



Municipal Railway Cable Car of Today



California Street Cable Railroad Car of Today

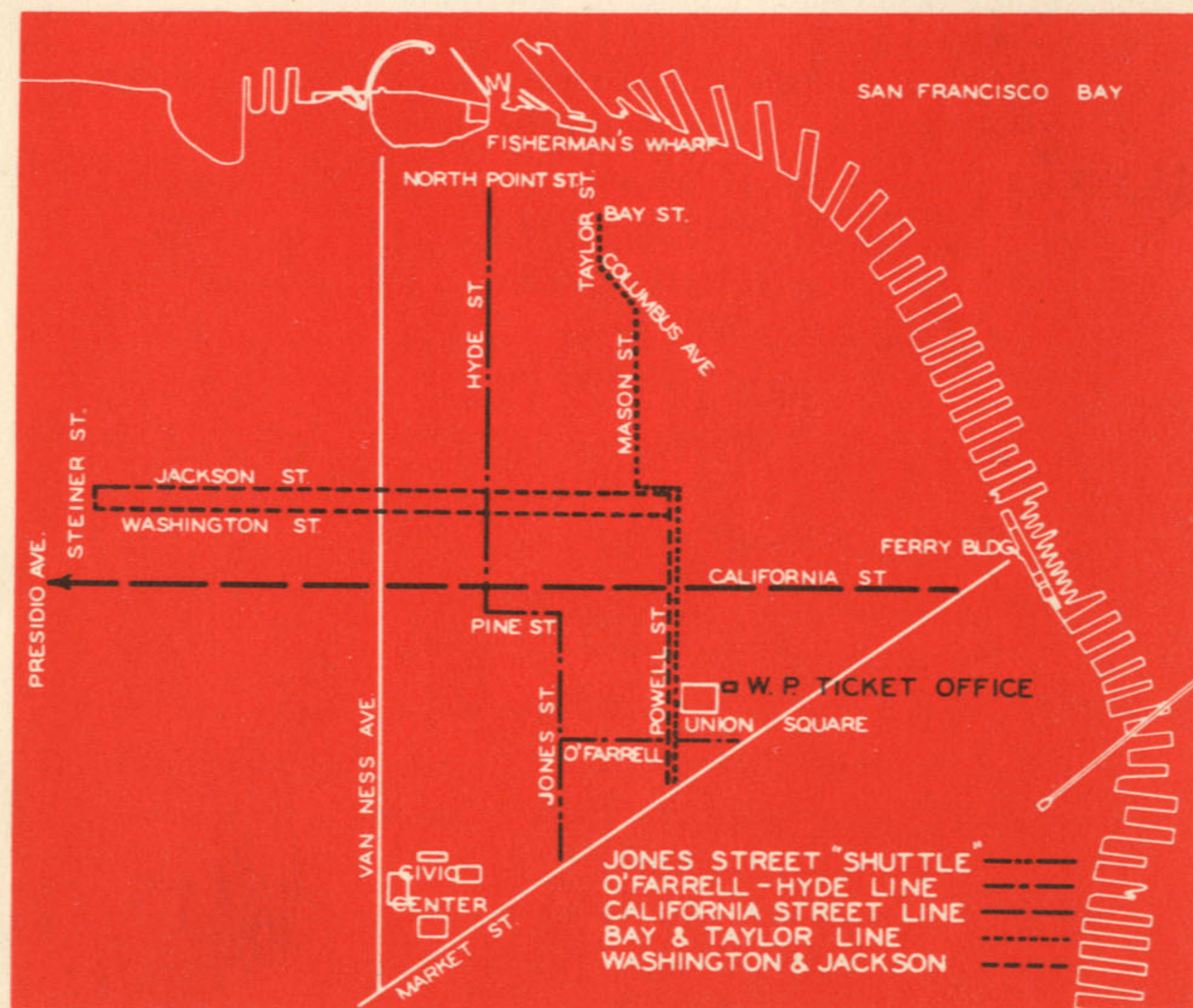
lest he tie up the other line. The gripman has the following controls to handle: first, the GRIP LEVER; second, the HAND BRAKE, which forces a soft pine block down on the rails; third, the FOOT BRAKE, which works the metal brake shoes on the wheels; fourth, the EMERGENCY BRAKE, which jams a metal wedge into the cable slot; and 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.

