

Remembrances of Delbert "D. K." Spencer

Santa Fe Career 1944-1986

Delbert "D.K." Spencer had a forty-two-year career with the Santa Fe in eastern Colorado. He authored several articles on his career as well as some on local rail history. These are presented in this document.

Career

La Junta Colorado Fred Harvey Hotel: 1941 – 1943

Needles School Vacation and a Santa Fe Job: 1943

A Declaration That Had to be Signed

Lamar Colorado Santa Fe: 1944 – 1956

Granada Colorado: 1944-1945

Rocky Ford Colorado: 1944 – 1945

La Junta Colorado - Santa Fe Railway: 1944 – 1986

La Junta Centralized Accounting Bureau: 1963 – 1969

La Junta Life After the CAB: 1969 – 1986

La Junta General Office Building: - Santa Fe Railway

From Pencils to the Computer Age

History

Colorado or Bust: 1869 - 1873

Lamar Colorado: 1886 – 1907

How About These Wages? 1944

La Junta War Time Passenger Service: 1941-1946

Rocky Ford Colorado Depot History: 1876 – 1979

"Santa Fe Depots Everywhere, but Not a One to Spare!"

The Artrain – Rocky Ford 1973

Milk on the Santa Fe

Santa Fe Parade Train ca 1940 – 1950

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Fred Harvey Hotel - La Junta, Colorado

1941 – 43

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I was a boy of 15 living in the Denver area before moving to La Junta Colorado with my parents and siblings in February 1941. My father's work with Sinclair Refining Company was located near the Denver train yard, and I had been smitten with the love of railroading.

My First Real Job

La Junta being a small railroad town, I had opportunity to get closer to the railroading that I loved. That summer I hired out at the Fred Harvey Hotel located on the railroad property. I had suffered from polio in my left leg since the age of 2, but was a strapping six-foot-tall, and able to do strong manual labor. I assume my parents signed a minor's release. However, since I looked older, that might have been overlooked, especially since I was paid in cash each week.



I worked in the storeroom, receiving the necessary supplies to run a hotel and eating establishment. It was a two-man operation, and I was the low man. I did the manual labor of receiving, storing and distributing all inbound items such as produce; fresh meat in quarters; bakery flour in 100-pound sacks; canned goods and alcoholic beverages by the case; fresh trout in iced containers from Frantz Hatchery at Salida; and whatever else came in for the hotel operation.

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The storeroom was actually two rooms. One was like a grocery store, with canned goods on shelves. The other room contained refrigerated coolers, one for fresh meat which was hung on hooks from the ceiling; one for produce; and a third for storage of liquor kept locked with access only by the hotel manager.

All other supplies were stored in the basement, which also held the cooling machinery for the walk-in coolers. I hated to go down there since it was dimly lighted with one bulb, and always smelled of ammonia which was used as part of the cooling process. It was also infested with big red cockroaches! Most were about 3 inches long, and 1 inch wide. For years after the building was torn down, and the new depot built on the same site, the cockroaches still reigned in the subterranean areas.

Almost Railroading

My other main job was to physically supply dining cars on the twelve passenger trains that passed through La Junta, some daily and some bi-weekly. However, Wednesday was the busiest day of each week since all twelve trains, passed through in one day.

The El Capitan (all coach 21-22), Super Chief (all sleepers 17-18) ran twice weekly, eastbound on Saturday, and westbound on Sunday, and both directions on Wednesday.

The Chief (19-20), and the regular California Limited (3-4), and the La Junta - Denver Centennial (9-10) were all daily trains. I seem to remember the Grand Canyon Limited (123-124) as another daily train going through La Junta, but unknown if it came through at this time period.

Another La Junta - Denver train was (13-14) which I think was called the Colorado State. Train 14 was home based at La Junta, arriving daily at 1:00 AM from Denver and leaving fourteen hours later at 3:00 PM, so we had plenty of time to service it.

The dining car stewards would telegraph supply stations advising their needs, and the store room would gather it together and supply the diner in the 10 to 15 minutes allowed during the loading and unloading of passengers. The stewards would be upset if everything ordered was not supplied, but all things were not always available. All available items were supplied in the order of the train arrival, until the supply was depleted.

The Kid Versus The Establishment

I had a memorable confrontation with a steward on train #20, resulting in loud words over an incomplete order. He had ordered frozen trout from the hatchery in Salida, for the evening meal for movie stars on board. The Chief was the last train of the day and our supply was exhausted.

Movie stars were daily occurrences and many town people met the trains looking for autographs. Actor Edward Arnold was sitting in the diner visiting with the staff, when we had our verbal donnybrook. The steward exploded and I responded likewise. At the end he asked for my name to "report me to the head office" which I gladly gave him. Mr. Arnold sat through the whole thing, and as I was leaving, he grinned and winked at me, so I knew he wasn't going to be part of

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the problem. I had been advised to stand up to stewards when I was in the right. I dreaded his next trip, but he later had realized I was not to blame, and we became good friends after that.

I also learned how it feels to handle large sums of cash. The Chief had a daily cash deposit to leave with the manager, and one day he was gone, so I was elected. It was no sweat for me until I learned it was several thousand dollars. That two-block walk to the office seemed a mile at least, with crooks behind every tree! It later became another part of my job and I was comfortable with it.

World War 2

I was working Sunday morning December 7, 1941 when the radio announced the Pearl Harbor attack. and I remember the shock of the message, and the waves of young men joining the service. I too felt the indignation but was a bit too young at 15.

I was there when the first military equipment train came through La Junta. Everyone was frustrated with the sudden increase of traffic, and especially with military requirements and their security demands. The yardmaster put this train on passenger track one for security reasons, otherwise it would be buried in the freight yard out of sight. It thereby blocked any access to the remaining passenger yard.

The streamliners arrived on passenger tracks 3, 4, and 5, after the arrival of the military train for their scheduled 15-minute stop. Passengers boarding or alighting were stymied, as was I. The military train had flat cars loaded with war material, and I had a baggage truck load of food to supply the diners. I pulled up to a flat car and started sliding the food across.

Suddenly a machine gun, was sticking between my eyes, with a very stern young soldier advising me to "get the hell out of there!" After much tension by everyone involved, they finally cut the train, but due to the delay, there was no time to service the dining cars and my boss took it out on me, why only the Lord knows! I had similar experiences during all of the jittery war years, both with Harvey and later during my 41-year AT&SF Railway career.

The Kid Versus The Establishment, Verse Two

After the war broke out, La Junta was picked for construction of an air base ending in late 1942 or early 1943. Our weather was such as to allow about 350 days of flying every year. Carpenters apprentices were making \$1.25 per hour, (12.00) daily doing mostly "gofer" work. "Everyone" knew the work was not going to last long, so I "wisely" stayed with Fred Harvey earning the immense sum of \$22.00 weekly, working twelve-hour days except for Wednesday which was fifteen hours, but smug in my thoughts that I would have a job when the end came. This was 87 hours weekly or 25 cents per hour! Oh wow!

I rationalized it knowing I was working by the railroad I loved, and could eat nearly anything I wanted, for I had a healthy appetite. Nearly every night was a real "Dagwood" sandwich, with several bottles of cold milk, or root beer float to wash it down, and I could stay in the employee living area during summer vacation from school, giving me unsupervised time away from home.

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During school, I worked the long hours on Saturday and Sunday, and morning and evening hours the rest of the week.

About the time the construction ended, I had a confrontation with an alcoholic adult storeroom supervisor, who was sleeping off a hangover in the store room, instead of doing his assigned work. I refused to do his work, was fired by a relief manager during the two weeks the regular manager was on vacation. No union representation here, just the word of a kid against an adult!

The Building

The hotel was part of a multi-purpose, steam heated sandstone and frame, three story building about two blocks long. It had been built in 1895, with additions in 1907, and 1921. The ground floor of the building was used 2/3 by Harvey and 1/3 by the railroad.

The west end was the railroad ticket office and waiting room, and at one time was also the bus stop, selling tickets for AT&SF Railway, and Trailways and Greyhound bus lines. At the time referred to here, the ticket office was on the central north wall, with a barred ticket window facing into the passenger depot and was fully enclosed. In a later remodeling, the ticket office was moved to the east wall, with just a counter which provided a well-lighted modern look, adjoining the baggage room

Hotel Layout Third floor

This floor was divided in its use. The west end was used for general public. With no elevators, the third floor may have been cheaper rates, or used for overflow only. There was an unfinished section between the west and east ends.

The east end was quarters for the hired help. The quarters for the employees was also divided with the men on the west end of the area, and the women on the east end. We had one married couple, and they were in the middle. The only room cooling was open windows, and open doors to allow the air to circulate.

My room was on the rail side and had a small balcony accessed by window, which allowed us to sit outside and I left the window open in the summer because I loved the smell and noise of steam engines, and still do today!

Second Floor

This was the main hotel. Many rooms had lavatories, but no toilets or bathtubs. They used a communal bathroom down the hall. I have personal knowledge of this since my wife and I spent our honeymoon night there. The antiquity of the hotel is the main reason it was razed in 1956. The plumbing and electrical wiring was bad, and the fixtures all early American, and to use a modern term, it was not "cost effective" to restore.

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Ground Floor

The lobby was spacious with wood paneling, and massive old-style couches and chairs. It had a wide formal staircase leading to the upstairs, and an office for the manager, Mr. Bobo. In the west end of the lobby was a concession stand that opened onto both the lobby and the station platform for use of passengers and was operated by Jaque Reed. Two bell boys I remember were Gerald White, and Ed Kranz, also school classmates.

Dining Harvey Style



LA JUNTA CO
FRED HARVEY DINING ROOM - ABOUT 1940

Adjoining the lobby was a formal dining room used for special events. When the multitude of troop trains began arriving, they were fed in that area, with many local girls hired as servers. This was a daily concern for many months.

Next to the dining room was the lunchroom next to the train platform for passenger use. The decor was attractive wall covering of 4-inch ivory and black tiles, arranged to form a specific pattern.

There were only counters with stools. The counters were horse shoe shaped, and I believe three of them. We employees used the overflow counter to eat our meals.

The waitresses wore starched, white uniforms with a black ribbon under the collar, crossed in front. They were widely known as the "Harvey Girls" and were even featured in a film. Many girls were proud to bear that name and were supposed to be chaste and proper. Most were young ladies in their late teens or twenties, and they were courted by many of the railroaders. One married a Special Agent for the railroad, and the chef's wife was a former waitress. Most were a bit older than I, and they treated me like a kid brother.

Fred Harvey was known for their rich coffee, which was Chase and Sanborn Special Mark. When coffee was selling in local cafes for 5 cents a cup, Harvey was asking 10 cents, and had plenty of takers! If you were a railroader, you could sign the check and pay only 8 cents! A penny meant something then!

Food Preparation

The kitchen was in one of the building additions. It was divided with a cooking room for the chef and his staff, and the other for salad making, dish washing, etc. The head chef was the late H.L. "Pottie" Nelson. He had come to La Junta from Albuquerque, having been a company chef there. When the hotel closed, he operated local cafe's, usually named "Potties".

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An assistant cook was well known locally for his spicy red chili, and many cold winter days a passenger would order the chili, only to take one or two spoonfuls, and leave the rest. He had a faithful following who relished the chili, however.

The bakery was complete with large natural gas fueled brick oven (estimated size 15 x 10 x 7 ft) and used long wooden sticks with a flat paddle on the end to place and remove the many bakery items in the oven. The baker was Ernest Stangl from Europe.

We always knew when he was on duty, as he raised the great gobs of bread dough over his head and slammed them down on the table, pounding the air out of them, and the sound would permeate the whole kitchen area. His bakery goods were of such excellence, and in such a great demand by all dining cars, that stewards would order enough bakery goods at La Junta, to last to Los Angeles, and back to La Junta, rather than use goods from other hotels.

Since most crews were home based at Chicago, their turn around time would not allow that to happen on the eastbound trip.

His lemon meringue pies were most in demand. Webster's dictionary shows meringue means "cake of Mebringen, Germany" so he may have been from that town. He had a daughter June who was a lunchroom waitress.

A Favorite Memory

Our family made a Christmas trip to Denver to see my grandparents. I had to be back in La Junta by 7:00 am on Sunday to do my job. My parents wanted to stay longer, so I made arrangements to work my way home on the dining car on train 10 leaving Denver at 3:00 pm on Saturday. My dad was not known for punctuality. The inevitable happened, and we arrived on the Denver Union Depot platform as the train disappeared in the distance!

Train 13 left Denver at 8:00 pm arriving in La Junta at 1:00 am. A phone call got me a ride on that car and when the car closed for the night, they had their Christmas meal which was outstanding! We sang a few carols and had great fellowship. About midnight they brought out sleeping cots and someone woke me up at 5:30 am in La Junta rail yards and I made it to work on time. I never will forget that Christmas, two great fellowships, one at my grandparents, and one on the dining car!

Above all, it was a pleasant memory of my first real job. I learned a lot about dealing with people that carried over to my 41-year rail career, but that's another story!

**School Vacation and a Santa Fe Job in Needles, California
or
How Hot Can It Get!**

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I first worked for the Santa Fe in the summer of 1943. Seven high school juniors and seniors went to Needles, California in May to work in the ice department. We had been recruited in La Junta by Guy Van Cleave Sr. who I believe was assistant superintendent at La Junta Ice Plant to a Mr. Brown. His son, Guy Jr, was a member of our 1944 class. I believe Guy Sr. was somehow connected at Needles, either through previous work, or as a relief supervisor.

We traveled on a trip pass on train No. 3, the California Limited, or possibly 123 (?). Our first experience was getting off the air-conditioned car in the early morning with the temperature well into the 90's, and many times that summer the temperature would hover around 110-120 degrees. This was in the Mohave desert. One day, according to the camp thermometer, the temperature equaled the USA heat record of 133 degrees.

The area was home to an U.S. Air Force base, and a base for mechanized warfare training in a desert environment, and uniformed soldiers were a normal part of life. Most were kids a year or two older than us, and since we had an Air Force base at La Junta, it all seemed life as normal.

We were met by a camp truck and taken to the plant about three miles south of town and placed our gear in barracks on a hill above the ice plant and were fed breakfast. Each barrack room had three double bunk beds, and open windows and doors for ventilation. I would lay in my underwear sweating until about 4:00 a.m., then would be pulling a cover over me, before getting up at 6:00 a.m.! Six of the guys returned to La Junta about three weeks after we got there dissatisfied with the work and heat.

Our first day was spent in getting the paper work done and being issued our identification badge of name and social security number. The badges were required for claiming mail and paychecks.

The main plant consisted of a large brick building, which I estimate to be 500 feet long and 300 feet wide. The largest portion was on the north side, and was about 300 feet on each side, and 100 feet tall and divided into two working areas, with a wall dividing the areas. The larger area was the winter storage, and the smaller the day storage. Access to the winter storage was stairs and doors at various levels above the day storage room. After the summer icing season, ice was made and stored there awaiting the next season.

When we arrived in late May the winter storage had ice almost to the ceiling and was beginning to be used. Workers wore crampons (spiked shoes), over the top of their regular shoes as they broke apart the cakes of ice with pry bars, to be sent down a long spiraling slide placed around the inside perimeter of the building, (about 18 inches away from the walls), to the day storage room through a hatch in the wall. By the end of June, the room was empty, having served that many trains.

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The inside walls were lined with an insulating material that looked like cork, covered over with plaster or stucco. Over the years some of the plaster had broken off, exposing the cork. The refrigeration machinery kept the temperature at a constant 18 degrees.

The day storage was where most of the daily activity took place in icing operations. It was between the winter storage and the battery (See MAKING ICE) and was a smaller room in height. Newly made ice from the battery and the older storage ice came together in this room to be conveyed by belts to the outside platform.

Adjoining the day storage was a large room containing the battery; power generating machinery for making ice; a machine shop; and the office. I remember two huge diesel motors, and a flywheel with a long, wide belt to the motors. We participated in dismantling one of the motors for repair during my stay, using a chain hoist to pull the pistons out.

The staff was mostly summer workers consisting of about 25 Anglos then known as "whites"; 300 Mexican Nationals known as "braceros"; and 75 Navajo Indians. The war had taken most eligible adult men. The resident permanent workers were older men not eligible for military service and were the office staff, and mechanics who maintained the plant.

The rest were high school kids too young to serve in the military who did the "clean" inside work. The Indians and braceros did the hot outside work. It may seem somewhat racist today, but the braceros and Indians were used to the heat, and the braceros had been brought in specifically to work the dock.

The ice platform could handle trains with 90 plus rail cars of vegetables coming out of the Imperial Valley. In the beginning, we kids were working either on the ice platform out in the heat, or inside the winter cold storage area, at 18 degrees above zero.

We were told to bring light coats or sweaters, but when we tried to work in winter storage, we about froze. All of us lucked out there, as they put us to work in warmer jobs.

On the first day we were putting ice in the car's roof bunkers from the platform, when several aircraft with Japanese markings made a low-level simulated strafing run down the length of the platform. They were a part of desert maneuvers, but it scared the pants off me, since we were new to the area. The old timers enjoyed that!

We were fed in a dining hall by Hanlin Supply (a subsidiary of either the Santa Fe, or Fred Harvey) for which we were charged 25 cents per meal. Since the war was on and many things were rationed, the cooks allowed one soufflé cup of sugar a day, which was consumed with the morning coffee, leaving no sugar for the rest of the day.

Being used to more sugar, we each found a quart beer bottle, and filled it with sugar from our ration coupons sent to us from home. We held the bottle between our legs during meals and stashed it in the barracks for the rest of the day.

My first day, I noticed most of the braceros would take some dried red peppers from a bowl on the table and crush them between their hands spreading the crumbs over their food. It really

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looked and smelled good, so I tried it. My first bite sent me to the compound ice water barrel, where I learned water does not put out the fire! I later learned that a slice of bread works wonders!

This was my first time to eat beans three times per day. The air was nauseous most of the time! I do not believe we would have recognized fresh air if it hit us in the face!

As time went by, they decided to cut down on the coffee usage, since it was also rationed, so we had fresh coffee for breakfast, then using the same grounds, iced coffee for lunch and supper. I actually got to the point where it tasted good, even if it was weak at supper. Of course, a lot of sugar helped!

Later when we had money to spend, we ate breakfast and lunch at camp, then either walked or bummed a ride to town with some of the permanent resident workers and ate supper at the AIR-CONDITIONED Fred Harvey Hotel.

We always had to walk back to the plant which was an adventure in itself. Just west of the plant was a hermit, who liked dogs, and he would take in all strays. At one time, I counted over 90, and the dogs would always rush out at us barking and snarling. In the daylight it was no problem, but at night it was scary! He lived in a shelter made from scrap lumber, orange crates, and whatever. Pretty much a hobo camp. Just before I left the authorities cleaned out his dogs and left him with three.

We would walk down the right of way at times, but that too had problems with hobo's and such. A few times we would hang a ride on the side of a train going out to be iced, but one time we got on the wrong train. It was headed for Arizona, so we baled off going head over heels, luckily into a sand pile! The company took a dim view of riding cars, and we could have been fired. This would have left us there with no free ride back to La Junta!

Having worked for Fred Harvey in La Junta in 1941, I felt at home in the Needles Fred Harvey especially when I found out that one of the relief chefs from La Junta was working there. In making small talk one evening with one of the waitress's, I was comparing the operations of the La Junta and Needles hotels.

As I went to pay my bill, I was accosted by two Secret Service Agents wanting to know more about me and my curiosity. With several military units around and jittery war nerves, the waitress had gotten suspicious and reported me as a possible spy or saboteur. They finally accepted my excuse, but I never put myself in that position again. A well-known axiom then was "loose lips can sink ships!" and mine almost sank me!

After supper, we went across the street to the AIR-CONDITIONED drug store for dessert including flirtation with some local girls behind the soda counter.

Then we would go to the AIR-CONDITIONED theater which changed their films five times a week. As you can see, AIR CONDITIONING was the prime requisite for our recreation!

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There were very few refrigerated air conditioners that nearly every business has now. Most were large evaporative coolers with squirrel cage blowers. The evaporative coolers in La Junta at that time had only fan blades and were not near as efficient.

The cool air for the multi-storied Harvey house was unique. They had ice filled refrigerator cars joined together with piping and blowers to move the icy air thru shafts under the rail yards for about 500 feet, into the hotel, and it was very effective! The whole building was delightfully cool! We filled the cars about every four days.

They used the same principle in the ice plant office. There was an area in the middle of the office that was fenced in, with a drain in the bottom. Fans would blow over the ice to cool the office.

Making Ice

To make ice at Needles, a salt brine in a huge tank called a battery was used. The tank was covered with wood and metal hatches, each hatch allowing eight steel ice cans to be nestled together for the freezing process. The battery had an overhead crane that was electrically operated for the up and down process, but also hand operated as we pushed the crane on overhead rails to the end of the battery.

The crane had eight hooking devices that were lowered simultaneously and attached to each can thru holes in the center of each can's rim. Each can produced an ice cake weighing 300 lbs. The cakes were standard size of that time, probably about 5 ft long, 2 ft wide, and 12 inches thick.

When the connection was made, the crane pulled up eight cans of ice until the cans cleared the top of the battery. We then pushed the crane to the end of the battery, with the cans of ice ahead of us edgewise. At this point, there was a tank of water, and all cans were lowered into the water to loosen the ice cakes, then raised and placed on a rack and secured; unhooked from the crane; and tipped over sideways allowing each cake to slide out into the day storage. At the end of the heavy shipping season, they were taken into the winter storage room for stacking. I had left when this stacking began and cannot remember how they were raised to each level of the stack. I assume they had an elevator or conveyer belts.

After the cakes were released, the eight cans would return to the upright position, and be filled with water. The crane would then be attached, and all taken back to the origin hatch, and lowered into the brine. This was tricky and required some dexterity. The cans would be swinging, and had to be dropped exactly together, or you would have cans of water spilled all over! Each eight-hour shift pulled 360 cans of ice, around the clock, totaling 1080 blocks each day. We understood the plant at Stockton would pull twelve cans with their crane.

Most small plants like La Junta would pull one cake of ice at a time, take it to a tank of water and dip it in to release the ice from the tank, then back to the battery and refilled with a hose.

The salt brine in the battery would ruin shoes pretty quick. When that happened, we could go to the ration board to get an emergency coupon, but only for work shoes.

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Most of the ice was called "white" ice, made with untreated water, and used strictly for the bunkers of the cars. We also made "clear" ice from distilled, treated water for use in human consumption, and for the "blow" ice used to cover produce directly. The clear ice was ground into a consistency of granular snow and blown in the doorway onto slatted crates of produce needing special cooling. The plant had its own tower for distilling the water, and in the afternoon the breeze blowing through it on the shady side provided cool sleeping for several who worked third trick. They slept on the roof of an attached shed, and occasionally got a little wet when the wind blew hard!

At either Needles or La Junta, we occasionally had special cars that had brine tanks in each end, instead of bunkers. We filled them from the top, then broke up the ice with long steel forks, and poured in rock salt, just like making homemade ice cream. I do not remember for sure what they were loaded with, but it seems like they were a meat product.

We had soldiers come onto the grounds from maneuvers looking for ice for drinking water, and they were discouraged by plant officers for fear of being injured by ice falling from the platform and also from using the not pure white ice. We workers would steer them to the clear ice when we thought we were in the clear, but even then, we sometimes got into trouble.

