

An Early Electric Power Facility in Colorado

BY CHARLES C. BRITTON

"In 1890 a man from the west came east with a definite power transmission problem. His company was operating a stamp mill in the mountains of Colorado. . . . The man from the west wanted to know whether electricity could transmit one hundred horse power a distance of three miles and replace the steam plant he was using."¹ The man was Lucien L. Nunn and the company was the San Miguel Gold Mining Company of Telluride, which thus became among the first companies² in the world to transmit alternating-current electrical power for industrial use,³ particularly at high voltages. Its research work on high voltage transmission and lightning protection was of considerable importance. Its single-phase, synchronous system was probably the most extensive ever operated. And the influence of its early educational work is perpetuated to the present time.

¹ Stephen A. Bailey, *L. L. Nunn: A Memoir* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cayuga Press, 1930), p. 23, quoting Louis B. Stillwell.

² The Telluride electric power operation became part of the San Miguel Consolidated Gold Mining Company in 1891 but was separated in February 1896 to operate as the Telluride Power Transmission Company and later as the Telluride Power Company. It became a part of the Utah Power and Light Company in November 1912. The Western Colorado Power Company was organized as a subsidiary of Utah Power and Light in March 1913 and absorbed the Telluride Power Company as well as the Telluride Electric Light Company, a municipal enterprise, which had been purchased by UP&L in November 1910. See "Power Company Histories: Utah Power & Light," *Electrical West* 129 (August 1962):293-307; and Colorado State Planning Commission, *Development of Electric Power Industry in Colorado, 1916-1936* (Denver: Colorado State Planning Commission, 1938), p. 15.

³ An earlier electric plant for lighting was in operation by 1890 from the falls of the Willamette River at Oregon City to Portland, Oregon, a distance of about thirteen miles. See Charles F. Scott, "Long Distance Transmission for Lighting and Power," *Transactions of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers* (New York: American Institute of Electrical Engineers, 1892), 9:426. This paper under the same title also appears in *Electrical World* 19 (June 18, 1892):419-21. Inez Hunt and Wanetta W. Draper, *Lightning in his Hand: The Life Story of Nikola Tesla* (Denver: Sage Books, 1964), p. 73, place "the date of organization of the Portland Company as late as 1891." This seems to be in error. Beginning August 20, 1891, 240 kilowatts of alternating-current power were transmitted at a potential of 15,000 volts from a hydroelectric plant at the Lauffen Dam across the Neckar River to the Electrotechnical Exhibition in Frankfurt, Germany, a distance of 110 miles. Both lights and motors were operated. See George Siemens, *History of the House of Siemens*, trans. A. F. Rodger and Lawrence N. Hole (Freiburg and Munich, Germany: Karl Alber, 1957), 1:123.



A tower at the Camp Bird Mine.

Gold mining was an important industry of Colorado from its inception for many years. Although some gold was found in placer deposits, most of it involved tunneling. This required power for moving the ore as well as for crushing and processing it in mills. The famous Camp Bird Mine near Ouray, for example, used one million watts of electrical power when it became available. For many years steam was the principal source of power; but by around 1885, with nearly all nearby forests cut for fuel or mine support timbers, the cost of transporting fuel into the more isolated locations was prohibitive. Coal packed in by burros cost forty to fifty dollars per ton, and even this was cheaper than using wood.⁴ This lack of an economic source of power caused the financial failure of many mines located in such regions.

Near Telluride the Gold King Mine had been attached by court order in 1888 to satisfy debts. L. L. Nunn, an attorney with mining interests in Telluride, had been retained by the mine owners as manager to work out a solution to the financial problems. The mine and an associated mill were located at the altitude of 12,000 feet; and, since this is above timberline, coal had to be packed in. An examination of the financial records led to the conclusion that the deficit in operations was due mainly to the enormous cost of power, some \$2,500 per month.⁵ A stay of proceedings was obtained and other sources of power were investigated.⁶

⁴ Bailey, *L. L. Nunn*, pp. 67-68. See also "Power Company Histories," p. 298.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ P. N. Nunn, "Pioneer Work of the Telluride Power Company," *Transactions of the International Electrical Congress at St. Louis, 1904* (Np.: 1905), 2:410. The same paper with additional illustrations is "Pioneer Work in High-

A low-cost source of power available in most mountainous regions is water. Three miles away and two thousand feet below the Gold King Mine was the South Fork of the San Miguel River. A solution to the financial difficulties of the mining operation seemed possible if this power could be harnessed and transmitted economically.

At this time and even for the next several years power transmission by cable or rope drive, compressed air, high-pressure water, and electricity all were considered viable options.⁷ As pointed out in personal recollections nearly forty years later, "back in 1890, electricity was very much in doubt."⁸ Hydroelectric power, which permitted the working of low-grade mines, had been used previously in Colorado in the vicinity of Aspen and Ouray.⁹ The alternatives all were considered for the Gold King development; but the advantages of alternating-current transmission were recognized, and this mode of transmission was chosen.¹⁰



Lucien L. Nunn



Paul N. Nunn

Lucien Nunn wrote his brother Paul N. Nunn on May 21, 1890: "I wish you would investigate the subject of transmission

Tension Electric Power Transmission," *Cassier's Magazine* 27 (January 1905):171-200.

