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THE PROPERTY SERVING A CITY WITH A POPULATION OF TWENTY THOUSAND OR LESS.

By N. C. Pilcher, General Manager, Sherbrooke Railway & Power Co.

Papers and discussions regarding electric railways usually deal with problems affecting large properties. As many members represent small companies, it has prompted me to read this paper in hope of a discussion that will bring out methods and ideas, useful to companies operating in small cities.

The Sherbrooke Railway and Power Co., acquired the Sherbrooke St. Ry. Co., in the spring of 1910. In addition to doing a railway business in Sherbrooke, we conduct a light, power and supply business in the district of St. Francis. Since acquiring the property, it has been entirely rebuilt; new power plant, roadbed and practically all new car equipment. We use a 70 lb. 7 in. T rail, special work having manganese centres. Considering the population served the outlay was large, but we believe that it was warranted from the operating results attained.

Gross receipts have increased 36 per cent., while the total operating cost for the year 1911—1912 is 8.638 per car mile. Under the franchise we were obliged to increase the mileage from 6 to 10 miles. The mileage in my opinion is too much for a city occupying so small an area and with a population of 18,000. Sherbrooke, however, is a growing city, well situated and the burden of making such a system pay will be lightened as time goes on.

METHODS OF STIMULATING TRAFFIC.—We have considered different schemes for stimulating traffic, but none have given much promise from a financial standpoint. This may be due in a measure to the general layout of the city. There are possibilities in handling freight in carload lots, and in fact less than carload lots to the various industries and between the railways. In order to do this, however, it would be necessary to spend a great deal of money in strengthening bridges, then there are many heavy grades varying between 5 and 12 per cent. We have therefore concluded that in consideration of the initial cost and the extra hazard involved it is not wise at present.

The writer has had some experience with a system of parcel and express business handled by regular cars, but has concluded that it interferes with the service and claims for lost articles are numerous and sometimes costly. Service and the goodwill of the public are among the companies' best assets and should have first consideration. Therefore we advocate uninterrupted service, clean cars and courteous employees as the safest and surest method of getting and keeping business.

STEEL WHEELS.—During the past two years, we have replaced practically all iron wheels with rolled steel wheels. The results have been satisfactory, with one great exception, the wheel account is bigger than ever. This is not due to the poor quality of the wheels nor to the first cost, but to the cost of turning them. We do not operate a machine shop, therefore we are obliged to send wheels out to a local shop to be turned. I have before me an invoice reading:—"46 hours. Pressing on and turning 1 pair wheels, \$27.60." Upon investigating the matter I was informed that the outside skin of the wheels was so hard that the machinist was unable for some time to get a tool to touch it. While all our wheels do not cost as much