

20th CENTURY COLORADO – TRANSPORTATION

Public Transportation

What do these photos tell you about the different kinds of public transportation 20th century Coloradans used?

A 1920's City Bus

This is an Englewood city bus of the 1920s.



Englewood city bus

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Electric streetcars provided public transportation in most Colorado cities during the early 1900s. During the 1920s some cities also added busses. The bus in this photo provided transportation from downtown Englewood to the Fort Logan Military Hospital.

Denver Tramway Company Bus

This bus provided public transportation in Denver during the 1930s.



Denver's Tramway Company

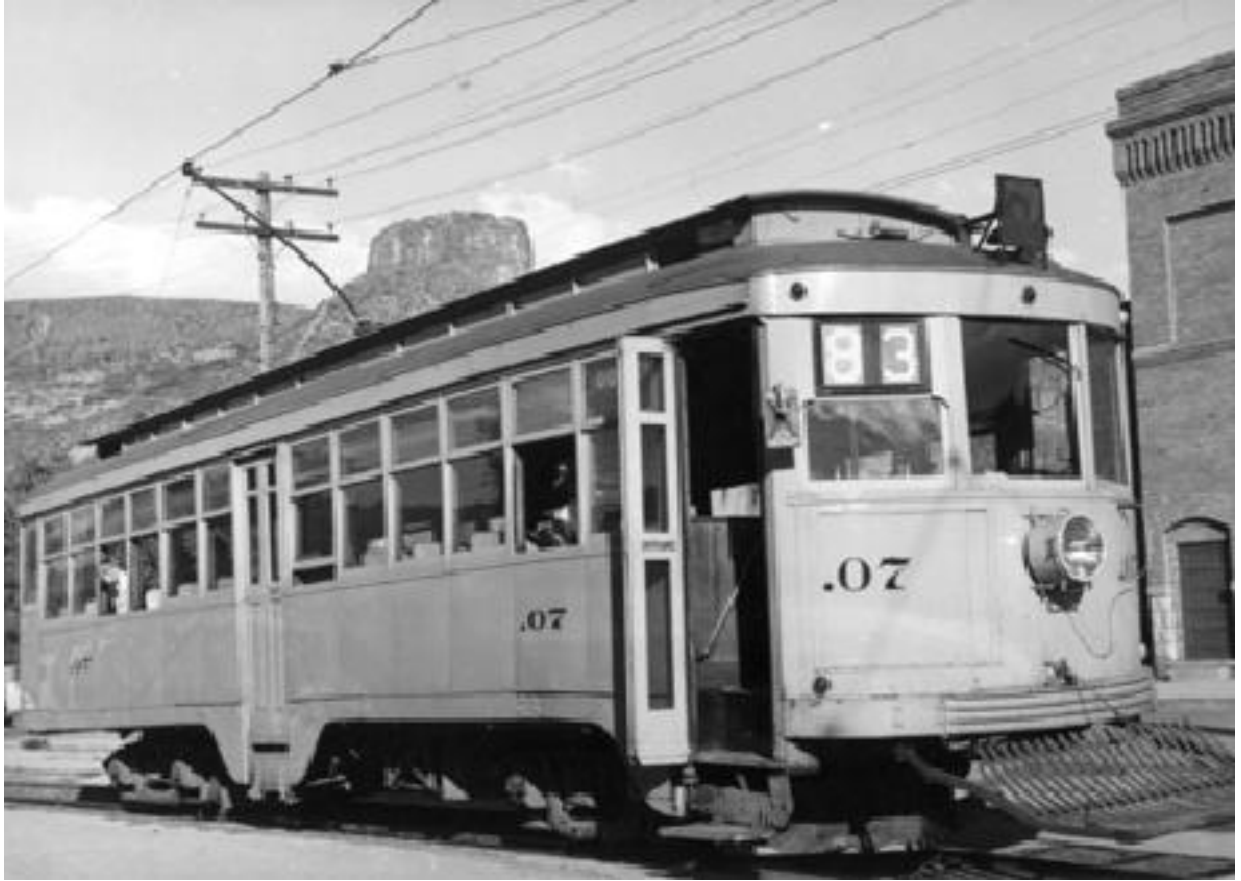
Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Denver's Tramway Company used busses during the 1920s in addition to electric streetcars. It ran busses like this one on streets that did not have streetcar lines. This bus was built in 1929 by the White Motor Company.

