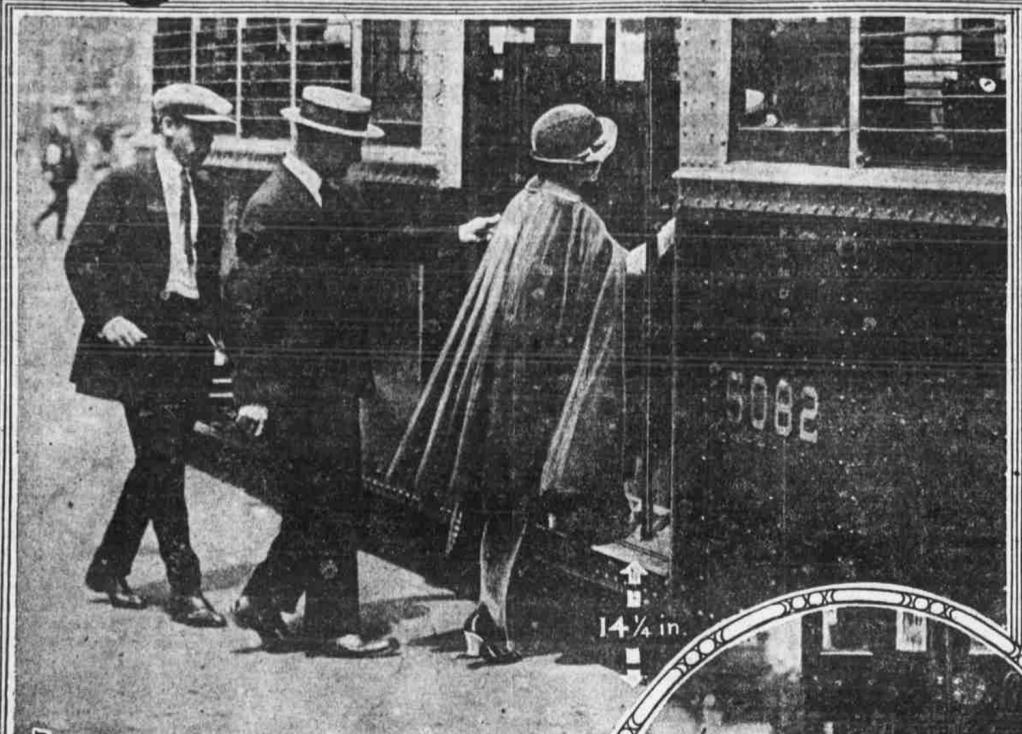


What is the "Safe and Modest" Height for a Trolley Step



Women favor the 14 1/4 inch "hobble skirt car" step —



Its one 20 inch stretch to the running board of an "open" trolley car and another to reach the seat platform —

Open Car Running Boards, 20 Inches From Ground, Stir Women to Protest-- Even Lowest, in 'Hobble Skirt' Cars, Twice Height of Stair Steps in Homes

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EVEN to the most casual observer—and, without doubt, there are many who are not merely casual in a matter of this kind—it is apparent many times every day that the designers of steps for the street cars and buses which ply New York's streets failed completely to take two things into account—the skirts of women and the demands of modesty. The steps, as at present constructed, are pretty rough on both.

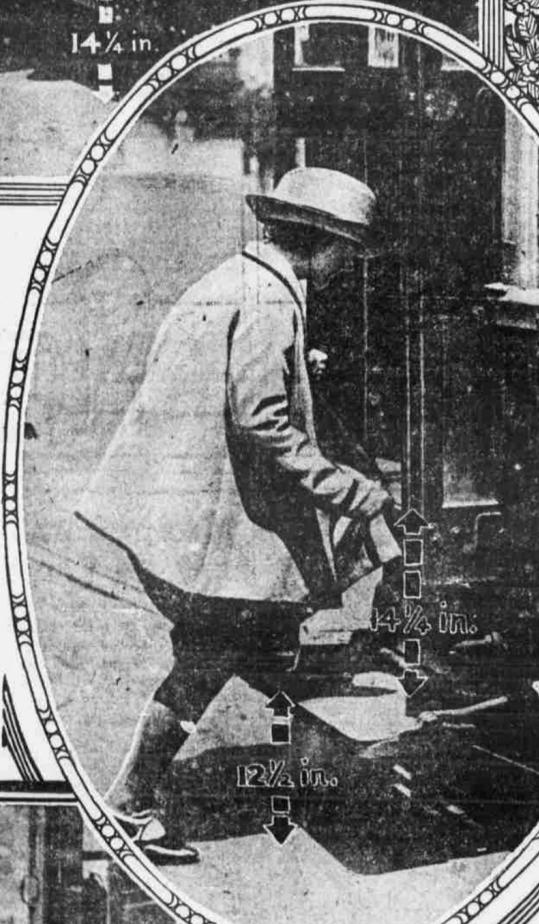
Of course the designers or the subsequent operators of the cars may say that they had no idea women were going to wear any such short and skimpy skirts as now adorn them. But the answer to that is that the steps are held to be undesirable from a hygienic standpoint as well. There's no doubt that persons who are infirm, who are crippled in any way, find it extremely difficult to negotiate the steps. For some, doubtless, the street cars are utterly impossible. They could no more get into them than they could leap over the moon.

There is another way than that of looking at women getting into or alighting from these public vehicles to realize the task that confronts them when they do so. That is by comparing what they have to do with what confronts one in essaying the ordinary staircase. In the average house the height of a step is rarely more than seven and a half inches.

