

COLORADO CITIES – TRANSPORTATION

Streetcars

What do these photos tell you about what streetcars were like?

Grand Junction's First Streetcar

This was the first streetcar in Grand Junction. The photo was taken in 1887.



First streetcar in Grand Junction

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

The first streetcars were horse-drawn vehicles. They were different from carriages because they ran on iron rails, which were laid down the middle of the street. The rails reduced the friction on the wheels. This enabled a horse to pull more passengers in a streetcar than in a carriage. It was cheaper transportation. Merchants also advertised on streetcars. The signs on the streetcar in this photo advertise Haskell's Pharmacy, Bannister's Furniture Store, and the Grand Hotel.

Their Own Words

"The horse looked small for such a big top-heavy car. The wheels were small, too, and away under the car. The cars were heavy. I know for I watched the boys after school lay two pins crisscross on the track and wait for the car to go over them. The car wheel washed them flat on the iron track and made a little pair of scissors that wouldn't work."

Source: Edwina H. Fallis, When Denver and I Were Young (Denver: Sage Books, 1956): 83.

Horse Streetcar In Denver

The streetcar in this photo ran on 34th Avenue in Denver. It also was called a "gravity car." Can you guess why?



Horse streetcar in Denver

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

The route going east on 34th Avenue went uphill most of the way. The horse pulled the car uphill. The car was pulled by gravity going downhill. Look at the next photo to find out how the horse got down hill.

