

Salt Lake Chy
ELECTRIC STREETCARS
AND
TROLLEY SQUARE

# IF TROLLEY CARS COULD TALK

# **A Pictorial History**

By Julia Hogan

Dedicated to Wally Wright and Walt Horrocks

- one moved us to the future with his vision
- the other taught us lessons from the past.

(Cover photo: Courtesy The Utah Historical Society, Shipler Collection)

Julia Hogan was the first marketing director of the Square for five years, part of the original renovation team with Richard G. Robins, manager.

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# Salt Lake City's Electric Streetcars And Trolley Square

What do you do with old trolley barns? Trolley Square provides a unique answer....a treasury of shops, restaurants and unique entertainments. Visitors come to enjoy the atmosphere and see a true working relic of the past.

Once the home of the Utah Light and Railway Company, the buildings no longer echo of men and machines, bells clanging, and the sounds of steel against steel....instead they play host to new funseekers and shoppers seasoned in the color and flair of today.

The Salt Lake City streetcars that returned to these buildings each night were part of one of the finest systems in the nation. This is their story and the exciting conversion of the carbarns that stand as mute testament to another era...known affectionately as "the good old days."





# AN EARLY START

In July of 1872, Brigham Young, the famous Mormon colonizer, proudly stepped up to take the first ride on the new mule-drawn streetcar as it started down Main Street. An exciting era in transportation history had begun for the pioneer settlement of Salt Lake City, Utah.

The children watching that day had a rare treat. One old timer recalled that his father, William Campbell Sr., who was the first driver on that inaugural trip, told him that several youngsters were invited to join the dignitaries for a free ride. Before long there was a carload of children all dazzled at the novelty of this strange "buggy on rails."

After that first run, the Salt Lake City Railroad Company began regular operation using two rat mules from Missouri. The mules were a sturdy lot as mules go, but not prone to excessive speeds. They were clocked at between "twenty minutes to one hour per mile," unless they felt like sitting for a spell. This explained a local saying, "If there's time, we'll take the streetcar; if not, we'll walk."

# FIRST ELECTRIC STREETCAR IN THE INTERMOUNTAIN WEST

The horse-cars (as they were called) proved popular enough that by 1883, the company had 4l cars, nine miles of track, 84 mules and 30 employees.

In 1889, Walter P. Read was named general manager of the company and he, along with president Francis W. Armstrong, proposed an important change. Since Salt Lake City was the fifth city in the nation to have electric power, the stage was set to electrify the streetcars.

With four lines or routes in operation using mules, Read decided to electrify one line. A trial run was made on August 8, 1889 with a luxurious new car powered by a small wheel or trolley connected to an overhead power line.

One of the newspapers in reporting the success of the run said, "the car sped up grades in fine style, and people along the line stared as though an apparition were flying by." When an old Chinese fruit vendor saw the trolley car approaching on its own power, he dropped his fruit basket and yelled, "No pushee…no pullee…go like hellee all the samee!!!" as he ran down the street.



Additional practice runs were made during the week with excitement mounting for the formal inauguration of service set for August l6th. That evening about five hundred people gathered at the old City Hall and witnessed a fistfight as to who would pay the first fare. Once the ride was underway, it was reported that "at thirty miles an hour, people held their breath at the sensation of being rushed along"

The trolley cars were an immediate success, and everyone seemed to thrill to the trolley fever. By 1893, the Salt Lake City Railroad boasted a fleet of 63 trolley cars with more than 42 miles of track in operation on the unpaved streets of the city.

For the record, although Salt Lake City was one of the first to introduce a trolley car system in the United States; the first official city was Richmond, Virginia.



Walter P. Read, Salt Lake City Railroad

Under the able direction of Read, the company moved quickly to increase and electrify routes. Read was described as an ideal leader, a man of warmth and considerable size and strength. His granddaughter, Edna Michelsen Faux recalled that whenever a trolley car was derailed, Walter Read could lift it back on the tracks alone! For his contributions, Read is said to be "one of the great captains in the industrial development of the West."



# **BITTER RIVALRY**

To meet the needs of an ever expanding community, other trolley companies quickly organized to capitalize on the trolley car craze.