⁷ "Projects for the Utilisation of Niagara," *Engineering* (London) 52 (October 23, 1891):46; W. Cawthorne Unwin, "Power Distribution from Central Stations," *Electrical World* 20 (August 20, 1892):124-25; *ibid.* (August 27, 1892):136-67.

⁸ Paul N. Nunn, "We Did Not Know What Watts Were," *General Electric Review* 59 (September 1956):43.

⁹ John McGhie, "Long-Distance Transmission of Power in the United States," *Cassier's Magazine* 9 (February 1896):362-63; and Colorado State Planning Commission, *Development of Electric Power Industry*, p. 3. The latter states: "The first hydroelectric plant in Colorado was erected at Aspen in 1885. . . . In 1888 . . . three 1200 light Westinghouse alternating current dynamos [were installed]."

¹⁰ It would appear that this decision was made principally by L. L. Nunn, an attorney. However, the president of the Gold King Mining Company was

of power by electricity. . . . I am not sure of putting in the plant, but if I do I want you to take charge of the construction, and not let any one know that you are not an old hand at the work. Post your self thoroughly and know who to send for as an assistant if necessary."¹¹ P. N. Nunn was to serve for several years as chief engineer of the Telluride Power Company.

There was considerable doubt expressed by the investors and their advisors on the practicality of the power proposal. The controversy over alternating versus direct current with respect to safety as well as to several technical considerations was not settled;¹² and the physical environment, among the most extreme in the United States, was as great a barrier as the technical problems. The Gold King Mine was located high in the arctic zone of the San Juan Mountains, and temperatures of forty degrees below zero, avalanches, blizzards, and severe electrical storms were common.¹³

Despite these rather formidable obstacles, the decision was made to go ahead. An electrical generator and a motor were received from the Westinghouse Company in the summer of 1890 and installed that winter. The generator, for the power plant, and the motor, for the mill, were identical single-phase alternators of 100 horsepower operated at 3,000 volts, 133 cycles per second—the largest manufactured at that time.¹⁴ The separately-excited generator was housed in a rough cabin near where the Ames Station now stands and was belt-connected to a six-foot Pelton water wheel under a 320-foot head. The switchboard was made of shellacked pine sheathing. Voltmeters and ammeters of both the solenoid and gravity-balance types were used and were mounted in black walnut cases with window-



The original power station at Ames.

glass fronts.¹⁵ Circuits were closed with jaw switches and opened with arc-light plugs.¹⁶ Breaking the circuit by pulling a plug drew a heavy arc, sometimes to the full length of the six-foot cable; and a "whiff from the attendant's hat" might be necessary to break the arc, which otherwise could involve the entire system.¹⁷

The transmission line was three miles long from the valley floor to the mine above timberline. It was constructed of West-

James Campbell of St. Louis, who also was associated with the Wagner Electric Manufacturing Company. See Mrs. M. L. Cummins, "An Industry and an Institution of Higher Learning Are Born at Ames, Colorado—1891," *Pioneers of the San Juan Country* (Denver: Big Mountain Press for Sarah Platt Decker Chapter, NSDAR, 1961), 4:130. Some magazines for the general public discussed technical matters occasionally, and possibly Nunn was acquainted with some of these. For example, see Thomas A. Edison, "The Dangers of Electric Lighting," *North American Review* 149 (November 1889):625-34, and George Westinghouse, Jr., "A Reply to Mr. Edison," *ibid.*, (December 1889):653-64. The alternating-current system promoted by Westinghouse was based on Tesla's work; see Nikola Tesla, "A New System of Alternate Current Motors and Transformers," *Transactions of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers* (1888), 5:308-27.

¹¹ Bailey, L. L. Nunn, pp. 67-68. Paul Nunn, who was listed in *Who's Who in America* from 1914-15 to 1940-41, was a high school principal from 1885 to 1888 and was educated in "pedagogy and technical subjects." He became a member of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers in 1895. *Who's Who in America* (Chicago: A. N. Marquis & Co., 1914-15 to 1940-41), s.v. Nunn, Paul N.

¹² R. H. Parsons, *The Early Days of the Power Station Industry* (Cambridge, England: Babcock and Wilcox, Ltd., 1939), pp. 136-50; see also Edison, "The Dangers of Electric Lighting," and Westinghouse, "A Reply to Mr. Edison."

¹³ P. N. Nunn, "Pioneer Work," p. 411.

¹⁴ Scott, "Long Distance Transmission," p. 426, in which Scott also points out that "the apparatus in the power plant is of a kind that has not been heretofore used."

¹⁵ Paul N. Nunn, "We Did Not Know What Watts Were," p. 45, explaining the use of the term *horsepower* in connection with a generator, said: "A watt-meter? We had none. . . . We did not know what watts were."

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 43, has a schematic sketch of how the switchboard was arranged.

¹⁷ P. N. Nunn, "Pioneer Work," p. 415.

ern Union cross-arms with insulators carrying two no. 3 bare copper wires. The cost of the wire was about \$700, being only 1 percent of the cost estimated for a direct-current line.

