



German History in Documents and Images

Volume 4. Forging an Empire: Bismarckian Germany, 1866-1890
Horse-Drawn Trolleys and Carriages in Berlin (1870)

Though many major train lines already existed in 1870, the electrification of the expanding public transportation system was still a way off. The primary mode of passenger transportation continued to be the horse-drawn carriage and the predecessor of the tramway, the horse-drawn trolley. After German unification, urbanization and industrialization created a demand for innovative solutions to the problem of transporting city dwellers more quickly – if not always more comfortably – to their destinations.

Traffic consisted of small horse-drawn trolleys, chugging omnibuses with one or two horses, and the old carriages “of first and second order,” whose coachmen, according to regulations, wore frocks with red braided lapels and polished black top hats; subsequently, for carriages equipped with meters [*Taxameter*], the latter were replaced with white polished top hats. I was also still familiar with the old “Torwagen,” which served, for instance, the route from Alexanderplatz across open fields to Niederschönhausen. They were small, open carts, similar to a “Kremser,” which in the wintertime were completely filled with straw up to the seats as a substitute for heating. In those days, when we set out on our return trip to our “Torwagen” after a visit to Niederschönhausen, the first thing to check was whether “the calendar indicated moonlight.” If that was the case, the streets remained unlit even during overcast skies, and we would be accompanied to the stop with a lantern.

Source: Julius Schramm, *Mein Leben als Kunstschmied [My Life as an Artisan Blacksmith]*. Berlin, 1941, pp. 10-11.

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