My main job was in the "pit". The ice house was in the middle of the 90-car platform, and I adjusted the flow of ice to whichever end of the platform it was needed, also counting and recording the cakes and clearing any jams that occurred. The conveyor belt from the day storage carried cool air to the pit, which was about 15 ft below ground level. With average daily surface temperatures of 110-120 degrees, the pit was a comfortable place to work.

I enjoyed the work at Needles, learning some Spanish from one of the braceros who was a college professor during the winter. Most of our conversation was pidgin English and gestures, and he probably knew more English than I did Spanish. Most of the braceros were good people. The Indians were aloof, and I did not get to know them at all.

There was a Hispanic family living nearby, that made extra money doing our washing. When I was not in town, I used my free time fishing in the Colorado river behind the plant and tinkering in the machine shop when they would let me.

My parents always encouraged me to finish what I started, and to see the good side of everything I was involved in. This made me something of a loner, and I was having fun living away from home, testing my new-found freedom, so I stayed until middle August, when I returned home to gear up for my senior year, and worked until late September at the La Junta Santa Fe ice dock.

During my senior year, my parents moved to Lamar, Colo. seventy miles east of La Junta, and I graduated there. Upon graduation I applied to go back to Needles, but I was too late. The crew had already been chosen. However, I did get a job offer from the Lamar freight house and was hired to begin my 41-year Santa Fe clerical career, but that's another story!

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We went through Needles a few years ago, and the ice plant and dock had been removed. The diesel-powered mechanical refrigeration car eliminated the need for an icing operation. As with all things, nothing lasts forever!

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**A Declaration That Had to be Signed When
Applying for a Railroad Position in 1944**

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Form SSA-1.

ATCHISON TOPEKA AND SANTA FE RAILWAY COMPANY

(City)

(State)

(date)

Section 8-(1) of the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940 reads in part as follows:

"It is the expressed policy of the Congress that whenever a vacancy is caused in the employment rolls of any business or industry by reason of induction into the service of the United States of an employee, pursuant to the provisions of this Act, such vacancy shall not be filled by any person who is a member of the Communist Party or of the German-American Bund.

I hereby declare that I am not a member of the Communist Party or of the German-American Bund.

I understand that the truth of the foregoing declaration is a material condition precedent to the employment for which I am hereby applying.

(Signature)

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Santa Fe - Lamar, Colorado

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The First Step of a 42 Year Career

Shortly after returning to La Junta, from my summer at Needles ice plant in 1943, my parents moved to Lamar Colorado. In June 1944 after graduation from Lamar High School, I contacted the Santa Fe in Lamar about going to Needles but was advised their crew had been filled. I had a job with the school district as a janitor, but it was not railroading! I applied at the local freight house, and on August 9 I was called. I took my physical examination at the Santa Fe Hospital in La Junta by Dr. Looper, and started as one of two Utility Clerks in the Lamar freight depot

Joe Snyder was Agent; and C. W. "Mac" McClain was Chief Clerk, both exempt positions. Mac was the father of one of my school mates. Shortly after I started, Snyder retired, and was succeeded by William T. Mason. Others were Al Weston, Cashier; Art Crowe, Yard Clerk (retired at Garden City); Stanley Cox, Abstract Clerk; Jim Williams, Demurrage Clerk, and Everett Bland, Utility Clerk. A utility clerk did what no one else was assigned to do. Others later included Clarence Guy, Virgil Cattallo, Dick Flint, Dudley Pultz, Hugh Coyle, and Ray Hunter and others whose names are forgotten. Shortly after, I was bumped by Dallas Baldrige from Colorado Springs, and was permanently assigned to the position of Utility Clerk at Granada, which had been advertised with no bidders, establishing my seniority date of Sept. 21, 1944.



On Nov. 6, the position was abolished, and I bumped onto the Consist Clerk - Baggage man position at La Junta. The Lamar Utility Clerk became vacant in October 1945, so I went back. In December 1948 I was bumped again and bumped the third trick Ticket Clerk at La Junta serving there until February 1951, when I returned to Lamar on the Billing and Revising (B&R) clerk position, which evolved

into the Cashier position which I held until my final day at Lamar April 4, 1956 when force reduced. I bumped into Rocky Ford, and this has been my home to this day, working jobs at Rocky Ford and La Junta until I retired on February 14, 1986.

Freight Depot

The "Santa Fe yellow" freight depot was on the west side of Main street, north of the main line, now marked by a large windmill. It was 107 feet long, and 24 feet wide, and was built in 1888. The outside was the usual "board and batten" consisting of smooth vertical panels, with vertical

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strips of wood on every upright stud. I imagine the office area had not changed much since the day it was built, except the addition of electric lights, and telephones. Compared to offices of today with all of the electronic gear, we were still in the pioneer days. The layout consisted of the Agent and Chief Clerk in the front office; and the rest of the crew in the back office, with a wall separating. A hallway on the north side was the customer area with a counter separation. I believe the lighting was fluorescent. The desks were all wooden.

The wall also contained the chimney for the large "pot belly" heating stove which used coal for fuel. It sat to the rear of the back office on top of a metal pad, backed with asbestos, very common then to prevent ash fires. There was a stove pipe laying horizontally above two desks to the chimney. There was a smaller coal stove in the front office. For the clerks sitting closest to the stove there was a curved, metal shield for protection.

Every spring the desks were covered with canvas, and the pipe taken down for cleaning. There was always a lot of soot, and it was a very dirty job. The inside walls of the offices were cleaned periodically with a brand of soap called "Dick-a-Doo", washing off the collected soot and grime. In the winter, all cigarette butts and scrap paper were disposed of in the stove. In late summer the scrap paper was stuffed into the stove to be used to start the first winter fire. One especially hot fall day, someone forgot about the paper inside and threw in a lighted butt, resulting in a roaring fire, that made that day one to remember!

Air conditioning was open doors and windows, thankfully fitted with screens. We had an inside unheated rest room consisting of a stool and a wash basin. The stool seat was part of the water valve, and in the up position closed the valve. When seated, the water ran continuously. In the winter, with no heat, and splashing water, rest breaks were taken quickly! Later, it was modernized with a normal flush stool and heating.

A Utility Clerk was also a janitor, and we had windows and walls to wash and rough wooden floors to be scrubbed with a string mop occasionally with creosoted water. That left the rooms smelling fresh, if you liked the smell of creosote! In the 1940's and 50's dust storms were daily possibilities, so dusting layers of grit was a daily occurrence.

Warehouse and Equipment

Adjoining was the warehouse, accessed through a door from the back office, and a small record storage room to one side. Since all freight charges are based on weight, we had a platform scale on wheels, and a scale built into the warehouse floor for larger articles.

The two wheeled hand trucks were heavy tubular steel about 26-30 inches wide with a large bottom lip, and two long handles that left an opening for a person to walk between as you pulled or pushed the truck.

The hand trucks were adaptable to many uses. You could slide the lip under a single object, or by using a wood "headboard" that fit down into the lip portion, could load several layers of boxes. The loads were easier to control if you pulled them and had them balanced. For many years the wheels were bare, but later they had hard rubber tires that eased the handling immensely.

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Many large objects were easily handled by balancing them on top of the truck, with or without the headboard, but you had to remember the possibility of the truck sliding out from under the load backwards into your face. Caskets in wood shipping boxes is a good example of a large load.

We handled all kinds of freight using combinations of hand trucks, crowbars, pipe rollers, specialty trucks and brute strength. One specialty truck was about 10 feet long, with a wooden bed and two 20-inch wheels in the center, one on each side, and one smaller wheel in the center on each end, that we used for long objects such as wrought iron pipe. We had a steel dolly with a roller in the middle about 12 inches long and 6 inches in diameter. We never had a forklift or other modern means of handling freight.

A welcome addition later was two flat wood pry poles with a steel lip on the end, and two small steel wheels directly behind the lip. The poles were made of oak and were about eight feet long. The wheels served as the fulcrum, and with eight feet of leverage, we could move nearly any heavy item. I believe they were called "Hy Lifters".

A wooden dock, with steps on the east end, ran along the south side where freight was handled from rail cars spotted on the House Track, and three large sliding doors on each side of the building. Freight from and to motor vehicles was handled on the north side. In the rear of the building was the McKee Spur, a dead-end track with dockage on three sides for unloading large items such as machinery.

Scattered on the dock were steel fire barrels filled with water, salted in the winter to prevent freezing. Each barrel had a cone shaped bucket with a wire bail (handle) hanging above it. A fire on the dock could have burned a long time since the wood had been soaked in creosote to prevent decay. One time a cigarette butt started the wood smoking but was extinguished quickly.

Being in wheat country, we stored rolls of paper caulking used to fill cracks when installing wooden grain doors across the rail car doorway. For nine months of the year they just collected dust, which came down in clouds when the rolls were disturbed.

The "Do-It-All" Utility Clerk

My main work was handling freight, first from "merchandise" rail cars, and later from Santa Fe Trail Transportation semi-trailers. The freight was shipped and handled under the heading of L.C.L. (Less than Carload) and we handled as many types of commodities, as it took to keep a community going.

Any weight from one pound to several thousands of pounds would move as LCL, but rates were assessed on a minimum of 100 pounds and the rates were higher than carload rates, since LCL handling involved railroad personnel. A drayage firm contracted with the Santa Fe to deliver these items.

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Carloads are loaded and unloaded by shippers and consignees, thereby reducing the cost to them with lower rates. Each carload has a minimum weight however, usually 30,000 to 40,000 pounds.

Usually freight came in box cars, which were level with the dock and easy to unload. The open space between car and dock was bridged with large steel plates about 1/2-inch-thick; 36 to 40 inches wide, and a bent lip on one end, and they were quite heavy. If possible, we left them leaning against the building for storage, or flat on the dock, then "walked" or trucked them to a car door as needed.

Occasionally freight came in a non-mechanical refrigerator car. The floor level was about a foot higher than the dock and had lower doorways. The car walls were thick enough that freezables were protected, but we hated those cars since the increased slope was hard to manage. If you were tall like me, you had to duck coming out the door. This maneuver also threw you out of balance. We always wanted those cars to be spotted west of the warehouse on the big wide dock, giving us more room to maneuver, per the following example.

Marx Master Bakery received large wood barrels of molasses, weighing 600 lbs. each. Once we had one in a refrigerator car, spotted during the night next to the warehouse. The dock width at that point was about 8 foot. A fellow worker tried to truck the drum out by himself and ended up with the handles of the truck busting through the warehouse wall, and him pinned between. Luckily, he was not hurt, but we never did that again! The one commodity I hated the most, was green cow hides tendered for shipment by Bressler Hide Co as L.C. L. He bought fresh (green) hides; salted them for preservation and folded and tied them into a square bundle with baling wire. When he had enough to ship to Kansas City, we would order a hide car. The hides would contaminate regular cars, so the Santa Fe had cars used only for that purpose. The salt would bring out the natural moisture in the hide, so they were wet with a type of brine, sometimes running out in a stream as you handled them. We wore jeans that were nearly worn out, since the salt juice was hard on cloth. We had to finish the day smelling like hides, since we had no company showers!

Another item was bags of wool. Shippers used burlap bags about 6 to 8 ft long, and they hired men known as "stompers" who were famous for how much wool could be forced into a bag. When we received them, they were packed so tight they were hard to get hold of. A bag might weigh 400 lbs.! A wool buyer would cut a hole in the bag, burrowing deep to grab a sample and then strike a bargain with the shipper. If a bag was unusually heavy, or the shipper was not known for his honesty, the buyer would be suspicious of possible foreign objects such as large rocks, etc. They would cut several holes feeling around for these objects. In my first dealings with both parties, I was not sure if I had the authority to refuse bags with holes in them, but I soon learned to demand the holes be sewed up. Buyers and shippers would grumble about that upstart kid and his demands, but they did sew up the bags! Another hated object were Montgomery Ward and Sears Roebuck catalogs. They were in twine tied bundles, both heavy and limber. The knots in the twine would unbalance any stacking, causing continuous re-handling. By the time you handled enough for the local area, your muscles and temper were sore! For a time, they came in mail bags, which was even worse. There were no handles, and a

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mailbag full was really heavy. We think of paper as being a light object, but concentrated paper can be very heavy.

We would have bundles of sheet metal, best handled by dragging, and leather gloves were most important for hand protection. Wrought iron pipe came in bundles, but while they were heavy, they were easy to handle on either the long truck or two-wheel trucks by laying the headboard flat covering up the steel lip and achieving a balanced load.

Two other instances stand out in my memory. A wood foot locker that we thought was clothing and personal effects, but contained lead type for the newspaper, that weighed close to 1000 lbs. The other was a 2500 lb. crate of plate glass that usually required handling on its edge but had to be tilted to clear the low doorway of a trailer, and not break it. It was a three-hour process, using ropes, pry bars, and pipe rollers, and extra manpower from the section crew.

The building was infested with rats from neighboring stores, so we had a small trapeze platform to store edible goods. This was not always effective since rats would climb the walls and drop down on the trapeze. At times we would find a box on the floor, apparently pushed off the trapeze by rats, with the usual hole in the side. Later, we had a thick-walled walk-in cooler, that solved the problem.

The '46 Blizzard

Early in the winter we had a snow storm with depths of four to five feet on the level. The area was completely snow bound, and area livestock were in dire need of feed. A local entrepreneur purchased 26 carloads of surplus army half-tracks, two to a car, and they were unloaded and sold from the west end of our warehouse on McKee spur. They served their purpose during that year or two, but for years after, many were setting in area fields slowly deteriorating. The city's streets were clogged and likewise our dock. We shoveled it off, but it just added to the drifts covering the tracks. The steam locomotives trying to break through the drifts would derail or stall out spewing out clouds of grit from their sanders to no avail. The main line was finally cleared, and a few set-out tracks. Merchandise cars were arriving daily, and by the time the streets were cleared, we had 15 cars on hand, many with freezables. We eventually unloaded them, but we had many claims for damaged merchandise. There was a secluded area on the north side of the dock that did not melt until spring. The one bright spot was a bumper wheat crop in June-July.

My Railroad "Cowboy" Days

One of my duties was the loading and unloading of livestock at our company stock yards and being able to count accurately. The old adage was to count their legs and divide by four! I kept the yards clean and water troughs full. In the fall, we received sheep for winter pasture. Many were unloaded at blind sidings, or at Lamar to be trucked to pasture. If the sheep were hot and thirsty, they could smell the water, and were easy to unload, sometimes knocking a person down if he happened to be in the chute. Loading was a little more difficult. We would take one sheep by a front leg, and drag it up the chute, verbally "baa-ing" to get the bunch to follow. Once moving, they loaded good. They were nearly all double decked, and we sealed all doors for protection.

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When sheep were loaded at blind sidings, they were brought into Lamar for main line pick up, and we had to seal those doors. Each deck had a door on each side and some older cars had end doors. We crawled up the side of a car, holding on with one arm, and manipulating the seal into position for locking. I never fell off the side of a car but had some scary times. Some door handles had an extension, which you could hook a leg around for support. The worst was sealing at night, holding a lantern or flash light. Also, a sheep's cough sounds human, which makes one look at the ground good before coming down!

We handled livestock for the Lamar Livestock Commission Company across the road from our stockyards. Each week we loaded cattle going to market. We had a ground level scale built like a pen, to determine weights. The real cowboys from the ring, did most of the loading, especially bulls with horns. They were tied to the side of the car, to prevent going in crowded conditions. The sale ring men would drop onto the back of a bull coming up the chute and ride him into the car looping the rope around his horns and tie him up while he was in the crowd. One particularly large bull backed out of the chute with the man aboard and jumped (crawled) over the 6 foot high fence, giving him a ride he never forgot!

Pigs from William Hog Company were a different lot. Most would load OK, but some laid down in the chute and refused to move. They were easy to injure, so we just left them until they decided to move. Several times they were there when the train left!

We also had old horses sold for market. We called them "soap" horses. Many were in pitiful condition considering how handsome we think a horse should look.

My Advancement in Skills and Earnings

On my return to Lamar in April 1951 on the B&R position, Mac kept after me to learn how to read freight tariffs. The highest paid clerk was Cashier, and Al Weston was the holder. He was also the tariff man. Al was badly crippled with rheumatoid arthritis, and Mac probably knew his days were short, and he wanted someone to learn how to look up rates in the 100 plus tariffs in our files. I made a feeble attempt for several months, finally knowing more than the rest of the office staff, but still not very much.

One Saturday in the fall of 1951, I was advised Weston was in the hospital, and I would be temporary on his job on Monday. Overtime was not authorized, and I found myself working on my own time many 12-hour days, including weekends, reading tariffs and struggling blindly along conscientiously doing my best. The underlying pressure was, "our future with the railroad depended on how well we did our work." Knowing my job performance was on the line, I was trying to do my best.

It was the start of our busiest season handling sheep by the thousands brought in to feed on harvested fields over the winter. Another major shipper was the Lamar Flour Mills, which received wheat, and shipped flour. We also had the Denver Alfalfa Milling Products, (later National Alfalfa Dehydrating & Milling Company) which shipped alfalfa meal, not only from Lamar, but from several blind-siding stations on the Arkansas Valley branch which we handled.

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There were several smaller alfalfa meal shippers also. The Des Marteau Grain Company elevator was later built west of 10th Street, that shipped and received wheat.

Each car, regardless of commodity was handled on a document called a waybill. Each car had to be weighed, usually at La Junta, or could move under an Average Weight Agreement authorized by the Western Weighing Inspection Bureau, in which shippers were periodically inspected by the bureau to be sure loading weights were consistent, and proper records kept.

At the shipping station, collect waybills were issued usually showing a rate of even dollars, for ease in doing the billing. (Example: 40,000 lbs @ \$1.00 = \$400.00). Only waybills that have the charges prepaid at origin would have the correct rate assessed, and only then when the weight had been determined.

At one time I had over 300 waybills to report, representing about 30 days of inbound carloads. I knew the billed rate was only a "pie in the sky" figure and the actual total due might be more, or less. When correct charges were determined from our tariffs, we issued a freight bill for collection from the shipper or consignee. Periodically an auditor would come unannounced to check our books, and one came at that time. He chewed me and the boss out terrible. We made freight bills on the 300 plus bills, using the billed rate, in order to get them to Topeka for their tariff department to assess the proper rates. Out of all those bills, only a few were corrected! After the death of Weston, I bid in the Cashier job in January of 1952, and held that position until January 1955, when I was bumped again, and went back on the B&R job. After that rocky start, I spent much of my 41-year career doing tariff work.

I also sold train tickets at Lamar on second trick for a short time at the passenger depot, which required passenger tariff knowledge, but to me it was much easier than freight tariffs. The train order operator and I also unloaded mail and baggage from trains. The platform was brick paved from Main street to a little beyond the depot, and gravel beyond. It was near Christmas and the Centennial State that ran from Denver to Kansas City, (Nos. 9/10) carried quite a bit of mail. We would have 5 to 6 baggage truck loads, packed up high each night. Conductor Fritz Garrity was cantankerous. On his trips, he would stop the train where the passengers had paving, but we would have to pull the baggage trucks with their steel wheels through gravel, which was nearly impossible for two men to do. Head Ticket Clerk A. R. Baker told me to stand up to him and have him back the train up. The next trip I did, and he refused. We started back to the depot with empty baggage trucks, with him yelling, but in a few minutes the train started moving backward. We never had trouble after that! Sometime in 1950, the freight office was moved to the passenger depot, but we still handled freight in the warehouse. Train order operators then included Bill Rucker (later Agent), Elmer Sapp, Joe Baublits, R. O. Marston, Howard Holter to name a few. Clyde Strain was the Railway Express Agent also in the depot office.

Afterglow

As I was beginning my career, the steam locomotive was beginning to fade. One of my most vivid memories was being awakened one night by the wailing whistle of a steam engine coming into Lamar from the Arkansas Valley branch blowing for the many crossings. As I laid there

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listening, little did I realize how soon the multi-toned whistle would be replaced by the blaring beeps of today!

In retrospect I thank Mac for his pushing me to learn the tariffs. Those higher paying jobs helped at retirement, to insure I received a good rate. In April 1956 I left Lamar for the last time, moving to Rocky Ford, where I bounced back and forth between there and La Junta.....but that's another story!

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Santa Fe - 1944-45

Granada, Colorado

Remembrances of D. K. Spencer

When I hired out with the Santa Fe in 1944, I had worked at Lamar only two months when I was bumped. I was force assigned to the little town of Granada, population then and today of about 500 persons, 19 miles east of Lamar. It is famous in Santa Fe history as being end of track when they first built into Colorado. However, World War 2 jitters had brought a nearby community of several thousand Japanese-Americans from the west coast to a Relocation Center known as Camp Amache, named after the Cheyenne Indian wife of John Prowers. Granada is in Prowers County.

The staff included Agent Art Stolfus, (later Agent at La Junta); Operator Apprentice Don Ayers, (later dispatcher at La Junta); June Henry, second trick operator; and another lady who worked third trick, name forgotten. Stolfus may have been first trick operator. There was also a Cashier (name unknown); Mr. Walker, Railway Express Agent; and me, still a Utility Clerk.

We mainly dealt with Amache, located southwest from town. I was low man on the totem pole, so I did all the janitor work, and unloading freight from box cars and helped with the express and baggage from the California Limited and a local two car train numbered 123-124, commonly called "The Plug".

There was a commercial fish house in Granada for the many Japanese who favored seafood over anything else. We would get large iced boxes of various seafood, nearly every day on the passenger train.

My shift was the odd hours of 12 noon to 9pm, which allowed me to hang the mailbag for the hotshot mail train No. 7 which was scheduled for late afternoon, but with heavy war traffic ran late much of the time. Normally the postmaster did that job, but he went home at 5 pm. The bag had rings on each end and was suspended from a mail "crane" by metal clips. The train would come by at speeds of 80 MPH, and the RPO (Railway Post Office) car had an arm that was swung out manually by their employee, at a 90-degree angle from the car, and would snatch the mailbag from the crane. They also would throw off a mail bag, and it would roll and bounce to a stop for me to find, sometimes in tall weeds.

The pickup bags needed to be in good shape, or they would tear open. One did, containing \$10,000.00 of government checks, and FBI types came in by the dozens looking for the checks, that had scattered around the area. Later it happened again, however this time the bag came loose from the crane from the suction caused from the engine passing by and fell under the train wheels.

I had an apartment at the old Ellis Cafe and Hotel. It was really a bar that served food. The building was of near frontier age, and the north side had several rooms they rented. In my mind I

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fantasized the rooms housing western characters in times past. Since Granada had been end of track when the Santa Fe builders crossed over from Kansas, I could picture railroad workers and cowboys taking girls to their rooms!



My window faced onto the depot just across the tracks and several times the Agent would come across the tracks and knock on my window to get me up, since I spent most of my evenings in Lamar, getting back to Granada in early morning! Later they changed my starting time to 10 AM to 700 PM and the boss laid down the law, so I bought my first alarm clock! I worked again in Granada in 1945. This time we were helping the Japanese people in their move back to California, and we sent a lot of their belongings by freight.

I really felt sorry for most of them. They were mostly great people and I dealt with several that I considered good friends. They were uprooted from their homes and jobs, just because their ancestors were Japanese. A few did declare allegiance to Japan and were deported. The worst part was minor kids, who considered themselves as Americans, and had to go with their deported parents. One young guy about 16 told us that he probably would serve in the Japanese army shooting at his American friends, while his 12-year-old sister could end up as a prostitute because of their lack of money and position. When they were going back, they would pack everything they had, but we had to inspect each item to make sure there was nothing dangerous. We had one box car catch on fire in New Mexico which was attributed to "farmer" matches rubbing together in someone's personal effects. They did not want to leave anything behind, which I assumed came from their disgust of the situation they were in, having left so much behind in the beginning.