Denver Tramway Company Streetcar

This is a Denver Tramway Company trolley or street car. The photo was taken in 1940.



Denver Tramway Company trolley

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

It took several years for gasoline powered busses to replace electric streetcars in Denver. Streetcars could carry more passengers more cheaply than early busses. The streetcar in this photo ran between Denver and the town of Golden.

A 1930's City Bus

This is a Denver Tramway Company bus. The photo probably was taken during the 1930s.



Denver Tramway Company bus

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

To serve its customers better, the Tramway Company kept adding busses to streets that did not have electric streetcars. Buses had one big advantage over streetcars. They did not need fixed tracks and overhead electric lines. They could run on any city street.

A Pueblo Streetcar (1945)

This streetcar was part of Pueblo's public transportation system. The photo was taken in 1945.



Pueblo streetcar

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Several Colorado cities, including Pueblo, ran streetcars until the 1950s.

A Row Of City Busses (1940's)

This photo shows a row of Denver Tramway Company busses.



Denver Tramway Company busses

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

Fleets of busses eventually replaced streetcars in every Colorado city.

A Fort Collins Streetcar (1950's)

This streetcar operated in Fort Collins. The photo was taken about 1950.



Fort Collins streetcar

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

The Fort Collins Municipal Railway operated streetcars in that city until the 1950s.

Trucks and Busses

What do these photos tell you about how their trucks and busses looked like?

A Night Coach Bus (1929)

This bus is a night coach or sleeper bus. The photo was taken in September 1930.



Night coach bus

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

The early busses used on long-distance routes were equipped with sleeping compartments. This 1929-model bus had 13 sleeping compartments and carried 26 people. Each compartment had a kitchen, lavatory, and two beds, each 33-inches wide.

A Modern Day Stage (1932)

This is a Union Pacific Stage bus. The photo was taken at the Denver bus station about 1932.



Union Pacific Stage bus

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

The Union Pacific Railroad also owned a bus line. It ran busses from Chicago to the West Coast, serving the cities of Omaha, St. Louis, Kansas City, Denver, Salt Lake City, Los Angeles, Portland, and Spokane,

Their Own Words

“It is raining. After dinner we went [from Denver] by bus for five dollars to Colorado Springs, a summer resort in the mountains. . . . We returned to Denver by bus at 9:15 P.M. . . . Everywhere there are many used buses for sale.”

Source: Joseph Rokoszny Diary, August 13, 1930, in “Polish Impressions of Colorado,” Essays and Monographs in Colorado History, No. 7, 1987, pp. 89, 90.

Truck Loaded With Appliances

This photo shows a side view of a truck, probably in Haxtun, Colorado. Haxtun is in Phillips County, in northeastern Colorado. The man is posing in a suit and duster hat. The photo was taken about 1910.



Truck loaded with appliances

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

The man in the photo is probably a salesman, selling the machines loaded on the truck. These include a washing machine, a vacuum sweeper, and a generator. These appear for sale from "Farmers Willys Light & Power Company." Door-to-door selling was a big business at this time.

Their Own Words

"Dependability is the first and most important factor to be considered when purchasing a Motor Truck. The truck must be able to make satisfactory time—winter and summer—over all kinds of roads, and under the harshest conditions. It must withstand the severe strains to which a Motor Truck, with its heavy load, is subjected. In other words it must 'always be on the job.' This fundamental truth is recognized as foremost in Republic construction. Your satisfaction is determined by the dependability of the Motor Truck you buy, and this dependability must, in turn, be the natural outgrowth of recognized high quality and simplicity of design. . . ."

