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For the Junior Members
EARLY TRANSPORT IN OTAGO

When you wish to travel you are accustomed to do so by motor car, bus, or train, or you may have had a seat in a aeroplane. You just take these things for granted, but the early settlers of Otago had none of these. In fact there wasn't a single motor car, motor bus, or aeroplane anywhere in the world. About thirty years ago Mr. Alfred Eccles wrote a very interesting account of how these modes of transit were gradually introduced and I will pass on to you some of the information he gave us.

At first the early settlers had no means of transport save by boat and all travelling was done on foot. One "Philip Laing" passenger had brought a cart, but without a horse he could not use it, so after three years he finally sold it to a man who was also able to purchase a bullock. At that time Princes Street was very muddy and much steeper than it is today. When it became known that the bullock was to draw the cart over the Bell Hill rise, people flocked to see if it could be done. Yes! the bullock not only pulled the empty cart up the hill but returned later with a load of firewood. That was the beginning of wheeled transport in Dunedin.

It was not long before carts and drays and buggies and horses became much more numerous. The first cab on the city streets appeared in November 1861, but a month earlier Mr. Charles Cole arrived in Dunedin from Victoria with one coach, a buggy, five wagons, several carts and 54 horses and started business under the name of Cobb & Co. Gold had been discovered near Lawrence and the first coach left Dunedin on 11th October, 1861, with passengers for "the Diggings". Other coaches began a service to Invercargill in the South and Christchurch in the North and continued till the opening of the railway from Bluff to Christchurch in 1879. Coach services continued, however, to places distant from the railway, particularly to Otago Central.

The first railway in Otago linked Dunedin with Port Chalmers in 1872. There were two engines named "Rose" and "Josephine" and Josephine is now on view beside the Otago Early Settlers' Museum. Mr. Eccles tells us the line from Milton to Lawrence was opened in April, 1877, and that from Mosgiel to Outram six months later. The railway to Otago Central was begun in 1879. For a time a short railway connected Dunedin with Andersons Bay.

The motor car made its first appearance in 1901 when Mr. T. W. Kempthorne owned a steam-driven motor-buggy. I well remember when I first saw it, rushing into the house saying "Hurry, and see a buggy going up the road without a horse." It was really a buggy, and had steel-tyres and large wooden wheels. The oldest petrol driven car I can remember was one that was owned and driven by Dr. Robert Fulton. It used to chug, chug, through the streets from 1906 till about 1924.

Trams first appeared on Dunedin streets in 1879, some drawn by horses and others driven by steam. Two years later the Roslyn Cable Car began operations and was often termed the "eighth wonder of the world." The Mornington cable car commenced two years later, but the Stuart Street cable car was not in use till 1900. All the cable cars remained in use until recent years when they were replaced by diesel buses and trolley buses. The first electric tram used to carry passengers from Maori Hill to and from the Roslyn tram, but the electric trams first ran along Princes and George Street in 1903, power being supplied from a steam plant in Cumberland Street. Power from Waipori was first used in April, 1907.

At this time horse drawn vehicles were still very numerous and few motor cars were to be seen. Different types of horse drawn vehicles are preserved in the Early Settlers' Museum. One that is missing, however, is the hansom cab and another is the jaunting car such as regularly plied between Mosgiel and the railway station. Gradually, however, the motor car replaced the buggy, and the tractor replaced the sturdy farm horses, till conditions became what we find to-day. It was a common sight some sixty or seventy years ago to see a traction engine on the road hauling behind it a threshing mill. At that time headers were not in use and the wheat or oat sheaves were built into a stack to await the arrival of the threshing mill. The traction engine not only transported the mill from farm to farm but also supplied the power to drive it.

The aeroplane has only been here a little over 30 years. Would not the early settlers marvel at conditions to-day, could they return?

W. M.