They mostly rode the California Limited back and forth to California, and nearly every day the train conductor would yell "all aboard" several times as they bid farewell going through the customary cultural bows and parting exchanges, leaving their many new and old friends to begin life anew in their old home areas. After they left in 1945, my job was abolished, and I went back to Lamar.

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Santa Fe - 1944-45

Rocky Ford, Colorado

Remembrances of D. K. Spencer 1956-1979

In April 1956, a force reduction at Lamar Colorado found my family moving to Rocky Ford where I have since lived, worked, and retired. Being only ten miles from La Junta, Colorado, I bounced back and forth between the two towns for the next thirty years, as my seniority would allow.

When I first came, the Agent was John E. Austin. He had been Agent at Lamar while I was there and had bid in the Rocky Ford job just prior to my move. Norman Clifford was the Cashier, and W. J. Valley was the Car Clerk, and I became Bill Clerk, bumping John Loftus. Victor Hudson was first trick operator, C. Harold "Brownie" Brown was second, and Bob Wheeler was third. Various clerks worked the three month long seasonal job. A few names I remember include Ray Hunter, Dick Willett, and Bill Hanagan. Agents after Austin were Frank M. Lucero, John F. Bart, and myself.

The railroad version of Morse code was still being used in 1956, and operators had to qualify in code. Clifford had learned the code in his many years of listening, and usually knew what a message said long before it was given to him by the operator. We knew something was amiss, when during a quiet moment Clifford would erupt griping about an incoming message!

We still had a Main street crossing watchman who flagged automobiles when trains were going through. His name was Bert Bius, and he had lost an eye during his service with a track gang, resulting in his lifetime job. We also had a section crew based at Rocky Ford.

Shortly after I arrived Valley died, and I took his place as Car Clerk, (and janitor!). I was the "sanitary engineer" for the whole she-bang! We still had a coal fired furnace, so ash removal was one of my daily chores, as well as window washing and floor mopping. I was pleased when we converted to a gas fired furnace in the 1960's.

We had a little bit of Less Than Carload (LCL) traffic that was handled on the Santa Fe Trail Transportation dock at La Junta, and brought to Rocky Ford by driver Bill Unger, and shipments that could not be delivered that day were handled by me in our little warehouse, but that business eventually died out.

We also had two stock yards, one on each end of town, and shipped a few cars of cattle after my arrival. Several stock feeding operations had been formed after 1900 using the ample amount of sugar beet pulp that had been generated by the sugar factory as feed. This business died during the 1950's with the advent of "in the field" handling by motor carriers.

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Those Wonderful Onions

Onions were and are, a popular product of the Arkansas Valley of Colorado. Over the years many produce dealers were headquartered in Rocky Ford that either grew onions locally or brokered onions from other growing areas. When I first came, twenty to thirty cars from Oregon and Idaho were in the yards at any one time, waiting for diversion orders. The onions had been loaded into the old-style refrigerator cars that were equipped with ice bunkers on each end with hinged lids (vents) that also had mechanisms to allow the lid to be partially propped open. Since onions required good ventilation, the partially opened lids allowed air to be scooped into the car from one end, and exhausted out the other end, as they moved enroute.

On arrival at Rocky Ford, I had to climb the end ladders to the roof to open or close the roof vents depending on the which side of 32 degrees the temperature was. I also handled the diversion orders, making "advance only" waybills covering diversion charges and any demurrage that might have accrued.

Locally grown onions were also loaded and shipped. Most of the field work was done in the daylight hours, and the loading and shipping done in the evenings. I worked many overtime hours readying cars for train pickup. As the years went by, the onion business went more by semi-trucks, since they could be loaded at the onion storage sheds, saving the extra expense of hauling to rail cars. Gradually the rail shipping of onions dried up.

Sugar Beets

At the turn of the century, beet sugar factories in Colorado were popular businesses. Rocky Ford had the Northern Beet Sugar Company (later American Crystal Beet Sugar Company); Swink had the Holly Beet Sugar Company; Sugar City had the National Beet Sugar Company, and several Great Western Beet Sugar factories in northern Colorado towns.

In 1900, with the establishment of a factory in Rocky Ford, we were the western end of a branch line that ran north of the Arkansas river eastward to Holly, Colorado, a distance of about 100 miles. It was known as the Arkansas Valley Branch, (AV) and had connections with the main line at Swink, Las Animas, Lamar, and Holly. Each of these stations also had sugar beet factories which over the years closed, leaving only Rocky Ford and Swink with factories on the Santa Fe, and Sugar City on the Missouri Pacific line. The A.V. line served farming communities of Cheraw, Ft Lyon, Hasty, McClave, Wiley, Wilson Junction, (with a spur to May Valley), Bristol, and Hartman, plus many blind sidings. Most of these towns had grain elevators. Later Swink became the western terminus, and the Rocky Ford to Swink tracks were removed, except for the portion that ran alongside of the Rocky Ford factory which was known as the AV and Agee tracks, and were important sugar beet storage tracks. Agee was the name of a former rail division superintendent.

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Northern Beet Sugar Company (Later, American Crystal Beet Sugar Company)

Much of our work revolved around the beet sugar processing plant. Sugar beet processing season began about October 1 usually covering 90 to 120 days, with over 300 cars of beets on hand daily. During the off season we were either shipping sugar or receiving supplies for the next season.

In the early days, sugar beets were hauled by horse and wagon. To reduce the amount of travel time, rail side beet dumps were located about 3 miles apart, and rail sidings were built at each dump. Each siding had a name, perhaps for small towns that had died away, or some railroad official or local personage they wanted to honor. Many had small depots in times past. East of Rocky Ford was Krammes and Newdale. West of Rocky Ford was Fayette and Vroman.

Our commercial rail yard was alongside of the main line, about a mile in length, with the usual business spurs. The depot sat in the middle. Most of our main yard was devoted to storage of beets. We had two tracks that paralleled the main line that were about 1/2-mile-long that could also be used as passing tracks but were usually full of beets. They were known as "west" or "east" Pass and Melon depending on which side of the depot the cars were on. We also had two more tracks about 1/4-mile-long also for beet storage, and a long track on the east end of town.

One of the problems of our yard was the eight street crossings that required "breaking the joints" for highway safety and shortened our rail capacity.

The factory was located north of town, accessed by a spur from the main line, across two more street crossings, and had several long beet storage tracks.

Like the "mud hops" (yard clerks) of larger stations, I started each day, regardless of weather conditions, walking each track recording loads and empties, then back to the office for clerical and janitor work until quitting time. During beet season, many days were 12 hours long, and I worked every day. The pay was good, but tiresome!

Winter weather was hard on the beet business. The process for unloading sugar beets was to place them on an elevated track over a large concrete hopper with a water sluice in the bottom. The drop bottom doors allowed the beets to fall into the hopper, assisted by streams of water from overhead hoses. In severe winters, the beets would be frozen in the cars, and workers would bang on the sides of the cars with sledge hammers to loosen the beets.

One winter we had about 200 carloads that were so severely frozen they had to be unloaded with a dragline and bucket. The cars racked up heavy demurrage charges in the process. The beets were placed on the ground, and when thawed and starting to rot, were loaded into farmers trucks for cattle feed at \$1.00 per truckload. Cattle loved the sweet taste and would chew on each beet contentedly!

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We had a two-trick switch engine assigned each year to do the beet work, and they were kept busy most of the day and evening. While many Colorado division trainmen served, Conductor John Brenhizer probably put in more switching hours than anyone.

As with any processing plant, there were inbound commodities that were needed to run the plant. We received limestone and sulfur used for purification of sugar, and molasses used in the startup process. After sugar was being made, we shipped molasses for cattle feed, and liquid sugar for soda pop bottling companies, as well as sugar both in bulk and in bags. The bulk sugar was stored in concrete silos, much like a grain elevator. We also shipped sugar beet seed.

When the powdered limestone was added to the beet juice in the purification process, the juice was then filtered through small sheets of canvas, known as filter cloths, to remove the limestone. One lasting memory in many households even today, 20 plus years after closing, is the used filter cloth. They were sold in bundles for use around farms and homes as utility coverings similar to a tarp, and everyone in a sugar town knows immediately what they are when displayed!

When I moved to Rocky Ford the price of a pound of sugar in the grocery store in 1956 was 11 cents, and when the sugar factory closed in the 1970's it was still 11 cents per pound! Government support of the cane sugar production in off shore companies and always rising production expenses in antiquated plants, with little room for profit is what has nearly killed the beet sugar industry. It closed the Rocky Ford factory for sure!

Beginning of the End of the Rocky Ford Agency!

In the early 1970's the Order of Railroad Telegraphers and the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks unions merged and resulted in merging and dovetailing our two seniority districts. In 1973 the cashier's position was abolished, and since the Morse code requirement to hold the Agents/Train Order clerk position, had been eliminated I passed the rule book examination and bumped Agent John F. Bart on March 1, becoming a one-man agency.

When the sugar factory closed, the business dropped down to almost nothing resulting in the closure of the depot on January 10, 1979, and my bumping onto the cashier position in La Junta, but that's another story, and will be the last of my series!

Remembrances of Delbert "D. K." Spencer

La Junta, Colorado - Santa Fe Railway

Remembrances of Delbert K. "D.K." Spencer

Introduction

Colorado Division Clerical Employees

Prior to 1972 in this history, when employee names are listed in towns or offices, we realize that all clerks on the Colorado Division Station roster represented by the (BRAC) Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks were eligible to qualify at any station on the division. Most had found their niche in a certain area, or community, and stayed there whenever possible, however their names may appear in multiple listings.

Likewise, members of the (ORT) Order of Railroad Telegraphers had a separate division seniority roster and could hold telegrapher positions anywhere on the Colorado Division.

After 1971 the BRAC clerks and the ORT telegraphers merged, with seniority being dovetailed, into one roster.

The General Office Building clerks on the Superintendents Operating Department roster had their own seniority district but were still members of BRAC. Their seniority allowed moves mostly within the building itself.

LA JUNTA RAIL HISTORY

AS I KNOW IT, LOVED IT, AND LIVED IT!

1944-1986

Colorado, the "Centennial State", became a state in 1876. The Atchison, Topeka Santa Fe Railway came to La Junta in December 1875. La Junta in Spanish means "junction" referring to where the northwest bound Oregon Trail split off from the Santa Fe Trail that went southwest. The Santa Fe likewise junctions in La Junta with main line traffic to Albuquerque, and a branch line to Denver.

RAIL YARDS

The rail yards are on the south bank of the Arkansas River, and by my arrival in 1941 as a boy of 15, La Junta had all the usual facilities needed to operate as a division point. The mechanical back shop area was next to the river, then the freight yard tracks, then the passenger yard tracks and finally the depot facilities and yard offices. This was in the main yards. Uptown was the General Office Building on the corner of 4th & Santa Fe Avenue featured in a separate article.

The river made the yards subject to flooding, and the 1921 flood wreaked havoc in the yards, as did successive floods. An earthen dike was built, but the annual buildup of silt made the dike less effective as time went by, and flooding occurred more often. (The most recent was this year, April 1999.)

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A panorama picture taken in 1913 shows an overhead walkway from the passenger yard to the round house to access the back shop. It was removed in 1930 and a cement lighted tunnel was built to replace it.

By 1941, the oil burning passenger train engines were fueled in the vicinity of the tunnel, and over the years, leakage of fuel oil seeped into the tunnel, requiring a raised wooden walkway platform. The tunnel, even with lighting, was a smelly and spooky place to walk, especially during the night hours!

In 1941 the diesel and oil burning engines were taking over, but we still had coal fueled switch engines in the yard that were hand fired (with scoop shovels), and some road engines with coal stokers. One of my chums was Alvin Johannes and he was a fireman on a yard engine. I do not remember when the last coal fired engine was used on the Colorado Division.

Passenger Yard Layout

The yard from west to east started with the original freight office and warehouse (where I never worked), which was abandoned when the present combination passenger and freight depot was built in 1950's. It is now a feed store.

Combination Telegraph Office and Yard Office



East of the freight house was the two-story building (now removed) housing the Yard Office and Yardmaster on the west side, and the Telegraph Office on the east side. The building was called the HN building, the railroad code call letters for La Junta. The upstairs portion had lockers for trainmen's use, and one room used for a meeting place. I never worked in this building but from memory, I will try to list those persons that did

Two of the General Yardmasters I remember were Vic Bishop, and John Hjelmstad. Trick yardmasters included "Shug" Shugart, Lon Zumwalt, Cleo La Fever, Don Hjelmstad, Virgil Kibler, Bob Swentzell, and John Cullinane (a former clerk).

Yard office clerks were Don Lowman (later Agent), Roy Conyers, Ralph Taylor, John Proctor, Christopher "Kit" Carson, Frank Foster, Hubert "Red" Hinman (later Agent at St. Joseph Mo.), Virgil Benham, Noel "Pepsi" Jenkins, Ron Alvis, and Ray Hunter to name a few. Some of these were crew callers, known as call boys in earlier days.

Bob Collier and Dave Proctor were two of the Refrigeration Department Inspectors also in the yard office. Dave finished his career in Denver.

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At the HN office, Ben Turner was Head Wire Chief in my early days, and Rick Langley in later years. Trick wire chiefs included Bill Frye, Jack Hagerman, and Tom Peabody to name a few. Among the many ORT operators that either worked there, or were eligible to qualify, were Guy Turrentine, Herb Trumble, Joe Baublits, Gary Montgomery, Bill Davis, Bob Marston, Howard Holter, Cecil Hendrickson, Bob Wheeler, Jim Lewis, Pat Martin, Dave Muniz, Ken Zwick, Mary Zwick, Susanne Proctor, Ed Vela, Debby Skinner, Ron Yergert, and Doug Harrison. Some of this group may have worked in the train order office at the passenger depot in the 1970's and some may have been promoted to dispatching. Some even went to train service in the 70's and 80's.

Messages were hand delivered to offices by messengers, usually ladies, many of which became train order operators, and later clerks when the different crafts were merged in the 1970's. Messengers included Hazel Bailey, Doris Holcomb, Julia Rupp, Mary Stahl, Bonnie Swentzell, Bonnie Casper, Velma Michels, and a host of others.



When the new passenger depot was built, they installed a message vacuum tube from the HN office to both the depot, and the General Office Building. As the tube aged, moisture leakage became a problem, and foot delivery was used as needed. Foot delivery was used for all other offices.

We sometimes attended safety meetings in this building. As a lure for young appetites, they had something to eat and drink. At one meeting just before the lights went out for the movie, one piece of pastry was left. Everyone, being polite, declined to take it. When it was dark, I saw Duane Fox slyly inching his hand towards the prize,

without looking. I took the piece, and watched his frantic hand go all over the table, and finally turning his eyes to the problem and me with a look of frustration as I ate the goodie!

Reading Room

East of the HN office was the Reading Room, (now removed) which was an overnight rooming house for out of town rail personnel and trainmen waiting for the return trip to their home point. I roomed there on occasions when a force reduction at Lamar or Granada caused me to bump into La Junta. The cost was .50 per night, which included showers. Gus Bradley the Watch Inspector had his office there and may have also been the "room clerk", but I think there was a man assigned to that job, name unknown.

The main floor was actually the second floor. The original first floor had been a swimming pool in the middle of the building in the early days. It was later converted to a dormitory which had no windows and was a cool place to sleep in hot weather, almost like a basement room. There were also rooms with two beds each. You might go to bed in a room by yourself and have a roommate

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when you awoke. When the new passenger depot was built, they installed a message vacuum tube from the HN office to both the depot, and the General Office Building. As the tube aged, moisture leakage became a problem, and foot delivery was used as needed. Foot delivery was used for all other offices.

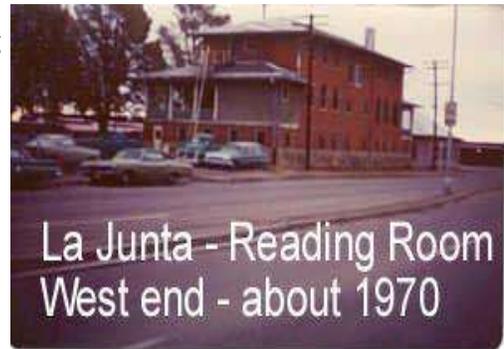


The main floor was an open area with chairs and couch's, and papers and books for passing the time. There may have been a pool table, since they were a common item in places such as this. The track side of the building had a large covered porch, and shade trees which provided a pleasant place to sit.

In September 1945, I was working in La Junta, and I bid in a new Utility Clerk position at Granada Colo. established to handle the extra business of closing the Japanese War Relocation Center known as Camp Amache. Union rules were, if you bid in a job in another community,

and were not released to make the move within 21 days, they had to pay your living expenses for the extra time held on the old position.

I was kept for an additional nine days, and my total living expenses were \$15.75. Besides my nightly room rate at the Reading Room, my meals were .35 for breakfast; .35 to .40 for lunch; and .55 to .65 for dinner I remember that I ate "higher on the hog" those nine days, than I usually did!



Railway Express Building

East of the Reading Room was the Railway Express Agency building, (still standing as of this writing) but used as storage.

Old Passenger Depot and Fred Harvey Hotel

The three-story hotel building (*See FRED HARVEY STORY*) (removed in 1950's) also housed the passenger station and ticket office, and baggage room in the west portion of the ground floor. The building was razed in the 1950's and a new station was built on the same site. The only thing left from the old building was the huge cockroaches in the sewer system!

Carmen

East of this building were the carmen shanties who serviced the various cars on all trains. Who can forget these men with their long-spouted cans for oiling the old-style brass journal boxes?

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The lids on the boxes were snapped open with a squeak and slammed shut with a bang! These jobs were gradually eliminated with the roller bearings.

Trackside in the passenger yard were long water hoses, where carmen filled engine and passenger car tanks, and as the hoses were removed from the cars and engines, there was nearly always a loud gushing stream of water as air pushed the excess out, and water flew everywhere.

Carmen names I remember were Phillip Johannes, Charley "Rabbit" Green, Al Monaco, and later Foreman Dennis Robinson. I remember a multitude of faces, but not names.

Another memory is the mangy rail dogs that found the shanties for shelter, and to beg handouts during meal times. They knew exactly when each group of men ate their sack lunches and were waiting for the handout!

New Passenger Depot and Freight House

Built in the 1950s, this one story building originally housed the news stand in the west end, with a display window opening onto the platform. The room inside the depot was all display, open to the adjoining passenger waiting room and ticket office.

A small office off the ticket office housed at different times, the ticket agent; freight agent; or the rail policemen.

The hallway to the east contained coin operated baggage lockers and rest rooms for both genders.

A door then led into the one room multi - desk freight office; a hallway on the other side to another set of rest rooms; the baggage room; and finally, the freight house and trackside unloading dock. A few carmen shanties were located near the dock

Since it was also the bus depot for Greyhound and Santa Fe Trailways, the new depot also had three covered bays for bus parking, but the bus lines eventually moved away, allowing three special parking places for the company truck and supervisory personnel vehicles.

List of Passenger Trains in 1945

Chicago to Los Angeles and return passenger trains were numbered even when eastbound, and odd westbound. Full service indicates dining car and /or lounge car.

Lightweight "Streamliner" Cars

Chief, Nos. 19 & 20, full service extra fare all sleeper daily.

Super Chief, Nos. 17-18, full service extra fare all sleepers, twice weekly. This train later sported a domed lounge car.

El Capitan, Nos, 21-22, full service extra fare all chair car, twice weekly

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(In the 1940's the El Capitan were standard size cars, but later were High Level cars giving every passenger an elevated view)

The Chief carried many movie stars, and autograph seekers were on hand every evening as stars, such as frequent rider Gregory Peck, walked along the platform. Edward Arnold rode the train often, and even came to La Junta in 1943 when invited by student Philip Domenico for a special celebration. They had a gathering in the old courthouse square, and at the high school.

Other stars rode the late-night Super Chief, but it was not as accessible as the Chief. We saw Abbot and Costello one night through a sleeper window, playing poker with a group of men.

I understand the High Level El Capitan cars were purchased by the Alaska RR when Amtrak took over, and now run from Anchorage to Denali park.

Standard Heavyweight Cars

California Limited, Nos. 3 & 4, full-service chair and sleepers daily

Grand Canyon Limited, Nos. 123-124 full-service chair and sleepers daily (added about 1950?)

Fast Mail & Express Nos. 7-8, daily with one combination chair-baggage car. I rode No. 8 to Lamar occasionally. It was a fast, slam bang ride, the combination car being the "caboose" of the train!

Denver - Kansas City

Centennial State, Nos. 9-10, full-service chairs and sleepers daily

Denver - La Junta

Centennial Limited (?) Nos. 13 & 14, full service all chair cars

La Junta - Newton

"The Plug" Nos. 127-128, actual name unknown.

This seemingly unimportant daily train left daily about 1:00 PM from La Junta to Newton and return. The consist was an engine, baggage car, Railway Post Office (RPO), and a chair car.

During those war years, some of the chair cars were also retrieved from the scrap yards and even had coal stoves for winter heat. This train carried local traffic, stopping at nearly every town.

The locomotives had large drivers, known locally as the prairie type, and on the straight "race track" between La Junta and Kansas could, and did, set some speed records. One record over this trackage was the famous Death Valley Scotty trip California to Chicago.

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You could put a postal letter in the mail slot on the side of the RPO at 1:00 PM and it would be delivered at any of the towns on the route within 24 hours.

We also had a steady milk business. Milk cans came in 5- and 10-gallon sizes, and many farmers shipped their milk this way. They sent milk to some distant creamery that paid better than the local one. Many were sent to the Newton creamery that supplied milk for Hanlin Supply, which in turn was sent out to railroad labor crews in food supplies over the system.

Many a depot worker went home at night with sore shoulders after handling multiple shipments. Unloading was not too bad, since the cans were going down, but lifting 10-gallon cans UP into baggage cars was something else!

Mail, Baggage and Freight Handling

This crew handled checked baggage and bags of U. S. Mail originating in both the local area and across country. Weight volumes of mail bags had their ups and downs but was always heavy at Christmas. The mail was stacked on both sides of the baggage car with a aisle down the middle. Late one night a car loaded with mail bags almost to the ceiling, was spotted on a holding track. It was the practice of some of the crew to sneak a nap on top of mail bags during slow nights, and they decided to sleep in this car. Most switching operations were smooth, but this night, the car was hit hard, dumping everyone to the floor with mounds of bags on top of them. There was much wailing and consternation, but no one was hurt seriously, but did cut down on the naps for a while!

One night, I was in a baggage car looking for something and found a large box labeled "Extremely Dangerous" with a wire mesh top. Being inquisitive, I shined my light, to see what was in it. Staring back at me was a live King Cobra! Wow, what a chill that was!

We had soldiers from the local Army Air Corps. base that helped on the mail crew in their spare time. One night we had a coffin with a corpse in a "rough box" (shipping container) to move from one train's baggage car to another, however we had two military trains between the two trains. Most military trains had kitchen cars, with a wide door in the middle of the car on both sides. We took the coffin alongside the troop train until we found a kitchen car and shoved it through the first train.

