

## MO: Gaslight Square and braking sand: He was in the driver's seat of one of the last streetcars in St. Louis

Kenneth Pitts remembers the day in May 1966 when the city's last streetcar line shut down. He was there, in the driver's seat of one of the last streetcars to traverse the Hodiament line.

Jun. 6—SPANISH LAKE — Kenneth Pitts remembers the day in May 1966 when the city's last streetcar line shut down. He was there, in the driver's seat of one of the last streetcars to traverse the Hodiament line.

"There was no hoopla," Pitts said. "I think most of the hoopla took place in the morning, when the streetcars were going out. And I was not part of that. During the day, I don't remember anybody getting that excited about it or whatever, but that's the way it was."

Pitts, 81, is one of the last living streetcar operators in a city that depended on them for a century.

He had the 2:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. shift on the Hodiament line, the only streetcar line left operating before Bi-State Transit Authority (now Metro) ended the service on May 21, 1966. It was a job he had only for about two years, just as the St. Louis streetcar era was nearing a close. He's had lots of jobs since then — school bus driver, wholesale liquor salesman, security supervisor at the Hazelwood School District — but the streetcar gig is one he remembers fondly.

"The biggest mistake they made was not leaving a streetcar line on," he said from his kitchen in Spanish Lake Friday. "At least one."

Pitts unearthed his old scrapbook after a story in the *Post-Dispatch* about plans to rehabilitate the historic Wellston Station, a waiting station in the then-thriving Wellston Loop that is now one of the last remaining pieces of St. Louis's old streetcar architecture.