



PCCs IN THE SMALLEST Fleets Cities Gauge

BY GORDON LLOYD, JR./PHOTOS FROM THE LLOYD TRANSPORTATION LIBRARY AS NOTED

AS A SOCIETY, we often compare and celebrate the largest, fastest, first, tallest, only, or grandest. Examples? Sure... the largest shopping mall or diamond; fastest car, aircraft, or computer; the first edition of a book or first-place winner in a race; or the tallest building or the deepest caverns.

The first PCC (Presidents' Conference Committee) trolley cars made their debut in Brooklyn, N.Y., in 1936. The streamlined design stemmed from the collaborative work of many transit companies looking to modernize their fleets after the Great Depression years ate away at ridership and profits. All told, 4,588 cars were built by St. Louis Car Co. (StLCC) and Pullman-Standard (PS) between 1936 and 1952. European tram operators

desperate to rebuild following the ravages of World War II licensed the PCC design beginning in 1951, resulting in thousands of additional variations, some still operating today.

Smallest Fleets

When considering large fleets, those of Chicago and Toronto quickly spring to mind. Chicago had the largest fleet of purchased-new PCCs at 683. Technically, they were acquired by two companies, Chicago Railways and Chicago City Railway, both operated by Chicago Surface Lines until Chicago Transit Authority was formed in 1947. Toronto ultimately possessed the largest fleet, a combination of cars purchased new and acquired secondhand from cities in the U.S. which

shunned the modern streamliners, usually in favor of buses. Toronto purchased 540 new cars, but acquired 205 secondhand cars to vault it to the top of total ownership.

At the other end of the spectrum, seven companies were notable for diminutive PCC statistics. Louisville, Ky., holds the questionable distinction of having ordered 25 PCCs in 1944. In the time between when the order was placed and the first cars were delivered, the decision was made to convert the streetcar system to bus operation during 1947. A deal was struck with Cleveland Transit System in Ohio to acquire the brand-new cars instead. Of the 25 cars ordered from StLCC, numbered 501-525, none ever operated in revenue service in Louisville,



OPPOSITE: Although dressed in tribute to Louisville Railways, Louisville cars did not possess a front trolley pole and featured a low-profile monitor roof to accommodate three ceiling fans. San Francisco 1062 (ex-SEPTA 2101) pauses near the Ferry Building on August 13, 2008. GORDON LLOYD JR.-LTL

ABOVE LEFT: Clark Equipment Co. built prototype PCC 1000 for Brooklyn & Queens Transit with an all-aluminum body. Following a collision, Car 1000 was repaired with a section of steel front end from a Brooklyn St. Louis-built car, as shown here on September 27, 1953. EDWARD S. MILLER, PENNSYLVANIA TROLLEY MUSEUM COLLECTION

ABOVE: This view of the Clark and St. Louis PCCs highlights the carbody differences of the mechanically similar cars. The Clark car had a slightly boxy appearance, but contained standee windows long before they were popularized. The gathering is shown at the loop, along 39th Street west of First Street in Brooklyn, N.Y., on September 27, 1953. EDWARD S. MILLER, PENNSYLVANIA TROLLEY MUSEUM COLLECTION

LEFT: Once the pride of the fleet, by 1971 Mexico City's only purchased-new PCC was just another member of a 275-car fleet. By April 8, 1971, doors had been cut into the left side of STE 2000, a common trait with former Detroit and Twin Cities cars which followed 2000's acquisition. GORDON E. LLOYD/GORDON LLOYD JR.-LTL

and many in the latter portion of the order were delivered directly to their new owner. Regauging was necessary before being placed in service, as the Louisville cars were 60-inch gauge, the only domestic PCCs built to that specification.

The 25 cars were numbered 4250-4274 in Cleveland but their tenure in Ohio was short. In 1953, Toronto provided a third home for the itinerant Louisville cars, a destination that provided long-term employment and satisfaction. Renumbered as TTC 4675-4699, multiple-unit couplers were added, along with yet another track gauge modification. Their service in Toronto was exemplary, adding more than two additional decades of productive life.

