

Historical Context

Since its beginning in 1864 as a rough wagon road used for hauling local produce to market, Broadway has served as one of the primary conduits bringing all manner of commercial and recreational traffic to and from the neighborhoods of south-central and downtown Denver. At the turn of the century, development of the railroads and improvements to Broadway supported a thriving industrial district in the area, including the Ford Motor Company and the Gates Rubber Company, and neighborhoods near South Broadway from Kentucky Avenue to Arizona Avenue, and from the South Platte River to Logan Street.

As Denver grew from a frontier town to a modern, vibrant, capitol city, Broadway continued to carry the burden for north-south traffic into the City, a trend that continues today. Throughout its history, Broadway has always been a corridor of many transportation modes.

DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTH DENVER

The neighborhood surrounding this project area developed from the 1890s until the 1940s when this area was essentially built out. The blocks in this part of the city follow the typical grid pattern of the neighborhoods in Denver. Fleming's Broadway Addition, which includes the area east of Broadway between Florida and Iowa Avenues was adopted by Denver in Ordinance No. 3, which passed January 12, 1895. The Sherman Subdivision was east of S. Broadway and north of Florida Ave. and its survey was officially adopted by Denver in the same Ordinance No. 3. To the west of S. Broadway, was the Overland Park Subdivision which was adopted by Denver Ordinance No. 71, passed October 19, 1897. In the adjoining blocks are single family and duplex homes built on one or more lots. Most of the lots in the neighborhood around the project area were built out by the 1940s. Broadway has mainly developed as a commercial area throughout its history.

South Broadway (south of Cherry Creek) was graded and improved in 1871 by Thomas Skerritt who cultivated apple orchards in Englewood near the present day site of S. Broadway and Hampden Ave. Skerritt wanted the road improved for farmers living to the south of Denver to enable them to bring their agricultural products into Denver. Shade trees were planted along the length of Broadway from Cherry Creek to Jewell Ave. after Skerritt improved the road.

The right-of-way on Broadway is 100 ft. That right-of-way was established on August 31, 1898 by Ordinance No. 98, Series of 1898, Supervisor's Bill No. 47 "to form a thoroughfare of full and uniform width of 100 feet", hence the name Broadway.

The first business on South Broadway was a grocery supply opened by William M. Butters.¹ By 1886, South Denver was incorporated with boundaries of Alameda Avenue on the north, Colorado Boulevard on the east, Yale Ave. on the south and the South Platte River on the west. James Fleming was elected the first mayor of South Denver.² The local newspaper, *The South Denver Advocate*, had been covering stories in the area for two years by the time South Denver was incorporated. Progress came quickly to South Denver. In 1889 a new water system was built for South Denver after the town residents voted for this improvement. And the next year, 1890, the first electric lights were installed in South Denver. It was only three more short years before South Denver was annexed into the City of Denver.

EARLY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IN DENVER

The first public transportation in Denver was via horse drawn streetcars starting in December 1871 under the direction of the Denver Horse Railroad Company. The cars were pulled by

horses along two miles of track from 7th and Larimer St. to 27th and Champa St. A year later, as the system expanded, mules were being used along with the horses and the company changed its name to the Denver City Railway Company. By 1884, the system had 15.5 miles of track, 45 cars, 200 horses and mules and one hundred men employed. Unfortunately horses and mules could get tired and sick, and a more reliable mode was sought. A year later, new cable and electric cars were being developed and on February 5, 1885, the Denver Electric and Cable Company was incorporated and the Denver City Railway Company, which still was using horses and mules, changed its name to the Denver Railway Association. These two companies merged into the Denver Tramway Company on May 4, 1886.

Two years after the Denver Tramway Company was formed, the horsecars were replaced by cable cars. By 1890, Denver had a very complete and extensive cable car system, but attention was then being turned to electric operation of streetcars. The first overhead electric line was a segment on South Broadway that opened on Christmas Day, 1889. By June of 1890, some of the cable car lines on Larimer St. had been converted to electric use. The change to electrification continued throughout the 1890s and on March 3, 1899, the Denver City Tramway Company was incorporated taking over several smaller companies involved in electrifying the streetcar lines. At that time, the system had been expanded to a total of 156 miles, and by the turn of the century, the basic city transit system was complete. All of the cable cars had been replaced with the electric trolleys by 1900, making their tenure a mere 12 years, five years less than the 17 years of horsecar service.