"With the Republic Motor Truck Service Stations—more than 900 of them located in all parts of the country, every station carrying an ample stock of spare parts—with men who know the whys and

wherefores of Republic trucks, the purchaser is always sure of that expert service which means satisfaction every day of the year.”

Source: Colorado Transcript, (Golden, Colorado), February 7, 1918.

A Trailway's Bus

This photo of a Trailway's Company bus was taken at Fountain, Colorado in June 1952.



Trailway's Company bus

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

This Trailways bus was photographed at a service station. In small towns, gas stations, grocery stores, and motels also sold bus tickets and served as a bus station.

A Truck And Trailer (1934)

The photo of this International truck and trailer was taken in Denver in December 1934.



International truck and trailer

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

By the 1930s, trucking companies were competing with the railroads for carrying long-distance freight. This photo shows two trucks with semi-trailers owned by Riss and Company. This company ran trucks between Denver and Chicago.

Green Brothers' Truck Fleet

This photo shows the delivery trucks and drivers who worked for Green Brother Fruit & Produce Company. Green Brothers was located on Market Street in Denver. This photo was taken about 1915.



Green Brothers' truck fleet

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

You might guess that trucks and autos had a big impact on farmers' lives. Not only did trucks make farmers' lives easier, they also helped farmers get their goods to market faster. In the cases of fruit and vegetables, this speed made it possible to grow more produce. Getting fruit and vegetables to market faster meant less spoilage and waste and more profits.

Their Own Words

"Thousands of businessmen learned the answers to their individual transportation problems and will permanently profit by them. . . . No industry, no business house requiring either pick-up or delivery can obtain full access today without the use of one or more trucks. The public demands quick service—motor truck delivery is the solution. . . . There can be no doubt in the mind of anyone who makes a serious study of transportation conditions as they exist the country over, but that the next few years will see an amazing increase in the use of trucks. Because speed, economy and adaptability to varied work will be vital consideration it seems certain that the greatest demand will be for moderately light-duty vehicles."

Source: Akron Weekly Pioneer Press, July 11, 1919.

A Fleet Of Coors Delivery Trucks

These are delivery trucks owned by the Adolph Coors brewery. The photo was taken in 1948 at the Coors Warehouse in Golden.



Fleet of Coors delivery trucks

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Trucks replaced horse-drawn wagons for delivering goods. By the 1940s, large companies like Coors owned fleets of delivery trucks.

A Weicker Storage Delivery Truck

This truck was delivering a machine to a machine shop in Georgetown. The photo was taken about 1952.



Weicker storage delivery truck

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

The truck in this photo was an International truck, which was a major truck manufacturing company in the 1950s. It was owned by the Weicker Storage Company.

Automobiles

What do these photos tell you about how their automobiles looked like?

An Electric Automobile (1925)

This auto was powered by electric batteries. The photo was taken in Denver about 1925.



Electric automobile

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Several early models of automobiles were electric-powered. They lost out to gasoline-powered models because they could not go very far without having their batteries recharged. However autos were powered, they began to change people's lives.

Their Own Words

"The dances and all quit about, I suppose, in about 1920-21. Not too long after automobiles. Whenever cars got prevalent, why the community broke apart, after cars got too plentiful. [People] could go other places and do other things. The people would bring seats out of their car and make beds back in the corner for the kids to sleep on, and the kids went to sleep. When they got ready to go home they'd gather [the children] up and go home. You didn't have baby sitters then, you sat your own kids."

Source: Gertrude Tower quoted in Maria M. Rogers, ed., In Other Words: Oral Histories of the Colorado Frontier (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1996): 105.

A Lot Full Of Model T's

This lot is filled with new Model T Ford cars and trucks.



Model T Ford cars and trucks

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

The most popular auto by 1920 was the Ford Model T. It was reliable and inexpensive. By 1926, one could buy a new Model T for as little as \$300.

Their Own Words

"I learned to drive when I was twelve years old. I just learned to drive by myself, nobody to teach me. You didn't have to have a driver's license. It was a great shift, an old Model T. And on day I was allowed to take the car, I guess I was about fifteen at the time. . . . We went out on Arapahoe [Road], and I bumped into a bunch of cows. I couldn't stop fast enough. It didn't damage the car or anything, but I was scared to death to tell my folks about it. And I didn't get the car by myself after that."

