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Creative Nonfiction

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Weeeeeee..... What a Ride!!!

### The Cherrelyn Bronco & Gravity Horse Car

As I stand here this hot summer morning, I am refreshed to see people and families lining up outside, awaiting the doors to be unlocked. Soon the people are rushing in as the doors are opened. Some go upstairs to the court house while others rush past me into the public library. Although I am very thankful and grateful to have a permanent home indoors and away from all the harsh outdoor weather, sometimes I just really long for the good old days. In those days, crowds of people and families were lining up and rushing to see me (Johnson 103). My name is Cherrelyn. I am one of four horse cars that were once a major attraction in a small city called Englewood in Colorado (Lawrence 64). James K. Cherry originally purchased a plot of land near W. Oxford and called it "Cherry Gardens." This gave the immediate community the name Cherrelyn (Forrest 105). That is where my name came from. I used to give people rides to the Cherrelyn Shopping Center and the post office ("Horse Railroads" par. 6). Cherrelyn was a district that was later incorporated into Englewood, Arapahoe County in Colorado ("Horse Railroads" par. 5). I have had a very long and interesting life so far; let me start from the beginning. This is the true story of the history of the Cherrelyn Horse Car.

My life began a long, long time ago back in the early 1880s. The year was 1882, to be exact ("Chronology of Englewood's History" par. 1). A man named John Bogue bought 40

passenger cars from Denver, and he then launched the Cherrelyn Bronco and Gravity Horse Car (Johnson 103). In 1883, crews worked very hard all year to lay down the rail lines for my up-and-coming route (“Chronology of Englewood’s History” par. 1). These lines were built by the Southside Investment Company (Steiner par. 5). My service began in 1883. My tracks ran the distance of approximately one and a quarter miles. They ran up a steep hill on Broadway from Hampton to Quincy (Hirskind p. 104) where there was a small shopping center called Cherrelyn (Steiner par. 5).

Back in those days, I was a very beautiful attraction. I was built eighteen-feet long, six-feet wide, and ten-feet high. I was originally made of wood paneling and glass (Lawrence 64). I was so big that I could give many passengers a ride. My windows were rounded and trimmed with stained glass. Inside, my seats along each side were upholstered in a heavy flowered fabric (Lawrence 64). I gave my passengers a very comfortable ride, while they got to enjoy the breathtaking view of the Colorado Rockies and the beautiful countryside. I had a big pot-bellied stove inside me that was used to keep my passengers warm during the brisk Colorado winters (Lawrence 64).

I had three different horses that I worked with during my days of active service. The horses names were Quickstep, Old Dobbin’, and Curley (Johnson 103). I was so excited every morning when I saw the driver coming with one of the horses. I then knew my fun-filled day was about to start. At the beginning of my route, my driver would hitch my horse to the front side of me. After the passengers were all aboard me and properly seated, my driver would then ride on the horse and pull us uphill to our final destination, The Cherrelyn Shopping Center at Broadway and Quincy (Steiner par. 5). Some of my passengers would get off to go to the shops, while others remained to continue on a round-trip ride. At this stop, the horse was then unhitched. My

driver led the horse around to the other side of me, where there was a special platform. This platform was built especially for the horse to ride during the trip back to Orchard Place at Hampden (Steiner par. 5). My driver proceeded to back the horse up a dirt ramp onto the platform (Johnson 103). The ride back was my favorite part of the ride. At the top of this hill, after the horse was loaded and the passengers were ready onboard, my driver would give me a push (Johnson 103). The horse, in return for his service, would be allowed to ride for free on the trip back down the hill. Harnessing gravity, I would coast back down the Broadway hill to our starting point at Orchard Place (Steiner par. 5). The ride back down was actually a lot faster than the ride up. The trip up took 15 minutes, while the ride back down took only three minutes (Steiner par. 5).

My route began at Hampden at Orchard Place. When the word about my service spread, and it spread as fast as wildfire, tourists flocked to Orchard Place to see and ride me (Johnson 103). This was a booming summer for business. With all the tourists coming to visit me, the businesses at Orchard Place and Cherrelyn Shopping Center did extremely well. Visitors rode the electric tramway cars from Denver to see and ride me (Johnson 103). The Denver Tramway Company started an electric streetcar line in the fall of 1889. This line opened on Christmas Day. It ran down Broadway, starting at Alameda and ending at Orchard Place in Englewood (Forrest 105). Many visitors would take the Denver Tramway to the Orchard Place loop at Hampden. This was where its service ended and mine began. They would take a round-trip ride on me, the Cherrelyn, and then go back to Denver (Johnson 103).

There was no streetcar service beyond Hampden and Broadway (Lawrence 64). I had the monopoly on transportation in that whole area during this time period. In 1903, James Obrien owned and operated me. He didn't make much money on the five cent fares, but he had a

thriving business on taking and selling photographs of the passengers standing next to me. He often had the horses sporting straw hats for these pictures (Johnson 103). Can you imagine? These horses were wearing hats! But then, wearing hats was so common during that time period, I just assumed they didn't notice. He also sold souvenirs and memorabilia to further his business (Johnson 103). My return trip was a favorite camera subject (Steiner par. 6). We would usually stop at the top of the hill at Broadway and Quincy to take the pictures. Since most of the passengers wanted the horse to be included in their photograph with me, we would take the pictures at the top of the hill after the horse was backed up onto the platform. Tourists took pictures so often, my driver and the horse would automatically assume a photogenic position at the sight of a camera (Lawrence 64). My horse-car ride became one of the most popular attractions in Englewood (Steiner par. 6). I was so proud and excited to have so many visitors each day. Many of the pictures of me became postcards. These postcards were sent all over the world (Heyke par. 3).

