



A Brief History of Invercargill's Tram Barn Complex

1881 December: the Southland Tramway Company commences operating horse-drawn trams on wooden rail tracks through the town centre.

1886 Southland Tramway Company operations taken over by the Invercargill and Suburban Tramway Company.

1908 End of horse-drawn tram operations.

1909 Invercargill Municipality agrees to an electric tram system. A loan is raised to finance the system. A coal fired boiler driving electric generators is the power plant of the new system. It is designed to supply electric power to the hospital and some commercial users in the town as well as the trams.

1911 14 January: the Governor-General, Lord Islington, turns the first sod for the new tramline in Dee Street and lays the foundation stone for the new office building (the M.E.D. building) with the Prime Minister, Sir Joseph Ward, in attendance. Work begins on the offices, workshops, tram barn and power house and on the laying of tram lines throughout Invercargill.

1912 26 March: the electric tram system is officially opened with a ceremony at the tram barn. The Mayor, W.A. Ott, drives the first tram out of the tram barn. Ten trams in commission, which run on Invercargill's streets for the next forty years.

1912 2 May: the Council adopts the proposal to supply the town with electric power from the power house.

1916 The original power house is extended and a further plant installed.

1920 About this time, E.R. Wilson designs two-storied additions to the M.E.D. building.

1921 Six more trams are added to the fleet.

1945 Diesel buses start taking over some Invercargill tram routes.

1952 10 September: the southernmost tram service in the world ends with a huge crowd throwing confetti at a final procession of four trams.

Head of column: Dignitaries at the opening ceremony of Invercargill's electric tramway in 1912. (Photo: Turnbull Library, ref. no. C25662-1/2)