At the second train we also found a kitchen car and had the coffin in the door when someone said something about it being a coffin with a corpse, and these soldiers would not have any more to do with it. The military train wanted to leave but could not until the coffin was removed. We had some tense moments until the situation was finally solved with personnel that were not so superstitious! Another incident with a coffin happened on the road between two baggagemen. They each worked in their own car. One was a nervous type guy, easily scared. The other had finished his work early and decided to take a nap. A rough box is over 6-foot-long and fairly wide, so he turned all but one light off which left a dim glow and laid down on the box for a snooze. The other fellow came looking for him, and nearly died with fright when the man rose from the top of the "coffin" box!

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Some crew names I remember were Trinidad Carrillo, C. L. Cox, and Santos Werick as Mail Foremen (Cox was Chief Clerk to Supt. when he retired), and mail crew members Chris Lopez, Raul Guerrero, Ralph Guerrero, George Lopez, Gabe Fernandez, Vincent Valvides, Froilan Rosales, Silas Padilla, W. M. Vasquez, Shorty Perez, Andy Carrillo, and Joe Florez, Eddie Salazar, just to name a few. The mail crew members later worked on the freight house dock as needed. The Freight Warehouse had foremen, R. H. Mc Neal, then Earl Hollis, then Lee Whorton. Greg Everett was a Porter for the passenger trains.

Selling Tickets

We were both train and bus depot, handling bus companies Santa Fe Trailways, and Greyhound in the 1950's. I sold tickets on third track. Most of the time I enjoyed the public, but the occasional drunk was the down side.

One night, shortly after I began, a fellow was going to Lone Tree, Colorado, but there was no listed town by that name. For over an hour I searched tariffs and made phone calls to Pueblo and Denver without success. Finally, I asked a question I should have asked much earlier. "What is the nearest town?" He replied, "La Junta."

He lived in a shanty about 5 miles south of town on the road to Trinidad. He would catch the bus under the one tree that grew in that desolated area, that he called "Lone Tree", and the drivers and day ticket sellers routinely sold him 25 cent tickets to his bus stop!

La Junta ticket clerks that I remember were Leonard Grimsley, Byron Kingsolver, Carmel Carrillo, Tony Aragon, A. R. Baker, John O'Neil, and later Chris Watters, and Roger Hernandez.

Station Masters and Special Agents

These railroad policemen had offices in the passenger depot. In 1941 Dave Fresch was the first I remember. He was a large, muscular man, and ran a tight ship! Any nonsense in the depot, and you were history!

Later men were George Friedenberger, Floyd Widup, J.O. Alley, Jim White, and Carlos Martinez (a former clerk) and many others that I can picture in my mind but cannot remember their names.

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La Junta, Colorado - Centralized Accounting Bureau 1963 - 1969

Remembrances of Delbert "D. K." Spencer

Santa Fe Railway - La Junta, Colorado

(The beginning of the end of local station autonomy)

A force reduction in 1963 at Rocky Ford, due to the establishment of the new Centralized Accounting Bureau (CAB) in La Junta, found me going there to work. This bureau took on the accounting work from ten stations and their blind sidings, viz.;

Kansas - Garden City, Ulysses (Including all of Cimarron Valley Branch)

New Mexico - Las Vegas, Santa Fe, and Raton.

Colorado - Pueblo, Colorado Springs, Lamar, Rocky Ford and La Junta.

We were one bureau of nine (?), system wide that began a new process of rail accounting procedures. Every line station listed the day's business on the new CAB forms and sent them in large envelopes to La Junta for reporting. The forms were pretty simple, mostly a recap of each day's segments. The Receiving Clerk sorted the envelope contents into piles and distributed to each desk as needed, and the work continued in the usual manner.

The Original Crew

In the beginning, we had nine clerks, in the main office, and the Agent and Chief Clerk, and Secretary in an adjoining office.

Art Stolfus was Agent, and Jim Micklejohn, Chief Clerk. Later on, Jim Zwick was Agent and Clyde Barnes was Chief Clerk. Barnes was Agent at Raton later.

Secretaries I remember were Jim Lewis (later in Denver General Freight Office), Mel Hogue, Carol Tasuda, Ava Estep Nix, and Linda Young Bishoff.

I believe the original crew of the main office included:

- M. M. "Mac" Gordon, Head Cashier;
- Bill Beauchamp, Revising Clerk;
- Walter "Heavy" Burrows, OS&D Clerk;
- Don C. Lowman, Cashier;
- D. K. Spencer, Billing Clerk;
- Bill Hanagan, Demurrage Clerk
- Duane Fox, Receiving Clerk
- and CAB "utility" clerks Gene Watts, and John Wadsworth. One may have been Abstract Clerk, but the other job title is forgotten

Remembrances of Delbert "D. K." Spencer

Later were Frank Lane (Rate Clerk), Floyd Watts, Wanda Miecklejohn, June Shepherd, Ron Alvis, Eddie Hibbs, Jim Casto (bumped in from Las Vegas NM) just to name a few. Gene Watts, Lane, and Casto moved to Kansas City, when the next consolidation came about. Gene had been employed by the Missouri Pacific as a telegraph operator, before coming to the Santa Fe.

Most of the crew were La Junta freight office men, but some, like me, came from outlying stations, and some were new hires. A short break in time was allowed, but for the most part, we "hit the deck running." The pressure and stress of daily working the accumulated business for nine stations was more than any of us had experienced before, and threats of "brownies" (demerits) were always hanging over our heads.

Cashier Lowman caught a lot of flak (and brownies) in the beginning trying to handle business over the ten stations. The clerks that came from the outlying stations knew the customers in their town but learning how to cope with customers from other towns placed an extra hardship on those who dealt with them directly.

We still handled Less Than Carload freight in all stations, and the consignees in each station were used to the personal handling that local clerks were able to give. As usual, some consignees were good payers, and some were not. Clerks in each local station could telephone a consignee and pressure for payment, and the slow payers had learned how far they could push the envelope. Now they were approached by mail, from a nameless figure in a distant office. This made it easier for them to postpone payment. For us, it added to our daily woes!

The cashier had the responsibility of handling and accounting for the money received in the mail, and trying to collect past due bills, as well as his regular duties. Contacts were made only by U. S. Mail, and it was an extra load each day to go through the 200-300 open accounts and send past due notices, and still have the accounts balanced by quitting time. I know, for I followed Don as cashier!

By the time I left the bureau, I had learned how to be "hard boiled" in my collection efforts and was told by one customer that he wished I worked for him, so he could collect some of his bills! Since freight charges were governed by the I.C.C. (Interstate Commerce Commission), I could threaten with government fines and/or imprisonment for nonpayment. This usually brought results!

Many of us knew station accounting well, but the expanded procedures were overwhelming. Business in each of the original stations was based on certain commodities that were handled repetitively, such as wheat in Kansas; onions and sugar beets in Rocky Ford; coal in Raton; etc., and we had to learn the respective handling without any real "break in" time.

The cashier also had the responsibility to serve as Paymaster on paydays. This entailed cataloguing an estimated 1000 paychecks by Social Security (SS) numbers for all departments to be ready by 1201 AM on payday, twice each month. Some workers would have checks in several departments, which were located and grouped together for delivery. In earlier days the check count may have been as high as 2000.

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Your SS number was your identification, and to receive a check you recited the last four numbers to the paymaster. Prior to the CAB, Burrows handled the checks, and had memorized many of the SS numbers. To "show off" he would tell the recipient what his number was, as he gave the check. One day an official from Topeka was observing the process to see if the proper procedure was being used. Several did not know their numbers, and not knowing an official was watching, said "I don't know my number, and you have never asked me for it before!" Needless to say, changes were made!

Burrows at one time was a yard clerk. Rather than checking storage spurs each day which hardly ever changed, he would put a pebble under a car wheel on the open end of the track. If the pebble was not crushed, he knew the track had not been switched. Some switchmen got wise and to be ornery, would remove the rock, switch the track, and put the rock back. An auditor found a car in Kansas that was supposed to be in La Junta, and Burrows got caught wanting, as the saying goes! Every employee has at some time developed a short cut in his work, that sometimes blew up in his face.

Amusing Memories

We were a group of people who, in our "misery" developed a close comradeship and several, out of many, memorable events come to mind. Some were not amusing at the time but are in retrospect!

A farmer delivered eggs to the office weekly in the early morning. The guys would leave their order and money with me the night before, since I was the Cashier and first one there at 7:00 am. One morning I was short of funds, both personal and egg money, so I used a small amount of the \$15.00 petty cash rail money, since the buyers would be there in an hour. A few minutes later, three Topeka auditors walked in to check our books, and their first duty was to see if the cash drawer balances. Several men had gotten fired for misuse of rail funds, and I was frantic!

I borrowed enough to cover the assumed shortage before they had their bags unpacked and felt quite relieved. However, when the cash was counted, I still was short 49 cents, and I got frustrated and the sweat was supreme! My conscience was bothering me, and I finally blurted out the truth! About that time, the errant egg buyers arrived, and gave me enough to cover the shortage. The auditors were young guys, and mildly gave me a hard time, but I never did that again!

Fox one day took Gene's eggs home and hard boiled them during his lunch break and sneaked them back into the office. Gene's wife was the real victim at breakfast the next morning. Try as she could, they would not fall into the pan!

Someone brought golf clubs to work with them and was hitting one of those plastic "whiffle" balls, while the boss was out of the office. They only go a few feet. Wadsworth accidentally picked up a real ball and before anyone could stop him, hit it hard! The ball was bouncing off masonry walls and ceilings, while we were hiding under our desks. We had a lot of windows and not one was broken!

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Lowman said he could jump flat footed from the floor straight up to the top of a desk, and to prove it he did. Fox came in later and wouldn't believe he did it, and pestered Don to do it again. Don protested, but finally said OK. He was still a little weak from the first time, so he was swinging his arms for momentum, and when he jumped, he hit his finger on the desk fracturing it! It had to be reported as a personal injury since it had to be splinted. How do you explain a personal on duty injury like that?

When the depot was built, one set of rest rooms were built for the passengers, and another set for the workers, with the freight office in between. As the CAB grew, we ran out of space. Since we only occasionally had women workers in the office, it was decided to eliminate the woman workers rest room and let them use the passenger area. This allowed a small office for two persons, and their desks.

The regular lady messenger delivered all messages from the telegraph office at 900 AM and 300 PM, usually at high speed. She would enter the freight room door, lay her messages on the counter, then zoom around the corner into the ladies' rest room. One morning after her morning run, the plumbers left the room entirely empty. Knowing what was coming, we looked forward to the afternoon trip. She came at 300 PM, somewhat faster than usual it seemed to us, zoomed around the corner, let out a scream, and came into the office with the damndest "what happened" look on her face!

The late Buck Burshears of Koshare Indian Boy Scouting fame was in the office when a discussion started about starting a friction fire with a bow. Some said it was near impossible to do. Buck obtained an Official Scout kit, and during the noon hour when the bosses were gone, he showed us how to do it. We got the fire going in the tinder, then blew it out, but the office had a strange odor all day long, with everyone wrinkling their nose as they passed through. Buck had been in Scouting since 1923 and was well versed in Scouting lore. As a Scout master, I was able to teach it to my Scouts and many learned the technique.

One morning, Agent Jim Zwick was called to go on board the west bound Chief to handle a dispute between a passenger and the train crew. Before he could get off, the train departed, so he rode to Trinidad Colo. We found out he was coming back on the El Capitan that afternoon, and riding in the locomotive. We made a butcher paper streamer across the track with a large message saying, "Welcome home Jim" and they came in on track one with a crowd of workers cheering him home!

The last story is of two men who were close friends. Ralph "Bab" Miller and Leo Walker worked together as clerks in the back shops and were known for their practical jokes on each other. Bab had moved to a promotion in Amarillo, but after a few days, gave up the promotion to come back to La Junta. With no opening in the back shops, he clerked in our department. His office was in the converted women's rest room.

Leo brought in a locked hip roof metal tool box before Bab came to work one morning and put it under his desk. No one remembered to tell Bab. He sat down and wheeled into the kneehole and kicked the box unknowingly, which caused a live rattlesnake in the box to buzz, and sent Bab

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flying backwards into the wall, screaming both from fright and a banged head. All that was left, was for Bab to get even which I am sure he did! Both men are deceased now.

The nagging thought in 1963 was, if the work can be consolidated into nine bureaus, there was no reason why one bureau could not do the job. Eventually the group of bureaus were reduced by further consolidations. In 1968 our bureau was combined with the CAB at Wichita, and moved to Kansas City, which I believe was one of three system wide bureaus. Later the fears of 1963 were finally realized with one bureau at Topeka, Kansas.

We lost jobs with each consolidation, and the clerical handling was forever changing with stations closing for good. System wide, in September 1981, there were 359 stations, on the mailing list, and by Jan 1985, there were only 107.

When the CAB closed for good, I ended up back at Rocky Ford during beet season, and La Junta the rest of the time. This will be covered in the segment entitled LIFE AFTER THE C.A.B.

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La Junta, Colorado - Santa Fe Railway

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Life After the C.A.B

(Centralized Accounting Bureau)

La Junta - 1969-1986

When the CAB was dismantled in April 1969 I bumped back into Rocky Ford as car clerk, but when beet season was over, the permanent car clerk position was abolished, so I came back to La Junta in January 1970.

The car clerk then became a seasonal job, so I was in Rocky Ford during the beet season (October to December) and La Junta during the off season. Each time I came back to La Junta, there was some change in operation.

The first time back, in January 1970, I was by myself in the old freight office/CAB office. The office originally held 9 desks, but now was empty except for me. My desk was next to the counter just inside the business door, and Clyde Barnes was agent in the adjoining office, along with his secretary, Linda Bishoff.

Just prior to Don Lowman becoming Agent in 1972, it was decided to close the yard office portion of the HN building, and move the yard master, yard clerk and crew clerks to the old news stand area in the west end of the passenger depot. The cashier was also moved into that area. A partition was installed on top of the original counter to enclose the area, except for a small open portion for the cashier's business, and to pass out paychecks. Another opening was made for the crew clerk.

For a short time, I developed a "cottage" industry there. With no news stand, Amtrak passengers were always asking me if I had anything to sell. As a Scoutmaster I encouraged my Scouts to make their own neckerchief slides. One day, I had left a slide on the counter, that I had made from a vertebrae segment from a calf, that I had dipped in paint, and applied "squiggly" eyes to. A passenger asked if it was for sale? I said "yes", and we settled on a price of \$3.00. I had about 15 of these segments, and sold them all in about three weeks, but the agent felt I should not be doing it, so my shop closed!

The yard master was placed in a small room facing the train yard. When the news stand was operating, various sundries were sold to train passengers through an open display area facing the platform. This area was boxed in and fitted with a plate glass picture window for the Yard master, which facilitated his view of the yards.

The whole operation was now together. The car clerks used a key punch machine to make a card for each car as it arrived, loaded or empty, and updated the cards as needed. The cards were sorted in track order and placed in a "pigeon" hole filing cabinet, using one hole for each track in the yards. When the train was made up and ready to depart, the stack of cards was put into

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another machine that printed a train consist which was given to the conductor along with the waybills.

The machine that printed the consists also printed daily yard inventories and demurrage reports on spread sheets from key punch cards. Both machines were always clattering away! To add to the clatter, was my manual typewriter typing waybills, etc., so it was very crowded and noisy. When the passengers from Amtrak trains and the bus lines arrived and departed, there was even more noise. Trainmen and switchmen were always blocking the narrow aisles, so they were told to stay out of the office, as if that was possible!

As cashier, I was also handling bus express, and every other Friday was Avon day, when sweet smelling ladies and their equally sweet-smelling inbound freight, brightened our usual routine of sweaty male bodies, and rail yard fragrance!

Back in the now empty CAB office, the counter was removed and a solid (except for an entrance door) cinder block wall took its place. At the middle of the CAB room the wall made a right angle turn to the west forming a separate room.

They moved the radio shop in the new room since it was both air conditioned, and secure for vital radio parts. The railroad police had an office nearby and could check as needed. However, the room was too small, and too far from their back-shop work area, so they moved back to their old storehouse shop. The room then became a little used meeting place. I used it as a lunch room during my noon hour, and a quiet place to take a 20-minute nap.

New Life for the Old CAB Office

After a few years, it was decided to move all the electronic equipment from the HN building, to the top floor of the General Office Building, three blocks away. The train order clerks were moved to the CAB office, so the HN building could be razed.

We were on the move again! Everyone, except the Yardmaster was moved back into the old CAB office, and the area we vacated was filled by trainmen's lockers, that had no home after the razing of the HN building.

Back in the old CAB room, the train order clerks were placed near the outside business door, with the crew clerks alongside, with a small partition between them. The top half of the wall was removed allowing a service window for trainmen to not only get orders, but to deal with the crew clerks.

Half of the cinder block wall down the middle of the room was removed so the train order clerks would have access to office machines and toilets, but this arrangement made copying orders difficult with the noise of all the machines, and regular office operation. The yard clerks and cashier were now in the other half of the old CAB office and were there when I retired.

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Merger of Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks (BRAC) and Order of Railway Telegraphers (ORT)

Sometime after 1971, the two groups merged and by the time of the issue of the January 1, 1985 Colorado Division seniority roster also included trick dispatchers. All of these seniority's were dovetailed into one roster.

Back to Rocky Ford, Finally an Agent, But Not for Long!

Sometime prior to March 1973, the telegraphic code requirement was lifted for train order clerks due to each office now having teletype machines installed. The messages, as typed, were transferred to paper tape through a series of small holes. The tape then passed through a "reader" for transmitting.

When Norman Clifford retired in September 1971 at Rocky Ford, I bid in the cashier job, and held it until they eliminated the position, in March 1973. I then passed the Rule Book and qualified for the Agency, and bumped Agent John F. Bart. When the sugar factory in Rocky Ford closed after the 1977 season, our revenue "died on the vine" which caused the station to close in January 1979, and I went back to La Junta as Cashier.

Computers and My Final Move!

I believe the computers on nearly every desk came into being about this time. A lot of the men were apprehensive, but I was intrigued and welcomed the change. Like the others, I had my share of mistakes and aggravation. The Input Supervisors were almost glued to us during the first days, for we were about as dumb as we could be. However, like all things new, the more you use them the easier it becomes. The only Input Supervisor name I remember is John Royse, but we had several.

My first rude awakening was my preconceived notion of how the computer programs worked, was quite different in use. I had imagined forms such as a waybill would be brought to the screen and the blanks filled in but found a line by line formula had to be used, that in no way resembled a waybill. However, the finished product was as it should be. This followed through on all the other reports, as we cast aside the antiquated knowledge of 35 years of railroading and stepped blindly into the computer age!

Regional Freight Offices The Centralizing Concept Revisited!

About this time, all the line stations between Garden City, Kansas and Pueblo, (except La Junta) were closed and La Junta became a Regional Freight Office (RFO). A few offices were designated Regional Yard Offices (RYO). For many years, long distance toll telephone calls were taboo, but now became an integral part of our daily operation, as we dealt with shippers and consignees from Coolidge, Kansas to Fowler, Colorado.

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All clerks were now RFO clerks, and if train orders were involved, they were designated RFO-TOC (Train Order Clerks), meaning they were able to qualify in either areas, handling all the daily business with shippers and consignees by telephone.

Also about this time, the famous CLIC books were issued that showed track and car spots in every station, using combinations of numbers and/or letters. With all the smaller stations closed, instructions were given to trains by messages, written or radio, from the RFO's where to place cars, or pick them up. The books were long and narrow, and fit nicely into pant pockets, especially bib overalls. The computer printed daily yard checks for each station showing whatever switching had been done as reported by train crews to the RFO's.

Retirement

My service ended with my retirement on February 14, 1986. I thought Valentine's day was an appropriate day for me to kiss my career good-bye! I went from September 1944 to Feb. 20, 1985 without any demerits. At that time, I received 10 due to a misunderstanding between me and the new agent, about a certain chore, normally done by him, but assigned to me one day as he was out of town. As the story goes, the engineer rings the bell, but the caboose catches hell!

At the time of my retirement, the Superintendent gave me a letter saying the 10 demerits had been removed from my record, leaving me with a clean slate. During my entire clerical career, I only worked in four Colorado stations, Granada, Lamar, La Junta and Rocky Ford. Most of my fellow workers worked many stations. I started my career August 9, 1944 at Lamar; was bumped by Dallas Baldrige from Colorado Springs, and established my seniority in Granada on Sept. 21, 1944, working there two months; then force reduced. I bumped the Consist Clerk at La Junta until September 1945, then back to Granada for two more months, and on to Lamar for a little over three years, during which I was married on Feb. 29, 1948. In June 1950 went to La Junta until Feb. 1951, then back to Lamar. In April 1956, went back west to Rocky Ford and spent the rest of my career working in the La Junta/Rocky Ford area.

Afterglow

My Original "Compensation Package"

When I graduated from Lamar Colorado high school in May 1944 and was hired August 9 as a Utility Clerk at Lamar freight house my advertised rate of pay was \$5.33 per day, or 67 cents an hour, for a 48-hour week. I am not sure when the 40-hour week came into existence.

However, unless you had a resume with extensive clerical experience, you were paid "step rates". The breakdown escapes my memory, but I would guess 80% of the daily rate for the first six months (\$4.26), then 90% for the next twelve months (\$4.80), and full rate after that. This would close to the rate apprentice operators were similarly paid at \$102.84 per month, which using formula of 24 days per month (6 days per week, 4 weeks in month) would amount to \$4.29 per day.

Three years earlier (1941), City of La Junta day laborers were paid 25 cents per hour, and the railroad was paying 43 cents per hour on the lowest paying jobs, so everyone wanted to be a

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railroader! When I retired in 1986, I was receiving \$12.95 per hour, or \$103.60 per day, as the top paid clerk in the La Junta office.

Vacations

Vacation days were for number of years served. The first year we earned 3 paid vacation days. From year one to year ten, one week; ten and above 2 weeks. As time went by, weeks were added topping out at 5 weeks with 20 years of service. In those later times, we also were allowed a certain amount sick days per year, and able to accumulate unused days in case of a bad illness and were paid for any unused days when separating from the company.

Rail Passes

Another "perk" was the rail pass system allowing reduced rate or free travel to employees. If you had less than 10 years service, you applied for a trip pass, good only for a specific trip. Over 10 years you were issued a long service pass good only for Western Lines and Panhandle and Santa Fe lines issued every two years, and trip passes elsewhere. At 20 years you were issued a system wide pass good for four years. After Amtrak, permanent long service passes were issued. The pass was a first-class ticket. If you wanted Pullman service, you paid only for it. In the beginning, you could get trip passes on foreign lines, but later you paid half fare. Passes were good only on regular heavyweight trains such as California Limited, and in later days, only during the slack business times of the year.

Beginning of the End

The use of computers and electronic gear, and consolidations of various departments over the years was probably the largest change, but many other changes also happened, some of which include:

The discontinuance of rail handling of Less Than Carload (LCL) freight reduced much of the daily clerical work. The loss of livestock shipping was another nail in the coffin. Before the advent of long-haul trucks, products were loaded first on a small truck, then transferred to the rail car, duplicating work. Now the long haul "18 wheelers" are loaded, hauled and unloaded in one operation. We have obtained part of the revenue through the piggy back concept.

The advent of one commodity trains has done away with much of the mixed train concept, and the carriers welcomed the change. This allowed major train movements with very little switching.

The union movement and the benefits realized in the early part of the century helped bring relief to a beleaguered labor force and created a labor power base that ruled for many years, but history shows that all things change. In my opinion, labor unions hit the wall under President Reagan, when he defied the Air Traffic Controllers, and the union power base began to slip, with a steady loss of benefits and membership in all trades.