At the present time there are two separate cable car systems in San Francisco. The Municipal Railway, operating single-end cars, has two lines, the Powell & Mason, and the Washington & Jackson, while the California Street Cable Railway runs its red double-end cars on three: the California Street, O'Farrell & Hyde, and Jones Street shuttle lines. All the cables are 1 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 Kahn; "Anatomy of the San Francisco Cable Car," by Frank Parker; "Cable Car Joey," by Naomi & Lorin McCabe (for children)

San Franciscans love their cable cars while admitting their antiquity. Last year a move to abolish them was indignantly voted down by the populace. Visitors like them, too, and thrill to the gripman's shout "L'kout for th' coive!", and his boogie-woogie on the gong. That's why we transplanted one of the little cars and its colorful crew to the Chicago Railroad Fair, for nothing is more typical of the City by the Golden Gate, terminal of the Western Pacific.

Appearing here is a map of the five remaining cable car lines. We suggest that when you visit San Francisco, you make the following "Grand Tour": Starting at Union Square, walk down Powell one block to O'Farrell, and take a westbound red car. This will take you around the edge of Nob Hill and over Russian Hill to the Bay. Walk three blocks east to famous Fisherman's Wharf, then up Taylor to Bay (three blocks) and take the green and cream Powell cable through the Latin Quar-



ter. At California Street change to the westbound red car and ride through the apartment house district, getting off at Steiner. Walk three blocks north and board the Washington-Jackson car, which will bring you to the edge of Chinatown, over Nob Hill and back to Union Square.

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means

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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



CHICAGO RAILROAD FAIR • 1949

"No pushee—no pullee,
allee samee go like hell."
As a Chinaman describes Cable Cars in 1873

Cable cars were born in San Francisco and only in San Francisco do they still live. They were born because a 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 horse-car lines were extended upward — only on the 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 labelled "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 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