Source: Della Friedman quoted in Maria M. Rogers ed., In Other Words: Oral Histories of the Colorado Frontier (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1996): 72.

A 1928 Model A Ford

The auto in this photo is a 1928 Model A Ford.



1928 Model A Ford

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

In 1922, the Ford Motor Company began making its Model A car and stopped making the Model T. The auto in this photo was the roadster model, which was a two-seat car with a canvas top. It had a third seat or “rumble seat” that opened up in back next to the trunk.

Their Own Words

“I remember one time in coming across the plains in a Model A roadster. I had no side curtains. I had a roof, a canvas-top roof, but no side curtains. . . . Just in case there were high winds and so forth, I made myself a pair of side curtains out of linoleum, yes, just to shield the wind. . . . I had to take whatever

came. Rain, if it rained from the side, and the rain slanted in, well, I just sat there and drove the car and got soaked. . . . Traveling in a Model A roadster was quite a thrill.”

Source: Raymond Friese quoted in Maria M. Rogers, ed., In Other Words: Oral Histories of the Colorado Frontier (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1996): 73.

A Gray Light Car

The Gray Light Car advertised in this photo was manufactured in Longmont, Colorado.



The Gray Light Car

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

During the early years of the auto industry, manufacturers in hundreds of cities introduced models of cars. Most of these small auto companies failed, as did the Gray Company of Longmont.

Their Own Words

“The automobile, Dr. Bartlett states, is as reliable for travel as any locomotive. Today, he said, there are 200 concerns [companies nationwide] engaged in the manufacture of automobiles, the combined capital of the industry being \$25,000,000. In this city [Denver] alone, he estimated, there were nearly \$1,000,000 worth of [these] machines. ‘I will venture to say that in ten years the automobile will displace seventy-five percent of the horses now in use.’”

Source: Colorado Transcript (Golden, Colorado), August 3, 1905.

A Line Of Yellow Cabs (1930's)

These auto are taxicabs operated by the Yellow Cab Company. The photo was taken in Denver during the 1930s.



Taxicabs owned by the Yellow Cab Company

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

During the 1920s, horse-drawn carriages-for-rent were replaced by gasoline-powered taxicabs.

Their Own Words

“But the vogue of the bicycle was brief. The phenomenally rapid increase of automobiles, satisfying as they did the urge for greater speed, gradually relegated [horse]-propelled and man-propelled vehicles to the realm of the obsolete until at the end of the first quarter of the present century [i.e., about 1925], save for the wheels of messenger boys and newspaper carriers, the ubiquitous ‘auto’ possessed the streets and highways of Colorado and horses and bicycles were rare as were automobiles at the beginning of the century. Now we have the motor bus and the airplane. What next?”

Source: Andrew Gillette, “The Bicycle Era in Colorado,” Colorado Magazine, 10 (November 1933): 14.

Stuck In A Ditch

The men in this photo are digging out a car stuck in mud. The driver had tried to cross a shallow creek.



Stuck in a muddy creek

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Roads that were quite adequate for horse-drawn vehicles often were not good roads for automobiles. The driver of the auto in this photo could easily have crossed this creek in a horse-drawn buggy. The growing use of autos led states and counties to build more bridges and better roads.

Their Own Words

“We used to have a wagon. . . . We’d go up Boulder Canyon at that time gettin’ our dynamite, right on the main road. . . . Then we moved to an International truck, hard rubber tires, chain drive. It was comin’

down [the canyon] one day and the boys got ta goin' too fast . . . and went off into Boulder Crick. The driver was just flyin', boxes broke open. Not a one went off. Powder won't go off; it needs ignitin.' But we had a lot of incidences. It was an interesting life."

Source: John Valentine quoted in Maria M. Rogers, ed., In Other Words: Oral Histories of the Colorado Frontier (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1996): 47.