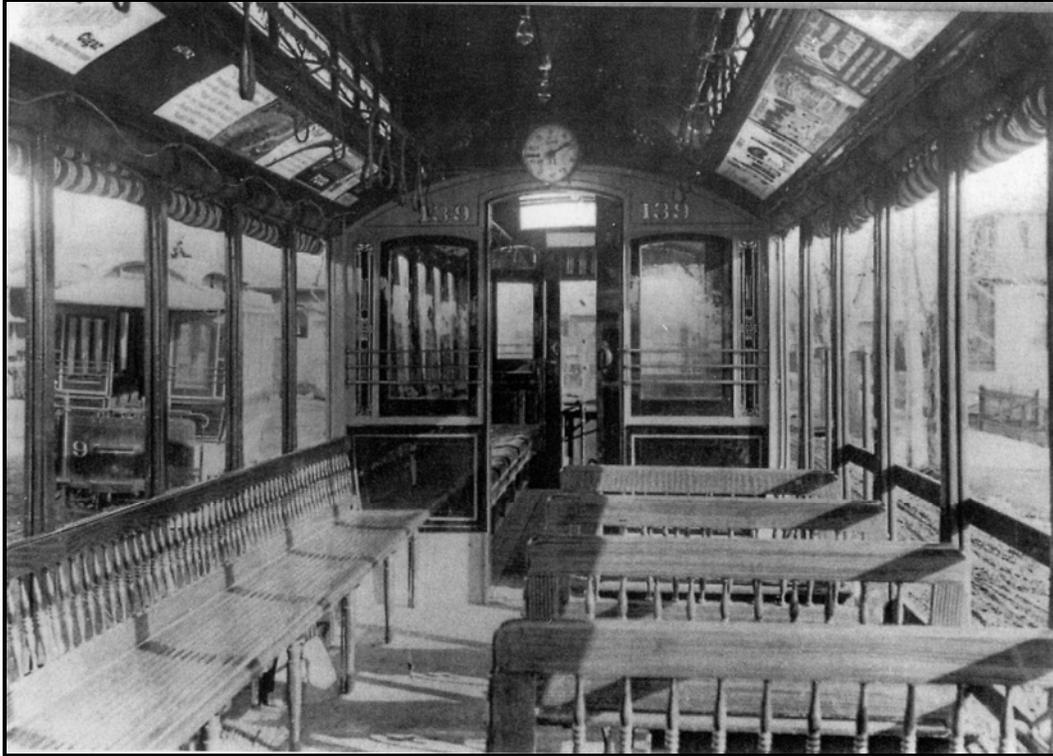
The electric trolleys enjoyed a good 40-50 years of service where they were the main mode of public transportation. People used them to get to and from work, school, picnics, ball games, shopping, movie palaces and even to funerals with the special funeral car which went to several of the larger cemeteries. The Denver Tramway system eventually had 260 miles of tracks in the city and 31 lines of service. The Interurban system connected Denver trolley passengers with points in Golden and Boulder and beyond for recreation, tourism and business pursuits.

Facilities and Rolling Stock

William G. Evans was the president of the Denver City Tramway Company from 1902 until 1913 guiding it through a time of extensive improvement to the system and the rolling stock. The power supply initially came from several small electric generating plants that were not able to meet the ever-increasing demand for power. In 1901, a huge power plant, costing a million dollars, was built on the South Platte River at 14th Street. The power plant was fueled by coal which was shipped in from the Leyden mines in Jefferson County. In 1911, an eight story brick office building was constructed at 14th and Arapahoe Streets for offices as well as a 2 story car-house for storage and servicing of the trolleys. The Tramway used this site until 1956.