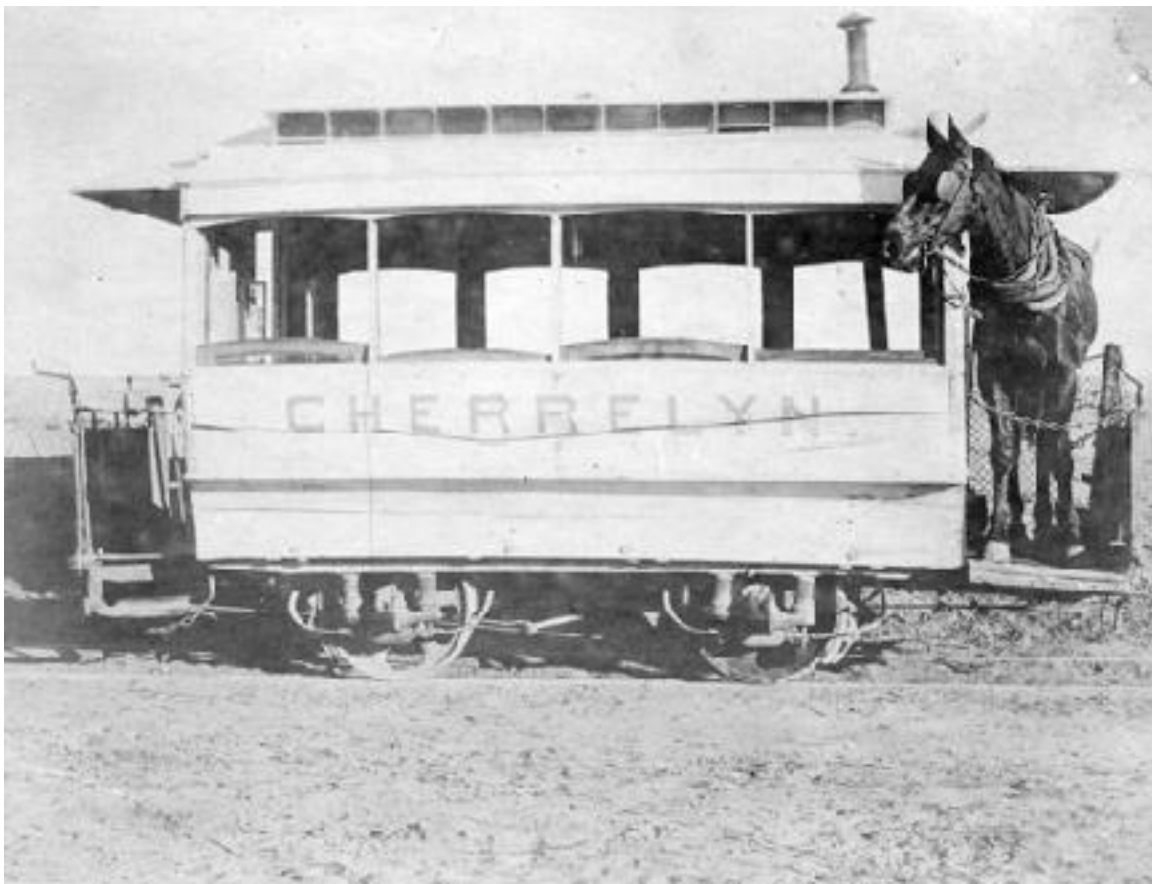
Their Own Words

“As a child I went with my mother to call on a lady who lived on East 34th Avenue where one of the early gravity cars, drawn by horse, went up and down. It started at East 34th and Williams [and ran to] near where Clayton College is today. Then the horse was unhitched and placed in his stall on the rear of the car to ride down the hill.”

Source: Quantille D. McClung, Memoirs of My Childhood and Youth in North Denver (Denver: Colorado Genealogical Society, 1979): 1.

A Horse Riding a Streetcar

This is a photo of the Cherrellyn Street Railway car in Denver. It was a gravity car like the one in the previous photo.



Horse riding a "gravity car"

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

The horse pulled this car uphill between Denver and Littleton. The route back to the city was downhill. The horse rode back to Denver on the car's rear platform. The car was pulled by gravity.

Their Own Words

"'What is a gravity car and where does it go?' asked Uncle Nelson.

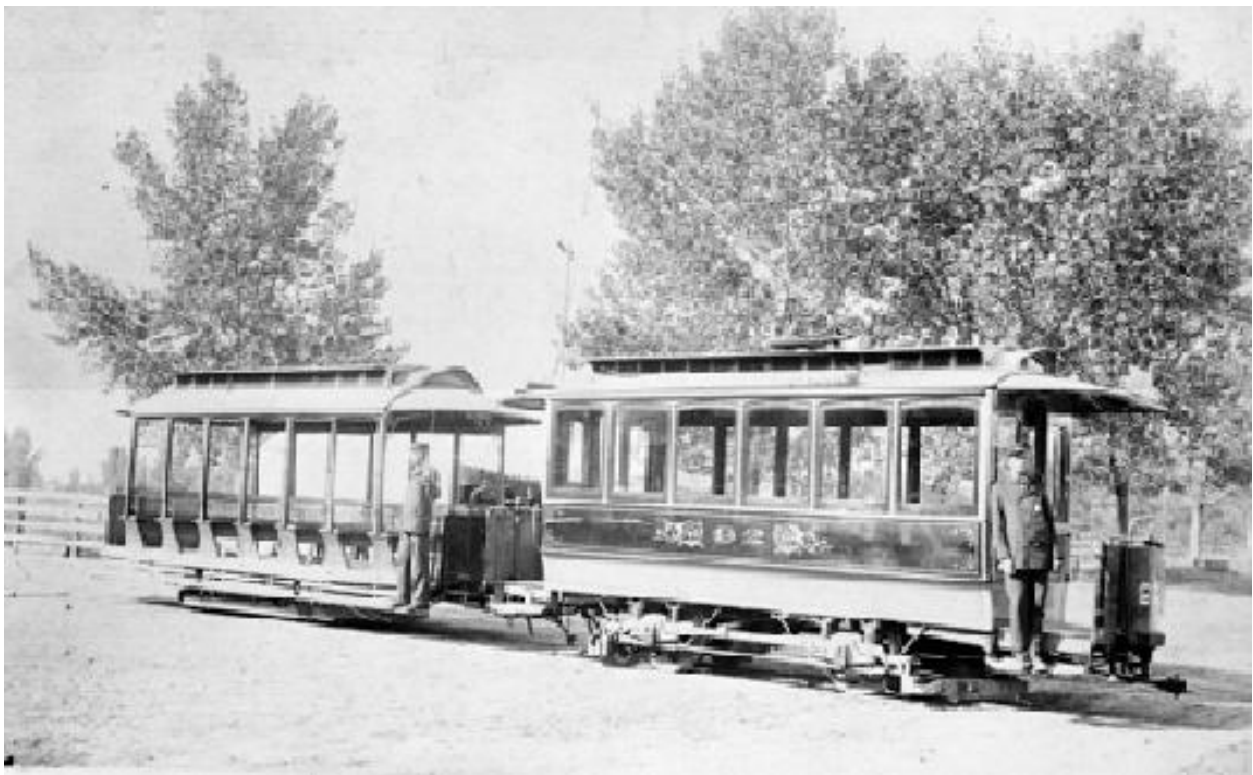
"That's the car the horse pulls up the hill and when he gets to the top of the hill he climbs up on the platform and rides down. It goes on 34th Avenue to Colorado Boulevard. . . .