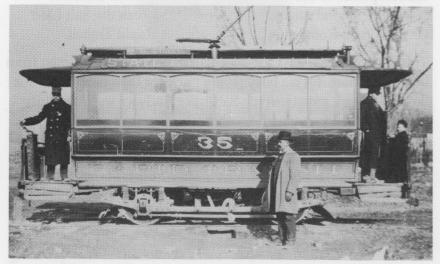
As ridership increased for all the trolley companies, city fathers kept control on the fares charged but didn't bother to control the rights of way. Operating franchises were issued allowing different companies to use the same rights of way. This action or "inaction" set the stage for a bitter feud between the Salt Lake City Railroad Company and the Salt Lake Rapid Transit.

This rivalry is truly one for the history books. One time men from the Rapid Transit were busy laying track for their new line while down the road, men from the Salt Lake Railway were carefully tearing up the same track! Another time two trolleys met on a single track, cowcatcher to cowcatcher. Both conductors refused to move, shouting insults to each other while passengers looked on in amusement. Finally city authorities were summoned to the scene to settle the dispute.



# TOGETHER, AT LAST

By 1900, these two companies had more than one hundred miles of trolley lines in operation between them, but their fierce competition prevented growth in services. In August 1901, they merged, along with other smaller companies, to become the Consolidated Railway and Power Company. The new director and superintendent was none other than Walter P. Read.



# **LOOKING BACK**

You can still see remnants of the early carbarn and machine shop of the Salt Lake Railroad Company on Second East between First South and South Temple. A closer look will reveal the old mule stable in back, since the mules were used to supplement some routes during the early days of the electric trolleys in the city.

Looking back at the "good old days," it's interesting to see how the traction companies met some of their challenges. One of these involved the use of transfer tickets, which carried the questionable notation—"nontransferable."

Here's how the system was set up to catch possible offenders. Using the artistic approach, each transfer slip displayed a "rogue's gallery" of male and female faces—five males and two females.

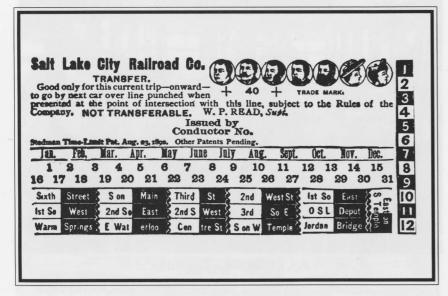


A Conductor's Dilemma

When a transfer was requested, the conductor simply punched the face that most closely matched the patron's appearance. The men were easy to select by the variety of facial hair in the drawings (unless the man was on his way to get a shave and a haircut):

- No. 1. The Smoothie (close shavers)
- No. 2 Handlebar Mustache
- No. 3 Muttonchops (low sideburns)
- No. 4 Uncle Ezra (feather duster on chin)
- No. 5 House of David (full crop of hair)

But for the women, it was a different story. With only two female drawings, one young, and one old, the conductor had to be a "Solomon in uniform" with each punch! Older women with young ideas didn't like it when the conductor punched the wrong drawing, and usually let him know of their disappointment. This kept the conductor ever alert—and ultimately worn down by all the decision making. Later the transfers were reprinted minus the drawings, a change welcomed by all the conductors.



Old Transfer Ticket with Faces

#### **GROWING PLANS**

In January 1904, a major event took place in the city when the Consolidated Railway and Power Company, which was buying part of its power from the Utah Power Company, merged with that company to create the Utah Light and Railway Company.

For the first time all the traction and lighting utilities of Salt Lake City and Ogden were under one management. It is interesting that the new company, Utah Light and Railway Company, was the parent company of Utah Power and Light.

Two years later, another milestone occurred in 1906, when Edward H. Harriman, the Union Pacific Railroad magnate, purchased a controlling interest in the new company. His dream was to build a traction empire in the west that would serve as a world model, and the Utah Light and Railway Company looked ideal for his plans.



Edward H. Harriman, Union Pacific Railroad

As a true man of vision with the funds to match, Harriman announced his intention of creating a multi-million dollar operation in Salt Lake City. This included updating existing rolling stock and modernizing the entire system including a new car house and maintenance shops, and new steam power plants.

