A HISTORY OF TUCSON TRANSPORTATION
The motor bus era has been marked by two significant periods of change and growth. The first was World War II which caused a 400 percent increase in size of the transit fleet and over 550 percent increase in passenger volume. The second began with the change from private to public ownership by the City of Tucson in 1969. In the decade since then Sun Tran, the name designated for the City system, has increased fleet size by over 550 percent and increased passenger volume by some 700 percent. Included in these impressive figures was the assumption in September, 1978 of Old Pueblo Transit Company service, a separate private operator on the south and west sides of Tucson. OPT had been started in 1974 by Roy Laos, Sr. as the Occidental Bus Lines.

Today as the Tucson metropolitan area passes the half million mark in population, Sun Tran operates a fleet of 140 buses over 22 routes carrying 9 million passengers annually. Standing at the end of a long line of transit history, Sun Tran is ready to serve the people of Tucson in a fashion which would have made the pioneers in transit proud.

A modern Sun Tran coach moves through downtown Tucson.  
—Motor Bus Society

A HISTORY OF TUCSON TRANSPORTATION

THE ARRIVAL OF THE RAILROAD BEGINNINGS OF TRANSIT IN TUCSON

by W. Eugene Caywood

CREDITS

For the railroad portion of this publication, the author is indebted to the excellent book by David C. Myrick, Railroads of Arizona, Volume I, The Southern Roads, published by Howell-North Books, Berkeley, California, 1975.

The history and development of transit in Tucson from the establishment of the Tucson Street Railway forward, has been adequately chronicled in two publications by the Tucson Corral of Westerners in their journal of Tucson and Southwest history, the Smoke Signal. Issue No. 23, entitled, "Cars Stop Here" traces the history of the street cars, while issue No. 32, "Please Step to the Rear" gives the history of Tucson's bus transportation.

All photographs are courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society, except as noted.

We gratefully acknowledge the production assistance of Mike Sanchez and Sun Tran.

TUCSON-PIMA COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

1980
Miss Nelson’s land development along the north boundary of the University (2nd Street), known as University Extension.

Before this line could be built, Miss Nelson sold out to William P. Woods and Associates, who reorganized and received their own franchise from the City Council on September 25, 1896. Little is known about the Nelson Street Car Line (the name was apparently retained) other than that a line was actually constructed from downtown to the University and operated for a short time in late 1896 and early 1897. Financially, the line was not successful, and the rails and equipment were sold to satisfy creditors.

Permanent transit, in an unbroken chain down to the present was finally to come to Tucson in 1897 with the organization of the Tucson Street Railway on September 9. Construction began and on May 12, 1898, the line’s chief promoter, Charles H. Hoff, drove the “golden spike” at the University end of the line.

Permanent bus service by Tucson Rapid Transit Co. was started in 1925 with buses 1 and 2. — TRT Photo

Mule drawn street cars plodded the streets of Tucson until June 1, 1906, when electric power replaced mules. With the advent of electric street cars, the corporate name was changed to the Tucson Rapid Transit Company (TRT), a name that lasted until 1967. Motor buses were used as early as 1916 by two small independent operators, both of whom were eventually taken over by TRT. Permanent bus service by TRT, however, did not come until November 25, 1925. Buses and street cars were used concurrently until December 31, 1930 when Motorman Dallas E. Smith took car 10 out to the University for the last run. Since that date, transit in Tucson has been provided exclusively by motor bus.
October 1, 1891.

The first couple of years there were very few students at the new school. However, by the third year, the student body had grown enough to stimulate two gentlemen, named Ganzhorn and Harris, to establish the University Hack Line on November 20, 1893. It operated not only to the University, but also in town. Fare was 25 cents before 10 p.m. and 50 cents after 10 p.m. Transport was via 'a new herdic, easy riding, lastest style.'

Tucson Rapid Transit electric car No. 3 stops at Church and Congress in 1907.

Some time in 1894, Ganzhorn and Harris sold out to the Orndorff operation which by then was known as the Orndorff Passenger Work, owned by Charles DeGroat. DeGroat continued his operation for a number of years, at least up until the establishment of a permanent street railway.

The 1890's brought additional attempts to establish a street railway. Possibly stimulated by the demise of the herdic coaches, The Tucson Improvement Company was incorporated on February 2, 1891. Primarily a land promotional firm, they intended to promote land sales by use of modern transportation.

John M. Ormsby and Associates were granted the right to construct a street railway by the City Council on March 12, 1895. Ormsby was no more successful in getting rails on the ground than the Tucson Improvement Company had been.

Fifteen years after the original attempts to establish a street railway, the City Council, on April 7, 1896, authorized construction of the Nelson Street Car Line. It was named after its promoter, Miss Lulu May Nekon, and was intended to provide not only transportation between downtown and the University of Arizona, but beyond the main gate (University Blvd. and Park Avenue) to

INTRODUCTION

One hundred years ago, Tucson was a small, dusty pueblo of 7,000 persons. The previous decade had been a significant one. Tucson had served as capital of the territory. The Arizona Citizen and the Arizona Weekly Star had both begun publication. Tucson was incorporated, first as a village, and then as a city. The city acquired two square miles from the federal government, laying out the original townsite and issuing deeds to the citizens for the land they already occupied, as well as selling new lots. The military telegraph line had arrived in 1871, linking Tucson with the outside world, and in 1872 the first public school had opened, supplementing the previous private school. Population more than doubled during the decade.

The bulk of the population increase since 1870 was probably recent, since the Indians had been placed on the reservation in 1877. Prior to that time Apache attacks had been frequent and the danger great. Though there were to be other uprisings during the mid 1880's before the surrender of Geronimo in 1886, the years of 1877-1881 were years of quiet. Many new settlers flocked into Tucson.

The great attraction was mining. A healthy share of Tucson's economy depended on supplying the mines. Tucson was the largest population center between the Pacific coast and San Antonio, Texas. As such it provided a place for miners coming out of the mining camps to spend their money, on entertainment and on supplies to continue looking for new mineral wealth, and mining the wealth already discovered. This activity was greatly stimulated in 1878 by the tremendous silver strike at Tombstone.

The other large factor in Tucson's economy was supplying the military. Tucson was, until 1873, an army town. Camp Lowell was located just east of the main part of town on what is today the site of Armory Park and the Main Library. The original name of Broadway was Camp Street; it formed the north boundary of Camp Lowell. Even after its move some 7 miles northeast along the Rillito River, many soldiers on leave continued ready and willing to spend their pay in Tucson. Additionally, the Fort purchased supplies from Tucson businesses for distribution to other military posts throughout the southern part of the territory.

The big news of 1880 was the arrival of the railroad. It was hailed as the greatest event in the history of the city. Whether it was may be debated, but it was likely the greatest event of the century. In 1880, with the railroad's coming, Tucson began evolving from an outpost on the frontier to a significant center of civilization in the Southwest. The railroad meant that greater quantities of goods could be received in a shorter period of time at less expense. It also promised a significant increase in migration to Tucson.
The coming of the railroad engendered great civic pride, a feeling among the citizens that civilization had arrived, and that with it ought to come all the accoutrements thereof. The newspapers constantly prodded local officials to improve the condition of the streets. In order to help persons find their way around, the City Council authorized in 1881, a system of street naming and address numbering. That same year Tucson’s first telephone exchange was installed, and in 1882 the Tucson Gas Company lit the city’s streets with modern gas lights. Starting in 1880, the health care of residents was greatly improved with the opening of St. Mary’s Hospital by the Sisters of St. Joseph. In 1885 the territorial legislature authorized a university for Tucson on the provision that forty acres be contributed for the campus. Finally, any city as significant as Tucson ought to have not only the modern intercity transportation system provided by the railroad, but a local transit system equally dependable and modern.