"We watched the gravity car come down the hill toward us. From where we stood we could see the horse's nose sticking out beyond the side of the car so we knew he was riding down on the back platform."

Source: Edwina Fallis, When Denver and I Were Young (Denver: Sage Books, 1956): 181.

Electric Streetcar – 1890's

The streetcars in this photo are trolley cars. Take a closer look to see how these cars are different from horse cars.



Trolley cars

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Trolley cars are powered by electric motors. The power was provided by an overhead electric line. A rod that extended from the top of the car to the overhead line conducted the electricity. The rod was connected to the line by a small metal wheel called a trolley-wheel. That's why electric cars were called trolley cars.

Their Own Words

“When we began growing up there was the thrill on the “trolley ride.” In those days some of the street cars were open with seats running across from side to side. There was a running board on which the conductor went to and from to collect the fares. . . Every summer the Church would engage one of these cars for the evening at a stipulated price. The car would be draped with strings of colored electric lights, refreshments installed, the sale of which would help to defray the expenses, and away we would go riding all about town all evening. . . .”

Source: Quantrille McClung, Memoirs of My Childhood and Young in North Denver (Denver: Colorado Genealogical Society, 1979): 41.

Trolley Car On a “Roundabout”

This trolley car is parked on a roundabout. Can you tell from the overhead wiring what a roundabout is?



Trolley car on a "roundabout"

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

A roundabout is a section of track built in a circle to let trolley cars turn around. The overhead wiring in this photo shows you the size of the circle.

Their Own Words

"When I was fourteen years of age, in 1879, we came to Denver. . . . When we arrived in Denver, a streetcar ran up Twenty-third street and was pulled by two horses. . . . In 1883 the streetcar system was extended to Seventh Avenue and Broadway. Later cable cars were installed (1888), and after a while regular electric cars were put in service."

Source: Mrs. Belle Cassidy, "Recollections of Early Denver," Colorado Magazine, 24 (January 1952): 53, 54.

15th & Champa Streets In Denver

The photo of this trolley car was taken at 15th and Champa streets in Denver. It was taken about 1915.



15th and Champa streets in Denver

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Electric trolley cars provided many cities in Colorado with cheap transportation during the early 1900s.