Harriman was a master builder already being called "the colonizer of the west." He was responsible for "relieving the country" of the escapades of famous train robbers, Butch Cassidy and The Sundance Kid. For his contributions in Utah, a monument of Harriman stands on the south side of the Utah State Capitol Grounds.



# CARBARN SITE SELECTED

One of Harriman's first actions was to select a permanent site for his new carbarns. The vacant fairgrounds at Fifth South and Seventh East with its central location, looked ideal for his purposes.

When Mormon pioneers first entered the valley, the ten-acre tract of land had been set aside by Brigham Young as the Tenth Ward Square to be used by area residents as a local gathering place. In 1889, it was designated the official territorial fairgrounds for the Territory of Utah and an imposing Utah Exposition Building was constructed on the site. It served as the official fairgrounds until 1902. There wasn't enough room for a race track or it would be Utah's State Fairgrounds today.

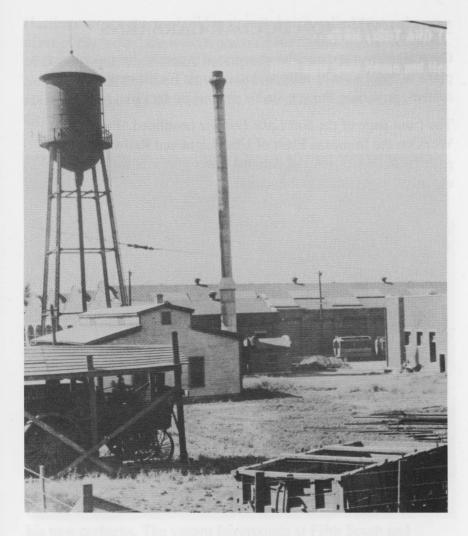
# **MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR CARBARNS**

Once Harriman secured the abandoned property, he announced plans to build a multi-million dollar home for his new trolley system, providing the very latest in housing facilities.

The front page of the *Salt Lake Tribune* headlined, "Progress of Work on the Immense Plant of Utah Light and Railway Company" with blueprints and detailed descriptions of the buildings' unique Mission-style architecture.

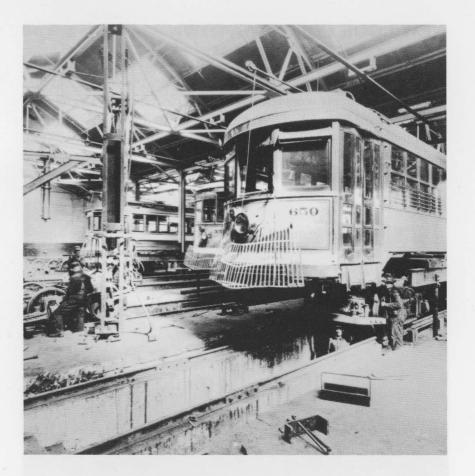


Once in use, the mammoth car barn had a capacity for 144 double-truck cars. The main building was divided into four huge bays, each 57 feet wide, with four tracks in each. There were 208 skylights to provide as much natural light as possible.



In those days of little insurance, fire was always a considered hazard and measures were taken to reduce the risk, with a water tower built 97 feet high to store 50,000 gallons of water. Connecting sprinkler lines were installed directly above and on the sides of each track inside the carbarn.

Harriman, a railroad man, was concerned about moving needed parts across the vast prairies, so he designed the new plant to be completely self-sufficient. Everything was created or maintained "on site" and only the trolley frames were purchased out of state.



In the maintenance building, or "Rip Shop" as the men called it, the cars were kept in working order, with blacksmiths creating parts as needed in the west end.

An impressive paint and carpenter shop was housed in the north building. To keep the cars looking shiny and new, they were given a coat of paint every three years and varnished every 18 months.

The material yard included a Sand House, and Heating Plant with tracks that allowed direct delivery of sand and coal. Bags of sand filled the Sand House with a heater in the center to keep them dry. Why would sand be necessary to run a trolley car system in this area? If you answered, "For traction on the tracks," you are right!

#### **NEW LOOK FOR DOWNTOWN**

One of Harriman's most impressive changes was in downtown Salt Lake City. At considerable expense, the wooden poles in the center of the streets were removed and replaced by underground wiring and metal poles to the side. This created a new look to downtown while providing room for his new larger cars to make the turns without hitting a pole.