The dubious record for shortest PCC service life goes to Louisville for ordering, and then never operating, its new streetcar fleet.

The Clark Equipment Co. of Battle

Creek, Mich., probably best known for its rugged PCC trucks typically known as B, B-1, B-2, B-3, and so forth, built just one complete PCC, for Brooklyn & Queens Transit, one of the initial members of the Presidents' Conference Committee. That car joined the roster in 1936 as number 1000 and it was unique. The street railway, in concert with Aluminum Company of America and automotive component manufacturer Clark Equipment, worked to verify engineering and quantify financial appeal of the project. The remaining 99 cars were built in 1936-1937 by St. Louis Car Co. with more traditional construction materials and techniques. The Clark-built car was notable in that it was the only all-aluminum-body PCC ever built.

When Car 1000 was damaged in a collision, repairs were made with steel components from a donor PCC, altering the as-built appearance of the singular car.

Clark-built 1000 has been preserved and is part of the Trolley Museum of New York's collection in Kingston, N.Y.

Therefore, Clark Equipment Company was the smallest PCC builder, building just one exclusive car for regular service.

Mexico City purchased only one new car. Acquired in 1947 from StLCC, number 2000 was a venture into modernization unrivaled in the Mexican capital. The car had no peers, at least until bargains in the U.S. reared their heads as "modernization." Mexico City never purchased another new PCC, but went on to own 274 secondhand cars purchased from the city of Detroit's Department of Street Railways (183 cars) and from Minneapolis' Twin Cities Rapid Transit (91 cars). They were a bargain; the TCRT and DSR cars had not even reached their 10th birthday. The cars enjoyed additional 20-year careers in the temperate Mexican environment.

Thus, Mexico City had the only single-car PCC fleet with its one-car order, but it was eventually overwhelmed by 274 other StLCC-built PCCs, invalidating its “small” award.

Illinois Terminal, the feisty interstate interurban that developed a significant freight business, operated local passenger service in Bloomington, Danville, Decatur, and Peoria, Ill., and between Granite City, Ill., and St. Louis, Mo. Local operations in Bloomington, Danville, Decatur, and Peoria succumbed earlier, but the line connecting Granite City with St. Louis was more successful.

In 1949, ITC placed eight StLCC-built double-ended PCCs into operation, numbered 450–457. The eight cars were unique in design and production, having only two doors adjacent to the operator at each end of the car, and no mid-car passenger access. They were designed for multiple-unit operation and frequently operated in that fashion during rush-hour periods.

Illinois Terminal was the only company

to provide an interstate PCC operation (though there was an *international* PCC service between El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico). The careers of the green and cream cars were relatively short. Service ended on June 22, 1958, short of even 10 years of service. They languished in a scrapyard for a time as attempts were made to resell the cars. Ultimately, the late date of their retirement and their one-off door



RIGHT: A coupling made, an operator and shopman pose for a somber portrait on the last evening of Illinois Terminal PCC service on June 21, 1958, in industrial Granite City, Ill., ending electric passenger operation system-wide. PCC 456 and sister are now a train, soon to head off to pick up the last load of weary workers headed toward St. Louis. GORDON E. LLOYD-LTL

BELOW: PCCs from two properties hold our attention in St. Louis on March 3, 1956. Headed back to Illinois, ITC 456 passes over the tracks of the St. Louis Public Service Route 40 Broadway line, where PCC 1762 will soon arrive. Both PCCs were built here in St. Louis. ITC 456 was delivered by St. Louis Car Co. in 1949, while 1762 came in 1946. The SLPs cars outlived those of ITC. GORDON E. LLOYD-LTL



ABOVE: Dressed to entice Civil Defense activism, Johnstown Traction Co. 401 treads through Johnstown, Pa., heading for Roxbury in March 1954. Although ITC received second-hand streetcars early in World War II, an order for 17 PCCs was accepted in 1945 to address heavy traffic. The cars arrived just before ridership began to decline. ROBERT P. TOWNLEY-LTL