Railroads

What do these photos tell you about how they used railroads?

A New Locomotive (1927)

This crowd is celebrating the first run of a new locomotive. The photo was taken at Denver's Union Station in May 1927.



New locomotive at Denver's Union Station in 1927

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

The 1920s was the Golden Age of the railroads. Most people still traveled long distances by train. Most goods shipped in or out of the state went by railroad. Autos, busses, and trucks had only begun to give railroads serious competition. Even so, World War I, which ended in 1918, greatly stimulated the trucking industry. Before long, trucks would carry more and more freight.

Their Own Words

“Twelve months [in 1917] ago the railroads of the United States handled practically all of the freight traffic without strain. Today, the enormous increase in troop and supply movements has created a revolution in transportation problems which has left a permanent impress upon this country. The commercial motor truck has come into its own, and where once steam reigned supreme, long lines of motor trucks now serve as feeders for tremendous stretches of the country.”

Source: Editorial, Colorado Highways Bulletin, Vol. I (June 1918): 15.

Pueblo's Union Station (1937)

The passenger train in this photo has stopped at the railroad station in Pueblo. The photo was taken in 1937.



Pueblo's Union Station

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Railroad stations like Union Station in Pueblo were one of the largest and most important buildings in every city. It was a visitor's first and last stop in the city. It often left a lasting impression.

The Moffat Tunnel

This locomotive is stopped at one end of the Moffat Tunnel.



The Moffat Tunnel

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

The Moffat Tunnel provided the first direct railroad route through the mountains west of Denver. Crews began digging in 1923. It was finished in 1927. Many skiers today take the train through Moffat Tunnel to ski at Winter Park.

Their Own Words

“The mountains directly west of Denver form a barrier which has forced the main lines of transcontinental travel to the north and south, leaving Denver in a backwater. To overcome this handicap the late David H. Moffat, one of Denver’s early millionaires, started in to build the Denver & Salt Lake Railroad, better known as the Moffat Road. . . . The great difficulty [of building a railroad through the mountains] has always been the crossing of the [continental] divide. The city of Denver has now come forward with the Moffat tunnel project . . . for the purpose of helping the railroad company to build the tunnel.”

“It will be more than six miles long, and will penetrate the continental divide at a point almost half a mile below that now reached by the road, saving twenty-four miles in distance and over two percent in grade. The tunnel is now under construction, and will, when completed, be the longest railroad tunnel in the Western Hemisphere. The railroad company stands one-third the cost, while the city of Denver undertakes two-thirds. When completed, this route will be the shortest between Denver and Salt Lake by many miles.”

Source: Julian Street, “Hitting a High Spot: Denver,” Colliers (November 7, 1914): 17.

A Lounge Car (1939)

This is the lounge area of a Denver and Western Rio Grande dining car. The photo was taken about 1939.



A lounge car

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Going by train was a comfortable way to travel. The lounge area was a pleasant place to relax and enjoy a trip.

A Dining Car

This is a railroad dining car. The dining car's good food, friendly service, and linen table cloths helped make trains a comfortable way to travel.



A dining car

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

The kitchen where the food is served is located behind the doors at the rear of the car. Waiters are standing in the doorway.

The Galley In A Dining Car

This is the kitchen or galley of a dining car.



The galley of a dining car

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

The man in the photo is dishing food from steel cooking pots onto plates on serving trays. Waiters in white uniforms carried the food to the tables. Cooks and waiters on dining cars usually were African Americans, as were the Pullman sleeping car attendants.

Airplanes

What do these photos tell you about why they adopted airplanes?

Stapleton Airport (1941)

This United Air Lines plane had landed at Denver's Stapleton Airport. This photo was taken in 1941.



Denver's Stapleton Airport

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Regularly scheduled air travel was still relatively new when this 1941 photo was taken. United Air Lines began the first daily flights between Denver and other cities in 1937. Stapleton Airport was Denver's major airport. It was named for Benjamin Stapleton, a mayor of Denver.

