History of the Interurban Railway System and Monroe Shops

Dallas Area Rapid Transit
The first interurban system in Texas was built in 1901, by the Texas Traction Company. It was a 10-mile line from Sherman to Denison.
Passengers in early 1900s
Denison Special Car #365
By 1909, the Texas Traction Company had built the 65 mile line to connect Sherman/Denison with Dallas. Northern Texas Traction Company, formed in 1902, built the first electric streetcar line in Dallas.
Downtown Plano Station 1908
Texas Traction Company entering Dallas 1909
First Interurban Car from Denison to Dallas 1909
Interurban train operator
The street cars and the interurban lines were vital in the development of the city of Dallas and North Texas. Real estate developers used them as amenities to support the idea of suburban life where a person could easily commute to downtown to work, but return home to a pleasant residential community.
Southern Traction employees 1913
Centered in Dallas, the Interurban line serviced 226 miles of track along three lines; these went to Denison/Sherman, Ennis & Corsicana, and Waxahachie, Hillsboro and Waco. A line also extended between Dallas and Fort Worth.
Route Map
Interurban Offices  1915
Texas Traction and Southern Traction companies merged to form the Texas Electric Railway. The Texas Electric Railway, at one time the longest interurban railway west of the Mississippi River, officially operated from 1917 until 1948.
Read---Relax---Smoke
Ride the INTERURBAN

And Enjoy Your Trips Between
Dallas—Waco—Corsicana—Sherman—Denison
And Intermediate Points

2c A MILE

10% REDUCTION ON ROUND TRIPS

Half Fare For Children

Ask the Agent

Train Ticket
Interurban over bridge
Kids on train 1920
Interior view of Bluebonnet car 1927
Dallas car 350 at the Terminal
Dallas 363 car
Wreck at Elmont between Dallas and Waco  1938
Waco cars 1940s
Downtown Dallas on Commerce Street  1940s
The interurban also connected outlying farms and rural towns to the large urban centers such as Dallas and Fort Worth. With the interurban, people from small towns and rural areas had greater mobility and were able to access all the goods and services that large cities offered.
Boarding for Waco 1940s
Dallas rail car  1947
Two cars passing  1947
Bluebonnet car with Monroe Shops in back  1940s
View out window of car 309 to Monroe Shops
Texas Electric Railway car Monroe Shops in background
Monroe Shops, built in 1914, housed the daily operations of repairing and maintaining the electric railroad cars for the Southern Traction Company and Texas Traction Company. Between 100 and 200 men worked there doing all the heavy general repair work.
The shops contained a machine shop, car repair barn, paint shop, offices and lecture hall.
Monroe Shops Floor plan 1915
Monroe Shops 1916
Monroe Shops 1916

Courtesy, Myers, Texas Electric Railway
Monroe Shops 1916

Courtesy, Myers, Texas Electric Railway
The Texas Electric Railway used Monroe Shops extensively in one of its first major endeavors, the re-lettering of the cars to reflect the Texas Electric name, and the adaptation of Dallas Southern Traction passenger cars into Texas Electric parlor cars. When crashes occurred along the lines, the cars were repaired at Monroe Shops.
Monroe Shops interior pits
Monroe Shops west façade
The building featured a huge, 15-ton box crane driven by three motors mounted in the upper story of the central bay. The crane has been removed, but portions of it are still visible. The original Warren and Pratt truss system and an original skylight are in the west bay of the building.
Monroe Shops interior toward south
Monroe Shops east façade
Monroe Shops south façade
Monroe Shops with track locomotive 1920s and 1930s
By 1942, the Texas Electric Railway was the only independent interurban line still operating in Texas. With increased automobile ownership and bus travel, ridership declined until the interurban made its final run on December 31, 1948.
Monroe Shops east façade
Monroe Shops June 1947
Monroe Shops had various owners between the 1950s and the 1990s. By the time DART purchased Monroe Shops in 1993, the building was deteriorated and had several insensitive alterations that threatened the condition and historic integrity of the building.
DART’s plans included sale of the building for adaptive reuse as part of South Oak Cliff light rail transit project.
Condition of Monroe Shops in early 1990s
Condition of Monroe Shops in early 1990s
Condition of Monroe Shops in early 1990s
Condition of Monroe Shops in early 1990s
Video of Monroe Shops shot in 1994, a year after DART purchased the property.
Rehabilitation of Monroe Shop

DART was recently notified by the Texas Transportation Commission of the successful funding application for the Rehabilitation of Monroe Shop. The Monroe Shop, completed in 1914, was originally used by the former Southern Traction Company (subsequently the Texas Electric Railway Company Interurban) for maintenance of the line's interurban rail vehicles until the operations ceased in 1948. The building had been identified as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The $2.1 million from TxDOT, plus the $531,000 in matching funds from DART, will be used to rehabilitate the exterior of the building to the original condition. Because the building is adjacent to the Illinois Avenue Light Rail Station and Transit Center, there is an opportunity for joint development of the building into a retail/commercial center serving the surrounding neighborhood and transit patrons.
Monroe Shops is now DART’s Police Headquarters. Reusing the historic structure and using energy efficient products, systems and design have made the building a model for sustainable and “green” practices.
Monroe Shops is the first public building on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) to receive Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Platinum.
Acknowledgements

Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) would like to thank Mr. Johnnie J. Myers for the generous use of his photographs for this presentation. His vast collection is now housed at the Interurban Railway Museum, located in the historic Plano Interurban Station, 901 E. 15th Street, Plano.
Acknowledgements

Mr. Myers photographs helped guide the architectural historians and architects during the rehabilitation of Monroe Shops. His grandfather, W. T. Jacobs, worked for Dallas Railway and Terminal Company Texas Electric Railway. It was his grandfather who instilled in Mr. Myers a lifelong love of trains.
Acknowledgements

Mr. Myers has worked in transportation for most of career including as Assistant Vice President of Bus Operations at DART. During his career, he amassed a large collection of information on railway systems and over 40,000 photographs. He has donated many of these photographs to the Interurban Railway Museum in Plano. In 2008, the Museum dedicated the “John J. Myers Research Center” to house his collection.
Acknowledgements

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