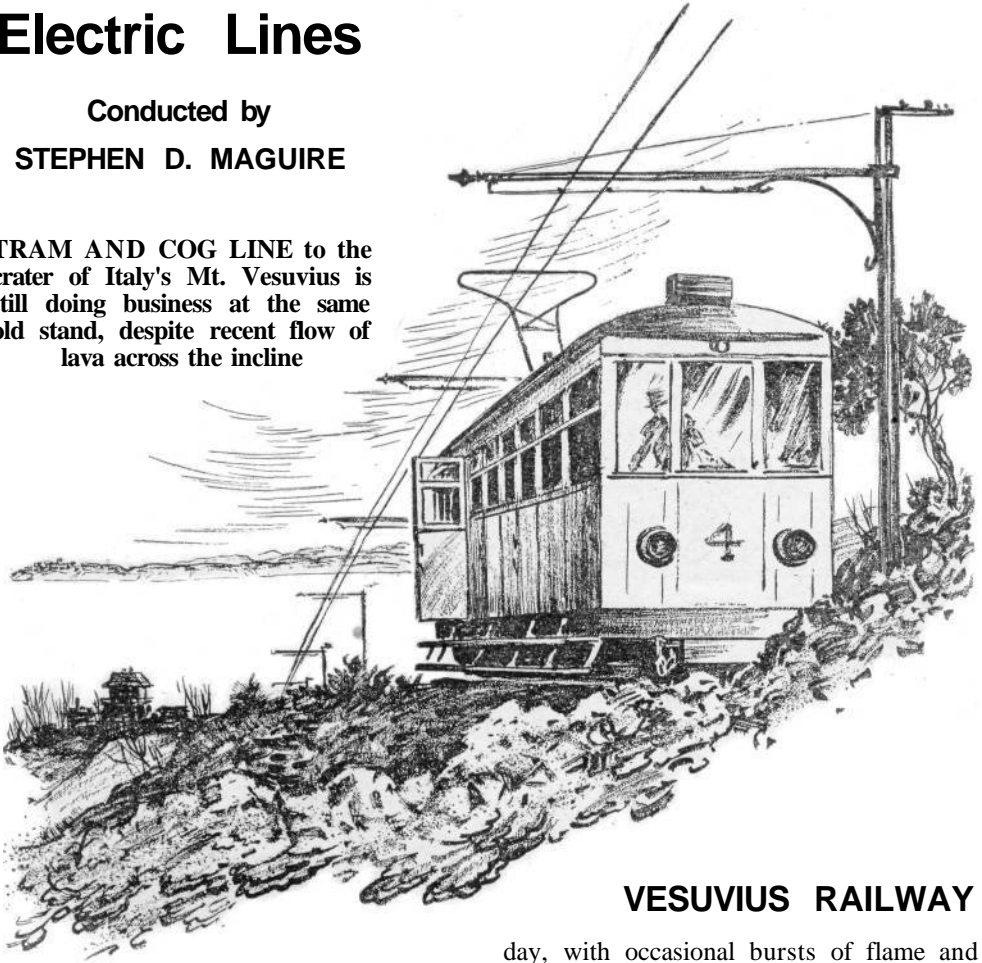


Electric Lines

Conducted by
STEPHEN D. MAGUIRE

TRAM AND COG LINE to the crater of Italy's Mt. Vesuvius is still doing business at the same old stand, despite recent flow of lava across the incline



VESUVIUS RAILWAY

ONE of the peacetime thrills of a tour around Naples was—and will be—riding the tramway and cog line to the top of Mt. Vesuvius. Scenically, the trip is beautiful beyond description, giving you a grand view of the famous old city and its environs, including the Bay of Naples, far below. Historically, it takes you back to the year 69 A.D., when Mt. Vesuvius; as an active volcano, suddenly buried the prosperous Roman cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum.

This volcano has been reasonably well behaved for nearly all the time since that most terrible of all its eruptions, but has never ceased to be a potential menace. Noxious gases emanate from it night and

day, with occasional bursts of flame and deadly flows of lava from inside the belly of the earth. No man can say when the slumbering giant will re-awaken or what terror will result when he does.