The motor at the mill was self-excited and brought up to synchronous speed by connecting it through a loose-fitting belt to an induction starting motor. The starting motor itself had to be started by hand, and even then the main motor also had to be turned over by hand to get it moving since otherwise the starting motor became so hot that it often burned out.

First operation of the system was either in the winter of 1890 or early the following spring.¹⁸ Once the system was started up, it operated steadily for thirty days. As many as one hundred distinct discharges of lightning per hour were counted, so coils on the armature were frequently burned out and had to be replaced with considerable care to avoid damage to the insulation. Fuse blocks were arranged in parallel and switched in as they were successively blown.¹⁹ Lightning was considered the greatest threat to the commercial success of electric power transmission, and much of the early work on this problem was performed by Alexander J. Wurts of the Westinghouse Company, who experimented with lightning arresters for several months on the Telluride system and developed a non-arcing arrester that eliminated this difficulty.²⁰

The plant, in operation continuously, required fifteen to twenty attendants. To prepare local young men for such duties, a course was organized by the company to provide training in shop work, wiring, and insulation. A technical library and test room were always open; a short course in the graphic treatment of alternating-current theory was the last part of the course.

¹⁸ Cummins, "An Industry and an Institution," p. 130, says that it antedated "the celebrated Frankfort-Lauffen experiment in 1891 by about a year." P. N. Nunn, "Pioneer Work" stated that the generator and motor were ready for trial in the fall of 1890. *The Telluride Times*, December 9, 1966, pp. 1, 5, reported that "on December 9, 1890, ac current was proven feasible through a line from the Ames hydro plant to the Gold King mine." National Manufacturers Association, *A Chronological History of Electrical Development from 600 B.C.* (New York: National Electrical Manufacturers Assoc., 1946), p. 65, stated that in 1891 "the first alternating-current power transmission installation in the United States for industrial use is made at Telluride, Colorado, by the Westinghouse Company." *Telluride Board of Trade, Resources and Mineral Wealth of San Miguel County, Colorado: Past, Present and Future* (Denver: Publishers' Press Room, 1894), p. 33, said: "It was not until the summer of 1890 that the [alternating-current] system was deemed sufficiently perfect to warrant the installation of an experimental plant, and it was not until early in the spring of 1891 that the machinery and apparatus was set up and ready to run." Scott, "Long Distance Transmission," p. 420, said that the plant "started for regular work" in June 1891.

¹⁹ Paul N. Nunn, "We Did Not Know What Watts Were," pp. 44, 46.

²⁰ P. N. Nunn, "Pioneer Work," p. 414. Although Telluride is not mentioned specifically, the following paper undoubtedly reports on some of the work there: Alexander J. Wurts, "Lightning Arresters, and the Discovery of Non-Arching Metals," *Transactions of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers* (1892), 9:102-32. This paper was published serially also in *Electrical World* 9 (March 26, 1892):218-19; (April 2, 1892):235; (April 9, 1892):245.

This school was referred to as the Telluride Institute. It was opened first at the Bear Creek Mill in 1891 and was expanded in 1904 by erecting a large building at the Olmsted Power Station, Provo, Utah, which was put into operation in 1898. The institute in Utah had classrooms, laboratories, library, and living quarters for the student-employees. It was in operation for eight years before being discontinued by the power company board of directors.²¹

The Telluride power system was rapidly extended both in length and capacity. For example, in the fall of 1892 a 600-horsepower generator was installed as was a 250-horsepower motor for a mill on Bear Creek, ten miles from the central generating station. Also, instruments were replaced with more elegant ones mounted on marble with brass trimmings, and the switchboard was reconstructed of highly polished, heavily paraffined oak. A transmission line was built into Savage Basin, fourteen miles away. For the necessary spans of up to 1,150 feet, no. 1 hard-drawn copper wire supported by one-half-inch, plow-steel cable was used. The strain insulators were a series of line insulators and pins on a longitudinal arm hinged to allow for span motion.

Since induction motors have several advantages over synchronous motors, the transmission system was converted to three-phase in 1896 so that induction motors could replace the synchronous ones. The central station was equipped with 600-kilowatt, 60-cycle, 500-volt, two-phase generators which were directly connected to the Pelton water wheels. The generators fed twelve 100-kilowatt transformers connected in pairs for two-phase to three-phase, 10,000-volt transmission. At the receiving end, transformers stepped the voltage down to 220 volts, two-phase for the induction motors. Again the system operation was entirely satisfactory and even more so due to the inherent simplicity of the induction motor.