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For those who were born at the turn of the 20th century, the technical advances made in their lifetimes were tremendous, and I have those same feelings as I record the changes in my rail career. When I retired, I thought there could not be many more changes, but in one year, and every year since the whole scope of railroading has changed.

La Junta has about 100 employees, but no freight office, no general office building, the Yardmaster is now a trainmaster, no switchmen, a restricted use yard, fewer train crews, and very little, if any, back shop work. Track maintenance is by a roving crew based in La Junta but travels over a large territory. The signal department still has maintainers, but widely spread out. Amtrak still has an office in the depot.

Worst of all, our beloved Santa Fe name is playing second fiddle to the Burlington Northern!

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La Junta General Office Building - Santa Fe Railway

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1944-1986

INTRODUCTION - COLORADO DIVISION CLERICAL EMPLOYEES

Prior to 1972 in this history, when employee names are listed in towns or offices, we realize that all clerks on the Colorado Division Station roster represented by the (BRAC) Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks were eligible to qualify at any station on the division. Most had found their niche in a certain area, or community, and stayed there whenever possible, however their names may appear in multiple listings.

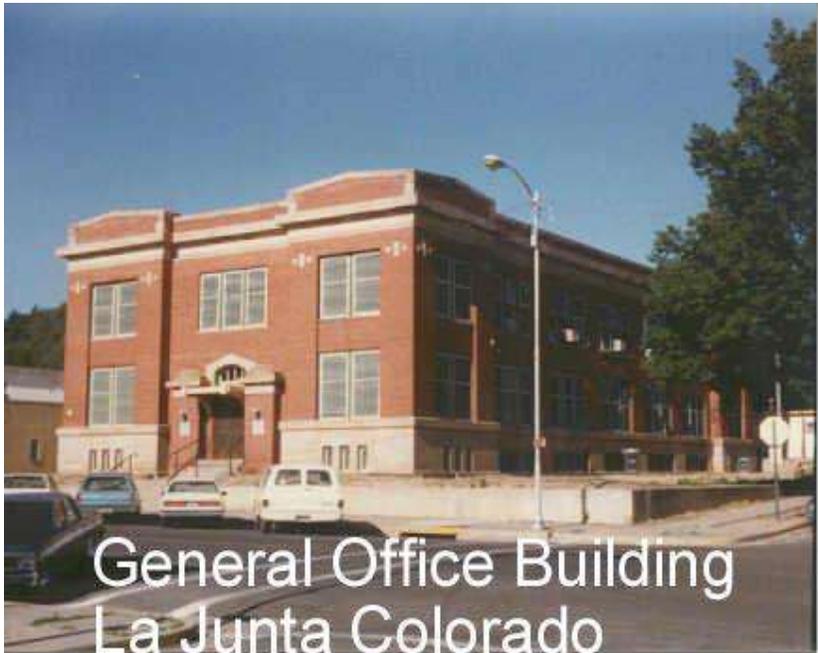
Likewise, members of the (ORT) Order of Railroad Telegraphers had a separate division seniority roster and could hold telegrapher positions anywhere on the Colorado Division.

After 1971 the BRAC clerks and the ORT telegraphers merged, with seniority being dovetailed, into one roster.

The General Office Building clerks on the Superintendents Operating Department roster had their own seniority district but were still members of BRAC. Their seniority allowed moves mostly within the building itself.

La Junta General Office Building Assistant General Managers

La Junta in 1941 was the headquarters for an Assistant General Manager, who I remember as G. R. Buchanan. With the AGM here, the Colorado Division Superintendent J. E. Lester was located in Pueblo, and he was in office when I hired out in 1944. In later years the AGM's office in La Junta was eliminated, and La Junta became HQ for the division. Both of these officials had passenger rail cars, known as "business" cars assigned to them. I believe the AGM was numbered 4, and the Superintendent 17 (?). When I was working for Fred Harvey in 1941-42, we provided food for both cars when they were in



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town. In 1956 T. J. Anderson was AGM in La Junta.

While I never actually worked in this 3-story brick building, I was there frequently on errands, and later as Treasurer of the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks local, knew most of the personnel.

Departments

In each section of the building were areas set aside for a certain department, or combination of departments, where the non-official staff labored. The sections were: Division Superintendent; Trainmasters; Special Service, Claim Agents; Engineering; Dispatchers, Roadmasters, Signals, Communication, Bridge and Building, and Motor Car Maintenance. It also housed the Chief Dispatcher, and his trick dispatchers, and in later years the Radio department.

It was located on the corner of 4th and Santa Fe, four blocks from the rail yard, and was staffed by the below listed roster of BRAC clerks, that could move from office to office as vacancies occurred and their job qualifications and seniority allowed.

The Engineering department, however, had their own staff that were considered as officials. They were not under the clerks' schedule and were available to work where ever needed during such times as strikes, for example.

Colorado Division Superintendents

Of all the Superintendents, I remember Mr. C. B. Kurtz the best. When Topeka officials chaired La Junta meetings, they used his middle name of Burns, but I never heard anyone in La Junta address him in any way but Mr. Kurtz, even after retirement when familiarity seems to prevail. He stayed in La Junta and served on the city council and was dedicated to the community. He was a real gentleman and fair in all his dealings, and most of all, he remembered your name and was concerned about your welfare.

Others besides J. E. Lester were H. A. Tice (1928), J. P. Spears (1956), B. O. Bernard, G. E. Young, J.K. Hastings, D. D. Didier, and Dennis McDougal, to name a few. There may have been a man named Agee, for we had a track by that name at Rocky Ford that was supposed to be named for him.

I had a slight knowledge of Mr. Lester. As a Fred Harvey worker in 1941, I knew his business car steward better, but had a few chance meetings. In 1945, I was going with a lady telegrapher working at Swink. She later was agent at a desolate one-person agency called Caddoa just south of the John Martin dam, and the only telegraph office between Las Animas and Lamar.

The station, because of its desolation, had a rail owned residence within walking distance. The area also had a terrible rattlesnake problem. She had been raised near Hasty (north of the dam) and was used to snakes. With a club she would kill a snake nearly every walk she made, and sometimes several. She then would hang the carcass over the barb wire fence. She had a lot of spunk!

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I was working nights, and she was working days. With our weird hours, my only time with her was during her work hours. One hot Sunday, much to her concern, I took the waiting room bench outside into the breezy shade of the depot walls to sit. She was afraid some official might come by, but I said "what official works on Sunday?" Shortly after, a motor car came around a sharp bend, bearing Mr. Lester and the track maintainer!

With the bravado of youth, I gave them a candy bar and a cold drink that I had brought with me, and we sat on the bench and talked railroading. He talked a bit with Mary, and went on his way, and we never heard another word!

My only other memory of him was seeing him one evening in a light gray suit, walking along side of the steam locomotive, when the blow off valves blew oily steam all over him! I, and several of my co-workers thought at the time that a certain engineer did it on purpose, but it may have been just fate, as automatic blow off valves were common on engines.

After I assumed the Agency at Rocky Ford, I had a run in with a superintendent. During beet season, a seasonal employee making a morning yard check mentioned that he had bumped his head on the side of a car, but did not want to go to the doctor. Most of us had done this at one time or another, so I assumed he was OK. Later in the day, he began to complain about the injury, and I sent him to the Santa Fe approved doctor and called the super's office.

A few minutes later, he exploded in my ear for nearly 15 minutes as to why I did not call him in the morning, right after the injury. He finally hung up, and I was a mess wondering why there was so much concern. The phone rang again, and away we went again for another 15 minutes! It seems there was a pre-existing problem between the employee and the carrier that I knew nothing about, and had I known of this, as Agent I would have been more cautious. I have been chewed out before, but nothing like this! However, once it was over, he never mentioned it again in any of our dealings.

Trainmasters

Trainmasters were one step below a superintendent and was the official that a station agent usually had to deal with. I have worked under several, but the one I most remember was Delbert Miller out of Pueblo. He was a real gentleman. He would come to Rocky Ford occasionally, but never with a chip on his shoulder. If I had messed up, we talked it over and he was always amicable.

There was a trainmaster assigned to a certain railroad area, and in some cases, there might be two trainmasters with offices in the GOB. They were usually the ones who notified the agent of an impending change in office staff, usually a job abolishment, but sometimes a new position when business was good enough. When a trainmaster came to your office, we were always apprehensive as to why he came!

We had a dread about getting your depot painted. In later years it seemed like a depot painting crew would come in, and a few months later they would close the depot for good. It seemed like the trainmaster was usually the bearer of those bad tidings!

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However, my personal opinion is, this trend was part of someone's master plan. A case in point is the General Office Building itself. Just a few short years before they closed the building, a major overhauling took place costing what was rumored to be about \$300,000.00. It stands to reason, if a rail building showed more expense than the income it was supposed to generate, it would be grounds for closure. The old adage is, you have to spend money to make money, so if you spend a bunch on a building that you want to close, you will save a lot of money in the long run!

Some trainmaster names I remember are H. J. Briscoe, W. R. Henry, E. B. Jones, M. E. Shewmake (Pueblo), B. Y. Steele, L. P. Heath, W. R. Hopper, and T. E. Auge.

Chief Clerks

I do not remember if there were Chief Clerks in all the offices. If there were, they were probably considered to be officials. I know those in the Superintendent's office were officials, and included Bill Bidall, Clarence Cox, and Barry Henry to name a few.

Clerks

The BRC clerks that were listed on the Superintendent's Operating Department seniority roster in 1980 included: Dean Sommers; Bernie Carroll; Frank Bissey (Pueblo); Marge Sommers; A. L. Moore (Amarillo) Lois Springer; Burch Ritter; Lloyd Hinderliter; Richard Hinderliter (Chicago) ; Elsie Horn (a classmate from Lamar Colo. H.S.); A. G. "Brownie" Wynne; Connie Rogers; Judy Karney; Linda Hinderliter, (Chicago) ; C. A. Barnhart; Dorothy Schultz; Marilyn Ritter; Nell Morgan; Charlene Sims (Pueblo); Andy Amparan (Agent when I retired); Muriel Brown; J. L. Clark (Raton); Sachi Fujimoto; E. Jo Foste; Bonnie Carlile; Tammy Davis; Jeanine La Fever; Linda (Lowman) Smith; Duranna Crosswhite; K. C. Melchoir; Bob Buller; H. L. Verne, and Jody Hansen.

Prior to 1980 were Trudy O'Leary, Hiawatha Griffith, Fern Bell, Frank Wyowadzic, and John Bickel to name a few retirees.

Claim Agent

Charles Fitzpatrick seemed to be always on the go, investigating the many different accidents or claims made against the carrier. These ranged from livestock deaths to rail and auto accidents to personal injury problems, and everything in between!

Engineering Department

In 1956 W. R. Rees was District Engineer. Later members of the Engineering department that I knew from my job distributing paychecks were J. B. Miller, Don McClure, R. E. McIntyre, Larry Stotts, Chuck Moore, Charlie Tucker, Mike Berry, and Dan Duff.

Chief Dispatchers

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Being a clerk from the beginning, I was not acquainted with the dispatching department until later in my career. When I passed the rule book to become agent at Rocky Ford, the Chief Dispatcher was W. N. Willis, and later Jack McAtee. Another earlier man was Jack Barnes.

Trick Dispatchers as of 1985

Les Anderson, Leonard Stephan, Gene Spoonemore, Don Deaton, Bill Abel, Randy Holiman, Ron Yergert, Doug Harrison, Sherril Taylor, Lyle Japhet, J. J. Garza, Doyle Elyea, and Ron Hiner.

Safety Supervisors

T. G. Corbin, and Dick Weakley

Signal Department

John Bagwell, Supervisor (1971), G. H. Sette and J. F. Sulier, Assistant Supervisors (1971), and in 1986 Paul Barnes, Supervisor; Mert Turner, Assistant Supervisor; and Signal Inspectors King Bullard, and Jerry Sitton. Maintainers Ralph Prather, Paul Fritz, Howard Norris, Bob Malden, Bruce Baublits, Mike Casper, Bill Blecha, and (Bill?) Mitchell, to name a few.

Communication

In 1971, C. C. Garret Jr was Assistant Engineer. When I retired Howard Luehring and John Mullaly were Radio men, and in the Telephone Department was Gary Hines.

Bridge and Building

Albert Matt was the head of the department. He was a WW 2, refugee from Europe, and had been an apprentice to a carpenter since his childhood days. He was a master carpenter and builder. Tom Coffield was the B&B foreman. Bridge Inspector was Dee Quicksall (after retirement, Federal Bridge Inspector)

Roadmasters

Clyde L. Conley was the first I remember, in 1944. His son Frank was one of my best friends in La Junta high school. M. C. Pannell and W. C. Popham Jr were roadmasters in 1971. I cannot seem to remember who else were roadmasters.

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Afterglow

I am sure that I have missed some names in this article, and probably will come to mind in the days ahead. My apologies to anyone I have slighted. If I hear from anyone with changes of spelling, or additions or subtractions, to this story, I will be glad to submit an addendum, probably by the end of the year.

From Pencils to the Computer Age Railroader Musings of a Time Gone By!

By D. K. Spencer

In these days of a computer on nearly every desk in the modern office, and information of the world just a click away, I am prompted to "Hearken Back to the Days of Yore" when I commenced my career. Almost everyone of my age had grown up with the Palmer method of learning to write legibly as taught in the lower grades and had been repeatedly drilled in how we were to write neatly and clearly if we were to succeed in the business world. Remember drawing all those circles, that would resemble a reclining "slinky" of today?

When I started in 1944, manual typewriters were common, but most had the small carriage for standard paper width of 8 1/2 inches. Very few line offices had the wide carriage billing machines, that would accept 11-inch-wide reports. Therefore, reports of that size were mostly handwritten with pencils of varying degrees of hardness of lead, due to multiple carbon copies. Ball point pens had not been developed yet, and fountain pens did not have the type of point for multiple copy pressure writing.

The Mud Hop

Since a railroad is in business to haul freight in rail cars, the most important document of any station, was the daily yard check, usually made by a person called a "mud hop" or yard clerk, who walked down each track recording car numbers, on a form with original and two carbon copies. The original was the permanent record of cars in the yards each day, and showing if they were loaded or empty, and the copies went to division offices.

This check was made regardless of weather. Pencils were easy to write with and could be erased. In later years, we used ball point pens, but erasable pencil errors made better records than entries blacked out with ink, which in wet weather tends to be messy. John Burton, author of other stories on this web site, tells of soaking the yard check form in kerosene, to make it waterproof. When the kerosene dried out, the numbers were quite legible. Another example of ingenuity of the working man! The whole day's business revolved around the yard check. Even today, 13 years after retirement, some of my frantic dreams are of unknown cars on tracks I may have missed on my rounds.

For many years, "nerds" have been classified by the plastic shirt pocket protector loaded to the hilt with writing tools. It was no different in our day as we carried multiple sharpened pencils, each fitted with an arrowhead shaped detachable eraser, since rail pencils were not equipped with commercial erasers. This was especially true if we were afoot in the rail yards, away from the office for extended periods of time.

For multiple copy reports, most used a No. 3 hardness, but some used a No. 4, which was the hardest. Either a 3 or 4 produced writing that was not as easy to read as the No. 2 which was a soft lead used for single sheets. A drawback to a No. 2 was the "crumbles" that a soft lead would

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leave, making the original copy look messy. A No. 4 lead was sometimes a detriment, especially if the paper was thin. If the lead had not been rounded off, by rubbing the sides of the point on a piece of scratch paper, it would tear the paper. Train orders were copied on very thin paper we called "onion skin", and a rough point would play havoc in trying to make multiple copies, however train order carbon had the carbon black on both sides, causing copies to be heavy black on both sides of the paper.

A special use pencil was the "indelible", almost like ink which could not be erased, making a permanent record. However, if the writing got wet, it would make a purple smear of your work! I never used it much.

Daily Reports

The end of day reports were known as abstracts which were summaries of the business of the day. The abstracts were color coordinated and were of standard paper size of 8 1/2 x 11 inches, with the form printed in the landscape form, or sideways. I believe white was local received, and light blue interline received. Yellow was local forwarded, and salmon was interline forwarded. All reports were made with original and two carbon copies, five sheets in all counting the thick reusable carbon sheets, which left the last copy somewhat faint, however we always kept the first carbon copy for our records.

Ingenuity prevailed, however. Every office had several 9 X 12-inch metal signs sent out by the Travelers Insurance Company that were supposed to be mounted on walls advertising their service. We used the extra signs as backing plates for assuring clear carbon copies!

Freight handled between two Santa Fe served communities were considered Local and referred to as "System". Freight handled between a Santa Fe served community and a community served by another rail company was considered Interline or "Foreign". Every shipment, whether LCL (less than carload) or CL (carload) was accompanied by a numbered document known as a waybill, that listed the origin; shipping date; shippers name; destination city; consignee's name; route if interline; contents; weight; assessed rate; and total amount charged, either to be collected, or prepaid by the shipper. All of this information had to be reported in daily reports, and a balance sheet was issued to recap the totals of each day's report.

Every office can remember an instance in which the reports had to be written again after the original reports had been made and destroyed by some event. Our Lamar Colorado office was across the street from a drug store with a soda counter. Each summer afternoon, someone would get fountain delicacies and bring them back to our non-air-conditioned office. One day the boss, R. N. Mason, had the tray over his head acting silly, and tripped spilling the whole mess on our finished reports. How nice it was to have the boss taking the blame for a change, and how much nicer it would have been, to have them saved on a floppy disc for reprinting!

Another document was known as a "freight bill" that mirrored the same information shown on the waybill. Since they were 8 1/2 wide, most typewriters handled them OK. Freight bills were usually original and 3 carbon copies. The original freight bill was given to the consignee after charges were paid, as his receipt, and he needed it for any future claims. Any damages were to be

Remembrances of Delbert "D. K." Spencer

notated thereon, and the consignee signed one copy to be kept by us known as the "delivery receipt" acknowledging receipt of the goods. One copy went to the cashier for his accounting of money received, and the fourth copy was used as needed. The reusable carbon paper was as thick as the paper, so the standard set consisted of 7 sheets of paper. In later years, the forms came with single use carbons that were discarded after one use. I have seen some handwritten freight bill copies from stations without typewriters, that were very hard to decipher.

The Wonderful Typewriter

Typewriters were first developed in the 1870's. They had the ability to produce clear, easy to read documents, but early models were difficult to use, and I imagine offices were slow to adopt them to daily office use.

Later models were much easier to use, and produced clearer reports, but most of the typewriters used in early day rail offices were owned by the forward-thinking men who used them. When typewriters proved to be useful, the railroads began to provide them, usually one to each office.

As a person fascinated with the mechanical aspects of various machines, typewriter classes in high school were a draw for me. I took typing mostly as an activity that I could do with my hands rather than the mundane study periods. I had no idea the typewriter would become a major part of my life's work.

Brands were Remington, Underwood, and R.C. Smith to name a few. Most were called "standard", were manually operated, and were very plain. For future generations unknowledgeable about such ancient machines, they were basically a metal frame with no housing, with a row of key bars with a letter or symbol on the end of each bar, and a carriage with a composition roller known as a platen. Most of the carriages were too short to accept a paper in the 11-inch horizontal position and could only accept paper 8 1/2 inches wide. They did allow room for multiple copies, however. The paper was inserted into the carriage roller from behind and rolled into place. As each keybar was struck, the symbol would print on the paper and the carriage would move from left to right to the margin edge of the paper, when a bell would ring, alerting the operator to roll the paper up one space, and return the carriage to the left to begin another line. In these days of multiple fonts and styles, we had only two sizes, pica (large) and elite (small). Some machines were "all capitals" in either font.

In school most of us were taught to hit the keys firmly, but lightly, to keep from damaging the platen. In a business with multiple copies to be made, we learned to hit the keys hard, and to heck with the platen!

In later days, the machines were electrified, and the touching became light again, and the multiple keybars were eliminated in favor of a "daisy" ball which had all symbols on a round metal ball. These balls could be interchanged in various styles. We also were taught to keep our hands high as if playing a piano, not resting on the desk as computer users do!

The bigger division offices were issued electric machines, but the line stations continued with the old standard manual machines. I never had an electric typewriter in any station that I worked.

Remembrances of Delbert "D. K." Spencer

In a way, humans are their own best enemy. We were hired to do a certain job with rules and tools provided by our employers. Since we are fascinated with every new gadget, we devise short cuts to make our jobs easier, and management is quick to notice these efforts, and to implement them as job requirements. In later years, we wonder why our jobs do not exist anymore, and we do not get any credit for our "inventions".

From pencils, to ball point pens, to typewriters, to computer keyboards has been my clerical road to follow. As a retiree I enjoy my home computer and rejoice in each new twist as I learn its operation. What will the 21st century hold for our descendants! I hope they enjoy their trip as much as I have enjoyed mine!

COLORADO OR BUST

"Almost busted, b'gosh!"

**A little known bump in the progress of the AT&SF Ry. Co
1869 - 1873**

By D. K. Spencer

(Excerpts of articles by Ava Betz, and C. V. Mills, of Lamar (CO) Daily News used in the Centennial Edition of May 19-23, 1986)

Also

James Marshal in "Santa Fe, the Railroad that Built an Empire", published by Random House in 1945.

Also

Milepost information from Larry R. Green - greenlr@juno.com

The AT&SF Railway Company was incorporated in Topeka, Kansas February 11, 1859 by Colonel Cyrus K. Holliday as president, but it was ten years before a steam engine had trackage to leave Topeka. This first trip was the Wakarusa Creek Picnic Special taking picnickers on 30-minute trip seven miles from Topeka, at a speed of 14 miles per hour, according to James Marshal in "Santa Fe, the Railroad that Built an Empire".

By 1870 the line was under construction for the 130 miles to Newton. With the modern track laying and maintenance machinery of today, it seems impossible to build a railroad without it. However, in those days the work was mostly by brawn. There was little machinery. Picks, shovels, and plows to cut through the hills; horse drawn scrapers made the fills. To make a curve, rail was cut into short lengths, new holes drilled by hand, and bolted together. No rail bending machines here. Rails and ties were carried by hand, and secured by muscles using spike mauls, and wrenches for bolts and nuts. Men with pry bars aligned the track to the proper gauge.

The Santa Fe Trail and the Arkansas River was their guide when they left Newton on May 1, 1872 heading for Colorado, estimated to be 340 miles away. The supervising engineer was Albert Alonzo Robinson and the construction foreman was J. D. (Pete) Criley. There was a requirement in the Kansas land grant (2,000,000 acres spread over 300 miles) the Colorado state line had to be achieved by March 1, 1873, or the grant would be voided.

In the beginning they laid a mile a day, except on Mondays, when a half mile was the norm allowing for hangovers from Sunday "rest days". The day after payday was even worse, averaging about 500 yards of new track.

However, knowing that deep winter and frozen ground made construction impossible, it became imperative to reach the Colorado state line no later than late December, the historical time when severe blizzards usually started.

Remembrances of Delbert "D. K." Spencer

As the crew settled into a rhythm, they picked up speed and were laying three miles of track a day. They were in Hutchinson by June 14; Great Bend July 15; August 8, west of Larned; September 19, in Dodge City, and had extended the line over 300 miles in 230 days.

Quite a feat, even under perfect conditions, but weather and other delays slowed the work somewhat. On July 23, a prairie gale blew three cars off the track at Raymond. On July 30 the westbound work train was held up at Ellinwood by desperadoes. The wildness of Dodge City was a problem, a story unto itself.

