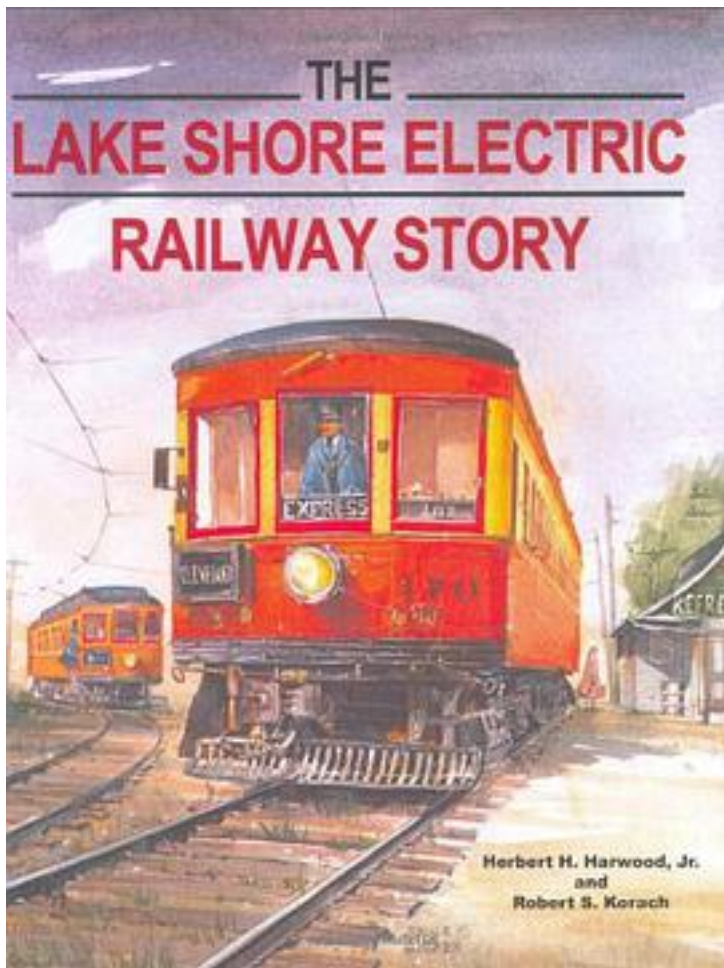


The Lake Shore Electric Railway Story



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This is the fully illustrated story of "The Greatest Electric Railway in the United States" connecting the Lake Erie cities of Toledo and Cleveland. Before its untimely death in

1938 it left a rich legacy of bold innovation and imaginative marketing practices. Born in 1901 and dead a brief 37 years later The Lake Shore Electric claimed to be (and was considered by many) "The Greatest Electric Railway in the United States." It paralleled the shore of Lake Erie connecting Cleveland and Toledo with a high-speed, limited-stop service. It was noted for its early pioneering spirit and radical innovations, rivalling the powerful New York Central with fast, frequent limited-train services and even pioneered a form of intermodal transportation 3 decades before the rest of the industry. It was important not only in itself but also as a link in the extensive midwestern interurban network. But, to millions of people, the bright orange electric cars were an economical and comfortable means of escaping the urban mills and shops or the humdrum of rural life. In summers during the glory years there were never enough cars to handle the crowds seeking weekend retreats to Erie's beaches and amusement parks. To thousands of midwestern newlyweds the Lake Shore was one of the more enjoyable avenues taken on the long but pleasant trip to Niagara Falls incorporating the night boat from Cleveland to Buffalo New York. Reaching its peak in the early 1920s it suffered the fate of most of its sister lines: unfortunate timing. It was created as a wonderful alternative to the dirty, expensive, and uncomfortable transportation in horsedrawn carriages over primitive roads. But it was born less than a decade before the advent of cheap, mass-produced horseless carriages. By the mid-1920s Lake Shore was in an unwinnable struggle with autos, trucks, and buses on the improved highways. There was no way the interurban could compete with their convenience, and the railroad's fixed costs and construction debt, not to mention the taxes they had to pay, meant they were always strapped for cash. "The Lake Shore Electric" tells the entire story of this fascinating chapter in interurban transportation, even including missed the opportunities that might have saved "The Greatest Electric Railway in the United States."

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