He also replaced 80 miles of track with heavier rails to support larger, heavier cars, and double-tracked most of the existing routes in the city. At the same time, new track was laid for service to the outlaying areas of Holladay, Sandy and Centerville.

The 50 new cars ordered by Harriman were greeted with anticipation in an account published as follows: "Some of the larger and more handsome cars have arrived and it is needless to state that for space and capacity, they will be found to always have 'room for one more'."

Because of the increased length of the cars, up to 45 feet, compared to 16 feet before, the larger cars had a seating capacity of 44 passengers facing forward. The earlier cars seated only 18 to 20 passengers facing each other on seats that ran lengthwise.

There were other problems with the older cars. The motorman had to stand on the platform to run the controls facing the elements head on. The cars also had a problem of becoming centered on the humps of the street due to the lighter rails and weathered unpaved streets. All passengers then would have to help the motorman rock the trolley car over the hump to resume the ride. With the heavier rails, this was no longer a problem. So for comfort and ride, passengers were delighted with the new additions.



While Harriman was creating his traction empire, he also was introducing the commuter age to the valley. More people could live away from town and depend on the trolleys to commute daily for work in the city. The circle of the valley widened and the trolleys were busier than ever. Women took the trolleys to go shopping, youngsters rode them for lessons across town, and couples courted on the last "free" trolley run to the carbarns.

# RIDING THE RAILS FOR AMUSEMENT

With amazing accuracy, the streetcar routes of each era shaped the valley's urban development. For example, in the 1880's and 90's, many of the popular parks were located wherever the streetcar tracks ended.

Liberty Park, Beck's Hot Springs, Calder's Park—now Nibley Park on Seventh East, The West Side Racetrack and Smoots' Pleasure Gardens were all served by the trolley cars. Today's popular resort, Lagoon, was served by the famous Bamberger interurban line that ran from Salt Lake City to Ogden.



During the 1900's, the most popular route was the Saltair Line to the Great Salt Lake. This was operated by the Salt Lake Garfield and Western Railway. On Mondays the fare was ten cents and included swimming at the world-famous lake that kept people afloat regardless of their weight or swimming ability. The last run ended at midnight, as bathers serenaded the stars with popular songs of the times while the open-air cars carried them back to the city.

In 1914 another major change occurred with the company. It was no longer operated as a subsidiary of the Union Pacific Railroad with the earlier death of E. H. Harriman, and was taken over by the Utah Light and Traction Company.

In that same year more than 38 million passengers rode the trolleys and interurbans in Utah. Harriman's ambitious goal had been achieved in part. He had laid the foundation for one of the finest systems in the world with 192 pieces of rolling stock, three electric locomotives, gravel and coal trains and 50 assorted work cars. In addition, a fifth bay had been added to the carbarns to store the open-air trolleys used for the baseball games in the summer months.

Meanwhile the horseless carriage appeared more frequently on the unpaved streets of downtown, frightening horses and onlookers alike. No one could imagine that this noisy contraption could pose a threat to the future of the beloved trolley car.



# **CHALLENGES AHEAD**

In 1923, the first gasoline-powered bus was used as a transport to the main streetcar routes. More buses were ordered to provide a stub service to the suburbs, eliminating the need for expensive track maintenance. For the first time in the valley, trolley tracks were removed.

Now the future of the company appeared uncertain as track maintenance and costs of paving rights of ways began piling up while the city refused to allow fares to be raised. After much deliberation, company officials in a desperate move, suggested a trackless trolley bus—one that would use existing overhead lines but did not require tracks.

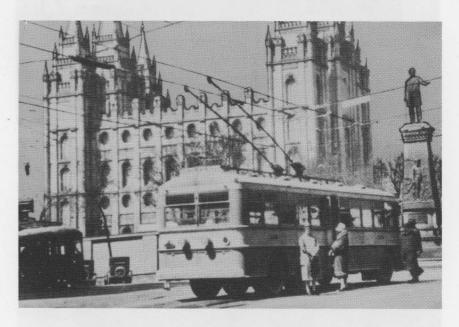
The trolley bus had not been operated on a grand scale up to this time because of its awkward design and insufficient power. Although Albany and Staten Island, New York were using them and some foreign countries, they did not meet with much favor for in-city transit. But Salt Lake officials persisted that with a few design alterations, larger, speedier, more powerful, trolley buses would solve the problem.