By Thanksgiving Day, the grader crew had arrived at the site the railroad's surveyor said was the Kansas-Colorado state line, and a tent community was set up known as State Line City. The actual trackage arrived on December 22. At dusk that day, a surveyor drove a wooden stake into the ground, with a sign reading "Kansas" on the east end, and "Colorado" on the west end.

"Home for Christmas, boys," yelled Pete, "work train leaves in the morning." The men gathered the remaining rail and ties in a pile and retired to their tents to pack and celebrate. The work train, crammed with most of the men left the next morning, but Pete was in his tent blissfully catching up on his sleep.

Hours later he was awakened by Robinson who had a government surveyor in tow advising they were four miles short of the actual state line. With the main crew gone, and very little rail and ties on hand, as well as manpower, they were in a quandary. With the government man leading the way, the skeleton crew graded ahead to the point designated by the surveyor.

An important man with the crew was the telegrapher to keep in contact with headquarters. He called for a work train to be sent out to State Line City, to pick up Criley and Robinson, and whatever men were still there, and to bring whatever manpower they could find. The job was to return east to tear out four miles of sidings to get the necessary rail and ties, for the final trackage. By dusk of December 28, 1872 the actual Colorado line was reached, and Pete drove the last spike.

They were 5 yards into Colorado at this point, and all available rail and ties were now in place, and a blizzard was in the making. The work train engine crossed into Colorado, and to celebrate, drinks were hoisted, and buffalo steaks were fried on the fireman's coal scoop, in the manner that engine men heated meals in those days. State Line City (later Sargent, still later Trail City in 1885) was also moved to the new end-of-rail at MP 471.9, and the land grant was secure.

In April 1873 the line was built across the Arkansas River reaching Old Granada MP 481.5 on July 5, 1873. A nationwide financial panic stopped the progress, and the expected surge of settlers did not become reality, so for two years Old Granada became the western terminus of the line, complete with a three-stall roundhouse and turn table, as well as other structures, and stock yards for cattle from area ranches, or trail herds from the New Goodnight Trail.

New Granada MP 485.3 was established in 1888, when Old Granada was abandoned to avoid paying bonds that were taken out to improve the city. Old Granada became the headquarters for the famous XY ranch, and as a town, faded into obscurity.

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Rail revenue came from shipping of cattle, buffalo hides, and bones. From Dodge City, in the winter of 1872-73 Charlie Rath and Bob Wright shipped 200,000 buffalo hides worth \$1 to \$3 apiece, and 200 cases of frozen tongues and hindquarters, to New York and Chicago restaurants. There was a constant stockpile on hand of 40,000 hides worth around \$100,000. It took 100 bleached buffalo skeletons to make a ton of bones, and the collectors received \$8.00 for each ton. Other revenue came from the travels of a few trappers, gold prospectors, and land seekers, but it was fleeting at best, so in September 1875 they started moving west, reaching Pueblo in 1876.

The Santa Fe published brochures by the thousands which painted grandiose verbal pictures of the Golden West available along the Arkansas Valley route, from Missouri to Colorado and New Mexico, of which settlers would find irresistible. Land sold between \$1.50 to \$8.00 per acre, and credit was available for eleven years at 7 per cent interest, or 20 per cent off if paid in cash. The availability of land takes us into my next story:

LAMAR COLORADO AND "THE PURLOINED DEPOT OF BLACKWELL"

**LAMAR COLORADO
AND
"THE PURLOINED DEPOT OF BLACKWELL"
1886 TO 1907**

By D. K. Spencer

(Excerpts of stories by Ava Betz, and C. V. Mills, of Lamar (CO) Daily News used in the Centennial Edition of May 19-23, 1986)

Also

James Marshal in "Santa Fe, the Railroad that Built an Empire", published by Random House in 1945.

Also

Milepost locations by Larry R. Green - greenlr@juno.com

When the Santa Fe came to Colorado in 1873, generally following the course of the Arkansas River, all the land it crossed, east of Pueblo County was named Bent County with county seat in Las Animas, 70 miles west of the state line. The only other towns besides Las Animas, were State Line City (later Sargent, then Trail City), and Old Granada near the river, and Sheridan Lake about 30 miles north of Old Granada. This county was about 110 miles east to west, and 70 miles north to south, or about 7,700 square miles.

Among the ranchers in the county, was Amos R Black who had a large spread west of Old Granada on both sides of the trackage, an area well suited for cattle with rich grassland on the south, and the Arkansas River with its water, and forest of cottonwood and plum trees for winter refuge on the north.

His headquarters was three miles east of the present Lamar, at a siding called Blackwell, established in 1876, bearing the milepost number of 499.2, the distance in miles from Topeka. The railroad placed a wooden two-story depot there, along with a water tank, privies, storage sheds, and stock yard for loading and unloading of cattle. Black's ranch foreman, J. A. McDowell and his family lived on the second floor, and the bottom floor served as an office for railroad business. Blackwell was named by using "Black" and "well" for McDowell. Mrs. McDowell was the station agent, and U. S. postmistress.

The Santa Fe Land Company knew the railroad's financial existence depended on income derived from new settlers and their growing towns. Early in 1886, Mr. Black was approached to make available some of his lands adjacent to Blackwell as a town site, whereupon he would profit from the sale of the town lots.

Black was a tall, fine looking man of forceful character, and true to his calling as a cattleman of the old west. To his mind, the land was cattle country, and he had little patience with farming homesteaders; their fences; their need for towns for support and would not sell his land.

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The railroad threatened to start a town three miles west of him, and to move the depot to that spot, much to the displeasure of Mr. Black, who was not above using his men and guns to enforce his will when needed. The depot was railroad owned, but after ten years of serving both as post office and shipping point for Black, he considered it to be part of his domain.

The owner of section 31 (name unknown), three miles west of Blackwell, subsequently provided land for a town site which was named Lamar, after Lucius Quintinus Lamar, Secretary of Interior, under President Grover Cleveland.

On Saturday May 22, 1886, Black received a telegram urgently demanding his presence in Pueblo, some 125 miles west of Blackwell. He took the last train west. After dusk, a railroad work train left La Junta pulled by Engine 345 in command of Santa Fe Superintendent Ed Marshall, and construction chief R. A. Steen and arrived at Blackwell about midnight.

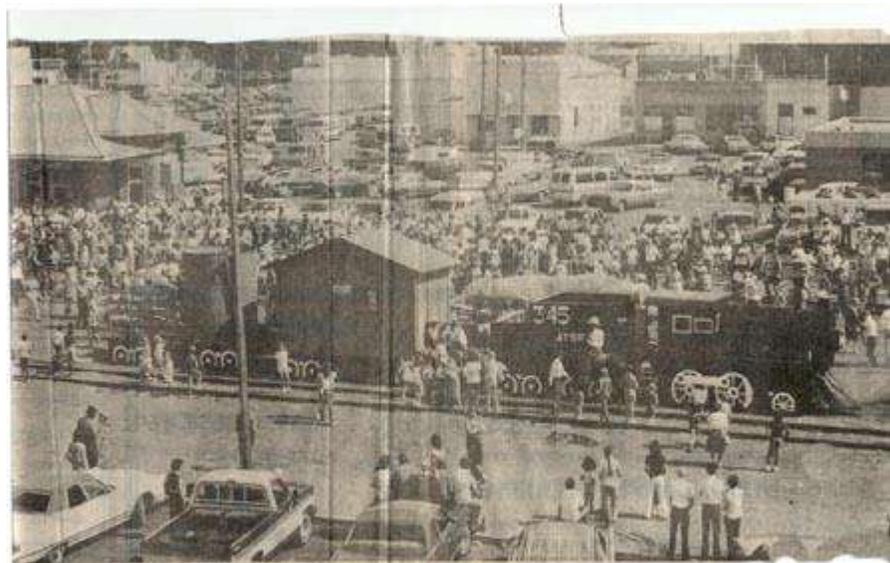
Aboard the train was every available man in the area, hired for a job paying \$10.00 each, and all the beer and whiskey he could drink at a big dance and supper in Lamar when the work was done.

Shortly after 12:01 a.m., when legal matters could not be accomplished on a Sunday, the men poured out of the cars with shovels, picks, jacks and blocks. The McDowell family and their belongings were bundled out of the home, with strenuous objections by McDowell, and the building was loaded onto a flat car, using two crane derricks, one on each end.

The crew also loaded the water tank, along with out buildings, cattle loading facilities, and whatever equipment that was needed, and the train slowly moved back into Lamar (MP 502) with men walking alongside the track steadying the building.

This was no small feat, walking in the dark through the sharp spines of yucca, and prickly pear cactus, as well as watching for those slimy critters of the dark. Also holes from the multitude of prairie dog towns were good for sprained ankles or broken legs for the unwary.

Considering that end-of-rail towns were constantly established, and later abandoned,



**PAGEANT OF THE BLACKWELL DEPOT HEIST
LAMAR COLO - MAY 1986**

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moving small depots to where they were better utilized was not unusual, as the trackage progressed westward.

At Lamar the depot and all its facilities were unloaded through the night, and a siding was constructed to allow the necessary switching of rolling stock from six more work trains sent from La Junta laden with more laborers to assist in the work. The siding was also necessary for the future unloading of the many freight cars carrying supplies and emigrants for the new town.

When Black returned home on Sunday, he found the train stopping at his familiar depot, but in an unfamiliar setting. The sign originally reading Blackwell, now read Lamar. He looked around a few minutes, then drew his six shooter and demanded to know who was responsible for moving the building. No one owned up to the deed, so after a bit of flustering he made his way back to his ranch.

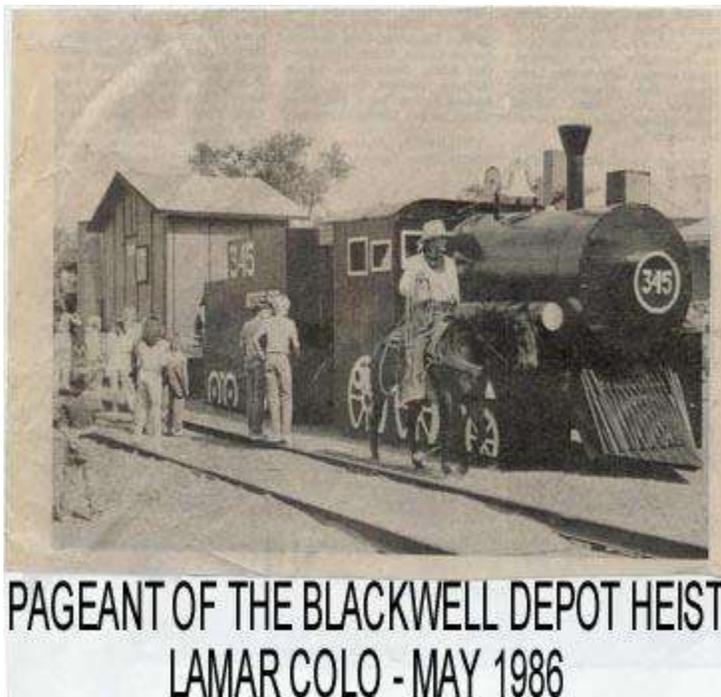
Even more disgusting to him was the makeshift shanties springing up on the prairie. The only carpenters available were those with a hand saw and a hammer, and very little expertise in construction of a building. Siding of buildings was rough boards, with many a crack between. It usually took two only days to complete a building.

Tents were commonly used as businesses, including one rooming house, operated by Mrs. Stokes. Real estate people were selling town lots, and the incessant pounding of stakes for property lines and streets. Main street was established for the business houses, but the first inhabitants were prairie dogs running to and fro'. However, it was not long until commerce began in earnest.

Land prices were ranging from \$1.50 to \$8.00 per acre, and credit was available at 7 percent interest or a 20 percent deduction allowed for cash. An old familiar way of life was giving way to progress.

In 1874, one year after crossing the Kansas-Colorado Line, 6,000 tourists rode the AT&SF Railway Company to the Rockies. Likewise, settlers looking for new land were daily travelers, and the agents of the Santa Fe Land Company were more than willing to help them find a new home.

Emigrants using the railroad would load themselves and all their belongings, including livestock, into however many box cars were needed, for the trip. The best place in the train was directly



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behind the engine, where there were less jerks and jolts from the slack running through the train in motion, as well as starting and stopping. In railroad jargon these cars were called Zulu's, meaning of which has never been determined.

In order to secure the desired train location, the wise emigrant would provide a jug of liquid refreshment for the train crew. When such a present was given, the cars was chalk marked with "Zulu-Jug". If no jug was offered, it was "Zulu-no jug", and placement in the train could be anywhere.

Monday morning, May 24, the day's first regularly scheduled train stopped in front of the Lamar station depot, so new that it was even without a foundation. A work train went back to Blackwell on Monday in full daylight to get the foundation stones which had been left behind, much to the chagrin of Black's armed men who protested loudly, but finally relented. A year later, McDowell quit the ranch and moved his family to Lamar and became one of the pioneer families of the new community.

The station served Lamar well for almost two years, then in the early morning hours of March 18, 1888 the newly formed Lamar volunteer fire brigade was brought out to answer an alarm. The building was burned to the ground, apparently by tramps attempting to keep warm. By June 1888 a new wooden depot was in place, corner of Main and Beech street. It was 107 feet long, and 24 feet wide, and the outside was the usual "board and batten" type of siding. In 1902 a ground level brick platform was added.

On January 18, 1906 the Lamar Sparks reported rumors of a handsome brick passenger depot to be built. Santa Fe Superintendent Ayer confirmed the rumor, and the depot was scheduled to be built in three months. However, on July 12, the Santa Fe reported a delay since there was not enough common labor available, but did install a 7000-foot siding, and several new tracks in the expanding rail yards.

On January 16, 1907 another interesting thing happened, that is not well known. The Lamar Sparks described it this way:

"As the culmination of a dispute which has waged since last spring between the Santa Fe Railroad and Prowers County over the payment of taxes assessed to the railroad company, County Treasurer John T. Adkins issued a distraint warrant against the railroad company yesterday to Sheriff Thomas, and last night the sheriff levied on two engines of the company at work in the local yards, placing them in charge of custodians on a spur near the depot. The move proved effective, for this morning the treasurer received a telegram from the superintendent of the road stating that all the taxes would be paid at once, under protest, if the county would release the engines. Accordingly, they were returned to the custody of the regular engine crews by the treasurer.

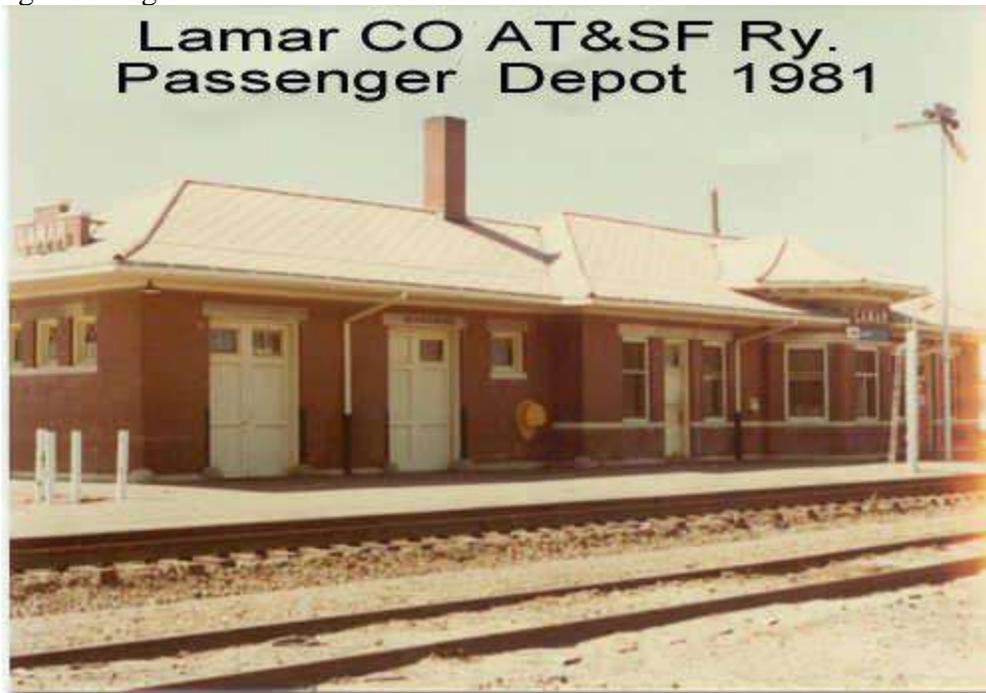
The Santa Fe objected last spring to the amount of taxes assessed against it in this county, claiming it was discriminated against heavily in comparison with the values fixed on all agricultural lands. The company made a tender of the amount it felt to be proper to pay, and this

Remembrances of Delbert "D. K." Spencer

was refused by the treasurer. Since then the taxes became delinquent and the treasurer proceeded in the manner stated. The total amount involved is about \$30,000.

The procedure followed to bring the railroad company to time with its taxes is the one suggested when the dispute first arose. It compels the company to become the plaintiff in court proceedings and throws on it the responsibility of presenting the burden of proof. The only difference is the advice of the Sparks was free, while the county pays Judge Northcutt \$1,000 for his time to do the same thing."

On August 2, Station Agent G. J. Garvin announced in the Sparks that \$10,000.00 was budgeted for the new depot, to be built on the south side of the main line, which was reported as complete on March 7, 1907, however, was not ready for business until May 9, when ticket agent Ed Hertzog began selling the first train tickets.



The old wooden depot then became the freight depot and remained so until September 1979 when it was razed. It was in this building, I began my railroad clerical career on August 9, 1944.

For that story, see [SANTA FE - LAMAR COLORADO](#)

Remembrances of Delbert "D. K." Spencer

HOW ABOUT THESE WAGES!

Remembrances of Delbert "D.K." Spencer

ADVERTISEMENT

From the La Junta Colorado Daily Tribune

March 12, 1944

THE SANTA FE RAILWAY NEEDS EMPLOYEES

in the following occupations at points in Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. Rates of pay listed are approximate and vary on different divisions.

Various Station Clerks (depending on character of work and experience)	rates between \$5.33 and \$8.16	per day
Telegrapher-Telephoner Clerks, Printer Clerks	\$.82 to .94	per hour
Apprentice Telegraphers	\$102.84	per month
Switchmen, Inexperienced men to 40 years old	\$ 8.54	per day
Brakemen, Inexperienced men to 40 years old	\$ 6.93	per day
Railroad Signalmen, railroad experience required	\$ 1.04	per hour
Asst. Signalmen-rate increased with experience	\$.81	per hour
Signal Helpers	\$.79	per hour
Bridge & Building Carpenters	\$.89 to .93	per hour
Water Service Helpers	\$.82	per hour
Bridge & Building Painters	\$.93	per hour
Bridge and Building Helpers	\$.79 1/4	per hour
Section Laborers	\$.57 to .60	per hour
Extra Gang Laborers, with outfit cars	\$.57 to .60	per hour
Chainmen (rates increased with experience)	\$ 148.96	per month
Rodmen (rates increased with experience)	\$ 183.96	per month
* Railroad Electricians, Boilermakers, Machinists, Sheetmetal Workers, Railroad Experience required	\$ 1.05	per hour
* Helpers for Electrician, Carman, Boilermaker, Blacksmith, Machinists, Sheetmetal workers	\$.82	per hour
Apprentices for Electrician, Boilermaker, Machinist, Sheetmetal workers	\$.63	per hour
Carmen	\$.98	per hour
Laborers Mechanical Department	\$.62 1/2	per hour

* Applicants in these classifications will be considered for employment in Colorado only.

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Those now employed at the highest skill in essential industry need not apply.

If employed by a vital industry within the past 60 days must present certificate of availability pursuant to War Manpower Commission Employment Stabilization Board. Applicants, other than class of laborer, must pass required examinations.

Apply to Local or Nearest Office of

RAILROAD RETIREMENT BOARD

OR

(last line unreadable)

Remembrances of Delbert "D. K." Spencer

La Junta, Colorado - Santa Fe Railway War Time Passenger Service 1941-1946

Remembrances of Delbert "D.K." Spencer

With the advent of gasoline rationing, public transportation was heavily used in the war years. Most of my early memories at La Junta were of the military moving through. Sometimes there were entire trains, commonly called troop trains, and other times just a car or two.

In 1941 when I was 15 years old, I was already 6 feet tall and pretty strong, except for my left leg which was decimated from polio at the age of two. Having been so afflicted from that early age, I had learned how to cope. Other than a slight limp, I was not visibly handicapped, as long as I had long pants on. I felt my height made me look older than 15, so I applied for a job at Fred Harvey, lying about my age, and was hired as a part time worker since I was still in school, but working full time in the summer and on weekends. My main job was to supply food to the passenger dining cars, and to supply the hotel kitchen, plus whatever else needed to be done.

I was working on Sunday morning December 7, when the radio announced the Pearl Harbor attack. Every young man was ready to join up, and many did, but my bout with polio made me 4-F, and I was a bit too young. The Army was stricter about age than Fred Harvey! I was there when the first military equipment train came through La Junta. Everyone was frustrated with the sudden increase of traffic, and especially with military requirements and their security demands. The yardmaster put this long military freight train on passenger track one, for security reasons, thereby blocking any access to the entire passenger yard. The military train had many flat cars loaded with war material.

Shortly thereafter the streamliners arrived on tracks 2, 3, and 4, and I had a baggage truck load of food to supply the diners, with a maximum of 15 minutes to service them. I could see the diners, but could not reach them, so I did what any thinking person would do. I pulled up to a flat car and started sliding the food across. The next thing I knew, a very large bore machine gun, was sticking between my eyes, with a very stern young soldier barking orders at me to "get the hell out of there!" The dining cars did NOT get serviced, and I did get reamed by my boss. I was losing at both ends, but I was still alive!

Most military trains had their own dining cars in later years, but in the beginning troop trains and individual military cars moving in regular passenger trains, usually were fed in the Fred Harvey Hotel dining room if the meal hour fell right. Many local girls were hired to serve the need. The men were fed pretty fast, but the girls still worked long hours. Since most banquets were for local dignitaries, the serving equipment was such as found in elegant dining rooms. My wife Dot worked there at times and remembers coffee pots with straight handles sticking out the side, and after hours of serving, made for aching wrists!

One night, the California Limited No. 3 had a sleeper car of WAVES (Navy women) on the rear, and the Fast Mail & Express train No. 7 had a sleeper car of soldiers. Mail trains were somewhat like freight trains with no services other than heat, air conditioning, and electricity. Someone got

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the bright idea to combine the two cars on No. 3 in order for both cars to have access to passenger train conveniences. They hooked them together for about 20 minutes, which was a bad move!

A lot of the equipment had been resurrected from the scrap yard to meet the war need and was not in the best condition. The air conditioning on some of the sleepers was not mechanical but was "ice activated" which required blocks of ice from the ice house in the back-shop area.

Occasionally a passenger would stroll uptown on some errand and find themselves stranded when they returned to the depot. A soldier from train No. 3 one night, came back to find the train departing without him. He still had the brick depot platform to run on and got to the last third of the train but was unable to find an open door. In desperation he hooked on the grab irons on the last car and was beating on the door and yelling when I lost sight of him in the darkness.