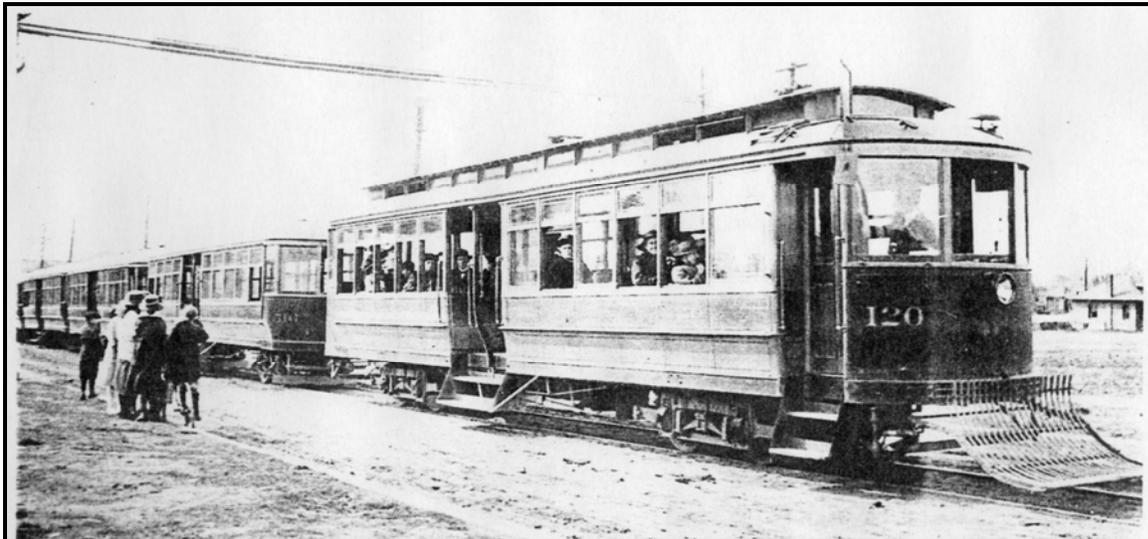
Most of the trolley cars used in the system came from Woeber Auto Body and Manufacturing Company. A few of the cars were built by the Tramway in their own shops. In 1898, Denver Tramway began providing service on 39-foot cars. There were two main types of 39-foot cars. Type 1 cars were built for single-end operation. The rear of Type 1 cars was not completely enclosed. The entrance to these cars was in the center of the right side. Type 2 trolley cars had controls at both ends and center entrances on both sides of the car.

The interior of the trolley cars had benches for passenger's comfort, window shades and a clock so passengers could keep track of whether the trolley was keeping to its schedule. There were also some specialty trolley cars. Funeral Car A was built to carry a casket plus mourners. The funeral car was pulled by the trolley and went to Fairmount, Riverside and Mt. Olivet cemeteries.

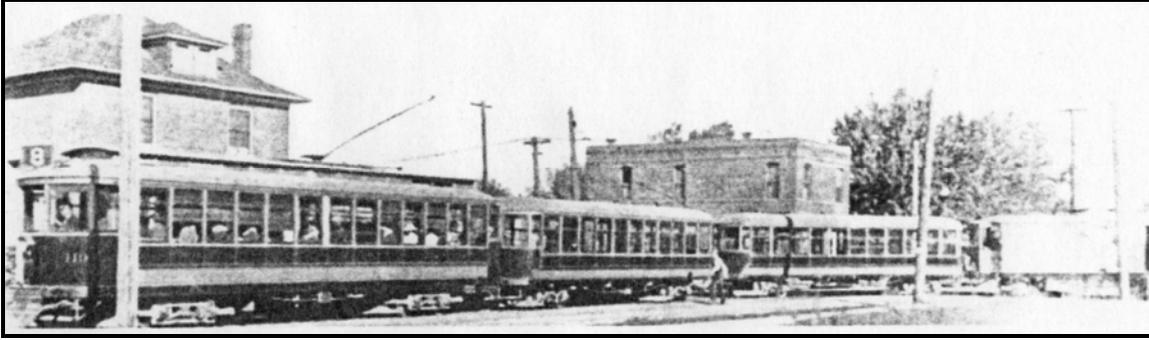


Interior of 39-foot Trolley Car, Denver Tramway Collection - Don Robertson Photo
Photo Courtesy Sundance Publications - *Denver's Street Railways Volume II*

The trolley cars were painted "Coach Painter's Red" on the main panel, and "Dark Straw", (yellow) on the lower panels giving them a distinctive and identifiable appearance. Trailers were pulled behind the trolleys in rush hour in order to carry an increased number of riders. The trailers were much lighter than the powered trolley cars.



