

Mile Markers in the History of the West Rail Line

By Richard Gardner

- 1890** William A.H. Loveland, Charles C. Welch and others begin efforts to build the Denver, Lakewood & Golden railway to connect Golden and Denver and give rise to the streetcar suburb of Lakewood. Edward L. Berthoud engineers Jefferson County's first metro mass transit railway.
- 1891** The Denver, Lakewood & Golden begins service on September 20, transporting passengers and freight. It operates by electricity as far west as today's Harlan Street and then switches to steam locomotives.
- 1893** Barnum Branch connecting the mainline south to the town of Barnum via today's Knox Court opens. It's created at the urging of the family of town founder P.T. Barnum, the famed circus showman.
- 1894** Tyndale Branch connecting Golden to coal mining company village of Tyndale overlooking Ralston Creek in the area of Long Lakes opens. Constructed at the behest of mining magnate and DL&G investor Samuel Newhouse, it transports coal and passengers over the 6-mile route that also connects to Golden's northern White Ash coal mines and Golden Pressed & Fire Brick Works.
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- 1896** On July 24, the Great Flood takes 29 lives across Jefferson County, and destroys bridge and 3,000 feet of the Tyndale Branch in Golden along northern shoreline of Clear Creek. With the company already teetering because of the Silver Crash, the event plunges the DL&G into bankruptcy. Plans to connect to Union Station are shelved. The railway is later rescued by Newhouse, but the Tyndale Branch never operates again. Part of its route is now taken by Highway 93 between Washington Avenue and near today's West 56th Avenue.
- 1904** Reorganized as the Denver & Intermountain Railway (D&IR), the line completes its original vision of being under full electrical power.
- 1909** On August 7, a cloudburst between Green Mountain and Denver floods Lakewood Gulch, sending a wall of water towards West Denver (today's Sun Valley) neighborhood where 200 lived. Police and riders from Jefferson County warn those ahead and no lives are lost despite table-deep water. The tramway dodges water around today's Harlan Street but its track to the east is destroyed, along with the South Platte River bridge.
- 1910** Morrison Branch connecting the mainline southwest towards the hogback ridge in the area of today's I-70 cut is built at the urging of Red Rocks owner John Brisben Walker. It never quite reaches Morrison but does tap the Williams and Parfet clay mines, initially operating on steam power.

1910 The Rubey Spur connecting the Golden terminal to the Rubey clay mines at the western end of the city via the southern shoreline of Clear Creek is built. The quarry at that point constituted 95% of the railway's freight service.

1911 Furious over the D&IR dramatically increasing fares after having been promised a perpetual 5¢ fare by the original company, 16 Lakewood citizens stage a protest January 5, paying only original fare. They are met by the tramway president with Deputy Sheriff upon their return trip at County Line Station. Some leave voluntarily, others are thrown off, and Stanley M. Barrows and Ernest Guebelle are arrested. A stop at today's Welch Street was named for Barrows.

1913 On August 11, Car #25, starting out from Golden unknowingly into the teeth of a major rainstorm that causes a flood of Kinney Run, miraculously escapes. Just after clearing one bridge torn out passenger Michael Sweeney sees the bridge ahead giving way and signals to stop. The car was marooned on Jackson Street between 16th and 17th but its passengers and crew are saved. The car is today restored and listed on the National Historic Register.



1913 In the Great Blizzard a tramway car is stranded on December 4 at Wight Station at today's Estes Street, in what was then the rural countryside of Lakewood. With temperatures plunging towards zero, Jack Frost saves the people from the Great Blizzard when Frost, whose given name is Arthur, wades through great drifts to reach a farmhouse and come back with a sack of coal to warm the passengers and crew. The next day they make it to safety, crossing drifts as high as 12 feet.

1917 The Denver & Intermountain and Great Western Sugar Company team up to challenge Lakewood area farmers to plant the new cash crop of sugar beets. They offer to build a shovel dump at Smiths Station if 200 acres are planted within 4 miles, and an automatic dump if 500 acres. They hoped for 600-700 acres planted; with 2,000 acres as response, the farmers got their automatic dump, which existed for many years at today's Garrison Station.

1932 At Deviny Station, today's Lakewood-Wadsworth Station, on May 17, motorman W.F. Alexander inadvertently let his car drift from the siding back onto the mainline too late for an oncoming car to stop. The crash sheared roofs and sides off both cars, seriously injuring three, including the mother of nearby telephone worker Ella Williams who had

called for help when she heard the crash. Among the passengers who miraculously escaped was future Colorado Governor John C. Vivian.

