

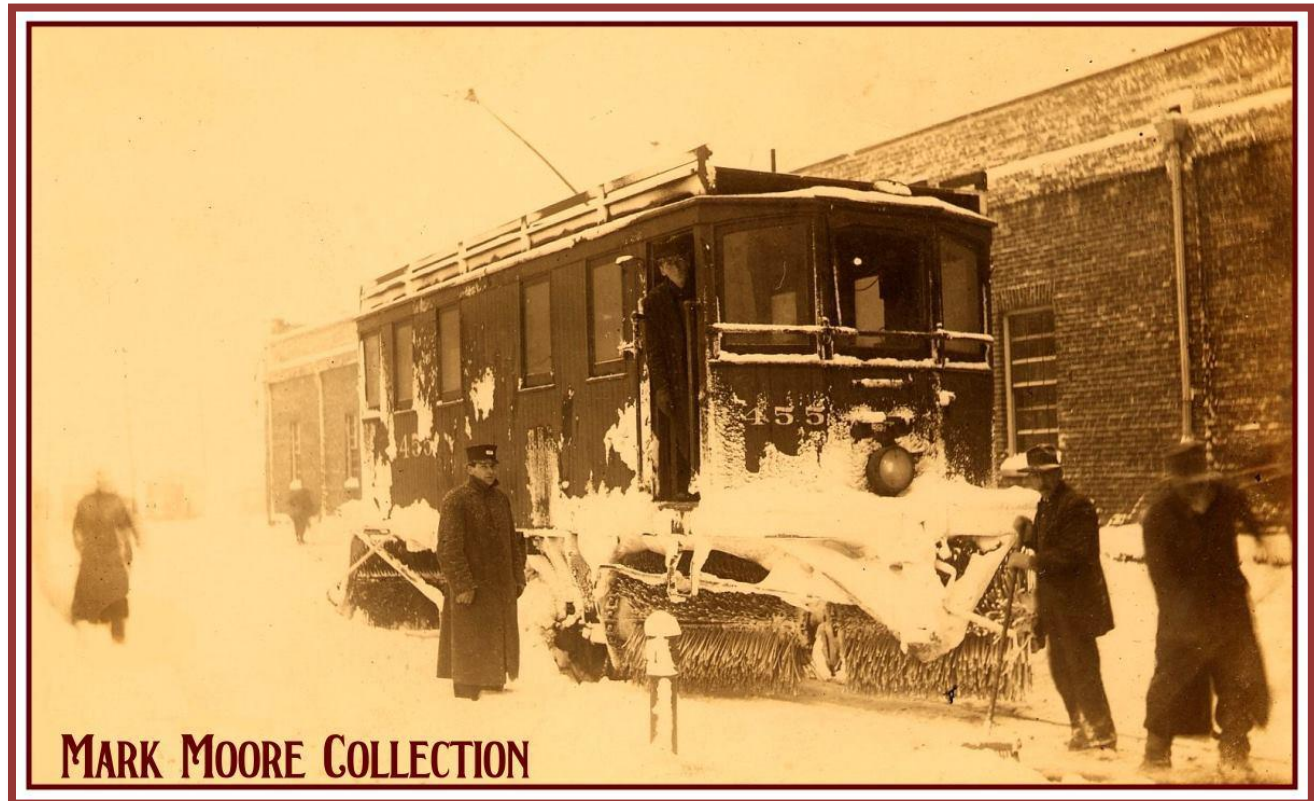


WEBFOOTER EXTRA

FEBRUARY 2024

WE LIKE NOT THE SILVER THAW

BY DONALD R. NELSON



MARK MOORE COLLECTION

Real photo postcard of Sweeper Car 1455 by the Sellwood Carbarn circa 1916. The car was built in 1899 by McGuire Co. in Chicago and it was originally numbered No. 102 for Portland and Suburban Railway.

Years ago, the sight of ice encrusted branches during snowy and frigid weather in Portland was considered a sight to behold. Referred to as a Silver Thaw, which in part was freezing rain that turned to ice on branches and on roads as well. Many photo post cards by professional photographers were sold depicting the spectacular, to many, beauty.

The Portland Daily News newspaper set a less than artistic and poetic tone to the Silver Thaw. Fred Boalt wrote on February 2, 1916 and delivered derisive words pertaining to poets proclaiming the beauty of a Silver Thaw with a disclaimer to the truth of the matter. "For us we like not the Silver Thaw. We do not call it beautiful. Nor does the working (class) girl we saw trudging work-ward. Her shoes were thin. Her clothing, decent but none too warm was sheathed in ice. Her lips were blue. She staggered as she went."

He went on to complaining of the disruption of streetcar service because of ice and the slushy conditions of the streets as temperatures rose melting the snow and ice on the street. The city's work force was lessened because of the weather. Children played indoors happily because there was no school.

As evidenced by the recent cold weather in 2024, injury, death, and destruction happened as trees fell into houses because of snow and ice. Power was also lost. A not so pretty event.