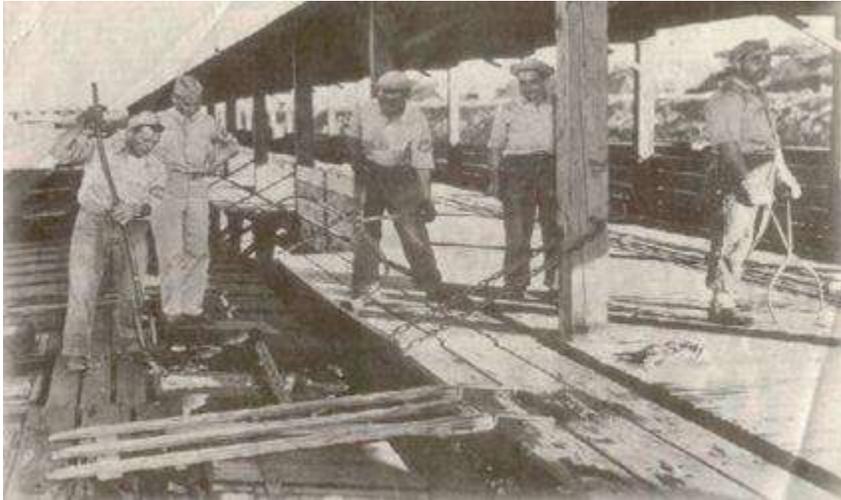
We had no two-way radios at that time, but IF the station at Timpas (17 miles away) was open, the train could have been flagged. The next station would have been Thatcher, 45 miles away, IF it was open, and his last chance would have been Trinidad 81 miles away. We later heard he made it inside OK, but he rode a few miles in cold desperation!

Several times, passengers who missed their trains, would hire a local driver to speed down the road trying to beat the train to the next open depot. Catching a train by car was not easy. The superintendent brought a mail pouch to the depot one evening with instructions to put the package on the Assistant General Managers business car on train 13 to Denver WITHOUT FAIL! I can't remember the man responsible, but as the train was leaving, he noticed the pouch laying on the counter.

Taking his car, he missed the train at Swink (4 miles), Rocky Ford (7 miles), Manzanola (16 miles), but did get to Fowler (24 miles) in time to throw the pouch on the observation platform of the business car as it went by and called Pueblo by phone telling them where it was. This was a two-lane road with a 60 MPH speed limit, and three towns. His guardian angel must have been very busy that night!

We had occasional chair cars with tightly guarded German or Italian prisoners of war, probably going to the prison camp at Trinidad, Colorado. One car was in the passenger yard for several hours, with armed military guards patrolling. Patriotism was high, and a number of local people came to stare at them. Some vented anger and did some taunting. The guards were usually with the locals, however when things would get too bad, they would exercise their authority.

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A recent historical picture in the Pueblo Colorado Chieftain showed Italian prisoners working at an ice plant in Pueblo, icing rail cars. They must have been prisoners brought up from Trinidad, or a satellite prison camp in the Pueblo Army Air base area.

We had soldiers from the La Junta Army Air Corps base

that helped on the mail crew in their spare time. One night we had a coffin with a corpse in a "rough box" (shipping container) to move from one train's baggage car to another, however we had two military trains between the two trains. Most military trains had kitchen cars, with a wide door in the middle of the car on both sides. We took the coffin alongside the troop train until we found a kitchen car and shoved it through the first train.

At the second train we also found a kitchen car and had the coffin in the door when someone said something about it being a coffin with a corpse, and these soldiers would not have any more to do with it. The military train wanted to leave but could not until the coffin was removed. We had some tense moments until the situation was finally solved with personnel that were not so superstitious.

We also had carloads of Jamaicans brought in as migrant labor, due to the lack of farm laborers. They would try to talk you out of anything they could get, especially cigarettes. Their dialect was hard to understand, but also interesting to listen to.

These are just a few of my war era memories, many of which are too long to relate, or of such nature they best be left unsaid in mixed company!

The History of the Rocky Ford, Colorado Depot

by D.K. Spencer

1876 - The Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway Company built its tracks through Rocky Ford in 1875-76 with operation commencing in March 1876 between Las Animas and Pueblo, Colorado.

A small, red, sand-painted frame depot was constructed just west of the Nichols Avenue (10th) Street crossing, which was the main road from Kit Carson, Colorado to Mexico. The state of Colorado was ratified in 1876, and New Mexico was not to be a state until 1912; therefore, the road was known as the Mexico Road.

George W. Swink moved his store from the river crossing to just east of the depot and became the first agent for the Santa Fe in 1876. His store and post office became the hub of the area with all kinds of merchandise being brought in by railroad for the big task of building a new city.

1882 - The next construction was a 5 room, 2 story, section house (re-modeled 1907) and a 12' x 16' tool shed. There is a record of a two-story dwelling built in 1887 as living quarters for Agent J. W. Baker in the 100 block of Washington Avenue (North 9th), and it is quite possible this building was used as general living quarters for both agent and section foreman with a separate bunk house for the section crew.

1887 - A new combination passenger/freight house was constructed in 1887, being a frame building size 24' x 109' on the site of the present depot. The Santa Fe Town Company had moved the main business area one block west from Nichols Avenue (10thSt.) to Robinson Avenue (Main Street), and Robinson Avenue was re-named Main Street and eventually became the center of town.

1893 - A large stock yard was built on east edge of Rocky Ford just east of the present 15th Street crossing.

1902 - A smaller stock yard was built near the point where the present 4th Street dead ends south of the main line. Both stock yards were well-used by local ranchers, and after the factory was opened in 1900, beet pulp was being fed to local livestock, causing an increase in the stock business. Sam Kitch was the main shipper in 1956. Both yards were removed during the 1960's.

1903 - A small building just east of the Main Street crossing housed a crossing watchman, the last being Mr. Bert Bius. There being no automatic crossing gates, he was required to stop traffic by hand signs as a safety factor. Side tracks usually either had carloads of beets or empty cars stored between campaigns, which effectively blocked view of the main line track.

1906 - This depot was moved westward across 9th Street and remodeled into a new freight house and offices for Agent F. G. Curran and his seven-man crew. There was a high platform around the building, fifty-foot-wide at front, and narrower in the rear, and tracking which allowed the unloading of five cars at a time. Brick sidewalks had been installed on east and north sides.

Remembrances of Delbert "D. K." Spencer

A 100-ton Fairbanks track scale was installed on the factory lead track, located between Swink and Chestnut Streets, for weighing sugar beet cars and whatever else was needed. The scale was removed about 1960.

1907 - Down Memory Lane - Daily Gazette picture from August 3, 1976 (see later in this document).

1907 - The present depot was constructed by J.B. Betts, probably using brick from Fred Cheek's Brick Kilns, commencing December 2, 1906, and occupied March 26, 1907. The construction was quite rapid, and the Venetian tile roof with Moorish gable work gave an attractive Spanish appearance to the handsome brick building. The Rocky Ford Enterprise describes the interior:

"The hard stucco walls are painted in solid but harmonious tints and the woodwork of hard pine stained in oak. The seating is the best make of station furniture. The electric lights, the steam heating, and the lavatory fittings are all of modern design and devise--the steam heating being a particularly compact and perfect piece of mechanism. The building is divided (by the intervening ticket office), into two commodious waiting rooms, and a connecting corridor, and the (water) closets are available in both men's (west) and women's (east) waiting rooms."

Also, in 1907, the Wells Fargo Company (later known as the Railway Express Company - REA) built the red brick building just west of the depot facing west on to 9th Street, replacing a rather unsightly structure whose demise was readily received by the community. The agent was James H. Butterfield.

1908 - A water treatment plant, complete with lime storage house and water storage tank, was built near the Rocky Ford Ditch crossing area; and another tank was placed east of the Main Street crossing for the purpose of filling the water tanks on locomotives' boilers.

1913 - A boxcar type of bunk house, whose location is unknown but assumed to be in the area west of the depot, was established for section crew use.

1921 - An electric powered Wig-Wag crossing signal was installed on Main Street.

1923 - Another Wig-Wag signal was installed on the 10th Street crossing. Both of these signals were placed in the middle of the street with auto traffic to pass to the side of them, and both sat upon a formidable concrete base. Many a valiant auto tried vainly to knock them over; however, they never succumbed! They were removed with great difficulty in about 1980.

1936 - Retired cashier Norman Clifford advises prior to 1936, the freight office crew on 9th Street was moved into the brick depot, resulting in paper work being done at the depot and freight unloaded, stored, and delivered from the old freight house.

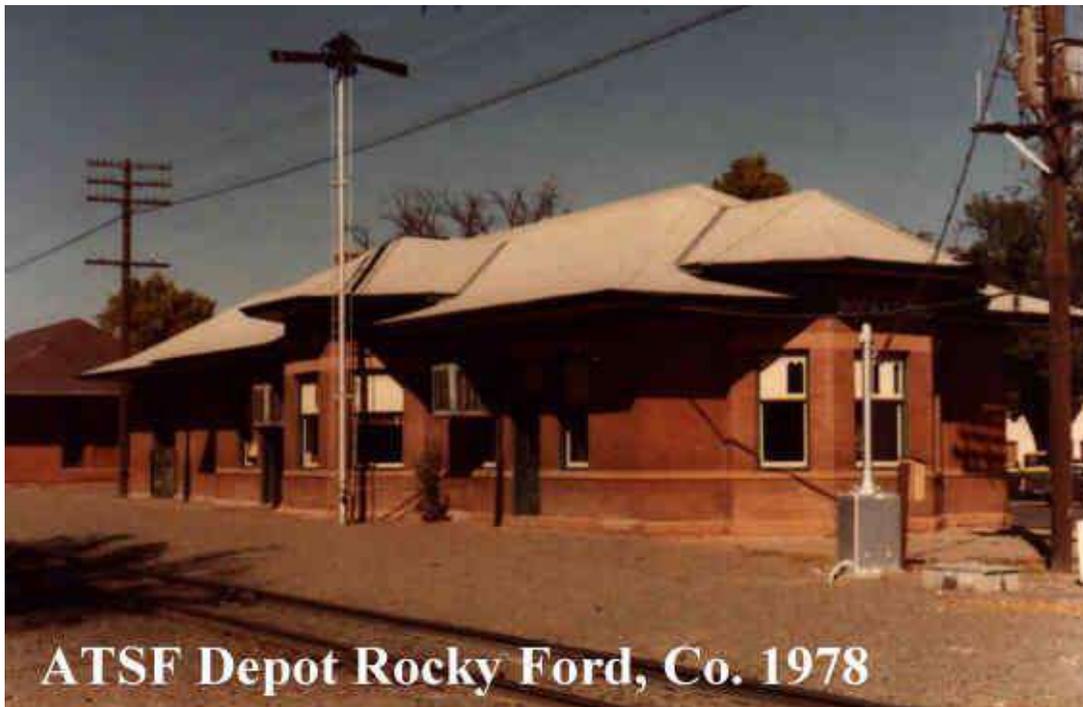
1939 - A separate implement dock was built west of the depot between the old freight house and the main line. The dock was originally 20 feet wide by 120 feet long, and in the late 1960's was shortened due to deterioration. This was built to replace the dock that was removed with the freight house in 1941.

Remembrances of Delbert "D. K." Spencer

1941 - A freight room and dock (including a scale and foreman's office) was added to the depot in 1941, and several other depot improvements were made, including removing three partitions surrounding the ticket/telegraph office, installing a modern counter, and placing new brick paving in front of the northwest door.

With all functions now being handled at the brick depot, the old freight house on 9th Street was demolished.

1961 - A new asphalt roof replaced the beautiful, but aging tiles, that were damaged in the June 1, 1961 hail storm. Other improvements included lowered suspended ceiling, fluorescent lights, and painting the inside of the depot. About this time, the furnace was converted from coal to natural gas.



1979 - The depot was closed permanently January 16, 1979.

The Santa Fe official list of agents from 1890-1979 include the following:

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1. P.O. Rudolph | 10. W.K. Robertson |
| 2. J.B. Pearce | 11. W.J. Wiley |
| 3. C.A. Nickles | 12. W.W. Johnson |
| 4. W.G. Lewis | 13. G.F. Johnston |
| 5. J.C. Foulk | 14. J.E. Austin |
| 6. J.E. Lawson | 15. F.M. Lucero |
| 7. A.G. Compton | 16. J.F. Bart |
| 8. G.A. Rose | 17. D.K. Spencer |
| 9. F.G. Curran | |

Remembrances of Delbert "D. K." Spencer

However, these were the men assigned on January 1 of each year, and many other unknown persons, which are not named, served as agents, including the afore-mentioned Swink and Baker.

Among the residents of Rocky Ford at time of dedication are those employees, active and retired, that served in the depot:

- Norman Clifford, cashier
- D.K. Spencer, agent
- Joe D. Baublits, operator
- Robert Wheeler, operator
- Victor Hudson, trick operator

Financially, REA and Santa Fe freight were ranked third in Colorado. For many years, Rocky Ford cantaloupes in crates known as "flats" were shipped nationwide, as well as any item needing expedited service. REA ceased operation on September 20, 1968 the last agent being F.M. McCown, and actual building ownership passed to the Santa Fe, for the first time.

Track maintenance was handled by a section crew, and each crew was supervised by a Section Foreman. Our foreman's house faced onto 7th Street directly north of the tracks. In 1906-1912, Albert Yates was foreman. About 1958, the section house was removed, and Foreman V.W. Leake moved to La Junta.

Agriculture and related industries have long been prominent in the rail operation. With the establishment of the Sugar Factory in 1900 and subsequent branch offices and sugar beet piles from Rocky Ford to Holly, we were the original western terminal of the "Arkansas Valley District", and traces of this roadbed are still visible, beginning on Chestnut Street near the Sugar Factory, extending north across river, and east near Ryan's Ponds. We also had sidings nearby at Fayette (west) and Krammes (east), plus a line that extended south of Newdale to Roberta and Hawley, and all were sugar beet loading/storage areas. Campaigns lasted 60 to 120 days, and 3500 to 9000 carloads of beets could be handled. One severe winter, 350 carloads were still frozen in the cars when the factory campaign ended and eventually were fed to cattle in the area, when thawed enough to unload.

Being irrigated farmland, Rocky Ford had little grain handling, but it kept busy with onions, melons, seeds, potatoes, lettuce, sugar (dry and liquid), beet pulp, molasses, and alfalfa meal, to name a few, and all the related industries, such as implements, fertilizer, containers, etc.

As you spend your time here, listen closely for the wail of the steam locomotive whistle as it glides through the Arkansas Valley, racing with the wind or the click of the telegraph key, bringing news of the outside world to a new city, blossoming on the plains! Listen for the joyful sounds of travelers departing and arriving, perhaps to attend the famous Arkansas Valley Fair!

Best of all, THANK YOU FOR COMING!

Remembrances of Delbert "D. K." Spencer

D.K. Spencer
August 19, 1987

The restored Santa Fe Depot now houses the Rocky Ford Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber of Commerce has been in the Depot since 1987. The old freight room has been restored, and the plaza has been planted and is used for community activities. The building is also used for art shows and a meeting place for various clubs and organizations. It can also be reserved for family gatherings such as weddings, receptions, reunions, etc., or any other type of functions.

Scottie Aschermann
Executive Director

May 1992

This page of the history of the Rocky Ford, Colorado depot was written by D.K. Spencer and presented at the dedication of the restored Santa Fe Depot in 1987. It is republished on the Santa Fe Railway Historical & Modeling Society with the permission of D.K. Spencer.

Remembrances of Delbert "D. K." Spencer

The History of the Rocky Ford, Colorado Depot

Daily Gazette

Tuesday August 3, 1976

Rocky Ford, Colo.

DOWN MEMORY LANE

Railroad Station -- The Hub of Yesterday



This is how Rocky Ford's Santa Fe station looked shortly after turn of the century when the station was one of the community's centers and Watermelon Day was one of the year's highlights.

19TH CENTURY TRAVEL, OR HOW IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN BY D. K. SPENCER

"Go west, young man" said Horace Greeley, and west they went, by all means of transportation, and particularly by railroad. Who can forget the wail of the steam engine's whistle and the "clickety-clack" of the rail car wheels over the rail joints, riding in comfort in the Pullman palace sleeping car, or in the seats of the coach as the iron horse carries you to the land of dreams and opportunity?

If you were in a sleeping car, a Pueblo (Colorado) Chieftain newspaper article mentioned the arrival in Pueblo, via Rocky Ford of "The Plymouth Rock" in charge of the "very courteous and gentlemanly conductor, J. E. Williams" that made its first trip in April 1876. "This car was magnificently furnished with all the modern conveniences for comfort available, and in a most tasteful and artistic manner". Your winter heating comfort would have been a wood or coal stove, and open windows in the summer for cooling.

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If you were a young family wanting to homestead or purchase property you no doubt read "flyers" from landholders of the west offering cheap land for a family to attach their roots to. An 1876 ATSF Railway Company timetable reads: "The Arkansas Valley Route from the Missouri River to Colorado and New Mexico. Up the valley of the Great Arkansas, Lovely Scenery, Sublime Views, Recreation, Health, Pure Mountain Air, Trout, Game, Antelope, Buffalo, Elk, the Foot Hills, Mountains and Canyons. The shortest route to Colorado Springs, Pikes Peak, and Manitou Springs, the Invalids Heaven. Mild Winters! Cool Summers! No Route so varied and picturesque. A delightful ride amid the magnificent scenery along the base of the ROCKY MOUNTAINS!! The only direct route to the famous San Juan mines!!"

Fare from Kansas City to Colorado Springs was \$35.00 sleeping car; \$30.00 coach, and \$20.00 emigrant, which probably was in a box car with your animals and personal effects.

The ATSF Railway Company was offering 2,500,000 acres for settlement in the west, offering "best opportunities for farming or stock raising on the favorite 38th parallel which is equally adapted for corn, wheat, fruits, and cotton. Climate is mild and the soil fertility will allow settlers to pay for their land with the products raised thereon. It is not a wilderness, but a country settling rapidly with good society, newspapers, churches, markets, and schools with free education. Land prices from \$2.00 to \$9.00 per acre, with eleven years credit at 7% interest of choice valley land along the Cottonwood and Arkansas Rivers, with road to Pueblo for marketing, and good soil, abundance of pure water and timber, and coal deposits available on the railroad for supply to settlers."

A typical train trip started at Kansas City at 11:30 a.m. on Monday, with a lunch stop at Topeka; dinner at Florence, Kansas; Tuesday breakfast at Lakin, Kansas; lunch at West Las Animas, Colorado and off the train at Rocky Ford at 4:06 PM. The daily train was No. 1, the Pueblo Mail and Express. This was 581 miles in 28 hours, and 36 minutes, with 20-minute meal stops along the way.

Upon alighting in Rocky Ford, you would be met by the local station agent who would help you with your luggage and see to what other needs you might have. The station agent in 1876 is unknown, but in 1890 he would have been P. O. Rudolph. He would see to your comfort, especially in the winter, by getting you into the warmth of the waiting room with the pot-bellied stove fed by coal and wood as you pondered your next move. This was a common winter meeting place regardless of your status in life.

After arrival at Rocky Ford, the engine would take on water and fuel, and with great clouds of steam and smoke, screeching driver wheels and the wail of the whistle, the train would disappear in the distance and your train trip was over.

You were now in the central meeting place of most prairie towns, for the arrival of the passenger trains was the social event of the day. Old friends were leaving, and new friends were arriving, bringing news of late happenings.

Later years found the railroad bringing in trainloads of people for the Arkansas Valley Fair, and the annual Watermelon Day that began with George W. Swink, the first settler of the city sharing

Remembrances of Delbert "D. K." Spencer

his bounty of watermelons by slicing them open on a railroad grain door for consumption by train passengers during the time of water and fuel replenishment.

The black and white picture shows such a crowd shortly after the depot was built in 1907. If only this old depot could talk! There was even a marriage held here. A young couple was to be married on a certain date, and they requested a minister from Las Animas, Colorado to do the honors at a local church. The night before the wedding, high water washed out the tracks and he was stalled at La Junta, 10 miles away. The couple wondered if the wedding could be held by telegraph? A lawyer in La Junta could see no problem, so the couple were wed in the Rocky Ford depot!

Over the country today, many depots are either gone or converted to other uses. Wouldn't it be nice to once again hear the wail of the steam locomotive's whistle as it glides through the night and across the prairies racing with the wind through the many towns it helped to build!

"Santa Fe Depots Everywhere, but Not a One to Spare!"

By D. K. Spencer

In the early days of railroading, a station depot was most likely a railroad box car, or perhaps a tent. Many stations were as little as five miles apart and did not have access to such modern conveniences as electricity, or water systems. Water, if available, came from a well with a hand pump.

As time went by, permanent depots were built, usually of wood, or brick, or other building materials that reflected the architectural style prevalent in that area. Smaller stations were a one building combination of freight and passenger services. A larger station might have separate depots for each service.

CUSTOMER COMFORT

Each waiting room had benches of some sort. Some benches were elaborate with divided with arm rests. If the depot was small, one Waiting Room served both men and women, and proper decorum of the men was expected at all times.

In larger stations, there might be separate waiting rooms. Outside doors were labeled which room was for Men and which for Women. The Men's Waiting Room allowed smoking and tobacco chewing along with a cuspidor for the chewers to spit in, and which some unfortunate soul had to clean periodically.

The Woman's Waiting Room was basically a Family Waiting Room, and the behavior of all who used it was expected to be exemplary. Some larger stations had a Station Master (so shown on his cap) who ruled with authority in maintaining proper depot manners.

Rest rooms was an outside privy. If you had passenger traffic, you might even have a "two-seater", one side for man and one for woman! Granada CO still used such a facility when I worked there in 1944.

HEATING

Since most depot ticket offices were fully enclosed, (except for the sash type ticket window), there was a wood/coal stove in the office, and another in the Waiting Rooms. Unless the depot was open 24 hours a day, the fires in a stove were banked (allowed to die out) at closing time and re-started the next morning. A daily chore was shaking down the clinkers and emptying the ash pan. Being an office, there was always ruined paper forms to discard, which became the startup tinder for the next day's fire. In later years railway flares were handy fire starters!

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A dirty periodic chore (usually done by a track crew) was the filling of the coal bin, usually from gondola car load of coal that was sent from station to station until the car was empty. Wood could be used when available, and in prairie areas, cow and buffalo chips (dried dung) could be used in a pinch.

Messy stove soot was a regular companion to traveling public and rail worker alike in those early depots. Ideally a stove would have a vertical pipe direct into the chimney, but in many cases the overhead pipe had to cross a room horizontally, and this allowed hot soot to build up in the pipe. This eventually caused leaking holes, and along with the expansion and contraction of pipe joints, allowed places for soot to escape.

As a result of those leaks, another summer chore was washing soot from the pipes, walls, ceilings, and floors, and everything between. The floors were tongue and groove soft wood, and easily penetrated with dirt and such. The railroad furnished creosote for use in mop water, to not only help clean and seal the floor, but to leave a fresh smell. Creosote was used in many wood applications, especially cross ties, in an effort to reduce the wear and tear. However, there was differing vocal opinions as to how nice was the "fresh" smell!

While this story is about depots, it holds true the soot problem was prevalent in all homes and business houses. Since shirts and blouses were all long sleeved, many clerks wore lower arm gauntlets, usually black cloth to match the soot. The gauntlets were held in place with elastic bands at both ends.

LIGHTING

Depot lighting in the early days, consisted of smelly kerosene lamps that were either suspended from the ceiling, or were used in brackets attached to a wall, and in many cases just set on the desk. Lamps had either metal or glass fuel tanks, and a cotton wick brought the kerosene up to the adjustable burner. If the wick stuck up too high, or needed to be trimmed, it smoked up the glass chimney, eliminating the light, requiring immediate cleaning. Just below the chimney, as part of the lamp decoration, was an area, lace like, that let oxygen in to feed the lamp's fire. The chimney then funneled the flame up, thereby keeping the flame bright. However, even at best the lamps were poor light, and I imagine most of the written work was done during the daylight, using the lamps and candles for the dark hours.