Car No. 120 Picking up a Trailer on S. Pearl Street.
Photo from James Kinkle Collection - Colorado Railroad Museum
Photo Courtesy Sundance Publications - *Denver's Street Railways Volume II*

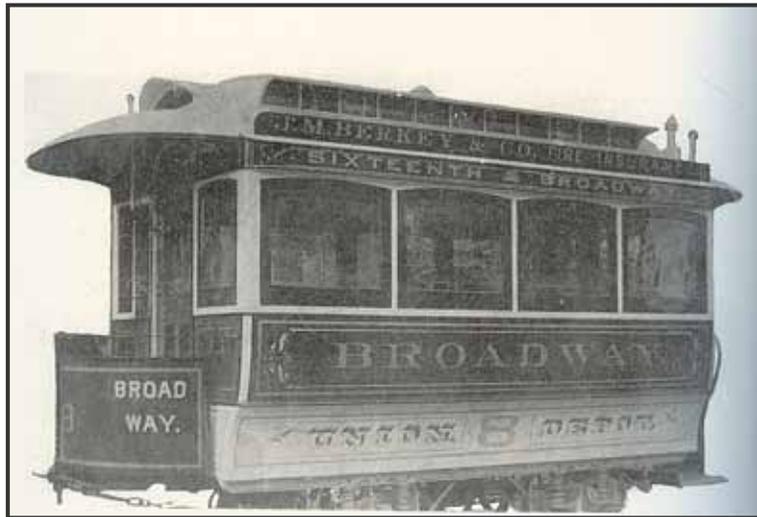


String of Trailers at Pick-up Point for Trailers
October 1917 Photo from James Kunkle Collection - Colorado Railroad Museum
Photo Courtesy Sundance Publications - *Denver's Street Railways Volume II*

The last trolley cars for this system were built in the Tramway's own shops in 1922. Few trolley cars from the system have been preserved. One passenger car from the Tramway fleet has been preserved and is on display at the Colorado Railroad Museum in Golden. Another one, Trolley Car # 54, is within the former Denver City Cable Railway's powerhouse at 18th and Lawrence St., now the Old Spaghetti Factory restaurant. Fortunate diners can eat dinner right inside the old trolley car.

South Broadway Trolley Lines

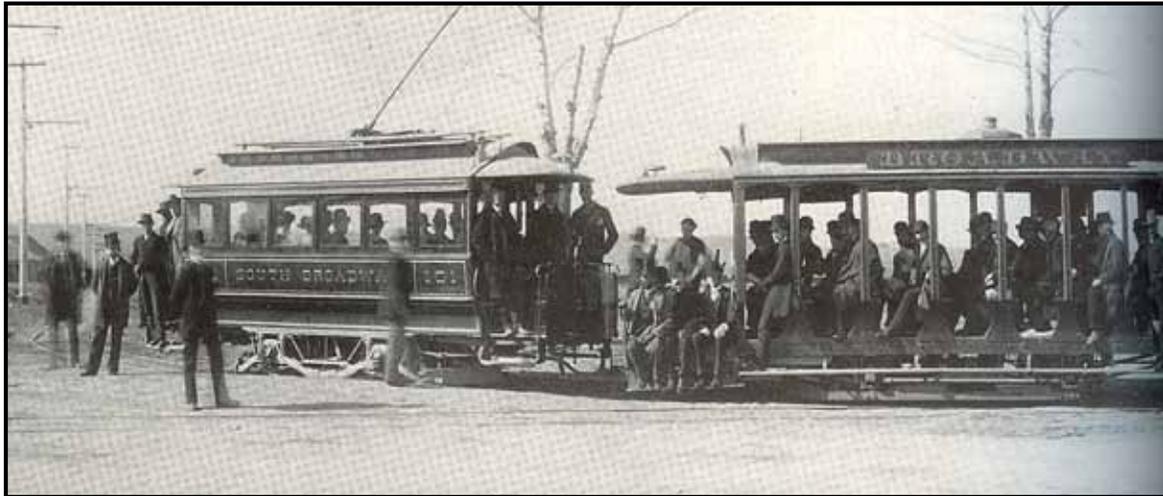
The first trolley line on Broadway was built in May 1874. It extended from 16th Avenue south along Broadway to 9th Avenue covering a distance of 1¼ miles. It was a Denver City Railway's horsecar line; Denver's third such horsecar line. By November 1880, the Broadway line was extended about two blocks to the south to Cherry Creek. By 1884, the Broadway line was extended south to Bayaud Ave. and again in 1886 to the south city limit of Denver which was Alameda Ave.