In 1900 a new powerhouse was constructed at Ilium, which

²¹ Education was of more than passing interest to L. L. Nunn. He erected a residence hall known as the Telluride House, patterned after the Olmsted Institute's building, on the Cornell University campus in 1909 to provide a place for more advanced students; it still is in operation at Cornell. Telluride Association, Ithaca, New York, to author, June 16, 1970. Nunn founded and endowed the Telluride Association in 1911 to perpetuate his educational plans. Bailey, *L. L. Nunn*, pp. 71, 99. He also developed a sort of boarding school for educating young men. It was established on a farm near Claremont, Virginia, in 1916 and moved the next year to a ranch in Deep Springs Valley, California. Committee of the Telluride Association, *Telluride Association and Deep Springs: An Account of their Origin and Plan* (Malden, Mass.: Dunbar-Kerr Co., 1928). Since 1962 it has operated as a junior college. American Council on Education, *American Junior Colleges*, 7th ed. (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1967), pp. 109-10, describes Deep Springs College as having a two-year trimester work-study program with no tuition or fees and an enrollment of about twenty students.

ages were required. To test the feasibility of such voltages, an experimental line was constructed in 1895 from the Ames Station to the Gold King Mill. A 75-kilowatt, oil-insulated transformer with taps for potentials between 15,000 and 60,000 volts was installed at each end. A transmission line with three circuits of different characteristics was constructed. Tests were made with different voltages, styles of insulators, conductors and distances between them, and varying weather conditions. The feasibility of operating at voltages up to nearly 60,000 was demonstrated.²² There is a story that George Westinghouse personally contributed \$25,000 toward the cost of the experimental work after the Westinghouse board of directors turned down the proposed expenditure.²³

The plant which was constructed at Provo in February 1898 operated at 40,000 volts, three-phase, as a result of these experiments. The highest previous line voltage had been the 12,500 volts transmitted from Lauffen to Frankfort, Germany.²⁴

Although accounts were published contemporarily, or nearly so, reporting on various aspects of the Telluride investigations, the Colorado plant never received the publicity that the Lauffen-Frankfort demonstration did. Siemens reports that "the sensation in the engineering world was enormous. Professional men from all countries, particularly the United States, flocked to Frankfort to see the almost incredible with their own eyes."²⁵ There are several obvious reasons for this difference in reception: their nearly simultaneous occurrence, the remoteness of Telluride, and the fact that the Lauffen-Frankfort power line was designed as an exhibition and demonstration while the Telluride line was a working commercial venture.

Nevertheless, the Nunn brothers received considerable professional recognition. From 1902 to 1910 they were engaged in the design and construction of the hydroelectric power plant

²² Chas. F. Scott, "High-Voltage Power Transmission," *Transactions of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers* (1898), 15:531-76.

²³ Cummins, "An Industry and an Institution," p. 132.

²⁴ A 44,000-volt line was constructed in 1897 at Provo with the "highest voltage for some time," according to *Who's Who in America* (1916-17), p. 1828, s.v. Nunn, Paul V. The voltage at which the Lauffen-Frankfort line operated is listed as 12,000 volts by J. D. Galloway, "Hydraulic Power Development and Use," *Transactions of the International Engineering Congress, 1915: Electrical Engineering and Hydroelectric Power Developments* (San Francisco: Neal Publishing Co., 1915) p. 401; as 12,500 volts in Carl Hering, "Description of the Lauffen-Frankfort Plant for the Transmission of Power," *Electrical World* 18 (September 26, 1891):232-34; and as 15,000 volts in Siemens, *History of the House of Siemens*, p. 123.

²⁵ Siemens, *History of the House of Siemens*, p. 123.

²⁶ P. N. Nunn, "The Development of the Ontario Power Company," *Proceedings of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers* 14 (June 1905):295-521. This same paper with discussion also appeared in *Transactions of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers* (1905), 24:807-38, and in *Electrical Review*

at Niagara Falls for the Ontario Power Company, one of the largest single hydroelectric developments for a number of years.²⁶ Also, the Ames Plant was acknowledged as being from the outset "a complete success."²⁷

Charles C. Britton, who is associate professor of electrical engineering at Colorado State University, began this paper at a National Science Foundation Summer Institute on the history of technology at the Smithsonian Institution.

(New York) 47 (July 15, 1905):95-97 and *ibid.* (July 22, 1905):123-27; and as "Hydro-Electric Enterprise in Canada," *Canadian Engineer* 13 (March 1906):73-88.

²⁷ Bailey, L. L. Nunn, p. 23.

"A College Where One Ought to Be"

BY NORMAN J. BENDER

The opening of the Rocky Mountain West by the transcontinental railroads after the Civil War brought to the Protestant churches of America a sense of urgency to create in the new territories an acceptable facsimile of the traditional American way of life. Many leaders of the Presbyterian church¹ were particularly concerned about supposed threats to hallowed democratic institutions posed by a frontier society which was undisciplined and influenced by broadly defined forces of evil. One writer in a western Presbyterian newspaper effectively summarized this concern when he stated:

The West may now be regarded the great battle-field of the world. . . . The ultimate issue will be . . . far-reaching and mighty. It is to determine what shall be the governing mind of that vast land. Shall it be [barbarism], infidelity, Roman Catholicism, or evangelical religion? Never were there so many passions and powers contending in any other conflict; never was a field so large; never was the prospective crown of victory so dazzling.²

Another commentator in a Presbyterian periodical reflected that moral forces were far stronger in the East than in the West, and he then warned:

[In the West] the unsettled state of society, the small percentage of Christian people, the large influx of foreigners, many of them of the worst type, the great numbers of the young growing up without saving influences, are perilous facts to contemplate and full of menace to the country.³

Implicit in the remarks of these observers was the suggestion that young people in the West would one day represent

the "governing mind of that vast land." It behooved the Protestant churches in general, and the Presbyterian church in particular, to make sure that these impressionable young minds were indoctrinated with proper thoughts regarding God and country. One of the weapons in the Presbyterian arsenal that could achieve this goal was the denominational college, but a glimpse at the problems encountered in the creation and sustaining of one of these western colleges will afford a basis for an understanding of why attempts by the Presbyterians in this field were sometimes unsuccessful.

