OMB No. 1024-0018

NPS Form 10-900 (Rev. 8-86)

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

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	APR 1 3 1994	
	GENCY RESOURCES ATIONAL PARK SERV	

de la company de		=======================================
istoric name: <u>Birney Safety Streetcar # 224</u>		
ther name/site number: N/A		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
Location treet & number: 100 South Fourth Street		
erece a namber. <u>100 boater rearest beree</u>	not for	publication: N/A
ity/town: Fort Smith	_	vicinity: N/A
tate: AR county: Sebastian code:	<u>AR 131</u>	zip code: <u>72901</u>
. Classification		
wnership of Property: <u>Private</u>	=======	2.94
ategory of Property: Structure		
Tumber of Resources within Property:		
Contributing Noncontributing		
buildings sites structures objects 1 0 Total		
Jumber of contributing resources previously li	sted in th	ne National
Register: N/A	sted III til	ic National

	=======================================
4. State/Federal Agency Certification	=======================================
As the designated authority under the lof 1986, as amended, I hereby certify request for determination of eligibili standards for registering properties in the procedur set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my operations	that this <u>X</u> nomination <u></u> ty meets the documentation n the National Register of al and professional requirements
Signature of certifying official	4-6-94 Date
Arkansas Historic Preservation Program State or Federal agency and bureau	
In my opinion, the property meets Register criteria See continuati	does not meet the National on sheet.
Signature of commenting or other offic	ial Date
======================================	:=====================================
I, hereby certify that this property i entered in the National Register See continuation sheet. determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet. determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register	Elson H. Beall 5.19.94
other (explain):	National Register
	Signature of Keeper Date of Action
6. Function or Use	
Historic: Transportation	
Current : Transportation	Sub: rail-related
Current : Transportation	sub: rall-related

======================================
N/A
Other Description: <u>Birney Safety Streetcar</u>
Materials: foundation N/A roof <u>Canvas</u> walls <u>Metal</u> other
Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.
8. Statement of Significance ===================================
Applicable National Register Criteria: <u>A,C</u>
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A
Areas of Significance: <u>Transportation</u> <u>Engineering</u>
Period(s) of Significance: 1926-1933
Significant Dates: 1926
Significant Person(s): N/A
Cultural Affiliation: N/A
Architect/Builder: American Car Company, St. Louis, MO
State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above. X See continuation sheet.

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Summary

Streetcar # 224 is a Birney Standard Safety Car built in 1926 by the American Car Company in St. Louis, Missouri that was operated in Fort Smith until the streetcar line was closed in 1933. The streetcar was subsequently utilized for a short-order diner in Ashdown, Arkansas. In 1979, the car was purchased by the Fort Smith Streetcar Restoration Association, who, after twelve years of research and restoration, returned the twenty-eight passenger trolley to its original condition in 1991. The streetcar now runs between the Fort Smith Trolley Museum at 100 South Fourth Street and the Old Fort Museum at 320 Rogers Avenue.

Elaboration

The general specifications for the Birney Safety Car # 224 are as follows:

Make:

Birney Standard Safety Car, Type F body.

Buildier:

American Car Company, St. Louis, Missouri.

Capacity:

28 passengers

Power:

Westinghouse motors generating 25 horsepower at 600 V DC

Truck:

Single truck manufactured by G. C. Brill and Company.

Type 78 MI with friction bearings.

Operation:

Double end. Either end of trolley can go forward, duplicate of controls at each

end.

Length:

Over body - 17' 9 1/2" Over dash - 26' 9 1/2" Over bumpers - 27' 9 1/2"

Width:

Over side sheets - 7' 8"

Height:

With 26" wheels

Rail over roof - 9' 9 5/8" Track to step - 15 7/8" Step to floor - 12 1/16"

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Side windows: (number and width per side)

5 - 28 1/2" single hung

2 - 34 1/8" " "

1 - 34 1/8" " (to left of operator)

Doors: Single front type consisting of double-leaf folding doors. One set per end, to

right of operator station. Width of opening: 30"

Weight: Approximately 13,000 pounds.