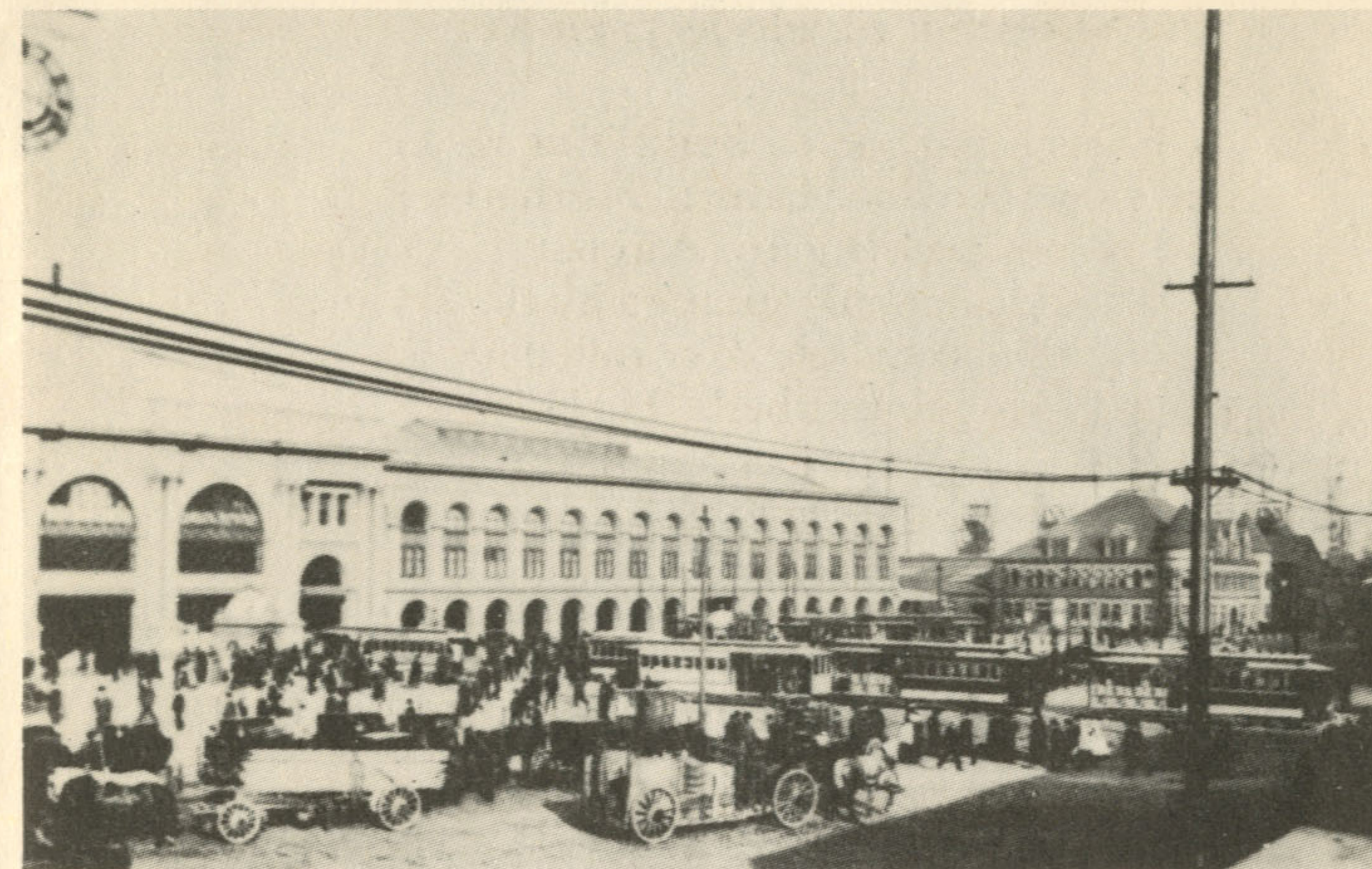


No. 524 When She Was Young and Known as No. 9

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% 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



Cable Cars At the San Francisco Ferry Building Just Before the 1906 Fire

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.

