



A secret meeting took place near at Herrington Lake, near Lexington Kentucky in 1938. The only reason the get-together came to light was a fire at Norman Smith's cottage there.

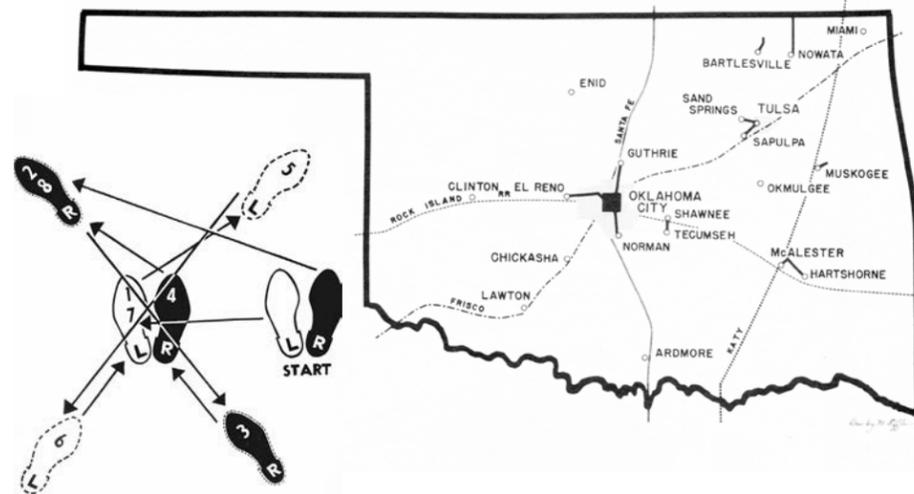
Smith was precisely the kind of guy General Motors liked to recruit for its tram-vaporizing campaign: a succesful, small-scale entrepreneur who could make it look like there was no big corporate hand guiding the destruction.

Scheming with Normie was Roy Fitzgerald, down from Chicago. Roy and his four brothers had spent the previous two years ripping out eletric railway systems all over the US. Sure enough, Lexington's trams were gone later that year.

Vaporizing Louisville's streetcar tracks took a bit longer, held up by World War Two, but the fix was in: the last streetcars ran on May 1, 1948, carrying crowds to the Kentucky Derby.

Many Louisville residents were unhappy with GM buses. City councilor Stanley Beckhart said: "A number of aldermen feel that streetcars are more suitable for Fourth St. for several reasons. They can handle more passengers, and they leave no fumes to cling between the taller downtown buildings to gag pedestrians". He also said he got a number of calls from South End residents saying they wanted to keep trams. General Motors had foisted its unpopular buses on yet another city.

Right, GM flunky Norman Smith. Below, the death watch is on for this Louisville Railway tram in 1948.



Tulsa Tram-Trashin' Two-Step

General Motors was booted out of Portland OR in 1935, largely because it expected somebody else to pay the substantial cost of tearing up streetcar tracks. Then, however, it made a fabulous discovery: corporate welfare! Franklin Roosevelt's job creation agency, the Works Progress Administration, would do it for nothing! What a deal! Throw in "free" ways and "free" parking and things were looking peachy.

Right, a photo from a sequence showing the removal of tram tracks in Tulsa in 1936 (*American City*). Below, GM didn't get its paws on Tulsa's independent Sand Springs Railway, which survived till '52.



Standing Up

Melbourne is consistently rated the most livable city in the world, and this 1980s pic gives an idea of why. Would you rather live there or in Detroit or Gary, Indiana?

The down-under burg is how it is largely because of the integrity of engineer Sir Robert Risson. Risson thought that all the self-serving drivell of the auto and oil industries made no sense. The Aussie metropolis kept its gigantic tram network.



Robert Risson, in Australian army uniform.



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By Louis Guillbault, April 2017