



## Trolley Trailer No. 610 (Aurora Landmark #24)

### Trolley into Aurora

Many major cities implemented public transit systems in the late 19th century. As the population spread, new communities like Fletcher (the original name for Aurora) created streetcar lines to link its citizens to Denver.

Denver experimented with horse-drawn and cable cars, as well as a locally invented street-level electric conduit system, before settling on an overhead electric trolley system in the early 1890s. Fletcher developers purchased the struggling Colfax Electric Railway in 1891 and expanded the line eastward. Completed by 1893, the trolley line terminated at Dallas Street, but extended to the Gutheil Park subdivision near present day Ursula Street within five years. Low ridership forced the Colfax Electric Railway to sell to the Denver Tramway Company in 1898 and cut service east of Geneva Street that same year.



*Munn family at Cottonwood Hotel, Terminus of Colfax Electric Railway, 1908, Aurora History Museum collection*

By the early 1900s, the frequency of trolley traffic into Aurora increased under the direction of Denver Tramway Company chief engineer John Beeler. Trolley trailers, like the one on display at the Aurora History Museum, were pulled by trolley cars and provided service during busy periods of the day. Built in 1913 by the Woeber Company, Trolley Trailer No. 610 traveled along Colfax Avenue into Aurora. The trailer weighs 18,300 pounds and has a rider capacity of 50 seated and up to 50 more standing. The Aurora trolleys moved to other lines by 1932, and some were given new life on the Denver & Inter-Mountain Railroad to Golden. Trolleys and trailers, including No. 610, also transported the WPA workers who built Red Rocks Amphitheater.

The conductor's booth contained the fare box for the riders on the trailer as well as a place for the conductor to sit. Money was placed in the top of the fare box. Denver Tramway Co. often hired young people especially university students to serve as conductors on trailers. Since trailers were primarily used during the early morning and late afternoon hours, students were the ideal candidate for this position. While several different educational institutions were represented, the majority of the conductors were University of Denver (DU) students, thus DU gained the nickname "Tramway Tech".

Mounted on the top of a mechanized trolley car, this bell signaled when the streetcar approached an intersection. The motorman also used it to signal the car leaving a station or to warn pedestrians, wagons, and later automobile traffic. Trolley trailers such as Trolley Trailer No. 610 did not usually have a bell. There is little or no historic record identifying the number of "clangs" used for the signals.

In the early days of Denver's trolley system, all cars had a destination sign in the first window by the door that identified the route the car traveled. Introduced in 1916, new numbers assigned to the routes made them easier to read and caused less confusion for the riders. Route names on signs like this one continued to be used in addition to the route numbers, for example the Aurora Line became Line 14.

## A Trolley in a House

To raise money and empty its storage facilities, the Denver Tramway Company sold many trolley cars and trailers for \$50 each. Dr. Edwin Perrott purchased three of these trailers in 1950.

Perrott moved Trolley Trailer No. 610 to his farm at the northwest corner of East Colfax Avenue and Airport Boulevard in eastern Aurora. He built a house around the trailer and used the car for his master bedroom. Despite Perrott cutting several openings for doors, the trailer remained protected from the weather and retained its original wood and fixtures.

In 2006, Aurora police officer Tim Jeffrey responded to a call by William Perrott, Edwin's son, regarding trespassing and vandalism on the family's property. Returning to the station, Officer Jeffrey told his supervisor, Sgt. Franklin Michelson, about the trolley built into the farmhouse by Dr. Perrott. Intrigued by its historical relevance, Sgt. Michelson contacted Dr. Gordon Davis at the Aurora History Museum.

William Perrott agreed to donate the trolley trailer if the Museum coordinated efforts to tear down the house. The Museum, with the help of Weitz Construction Company, Anderson Demolition, Duffy Crane Company, the Aurora Police Department, and the Aurora Streets Department, salvaged the trolley trailer. Loaded onto a flatbed truck and placed into storage, the trailer awaited restoration.

In October 2012, the Aurora City Council approved funding for the construction of a new gallery and resolved it would be named in honor of former City Councilwoman and longtime community activist and Museum supporter, Ruth Fountain.



## Trolley Restoration

The restoration of Trolley Trailer No. 610 took 16 regular volunteers more than two years and over 4,500 hours to complete. Former Aurora Museum Foundation president Robert "Bob" Eide enlisted the help of Morey Miller and Cliff Lushbough to coordinate the project. Together they managed the crew of volunteers and located and fabricated materials.

The disrepair of the trolley trailer made it difficult to begin. Volunteers hand cleaned every brass screw, piece of hardware, and length of wood to remove almost 100 years of paint and grime. In order to protect the wood ceiling during cleaning, workers used a special process of blasting ground corn cob husks. The crew also recreated missing panels where Dr. Perrott cut three entrances into one side of the trailer.



Museum staff located metal seat frame supports in Strasburg, Colorado, and Morey Miller rebuilt the wooden benches to attach to the supports. Purchased using a grant from the State Historical Fund and additional funds from the Aurora Museum Foundation, the trolley wheels, known as “trucks,” completed the restoration.

To honor its significance to the community, the Aurora Historic Preservation Commission recommended the trailer for designation as Aurora Historic Landmark #24. The City Council approved it in 2008.



## Transportation Evolves

After World War II, the automobile dramatically changed Aurora’s transportation landscape. Increased traffic motivated planners to develop effective solutions to alleviate congestion.

The popularity of the automobile in the 1950s sparked the federal government to institute the Interstate Highway System. As one of the first interstates built in Colorado, I-70 provided regional and national connections throughout the Denver Metro area. Completed in 1976, I-225 expanded access to the major highways for local citizens.

The 1980s and 1990s saw increased use of the highway systems. Motivated by daily traffic jams and pollution concerns, in 2004 Aurora became part of the

regional FasTracks Initiative to provide commuter rail service throughout the metro area. Similar to the trolley lines of the 1890s, the new Aurora Line will connect the city to its neighbors.



*I-225 and 6th Avenue interchange under construction, 1973, Aurora History Museum Collection*

## Museum Expansion

In October 2012, the Aurora City Council approved funding for the construction of a new gallery and addition at the Aurora History Museum. Council resolved to name it in honor of Ruth Fountain, a former city councilwoman, community activist and museum supporter.

The Aurora Museum Foundation was instrumental in raising funds and in-kind donations through grants and support from local businesses, organizations and individuals. The 1,630 square foot gallery was completed in November 2014. The addition was designed by Humphries Poli Architects and built by Palace Construction. The *Growing Home* exhibit about Aurora’s history was designed by Dennis Meyer of Filament Design/Build with support from museum staff. The exhibit features Trolley Trailer No. 610.

From the Aurora History Museum  
Edited May 5, 2016