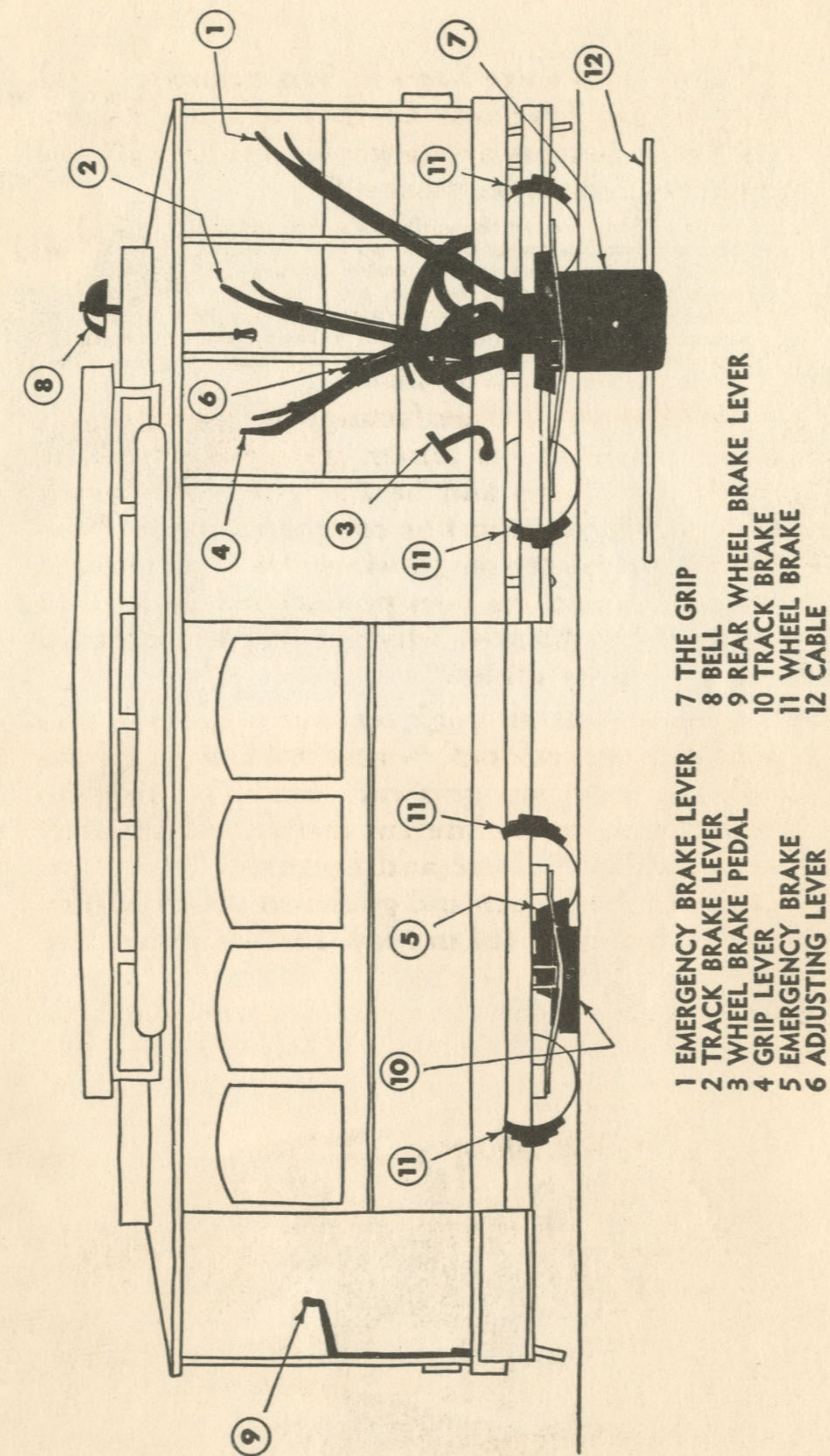
Chicago went all out for cable cars. The far-flung system of the Chicago City Railway which opened on January 22, 1882, was the sensation of the times and horse car executives came from far and near to wonder at it. State Street property owners had objected violently to the idea of breakneck speeds of nine miles an hour before their very doors, but bands played and 300,000 spectators cheered as a train of ten trailers drawn by a single grip car made the first run from Madison to 21st. The cable car in Chicago had come to stay — for a quarter of a century, that ended July 22, 1906, when the last State Street cable car made its midnight run to the barn.

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

The cable car gripman is not a panty-waist. 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.