In 1883 when a Board of Aid for Colleges and Academies was created by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church to "have in charge the interests of higher education as connected with the Presbyterian church," it was assumed that there would be special concern shown by this board for western institutions. Indeed, one delegate at the assembly exhorted:

The whole continent west of Ohio is our field for immediate action. . . . We cannot wait. Colleges West must leap to existence full-equipped or whole generations must go without college education. Driblets and half-centuries for endowment! No! We are done with emigrant-wagons and stage-coaches.⁴

Colorado Presbyterians certainly caught the spirit of this challenge and their impulse to found a denominational college in the 1880s may have received additional impetus from the knowledge that other Protestants were getting a head start in this direction. In 1880 the University of Denver was created from origins associated with the Methodist-sponsored Colorado Seminary, chartered in 1864. Colorado College, a school which was started under the auspices of the Congregational Church in 1874 at Colorado Springs, could point with pride to an enrollment of 122 students in 1881. In the 1870s the Episcopal Church attempted academies in Golden and Denver; and, although the effort in Golden failed after a disastrous fire, it might have been presumed that the schools in Denver would be expanded to collegiate status at a not-too-distant date.⁵

It might have been suggested at the time that this proliferation of denominational schools was not really necessary to accommodate students already served in Colorado in the 1880s by a state university at Boulder, an agricultural college at Fort

¹ This study is directed only to the activities of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, now called the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

² Albert Barnes in "The Great Home Mission Field," *Rocky Mountain Presbyterian* (Denver), January 28, 1874, p. 2.

³ "The Evangelization of the Great West," *The Church at Home and Abroad* 5 (January 1889):19.

⁴ *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1883), p.s. 7:582, 583, Synod of Colorado office, Denver. Hereafter cited as *Minutes, General Assembly*.

⁵ Wilbur Fisk Stone, ed., *History of Colorado*, 4 vols. (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1918), 1:611-14, 623-36. In 1864 a Catholic academy for girls was founded in Denver under the direction of the Sisters of Loretto. *Ibid.*, pp. 678-80.

Collins, and a school of mines at Golden.⁶ However, the Presbyterians, and probably the other Protestant denominations, subscribed to the thought expressed by one Presbyterian critic who deplored that teaching from the Bible was excluded from Colorado public schools and asserted that "a religious education is of vastly more healthful power than that of a purely intellectual order."⁷ It might also have been suggested that interdenominational rivalries from several church schools in Colorado presented a needless duplication of efforts and facilities, whereas a union college of some sort could have served more economically and efficiently. But this proposal would have found no support in Presbyterian circles where it was understood that the quality of education offered in some kind of ecumenical institution would be much lower, doubtless, than that expected from Presbyterian teaching traditions.

In any event, members of the Presbytery of Denver petitioned the Synod of Colorado in 1882 to establish an institution of higher education in Colorado, and a committee of twelve was appointed to study the feasibility of several suggested sites.⁸ On October 5, 1883, this committee drafted a report to be presented later in the month at the synod meeting to be held at the small town of Del Norte in southern Colorado. This cautious

The Presbyterian Church in the ambitious little town of Del Norte in 1882.



preliminary report recognized difficulties in chartering, taxation, endowment, and altitude in making any decisions on location. Acknowledging that Greeley, Longmont, Pueblo, Salida, Poncha Springs, La Veta, and Del Norte were considering colleges and knowing that Denver Presbyterians also were very interested in obtaining this prize for their city, the committee suggested that no final action be taken at the impending Del Norte meeting but that the synod reconvene later in December to meet with a representative of the Board of Aid for additional guidance. It was suggested also that all applicants for the location of the college present their proposals in writing at the December meeting.⁹

The results of the Del Norte gathering in October were, to say the least, not in accord with the committee's wishes. George M. Darley, a quick-tempered and uncompromising individual of Scottish-Calvinist ancestry, was pastor of the Del Norte church where the synod meeting was to be held. Darley had been a carpenter by trade until his older brother, Alexander, who was a Presbyterian pastor and missionary active in proselytizing among Catholic Mexican-Americans in southern Colorado, convinced him to pursue the ministry as a career. After a program of self-study and without any formal advanced education in college or seminary, George was ordained in 1878 in Denver while serving a church in Lake City.¹⁰

In 1883 George Darley was recognized as a leader of a group of Del Norte businessmen who were booming that town as a logical site for a Presbyterian college. Consideration by the synod of the above-mentioned committee report was interrupted by a presentation of an offer, pursuant to location of a college in that community, by the mayor from "The People of the Town of Del Norte, Colorado, and the County of Rio Grande." This offer pledged over 150 acres of land in and near Del Norte,

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 604, 612-20.