The year 1880, then, was a significant turning point for the City of Tucson, marked primarily by improved transportation, both intercity and intracity. It is the purpose of this centennial publication to trace the roots of both.

Buell’s Addition was ahead of its time. Less than a dozen lots were sold in five years. Finally on February 2, 1888, the assets of the company were sold by order of the superior Court. In order to preserve the interests of the investors, M. P. Freeman, who had acted as Secretary and Treasurer of the Tucson Land and Herdic Coach Company, purchased the assets for $500. In April he sold Buell’s Addition to James Buell’s wife, Sallie. Her husband was ill and died that December.

Although ownership of the herdics is uncertain at this point, it is known they continued to operate beyond the date of the court ordered sale of the company’s assets. The late 1880’s and early 1890’s were a time of economic recession in Tucson. If pure transit ceased in Tucson, there were likely once again enterprising owner-operators who filled the gap with taxi type operations with some occasional transit elements thrown in. One such, known to be operating by 1891, was the Orndorff Bus. Initially this “bus” was owned by and operated as a service of the Orndorff Hotel to and from the trains. However, with the demise of the herdics, they advertised “Take the Orndorff Bus, only 25 cents to any part of the city.”

Tucson Street Railway mule car No. 2 heads down 3rd St. (University Blvd.) toward the University about 1900.

The significant local event of the early 1890’s was the opening of the University of Arizona out in the desert east of town. The University had been authorized in 1885. In 1886, 40 acres were donated for the campus by local Tucson gamblers, E. B. Gifford and Ben Parker, and Saloon keeper, William S. “Billy” Read. Ground was broken the next year for the first campus building, “Old Main,” which stands today in the center of the campus. Time needed to complete the building and recruit staff delayed the first classes until
one locality of the city to other points, but will place within the reach of all the people who do business downtown the means of purchasing desirable lands for residences outside the city limits, as the distance will be reduced by this quick means of travel."

Effective April 27, 1882, with the arrival of a second Herdic coach, the company doubled service instituting service in both directions on the loop portion of the route. The accompanying map shows the route which was to be operated on 15 minute headways between the hours of 6 a.m. and 9 p.m. Tickets were for sale by the drivers, or by Mr. William Scott at his insurance office on the corner of Meyer Street and Maiden Lane.

June 26, 1882, marked the placing in service of what was called "a large (12 passenger) Herdic Coach No. 3." It was more like what might today be called a special charter coach. It was available for charter at a rate of $1.50 per hour in the daytime and $2.50 per hour at night. When not in charter use, it ran trips to Silver Lake. Tickets were 25 cents each way, and the price included a bath ticket. At other times, it acted as an extra or exclusive coach over the regular Herdic routes, charging a premium fare of 20 cents each way.

The Tucson Land and Herdic Coach Company was a well organized, adequately funded endeavor. As a result, it provided the first transit system the citizens of Tucson could really depend on and be proud of. Its coaches continued to ply their regular paths through the city until at least 1888.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE RAILROAD

Were it not for the railroad, Tucson might be part of Mexico rather than the United States. One of the reasons for the acquisition of the Gadsden Purchase (that part of Arizona south of the Gila River) from Mexico in 1854 was to provide a relatively low altitude crossing of the Continental Divide. That year the Texas Western Railroad Company did a survey from Texas, across New Mexico and Arizona to California, following the Gila River route. Published as the A. B. Gray Report, it bid much to disseminate information on the Southwest. However, due to the lack of finances, construction was never started, and it was to be 23 years and a succession of railroad companies and schemes later, before rails would rest in the Arizona dust.

By 1869, when the golden spike was driven joining the Central Pacific and the Union Pacific at Promontory Point, Utah forming the first transcontinental railroad, railroad promotion had reached a fever pitch in the United States. The Northern Pacific and the Atlantic and Pacific (later Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe) had both been authorized and the southern route along the 32nd parallel was gaining increasing support. By early 1871, the Congress of the United States came to agreement, and on March 3 President Grant signed into law a bill incorporating the Texas Pacific Railroad (later the Texas and Pacific Railroad).

When the news arrived in Tucson by stage from San Diego, the citizens celebrated the event with 100 firings of a cannon obtained from Camp Lowell and the blowing of the steam whistle of the flour mill on Main Street for an hour.

In spite of the enthusiasm, the Texas and Pacific never entered Arizona. The financial panic of late 1873 ended hopes of selling bonds both in the United States and Europe. The Texas and Pacific was forced to turn to the United States Congress in hopes of obtaining a subsidy in the form of a United States Treasury guarantee of the interest on its five-percent, forty-year bonds. This long effort ended unsuccessfully, and the Southern Pacific, whose President Collis P. Huntington kept telling Congress that his railroad could build the route without government aid, built while Texas and Pacific hoped. In spite of financial difficulties, Texas and Pacific did extend its line westward across Texas. Finally, on November 26, 1881, an agreement was reached between the Texas and Pacific and the Southern Pacific Railroad ending any claims Texas and Pacific may have had west of El Paso.

The Southern Pacific Railroad grew out of a desire of the owners of the Central Pacific – Collis P. Huntington, Charles Crocker, Leland Stanford, and Mark Hopkins – to protect that

Some of the crowd attending the eighth grade graduation ceremonies at the court plaza in 1892 arrived by the two herdies pictured.
railroad's economic integrity. In 1868, they purchased controlling interest in the Southern Pacific, which had been organized in 1865. It had no trackage, but had rights from Congress to connect with the Atlantic and Pacific at Needles, and with the Texas and Pacific at Yuma. The new owners pushed construction ahead, completing the line between San Francisco and Los Angeles in 1876, and extending eastward to Indio the same year and on to Yuma, becoming the first railroad to enter Arizona on September 30, 1877. Meeting the trains with daily stage service to Prescott and Tucson was the Southern Pacific Mail and Stage Line. In spite of the name, the stage line was under separate ownership, in no way connected with the railroad.

Building across Arizona presented several challenges. First, the Texas and Pacific Railroad had congressional approval to build, and agreement could not be reached with them to take over their rights. This problem was bypassed by rights afforded Southern Pacific under the General Right of Way Law of 1875 passed by Congress, and by the permission granted by the Arizona Territorial Legislature to build in Arizona. Hunnington's money reportedly secured passage of the act of February 7, 1877, introduced by Estevan Ochoa of Tucson.


—David Myrick Photo

Next was the question of connections to railroads in the east. So many unsuccessful railroad schemes had been put forth that eastern railroads were reluctant to make any commitment, especially when it involved building across Texas to meet the Southern Pacific as the Union Pacific had done with the Central Pacific.

from later schedules, this was strictly a pure transit-type operation. It operated over a set route and on a strict schedule throughout the day, for a fare of 10 cents.

Operating any type of vehicle through the unpaved streets of Tucson was at times very difficult. Usually, the streets were dusty. When it rained, however, they could become very muddy, tending to act as little washes carrying away the water. After that they often became very rough and uneven as the top soil was washed away and rocks were exposed. On January 21, 1882, the Star, apparently right after a rain, stated: “The City Council would show good

What is believed to be Tucson land and Herdic Coach Company’s Herdic No.3, waits for passengers about 1885.

judgment if they would adopt measures at once to gravel Congress Street. In its present condition, if large sized pebbles were used, then hardened, it would make a fine firm bottom.”

As we know even today, the City Council does not often take the advice of the news media. Apparently, they took no action then, either, since a mere week and a half later, on February 1, the same paper had to announce that “The Herdic Coach has been withdrawn a few days due to muddy streets.”