Horsecar No. 8 Assigned to the Broadway Route
Woeber Carriage Company Photo, Richard H. Kindig Collection – Courtesy Ed Haley
Photo Courtesy Sundance Publications - *Denver's Street Railways Volume I*

By 1888, the Denver Tramway wanted to build lines for its double-track cable line. Since the Denver City Railway's double-track horsecar line occupied the center of the street, The Denver Tramway Company had to locate its lines along the east and west sides of Broadway close to

the curb.³ This resulted in the Denver Railway's horsecar lines being flanked on both sides by the southbound and the northbound cable tracks of the rival Denver Tramway Company. That cable line was completed as far south as Alameda Ave. by December 1888. In 1889, construction started on extending electrified lines south to Orchard Place (Englewood) at approximately Hampden Ave. On Christmas Day, 1889, the first electric trolley cars that ever operated in Denver made their maiden runs on the new South Broadway electric line.⁴



S. Broadway Electric Trolley Car No. 101 on Inaugural Run Christmas Day 1889, Don Robertson Collection
Photo Courtesy Sundance Publications - *Denver's Street Railways Volume I*

By August of 1891, the Broadway horsecar line had been abandoned and only the electric trolley cars ran down S. Broadway. The Denver Tramway had acquired all the lines of the rival Denver City Railway (who had operated the horsecar lines on Broadway) and of the Denver City Cable Railway and had electrified them. By 1901 the trolley line down South Broadway supported two routes. One route, Route # 3, went all the way south to Orchard Place (Englewood) and the other, Route 2, was a shorter route that traveled down South Broadway ending at Colorado Avenue. Residents used both of these routes for travel to work and other activities. Many of the workers from Gates Rubber relied on the trolleys for transportation to work.



Passengers Disembarking the Trolley at Gates Rubber Company on S. Broadway
Photo Courtesy Sundance Publications - *Denver's Street Railways Volume II*

The South Broadway route to Englewood was one of the routes for "Owl Cars" which provided late night service from midnight to 6:00 am. This service continued from 1893 until 1950 when the trolley cars were abandoned for buses. The various trolley lines had colored lights on them to distinguish them at night. The South Broadway line trolleys had a yellow light on them.

Route 3 to Englewood provided service for over 60 years. The S. Broadway route was one of the last ones to stop providing trolley service, providing its last run on June 3, 1950, before the service was replaced by buses.

Operations

Fares of 5 cents around 1900 to 10 cents by their end of service, were collected by conductors which were usually high school or college boys. During World War I it was difficult to find enough young men to collect the fares, so women were hired to work as conductors. By January 1917, the cars were converted to a pay as you enter (PAYE) system, thereby eliminating the job of conductors so that only one person, the motorman, was needed to operate the trolley.

There was one time when even the trusted trolley cars could not transport passengers. That was in the blizzard of 1913 when Denver received 47 inches of snow. It took a couple of days after the blizzard for full service to be resumed.

End of Trolley Era

The demise of the trolleys started slowly in 1924 when the first Denver Tramway bus was put into service between Englewood and Fort Logan. From that point on, the trolleys, rocking and swaying along the rails, had to clear their way with clanging bells through the ever increasing bus and automobile traffic. The date of June 7, 1930 heralded the last trolley run to Fairmount Cemetery and the next day buses took over service on that route. Costs were high to operate an electric rail system and a bus operation was less expensive and more efficient.

The 1940s saw many more trolley routes abandoned as the Denver Tramway Company implemented their plan to phase out streetcars and put motor bus and trolley coach lines in their place. By the end of 1948, Denver Tramway had 131 streetcars in service, 138 trolley coaches (which were buses powered by electricity that were hooked to the trolley line above and used between 1940 and 1955) and 116 gasoline powered buses. By the end of 1949, there were only 85 trolleys left in service. June 3, 1950 marked the last runs of Denver's trolley, although the narrow gauge Interurbans continued to operate for a short time after that. By the mid-1950s much of the system's infrastructure had been removed. Wires had been torn down, the yellow trolley cars had been scrapped and the tracks had been removed or covered up with asphalt. Automobiles and buses were the new transportation mainstay.