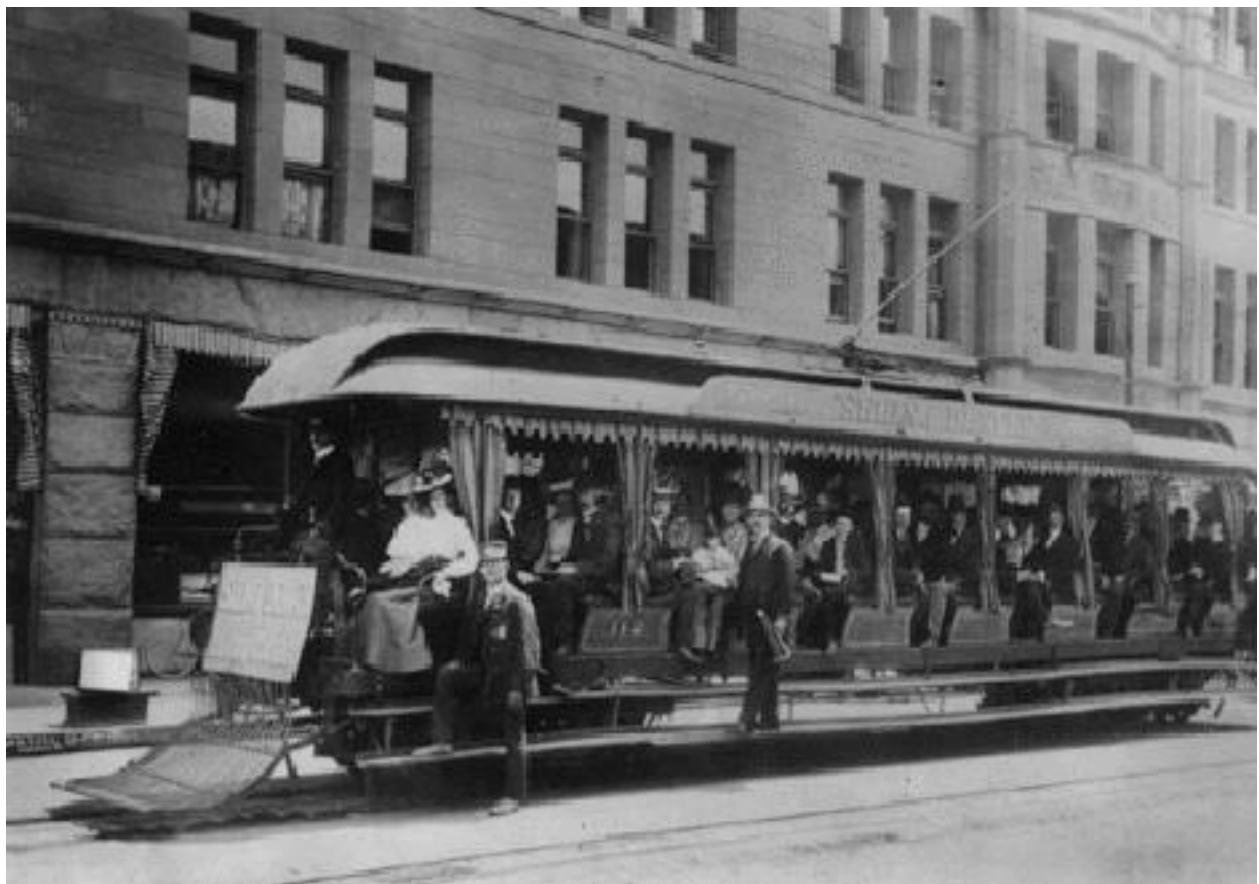
Their Own Words

“When relatives of my mother came to visit, we had very simple ways of entertaining them. . . . We used to board this [trolley] car at about 32nd and Tejon, as this corner is known today, ride out to the end of the line, get off and walk across the prairie through the dust and the weeds, then get the Larimer Street car back, transfer and return to the starting point. And this cost 5 cents a ride.”

Source: Quantrille McClung, Memoirs of My Childhood and Young in North Denver (Denver: Colorado Genealogical Society, 1979): 66.

Sight Seeing Streetcar In Denver

The sign on this streetcar says "Seeing Denver." It is a "sight-seeing" car.



Sight-seeing streetcar in Denver

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

Open streetcars like the one in this photo were used to show tourists the sights in downtown Denver. The man standing on the running board of this car is the tour guide. He is holding a megaphone.

Their Own Words

“Seeing Denver. ‘Seeing Denver’ trolley cars make a two-hours’ trip through the city. Fare, 50 cents. . . . ‘Seeing Denver’ autos make special trips for large parties of tourists. Fares, 50 and 75 cents and one dollar. ‘Touring Denver’ automobiles make trips through the finest residence streets and boulevards of Denver. Every trip last 1 ½ hours and covers 18 miles. The route includes Cheesman Park and City Park. Fare, 75 Cents.”

Source: Eugene Parsons, A Guidebook to Colorado, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1911): 68.

Railroads

What do these photos tell you about how trains and train depots were like?

Denver’s First Railroad Station

This is a drawing or engraving of Denver's first railroad station. It was made about 1875.



Denver's first railroad station

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

The first railroad reached Denver in 1870. It was called the Denver Pacific Railroad. Traveling to Colorado on a railroad car was faster and more comfortable than coming by stagecoach or wagon.

Their Own Words

"As a railroad centre, Denver is fast becoming as important as either Kansas City or Omaha. The new Union Depot, where centre the many tracks of the various roads now extended across the plains to this seat of influence in the West, is one of the largest and handsomest buildings in Denver. . . . Two hundred thousand pieces of baggage were handled at the Union Station in 1886, and the passenger business was larger than ever before."

Source: Edwards Roberts, "The City of Denver," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, (May 1888): 953, 954.

Denver's Union Depot – 1881

The new Union Depot was built in Denver in 1881. It was much larger than the train station shown in the previous photo.



Denver's Union Depot

Photo: N/A

More About This Topic

By 1880, several railroads connected Denver to other cities in Colorado and to the east. To provide a connection for these railroads, Denver built a Union Station next to the Platte River. A union station is one used by more than one railroad company.

Their Own Words

"They are building an immense Union R. R. [Railroad] Depot extending clear across 2 blocks from 16th to 18th Streets, crossing, and blocking 17th Street. This immense structure being built of Stone is at the foot of those Streets near the Platte. An immense building is being erected and well along, at the foot of 16th for heating the City by Steam."

