

Denver Railyard History

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May 16, 1868 Denver Pacific Railway and Telegraph Company broke ground for its line going north to meet the Union Pacific in Cheyenne. Milepost 0 was on a line with the alley between Wynkoop and Wazee at 19th Street. The station was located at 21st and Wazee.

1870 First Denver Pacific train arrived from Cheyenne on June 24.

Construction commenced July 5 eastward on the Kansas Pacific Railroad. It connected with the west bound construction at Strasburg August 15.

Colorado Central Railroad started construction on its line which would connect Denver and Golden. The Kansas Pacific and Colorado Central both rented space from the Denver Pacific station at 21st and Wazee.

1871 Denver and Rio Grande Railroad started construction July 21. Milepost 0 was between two spurs of the Denver Pacific Railroad at 19th and Wynkoop. D&RG constructed its own station at 19th and Wynkoop.

1874 Denver, South Park and Pacific Railroad commenced grading in August. Milepost 0 was at 6th and Larimer with the depot at 6th and Walnut.

1875 Colorado Central moved to a new station at 16th and Delgany.

1879 Union Depot and Railroad Company was formed by the Denver and Rio Grande, the Denver, South Park, and Pacific, the Colorado Central, and the Union Pacific Railroads. Walter Cheesman was the first president. The purpose was to build and operate a combined passenger depot. Land was purchased with boundaries being 16th, Wynkoop, 18th, and Delgany Streets.

1880 John Brisben Walker purchased 500 lots near present day Union Station where he would build Denver's first amusement park, River Front Park.

Construction started on the new Union Depot.

1881 20,000 people attended the official opening of Union Station in July. The station was in use starting in May.

1882 Burlington & Missouri River Railroad (subsidiary of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy) arrived. Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe reached Union Station on D&RG tracks until it built its own line from South Denver in 1900.

1887 Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific trains reached Denver via D&RG track from Colorado Springs.

John Brisben Walker opened River Front Park in the Central Platte Valley where Commons Park is located today. The park boasted a race track, the Castle of Culture & Commerce, ball parks, an excursion steamer, and numerous other features including fireworks displays. The Castle was later utilized by the

Denver and Salt Lake Railroad (Moffat Road) which became part of the D&RG in 1947. The Castle was destroyed by fire in 1951.

Denver Connections

When the Missouri Pacific opened its line to Pueblo on New Year's Day 1888, another connection to the east was possible via the Denver & Rio Grande. Thus there was a choice of six ways to reach the Missouri River and points east from Denver: Santa Fe, Missouri Pacific, Rock Island, Union Pacific (Kansas Pacific line), Burlington, or Union Pacific (Julesburg line). Travelers to California had a choice of Santa Fe, Rio Grande, Colorado Midland, or Union Pacific; the last three all reached the Golden State via the Central Pacific west of Ogden. After the turn of the century, the San Pedro, Los Angeles & Salt Lake and the Western Pacific lines had also been built.

1890s Walker sold River Front Park to the railroad(s).

Burlington Consolidation

Union Pacific and its subsidiaries Union Pacific Denver & Gulf (including the former Colorado Central Railroad and the Cheyenne and Northern Railway) and the Denver Leadville & Gunnison had fallen into receivership. UPD&G and the DL&G were reorganized in 1899 as the Colorado & Southern Railway, which in turn came under the control of the Burlington in 1908. The C&S established headquarters in Denver, building new shops and yards at 7th Street and in 1911 opened a new Fort Collins-Cheyenne route. This closed the gap created in 1889 with the abandonment of that part of the old Colorado Central. Also, in 1899, an operating agreement was entered into with the Santa Fe to use the latter's Denver to Pueblo track, relegating the old Denver & New Orleans route to branch line status.

