



Contact: Megan van Frank, 801.359.9670 ext. 110
vanfrank@utahhumanities.org

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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](#).

Not the End of the Line: Salt Lake's Rio Grande Train Depot

Once a major transportation hub, Salt Lake City's Rio Grande Train Depot has served its community well over the last century.

The Rio Grande Train Depot in Salt Lake City was built in 1910. Once a major hub of transportation, the building has had its ups and downs, and in one close call, even cheated death.

At the turn of the 20th century, Salt Lake was a battleground for rival railroads and fierce competition spurred construction of infrastructure. When trains began running through the newly-built Rio Grande station in 1910, they ushered Utah into the modern era.

The station attracted many immigrants who transformed the surrounding neighborhood. Greeks, Armenians, Syrians, and Japanese lived nearby, and the smells of a thousand kitchens, coffeehouses, grocery stores, and saloons mixed in the Utah air. Following these boom years, the Depot suffered disuse during the Great Depression, but sprang back to life with the coming of World War II. During the War, the Depot serviced twenty trains a day full of soldiers in uniform and civilians forced to adopt train travel due to gasoline rationing. After the War, the Depot declined again. New interstates made driving easier and people moved to the suburbs. For long distance travel, they chose airplanes.

Cash-strapped railroads were forced to sell or tear down their unused stations. The Rio Grande Depot narrowly escaped destruction and was instead sold to the State of Utah for the whopping sum of \$1.

After careful restoration, the old building was dedicated in 1981 for a new use: to house the Utah State Historical Society. The surrounding neighborhood has also received a facelift, with the "Gateway Project" commemorating the neighborhood's history as a gateway welcoming newcomers to the city.

Today, instead of train whistles, Depot neighbors can hear live music from nearby Pioneer Park. Smells don't come from immigrants' kitchens but from the Mexican dishes at the popular Depot café. This century's Rio Grande Depot seems bent on preserving history, rather than just making it.

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 © Utah Humanities Council 2015.

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