ABOVE LEFT: A Franklin line car reposes on July 26, 1953. Behind the car, signage directs road traffic to the Williams Farm operation of Cambria Slag Company, a scrap drop-off facility. Passenger traffic for Cambria Slag was not heavy on this trip. GORDON E. LLOYD-LTL

Smallest Cities

Johnstown, Pa., turned more than a few heads when, in 1945, it ordered 17 PCCs from StLCC. Located 70 miles east of Pittsburgh, Johnstown was heavily industrial, a blue-collar city in which steel mill workers and others relied on steel-rail transit. At the time of the order, the population was about 68,000. An unlikely PCC operator, Johnstown Traction Co. was using a tired fleet of legacy streetcars on its five routes, well-worn from heavy wartime ridership. Johnstown's history was rooted in steel, which was bolstered through war-related production. Despite the ongoing wartime restrictions on essential materials, Johnstown managed to be approved to receive the new streamlined streetcars. The orange carbody, cream-colored trim, and gray-roofed PCCs were numbered 401–417.

The cars were intended to support increased ridership and replace older equipment, but following the war and production frenzy, patronage began to drop soon after the PCCs were delivered. By 1950, the population dropped to about 63,000. Buses replaced some of the lighter routes, then a scheme to replace PCCs with trolleybuses (to accommodate city plans to make certain streets one-way) rendered the electric cars superfluous. In the end, only 16 cars survived, one having been wrecked in an incident with a train in 1953. Johnstown Traction streetcar operation ended on June 11, 1960.



ABOVE: On a day nearly as dark as the future of Montreal's PCC fleet, MTC 3511 passes a sister on the Outremont Line. The shells were built at St. Louis Car Co., with final assembly taking place in Montreal at Canadian Car & Foundry. BRUCE BATTLES-LTL

LEFT: MTC 3517, the last of the 18-car order delivered in 1944, is at Victoria Square in Montreal on August 31, 1957. It has been preserved at the Exporail Museum in Delfon, Que. Dash lights under the visor substituted for more typical headlights. KENNETH L. DOUGLAS-LTL

configuration soured future sales. Concerns of speedy loading and unloading were the most cited issues. The smallest PCC fleet had one of the shortest careers.

In a twist of fate, two of the eight cars went to museums in 1964, with Car 450 acquired by Ohio Railway Museum in Worthington and Car 451 going to Connecticut Trolley Museum in Warehouse Point. In 1975, Cleveland's Shaker

Heights Rapid Transit needed additional capacity. A deal was struck with both museums to temporarily acquire the two cars, pressing them back into service 17 years after retirement. They operated until 1979 when they were returned to their respective museums.

Illinois Terminal, an interurban passenger and freight railroad, operated the smallest PCC fleet.



ABOVE: The narrow gauge 42-inch trackage of the former Los Angeles Railway is clearly evident in this head-on view at the Georgia Street yard of Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority. Remarkably, the yard consists of elevated track above a "pit" adjacent to a city street. Note the differences in car widths between PCC 3090 (100 inches) to the left of the pole and PCC 3151 (108 inches) to the right. It's March 1963, and the end of PCC service in Los Angeles is only days away. BRUCE BATTLES-LTL

RIGHT: The 165-car Los Angeles Railway fleet appears on our survey, not for any quantity of cars — they had neither the largest nor the smallest fleet — but for its 42-inch track gauge. The first of the fleet, 3001, dressed in midlife National Cities Lines' "fruit salad" colors, was found at South Gate on Route J on May 14, 1959. The narrow gauge track required a new truck design from the builder, Clark Equipment Co. LLOYD TRANSPORTATION LIBRARY



No buyer stepped forward to acquire the relatively young vehicles. Eventually, they were stripped of usable electrical equipment and trucks. Several carbodies lingered well into the 1970s, forlorn and abandoned in nearby Krings, Pa.

