



California Street Cable Car of today



Go West

means

Go Western Pacific

aboard the most talked about train in America!

California Zephyr

It's the *only* train to California that offers you the incomparable thrill of riding through the Colorado Rockies and Feather River Canyon in a Vista-Dome, the unique "penthouse" atop the "California Zephyr's" Reclining Chair Cars, Buffet-Club Car and Observation Lounge Car.



Daily between Chicago, Omaha, Denver, Salt Lake City, Oakland and San Francisco

THE WESTERN PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY

SYMBOL of a CITY



"POWELL AND MARKET AT 5:15"
By Howard Brodie—Courtesy S. F. Chronicle

The Story Behind
San Francisco's
Fabulous

CABLE CARS





Powell Street Cable Car of today

At the present time there are three cable car lines, all operated by the Municipal Railway. The two Powell Street lines, using green and cream single-end cars, were acquired with purchase of the Market Street Railway in 1944. The California Street line, with red and gray double-end cars, was taken over by the city from the California Street Cable Railroad Company on January 13, 1952.

All the cables are $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter, twisted steel wires over a hemp core. Their life varies from four months to over a year, depending on the grades.

For more details on cable car operation and history we suggest:

"Fares, Please!" by John Anderson Miller

"Cable Car Days in San Francisco," by Edgar M. Kahn

"Anatomy of the San Francisco Cable Car," by Frank Parker

"Cable Car Joey," by Naomi and Lorin McCabe (for children)

"Cable Car Carnival," by Lucius Beebe and Charles Clegg

San Franciscans love their cable cars while admitting their antiquity. Repeated moves to abolish them have been indignantly frustrated by the populace.

Visitors like them, too, and thrill to the gripman's shout, "L'kout for th' coive!" and his gay tunes on the gong.

That's why Western Pacific transplanted one of the little cars with its crew and rumbling cable track to the Chicago Railroad Fair in 1949 (with free rides for half a million people), for nothing is more typical of the City by the Golden Gate, terminal of Western Pacific.



California Cable Car lines today

"No pushee—no pullee,
allee samee go like hellee."

As a Chinaman described Cable Cars in 1873.

CABLE cars were born in San Francisco and only in San Francisco do they still live. They were born because man was kind to animals and could not bear to see them suffer.

For San Francisco, in the early '70's, had outgrown its level land and was beginning to push up into its many hills. The city's horsecar lines were extended upward—only on lower, gentle slopes, to be sure, but the grades were a real ordeal to the patient horses. Andrew S. Hallidie used to cringe when he saw them struggle to keep their feet on the fog-damp cobbles with a heavy car behind them—sometimes fall and lie exhausted in the traces.

Hallidie was a manufacturer of "metal rope," an invention of his father. He thought of the straining horses and he thought of the much steeper hills that must be conquered if San Francisco were to keep on growing. "Why," he asked himself, "could his own product not be used to solve this problem—why not pull those loaded cars up hill by cables?"

Hallidie was an engineer and it did not take him long to work out an acceptable design for a cable railway and grip car. Finding money to build them was a different matter. The project was labeled "idiotic and fantastic," but three men with both faith and gold finally backed him. Construction started in May, 1872—up the steep Clay Street hill six blocks from Kearny Street to Jones.

It was a big job to build it, as nothing similar had ever been done before. Furthermore, the cars had to be running by August 1, 1873, or the franchise reluctantly granted by the skeptical city fathers was lost. July 31st rolled around and the job was still unfinished. Hallidie and his crew worked all night and at 5 a.m. the line was ready. Nothing demonstrates the Scotsman's complete confidence in his own designs better than the fact that he chose to make the initial



*The first Cable Car ... Clay Street Hill Railroad
atop Nob Hill, 1873*

run from the top down. An ordinary man would have started the car at the bottom of the hill. Then if things went wrong he wouldn't streak down six blocks of near precipice and land in a heap of splinters.