On February 9, 1882, incorporation having been completed and the patent to Buell's Addition having finally been received, the Star printed the Prospectus of the Tucson Land and Herdic Coach Company. As the Star put it in an accompanying article, this was “worthy of more than passing notice, as it proposes not only to furnish the city with comfortable and cheap means of travel from
On April 2, 1881, Charles H. Lord, Charles R. Drake and Hugh Farley incorporated the Tucson Railroad Company. They proposed to build a line between the railroad depot and the corner of Congress and Main Streets. Additionally, they proposed to build to such outlying points as Silver Lake, the old church of San Xavier, Buell’s Addition, Fort Lowell, and a point to be selected between Warner’s Mill and the Sister’s Hospital.

The Tucson Land and Street Railroad Company was incorporated on June 30, 1881, by P. R. Tully, James H. Toole, J. S. Wood and James Buell. Their stated object was “to build and operate a street railway from the business part of the town out to Buell’s Addition, and to sell lots in said addition.”

James Buell was the prime mover behind this attempt and a short time later, the successful herdic line which was established. Buell was an attorney, originally admitted to the bar in Alabama in 1859. Due to failing health, he had moved in 1875 to Colorado where he practiced law and pursued mining interests. He moved to Arizona in the summer of 1878, first taking up mining interests in the Patagonia Mountains and then opening a law practice in Tucson in September of 1878. The Citizen reported in February of 1879 that he and another gentleman had started “a little villa” just east of the city limits, and had dug a well obtaining excellent water at a depth of 36 feet. Buell had the land, located generally east of First Avenue between Third Street (University Blvd.) and Broadway, platted into lots and applied for the patent to it from the Federal Government. The subdivision was named “Buell’s Addition,” and patterned after developments in other cities at the time, Buell proposed to promote the development by providing modern transportation to it from the city center.

When three efforts to organize a street railway in just over a year and half failed, the influential citizens of the city gave up and pursued a less expensive route. James Buell enlisted Charles Rivers Drake from the Tucson Railroad Company effort and Barron M. Jacobs, a local banker. Together they decided to launch the Tucson Land and Herdic Coach Company. Other interests included William A. Scott (for whom Scott Street was named), who had come to town in 1879 as a banker but shifted into insurance; and E. N. Fish, proprietor of a local mill.

In September, 1881, James Buell made a trip to Philadelphia where he met with Peter Herdic. For the sum of $500, he secured all rights to build or have built, and operate herdic coaches in the Tucson area. They ordered, received and placed into service their first herdic even before incorporating. It arrived on November 16, 1881 and presumably went into service immediately.

While the original route and schedule is unknown, judging

Then there were the specific Arizona problems. Lack of population over vast distances was one. In 1870, the United States Census found less than 10,000 people in the entire territory; population centered in Prescott, La Paz, Yuma, and Tucson. On the other hand, the movement of people and freight by stage coach or mule drawn freight wagon was agonizingly slow, hot and dusty, hampered by Indians and highwaymen, and very expensive. Passenger traffic from Yuma took four days and cost $60. The same trip by rail promised to cost only $22.50 and take one day. Freight took 20 days costing 5 to 5 cents per pound, while the railroad would reduce that cost to ½ cent per pound. It was obvious that all traffic would move by rail once that option was available.

The real attraction to the railroads was two-fold. Through traffic from the east to the Pacific coast was lucrative. Even more valuable was the freighting of gold, silver and copper from Arizona’s mines, and of supplies to be brought into the territory.

These considerations led Crocker and other Southern Pacific associates to stand against Huntington in their unwillingness to build east of Yuma. However Huntington persisted, and on August 20, 1878 a separate Southern Pacific Railroad Company was incorporated under Arizona laws to build across the southern part of the territory. The deciding factor was the attraction of the mines.

Construction actually began in the second week of November 1878, and continued steadily at a rate of about one and one half miles per day. The tracks reached Gila Bend, 120 miles east of Yuma, on April 1, 1879, and Casa Grande, which was established by the railroad, on May 19, 1879.

Southern Pacific’s locomotive No. 17 stops for passengers at Red Rock north of Tucson in the 1880’s.
Work was suspended there, at least for the summer. The rail was already too hot to be handled without tongs. There was a continuing shortage of rail which often delayed progress, and there was beginning to be a shortage of ties.

The passenger’s view of Tucson about 1890. The depot is on the left and beyond it to the right is the San Xavier Hotel.

Once actual construction of the railroad east of Yuma began, excitement mounted in Tucson. The town had eagerly expected the railroad for several years, and had in fact conveyed some lands to the railroad as early as January 3, 1877. Now the newspapers published frequent reports of progress, along with rumors and speculations as to when the trains might actually arrive. On April 21, 1879, the Citizen predicted the arrival of the railroad “to the most important trade center, Tucson” by July 1, 1879. The Citizen could have been right had the work suspension not occurred. More importantly, it was reported that Mr. Thomas M. Cash, General Freight Superintendent, had just arrived to examine the surveyed route and recommend the number and type of railroad buildings to be located in Tucson.

On May 14, Col. George E. Gray, Chief Engineer of the Southern Pacific Railroad Company, arrived in Tucson to determine the location of the depot and other necessary buildings, and to meet with the Mayor and Council to arrive at an agreement regarding the needs of the railroad. The City Council, in early July, authorized issuing of bonds to defray the expense of securing right of way for the railroad. The right of way Committee reported that all but two parcels had been acquired from the Rillito River through the City to about one mile east of the City limits (now Campbell Avenue), and south along Meyers Street about the same distance. Most of the developed area of the city was within three blocks of the heart of the business district. Additionally, out-town visitors were dropped off by the stages at the door to their hotels and could easily walk where they needed to go.

When the railroad arrived, it was way out east of town, about three-fourths of a mile uphill from the main business district. Suddenly there was the need to connect the two with public transportation of some sort.

Field and Morgan stood ready to provide the service with their “City Hacks.” Additionally, another enterprising citizen stepped in with what was advertised in the Star as “The Accommodation Line, John Trabucco & Bros., Proprietors.” The Trabuccos promised to run to and from the trains, night and day, for “the accommodation of the traveling public,” or to any other point within the city for a fare of 50 cents, a very substantial sum. Apparently, neither Morgan nor Trabucco adequately served the city. In early November 1880, new competition appeared on the scene in the form of L. B. “Doc” Millard who advertised as “Doc’s Carryall Coaches! – Nos. 1 and 2, two of the Finest Coaches in the Territory.” More specifically known as the Silverlake and City Hack, Doc probably combined taxi and transit service. At least in some respects, it met all the criteria of transit. Specifically, his coaches served San Xavier Mission semi-weekly, leaving the Palace Hotel at 9 a.m. on Wednesdays and Sundays. While schedules have not been discovered, service was provided within the city, and to Camp Lowell, Aguila Caliente, Silver Lake, Warner’s Mill and St. Mary’s Hospital.

None of these early efforts at public transportation could be called substantial. They were primarily small owner-operated enterprises. The demands of the citizens, then, the need for transit, for the city, were first committed (probably more out of their civic pride than anything else) to the establishment of the most modern form of transit then known, a mule-drawn street railway. On March 16, 1880, four days before the arrival of the first train, the City Council passed Ordinance No. 25 granting H.C. Wiley and Associates, the right to construct a street railroad within the city limits. Work was completed within six months and one or more of the three authorized lines were to be completed within two years. The three authorized routes were all to operate from the railroad depot to Pennington and Main (location of Levin’s Park and Brewery, the main place of assembly in the city). Route 1 was to go via Camp Street, route 2 via Congress, and Route 3 via Pennington Street.