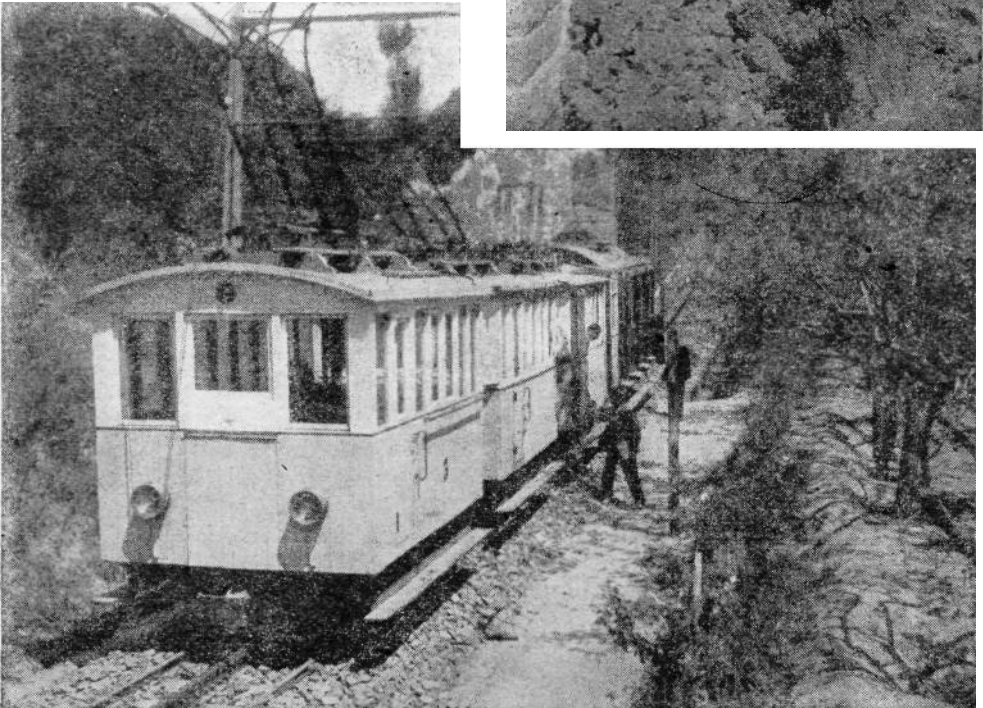
Today, many GIs in the American occupation forces take this ride up to the crater, for, despite a recent destructive eruption on a relatively small scale, most of the tramway is still intact and giving service. The facts and photos embodied in this article come from an old friend of the *Electric Lines* department, Sgt. Roger Borrup, 12th Weather Sqn., A.P.O. 650, New York City. The sergeant took such an excursion himself and gives us his impressions.

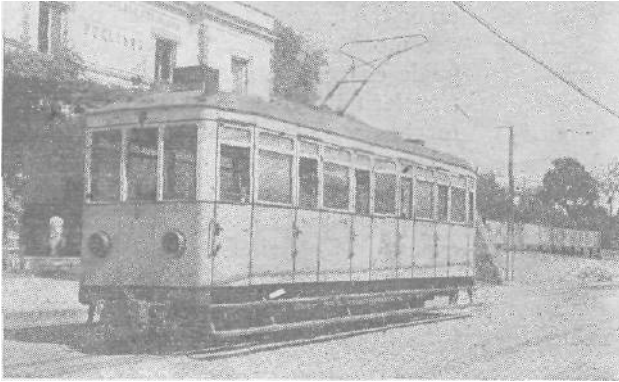
The tramway and cog line, technically known as the Ferrovie & Funicolare et Vesuviana, starts in the town of Pugli-

ano, a fifteen-minute electric train ride from Naples. Cars are painted light blue and are single-truck with carriage-type seating—that is, there is a door opposite each seat, which runs the full width of the car. The arrangement is almost like the usual open-trolley seating but in a closed car.