By 1899, the Northern Pacific (first of the northern transcontinentals) and the Great Northern (James J. Hill) held controlling interest in the Burlington. In October, 1914 the C&S opened its new line from Orin Junction, Wyoming, through Casper and on to a connection with the NP at Laurel, Montana. Denver was now on a direct Gulf of Mexico to Puget Sound railroad. This included a direct route to Yellowstone National Park, a significant boost to tourism. In 1970 the CB&Q, Great Northern, Northern Pacific, and the Pacific Coast merged under the name Burlington Northern.

1894 Central portion of Union Station was flattened by fire caused by an electrical short circuit March 18. It was immediately replaced. Cost: \$200,000.

1899 After Jay Gould's fall from power, the station ownership reorganized as the Union Depot and Railway Company. Stock ownership among the railroads remained the same. Other railroads were tenants and paid rent based on number of trains entering and leaving. Another four acres of land was purchased bringing the total traffic tracks to 12.

1902 Denver Northwestern & Pacific Railroad (Moffat Road) began construction at Utah Junction, three miles north of Union Depot. The Moffat line built its own station at 15th and Bassett Streets with its subsidiary Northwestern Terminal in 1905. Moffat died 1911. The railroad reorganized in 1913 as the Denver & Salt Lake. The Moffat Tunnel opened in the 1920s. The Dotsero Cutoff opened in 1934. Became part of the D&RG in 1947.

1912 The depot company once again reorganized August 17, 1912. Total reorganization was completed by March, 1914. The owners of the newly organized Denver Union Terminal Railway Company were the

Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe; the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy; the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific; the Colorado and Southern; the Union Pacific, and the Denver and Rio Grande Western railroads.

1914 Construction began on the new center section of Union Station September 3 with removal of the tower and center section of the old station. Subways to the train platforms were added during this phase of construction. The project was finished February, 1917.

1933 Central Platte Valley flooded August 4. Castlewood Dam on Cherry Creek broke and sent a wall of water downstream.

1948-50 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers constructed Cherry Creek Dam for flood control.

1958 This was the last year that the number of passengers at Union Station exceeded the number at Stapleton Airport.

1965 The Great Flood swamped the South Platte River on June 16, temporarily cut Denver in two.

1967 Chatfield Reservoir was built for flood control.

1969 Regional Transportation District (RTD) created by the state legislature.

1980 16th Street Pedestrian Mall, 1.2 miles long, opened. Cost: \$29 million.

1983 Burlington Northern tore down its old freight house at 15th Street and Delgany (built by the Burlington and Missouri River railroad in 1882) and the roundhouse at 23rd Street.

1984 Philip Anschutz purchased the D&RGW for \$500 million.

October 15, 1985 Denver voters rejected a city proposal to build a new Convention Center in the Central Platte Valley (specific site unidentified).

1986 Burlington Northern redeveloped land between West 46th Avenue and Utah Junction (torn up when North Yard was built at West 48th Avenue and Inca Street in 1949) to an intermodal yard which replaced the old 19th Street intermodal yard next to the Union Station. BN cleared tracks and buildings between 15th and 19th Streets by July 1 which made 25 acres available for development.

D&RGW abandoned its line from Union Station to the Burnham Yard making Burnham a dead end terminal. This would later become the route of the RTD Southwest and Southeast Light Rail lines. D&RGW started operating over the BN to North Yard.

Railroads were implementing the Mid Valley Rail Corridor, what would become known as the Consolidated Main Line, in about the same location as the BN main line. The plan was for a two or three track main line from the south end of Rice Yard (3rd and Wewatta Streets) to Prospect (Prospect to West 48th Avenue) and the BN Crossing near the 23rd Street Shops.

1987 D&RGW purchased the Southern Pacific Railroad, initially operated separately.

1988 Railroads which owned Union Station considered their options for the building including boarding it up and allowing it to deteriorate, selling, or demolishing. The Denver Union Terminal Development Agreement required the owners to maintain and repair the main building and the two-story wings. Alterations or demolition would require approval of the Denver Landmark Preservation Commission. In return station owners received assurances that Union Station would not be included in the Lower Downtown Historic District. Owners retained the right to demolish the one-story wings. They also won the right for 50 years to build two 250-foot towers behind the building as well as smaller buildings along Wynkoop Street. Railroads said this agreement was justified because they had to give up significant pieces of property to Denver for the construction of Wewatta Street behind the station, as well as the extension of the 16th Street Mall and several other streets into the valley.