When this scheme failed, due probably to the inability of local interests to fund it adequately, citizens mounted two additional efforts.
BEGINNINGS OF TRANSIT IN TUCSON

In mid-January 1879, William Morgan’s many friends welcomed him back to Tucson. He was returning from an extended trip to his home in Western Pennsylvania, where he had gone to seek medical attention for an illness. Morgan’s trip, as it turned out, was significant not only to his health, but to the beginnings of transit in Tucson. Western Pennsylvania was also the home of one Peter Herdic, who had invented a new vehicle for public conveyance. It came to be called by his name. The Herdic was a low-slung, closed-body, horse-drawn carriage with a rear entrance and side seats facing inward. The original vehicle had only two wheels, but all western examples photographed had four wheels. Whether Bill Morgan knew Peter Herdic is unknown, but he certainly became familiar with the Herdic, which was well known in Pennsylvania.

Upon his return to Tucson, Morgan entered into partnership with George Field. They formed the Iron Wood Livery and Boarding Stables, Field and Morgan Proprietors. Their stable was on the Sixth Avenue between Congress and Camp (Broadway) Streets. One of their side ventures was advertised in 1881 as “City Hacks.” It is likely that the Field and Morgan operation was primarily a taxi operation. However, they likely used a Herdic, probably directly as a result of Bill Morgan’s trip east.

The main differences between a taxi operation and a transit operation are two in number. Transit will carry anyone as long as space is available, while the taxi is usually not permitted to pick up additional parties once the first party has engaged the taxi. Transit operates over a fixed route and on a set schedule, while the taxi will go anywhere, anytime. Obviously, there is room for variation – operations which are neither pure transit nor pure taxi. Recently, these “in between” types have come to be called “para-transit.”

The earliest public transportation in Tucson most likely was para-transit. It probably carried as many persons as demanded service as long as space was available. It was not strict transit as apparently there was no fixed route or schedule.

Prior to the arrival of the railroad on March 20, 1880, there was really no need of transit within the City of Tucson. The developed area was small, measuring at its broadest points about a mile north and south (Franklin to 17th Street) and a half mile east and west (Main to Sixth Avenue). The central business district, which included the two hotels and all businesses of any importance, centered on the Congress Hall Saloon on the southeast corner of Congress and Meyers Streets (about the present day location of the pedestrian bridge over Congress Street). Businesses stretched east and west along Congress for two or three blocks in each direction.

On July 22, Southern Pacific was notified by telegraph of the acquisition of all but one parcel of right of way. This parcel was tied up in probate court. On August 6, the acquired lands were conveyed to the railroad by the City of Tucson, as authorized by the Mayor and Council in Ordinance No. 21. Judge Underhill, Land Attorney for Southern Pacific, arrived in Tucson on November 17 for official ceremonies transferring title of the acquired lands to Southern Pacific. He returned to the City the deed to land given to the railroad back in 1877. In turn, Mayor James H. Toole executed a new deed to Southern Pacific.

The long awaited resumption of construction took place on January 25, 1880. For five days prior to that the papers were filled with reports of men and supplies moving to the front. As construction continued the papers reported progress: January 28 – 4½ miles out of Casa Grande; February 6 – 14½ miles out; February 12 – 28 miles out; February 24 – within 20 miles of Tucson; March 1 – 16½ miles from Tucson; March 9 – 12 miles out; March 11 – 8 miles out...

The line of buildings across the center are the Southern Pacific shops in Tucson soon after the arrival of the railroad. On the left is the car shop. In the center just to the right of the smoke is the machine shop. On the right is the round house.

On February 14th the Star suggested the need for a celebration on the coming of the railroad. The Citizen echoed this plea on the 16th, even urging that public monies be spent, and concluding with: “The greatest event in the history of the City is almost upon us. Do not count it to the last moment.”

On February 17th the railroad announced it would not establish any intermediate station between Casa Grande and Tucson. This meant passengers would continue to change to stage coach at Casa Grande, even if tracks were almost to Tucson.

A special low fare excursion train was announced on February 20. It would go from Tucson to San Francisco a few days after the tracks were completed. At least 24 tickets had to be sold,
and the group had to travel together to San Francisco, but could return independently with stopover privileges.

On March 3 the Citizen became the first to predict accurately the exact date of the first train’s arrival. That same day plans were announced for a new hotel since Tucson’s two hotels, the Palace and Cosmopolitan, were both constantly full. Two days later, a contingent of graders arrived to prepare the depot site and sink what was called the “artesian well” to provide water for the locomotives.

The next day, Thomas M. Cash, resident agent for Southern Pacific, moved his office from its temporary location on Congress Street next to Lord and Williams to the former residence of Joseph Neugas, near the site of the new depot. This residence was southwest of the depot within the right of way of Toole Avenue. The City Council had just established Toole Avenue in front of the depot site two days before.

On March 7, the Star suggested a Silver Spike from the three mills of Tombstone, to symbolize the completion of track to Tucson. The Citizen reported a week later; “Richard Grid of the Tombstone M. and M. Company with commendable public spirit and liberality, is having made a fine silver spike, which will be driven in the last rail. It is needless to add that it will not remain there, as not more than one company of soldiers can be spared at present from Camp Lowell, but will be withdrawn and forwarded to the head office in San Francisco.”

As with all new projects there were those who couldn’t wait to try it out. On March 10, the Citizen reported that several persons secured a ride on the construction train from Casa Grande to the end of track and walked from there into town, a distance of eleven and one half miles. By that time the grader had reached Tucson so their entire trip was on the roadbed, if not on the rails.

Tucson that when the Vice-President of the railroad arrived in Tucson in 1905 on business, the mayor was able to convince him that a new depot was needed.

September 1907 saw the completion of the new Tucson depot which, while remodeled since, stands downtown today on Toole Avenue. By 1925 there were five trains a day to Tucson, and while the depression of the 1930's reduced the number to three, the second World War increased passenger traffic to its peak—six trains daily with extra military trains.

Last, but not least to those for whom railroads hold a degree of nostalgia, are those locomotives which have drawn all those trains through Tucson. Powered at first by coal, the blooming steam locomotives were converted to burn oil beginning in 1897. The era of steam power finally ended on the Southern Pacific in 1957 with the complete dieselization of the line, a task which has been underway since 1936.

The new Tucson depot as it appeared shortly after completion in 1907. It still stands today with a slightly different appearance due to a 1942 remodeling.
the local freight and passenger operations. Southern Pacific policy provided health-care for employees at company-owned hospitals. S.P. considered building a hospital in Tucson in 1880, but opted instead to convince the Rev. Jean B. Salpointe, to ask the Sisters of St. Joseph to open a hospital locally. The sisters agreed, and St. Mary’s Hospital opened its doors on May 1, 1880.

John Skinner (left), and Charlie Ross (right) stand by No. 2100 about 1913. The boy on the locomotive is Jose Ramirez.

Another company policy was to establish company-owned hotels next to depots in major population centers. In Arizona, Yuma, Tucson, and Bowie were selected, the lattermost not because of population, but because schedules called for trains to arrive there about meal time. The hotel in Tucson was opened in May, 1881 as the Porter Hotel, named after its first manager. It was located just northwest of the depot and instantly became one of Tucson’s major hotels. The name was changed to the San Xavier Hotel on September 13, 1885. It remained in operation until fire destroyed it in July, 1903.

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The welcoming speech was given by William Oury. Presentation of the silver spike followed. It had been suitably engraved by local dentist, Dr. Hitchcock. In presenting it to President Crocker, Estevan Ochoa said: "My fellow citizens have conferred upon me the honor to present you with this Silver Spike, the production of the Tough Nut mine at Tombstone – one of the most important in the territory."