⁷ Thomas E. Bliss, "Matters Presbyterian," clipping, n.d., Sheldon Jackson Scrapbooks, 40:32-33, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Reverend Sheldon Jackson was self-styled superintendent of Presbyterian missions in most of the Rocky Mountain West for approximately a decade beginning in 1869.

⁸ Minutes, Synod of Colorado, April 25-28, 1882, pp. 74-75, Presbyterian Historical Society. Presbyterian church administration at the local church level was governed by ruling elders constituted as a session; a larger presbytery consisted of representatives from several churches in the same region; and a synod was composed of delegates from several presbyteries in a still larger geographical area. The actions of these organizations were reviewed and were subject to annual approval at the meeting of the national general assembly.

⁹ *Ibid.*, October 10-12, 1883, pp. 104-11; *The Earnest Presbyterian* (Denver) 2 (November 1883):6-7, George M. Darley Scrapbooks, microfilm, Darley Family Collection, Norlin Library, Western History Collection, University of Colorado, Boulder. The original scrapbooks are at the library of Adams State College, Alamosa.

¹⁰ George Marshall Darley, "Historical Sketch of the Life and Work of George Marshall Darley," Darley Family Collection.

building material in the form of stone and lumber, plans for a college building with architect's fee, seventy scholarship pledges of \$100 each, and other lesser considerations reaching an estimated total of almost \$21,000. Along with this commitment was an extraordinary offer from the trustees of the Del Norte church to deed the church property to the new college, to be used as the college saw fit, with the understanding that a new church would be built elsewhere in the town. Evaluating the latter offer at \$7,000, the total pledge from Del Norte appeared to be close to \$28,000.¹¹

A motion simply to acknowledge receipt of this offer and to continue with study of the committee report was tabled, and a resolution was introduced at once to accept the Del Norte proposition. After spirited debate the resolution was passed, and trustees were named to conduct the affairs of the new college.¹² There is little doubt that Darley and his supporters had come to this meeting with the deliberate intent of stealing the college from the Denver brethren who were proceeding leisurely and sedately to a more carefully analyzed, but obviously Denver oriented, proposal. Darley knew that he had the votes at the Del Norte meeting to accomplish his purpose. Whereas previous meetings of the synod had been dominated by delegates from the Denver Presbytery, the Del Norte meeting showed synodical representation of only twelve delegates from Denver but twenty-seven from the Pueblo Presbytery of southern Colorado and three from Santa Fe, New Mexico.¹³ Still, even with this comfortable majority, the debate on the issue must have been very heated. A later student at the college recalled that one objector to the Del Norte site was confronted by an irate Darley who, with his fierce temper aroused, "jerked

¹¹ Minutes, Synod of Colorado, October 10-12, 1883, pp. 112-14; George S. Darley to Marshall Darley, March 24, 1923, Darley Family Collection.

¹² Minutes, Synod of Colorado, October 10-12, 1883, pp. 115-16, 121. Of the thirteen trustees seven were from the Pueblo Presbytery of southern Colorado and its ally the Santa Fe Presbytery.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

¹⁴ Hattie Buck Williams, "The Presbyterian College of the Southwest," manuscript, Dyer-Benjovsky Collection, Norlin Library, Western History Collection.

¹⁵ Full, True, and Complete Transcript of the Certificate of Incorporation of the Presbyterian College of the Southwest, December 5, 1883, Board of Aid Correspondence, RG-32-25-3, Presbyterian Historical Society.

¹⁶ "The College," clipping, n.d., Darley Scrapbooks.

¹⁷ Since the term *Mexican* was used commonly in contemporary references to Americans of Spanish or Mexican descent, it will be used in like manner throughout this study.

¹⁸ Bliss to H. Johnson, October 20, 1883, Board of Aid Correspondence, RG-32-24-10. Apparently the board was not sure of the whereabouts of Del Norte, as Bliss enclosed a map which would provide "a definite idea of the locality of the proposed 'University of the Southwest.'" *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Del Norte's population in 1880 was 729, while that of Denver was 35,629. U.S., Department of Interior, Census Office, *Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census (June 1, 1880)* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1883), p. 113.

the dissenting Reverend over a pew by the coat collar and shook his fist in his face until the Reverend decided that Del Norte was a very suitable location."¹⁴

And so the Presbyterian College of the Southwest was conceived in October 1883 to be born in September of the following year. In the intervening months the purpose of the college began to be defined. Articles of incorporation were prepared in December 1883. The object of the corporation was "to found and perpetuate an institution for the encouragement and promotion of sound learning and high moral and religious culture."¹⁵ There appeared to be a carefully thought-out plan behind the use of the term *Southwest* in the selection of the college name. It was predicted that a network of Presbyterian mission schools would spread throughout the Southwest, with the college at Del Norte representing the final educational goal for many of the students working their way up through this system of "feeders."¹⁶ Another goal was disclosed by one of the trustees writing to the Board of Aid. He boasted that the location at Del Norte would result in many native Mexican¹⁷ graduates who would not only bring the influence of the church to 25,000 Spanish-speaking people of Colorado but who also would carry similar opportunities to another 10,000,000 in New and Old Mexico and eventually to 30,000,000 more in South America.¹⁸

Despite these hopes Del Norte in the early 1880s was still a small community that served primarily as a supply point for nearby farms, ranches, and mines.¹⁹ It also provided outfitting services for settlers en route to the San Juan mining camps farther west in Colorado. Its prospects for future growth were

Del Norte's first bank, with room to grow.



based primarily on the assumption that the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad would build its line to the San Juans through Del Norte, following generally the existing wagon road to that booming area. Del Norte's newspaper, called the *San Juan Prospector*, was to extoll the virtues of the new college at every opportunity during the college's formative years.