Some such thoughts must have passed through the first gripman's mind as he boarded the little car poised on the crest. He took one look down the steep fog-shrouded hill, turned pale and disappeared. Hallidie shrugged and took hold of the grip wheel himself—the original grip was tightened by a screw—and began to turn it. The car "took rope" and rolled smoothly over the brink and down the 20 per cent grade at an even nine miles an hour.

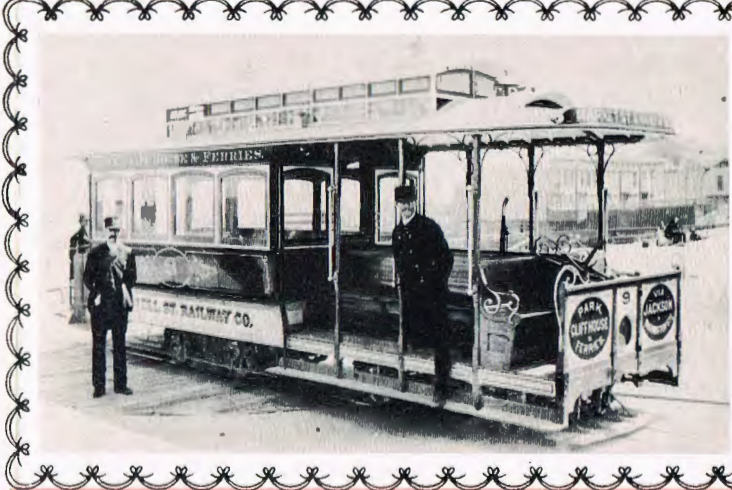
San Francisco still slept and no cheering crowds watched the first cable car journey. Only an insomniac Frenchman in nightshirt and cap leaned from his bedroom window and tossed out some faded flowers that were handy in a vase.

When the official "first trip" came off in the afternoon, news of the successful trial at dawn had spread and now there were cheering crowds a plenty. It was

the beginning of a new era in urban transportation and cable cars spread—not only through San Francisco until there were eight companies operating 112 miles of track—but into most of the large cities of the world. They all, perforce, used Hallidie's patents.

New York, Washington, Cincinnati, Boston—they all went all-out for cable cars. The far-flung system of the Chicago City Railway which opened in 1882 was the sensation of the times and horsecar tycoons came from far and near to wonder at the spectacle of a single grip car hauling a train of ten trailers. But the widespread reign of cable cars was short-lived, for the trolley was close behind.

Little by little the cables gave way to electric cars and then buses in other cities. Dunedin, New Zealand, last except for the city of their birth, has given them up. Now San Francisco, as in 1873, is the only city with cable cars.



No. 524 when she was young and known as No. 9

The cable car gripman is not a pantywaist. Both his grip and his brakes require considerable strength to operate and he must be eternally vigilant lest he fail to "let go" when necessary, damaging the cable and tying up the line.



*Cable Cars at the San Francisco Ferry Building
just before the 1906 Fire*

In principle, nothing is simpler than pulling a vehicle up a hill with a rope and fundamentally the car moves when the gripman pulls back on a lever, closing a pincer-like "grip" on an endless cable kept continuously in motion by motors in the powerhouse. BUT—there are pulleys at the side of the cable on curves, on top of the cable in valleys and below the cable on the crests of hills. Cable car lines cross and the gripman on the lower cable must "drop rope" and coast across lest he tie up the other line. The gripman has the following controls to handle: first, the GRIP LEVER; second, the HAND BRAKE, which forces a soft pine block down on the rails; third, the FOOT BRAKE, which works the metal brake shoes on the wheels; fourth, the EMERGENCY BRAKE, which jams a metal wedge into the cable slot; fifth (but by no means last in importance), the GONG. In addition, the conductor helps out on steep grades with his HAND BRAKE on the rear platform, which works the brake shoes on the rear truck.



*X-ray view of
Powell Street Cable Car*