Ceremonies at the depot being concluded, the Star reported that: "the party were then escorted in carriages to the Park (Levin’s Park at the foot of Pennington Street west of Main Street) where a large concourse of our citizens awaited them and enjoyed themselves in a general interchange of thoughts and good feelings. When the banquet was announced (at 2 p.m.) all repaired to Park Hall, where the tables were arranged in the form of a horseshoe – the Mayor being seated in the center, Charles Crocker on his right and James Gamble on his left."

After the meal Mayor Leatherwood introduced "my distinguished friend – the Hon. Charles D. Poston, an old Pioneer, and the first to speak for Arizona in Congress, who has been selected to propose the toasts on this occasion." Fourteen different toasts were given, each followed by an appropriate response. Most notable were those to the President of the United States, to the prosperity of the Southern Pacific Railroad, to "Chained Lightening" (the telegraph), to the health, prosperity and perpetuity of the City of Tucson, and to the Army of the United States. The celebration wound up that evening with a dance, music being provided by the Sixth Cavalry Band.

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the local freight and passenger operations. Southern Pacific policy provided health-care for employees at company-owned hospitals. S.P. considered building a hospital in Tucson in 1880, but opted instead to convince the Rev. Jean B. Salpointe, to ask the Sisters of St. Joseph to open a hospital locally. The sisters agreed, and St. Mary’s Hospital opened its doors on May 1, 1880.

John Skinner (left), and Charlie Ross (right) stand by No. 2100 about 1913. The boy on the locomotive is Jose Ramirez.

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and the group had to travel together to San Francisco, but could return independently with stopover privileges.

On March 3 the Citizen became the first to predict accurately the exact date of the first train’s arrival. That same day plans were announced for a new hotel since Tucson’s two hotels, the Palace and Cosmopolitan, were both constantly full. Two days later, a contingent of graders arrived to prepare the depot site and sink what was called the “artesian well” to provide water for the locomotives.

The next day, Thomas M. Cash, resident agent for Southern Pacific, moved his office from its temporary location on Congress Street next to Lord and Williams to the former residence of Joseph Neugas, near the site of the new depot. This residence was southwest of the depot within the right of way of Toole Avenue. The City Council had just established Toole Avenue in front of the depot site two days before.

On March 7, the Star suggested a Silver Spike from the three mills of Tombstone, to symbolize the completion of track to Tucson. The Citizen reported a week later; “Richard Grid of the Tombstone M. and M. Company with commendable public spirit and liberality, is having made a fine silver spike, which will be driven in the last rail. It is needless to add that it will not remain there, as not more than one company of soldiers can be spared at present from Camp Lowell, but will be withdrawn and forwarded to the head office in San Francisco.”

As with all new projects there were those who couldn’t wait to try it out. On March 10, the Citizen reported that several persons secured a ride on the construction train from Casa Grande to the end of track and walked from there into town, a distance of eleven and one half miles. By that time the graders had reached Tucson so their entire trip was on the roadbed, if not on the rails.

Tucson that when the Vice-President of the railroad arrived in Tucson in 1905 on business, the mayor was able to convince him that a new depot was needed.

September 1907 saw the completion of the new Tucson depot which, while remodeled since, stands downtown today on Toole Avenue. By 1925 there were five trains a day to Tucson, and while the depression of the 1930’s reduced the number to three, the second World War increased passenger traffic to its peak – six trains daily with extra military trains.

Last, but not least to those for whom railroads hold a degree of nostalgia, are those locomotives which have drawn all those trains through Tucson. Powered at first by coal, the slowing steam locomotives were converted to burn oil beginning in 1897. The era of steam power finally ended on the Southern Pacific in 1957 with the complete dieselization of the line, a task which has been underway since 1936.
BEGINNINGS OF TRANSIT IN TUCSON

In mid-January 1879, William Morgan's many friends welcomed him back to Tucson. He was returning from an extended trip to his home in western Pennsylvania, where he had gone to seek medical attention for an illness. Morgan's trip, as it turned out, was significant not only to his health, but to the beginnings of transit in Tucson. Western Pennsylvania was also the home of one Peter Herdic, who had invented a new vehicle for public conveyance. It came to be called by his name. The Herdic was a low-slung, closed-body, horse-drawn carriage with a rear entrance and side seats facing inward. The original vehicle had only two wheels, but all western examples photographed had four wheels. Whether Bill Morgan knew Peter Herdic is unknown, but he certainly became familiar with the Herdic, which was well known in Pennsylvania.

Upon his return to Tucson, Morgan entered into partnership with George Field. They formed the Iron Wood Livery and Boarding Stables, Field and Morgan Proprietors. Their stable was on the Sixth Avenue between Congress and Camp (Broadway) Streets. One of their side ventures was advertised in 1881 as "City Hacks." It is likely that the Field and Morgan operation was primarily a taxi operation. However, they likely used a Herdic, probably directly as a result of Bill Morgan's trip east.

The main differences between a taxi operation and a transit operation are two in number. Transit will carry anyone as long as space is available, while the taxi is usually not permitted to pick up additional parties once the first party has engaged the taxi. Transit operates over a fixed route and on a set schedule, while the taxi will go anywhere, anytime. Obviously, there is room for variation — operations which are neither pure transit nor pure taxi. Recently, these "in between" types have come to be called "para-transit."

The earliest public transportation in Tucson most likely was para-transit. It probably carried as many persons as demanded service as long as space was available. It was not strict transit as apparently there was no fixed route or schedule.

Prior to the arrival of the railroad on March 20, 1880, there was really no need for transit within the City of Tucson. The developed area was small, measuring, at its broadest points about a mile north and south (Franklin to 17th Street) and a half mile east and west (Main to Sixth Avenue). The central business district, which included the two hotels and all businesses of any importance, centered on the Congress Hall Saloon on the southeast corner of Congress and Meyers Streets (about the present day location of the pedestrian bridge over Congress Street). Businesses stretched east and west along Congress for two or three blocks in each direction.

On July 22, Southern Pacific was notified by telegraph of the acquisition of all but one parcel of right of way. This parcel was tied up in probate court. On August 6, the acquired lands were conveyed to the railroad by the City of Tucson, as authorized by the Mayor and Council in Ordinance No. 21. Judge Underhill, Land Attorney for Southern Pacific, arrived in Tucson on November 17 for official ceremonies transferring title of the acquired lands to Southern Pacific. He returned to the City the deed to land given to the railroad back in 1877. In turn, Mayor James H. Toole executed a new deed to Southern Pacific.

The long awaited resumption of construction took place on January 25, 1880. For five days prior to that the papers were filled with reports of men and supplies moving to the front. As construction continued the papers reported progress: January 28 — 4 1/2 miles out of Casa Grande; February 6 — 1 1/2 miles out; February 12 — 28 miles out; February 24 — within 20 miles of Tucson; March 1 — 16 1/2 miles from Tucson; March 9 — 12 miles out; March 11 — 8 miles out...

The line of buildings across the center are the Southern Pacific shops in Tucson soon after the arrival of the railroad. On the left is the carriage shop. In the center just to the right of the smoke is the machine shop. On the right is the round house.

On February 14th the Star suggested the need for a celebration on the coming of the railroad. The Citizen echoed this plea on the 16th, even urging that public monies be spent, and concluding with: "The greatest event in the history of the City is almost upon us. Do not let it pass you in the last moment."

On February 17th the railroad announced it would not establish any intermediate station between Casa Grande and Tucson. This meant passengers would continue to change stage coach at Casa Grande, even if tracks were almost to Tucson.

