



Contact: Megan van Frank, 801.359.9670 ext. 110  
[vanfrank@utahhumanities.org](mailto:vanfrank@utahhumanities.org)

Photos Available Upon Request

**For Immediate Release (December 29, 2014)**

### **Beehive Archive**

Welcome to the Beehive Archive—your weekly bite-sized look at some of the most pivotal—and peculiar—events in Utah history. With all of the history and none of the dust, the Beehive Archive is a fun way to catch up on Utah’s past. Beehive Archive is a production of the Utah Humanities Council, provided to local papers as a weekly feature article focusing on Utah history topics drawn from our award-winning radio series, which can be heard each week on [KCPW](#) and [Utah Public Radio](#).

### **Utah’s Interurban Railroads**

**Utah’s interurban railroads were the predecessors of light rail in Utah.**

At the height of the railroad age, Utah was criss-crossed with rail lines. Many of these were established to haul freight, but most of them also provided passenger service. In the more densely populated areas from Provo to Logan, electric interurban rail lines carried students to school, workers to their jobs, and shoppers to areas of commerce.

Simon Bamberger was one of the best known railroad owners in Utah. He started his Great Salt Lake and Hot Springs Railway, popularly known as the Bamberger Line, in 1890, and then continued to build northward. At Farmington, he drained a swamp and developed the Lagoon Amusement Park to compete with the Rio Grande Railroad’s Lake Park on the shores of the Great Salt Lake. With the economic boost that Lagoon gave to Bamberger’s railroad, the company built rails to Ogden by 1908 and ran five trains a day in each direction. The Bamberger Line provided the only rail access to Hill Air Force Base during the 1940s.

The A.J. Orem Company built a rail line in 1913 that served commuters between Provo and Salt Lake City. Other small railroads provided freight and passenger service to communities all over the state, including American Fork, Tooele, Tintic, Cedar City, and more. The San Pete Valley Railway was established to serve coal mines and rural areas. During the 1880s, when polygamists were being chased by federal authorities, the San Pete train signaled townspeople with coded whistle blasts to alert them that marshals were on board the train. This gave polygamists time to disappear into their hiding places, and few arrests were made. The train earned the nickname, the Polygamist Central.

So, what happened to Utah’s interurban lines? With more Utahns buying cars, especially after World War II, and with competition from buses that had greater route flexibility, most of the passenger rail lines in Utah were out of business by the early 1950s.

*Beehive Archive is a production of the Utah Humanities Council. Sources consulted in the creation of the Beehive Archive and past episodes may be found at [www.utahhumanities.org/BeehiveArchive.htm](http://www.utahhumanities.org/BeehiveArchive.htm). © Utah Humanities Council 2014.*

####

[The Utah Humanities Council](#) empowers Utahns to improve their communities through active engagement in the humanities. UHC is funded through gifts from individuals, foundations, and corporations, the Salt Lake County Zoo, Arts, and Parks Fund, the State of Utah, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Each year, the Council underwrites hundreds of educational and cultural programs throughout Utah. For more information, visit [www.utahhumanities.org](http://www.utahhumanities.org) or [www.facebook.com/utahhumanitiescouncil](https://www.facebook.com/utahhumanitiescouncil).