To convince lenders back east who required that a prototype bus be built first, "Operation Hoodwink" was underway when a sleek, gasoline-powered bus was passing through Salt Lake City. Permission was given to photograph it, and then a second photograph was taken of a trolley car and superimposed over the first to create a "prototype trolley bus."

This picture was just the proof needed. A contract was signed to begin manufacturing a fleet of these revolutionary trolley buses—buses in fact, that had never before been produced, except in dreams and blueprints of Edward A. West, general manager of the Utah Light and Traction Company, and his chief engineer, Jed F. Woolley.

# A SALT LAKE CITY FIRST IN THE WORLD!

In 1928, the attention of the world was focused on Utah when the first trolley coaches (as they were renamed) were put into service in Salt Lake City. Representatives from 26 states and 13 foreign countries came to study the operation and copy the design.

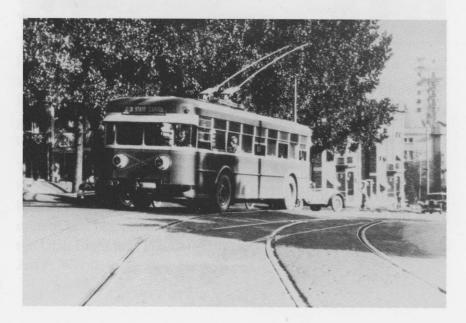


The world famous Salt Lake City trolley coach was the result of desperate times that required bold actions.

These coaches were the first to be placed into service anywhere, and they combined the best features of the electric trolley car, the gasoline bus and the electric bus. The basic feature was a new type motor with a lower starting torque that did not strip rubber from the tires.



The success of the Utah trackless trolley coach was sensational. Reports confirmed that a "new era in urban transportation was born." Because of their desire to find a solution and save their company, many innovations still in use today are attributed to officials of Utah Light and Traction Company, and their revolutionary trolley coach.



# A SECOND FIRST

It appeared that the trackless trolley coach had solved the company's problems. There was no longer a need to maintain the tracks. The coaches were quieter and easier to maneuver. The routes were flexible and passengers were picked up and unloaded at the curb.

But the problem was only half solved. There was still a need for service to outlying areas that didn't justify the expense of installing overhead lines. The gasoline motor bus was the next step in keeping the company afloat, but again the front engine bus had several shortcomings that made it unsuitable for city service.

It was back to the drawing board for West and Woolley. This time the details were worked out for a new type of bus—a light weight rear engine gasoline bus.

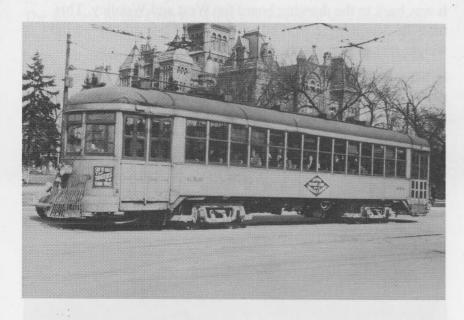
In 1933, just five years following their amazing trolley coach, the two officials presented the city with another "first" when their new rear engine gasoline buses were successfully placed into service. Now Salt Lake City boasted a "coordinated system of modern street railway and bus transportation" unrivaled in the world.



#### A STEADY DECLINE

The overwhelming success of the rear engine gasoline bus spelled the doom to Salt Lake's trolley cars. With more families owning automobiles and bus ridership on the upswing, gradually trolley overhead wires were removed, until finally only three main routes were in operation by 1941.

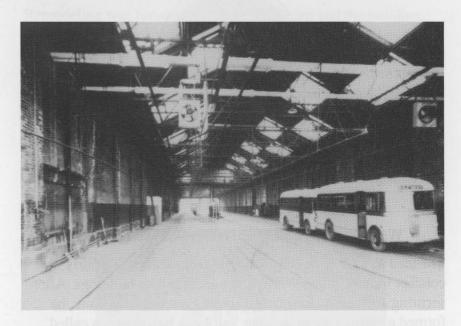
On May 31st of that year, the city prepared to say goodbye to their streetcars. Caught in the march of progress, old 712 was decked with a flowered wreath and at 7:10 p.m. a few faithful friends gathered in front of East High School, at Thirteenth East and Ninth South, to witness the last historic run.