A special low fare excursion train was announced on February 20. It would go from Tucson to San Francisco a few days after the tracks were completed. At least 24 tickets had to be sold.
Work was suspended there, at least for the summer. The rail was already too hot to be handled without tongs. There was a continuing shortage of rail which often delayed progress, and there was beginning to be a shortage of ties.

The passenger's view of Tucson about 1890. The depot is on the left and beyond it to the right is the San Xavier Hotel.

Once actual construction of the railroad east of Yuma began, excitement mounted in Tucson. The town had eagerly expected the railroad for several years, and had in fact conveyed some lands to the railroad as early as January 3, 1877. Now the newspapers published frequent reports of progress, along with rumors and speculations as to when the trains might actually arrive. On April 21, 1879, the Citizen predicted the arrival of the railroad “to the most important trade center, Tucson” by July 1, 1879. The Citizen could have been right had the work suspension not occurred. More importantly, it was reported that Mr. Thomas M. Cash, General Freight Superintendent, had just arrived to examine the surveyed route and recommend the number and type of railroad buildings to be located in Tucson.

On May 14, Col. George E. Gray, Chief Engineer of the Southern Pacific Railroad Company, arrived in Tucson to determine the location of the depot and other necessary buildings, and to meet with the Mayor and Council to arrive at an agreement regarding the needs of the railroad. The City Council, in early July, authorized issuing of bonds to defray the expense of securing right of way for the railroad. The right of way Committee reported that all but two parcels had been acquired from the Rillito River through the City to about one mile east of the City limits (now Campbell Avenue), and south along Meyers Street about the same distance. Most of the developed area of the city was within three blocks of the heart of the business district. Additionally, out-of-town visitors were dropped off by the stages at the door to their hotels and could easily walk where they needed to go.

When the railroad arrived, it was way out east of town, about three-fourths of a mile uphill from the main business district. Suddenly there was the need to connect the two with public transportation of some sort.

Field and Morgan stood ready to provide the service with their “City Hacks.” Additionally, another enterprising citizen stepped in with what was advertised in the Star as “The Accommodation Line, John Trabucco & Bros., Proprietors.” The Trabuccos promised to run to and from the trains, night and day, for “the accommodation of the traveling public,” or to any other points within the city for a fare of 50 cents, a very substantial sum. Apparently, neither Morgan nor Trabucco adequately served the city. In early November 1880, new competition appeared on the scene in the form of L. B. “Doc” Millard who advertised as “Doc’s Carryall Coaches! – Nos. 1 and 2, two of the Finest Coaches in the Territory.” More specifically known as the Silverlake and City Hack, Doc probably combined taxi and transit service. At least in some respects, it met all the criteria of transit. Specifically, his coaches served St. Xavier Mission semi-weekly, leaving the Palace Hotel at 9 a.m. on Wednesdays and Sundays. While schedules have not been discovered, service was provided within the city, and to Camp Lowell, Agua Caliente, Silver Lake, Warner’s Mill and St. Mary’s Hospital.

None of these early efforts at public transportation could be called substantial. They were primarily small owner-operated enterprises. The motored interests of the city, while interested in the railroad for the city, were first committed (probably more out of their civic pride than anything else) to the establishment of the most modern form of transit then known, a mule-drawn street railway. On March 16, 1880, four days before the arrival of the first train, the City Council passed Ordinance No. 25 granting H.C. Wiley and Associates, the right to construct a street railroad within the city limits. Work was begun of the line within six months and one or more of the three authorized lines were to be completed within two years. The three authorized routes were all to operate from the railroad depot to Pennington and Main (location of Levin’s Park and Brewery, the main place of assembly in the city). Route 1 was to go via Camp Street, route 2 via Congress, and Route 3 via Pennington Street.

When this scheme failed, due probably to the inability of local interests to fund it adequately, citizens mounted two additional efforts.
On April 2, 1881, Charles H. Lord, Charles R. Drake and Hugh Farley incorporated the Tucson Railroad Company. They proposed to build a line between the railroad depot and the corner of Congress and Main Streets. Additionally, they proposed to build to such outlying points as Silver Lake, the old church of San Xavier, Buell's Addition, Fort Lowell, and a point to be selected between Warner's Mill and the Sister's Hospital.

The Tucson Land and Street Railroad Company was incorporated on June 30, 1881, by P. R. Tully, James H. Toole, J. S. Wood and James Buell. Their stated object was "to build and operate a street railway from the business part of the town out to Buell's Addition, and to sell lots in said addition."

James Buell was the prime mover behind this attempt and a short time later, the successful herdic line which was established. Buell was an attorney, originally admitted to the bar in Alabama in 1859. Due to failing health, he had moved in 1875 to Colorado where he practiced law and pursued mining interests. He moved to Arizona in the summer of 1878, first taking up mining interests in the Patagonia Mountains and then opening a law practice in Tucson in September of 1878. The Citizen reported in February of 1879 that he and another gentleman had started "a little villa" just east of the city limits, and had dug a well obtaining excellent water at a depth of 36 feet. Buell had the land, located generally east of First Avenue between Third Street (University Blvd.) and Broadway, plotted into lots and applied for the patent to it from the Federal Government. The subdivision was named "Buell's Addition," and patterned after developments in other cities at the time, Buell proposed to promote the development by providing modern transportation to it from the city center.

When three efforts to organize a street railway in just over a year and half failed, the influential citizens of the city gave up and pursued a less expensive route. James Buell enlisted Charles Rivers Drake from the Tucson Railroad Company effort and Barron M. Jacobs, a local banker. Together they decided to launch the Tucson Land and Herdic Coach Company. Other interests included William A. Scott (for whom Scott Street was named), who had come to town in 1879 as a banker but shifted into insurance; and E. N. Fish, proprietor of a local mill.

In September, 1881, James Buell made a trip to Philadelphia where he met with Peter Herdic. For the sum of $500, he secured all rights to build or have built, and operate herdic coaches in the Tucson area. They ordered, received and placed into service their first herdic even before incorporating. It arrived on November 16, 1881 and presumably went into service immediately.

While the original route and schedule is unknown, judging

Then there were the specific Arizona problems. Lack of population over vast distances was one. In 1870, the United States Census found less than 10,000 people in the entire territory; population centered in Prescott, La Paz, Yuma, and Tucson. On the other hand, the movement of people and freight by stage coach or mule drawn freight wagon was agonizingly slow, hot and dusty, hampered by Indians and highwaymen, and very expensive. Passenger traffic from Yuma took four days and cost $60. The same trip by rail promised to cost only $22.50 and take one day. Freight took 20 days costing 5 to 5½ cents per pound, while the railroad would reduce that cost to ½ cent per pound. It was obvious that all traffic would move by rail once that option was available.

The real attraction to the railroads was two-fold. Through traffic from the east to the Pacific coast was lucrative. Even more valuable was the freighting of gold, silver and copper from Arizona’s mines, and of supplies to be brought into the territory.

These considerations led Crocker and other Southern Pacific associates to stand against Huntington in their unwillingness to build east of Yuma. However Huntington persisted, and on August 20, 1878 a separate Southern Pacific Railroad Company was incorporated under Arizona laws to build across the southern part of the territory. The deciding factor was the attraction of the mines. Construction actually began in the second week of November 1878, and continued steadily at a rate of about one and one half miles per day. The tracks reached Gila Bend, 120 miles east of Yuma, on April 1, 1879, and Casa Grande, which was established by the railroad, on May 19, 1879.