It was anticipated at first that the college would be ready to open in April 1884, and the *Prospector* reported that workmen were rapidly erecting the preparatory department of the college, and "that branch of Del Norte's boom is going along smoothly."²⁰ Construction of a preparatory department actually meant that a small frame addition was being added to the Presbyterian Church to provide classroom space, while plans for a much more elaborate college structure nearby were being prepared.

George Darley continued to work feverishly in behalf of the college. Soon after the synod's action, he appeared at the headquarters of the Board of Aid in Chicago to give a firsthand report on the school's progress. This caused some dismay among the Denver members of the college's trustees. One member wrote to the board that he had heard indirectly that Darley was in Chicago raising funds and speaking for the college, but "I know of no authority from the Board of Trustees which warrants him in so doing. This Board . . . is not even organized to my knowledge, and still I have ceased to wonder at anything he may do."²¹ Early in 1884 Darley was back in Chicago with a request for an authorization from the Board of Aid to solicit funds in one or more large eastern cities. This request was endorsed by several of the Del Norte trustees, acting as an "executive committee," with the assurance that in the Southwest "it is also literally true that today, not tomorrow, is the very day for educated and educating Christian forces to come in and take possession."²²

When Darley returned it was proclaimed that he had found that "the college question [is] all right" and "our college scheme is in as good shape as it could be, at present."²³ However, a week later it was announced in the *Prospector* that "owing to unforeseen and unavoidable circumstances, it is deemed advisable to postpone the opening of the college at Del Norte until September."²⁴ Apparently this delay could be attributed

²⁰ *San Juan Prospector* (Del Norte), January 12, 1884, p. 3.

²¹ Bliss to Johnson, November 20, 1883, Board of Aid, Correspondence, RG-32-24-10.

²² George M. Darley, et al., to Board of Aid, February 11, 1884, *ibid.*

²³ *San Juan Prospector*, March 8, 1884, p. 3.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, March 15, 1884, p. 3.

to the fact that the temporary college building was still incomplete, the faculty was yet to be obtained, and the eastern fund-raising trip was still being held in abeyance. When some doubts began to be expressed about the erection of a real college building, the editor of the *Prospector* finally acknowledged that the college trustees "have not hurried as fast as some would like to have them." But skeptics were assured that the main building plans would be on public display soon, and "there is full assurance of the co-operation of the friends of education in the East."²⁵ A drawing of the anticipated college building did not appear in the newspaper until later in the fall, but descriptions of the edifice continued to be printed throughout the summer of 1884. It was to be a large, four-storied stone structure, measuring 200 by 75 feet, topped by a spire 160 feet high.²⁶

Drawing of the proposed main college building.



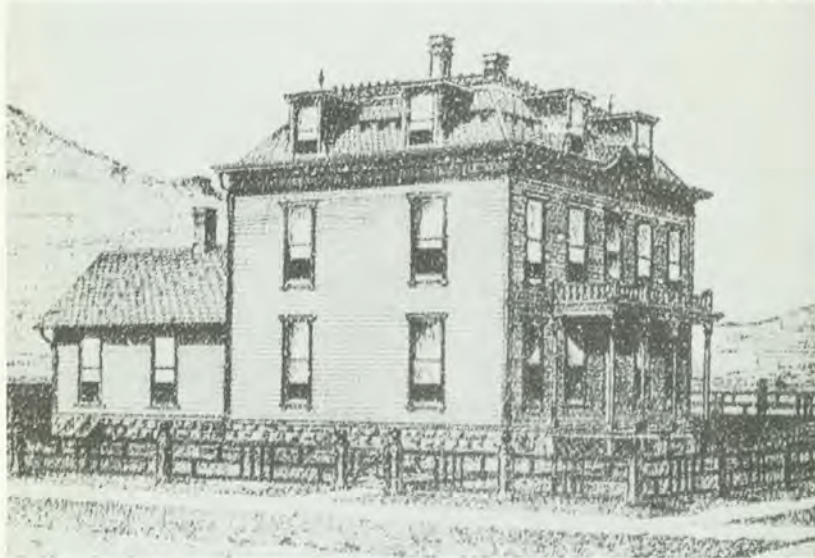
One of the "friends of education in the East" made an appearance in Del Norte in June. Dr. Herrick Johnson, secretary

²⁵ *Ibid.*, June 7, 1884, p. 3. The editor was sure that completion of the college would "mark a new era and determine a new course for the intellectual energies of the infant people swung in the cradle of the continent, the San Luis Valley." *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, August 2, 1884, p. 3, and October 4, 1884, pp. 1, 3. The October issue announced the dimensions of the building as 206 by 60 feet. *Ibid.*, October 4, 1884, p. 3.

of the Presbyterian Board of Aid for Colleges and Academies, lectured to a receptive audience on the college prospects; and a reporter stated that Johnson, speaking for the board, "promises a hearty co-operation and full sympathy."²⁷ Darley's letter of authorization to raise money in the East finally arrived in July. He was given, as a special field for appeals, the cities of New York and Brooklyn.²⁸ Darley hit the jackpot with this fund-raising venture. He wrote later: "On this trip I received \$5,000 from Mrs. R. L. Stuart. This check was not sent through the Board of Aid. The 'student home' was built with this."²⁹

The student home.