The car body is a metal framework with wooden windows, roof, and floor. The structural end work is oak, while the windows, doors, and trim is executed in Philippine mahogany. The floor is composed of 7/8" thick edge-cut pine with a maple stringer down the center in the wear area (oak was used for the two small entrance platforms). The roof is composed of a wooden cross rib frame covered by 2 3/8" tongue-and-grove poplar boards with double curvature at the ends.

The "safety" in the designation refers to the special control handle, known as a "dead man control," which automatically stops and opens the door of the car if the motorman releases downward pressure on the handle. The streetcar also features electric heating installed under the bi-directional wood seating.

When the streetcar system was abandoned in Fort Smith in 1933, the truck, including the wheels and motors, was removed for salvage, and the car body was sold to a man named Johnson in Ashdown, Arkansas. Johnson converted the car into the "Streetcar Cafe" short order diner by removing the seats and installing a counter, stools, and a kitchen including a stove and sink.

The car body was later purchased by streetcar historian Louis Hennick of Shreveport, Louisiana. Hennick never realized his intention of restoring the trolley and advertised the car for sale in an antique journal in 1979. Coincidentally, Charles Winters was preparing a history of the Fort Smith streetcar system for publication by the Fort Smith Historical Society and discovered the advertisement while the manuscript was being edited. Winters contacted Dr. Art Martin, who organized a non-profit committee to purchase the trolley and return it to Fort Smith for restoration.

The newly formed Fort Smith Streetcar Restoration Association was charged with restoring a

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car that had been painted many times with white household paint on both the exterior and over the interior mahogany woodwork. The wood window frames were deteriorated, and there were several holes in the floor. Both doors were missing, and the destination sign box had been removed. More seriously, one end of the car had been damaged and required restoration of the major body frame wood. All of the controls, air hoses, and electrical wiring had been removed from the bottom of the car body. Fortunately, the canvas-over-wood top was in good condition.

During the restoration, the layers of old paint were needle-chipped from the metal, and the painted wood was stripped with paint remover. All of the decayed windows were rebuilt, new doors constructed to exact specifications, and the damaged body frame was repaired. This restoration followed the original wood type throughout. Both the exterior and interior were repainted to the original colors. The exterior was painted traction orange with cream trim, and the doors and window sashes received a coat of red paint.

As the original 1926 truck had been removed, complete restoration efforts were stymied until 1984 when a dilapidated Kansas City Birney Car, # 1545, became available for sale from the Ohio Railway Museum in Columbus, Ohio. The Fort Smith group purchased this car, which had been constructed by the American Car Company in St. Louis in 1919, and removed the streetcar's body that was considered deteriorated beyond repair (it still exists in the carbarn). The two Westinghouse motors were completely refurbished by the Baldor Electric Motor Company using parts to original specifications. Although the car is electrically powered, air pressure from an on board compressor operates the brakes, door opening and closing, track sanding system, and the emergency safety system. All of the air pressure piping lines (1/2", 3/8", and 1/4") were replaced under the floor. The steel air tanks did not require replacement, but were water pressure tested.

After twelve years of research and restoration that included thousands of volunteer hours and encouragement and consultation from other streetcar museums across the country, the Fort Smith Car # 224 ran under its own power on December 25, 1990.

The streetcar did not become fully operational until May 19, 1991 with the completion of the overhead wire system to carry the 570 volt DC current. As the original 33 miles of streetcar track had long since been removed, 1200 feet of abandoned Frisco freight spur track was utilized, and Car # 224 now runs from the Old Fort Museum at 320 Rogers Avenue to the Trolley Museum at 100 South Fourth Street and has provided over 38,000 riders with the now unique experience. Additional track, which will approximately double the current length, is now being laid next to the National Cemetery.