1932 The Welch family tragically comes to an end on November 26, when a tramway car, run by their friend T.R. Grover, unavoidably collides with the automobile of Charles Welch Jr. and wife at a blind curve a few feet from the gates of the Welch estate. It takes months for motorman Grover to recover from the ordeal.

1941 Remaco Spur connecting the D&IR mainline to the new Remington Arms plant is built. Its name is an acronym for the Remington Arms Company, which built the plant to manufacture bullets and cartridges for the World War II war effort. Today the plant is the Denver Federal Center.



1943 President Franklin Delano Roosevelt becomes the most famous person to travel this line when he travels to the Remington Arms plant on April 24 by special car. The trip was a surprise inspection as part of his nationwide tour of war facilities.

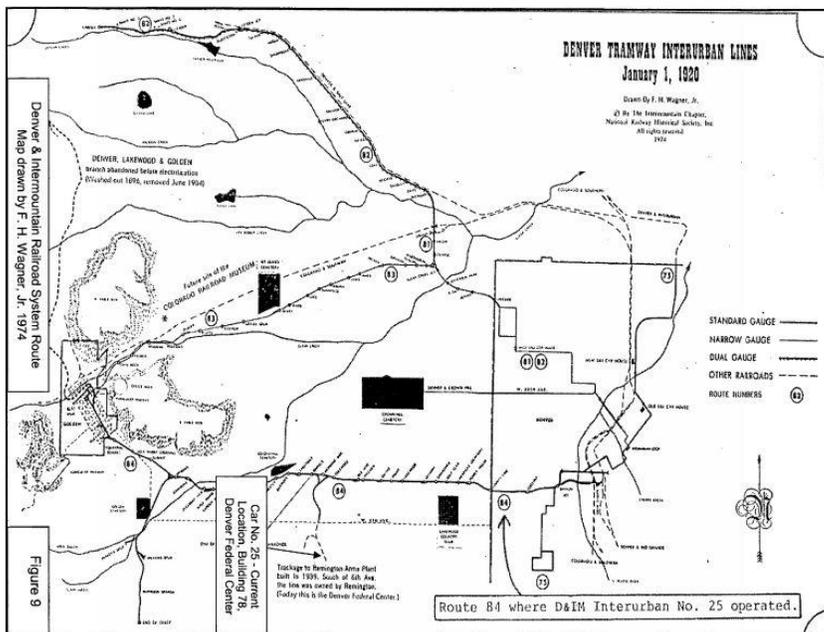
1950 Passenger rail service along this rail line ceases operation on June 4. It is replaced by the #84 bus line, now known as #16, along West Colfax Avenue.

1953 Freight rail service along this D&IR line ceases operation on March 15. Associated Railroads, owned by 5 railroads, takes over mainline running 3 little trains per week to Denver Federal Center. Barnum Branch, Morrison Branch, Rubey Spur, and all mainline points west of the Federal Center are permanently shut down.

1988 The final operating portion of the D&I railway ceases operation October 23, when the Associated Railroads runs its last train to the Denver Federal Center. For the first time in modern American history a city of 100,000 or more was left without railroad service.

2013 **Railway reopens for passenger service on April 26 as the West Rail Line of the Regional Transportation District.**

- Mainline between Federal and Oak is reactivated after 60 years;
- Remaco Spur is reactivated after 25 years;
- mainline between Federal and I-25 is reactivated after 96 years.
- Coleridge, Smiths, Devinny, and County Line stations are reactivated after 63 years as Oak, Garrison, Lakewood-Wadsworth and Sheridan stations;
- Herricks Station is reactivated after 91 years as Lamar Station.



One hundred seventeen years after its conception, the vision of connection to Union Station is finally realized. A new mainline is built along West 6th Avenue connecting to Golden, crossing over where the Morrison Branch once was at the southeast corner of Golden Cemetery.

Photos and map from the National Register of Historic Places documentation for Car #25, 5JF.B17.9.

Car #25 has been restored and is currently on display at the Denver Federal Center. Read more in the 2001 issue of *Historically Jeffco*.

http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/feature/weekly_features/2012/den-imt-rr_interurbanno25.pdf