

A Publication of the National Museum of Transportation Trolley Volunteers



OUR TOWN, ST. LOUIS --- March 26, 1777, Peter Lindell was born. He made a fortune as a merchant and bought up land that now makes up the Central West End, where Lindell Boulevard now runs today. Spring Avenue was named for a spring on his land. The eastern part of his land was the site of the 1861 encampment of the state militia known

as “Camp Jackson.” At least 30 people died in the violence after federal troops seized the encampment.



DELIVERY WAGON, ABOUT 1900 - Many city businesses made use of delivery wagons like this one, which was built in Maryland. In 1900, over three million horses worked in American cities. They produced some 30,000 tons of manure every day. This was a major urban concern, used by promoters of motorized vehicles to sell the idea of trucks and automobiles to the public.

The Merchants Despatch Transportation Company (MDT, also known as the Merchants Despatch Refrigerator Line) was established in 1857 or 1858 by the American Express Company of New York (then a freight forwarding service).

The entity was reformed as a joint stock trading company on June 1, 1869, with ownership divided among the Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati and Indianapolis Railway (CCC&I), the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railway, and the New York Central Railroad (NYC), all part of the Cornelius Vanderbilt rail empire.



The MDT entered the refrigerated transit business around 1880, and within five years had 1,900 reefers in service, making it one of the largest such concerns in the United States. Historian and author John H. White

describes MDT as "the oldest corporate name connected with refrigerated transit to survive into modern times." The company began manufacturing cars on a small scale in 1883, and in spring of 1887 constructed a large manufacturing facility near Rochester, New York in a town they named Despatch (present-day East Rochester). MDT hired 900 workers and embarked on an aggressive car building program; by 1900 the firm owned 6,687 units, slightly more than half of which were refrigerator cars.

The company incorporated in the State of [New York](#) in May, 1911. 3,400 reefers were sold to the NYC in December 1912, and 2,988 to the Lake Shore line, though all of the units were in turn leased back to the MDT. The firm was reincorporated as a [Delaware](#) corporation in 1923. Circa 1925, the NYC established a new subsidiary, the Eastern Refrigerator Despatch (mirroring the expansion strategy of the rival [Fruit Growers Express](#)). Operation of the ERD, along with its 2,100 reefers, was quickly absorbed by Merchants Despatch. In November, 1928 the MDT purchased the Northern Refrigerator Car Line (founded by [Milwaukee's Cudahy](#) brothers) and its 1,800 cars.

A holding company, Merchants Despatch, Inc., merged with the MDT in 1936; the new venture was chartered in Delaware on December 18. In 1962 the NRC was combined with Merchants Despatch. At the same time, greater emphasis was placed on auto carrier business; from 1961 to 1966, the company acquired nearly 1,200 [autorack](#) cars (although the base [flatcars](#) were owned by MDT, the rack structures were owned by the New York Central). MDT also entered the [Intermodal freight transport](#) business, and purchased 572 Flexi-Van [container](#) flats (intended mainly for use in mail service on [passenger trains](#)) between 1958 and 1965.



Preserved MDT car in a rail museum. Car is ca. 1958.

As part of the consolidation of facilities planned for the Penn Central merger, the car shop was closed down on April 1, 1970, and the 72-acre property was sold off^[1]. In July, 1985 the MDT assumed the responsibility for car weighing and inspection previously under the purview of the Eastern

Weighing and Inspection Bureau.

After ceasing construction, MDT would continue as a repair shop, and a car lessor to both railroad and private companies. As an independent lessor, it was able to outlast NYC's merger into Penn Central, and their collapse into Conrail. However, after the 1998 purchase of Conrail, MDT's assets were merged and the company dissolved in 2000.

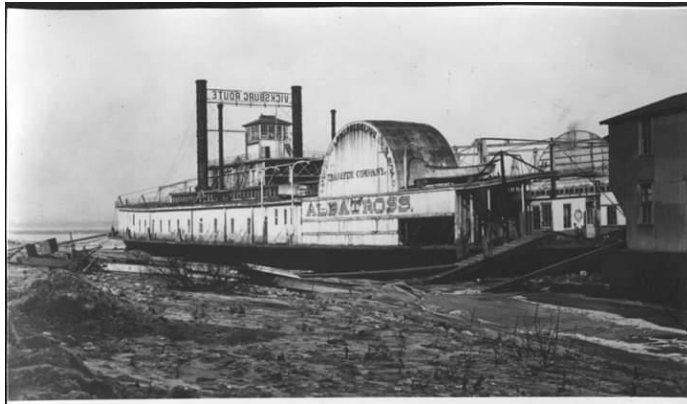
IN OUR TOWN ST. LOUIS - July 8, 1993 - Mazie Krebs died in a Santa Clara, California nursing home, at the age of 93. She's buried at New St Marcus Cemetery, on Gravois.

We came to know & love the SS Admiral & from top to bottom, stem to stern, the former rail ferry Albatross was designed by Mazie Krebs, a graduate of Cleveland High School who received a scholarship to attend Washington University's School of Fine Arts. To pay her other expenses, she taught dance at night.



After school, she took a job as fashion designer with local department store, Famous-Barr, & was soon promoted to head artist, & then advertising director. Taking a job as art director for a Los Angeles store, she grew homesick, & moved back to St Louis, where her career changed, as she went to work for an industrial arts firm. Designing nightgowns & women's hats for the department stores, she now found herself designing restaurants & train interiors. But she really gained notoriety after designing six buildings for the Chicago World's Fair in 1933.

As she submitted illustrations for an ad campaign for the Streckfus Lines, she



overheard Captain Joe Streckfus talking about his ideas for a new steamer, unlike anything else seen on the river. Taking it upon herself, she went home & drew some sketches she thought the Captain might like. When she submitted the drawings, she was met with condescending smiles, but this would change as they were studied

in depth. And in 1936, Streckfus contacted her to draw up plans. Mazie wasn't merely the decorator, she was the creator; from the top deck to the hull, & everything in between.

In another sign of her creativity, as the exterior of the Admiral was being built, she drew a syndicated comic strip named "Cindy", but gave it up after two years, because she felt it was taking too much of her time.

After the Admiral was turned into a floating casino in 1987, Mazie was invited back, & once again, broke a bottle of champagne on the hull, to christen the new endeavor. Seeing it for the first time in nearly 50 years, she wasn't pleased with the changes, but recognized that it reflected current styles, and was happy that at least it wasn't being scrapped. I'm glad she wasn't around to see what happened to it.



A STREETCAR IN NEED - February 20, 1909 The wife of a Clayton constable took matters into her own hands when accosted by a “masher” in downtown St. Louis, Mrs. John Bode said the man followed her and called her “honey” and “sweetheart.” She struck him in the face with both hands. The Globe reported that the cad made his escape on a swift moving Olive Streetcar before onlookers could give chase.