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Summary

The Birney Safety Streetcar # 224 was built by the American Car Company in St. Louis in 1926. The Fort Smith Light and Traction Company purchased the car and operated it until the system was closed on November 15, 1933. It is being nominated under Criterion A with statewide significance for its direct association with the public transportation system utilized by nine Arkansas cities before the widespread reliance upon the automobile. Under Criterion C, the Birney Safety Streetcar # 224 is being nominated as the best and only surviving streetcar in operation in Arkansas.

Elaboration

The history of street railway transit in Fort Smith began in 1883 with mule-drawn cars. The Fort Smith Railway Company headed by Samuel J. McLoud operated three cars which could seat between 14 and 16 passengers. Electric streetcar service started in 1893 when the Fort Smith & Van Buren Electric Street Railway Light & Power Company was granted a franchise on the condition that it construct a bridge across the Arkansas River to Van Buren. The company operated two streetcars and had a small electric generating plant and facilities for light streetcar repairs. In 1902, Lemert and O'Neil acquired control of the company and purchased the first double-truck streetcar the following year. Later in 1903, McCloud's company, which had partially converted to electric streetcars, combined with Lemert and O'Neil to form the Fort Smith Traction Light & Power Company. The company was reorganized shortly thereafter and the name slightly scrambled to create its final form, the Fort Smith Light and Traction Company. In 1904, the H. M. Byllesby Engineering & Management Company of Chicago, Illinois, obtained controlling interest in the company through stock purchases.

At this time, there were fifteen streetcars running on trackage extending out Towson Avenue, Little Rock Avenue (now Rogers Avenue), North Eleventh, and North E Streets. Fifteen openstyle cars were ordered, and improvements were made to the popular McCloud Park, an amusement park with a roller coaster, auditorium, pavilions, baseball park, and similar amenities that was owned by the Fort Smith Light and Traction Company. Renamed Electric Park, it proved to be profitable for the company largely through proceeds garnered by the streetcars transporting patrons to and from the facility. The company also benefitted from a three-mile track extending to Arkoma, Oklahoma, where the baseball park drew big crowds from Fort Smith on Sunday (at that time, baseball games were banned in Arkansas on Sunday). The bridge over the Arkansas River to Van Buren was finally completed in 1912, and streetcar service was now available to citizens of that town. Additionally, passenger movement between

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these two towns accounted for nearly 40,000 cash fares a month.

By the end of this decade, however, streetcar patronage suffered from the increasingly more automotive-oriented society. The need for a lighter and more efficient streetcar was answered by the Birney Safety Streetcar, which first appeared in Fort Smith in 1919. It was designed and engineered by Charles O. Birney of the Stone and Webster Engineering Company in 1916 and featured a single truck trolley (both front and rear wheels supported by a single frame) and a 28-passenger capability. The Birney Safety Streetcar consumed approximately 40% less electricity than the standard trolleys at that time, and provided single operator capability. At \$6,000 per car, the Birney Safety Streetcar was also substantially less expensive than the older, heavier trolleys. These cost-saving features allowed the company to lower fares and schedule runs more frequently, thus presenting a competitive and attractive alternative to the automobile. The Fort Smith Light and Traction Company owned fourteen of these cars, and #224 was from the last batch ordered before the system was abandoned.

Still, operating expenses increased, and the Fort Smith Light and Traction Company imposed a six cent fare in 1920. A year earlier, the Chicago headquarters had ordered the closing of Electric Park, which was subsequently dismantled in 1920. This loss was compounded by the construction of the new baseball park some distance from streetcar service. As fares continued to increase, the management attempted to improve public relations by comparing Fort Smith to other streetcar cities in terms of mileage in relation to population:

Fort Smith - 33 miles of track, 33,000 population

Little Rock - 36 miles of track, 75,000 population

Muskogee, OK - 15 miles of track, 30,000 population

In February of 1923, the Oklahoma Gas & Electric Company purchased Byllesby's holdings in the Fort Smith Light and Traction Company. The Oklahoma company controlled the Fort Smith streetcar system until November 15, 1933, when, citing heavy financial losses, all streetcar operations ceased.

