

FIRST DRAFT Horse-drawn streetcars made Junction a modern metropolis

The first streetcar in Grand Junction was a source of pride for the community and excitement for youngsters who lived in the small town around the turn of the century, recalled Merle M. McClintock.

"We felt metropolitan when we first had our street car," McClintock wrote in a 1939



BOB SILBERNAGEL

column in The Daily Sentinel. She had grown up in the city and remembered the delight the first streetcar created.

"It is probably still a matter of pride to the pioneers that, less than 10 years after the Indians had left the reservation, we had a mile or so of track and a street car and a driver who was a romantic figure to the children of the town."

That driver was a Black man named Bert Price, she added.

The predecessor of streetcars — omnibuses, or large carriages that could haul multiple passengers and could travel on city roads — made their appearance in this country in the 1820s in places like New York, Boston and Philadelphia.

Often, they had designated routes and schedules. In 1832, the New York and Harlem Railroad fitted its omnibuses to operate on railroad tracks on city streets, creating the first horse-drawn streetcar service.

Because it could carry additional passengers, it was seen as more efficient. Horse-drawn streetcars were soon adopted by other cities.

The first streetcar line in Grand Junction began operating in September of 1890, nine years after most Ute Indians in Colorado were forcibly removed from what had been their Western Slope home to new reservations in Utah.

That first line, the Grand Junction Street Car Co., was owned by a man named Barney Kennedy, who obtained a franchise from the city to lay tracks and operate the system.

The horse-drawn car initially ran only five blocks on Main Street, from the railroad depot at First Street to hotels on Fifth Street.

The company reorganized in 1891 as the Grand Junction Street Railway Co. Some of the leading businessmen of the community, including George Wheeler and Benton Cannon, assumed control of the business.

In 1900, they sold the streetcars, tracks and business to the city, which then accepted bids for the operation of the line.

Whether an African-American named Bert Price worked as the first driver for Kennedy's company, as McClintock claimed, is unclear. She also said that later, another Black man named



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Grand Junction's first streetcar, carrying advertisements for Bannister's Furniture and Undertaking, Haskell's Pharmacy, the Grand Hotel and others. Although the inscription on the photo says it was 1887, multiple sources make it clear that Grand Junction's first streetcar line didn't begin operating until 1890.

John Newman "took over the job, on a sort of lease, I think."

McClintock may have confused the timing of the two men. John Newman did, in fact, have a lease to operate the streetcar line from 1893 to 1899. But the city revoked the license after numerous complaints about delays in the schedule and cruelty to the horses.

Once the city purchased the entire system, a Black man named John Price won the bid in 1900 to operate it for \$15 a month.

Price was apparently well-known and fairly popular in Grand Junction. But his three years of operating the streetcar line weren't without controversy.

For one thing, he angered several area citizens because, they claimed, he ran the streetcar to benefit the owners of the Grand and Brunswick hotels, but did not let riders know they could also stop at the Buena Vista Hotel.

The angry citizens presented a petition against Price to the Grand Junction City Council in 1901, and he received a warning, but no other action was taken against him.

Later that year, Price was fined \$5 for using "profane and obscene language in a public place." The complaint against him came from a clerk at the Buena Vista Hotel.

In March of 1902, Price was apparently assaulted by a streetcar rider whose luggage Price had confiscated because the man hadn't paid his fare or his hotel bill.

Despite these events, however, Price's annual contract to operate the streetcar line was renewed in April 1901, and again in April, 1902.

By then, the streetcar tracks had been extended south on Fifth Street to the bridge over the Colorado River, and there was a connection to the Little Book Cliff Railway, which ran to the coal mines and houses at the small community of Carpenter, at the foot of the Book Cliffs.

The streetcar tracks also ran east beyond Seventh Street.

In 1902, Price was also seeking permission to ex-



"MERCHANTS' EXCHANGE, PHILADELPHIA, 1840. LITHOGRAPH BY J.T. BOWEN AND M.A. O'CONNOR, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

An 1840 lithograph from Philadelphia shows multiple omnibuses outside the city's Merchant Exchange, while a horse-drawn streetcar operates on tracks. Many cities were transitioning from omnibuses to streetcars at this time.

tend the tracks north and south on Fourth Street. But the summer of 1902 was not a good one for the streetcar line or Price.

In July, the streetcar driven by Price struck a 75-year-old deaf man who was crossing the tracks and didn't hear the bell Price was ringing. Price was blamed in newspaper articles for not stopping more quickly.