Single story wings constructed in 1892 were removed from both ends of Union Station.

City of Denver created the Lower Downtown Historic District over objections of most property owners within the District.

Riverfront Park and Commons Park

This area is located in the historic heart of Denver. The site is bordered on the northwest by the South Platte River, on the southwest by Cherry Creek, on the southeast by the railroad lines, and on the northeast by 20th Street. The first residential units were completed in 2001-2002. By the end of 2013, 2500 people live in the Riverfront Park neighborhood. There are 1044 rental units and 815 ownership units completed or under construction.

1991 Trillium Corporation acquired several hundred parcels of land from Burlington Northern Railroad through the BN real estate arm, Glacier Park. This purchase included several parcels in downtown Denver near the South Platte River. Trillium acquired most of the old rail yard between Union Station and the South Platte River as well as partial interest in the Union Station parcel.

Trillium brought in Design Workshop to help with a planning and design study to develop a concept plan and design guidelines for the newly available land. A public process was undertaken to prepare and execute a 21 block infrastructure and development plan.

1991-92 15th Street Viaduct was demolished. An underpass was constructed at the main railroad crossing.

May, 1992 Announcement that DRG&W would no longer exist as an operating company and would be completely absorbed by the Southern Pacific system.

1994 16th Street Viaduct was demolished.

Mid 1990s Riverfront Park development

- A special district, the Central Platte River Metropolitan District, was established.
- South Platte River Commission was established in 1995 to create partnerships among public agencies, the private and nonprofit sectors as well as arranging funding for various projects including parks and bridges.
- Trillium sold 25 acres of land along the South Platte River to the city of Denver for the development of a new park. The city and Commission arranged a land deal to allow the city to

acquire land next to the river for \$5 per square foot and a city commitment for infrastructure improvements, including new roads and bridges and a new park.

- Harry Frampton and Mark Smith of East West Partners, a resort development firm based in Beaver Creek, heard Mayor Webb speak at an Urban Land Institute event in Denver (1996) about plans for the Central Platte Valley. They decided to investigate the possibilities.

1996 Burlington Northern acquired the Santa Fe Railroad.

Union Pacific acquired the Southern Pacific Railroad.

1999 East West Partners, together with the firm's longtime equity partner Crescent Real Estate, purchased 22.65 acres of entitled land from Trillium and began redeveloping that site into what is now Riverfront Park. Cost was \$25 per square foot. Early parcels sold for \$45 per square foot with later parcels going for more than \$200 per square foot.

2001 The Regional Transportation District (RTD) acquired the Denver Union Station site (19.5 acres) in cooperation with the City & County of Denver, Colorado Department of Transportation, and the Denver Regional Council of Governments. Cost: \$49.5 million. Station owners were Trillium Corporation (1/2 from Burlington Northern), real estate investor Pat Broe (1/6 from the Santa Fe), and Union Pacific Railroad (1/3 original owner). Value was higher due to zoning approved in 1988 agreement protecting the station while approving two 22-story towers on the property.

Commons Park with pedestrian bridge over the South Platte opened to the public. Cost: \$10 million.

2002 Millennium Bridge completed at a cost of \$11 million. It was partially funded by developers, who championed a more creative and striking design and agreed to cover any cost overruns.

2004 Voters approved RTD's FasTracks project.

2006 Continuum Partners and East West Partners established the Union Station Neighborhood Company. In November the partner agencies announced the selection of the Union Station Neighborhood Company as Master Developer for the project. USNC made a significant financial commitment to the project with land sales totaling \$38.456 million for six parcels.