Source: Rezin H. Constant, "Colorado as Seen by a Visitor of 1880," Colorado Magazine, 12 (May 1935): 111.

Denver's Welcome Arch

This photo shows the Welcome Arch built next to Denver's Union Station. It welcomed people to Denver.



Denver's Welcome Arch

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

One side of the arch at Union Station said "WELCOME." The word MIZPAH was written on the other side. That is a Hebrew greeting that one Denver resident translated as: "The Lord watch between me and thee when we are absent one from another." The photo also shows a trolley car, an early auto, horse-drawn carriages, and a bicycle.

Their Own Words

"It was late afternoon when the train upon which we had come from eastern Kansas stopped at the Denver station—a substantial if not distinguished structure. . . . Passing through the building and emerging upon the taxi stand, we found ourselves confronted by an elaborate gateway of bronze. . . ."

Source: Julian Street, "Hitting a High Spot: Denver," Collier's, (November 7, 1914): 16.

"Mizpah"

This photo shows the other side of the Welcome Arch in Denver. It says "MIZPAH." This is a Hebrew greeting that means: "The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another."



"Mizpah"

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

This photo shows a trolley car in the middle of the street, an early auto, horse-drawn carriages, and bicycles. It also shows a man sweeping the street with a broom. His street-cleaning cart is parked at the curb behind the auto.