Now, look at the height of car steps and don't wonder at the photographs on this page. Don't be amazed—because, from familiarity, you're probably not—at the evident gymnastic performance some women have to do to get aboard or off of cars. Just compare the figures, remembering the aforesaid seven and a half inches of rise to ordinary steps.

First, as to the so-called "hobble-skirt" car. This is the one with the

side doors and the step, which is flush with the side of the vehicle, obviously low. This step is, on an average, fourteen and a quarter inches from the street level. This means that to make it the passenger must do what

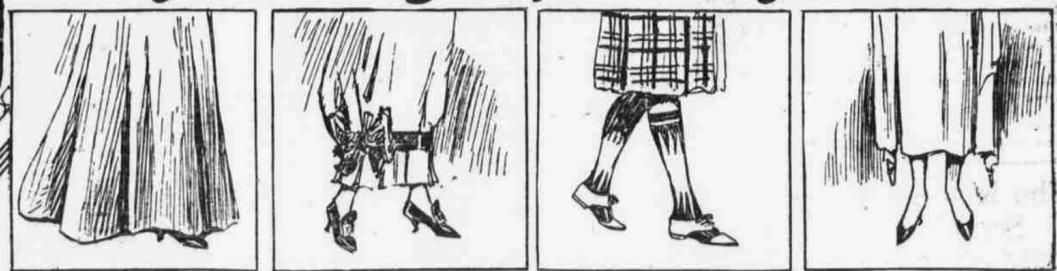


This type of car divides 27 inches into 2 steps, the highest 14 1/4 inches —



New York "Buses" compromise with a 15 1/4 inch step —

Must Styles in Trolley Steps Follow Styles in Skirts?



Twenty years ago trolley car running boards held none but physical terrors for the modest woman whose skirt touched the ground and was three yards wide.

The hobble skirt, which immediately preceded the "hobble-skirt car," was from 45 to 54 inches wide and came within 4 or 5 inches of the ground.

The "flapper" of to-day wears a skirt that is from 60 to 70 inches wide and ends from 14 to 15 inches above the ground—sometimes at the knee.

The newer skirt now coming into vogue among the more conservative women is from 60 inches to 3 yards wide, ending 6 inches above the ground.

is equal to taking ordinary steps two at a time.

Next comes the kind known as the rear-entrance-front-exit car. This type is equipped with two steps, and careful measurement of them has shown that the step from the street to the first step is up twelve and a half inches, the second, up fourteen and a quarter inches. Both these steps are many inches higher than the house step.

The third type is the one almost universal at this time of year—the open car with the running board. These provide the most severe test of all to temper and agility. That they make modesty a practical impossibility is just another count against them. From the street to the level of the running board the distance ranges from nineteen and one-half to twenty and three-eighths inches! The distance thence to the floor of the car is almost as great. In other words, a person going up

stairs three steps at a time is called upon for little more exertion than in negotiating the running board of these summer cars.

In the case of the other form of public vehicle, the bus, the measurement proved that the step of the old style bus is fifteen inches from the street and the new style fifteen and three-quarters.

If the reader has borne in mind the seven and one-half inch step, the comparison will probably prove startling. It will explain much that he sees every day in the streets and perhaps cause him a little sympathy for the women who have to ride in cars and buses.

As for the car step in its hygienic aspect, there is little enough to be said. When it demands of a woman that she alight in safety from such a height it is asking even more than it does when she boards the car. To step down is next to impossible; a

Jump to the street is nearly always necessary.

Dr. Frank J. Monaghan, at present Acting Commissioner of Health, said to-day:

"The steps of cars in this city, save those of the so-called gondola cars, (referred to in this article as "hobble-skirt" cars) are all too high. We have received numerous protests against them, both from women and physicians and the welfare of the people demands lower steps. There was, perhaps, more danger to women in the days when they wore hobble-skirts, because these restricted their movements very much. But even now there is danger to women in getting on or off the cars.

"It has been suggested by the car companies that if the step were lowered it would make the second step higher, and if a third step were added it would extend too far beyond the car. That may be all true enough, but the fact remains that it would be

better physically for every one if the steps could be made lower and easier of mounting."

However, the women of Brooklyn are up in arms now against the steps of the cars in their borough. They've taken the fight to the Transit Commission and are apparently determined to see the matter through. The commission gave a hearing recently to a delegation of the League of Women Voters of the 4th Assembly of Brooklyn, headed by Mrs. Elizabeth Alexander. She, without any hesitation whatever, described the running boards of the Brooklyn trolley cars as altogether too high and as "indecent, hazardous and annoying." A resolution adopted by the women voters and presented to the commission added to the description the characterization "injurious to the life, health and limb of women and children."

The women were told by Secretary James B. Walker of the commission, trolley step?"

that the latter had made repeated efforts to get rid of the running-board cars, adding that, unfortunately, many of the companies owned large numbers of them in fairly serviceable condition and it wasn't quite just to ask the companies to scrap them and get new one.

Counsel to one of the companies declared that it would be impossible to lower the steps, and that an attempt to mix in cars of the hobble-skirt type would cut down seating, as the open cars have more seats than the closed ones.

"It's a question of whether you want seats or low running boards," he said.

"We want both," Mrs. Alexander promptly replied.

So the women are in the battle now and if they persist they will probably provide an answer to the as yet unanswered question: "What is the safe and modest height for a trolley step?"