The restored Birney Safety Streetcar # 224 is being nominated under Criterion A with statewide significance for its direct association with the streetcar era of public transportation that existed in nine Arkansas cities before World War II. Under Criterion C, the trolley is significant not only as the best example of a Birney Safety Streetcar, but as the only operating historic streetcar of any type in Arkansas.

9. Major Bibliographical References
X See continuation sheet.
Previous documentation on file (NPS):
<pre>preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested. previously listed in the National Register previously determined eligible by the National Register designated a National Historic Landmark recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #</pre>
Primary Location of Additional Data:
<pre>X State historic preservation office Other state agency Federal agency Local government University X Other Specify Repository: Fort Smith Trolley Museum</pre>
10 Coomphigal Data
10. Geographical Data ==================================
UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing
A 15 370150 3916560 B C D
See continuation sheet.
Verbal Boundary Description: See continuation sheet.
The streetcar is permanently housed at the Fort Smith Trolley Museum, 100 South Fourth Street (UTM: 15/370150/3916560), and it currently operates or 1200 feet of track running approximately two-and-a-half blocks northeast to the Old Fort Museum at 320 Rogers Avenue.
Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.
This boundary includes all of the property historically associated with this resource that retains its integrity.

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Bibliography

Information supplied by Dr. Art Martin, September, 1993.

Winters, Charles. *The Streetcars of Fort Smith*. Fort Smith: The Fort Smith Historical Society, 1979.

Name/Title: <u>Patrick Zollner, National Register Historian</u>	_
Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: 03/25/94	
Street & Number: 323 Center, 1600 Tower Bldg. Telephone: (501) 324-9880	
City or Town: Little Rock State: AR ZIP: 72201	

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED AC	TION: NOMINA	ATION			
PROPERTY B	irney Safety	Streetcar	No. 224		
MULTIPLE NAME:					
STATE & COUN	TY: ARKANSAS	S, Sebastia	an Molo		
DATE RECEIVE DATE OF 16TH DATE OF WEEK	DAY: 5/19	3/94 9/94		PENDING LIST: 45TH DAY:	5/03/94 5/28/94
REFERENCE NU	MBER: 940004	165			
NOMINATOR: S	TATE				
REASONS FOR	REVIEW:				
OTHER: N	DATA PROBLEM PDIL: SAMPLE:	N PERIO	CAPE: N D: N RAFT: N	LESS THAN 50 Y PROGRAM UNAPPE NATIONAL:	
COMMENT WAIV	ER: N				
ACCEPT	RETURN	REJEC	5·19	.94 DATEEnter	red in the
ABSTRACT/SUM	MARY COMMENTS	5:			northo
RECOM./CRITE	CRIA				
REVIEWER DISCIPLINE DATE		b.sd. /sm :			
DOCUMENTATIO	N see attach	ed comment	s Y/N se	e attached SLR	Y/N

CLASSIFICATION
countresource type
STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION
FUNCTION ASS TON DESCRIPTION ASS TO A STREET AND ASS TO A STREET ASS TO A STRE
historiccurrent
DESCRIPTION
architectural classificationmaterialsdescriptive text
SIGNIFICANCE
Period Areas of SignificanceCheck and justify below
Specific dates Builder/Architect Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)
summary paragraphcompletenessclarityapplicable criteriajustification of areas checkedrelating significance to the resourcecontextrelationship of integrity to significancejustification of exceptionother
BIBLIOGRAPHY
GEOGRAPHICAL DATA
acreageverbal boundary descriptionboundary justification
ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION/PRESENTATION
sketch mapsUSGS mapsphotographspresentation
OTHER COMMENTS
Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to
Phone
SignedDateDate



Birney Safety Streetcar #224
Sebastian Co., Arkansas
Photograph by Patrick Zolhen
February 1994
Vegative on file at AHPP
View looking southeast