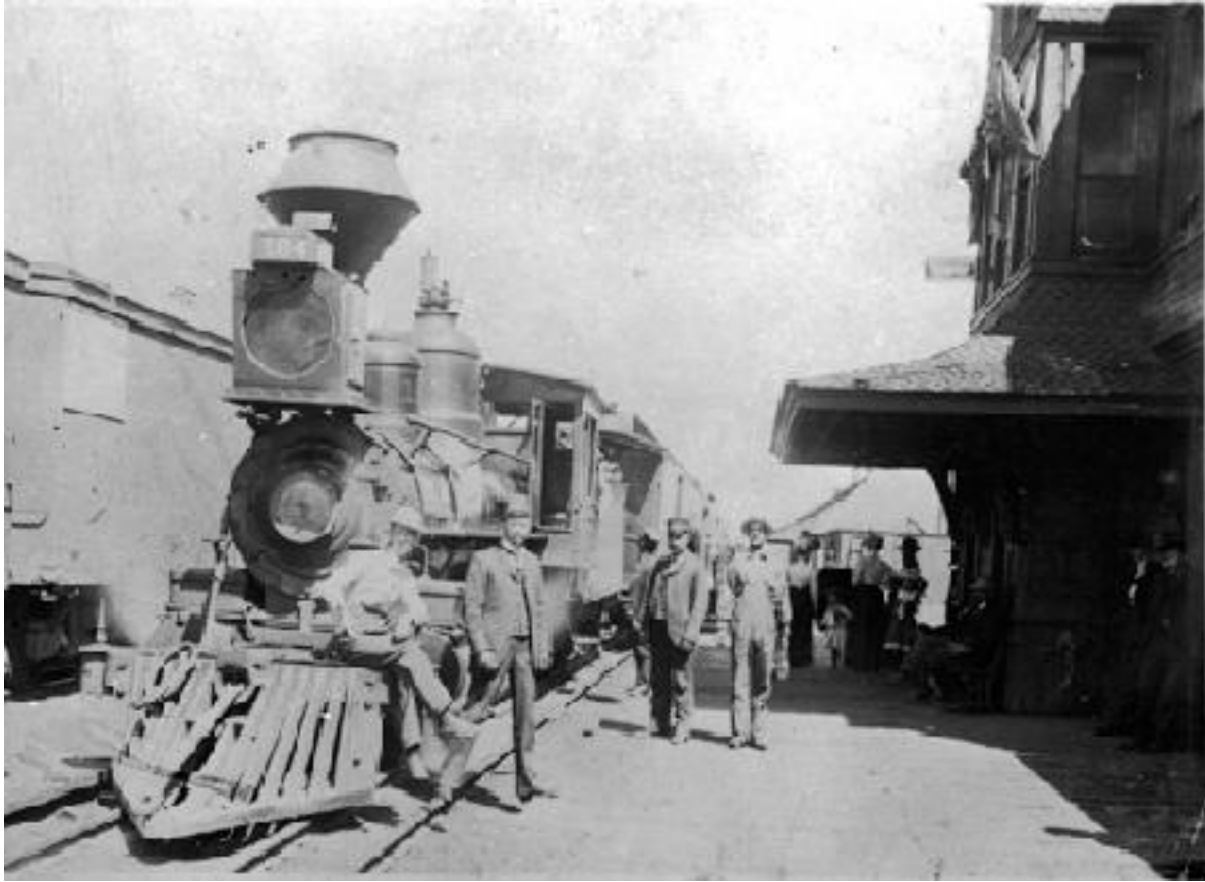
Their Own Words

"[T]he Denver gate [is not] a barrier. Indeed, it is not even a gate, having no doors, but is intended merely as a sort of formal portal to the city—a city proud of its climate, of the mountain scenery nearby, and of its reputation for . . . hospitality. . . . Over the large central arch . . . [one] may read in large letters the word 'Welcome'; and when later, departing, he approaches the arch from the city side he finds Denver gives him Godspeed with the work 'Mizpah.'"

Source: Julian Street, "Hitting a High Spot: Denver," Collier's, (November 7, 1914): 16.

Grand Junction Railroad Depot

This photo was taken at the train station in Grand Junction. It shows a train pulled by a narrow-gauge locomotive at the station.



Grand Junction Railroad Depot

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

Take a close look at this photo. You will see that the railroad track has four rails. The train in the photo is using the narrow, inside rails. Narrow-gauge locomotives and the cars they pulled were smaller than the regular wide-gauge trains. Many of the early mountain railroads in Colorado had narrow-gauge trains. It was easier for the smaller locomotives and cars to wind through canyons and go over mountains.

Their Own Words

"Gen. Palmer had invented a locomotive with two complete engines on it, boilers and all, so that one would pull and one would push. There were two engineers. When the train, after arriving here, was ready to start back, the other engineer simply took the throttle and the engine would push the cars all the way back to Denver.

"The cars themselves were very small, as well as the engine, and the smokestack looked like the hopper of an old fashioned coffee mill. The whole train looked like a toy compared with the great steel cars and large locomotives of today."

Source: S. M. Buzzard, Dawson Scrapbooks, Vol. 34, p. 81; Colorado Historical Society.

Grand Junction Railroad Depot – 1908

This photo shows the modern railroad station built in Grand Junction in 1908.



Grand Junction modern Railroad Depot

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

The station in this photo is still in use today.

Their Own Words

“One event of immense important to the city [of Grand Junction] occurred at this time—the arrival of the first locomotive and the completion of railway communication with the outside world. The coming of the first train to the city, on November 25, 1882, caused great rejoicing among the citizens and filled them with new confidence in the future of the town.”

“Tuesday was a day which will be remember in the history of Grand Junction, as a day which united us by two steel rails with all parts of the United States, and opened up a way for the rapid development of Grand valley’s immense resources. . . . Who can tell what five, ten, or fifteen years may bring forth? Thousands of people all over the United States have read of Grand valley and who have been waiting for an easy access to our valley, will now begin to seek homes in our midst, capitalists will no longer hesitate about placing their money and we may expect a city to spring up as if by magic. . . .”

Source: Grand Junction News, November 25, 1882 quoted in Walker D. Wyman, “Grand Junction’s First Year, 182” Colorado Magazine, 13 (July 1936): 132.

Early Autos

What do these photos tell you about the way early automobiles were like?

Coors Delivery Truck – 1910

This truck delivered beer for the Adolph Coors Brewery located in Golden.



Coors Delivery Truck

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

By 1910, gasoline-powered trucks were beginning to replace delivery wagons in Colorado's cities. This Coors delivery truck had solid rubber tires and used kerosene lanterns for headlights.

Their Own Words

"The speed limit then (1915) was 45 miles per hour. . . . I never heard of a stop sign until about 1930. I never saw a traffic signal until about 1935, except in downtown San Francisco [California]."

Source: Forrest Coulter, "65 Years of Memories," p. 14. *Denver Public Library Manuscript Collection*.

One Of Denver's First Automobiles

This photograph shows one of Denver's first autos.



Denver's first automobile

Photo: N/A

More About This Topic

The first automobiles combined features of horse-drawn carriages and bicycles. The body and seats looked much like the box and seats of a buggy. The wheels were similar to bicycle wheels.