"Doff" Evans, who was called the "kid conductor" when he first took the controls back in 1891, was at the controls for the final run, joined by other oldtimers for the farewell ride.

Due to a gasoline shortage during World War II, the trolleys continued operating through August 19, 1945. The last run was without fanfare. It was a quiet end to an era in street railway "firsts" for the city and the nation…an era that left its imprint in cities throughout the world.

# FROM CARBARNS TO TROLLEY SQUARE



The electric streetcar operated in Salt Lake City from 1889 to 1945, a brief time perhaps, but what a momentous stay! But the story isn't over yet for the carbarns were still operating as the home of the city's bus company, standing as reminders of the streetcars many Salt Lakers remembered.

In 1969, it was clear to current occupants—The Salt Lake City Lines, that the buildings no longer filled the needs of the company, and a new location was being planned. But what to do with the old carbarns? To raze or re-use—that was the question!

Enter Wallace A. Wright, Jr., an innovative realtor with a plan to use the carbarns for an entirely different purpose. A true visionary like the transportation leaders who preceded him, "Wally" as he is known, was a dreamer too. He saw a new use for the buildings with their unique "Mission-style architecture" as a shopping and entertainment center similiar to the famous Ghirardelli Square in San Francisco. His renovation project would be called "Trolley Square."



Wallace A. Wright, Jr., Trolley Square Developer

The idea of finding new uses for old real estate was a fairly new concept in 1969, when Wally first purchased the buildings. After securing short-term financing through First Security Bank, he formed a partnership with other Salt Lake businessmen called Trolley Square Associates.

Albert L. Christensen, Wally's former college classmate, was the outstanding choice as project architect. The two men set about "creating their center" on paper, using some of the original blueprints for dimensions.

Wally also formed a construction company called Trolley Square Construction with Jack L. Rudy as superintendent. Men were hired to begin sandblasting the outside of the buildings, revealing the warm vintage brick beneath layers of old yellow paint. As crews began installing the old wrought iron lighting fixtures from downtown Salt Lake City, the community took note that something exciting was happening to "their" trolley barns.

# **NEW AND DIFFERENT TENANTS**

Remodeling was focused in the main carbarn and the building next to it, the maintenance or Rip Shop. The first three bays in the carbarn were interconnected like streets, with shops tucked away in corners, around newly created courtyards, and along brick walkways. Cutouts from the walls provided used brick for the floors.

The first bay was given the appearance of a winding European street, while the second bay appeared more like an open market-place. Space on the third bay encompassed shops and businesses facing the second bay.



The dream began to become a reality with the opening of the first tenants in June of 1972. Trolley Theatres, a four-movie complex, opened in the maintenance building and The Ice Cream Store Restaurant opened in the carbarn.

Retail shops began opening in the carbarn on two levels, by using cored concrete slabs to create a second floor. All of the wiring on the main level, was installed underground using the original grease pits as access tunnels.

#### ONE OF A KIND CENTER

Meanwhile, the developers ran out of used brick. With "need preceding innovation," they decided to buy old buildings scheduled for demolition to get authentic used brick.

Here, the project took an unusual turn. Many of the antique fixtures taken from the various Salt Lake mansions and landmarks were used in the renovation of the Square and as accent pieces in the shops and restaurants.

If a door was needed for a storage area, and it happened to be a hand carved door from the Dinwoodey mansion, that was what was used. The result was a whole new look that "Ab" Christensen described as "tongue in cheek" architecture.

This development approach continued throughout the renovation of the project. A cupola from the Dinwoodey Mansion became an outdoor gazebo; the entire attic from the Culmer Mansion was rescued and moved to the Square on the second level for a shop; the "Dickens-like dormers" from the Culmer Mansion were installed in the first bay including the front door with etched glass above, and the beautiful hand carved staircase inside a shop on the first level.