With a population of less than 66,000, Johnstown became the smallest city to operate PCCs, with one of the smallest fleets assembled. Only the above-mentioned Illinois Terminal had fewer cars.

Considerably farther north and east than the first small-award winners was Montreal. Montreal Tramways found itself in need of additional equipment and placed an order in 1942 for PCCs. The initial order was for 25 cars, approved by the Canadian government, but only 18 were allocated by the U.S. War Production Board. The cars were "delivered" in 1944; Montreal's cars had their bodies

fabricated by StLCC in the U.S., with final assembly taking place at Canadian Car & Foundry in Montreal. There was subsequent interest in obtaining more PCCs, but Canadian government distributions excluded Montreal as a destination for available cars, with Vancouver, B.C., and Toronto being judged as having a greater need.

Despite initial concerns regarding PCCs and operation in winter weather as potentially harsh as Montreal's, in 1945 another order was placed for an additional 30 cars. But, with the end of World War II, the order was canceled. Montreal eventually operated only the 18 cars acquired in 1944, and no more.

The cars, numbered 3500–3517, were painted cream overall, with red striping as opposed to the city's two-man cars painted green. Largely due to the

enhanced capabilities of the new cars, they were assigned to Route 29, Outremont. Montreal Tramways was taken over by the Montreal Transportation Commission in 1951, and planned system "modernization" did not include trolleys as part of the future, declaring all lines would be converted to bus within 10 years. When Route 29 was abandoned, the PCCs fell back to lesser service on alternate routes, particularly the lines of Papineau or Rosemont. It all came to an end on August 30, 1959. Car 2517, the final Montreal PCC purchased, is preserved at the Exporail Canadian Railway Museum in Delson, Que.

With a population of more than 900,000 in 1944, Montreal was the largest city to operate the smallest PCC fleet at only 18 cars. Only Johnstown Traction and Illinois Terminal had fewer cars.

Smallest Gauge

North American PCCs were built for seven different track gauges; the smallest, or narrowest, gauge of any PCC fleet was encountered in Los Angeles. Los Angeles had an extensive operation and fleet of older cars, but interest in the new streamlined cars spawned three orders, all built by StLCC. The cars were numbered 3001–3165. Unlike Pacific Electric PCCs, these were all single-ended and lacked m.u. capability. But they were differentiated in a significant fashion beyond double ends or couplers, in that neither fleet could ever operate on the others' property. Los Angeles Railway

PCCs were built to 42-inch gauge. The narrow track gauge required an entirely new and different truck. While most PCCs operated on a Clark Equipment truck called the B-2, the redesign for slim rails was designated B-1. Only the 165 42-inch gauge Los Angeles Railway PCCs utilized the B-1 truck, an inside frame truck with a bolster equipped with swing hangers. Although designed with rubber springs, ultimately standard steel springs prevailed as was the case with larger-gauge cars. Regardless of the narrow gauge, the first 125 cars had 100-inch-width carbodies, while the last 40 featured 108-inch bodies — both

typically common to a multitude of systems and operators with larger-gauge trackage. The cars operated from 1937 until then-operator Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority ended rail service on March 31, 1963. Most found second careers in Chile or Egypt. Original Car 3001 is preserved at Orange Empire Railway Museum in Perris, Calif., along with sisters 3072, 3084, 3100, and 3165.

In our survey of all things large and small, Los Angeles Railway PCCs take the honors for operating on the "smallest" track gauge. ■

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LEFT: Ex-Los Angeles Railway 3082 makes its way through the rainy intersection of 7th and Figueroa in February 1963. Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority acquired the LARy transit lines in 1958. GORDON E. LLOYD-LTL

BELOW: A rare occurrence — PCCs from two properties could be found in Los Angeles, but never could the fleets be co-mingled due to a 14.5-inch difference in track gauges. Dressed in the same colors as LAMTA's bus fleet, car 3027 paused at the loop in South Gate on May 28, 1959. Excellent maintenance practices, a dry climate, and mild winters — meaning no salt — combined to enhance car appearances.

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