Their Own Words

“For the first time in the history of Denver, an automobile was fined in the police court yesterday for driving along the streets of the city at a speed which endangered the lives of pedestrians. E.S. Matheson was the prisoner. He had been arrested on Sixteenth Street by Officer Asken, who said that the auto was making forty miles an hour.”

Source: Rocky Mountain News, January 15, 1902.

Auto In a 1901 Denver Parade

This photo was taken during the 1901 Festival of Mountain and Plain parade in Denver.



Auto in the Festival and Mountain and Plain parade in Denver

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

By 1901, gasoline-powered autos and trucks were beginning to replace horse-drawn carriages and floats in Denver's parades. The drivers in this photo decorated their autos with flowers and crepe paper, just as they used to decorate their carriages.

Their Own Words

“August 1st Proclaimed a Legal Holiday by the Legislature. . . . For the morning of the great day a parade has been planned which will include prairie schooners and floats representing the early days of Colorado, with the pioneers en masse; decorated carriages and automobiles, and the city fire department. Prizes will be offered for the three best decorated fire wagons, automobiles, carriages and schooners. . . . The Gentlemen’s Driving and Riding Club, the Colorado Automobile Club and similar organizations will be invited to enter in the parade, which, as planned, will be one of the finest ever seen in this city [Denver].”

Source: Colorado Transcript (Golden, Colorado), July 11, 1907.

Auto Decorated For a Parade

This photo was taken in 1908 during the Flower Carnival in Denver. The vehicle is covered with white snowball flowers and green leaves. The women are wearing matching green and white gowns.



Auto decorated for the Flower Carnival in Denver

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

This is a good example of an early auto decorated for a parade. Automobile owners took part in many kinds of public activities. Members of auto clubs took part in parades of many kinds.

Their Own Words

“One thousand automobiles to journey from Denver to Golden and through mountain parks on the morning of Sunday, March 7 [1915]. Such is the plan of the Denver Motor Club. . . . The first Sunday in March is set as the date for the great automobile excursion to Denver’s mountain parks. Sunday has been selected because it is felt that on no other day can Denver’s working people get away to enjoy the beauties of the trip.”

Source: Colorado Transcript (Golden, Colorado), February 25, 1915.

A Larger Automobile

This photo shows four clergymen leaving a Denver church in an automobile.



Larger automobile

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

By the time this photo was taken, the autos used in Denver were much bigger than the earlier one shown in Photo 2. But this four-seater still looked more like a carriage than a modern car.

Their Own Words

“If all the automobiles in Denver were loaded with people, there would be around 30,000 persons awheel. Right now, says the Denver News, there is one automobile for every fifty persons in the city, or 4,000 autos for 200,000 population, which gives Denver a considerable edge in auto population proportionately to size over other cities of the country. This census. . . means that in a few brief years the erstwhile haunt of the buffalo and coyote has become a vast speedway for automobiles representing an investment easily of \$8,000,000.”

“It is likely that, taking Colorado Springs, and the country districts of Northern Colorado, where autos are particularly numerous, as well as Eastern Colorado, Pueblo and other towns, that Colorado can show more cars in proportion to population than any other state in the Union.”

Source: Colorado Transcript (Golden, Colorado), October 28, 1908.

“Stuck In The Mud”

The auto in this photo is stuck in the mud on a country road somewhere in Colorado.



Auto stuck in mud

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

Many of the roads in Colorado were not suitable for auto use. They were built for high-wheel, horse-drawn wagons, not for low-slung automobiles that needed a hard surface. This photo shows a team of mules pulling the auto to solid ground. The widespread use of automobiles eventually led to the building of paved highways in Colorado and elsewhere.

Their Own Words

“When my father died, which was in 1933, my mother ran for county superintendent of schools, and she was county superintendent for the [next] 20 years. . . . She had 25 to 30 rural schools, scattered all throughout the county. . . . She went in the wintertime [in order] to make the rounds of the schools. She was traveling all the time. . . . The first years in office she went mostly by herself. Then Mr. Purdy drove her for years. She went in that old Model A [Ford] . . . [and] she was stuck by the side of the road half the time. . . . Somebody would finally come along and dig her out, and she would go on. . . . That was nothing for her, to be off to the side of the road.”

Source: Norine Holland quoted in Julie Jones-Eddy, ed. Homesteading Women: An Oral History of Colorado, 1890-1950 (New York: Twayne, 1992): 183, 184.

A “Broken Down” Automobile

This family is pulling and pushing a broken-down auto on a country dirt road.



