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May 8, 2016 7:00 PM

Highly Recommended: "Streetcar Advertising in America"

Barron Collier may be the most famous Memphian you've never heard about.

by Vance Lauderdale

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If the answer to that is also YES (and really, that's the only correct answer), then I can proceed to recommend another book for your history bookshelves. (I had to make sure you'd bought my own books first, you understand).

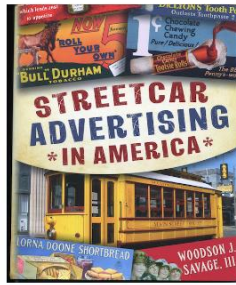
(If you answered NO, then I suggest you go [here right now](#), and then we can get on with things here.)

My pal Woody Savage has put together a remarkable volume called *Streetcar Advertising in America*. Some of this may be before your time, but in Ye Olden Days, people rode streetcars everywhere, and somebody figured out that not only did this mode of transportation provide a captive (and bored) audience for advertisers, but the streetcars themselves offered plenty of blank advertising space — right above the windows, inside.

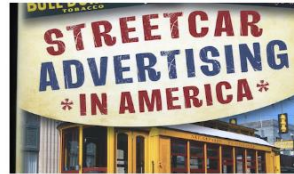
And the person who hit upon this brilliant idea was a Memphian named **Barron Collier** (1873-1939), who is not only considered the inventor of ads for streetcars, but he is in fact regarded as one of the fathers of American advertising, building such a successful firm that he moved to Florida and became the largest landowner in the entire state. At one time, he owned more than *one million acres* of land in southern Florida. Yes, you read that right — one million acres.

Now, I could tell you more about him, but that would defeat my purpose here. You need to buy Woody's book, which tells the remarkable story of Barron Collier, talks about the history of streetcar advertising, and also contains pages and pages of eye-catching examples of the best advertising of the day. The cover alone (shown here) just gives you a hint of the colorful treasures on display inside.

You can order a copy from the [nice website](#) Woody has created, which also contains a slide show of the best ads from the book, and a handy order form. It's a fine book, and you'll enjoy it.



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Vance Lauderdale

Ask Vance is the blog of Vance Lauderdale, the award-winning columnist of *Memphis* magazine and *Inside Memphis Business*. Vance is the author of three books: *Ask Vance: The Best Questions and Answers from Memphis Magazine's History and Trivia Expert* (2002), as well as *Ask Vance: More Questions and Answers from Memphis Magazine's History Expert* (2011) and *Vance Lauderdale's Lost Memphis* (2013). He is also the recipient of quite a few nice awards, the creator of several eye-catching wall calendars, and the only person we know with a vintage shock-treatment machine in his den.

Questions for Vance? [Email him here.](#)

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