Their Own Words

"The 14,000-foot peaks on the skyline also were hazards to early airline operations. Not until just before the war [late 1930s] did Denver get on the main skyways. Since then, however, aviation has spurted, and many feel the future of the city as a major air center is secure. . . . Even the moribund [nearly dead] Chamber of Commerce shows signs of rising to meet the challenge. . . . It has a hand in the recent transfer to Denver of a major portion of United Air Lines' Chicago headquarters."

Source: Charles A. Graham and Robert Perkin, "Denver: Reluctant Capital," in Ray B. West, ed., Rocky Mountain Cities, (New York: Norton, 1949): 282, 315.

Alexander Aircraft Plane (1920's)

This airplane was manufactured in Colorado by the Alexander Aircraft Company of Colorado Springs.



Alexander Aircraft Company airplane

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

The Alexander Aircraft Company of Colorado Springs was one of the largest non-military aircraft factories in the United States during the 1920s.

Their Own Words

“One area manufacturer of planes about that time was the Alexander Company in Colorado Springs, which produced the Eaglerock plane. These aircraft...had more than their share of crashes. It got so bad

that people made crude jokes about them such as: They call the planes Eaglerocks because they fly like an eagle and fall like a rock. Their track record finally became so bad that, as I understand, the authorities in charge of flying regulations banned further manufacturing of the Eaglerock.”

Source: Robert Esterday, A Kid's-Eye View of Early Greeley (Greeley, CO: The Author, 1993): 39.

Stapleton Airport (late 1940's)

These DC-3 airplanes are parked at Stapleton Airport. The photo was taken in the late 1940s.



DC-3 airplanes are parked at Stapleton Airport

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

These two-engine DC-3 aircraft were among the most widely-used airplanes of the 1930s and 1940s. The names of the airlines on these planes are Monarch Airlines, Challenger Airlines, and Arizona Airlines. None of them exist today.

A Frontier Airlines DC-3 Plane

The airplanes in this photo are DC-3s owned by Frontier Airlines.



DC-3 airplanes

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

Frontier Airlines is the only Denver-based airline that has survived from the 1940s until today.

Rules For Airline Stewardesses

The woman in this photo is a stewardess for Frontier Airlines.



Stewardess for Frontier Airlines

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

Stewardesses for airlines in the 1950s had to follow strict rules. The rules posted next to the mirror in this photo include the following: Is your SMILE Friendly & Sincere; POSTURE Erect & Poised; HAIR Short & Styled; MAKE-UP Neat & Natural; BLOUSE Fresh & Pressed; RIBBON New & Trimmed; NAILS manicured & Polished; GLOVES White & Tailored; UNIFORM Clean & Pressed; PURSE Orderly & Polished; SHOES Repaired & Shined. She is stepping on a scale because stewardesses could not be overweight.

Their Own Words

"The physical examinations are fairly difficult to pass and the majority of airline companies demand that their stewardesses be registered nurses. No young woman will be employed by a large airline company if she wears glasses, has ever had mastoid or sinus trouble, has had any broken bones, or has ever undergone a serious operation.... The airline hostess must be free from scars or deformities, her feet must be in good condition, and she must have excellent posture. At the time she applies for work, she must be between 21 and 26 years of age. She should be at least five foot, two inches tall, but not more than five feet, five inches in height.

"Neither railroad nor airline companies will accept applicants who are married; nor will they permit their hostesses to continue in their employ after marriage."

Source: "Earning a Living as a Stewardess on the Railroads and Airlines," in "Stories of Occupations," Colorado Writers' Project, Colorado Historical Society Library, Bulletin No. 3, (1940 Series): 2

Airplane Food

The woman in this photo is preparing food for Frontier Airline passengers.



Airplane food for Frontier passengers

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

Hot meals were an important part of airline travel. Each meal was prepared on the ground, taken to the airplane, and kept warm in insulated cases.

Denver's Lowry Field

This is a photo of Lowry Field in Denver taken during World War II.



Lowry Field in Denver

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

Lowry Field was a United States Army Air Force base during World War II. It was a training base for the crews of bombers.