Broken down automobile

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

The first autos were not very reliable. They frequently had flat tires and mechanical problems that left passengers stranded.

Their Own Words

"[After getting a teaching job] I could now go in debt and purchase a Model 'T' Ford, crank and all. . . . Roads and tires were poor and I had to learn also to patch inner tubes."

"More than once I have to wrap my voluminous skirts around my knees, and wiggle under the car to drain a little gasoline to aid in the vulcanizing [repair of the rubber inner tube] process. But I first had to jack up the car, remove tire and tube from the rim with tire irons, patch the tube, place it in the tire, put the assembly back on the rim, and then on the jacked-up wheel before continuing a journey. Colorado eastern hamlets [small towns or villages] were far apart and my Model 'T' never broke down anywhere near civilization."

Source: Grace Fitzgerald, "A Lighthearted Look . . . 50 Years Ago," in Margaret J. Lehrer, ed., Up the Hemline (Colorado Springs, CO: Williams and Field, 1975): 101.

Wagon and Carriages

What do these photos tell you about the different kinds of wagons city people used?

Bottled Water Wagon

This wagon delivered bottled water in Colorado Springs. The sign on the side of the wagon says Manitou Soda Water. The wording on the crates inside the wagon says Hiawatha Table Water from Pikes Peak Mineral Water Co.



Bottled water wagon in Colorado Springs

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Until the 1920s, most delivery vehicles in Colorado cities were horse-drawn wagons like the one in this photo.

Their Own Words

"People usually carried home their purchases, but those buying for large families could not manage the great loads, so for them there was a delivery service by means of horse and wagon. The purchases were packed in a large wooden box which had to be unpacked in the kitchen, during which process the housewife might have a pleasant chat with the delivery boy."

Source: Quantrille McClung, Memoirs of My Childhood and Youth in North Denver (Denver: Colorado Genealogical Society, 1979): 41.

Furniture Delivery Wagon

This wagon is delivering furniture for the People's Furniture Company in Cripple Creek. Its load includes a table, a chair, and other items.



Furniture delivery wagon

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Many stores owned their own delivery wagons, especially those that sold heavy items like furniture. Stores that did not have their own wagons hired "express wagons." These wagons-for-hire were parked at convenient locations called express stands. Anyone could hire an express wagon.

Their Own Words

"My work for [Mr. Thomas] was to drive a little dun horse they called Major, hitched to an express wagon, delivering goods to and from the store, and picking up express jobs on the street. So Major and I 'majored along' and made money for Mr. Thomas. I had a stand on upper Union Avenue [in Pueblo], near the Commercial Hotel and under a cottonwood tree. . ."

"In a laundry around the hotel corner lived another fat-faced, good-natured Chinaman, who often gave me job. Dressed in his native costume, with wooden shoes, a black pigtail hanging down his back, carrying a basket full of clothes on his shoulder, he would come down to my stand, and place the basket carefully in my express wagon, then jump onto the seat beside me and wave his hand in the direction he wished me to go."

Source: Lyman Sproul, Turning Back the Clock (St. Louis: Mound City Press, 1953): 84.

An 1870's Buggy

This photo shows a man riding a buggy. It was taken in Colorado Springs sometime during the 1870s.



A buggy in Colorado Springs

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

City people who could afford to own and feed a horse used light buggies like this one for shopping and visiting.

A Barouche In Denver – 1910

The large carriage in this photo was called a barouche. The driver's seat in a barouche was separated from the passenger seats. This one had a convertible top.



Barouche in Denver

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

A barouche with the top down was a good vehicle for riding in parades. This barouche was leading a parade through downtown Denver in 1910. The man waving his hat is Theodore Roosevelt, the former President of the United States.

A Stagecoach In Colorado Springs

The photo of this stagecoach was taken on Pikes Peak Avenue in Colorado Springs. The building in the background is the Antlers Hotel.



Stagecoach in Colorado Springs

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

People often used stagecoaches to travel from one city to another. The coach in this photo took people from Colorado Springs on sight-seeing trips. At least eight people are seated on top of the carriage, with six or more people seated inside.

Their Own Words

"Prior to November 1871, the only way to get to Colorado Springs was by stage from Denver and the fare was 20 cents a mile and the walking not very good."

Source: Recollection of W.H. McIntyre, Colorado Springs Gazette, July 31, 1921, Dawson Scrapbooks, Vol. 34, Colorado Historical Society.