Southern Pacific’s locomotive No. 17 stops for passengers at Red Rock north of Tucson in the 1880’s.
railroad's economic integrity. In 1868, they purchased controlling interest in the Southern Pacific, which had been organized in 1865. It had no trackage, but had rights from Congress to connect with the Atlantic and Pacific at Needles, and with the Texas and Pacific at Yuma. The new owners pushed construction ahead, completing the line between San Francisco and Los Angeles in 1876, and extending eastward to Indio the same year and on to Yuma, becoming the first railroad to enter Arizona on September 30, 1877. Meeting the trains with daily stage service to Prescott and Tucson was the Southern Pacific Mail and Stage Line. In spite of the name, the stage line was under separate ownership, in no way connected with the railroad.

Building across Arizona presented several challenges. First, the Texas and Pacific Railroad had congressional approval to build, and agreement could not be reached with them to take over their rights. This problem was bypassed by rights afforded Southern Pacific under the General Right of Way Law of 1875 passed by Congress, and by the permission granted by the Arizona Territorial Legislature to build in Arizona. Hunington's money reportedly secured passage of the act of February 7, 1877, introduced by Estevan Ochoa of Tucson.


—David Myrick Photo

Next was the question of connections to railroads in the east. So many unsuccessful railroad schemes had been put forth that eastern railroads were reluctant to make any commitment, especially when it involved building across Texas to meet the Southern Pacific as the Union Pacific had done with the Central Pacific.

from later schedules, this was strictly a pure transit-type operation. It operated over a set route and on a strict schedule throughout the day, for a fare of 10 cents.

Operating any type of vehicle through the unpaved streets of Tucson was at times very difficult. Usually, the streets were dusty. When it rained, however, they could become very muddy, tending to act as little washes carrying away the water. After this they often became very rough and uneven as the top soil was washed away and rocks were exposed. On January 21, 1882, the Star, apparently right after a rain, stated: "The City Council would show good

What is believed to be Tucson land and Herdic Coach Company's Herdic No. 3, waits for passengers about 1885. judgment if they would adopt measures at once to gravel Congress Street. In its present condition, if large sized pebbles were used, then hardened, it would make a fine firm bottom."

As we know even today, the City Council does not often take the advice of the news media. Apparently, they took no action then, either, since a mere week and a half later, on February 1, the same paper had to announce that "The Herdic Coach has been withdrawn a few days due to muddy streets."

On February 9, 1882, incorporation having been completed and the patent to Buell's Addition having finally been received, the Star printed the Prospectus of the Tucson Land and Herdic Coach Company. As the Star put it in an accompanying article, this was "worthy of more than passing notice, as it proposes not only to furnish the city with comfortable and cheap means of travel from
one locality of the city to other points, but will place within the reach of all the people who do business downtown the means of purchasing desirable lands for residences outside the city limits, as the distance will be reduced by this quick means of travel."

Effective April 27, 1882, with the arrival of a second Herdic coach, the company doubled service instituting service in both directions on the loop portion of the route. The accompanying map shows the route which was to be operated on 15 minute headways between the hours of 6 a.m. and 9 p.m. Tickets were for sale by the drivers, or by Mr. William Scott at his insurance office on the corner of Meyer Street and Maiden Lane.

June 26, 1882, marked the placing in service of what was called "a large (12 passenger) Herdic Coach No. 3." It was more like what might today be called a special charter coach. It was available for charter at a rate of $1.50 per hour in the daytime and $2.50 per hour at night. When not in charter use, it ran trips to Silver Lake. Tickets were 25 cents each way, and the price included a bath ticket. At other times, it acted as an extra or exclusive coach over the regular Herdic routes, charging a premium fare of 20 cents each way.

The Tucson Land and Herdic Coach Company was a well organized, adequately funded endeavor. As a result, it provided the first transit system the citizens of Tucson could really depend on and be proud of. Its coaches continued to ply their regular paths through the city until at least 1888.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE RAILROAD

Were it not for the railroad, Tucson might be part of Mexico rather than the United States. One of the reasons for the acquisition of the Gadsden Purchase (that part of Arizona south of the Gila River) from Mexico in 1854 was to provide a relatively low altitude crossing of the Continental Divide. That year the Texas Western Railroad Company did a survey from Texas, across New Mexico and Arizona to California, following the Gila River route. Published as the A. B. Gray Report, it did much to disseminate information on the Southwest. However, due to the lack of finances, construction was never started, and it was not to be 23 years and a succession of railroad companies and schemes later, before rails would rest in the Arizona dust.

By 1869, when the golden spike was driven joining the Central Pacific and the Union Pacific at Promontory Point, Utah forming the first transcontinental railroad, railroad promotion had reached a fever pitch in the United States. The Northern Pacific and the Atlantic and Pacific (later Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe) had both been authorized and the southern route along the 32nd parallel was gaining increasing support. By early 1871, the Congress of the United States came to agreement, and on March 3 President Grant signed into law a bill incorporating the Texas Pacific Railroad (later the Texas and Pacific Railroad).

When the news arrived in Tucson by stage from San Diego, the citizens celebrated the event with 100 firings of a cannon obtained from Camp Lowell and the blowing of the steam whistle of the flour mill on Main Street for an hour.

In spite of the enthusiasm, the Texas and Pacific never entered Arizona. The financial panic of late 1873 ended hopes of selling bonds both in the United States and Europe. The Texas and Pacific was forced to turn to the United States Congress in hopes of obtaining a subsidy in the form of a United States Treasury guarantee of the interest on its five-percent, forty-year bonds. This long effort ended unsuccessfully, and the Southern Pacific, whose President Collis P. Huntington kept telling Congress that his railroad could build the route without government aid, built while Texas and Pacific hoped. In spite of financial difficulties, Texas and Pacific did extend its line westward across Texas. Finally, on November 26, 1881, an agreement was reached between the Texas and Pacific and the Southern Pacific Railroad ending any claims Texas and Pacific may have had west of El Paso.

The Southern Pacific Railroad grew out of a desire of the owners of the Central Pacific — Collis P. Huntington, Charles Crocker, Leland Stanford, and Mark Hopkins — to protect that

Some of the crowd attending the eighth grade graduation ceremonies at the court plaza in 1892 arrived by the two herdies pictured.
The coming of the railroad engendered great civic pride, a feeling among the citizens that civilization had arrived, and that with it ought to come all the accoutrements thereof. The newspapers constantly prodded local officials to improve the condition of the streets. In order to help persons find their way around, the City Council authorized in 1881, a system of street naming and address numbering. That same year Tucson's first telephone exchange was installed, and in 1882 the Tucson Gas Company lit the city's streets with modern gas lights. Starting in 1880, the health care of residents was greatly improved with the opening of St. Mary's Hospital by the Sisters of St. Joseph. In 1885 the territorial legislature authorized a university for Tucson on the provision that forty acres be contributed for the campus. Finally, any city as significant as Tucson ought to have not only the modern intercity transportation system provided by the railroad, but a local transit system equally dependable and modern.

The year 1880, then, was a significant turning point for the City of Tucson, marked primarily by improved transportation, both intercity and intracity. It is the purpose of this centennial publication to trace the roots of both.

Buell's Addition was ahead of its time. Less than a dozen lots were sold in five years. Finally on February 2, 1888, the assets of the company were sold by order of the superior Court. In order to preserve the interests of the investors, M. P. Freeman, who had acted as Secretary and Treasurer of the Tucson Land and Herdic Coach Company, purchased the assets for $500. In April he sold Buell's Addition to James Buell's wife, Sallie. Her husband was ill and died that December.

Although ownership of the herdics is uncertain at this point, it is known they continued to operate beyond the date of the court ordered sale of the company's assets. The late 1880's and early 1890's were a time of economic recession in Tucson. If pure transit ceased in Tucson, there were likely once again enterprising owner-operators who filled the gap with taxi type operations with some occasional transit elements thrown in. One such, known to be operating by 1891, was the Orndorff Bus. Initially this "bus" was owned by and operated as a service of the Orndorff Hotel to and from the trains. However, with the demise of the herdics, they advertised "Take the Orndorff Bus, only 25 cents to any part of the city."