The "recovery spirit" can be seen throughout Trolley Square. One of the most dramatic is a huge stained glass dome, measuring twenty-five feet in diameter. It's from the First Methodist Church in Long Beach, California and hangs from the ceiling in a wrought-iron frame. The dome was shipped to Salt Lake City in boxes without a pattern or frame, and the resourceful men of Trolley Square Construction, put that giant jigsaw together. The green stained glass windows from this church can be seen in two restaurants in the Square.

The melding of the old with the new (inside the old), created a wonderful spirit of cooperation among the construction crew and architects. Under the inspiration of Wally with his many ideas and discoveries, architects using "open-ended" designs worked closely with the construction crew who in turn became "armchair designers" adapting here and there. In tribute to those who created Trolley Square, it was a "true labor of love for all."



The old water tower, standing as the landmark of the property, had ceased to function as a storage tank, when in the 1920's the city water pressure built up and plans were made to remove it. But it cost the same to pay taxes on it so it remained.

Inspired by a California lighthouse, Wally decided that an observation deck should be added to the tower along with a seven-spiral staircase to give visitors a magnificent view of the city and the Great Salt Lake beyond. The tower, standing on one of the busiest streets in the state, also became the marquee for the theatres, and was strung with thousands of tiny lights beckoning visitors day and night to come to the Square.

# STATE HISTORIC SITE

In 1973, Trolley Square was designated a "state historic site," one of the few shopping centers in the nation to receive that distinction. Newspapers, magazines and travel publications world-wide have published articles on Trolley Square—as an outstanding working relic of the past.



The Sand House had been transformed into a branch of First Security Bank of Utah, and as tenants opened in the North Building which was once the paint and carpenter shop, the project was nearing completion.



Meanwhile the fourth and fifth bays were converted using unusual accent pieces from old mansions. Even the grand overhead walkway to the south parking lot had a "previous life" as an old mining trestle from the Anaconda Mines in Tooele, Utah. In recognition for this section, the center was awarded the "Innovative Development Techniques"—by the International Council of Shopping Centers in 1980.

As Trolley Square, the property has come full circle in combining its past and present uses. From country square to territorial fairgrounds, to the home of the city's trolley cars and buses, to a unique shopping and entertainment center showcasing colorful shops, restaurants, and theatres, it reflects the best of all eras.



Once again visitors come to the Square as in the early days to have fun and enjoy new sights and sounds. Once again visitors are reminded of the former function of the property with its trolley bays and water tower. And once again residents of Salt Lake City have good reason to be proud!

# A NEW LOOK FOR THE NINETIES

Progress seems the core of carbarns, and the message for the 80's was "move ahead," as Melvin Simon & Associates, the largest shopping center manager in the country, with Cordish Embry & Associates, Inc., renovation leaders, acquired Trolley Square.

Plans were announced for a major face lift, and when the construction dust settled, there was a new second level food court, the amphitheatre had been doubled in size, new bridges and walkways improved pedestrian flow and increased square footage. New skylights were installed and lighter, brighter colors gave the Square an entirely fresh, new look.

The owners have blended Trolley Square's historic past with contemporary retailing, dining and entertainment, making it a lively place both day and night. Even the water tower has a new appearance and function as a neon weather beacon, with lights of solid blue for clear skies...flashing blue for cloudy...red for rainy days...and flashing red predicting snow.

A special feature in the center of the main mall is a working model of the carbarns and maintenance shops as they functioned in the 1930's. Created by former Utah Light and Traction Company employee, Emerson Carter, it took three years to complete.

His dream was to have it displayed for others to enjoy, and thanks to Melvin Simon and Associates, it now stands as a fascinating reminder of the unique heritage of Trolley Square. Push the button to be taken back to the good old days "when a hundred bells clanged and a hundred trolleys rolled the line."





Ann Waters, editor; Michael Laine, trolley car historian; Jack L. O'Donnell, trolley car historian; Kent Smith, technical assistance, family and special friends for their help; Jean Sommers for her encouragement.

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Utah State Historical Society, pages 2,3,6,7,8,10,14,15,21 Utah Power and Light Company, pages 5,11,12,13,17 Trolley Square, pages 23,24,26,27,29,30,31 Union Pacific, page 9 Walt Horrocks Family, pages 19,20 Gordon Cardall, pages 16,22 Julia Hogan, pages 25,28 Edna Michelsen Faux, page 4 The Emerson Carter Family, page 32

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