My horse-car route continued until 1910. Sadly, I was replaced by electric cars (Heyke par.1). My horses were retired and sold to farmers. The farmers reported that they had no trouble getting the horses to pull a plow uphill, but a lot of trouble convincing them to pull it downhill (Heyke par. 2). The horses had spent their lives repeatedly pulling me uphill on a daily basis, while riding on me downhill. That's all they knew how to do. I would have explained this to the farmers, had they only asked me. I was sold to Louis F. Liebart, a local fruit and vegetable broker. As I mentioned before, I was one of four Cherrelyn horse cars. One was used for a barber shop for many years. One was pushed from the top of a hill at Fort Logan, by some soldiers into Little Dry Creek, and never seen again. Nobody knows what happened to the third one

(Lawrence 64). Although the next 90 years were hard and rough for me, I am glad and also lucky to have ended up where I am today.

I became a playhouse for children at Rose Acres Estate in Edgewater, Colorado (Lawrence 64). The children were wonderful, but being outdoors for few decades with no maintenance really took a toll on my physical condition. My paint had all chipped off. My wooden body was really rotting and in very poor condition. One day, before World War II, I was noticed by a fire chief named George Woods (Lawrence 64). He was so excited that he spread the news about my whereabouts. The Englewood committee wanted to buy me, since I was a big part of Englewood's history, but the Liebhart family wanted to keep me for sentimental reasons (Lawrence 64). The next thing I knew, I was being donated to the City of Englewood (Johnson 103). What an exciting day! After 40 years, I was finally being moved, and restored.

In 1961, the City of Englewood paid a man named James B. Howell to refurbish me (Johnson 103). Oh, how good that felt to be renewed after so long. But even though I was finally all fixed up and as good as new again, I still had a long way to go to get to where I am now. The year was now 1965, and I was moved to a spot outside of the city hall building at 3400 E. Elati Street (Johnson 103). Even though I was no longer in active service, I was on display. Many people came to see me again. Some would reminisce about how their parents and grandparents had ridden me back in the good old days. Others would just enjoy seeing me. I was very beautiful, once again.

My beauty began to fade once again. By 1987 the wind, weather, and time had caused me to be nothing more than a sagging mass of rotten wood (Johnson 103). Oh, I was so sad. I felt as if I just blended into the background. The Englewood citizens committee decided that I was an

important piece of Englewood history. They felt that, as an important piece of history, I might be lost if I wasn't restored (Johnson 103). That was the best news I had heard in a long time. A nice man named Ernest "Packy" Romans, retired Englewood Parks and Recreational Director, served as chairman of the Save the Horse Steering Committee (Johnson 103). He created a display and raised over \$30,000 for my restoration (Johnson 103). I was once again on my way to being beautiful and extravagant. My restoration began in 1988. At that time, another \$30,000 was raised for my permanent shelter (Johnson 103). When I heard that, I couldn't believe my ears. It brought a tear to my eye. In all the 105 years of my life, I never had my own home. During my restoration, my parts were carefully dismantled and used for patterns (Johnson 103). What excitement this was. I couldn't wait.

My restoration was finally finished. I became beautiful once again. The craftsmen did an exceptional, splendid work on me. In February of 1992, I was temporarily housed indoors as a display. I was on display in the center court of the Cinderella City Mall, blue building (Johnson 103). What an honor! This was fine by me. There were so many visitors every day. I also really liked the indoor climate control. Now, my permanent home is inside the Englewood Civic Center. I live in a gated community on the ground floor, right outside the public library. Since nobody climbs on me and I am out of harsh weather, I suppose I will be very happy in this home. Although not all the visitors that come through these doors each day are here to see me, I still do get visitors. That makes me very happy. Just the other day a woman came in to see me. She told me she was doing a story of my life for her English paper. She took many pictures of me. It made me feel like a star once again. So, if you are ever in this neighborhood, please stop by and see me. You will very much enjoy the visit.

## Afterword

This is the true story of the Cherrelyn Bronco and Gravity Horse Car. After many long, hard hours of research, this true story was written. However, for the purposes of writing this as a creative nonfiction paper, I have added a personality to the Cherrelyn horse car. This personality was created from my best interpretation of all my combined research. I hope you enjoy reading this as much as I have enjoyed writing it. Happy readings.

## Works Cited

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THE CHERRELYN  
HORSE CAR

IN SERVICE FROM  
1892 - 1910

PRESENTED TO THE  
CITY OF ENGLEWOOD

BY THE

ROTARY CLUB  
OF  
ENGLEWOOD

1951

BUILT BY WOEBER BROTHERS CARRIAGE CO.  
REBUILT BY WOEBER AUTO BODY  
AND MANUFACTURING COMPANY