Summer of 1902 was also reported to be extremely hot, and it was rough on the horses that Price used to pull the heavy car. Sometime late that summer or early fall, he apparently stopped operating the line, although the exact reasons are unclear.

In December of 1902, the Grand Junction News noted that the city still had streetcars, but they weren't in active operation.

The following April, when the city was trying to determine whether to lease the streetcar system once more, the News declared, "There never was any good reason why it should have been discontinued."

But it was discontinued, and in July of 1903 the City Council voted to remove all of the streetcar tracks in the city. And in December, it directed the city street supervisor to sell off all of the cars and iron that had once served the city.

John Price remained in Grand Junction, first as a driver for the Grand Hotel customer wagon, and later as porter at the La Court Hotel. He suffered a stroke in December,

1903, but recovered.

He was a leader of the African-American community and led an effort in 1907 to raise funds for the A.M.E. Church. He died in December, 1912, and was buried in the Orchard Mesa Cemetery.

By the turn of the century, cities throughout the country were abandoning horse-drawn street cars in favor of electric ones.

In addition to accidents such as the one Price was involved in in 1902, horses were expensive to purchase, feed and maintain. And most horses could be used only three to five years before they had to be retired.

The era of the horse-drawn streetcar had died in Grand Junction in 1902, when Price stopped running the line.

As the Grand Junction News put it in 1903, "The period for horse cars is passed forever in this city. What is needed, and what must soon be provided, is an electric railway."

But it would be another six years until that occurred.

Sources: "Historic Streetcar Systems of Colorado," by Nick VanderKwaak, Jennifer Wahlers, Dianna Litvak and Ethan Raath, for the Colorado Department of Transportation, 2020; historic editions of the Grand Junction News and Grand Junction Daily Sentinel, through www.newspapers.com.

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Man denies any role in 1984 killing of Greeley girl, 12

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GREELEY — A former longshot Idaho gubernatorial candidate on trial in the 1984 killing of a 12-year-old Colorado girl has testified that he did not know the girl or her family before she vanished and denied being involved in her disappearance.

At the time, Steve Pankey was a neighbor of Jonelle Matthew and her family in Greeley, a city about 50 miles north of Denver. The girl's remains were found by oil and gas workers in 2019. She had been fatally shot.

Pankey was charged with Jonelle's murder last year after showing extreme interest in the case for many years and allegedly sharing details with investigators that had not been made public.

Pankey said last week in court that he pretended to know information about the case out of bitterness for police and for his former church and former employer, both of which he wanted investigated.

Most of his testimony to questions by his lawyer was rambling and included comments about his hatred of racist police officers and of being bullied for being bisexual.

District Attorney Michael J. Rourke pressed him about his views about police during questioning, which Pankey said came from seeing police officers humiliate and hurt



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Steven Pankey listens to testimony on the first day of his trial Oct. 13, 2020, in Weld County District Court in Greeley.

Hispanic people while he was working for an ambulance service in California. Pankey said that he refused to put a splint on a sheriff's deputy who broke his leg because of his beliefs about police, letting the deputy ride to the hospital in pain.

He said the deputy screamed for eight or 12 minutes.

"I sat there and watched," Pankey said.

Pankey's lawyer, Anthony Viorst, has argued that his client is obsessed with "true crime" mysteries and has Asperger syndrome, which causes his mind to process information differently and leads him to get "in middle of these things" to prove his own "self importance."

Prosecutors said Pankey kept up to date on the case throughout the years even as he moved his family to several states before settling in Idaho where he ran unsuccessfully for Idaho governor in 2014 and 2018, the year he was named as a person of interest in the girl's death.

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Court: Mine permit ignored pollution law

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BILLINGS, Mont. — Montana environmental regulators ignored the law when they permitted an expansion of a massive strip mine that is the sole source of coal for a

large power plant despite concerns over water pollution, a state judge ruled.

State District Judge Katherine Bidegaray ordered the Department of Environmental Quality to revisit its 2015 permit

to expand the 25,752-acre Rosebud Mine, owned by Colorado-based Westmoreland mining.

The judge's order came after groups sued over damage to a nearby creek from wastewater that

flows out of the mine.

Rosebud is in the Powder River Basin along the Montana-Wyoming border. It fuels the Colstrip Power Plant that burns 8 million tons of coal annually.

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