*Tucson Street Railway mule car No. 2 heads down 3rd St. (University Blvd.) toward the University about 1900.*

The significant local event of the early 1890's was the opening of the University of Arizona out in the desert east of town. The University had been authorized in 1885. In 1886, 40 acres were donated for the campus by local Tucson gamblers, E. B. Gifford and Ben Parker, and Saloon keeper, William S. "Billy" Read. Ground was broken the next year for the first campus building, "Old Main," which stands today in the center of the campus. Time needed to complete the building and recruit staff delayed the first classes until
October 1, 1891.

The first couple of years there were very few students at the new school. However, by the third year, the student body had grown enough to stimulate two gentlemen, named Ganzhorn and Harris, to establish the University Hack Line on November 20, 1893. It operated not only to the University, but also in town. Fare was 25 cents before 10 p.m. and 50 cents after 10 p.m. Transport was via a "new herdic, easy riding, lastest style,"

Tucson Rapid Transit electric car No. 3 stops at Church and Congress in 1907.

Some time in 1894, Ganzhorn and Harris sold out to the Orndorff operation which by then was known as the Orndorff Passenger Work, owned by Charles DeGroff. DeGroff continued his operation for a number of years, at least up until the establishment of a permanent street railway.

The 1890's brought additional attempts to establish a street railway. Possibly stimulated by the demise of the herdic coaches, The Tucson Improvement Company was incorporated on February 2, 1891. Primarily a land promotional firm, they intended to promote land sales by use of modern transportation.

John M. Ormsby and Associates were granted the right to construct a street railway by the City Council on March 12, 1895. Ormsby was no more successful in getting rails on the ground than the Tucson Improvement Company had been.

Fifteen years after the original attempts to establish a street railway failed, the City Council, on April 7, 1896, authorized construction of the Nelson Street Car Line. It was named after its promoter, Miss Lulu May Nelson, and was intended to provide not only transportation between downtown and the University of Arizona, but beyond the main gate (University Blvd. and Park Avenue) to

INTRODUCTION

One hundred years ago, Tucson was a small, dusty pueblo of 7,000 persons. The previous decade had been a significant one. Tucson had served as capital of the territory. The Arizona Citizen and the Arizona Weekly Star had both begun publication. Tucson was incorporated, first as a village, and then as a city. The city acquired two square miles from the federal government, laying out the original townsite and issuing deeds to the citizens for the land they already occupied, as well as selling new lots. The military telegraph line had arrived in 1871, linking Tucson with the outside world, and in 1872 the first public school had opened, supplementing the previous private school. Population more than doubled during the decade.

The bulk of the population increase since 1870 was probably recent, since the Indians had been placed on the reservation in 1877. Prior to that time Apache attacks had been frequent and the danger great. Though there were to be other uprisings during the mid 1880's before the surrender of Geronimo in 1886, the years of 1877 - 1881 were years of quiet. Many new settlers flocked into Tucson.

The great attraction was mining. A healthy share of Tucson’s economy depended on supplying the mines. Tucson was the largest population center between the Pacific coast and San Antonio, Texas. As such it provided a place for miners coming out of the mining camps to spend their money, on entertainment and on supplies to continue looking for new mineral wealth, and mining the wealth already discovered. This activity was greatly stimulated in 1878 by the tremendous silver strike at Tombstone.

The other large factor in Tucson’s economy was supplying the military. Tucson was, until 1873, an army town. Camp Lowell was located just east of the main part of town on what is today the site of Armory Park and the Main Library. The original name of Broadway was Camp Street; it formed the north boundary of Camp Lowell. Even after its move some 7 miles northeast along the Rillito River, many soldiers on leave continued ready and willing to spend their pay in Tucson. Additionally, the Fort purchased supplies from Tucson businesses for distribution to other military posts throughout the southern part of the territory.

The big news of 1880 was the arrival of the railroad. It was hailed as the greatest event in the history of the city. Whether it was may be debated, but it was likely the greatest event of the century. In 1880, with the railroad’s coming, Tucson began evolving from an outpost on the frontier to a significant center of civilization in the Southwest. The railroad meant that greater quantities of goods could be received in a shorter period of time at less expense. It also promised a significant increase in migration to Tucson.
Miss Nelson's land development along the north boundary of the University (2nd Street), known as University Extension.

Before this line could be built, Miss Nelson sold out to William P. Woods and Associates, who reorganized and received their own franchise from the City Council on September 25, 1896. Little is known about the Nelson Street Car Line (the name was apparently retained) other than that a line was actually constructed from downtown to the University and operated for a short time in late 1896 and early 1897. Financially, the line was not successful, and the rails and equipment were sold to satisfy creditors.

Permanent transit, in an unbroken chain down to the present was finally to come to Tucson in 1897 with the organization of the Tucson Street Railway on September 9. Construction began and on May 12, 1898, the line's chief promoter, Charles H. Hoff, drove the "golden spike" at the University end of the line.

Mule-drawn street cars plodded the streets of Tucson until June 1, 1906, when electric power replaced mules. With the advent of electric street cars, the corporate name was changed to the Tucson Rapid Transit Company (TRT), a name that lasted until 1967. Motor buses were used as early as 1916 by two small independent operators, both of whom were eventually taken over by TRT. Permanent bus service by TRT, however, did not come until November 25, 1925. Buses and street cars were used concurrently until December 31, 1930 when Motorman Dallas E. Smith took car 10 out to the University for the last run. Since that date, transit in Tucson has been provided exclusively by motor bus.
The motor bus era has been marked by two significant periods of change and growth. The first was World War II which caused a 400 percent increase in size of the transit fleet and over 550 percent increase in passenger volume. The second began with the change from private to public ownership by the City of Tucson in 1969. In the decade since then Sun Tran, the name designated for the City system, has increased fleet size by over 550 percent and increased passenger volume by some 700 percent. Included in these impressive figures was the assumption in September, 1978 of Old Pueblo Transit Company service, a separate private operator on the south and west sides of Tucson. OPT had been started in 1924 by Roy Laos, Sr. as the Occidental Bus Lines.

Today as the Tucson metropolitan area passes the half million mark in population, Sun Tran operates a fleet of 140 buses over 22 routes carrying 9 million passengers annually. Standing at the end of a long line of transit history, Sun Tran is ready to serve the people of Tucson in a fashion which would have made the pioneers in transit proud.

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A modern Sun Tran coach moves through downtown Tucson.  --- Motor Bus Society

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A HISTORY OF TUCSON TRANSPORTATION

THE ARRIVAL OF THE RAILROAD BEGINNINGS OF TRANSIT IN TUCSON

by W. Eugene Caywood

CREDITS

For the railroad portion of this publication, the author is indebted to the excellent book by David C. Myrick, Railroads of Arizona, Volume I, The Southern Roads, published by Howell-North Books, Berkeley, California, 1975.

The history and development of transit in Tucson from the establishment of the Tucson Street Railway forward, has been adequately chronicled in two publications by the Tucson Corral of Westerners in their journal of Tucson and Southwest history, the Smoke Signal. Issue No. 23, entitled, “Cars Stop Here” traces the history of the street cars, while issue No. 32, “Please Step to the Rear” gives the history of Tucson’s bus transportation.

All photographs are courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society, except as noted.

We gratefully acknowledge the production assistance of Mike Sanchez and Sun Tran.

TUCSON-PIMA COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

1980
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