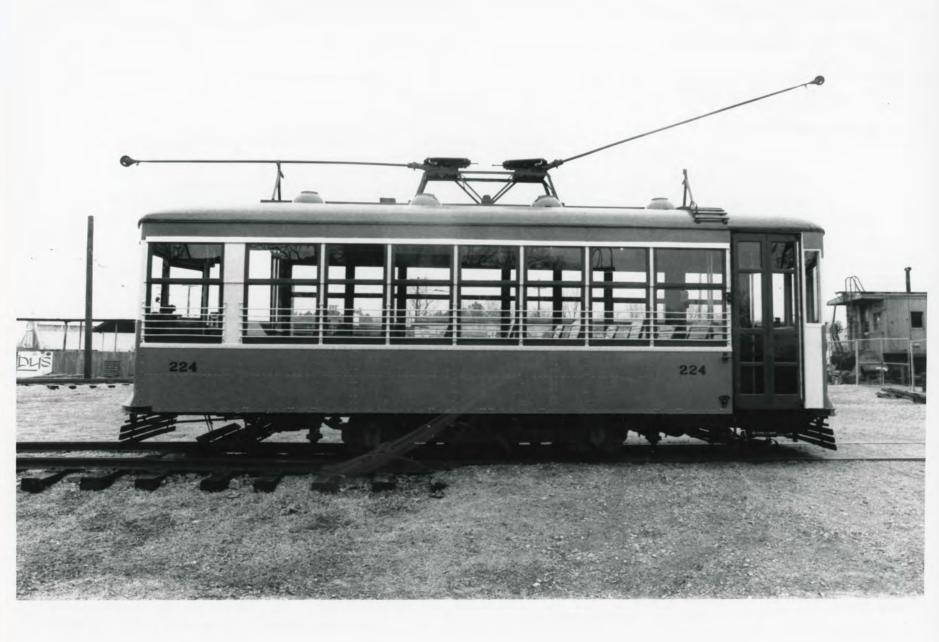
Birney Safety Street Car # 224
Sebastian Co., Arkansas
Photograph by Patrick Zollher
February 1994
Vegative on file at AHPP
View looking west



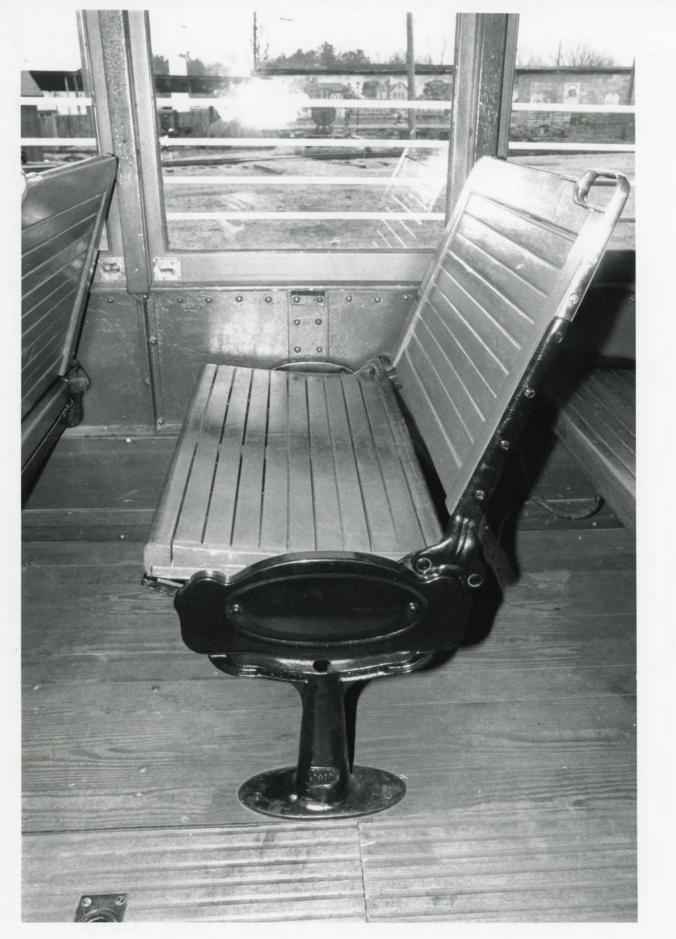
Birney Safety Streetcar #224
Sebastian Co., Arkansas
Photograph by Patrick Zollher
February 1994
Vegative on lile at AHPP
View booking northeast