2007 Highland Bridge over I-25 completed.

2008 Partner agencies Regional Transportation District, City & County of Denver, Colorado Department of Transportation, and Denver Regional Council of Governments established the Denver Union Station Project Authority (DUSPA).

2009 Final run of the Ski Train. Service began in 1940.

2011 Amtrak moved to temporary location at 21st Street and Wewatta February 1.

Union Station Alliance was selected by RTD to redevelop Union Station. USA principals include McWhinney (Chad and Troy), Sage Hospitality (Walter Isenberg), Larimer Associates (Jeff Hermanson), REGen LLC, Urban Neighborhoods Inc (Dana Crawford), JG Johnson Architects, Tryba Architects, Milender White Construction, and FirstBank.

2012 Union Station closed for redevelopment December 1.

2014 Amtrak moved back into Union Station February 28.

RTD Union Station Bus Concourse opened and all bus operations, including new downtown circulator, moved from Market Street Station to Union Station May 11. This is an underground 22-bay terminal stretching 1040 feet.

Historic Union Station building opened July 26. Union Station Alliance has a 99 year lease for use of the building. Redevelopment was primarily the responsibility of Union Station Alliance. RTD contributions were : \$13 million from the sale of Parcels A&B, \$7.5 million in Historic Preservation Tax credits toward the rehabilitation of transit specific elements, and \$5 million in CDOT Faster funds. Cost: \$54 million

Summary of RTD investments in the Union Station Neighborhood:

Light Rail	\$ 57.6 million
Passenger Rail	140.3
Regional Bus	201.6
Streets and Public Spaces	59.

RTD Funding Sources:

TIFIA Loan ¹	\$145.6 million
RRIF Loan ²	155.0
FHWA Grant	45.3
ARRA Stimulus Grant	28.4
Homeland Security	.353
RTD	65.1
Other state and local	19.9
Land sales	18.4

Private Sector Investments

- Downtown Denver Partnership estimates that private investment in the Union Station-LoDo area 2008-14 totals \$1.8 billion. Developers completed 14 construction projects with 11 more under construction, adding 2136 housing units, 112 hotel rooms, and 2.1 million square feet of office and retail space. This amount continues to increase.
- In 2013, 15 corporate relocations occurred in Denver. 13 of those went to the Union Station-LoDo area.

¹ Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act. This loan will be repaid from RTD's FasTracks sales tax revenues.

² Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing. Denver is responsible for repayment from tax-increment revenues from the 20 acres of development around the station site.

- Office lease rates in the area, pushing \$40 per square foot, are the highest in the state. Vacancy rate, below 5%, is the lowest in the metro area.

Information Sources

Forrest, Kenton and Albi, Charles *Denver's Railroads* Colorado Railroad Museum Golden 1981, 1986

Rockwell, Sarah M. *Alternative Techniques for Resolving Land Use Disputes* Massachusetts Institute of Technology Masters Thesis Cambridge 1985

Applications for Designation on the National Register of Historic Places

Published articles in Denver Post, Denver Business Journal, 5280 Magazine

1986 Central Platte Valley Comprehensive Plan

1991 Central Platte Valley Comprehensive Plan Amendment

1994 Denver Union Station Master Plan Appendix 1

Consultations:

- Charles Albi, Historian, Colorado Railroad Museum and author
- Mark Barnhouse, author and historian
- John Elias, Historian, Regional Transportation District
- Sue Grabler, Railroad Coordination LLC, Southern Pacific Railroad retiree
- Allen Kiel, real estate developer/lender, activist involved in 1985 Convention Center issue
- Robert Ryerson, Regional Transportation District, retired: passenger rail advocate
- Ken Schroepfel, College of Architecture and Planning, University of Colorado Denver
- Alana Watkins, VOCA Public Relations/East West Partners
- Staff, Community Planning and Development, City of Denver
- Staff, Western History Department, Central Library, Denver Public Library