

BOOK REVIEW

by Tom Vaughan

“Mining Town Trolleys: A History of Arizona’s Warren-Bisbee Railway” by Richard V. Francaviglia. Fifty pages, two maps, 28 photographs, bibliography. Published by Copper Queen Publishing Company, Box 48, Bisbee, Arizona 85603. Available at \$6.50 from the publisher and from the Bisbee Mining & Historical Museum, Box 451, Bisbee, AZ 85603.

This slender book is comprehensive and exciting; its fold-out pages are unique.

Francaviglia makes use of old timers’ reminiscences, accounts of local newspapers and mining company records, maps and rare photographs, as he traces “the rise and fall of this traction line, its impact on the settlement of the Warren District, and the vestiges which still can be seen today in the district’s remarkable landscape.”

The idea of a streetcar line in Bisbee was not accepted at first. He writes, “As early as 1902 a request was made to the city council for a franchise to construct and operate a streetcar line, but...it was promptly denied as being totally absurd. The sheer engineering problems alone were too great” (Munson p1).

The Calumet and Arizona Mining Company finally got the franchise and “On March 12, 1908 between 2:30 and 4:00 all work stopped, business closed and children were marched from school so all could attend the festivities at the arrival of the first streetcar in front of the railroad depot in Old Bisbee.”

Francaviglia follows the construction of the line from Warren up to Old Bisbee and later to the old country club and eventually further up Tombstone Canyon. As the book continues, we read about the rise in popularity (2.5 million passengers in 1916) and its eventual demise in 1928.

There are first-hand accounts from people like R.R. Foster, who witnessed a runaway work car while the line was under construction. Former Bisbee resident and writer Jack McDonald gives an amusing account of the Halloween prank of greasing the rails “which usually brought the big green cars to an unscheduled and embarrassing stop on the uphill sections of the track.”

Francaviglia takes particular pains to give correct and detailed information regarding the color and dimensions of the trolleys, horsepower of the motors and source of power. Even the weight of the rails is given.

The mountainous terrain of Bisbee was not overlooked as Francaviglia states "...the Warren-Bisbee Railway was one of the most sinuous and steepest interurban lines in the United States."

Blended into this text are rare photographs gathered from collections throughout the state, both private and public. One extra feature of this book is fold-out pages of two panoramas, one of Upper Lowell in 1914 (a community now obliterated by the mining of the Lavender and Sacramento pits), and one of Warren as it appeared in 1908.

Two Bisbee artists, Tom Jester and Judy Perry have their work reproduced in full color by the Copper Queen Publishers (Publisher of the Brewery Gulch Gazette and Pay Dirt Mining Journal). Jester's lively watercolor of a Bisbee trolley illustrates the front cover, the back an acrylic painting of Warren by Judy Perry.

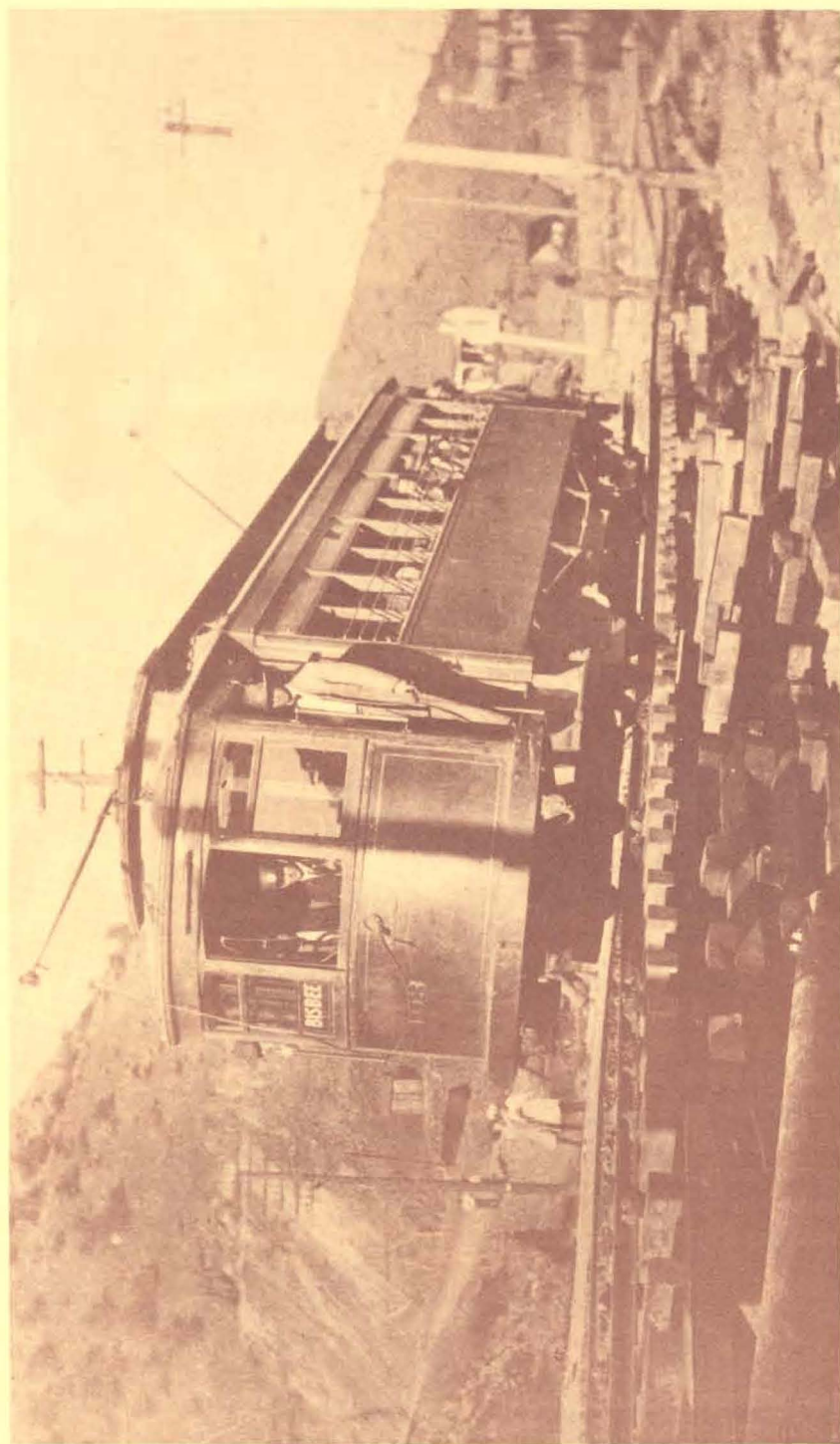
Francaviglia holds a doctorate in geography and architectural history from the University of Oregon. Until July 20, 1984, he was Director of the Bisbee Mining and Historical Museum in Bisbee. He is now Assistant Division Chief of the Ohio Historical Preservation Office in Columbus, Ohio.

He is author of "The Mormon Landscape" (1978) and co-editor of "The Railroad Station Planbook" (1976). He also has written numerous articles for professional history, landscape architecture, and geography journals and for the popular model railroad press. His article "The Upper San Pedro Valley" was carried in **The Cochise Quarterly** (Vol. 14, No. 2, Summer 1984). He is now researching the history of the Douglas Trolley, which he plans to have published in book form.

(This review first appeared in the Bisbee Daily Review and is reproduced with the permission of the author, Tom Vaughan, Box 832, AZ 85603.)

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Warren-Bisbee Railway



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