Birney Salety Streetcar # 224
Sebastian Go., Arkansas
Photograph by Patrick Zolher
February 1994
Negative on file at AHPP
View looking east



Birney Safety Streetcar #224
Sebastian Co., Arkansas
Photograph by Patrick Zollner
February 1994
Negative on file at AHPP
View looking north west



Birney Sofety Streetcar # 224
Sebastian Oo, Arkansas
Photograph by Patrick Zollher
February 1994
Negative on-file at AHPP
View of reversible bench seat



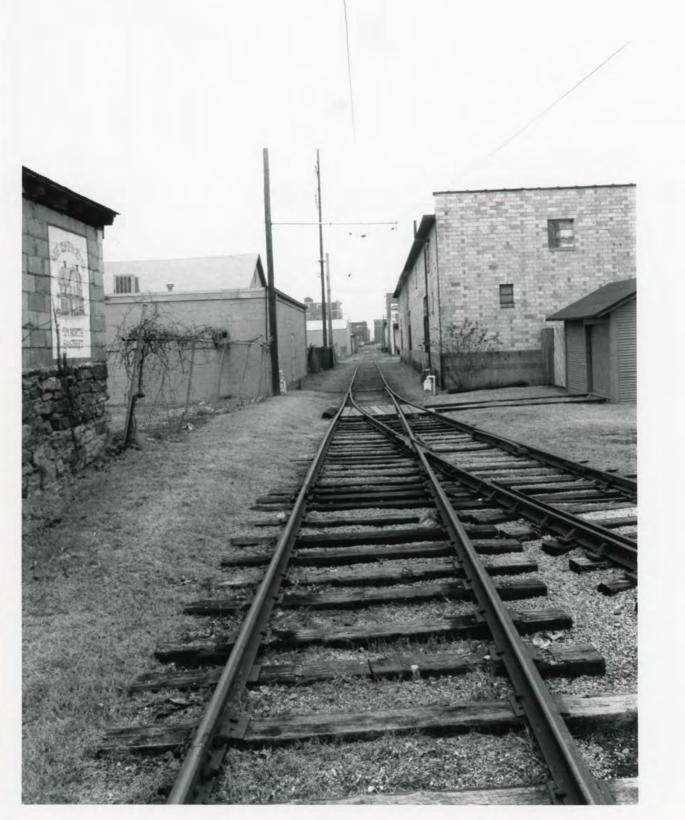
Birney Salety Streetcar # 224
Sebastien Go., Arkansas
Photograph by Patrick Zollner
February 1994
Negative on file at AHPP
View of interior looking northeast



Birney Safety Streetcar # 224
Sebastion Co., Arkansas
Photograph by Patrick Zallher
February 1994
Negative on file at AHPP
View of folding step mechanism
(down)



Birney Safety Streeton # 224
Sebastian Co., Arkansas
Photograph by Patrick Zollner
February 1994
Vegative on file at AHPP
View of folling step mechanism
Cup)



Birney Safety Streetcar# 224
Sebastian Co., Arkansas
Photograph by Patrick Zollner
February 1994
Negative on file at AHPP
View of tracks extending
northeast to Rogers Avenue



ARKANSAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM



April 6, 1994

Carol D. Shull
Chief of Registration
United States Department of the Interior
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
800 North Capitol Street, Suite 250
Washington, DC 20002

RE: Birney Safety Streetcar #224

Fort Smith, Sebastian County

Dear Carol:

We are enclosing for your review the nomination of the above referenced property. The Arkansas Historic Preservation Program has complied with all applicable nominating procedures and notification requirements in the nomination process.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Cathy Buford Slater

State Historic Preservation Officer

CBS:kg

Enclosures