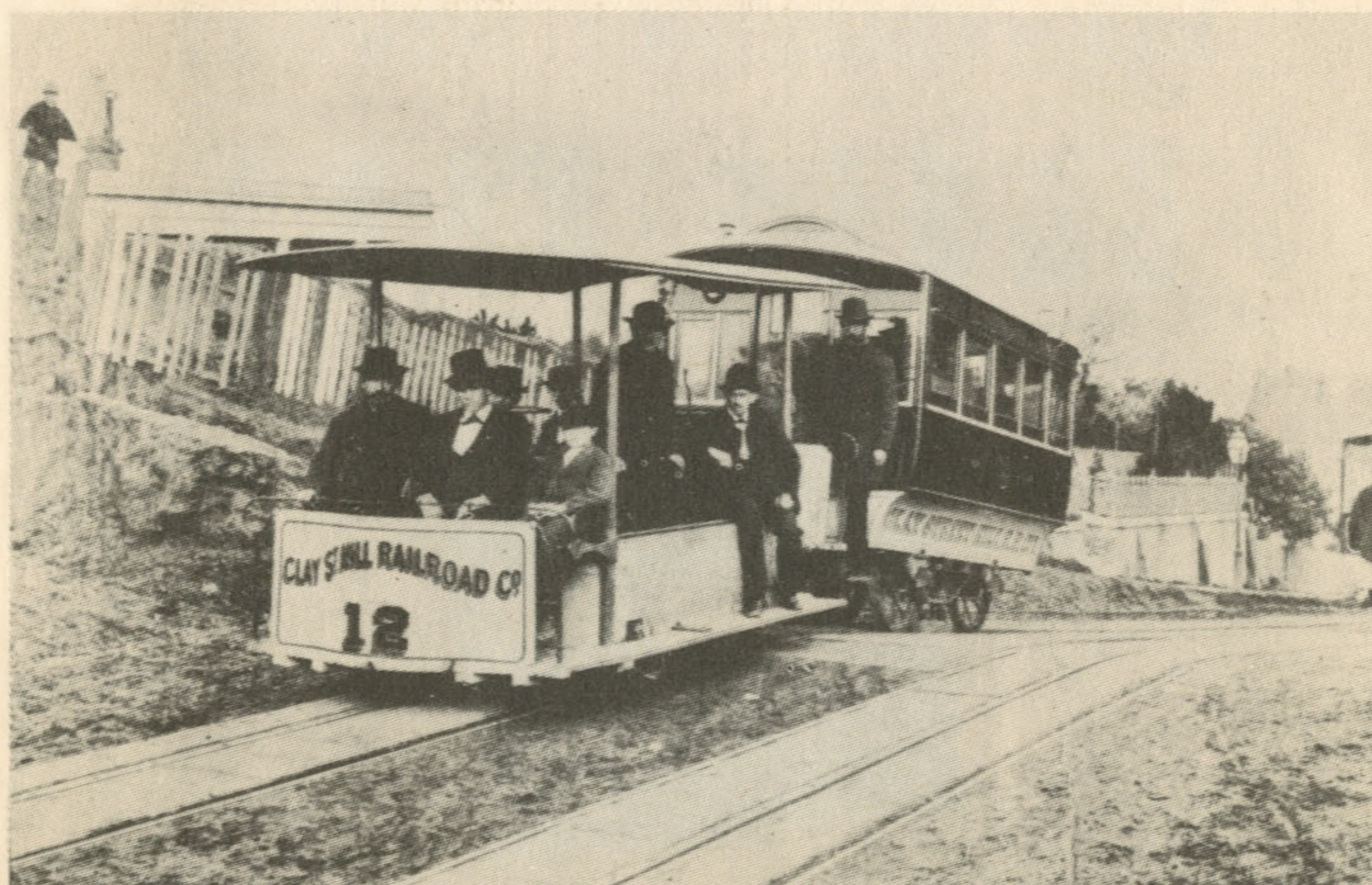
In principle, nothing is simpler than pulling a vehicle up a hill with a rope and fundamentally the car moves when the gripman pulls back on a lever, closing a pincer-like "grip" on an endless cable kept continuously in motion by motors in the powerhouse. BUT — there are pulleys at the side of the cables 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

X-Ray View of Municipal Railway Cable Car.



- 1 EMERGENCY BRAKE LEVER
- 2 TRACK BRAKE LEVER
- 3 WHEEL BRAKE PEDAL
- 4 GRIP LEVER
- 5 EMERGENCY BRAKE
- 6 ADJUSTING LEVER
- 7 THE GRIP
- 8 BELL
- 9 REAR WHEEL BRAKE LEVER
- 10 TRACK BRAKE
- 11 WHEEL BRAKE
- 12 CABLE

From "Anatomy of the San Francisco Cable Car" by Frank Parker . . . Courtesy James Ladd Delkin



The First Cable Car . . . Clay Street Hill Railroad Atop Nob Hill, 1873