Refinements in later years used the incandescent gas lamp in which the gas flame heated a finely woven mesh sleeve, or mantle, to produce a much brighter light.

Kerosene lanterns were a slightly different breed. The same lamp principle was used, but the whole lamp was now encased in a cage with a bail handle for carrying. Usually there were two, one with a clear globe, and one with a red globe. It stands to reason, the lanterns were for use at night or on dark days. The clear globe was used to signal various train movements, or to do work outside. In later years, the battery-operated lanterns had incandescent bulbs, and a much brighter sustained light.

Remembrances of Delbert "D. K." Spencer

Red has always stood for danger or caution, so the red lantern was always a danger signal, and when swung sideways in a downswing arc, the engineer was to stop his train immediately! As a precaution, the red lamp was lit at dusk, and kept burning all night. These red lamps were still being used in the 1940s. Red flags were used in the daylight hours.

Another form of warning used by almost any rail worker, especially trainmen, was a bright red incendiary flare called a fusee. They came in various lengths, depending on the burning time allowed. For example, if the fusee was a 15-minute length, no train could proceed past the flare until it burned out. Some fusees had a sharp spike protruding from the lower weighted end allowing a train crew to drop it into a cross tie to stand upright but did not always work unless it was driven in by hand. Most fusees were spikeless and were laid on the track ballast between the rails to burn themselves out.

Another form of warning to trainmen was an explosive device known as torpedoes. They were not used extensively by the time I went to work, but every depot had a tin box under the train order table containing the red flags and the torpedoes. They had tin "arms" that bent over the rail to hold them in place, and when the locomotive wheels hit them, a very loud explosion alerted the engineer to stop.

ELECTRICITY

I know that electricity came to my community of Rocky Ford CO in 1900 but was still quite primitive. A cord hanging from the ceiling was the best you could get, and with so few electric appliances available, that was a moot point.

When I began my career in Lamar CO. in 1944, we had some electrical wall outlets, but overhead electric lights were all that was needed, in both the passenger and freight depots, since our accounting machines and freight handling devices were all non-electrical. We still used manual typewriters, adding machines, calculators, etc., and even had a shop in Topeka devoted to repair of these machines. Electrical accounting machines were widely used in other businesses, but the railroad was slow to adapt such modern conveniences, possibly due to the existing maintenance support system and the huge inventory of mechanical machines.

One electrical appliance might have been a circulating fan for cooling, but these were privately owned, not provided by the carrier. There could have been other electrical appliances that I forgotten about, but not too many.

AIR CONDITIONING

Air conditioning, so much a part of our modern-day comfort, was open doors and windows, hopefully with screens, since flies and mosquitoes were in abundance. This was due to the many animals, mainly horses, and their droppings; many home and business privies; and the general lack of sanitation throughout the town. With livestock shipping and receiving being a prime revenue source, nearly every station had a rail owned stock yard, complete with loading chutes, and that also added to the sanitary problems.

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I remember as a boy seeing a fly trap in front of a store in Friend, Kansas, almost full of flies. This was a round screen wire baited trap, with a funnel shaped entrance. They knew how to get in, but not how to get out. I have often wondered how many LESS flies there might have been without the trap!

COMMUNICATIONS

In the early days, telegraph wires for communication were about as modern as you could get. Since the telegraph used battery power (direct current) the lines were simple one-pair wires, with plain pole lines elevated for clearance of train equipment, and others passing by.

Samuel Morse invented the electro-magnetic telegraph in 1836, complete with the code needed for transmitting a series of electrical pulses over a paired line with each "dot" or "dash", or series thereof, representing letters of the alphabet. In 1837 he filed a caveat (legal notice) and applied for patent.

In 1843, Congress appropriated \$30,000 to build an experimental line from Washington D.C. to Baltimore and on May 24, 1844, the first message was sent reading "What hath God wrought". Morse died in 1872, but his invention was widely used, and the code aptly named Morse is still in use in many ways, even in this day of high-tech communication. However, the code used on the Santa Fe was not the exact original Morse code. Changes had been made to better facilitate the code to rail work.

Alexander Graham Bell then invented the telephone in 1876 which once again broadened the scope of railroad communication. However, by the time I began my career in 1944, the telegraph was still the main instrument for sending all messages of record. Train orders were received via telephone, but in an emergency, they too were sent by telegraph. The persistent clicking of the telegraph keys was a necessary part of each day's work scene.

When the railroad began using the telephone, they already had the poles for the telegraph, so they strung their own lines. To call someone, it required a cranking magneto to send a coded ringing signal to the station you wanted to reach. This would be series of longs and shorts assigned to the station. There was usually a general message line, and a separate line assigned for the use of the dispatchers only, (See TRAIN ORDERS) but the ringing sequence remained the same, as I remember it.

There were two bells, mounted side by side on each wood box for each line. Since many stations had at least two lines, and maybe more if they had a branch line, there had to be some way to distinguish which bells were ringing. Bells were not the exact same thickness throughout, so many times they could be loosened and rotated to give a slightly different ringing sound. A lot of stations used wadded paper, or similar material under the edge of the bell, to change the sound from a ring to a buzz.

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Later, when each operating division had its own telegraph office with PBX switchboards installed, the ringer was a signal to the PBX operator that you wanted to place a call to an office in that town, or some distant station. Each office or station had a wire connection on the switchboard in the form of a hole. Connector cords had a male plug on each end. One end of a cord was placed in your hole, and the other in the hole of the requested station, thereby making the connection.

Last but not least, was the lighted semaphore signal on a tall pole just outside of the station operators bay window. It was controlled manually from inside of the depot. At the top of the pole, were two arms that extended horizontally each direction, directly opposite of each other, and in that position at night the lighted reflectors showed red, visible for a good distance. A train could not proceed past the signal unless the arm had been lowered to the green position, or they were given train orders allowing them to proceed. In the daytime, the lights did not matter, since the signals were quite visible.

When the station was closed, both arms were put in the green position. Many operators have had nights when out of a sound sleep, they heard an engine's beep or whistle, and sat upright wondering if they had forgotten to put the signals in the green position. I even went back to the depot a few times in the middle of the night, to put my mind at ease!

TRAIN ORDERS

A vital part of train operation was the issuance of train orders, i.e., instructions to the train crew by the dispatcher, that governed the train's every move. When a train left a division point, each crew member had that train's orders, but situations change, and new orders must be given enroute.

The station clerk copying the train order had a phone, with the mouthpiece at the end of a scissor's extension, that rested out of the way until needed, then stretched out to be used. The hearing device was at the end of a clamp that fit over your head, positioned at your ear. The phone was always in charge of the dispatcher, and for a clerk to talk to him, a foot pedal opened the line. This way, your hands were free to write or type the train order as the dispatcher related it.

Train orders were written on thin paper known as onion skin, using a carbon paper that was carbon on both sides. There were at least six copies needed, one for each member of the five-member train crew, plus a copy for station records. Just like the afore mentioned soot, train order carbon likewise was a messy operation. A day of handling train orders meant repeated washing of hands!

After copying the train order, it needed to be given to the train crew. Stopping a train for orders at every station would seriously hamper the speedy operation of the train. Therefore, in the early days each station had bamboo hoops, with a wire holding device and a long handle. The train order was affixed to the hoop, and an entire hoop was handed up to the engineer in the engine, and one to the conductor in the caboose as they whizzed by. They in turn, threw the empty hoops

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off to be used again. Men learned early to wear heavy padding on their arms, to alleviate the pain of the hoop banging against their arms and biceps.

In later years, a device known as a train order crane was installed at each station, complete with an electric light for use at night. Cranes could hold as many as four wood holders, and had a small ladder permanently attached to the crane to reach the upper levels. A wood holder in the shape of a Y became the hoop of yesterday. Each of the shorter Y ends had a groove on the end and at the juncture of the two arms was a pressure clamp.

Using a string about 6-foot-long, with a slip knot tied on each end around the main string, allowed a "hole" in which the train order was placed, then the slip knot tightened to hold the order in place. The string was then looped around the slotted ends of the Y and held in place by the clamp. The long end was clamped onto the crane, and the trainmen then thrust their arms in the open space of the Y pulling the string loose as they whizzed by, getting their orders, and the string was discarded. The engineer and fireman got the higher levels, and the conductor on one end of the waycar (caboose), and brakemen on the other end getting the lower levels.

THE FADING DEPOTS

The Santa Fe Distance Table No. 9900-D issued November 25, 1944 listed about 2431 stations on the Santa Fe Lines, not all of which had depots. There were stations that were merely sidings with no facilities, and the business being taken care of by a nearby station with an Agent. Many small stations were known as a "one-person agency" in which the person was both Agent and janitor.

The railroad depot was usually the hub of a community, especially in the early days of growing towns, and main highways were located near the depot. When communities began passing ordinances requiring modern conveniences such as electricity, inside plumbing, sewers, and central heating, the depot had to follow suit, or close.

If the financial projections of a station were not good, and the business could be handled by a nearby station, many depots were closed, and either demolished or sold to private individuals for removal. Many became private residences or restaurants, usually retaining the depot look, complete with the station name in many cases.

I served as lodge chairman, and later treasurer, of the La Junta CO Lodge 645 of the Railway Clerks union in the late 70's, and in my periodic travels around the Colorado Division, I began to see more and more depots closing. My camera and I became close companions, and I began to record the existing depots as I found them. Most were still open, but many were closed.

With relatives in eastern Kansas and Arkansas, I found myself passing other Santa Fe towns and photos of their depots became a way of life. I also began taking photos of depots on the foreign lines serving the areas of my wanderings. Now, I watch for the distinctive lines of a depot building as I travel anywhere in the world. All depots have a certain look, large over hanging roofs, with large outside eave supports. I have seen very few depots that did not have these distinctive features.

Remembrances of Delbert "D. K." Spencer

Sometimes it takes the written word to bring out the gravity of a little-known truth. Santa Fe Circular 2510-M on Sept 4, 1981 is a Numerical List of Mailing List Numbers Assigned to Agents, and there were 359 stations shown. The next issue of the circular 2510-N issued on January 7, 1985 showed only 107 stations left, a loss of 252 stations in 39 months!

Many depots were left on the right of way, and sold for a small amount (usually the building only, not the land) to be used in the community for city halls, or meeting halls, or Chamber of Commerce offices, museums, etc. The land was leased to the parties involved, usually at a minimal price, which helped to absolve the carrier from maintenance and lawsuits. In later years, when rails were removed and depots closed, the land was also sold with the building

When the depot at Rocky Ford closed, and was given to the city, they researched the original brick depot and refurbished it to its original tiled roof splendor, complete with tall curved eave ceilings, and details even down to the original overhead pull chain flush mechanisms on the toilets.

West of the depot was a large brick building that originally housed the Railway Express Agency. With Rocky Ford being internationally famous for their cantaloupe and watermelons, huge volumes of melons were sent nationwide via Railway Express for many years. However, when passenger service was discontinued on the La Junta-Denver branch, this too faded out and the building was signed over to the Santa Fe, who then in turn gave it to the city.

The building was in bad shape, so it was removed making room for the addition of a matching L shaped building complex to the west end of the depot, making a large community building for various civic events. The old passenger portion is the Chamber of Commerce office, and the whole structure has become the cultural hub of the community.

Likewise, the depot at Lamar CO, is the Chamber office, who also still serves the two daily Amtrak trains. The depot at Manzanola CO became a Senior Citizen complex. The Boone CO depot is a city hall, and the Fowler CO depot served in that capacity for a number of years. The Avondale CO depot was moved to another location about six miles away to extend an existing restaurant. The Colorado depots of Cheraw, Ft. Lyon, and McClave were moved to La Junta and remodeled into attractive residences.

The Colorado Springs DRGW passenger depot houses Giuseppe's, a well-known Italian restaurant, and the ATSF depot has commercial offices. I believe the depot at Lakin KS is a museum. The depot at Ada OK is a gift shop. I am sure that readers of this article can point out many more depots that continue to serve other pursuits.

When I retired in 1986, I thought they had just about run out of options in the downsizing of the railroad. How foolish I was! A newspaper article dated Dec. 9, 1987, talks of laying off 18 more jobs at La Junta, and doing away with the Colorado Division as I knew it. Eleven operating divisions were now six, and the title of Division Superintendent now became Division Manager. Crew calling and freight office functions were regionalized. Locomotive remanufacturing and heavy repair work only at San Bernardino shop. Heavy freight car repair only at Topeka, Kansas.

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Locomotive repair facilities at Barstow, CA; Kansas City, KS; and Cleburne TX to Locomotive Inspection Terminals. Cleburne alone lost 170 out of their 420 employees!

La Junta's ample train yard now sits empty on occasion. Recently, there was not one engine or rail car in the entire yard! As I understand it, there are no switch crews, since each train's crew does their own switching.

There is no yardmaster, no clerks, no back shops, no diesel shops, no storehouse, no rip tracks, no General Office Building (it has been sold and made over into commercial office space), no officials, no local dispatchers, and only a telephone for the sparse crew of trainmen to register in and out.

One AMTRAK train each direction each day keeps the passenger depot open, but only for a few hours daily. Signal and Maintenance of Way personnel still have a small storage area where the freight platform was. The building that once housed the Railway Express Agency, just west of the passenger depot, is being used for some sort of storage.

As long as there are some warm bodies left that loved our work, there will be records kept of those glorious days of railroading as we knew it. The curator of the Otero County Museum in La Junta CO is Don Lowman, a retired Agent of La Junta, and he helps keep the Santa Fe memory alive.

To help keep the spirit alive, in 1997 we established a Santa Fe Employee annual pot luck picnic, usually the last Saturday in September at the La Junta City Park, starting at 12 noon. Any former employee and their family are invited to come and bring photos and memories to share.

The depots are still in existence, but we must keep our eyes open for the familiar "depot look" and realize they might be miles from the railroad sites they once served. Hopefully the station name will still be evident.

If only the most memorable happenings in each depot were ever recorded, even the Internet would be strained for capacity. So, time marches on, and like it or not, we adjust or fade away like so many wonderful depots have.

In my depot photo collection, I have 71 Santa Fe, and 24 off line depots. If you are looking for a particular depot, and can receive via e-mail, I am willing to share if I have it in my collection.

The Artrain

A Special AT&SF Event in Rocky Ford, Colorado

March 1973

By D. K. Spencer

An article in the third quarter 2000 Warbonnet about AT&SF President John S. Reed brought to mind a time when he and his wife, and the Colorado State Governor John A. Love and his wife, and the wife of the New Mexico governor Bruce King, came to our little city of 4000 people in his private business car "Santa Fe" for a special event.



Left to right: Mrs. Bruce King, New Mexico first lady; Gov. John A. Love, Colorado; Mrs. John S. Reed, AT&SF Ry first lady; Mrs. John A. Love, Colorado first lady, John S. Reed, Pres. AT&SF Ry. The local art community had been working for several months to bring this \$2 million-dollar, three-rail-car exhibit to southern Colorado, as part of its national tour. Prior to Rocky Ford, the train traveled in Arizona and New Mexico, and went on from Rocky Ford to Greeley, Craig, and Fruita Colorado, and continuing to Utah, Montana, and Wyoming before returning to Michigan.

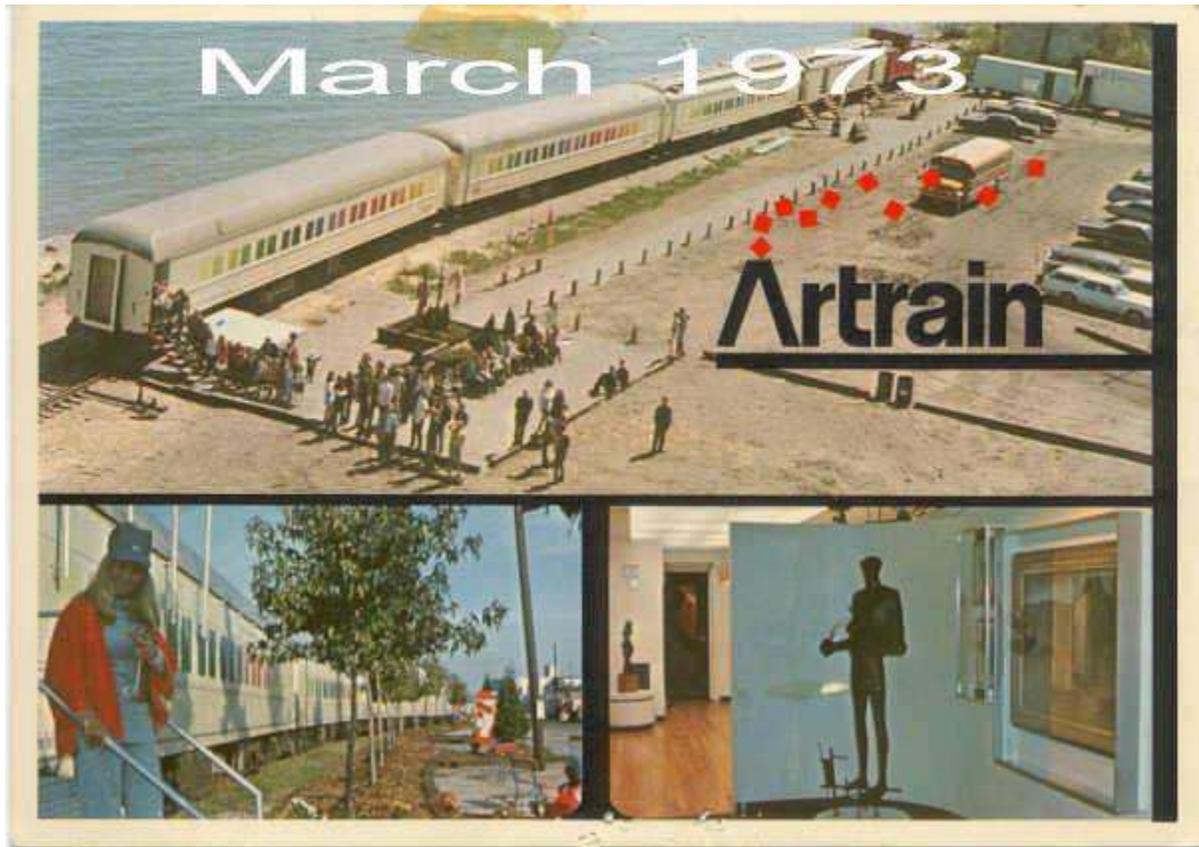
The wives of governors were designated chairpersons for each state, so Mrs. King of New Mexico officially turned the train over to the Colorado chairperson, Mrs. Love, during the day's activities. A mid-day welcoming banquet was held at the El Capitan Hotel, with local dignitaries attending and entertainment by area talent. Later, a special train picked up the business car and its notables for the trip to Denver.

The free admission train was placed by a rail side park across from the depot during its five day visit, and school children and families from several nearby counties came to visit. Local art was

Remembrances of Delbert "D. K." Spencer

hung both inside and outside of the depot, and school kids made pinatas that were hung from the suspended ceiling of the depot, and ribbons were awarded in various categories.

Four artists accompanied the train and worked in the studio car, doing jewelry making, painting, and pottery. Local artists were invited to physically join in, presenting the various art forms during each day's activity.



The traveling artists were Margaret Breilkurtz, Robert Beckmann, Craig Carver, and Susan Harmon. Technicians included Jim McCoy, Charles Davis, and Robert D'Aoust who kept the closed-circuit television (watches every inch of the train's exhibits) in operation, as well as the six tape decks, and nine slide projectors.

Exhibits ranged from an Egyptian mummy to medieval armor to various American Indian and Chinese art, as well as paintings by well-known western artists, all loaned by various museums. Effective use of mirrors added dimension to the narrowness of the rail cars.

My part in the process was keeping the depot open and clean (one-man agency) and had little to do with the actual operation of the event. All too quickly it was over, but how many other small stations can boast of being host to the president of the railroad and his private car, even if only for a day!

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My only boo-boo? When all of the officials were gathered in the depot, and I was introducing myself, I knew each of the men on sight, but was not sure which woman belonged to which man, and managed to pair them up wrong in my introductions, much to my dismay, but the ladies were gracious in responding, and the day ended well!

FOOTNOTE: Readers of my previous articles will remember an old axiom among station agents.... if they come to paint your depot, BEWARE! you are about to lose part of your staff, or the depot is scheduled for closing!

One February morning, six years before the permanent closing of the depot, the paint gang arrived to spruce up the depot for the arrival of the Artrain. It was a superfluous paint job, mainly to make the depot look good for just a few weeks, and it was the last paint job for the old depot.

She was not to regain her splendor until it was taken over by the City of Rocky Ford and restored by a committee of dedicated persons. It now houses the Chamber of Commerce, and with a recent addition is part of a large community building, heavily used in the community!

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Milk on the Santa Fe

By D. K. Spencer

When I was a Santa Fe worker in the mid to late 1940's, milk in small shipments of five and ten gallon cans shipped in baggage service by local farmers on the Colorado Division, were a daily occurrence on eastbound local passenger trains such as #4 - California Limited; #10 - Centennial (Denver-Kansas City); #14 (Denver-La Junta), and the "plug" #128, name forgotten, (La Junta to Newton).

Most were going to Newton Creamery in Newton Kansas. Not sure why farmers sent milk over 300 miles for processing, but assume Newton paid a higher price than local creameries. With the depression just ending, Newton Creamery might have been the only reliable income source for farmers just barely making ends meet.

Five-gallon cans were a snap but lifting the ten-gallon cans from a baggage wagon upwards to the baggage car doorway was a chore, especially if you were working alone and had several. That is when you learned how to boost with your knees and thighs, as well as back muscles. That was also the time when a lid not firmly tight, would douse you good with milk, and sometimes when the milk was sour, the inside pressure would blow a lid off, when jostling it around.

I believe the Newton Creamery supplied milk for Fred Harvey restaurants and dining cars, as well as for Hamlin Supply, who was the food supplier for various Santa Fe railroad gangs and mess halls around the system. I remember getting twice weekly shipments of bottled milk from Newton when I was store keeper for Fred Harvey in La Junta in 1941-43.

Remembrances of Delbert "D. K." Spencer

More Memories of D. K. Spencer Santa Fe's Parade Train

Circa 1940'S

This little train was a popular sight in many parades of the 1940's and 1950's. It was built by the men in the Topeka car shops, and it traveled the system in its own specially fitted, end door box car, accompanied by the "engineer" assigned to its care and maintenance.

I believe it was built on a small truck chassis and powered by an internal combustion engine. It sported a bell and may have had a smoke generation system. I would guess the height of the locomotive and cars as about 5-foot-tall, and each car about 8-foot-long, and about 4 foot wide.

Each type of car bore the proper colors and stenciling. I believe the consist was a box car; a refrigerator car; a stock car; a tank car; a flat car; and a caboose, plus the engine and tender.

The locomotive cab was big enough for the engineer to drive the train, from the left side, with a fireman's seat that was usually designated for the Agent of the station involved, or whoever the Agent wanted to do the job. The fireman had not only the responsibility of ringing the bell but watching out for any problems with bystanders. I had the "pleasure" of being the fireman during one parade, but on a hot day, the inside was sweltering, since there was no air conditioning. No one was allowed to ride in or on any of the cars if my memory serves me right.



**ATSF Miniature Train
Lamar Co Parade-1940's**

