

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

Two weeks ago, I voiced my concern about the City changing the traffic lanes on H and I Street in Eureka. That brought back memories of the conditions of Eureka city streets in the 1930s. No! I am not saying go back to the way things were, just personal memories. Many of the streets were still not paved including Albee Street where I grew up. Street maintenance included a road grader smoothing out the gravel at least once a year with a coat of oil sprayed to keep down the dust and occasional filling of pot holes as needed. Cars did not necessarily speed on the graveled streets in respect to the autos parked at the curb as flying gravel was always a problem, even at low speeds. Winter brought the rains with water draining off the streets into the gutters. All the dirt and rocks were put to work by us kids to build dams of all sorts to make a nice lake for toy boats or floating just plain old wooden sticks. In the summer time all those rocks provided good ammunition for rock fights when an unwanted group of kids invaded our space. Throwing rocks at the 'enemy' took a little skill. You had to take aim to hit the kid and not the parked cars or break someones windows. Our alley was also city owned and maintained. Again the road grader was used and a ditch on the each side of the alley was freshly dugout each spring by city maintenance workers armed with pick and shovel. Those residents served by the alleys had the responsibility of maintaining access to their garages either by providing some type of culvert or a wooden ramp or bridge so the water could flow freely in the ditches. I remember the access to our garage was four by fours covered with planks. With the automobile beyond the reach of many a family the local street car system provided needed transportation with a well laid out route. The street car line, running the length of Broadway, was not in the center of the street but was located on the west shoulder parallel with the street. Back in the early 1900s, ridership on the street cars was heavy but as autos increased in number a decline was seen. One of the popular destinations was Sequoia Park. Sundays were busy A family outing back then was a ride on the street car to the Park accompanied by a picnic in the Redwoods, an all day adventure. The month of July was always exciting what with the teenagers laying fireworks on the steel rails with the loud explosions following as the wheels came in contact. The firework used was called "sidewalk torpedoes" and blew up when thrown against a sidewalk or other hard object. These nuisances, coupled with the kids hitching an illegal ride on the outside of the street car, kept the motorman and conductor on their toes.

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