Out of the station but fifty feet, the car begins to climb, the entire trip being up a continuous grade for approximately five miles. The tramcar climbs to within a thousand feet of the tip of Mt. Vesuvius, whose summit rises 3500 feet above sea level. Steep though the grades are, the car is equipped with only hand and electric traction brakes. Effectiveness of the hand brakes was demonstrated when, during Borrup's trip, the bow-type current collector stuck down and the car, which had started to roll backward, was immediately controlled.

The latest eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, took place during the battle for Naples. It played havoc with the line, for lava crossed the tramway portion in two places, de-





COG PUSHERS 3, 1 and 2, pictured at bottom of page 62, get ready to boost tram 4 up the steepest part of the Vesuvius grade

FERROVIE & FUNICOLARE et VESUVIANA car-house (top of page 62) stopped flow of lava

AT LEFT: Starting point of 65 lire excursion is Pugliano. Cars have transverse seats, with independent doors

stroying the incline line (funicular) that went right up to the crater.

After several minutes of uphill riding, the car climbs up to a spot where the track disappears into a fifty-foot bank of material that looks like ashes and giant clinkers from a steam locomotive. This is the first lava flow to be reached by the car. Passengers have to alight and walk around the edge of the flow.

A two-story car house and power station stand at this point. The flow piled up right against the building and apparently stopped there. All cars except Number 2 were run out of the car-house before the flow reached it. The two-spot was left above it in order to be able to carry on operation up from there. Several pieces of equipment are still blocked on the second floor of this building but are not damaged.

After walking past the car-barn a distance of about five hundred feet, you emerge from the ash and find a second tramcar standing there with, three cog pusher-cars at its rear. These are four-wheel box affairs powered by cog wheel geared to a cog track laid between the rails. They shove the car up the 25-degree grade which extends from the damaged car-house to the Mt. Vesuvius Observatory.

As the train starts off on this second lap of the journey, with cog pushers grinding behind, the view below becomes magnificent. Not too far to the northwest you can see the black lava stream and the

space that once was San Sebastian, a village now lying below the lava bed. Gradually climbing, the Bay of Naples and then the entire old city and its suburbs swim into view.

Above the observatory the grade eases, off. Cog cars are cut off the rear of your tramcar, which then proceeds ahead a couple of thousand feet until a second lava flow crosses the tracks. Here is where rail travel terminates. To reach the top of the crater your journey must be completed on foot.

Walking over this second lava barrier and on up the open tracks, it is only a few hundred feet to where a third flow covers the rails again. The several hundred more feet beyond here lead to the funicular station, now a total wreck. Broken walls jut out from the ashes and pumice, while a couple of rails dangle up above on the mountain slope where the incline line used to run right up to the mountain summit. Nothing salvagable remains of the funicular.

The top of Vesuvius and its yawning crater, perhaps five hundred feet deep, looks like something from another world. It is reached now only by foot along a difficult path a mile and a half long through large lava clinkers and pumice. Each step of the path is a foot above the other, and your feet sink into the coarse sand six inches on each step.

The funicular ride straight up to the top, was only a thousand feet in length on slopes that varied from 45 to 60 de-

grees. It had been destroyed before in the famous eruption of 1906, and was rebuilt in 1909. Perhaps, if and when the volcano shows signs of being dormant for another extended period, it will be rebuilt again. Revenues on the tramway portion of the line have been threatened because the line no longer makes a direct connection with the rim of the crater, and the foot walk in place of the incline is most difficult to negotiate.

The tram fare is 65 *lire* for the round trip from Pugliano. It used to include the

through ride to the funicular station and up on the funicular itself. Now passengers get more walking for their money. A guide charges 100 *lire* to accompany the traveler to the top. And the tram conductor has a side line of pictures, trinkets, other; souvenirs, and Vesuvius wine to sell on the ride.

Originally promoted by the travel agency of Thomas Cook & Sons, the trip was one of their feature *Cook's Tours* for visitor's to Naples. Now it is an attraction for Uncle Sam's khaki-clad nephews.