MARK MOORE COLLECTION

Real photo postcard dated January 27, 1907 on North Williams Avenue in Portland.

This grisly scene on North Williams Avenue outside a store was offered for sale as both a lithographed and real photo postcard. Frozen powerlines snapped and fell upon the horses of a milk wagon, taking their lives. A stranded streetcar is behind.



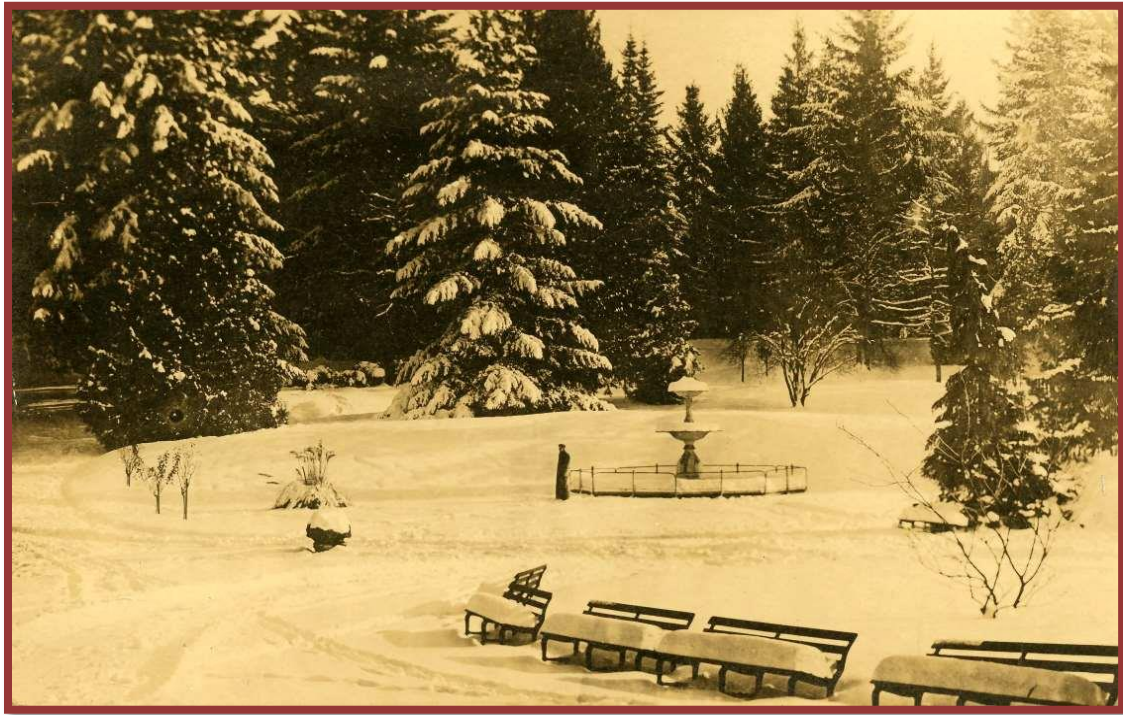
"SILVER THAW"

Residence Street, January 28th, 1907

Lithographed postcard by Publicity Press which shows the silver thaw on a residence street and it is dated January 28, 1907. The winter storm in late January of 1907 brought beauty and wreaked havoc in many situations. Bystanders congregate on the street. Don Nelson collection.



Photo of the home of scientific chiropodist (podiatrist) Dr. William DeVeney, on NE 80th near Glisan Street with tree branches encrusted with thick ice in 1907. Don Nelson collection.



Real photo postcard showing Portland's Washington Park which had much snow during the 1916 Silver Thaw. In the background was the fountain, originally called Cupid's Fountain because of the figure on top. In the late 1920s or early 1930s, water to the fountain was not turned off during cold weather. The ice that formed destroyed the cupid. Today, the fountain, minus the figure, is known as Chiming Fountain because of the sound made when water falls upon the lower basin. Don Nelson collection.



Real photo postcard showing a couple in a one-horse sleigh traveling south on SW 12th Avenue. Don Nelson collection.

The tower in the left background of SW 12th Avenue in the photo on the previous page is that of an apartment house which originally was St. Helen's Hall, an episcopal girl's school. It sat at the site of Portland's City Hall and was moved in the early 1890s where it was used as the Portland Ensor Institute, which offered a cure for drunkenness and the morphine habit. Temple Beth Israel Synagogue is in the right background.

Power poles were frequently toppled from the weight of the ice on the power lines. Although the possibility of injury could happen, there was some fun available during frigid weather and Silver Thaws. In 1930, young and old enjoyed ice skating on the frozen Firwood Lake at Laurelhurst Park.



Real photo postcard showing ice skaters at Laurelhurst Park, ca 1930. Don Nelson collection.



Photo of the silver thaw in 1916 showing an auto with chains and toppled power poles. The automobile has chains on the back tires for traction on the icy street. Don Nelson collection.



Real photo postcard showing a silver thaw on an unidentified Portland street, circa 1916. Mark Moore collection.

Sources:

- *The Oregonian*
- *The Daily News*



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