The student home was a separate building erected for boarding students. Those who might have hoped that the money would have been used to start the main college building probably were relieved when it was announced later in the summer that ground was broken at last for the Presbyterian College of the Southwest, although it was estimated that it might take two years to complete the structure. At the same time it was revealed that faculty had been engaged and everything would be ready to open the preparatory department in September.³⁰ The

president of the college was to be the Reverend Dr. Willis Lord, a man advanced in years, who had been president of the College of Wooster in Ohio. He probably used his contacts at that school to secure two recent graduates, Professor F. N. Notestein and Miss Amanda Flattery, to assist him in making up the faculty.³¹

With this Wooster triumvirate ready to teach and the Presbyterian Church and its addition ready for classrooms, the college was opened formally in a service at the church on September 10. A packed house was treated to inspired oratory by several speakers, but enthusiasm may have been dampened by an announcement from Dr. Lord that, due to his advanced age and feeble condition, he might not be able to continue as president for any great length of time.³² However, the editor of the *Prospector* exulted:

Within our knowledge there has never been a college opened in the West under such favorable prospects as has the Presbyterian College of the Southwest, located at Del Norte. Thirty students are now in attendance, and applications for admission are received almost daily. The institution is on the high road to prosperity.³³

The opening of the college unquestionably was viewed throughout southern Colorado as a great achievement. With an unfortunate confusion of religious relationships that must have dismayed some Presbyterians, a writer in the *Telluride News* lauded the future college building, estimated to cost \$125,000, as a credit to Del Norte "which will be a kind of Notre Dame for San Juan."³⁴

Judging by outward appearance, the college in 1884 was off to a good start; yet, by the end of 1888 it was torn by internal dissension and hopelessly in debt, and George Darley had left Del Norte after a serious physical collapse. First, the expected flood of students did not materialize, although the initial enrollment of thirty had been expected to grow significantly each year. To supplement a very limited potential enrollment of local students, propaganda was used to entice nonresident students. In a small newspaper edited by Darley, who was described therein as being secretary of the board of trustees, appeared the assertion that students with delicate health from the East probably would be able to continue their studies in Del Norte without intermission "and even find themselves being built up

²⁷ *Ibid.*, June 7, 1884, p. 3.

²⁸ "Letter of Authorization," July 15, 1884, Darley Scrapbooks.

²⁹ Handwritten note with clipping, "Church Erection," November 1884, *ibid.*

³⁰ *San Juan Prospector*, August 2, 1884, p. 4.

³¹ *Ibid.*, October 4, 1884, p. 3.

³² *Ibid.*, September 13, 1884, p. 3.

³³ *Ibid.*, September 27, 1884, p. 3.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, quoting the *Telluride News*.

in physical vigor while successfully developing and enriching the mind."³⁵ But the enrollments of thirty-four, thirty-two, and forty-three in the following years hardly reached the totals that were anticipated.³⁶

The financial solvency of the college was always in doubt. The Board of Aid provided a small annual subsidy, but the amount was not guaranteed. The college was allotted an appropriation of \$1,250 for its first year of operation, but at the end of the year only \$464.63 of this amount had been paid.³⁷ The board explained that its payments were, of course, contingent on its own income from donors, and this supply often depended on whim and the level of national prosperity. At the end of 1884 Darley informed the board that Dr. Lord had resigned as president and that he had taken the job himself with no additional compensation beyond his pastor's salary.³⁸ It was revealed that Lord's salary had been a heavy load on the college budget, and "we are behind with the teachers' salaries, but hope soon to hear from you."³⁹ It would appear that the operating expenses of the institution were paid to a large extent in the first year from the seventy scholarships of \$100, pledged in the original offer to the synod. These payments must have been slow in coming in as it was reported in the *Prospector* early in 1885 that there was still a considerable deficiency in the college subscriptions, and among the delinquents were noted the names of some prominent men who had signed the original pledge in 1883.⁴⁰

In succeeding years expenses were met by short-term loans. Asa Middaugh, one of the college trustees and a prominent Del Norte banker, loaned \$3,000 at 18 percent interest. When principal and interest on the note became long overdue, this gentleman wrote to the board: "I have lived on promises and hopes until I am getting tired."⁴¹ With threats of foreclosure on the college property in the air, an officer of the board hastily replied that "our Board is fully aware of the critical condition

³⁵ "The Presbyterian College of the Southwest," *The Little Presbyterian* (Del Norte), n.d. [1883], clipping, Darley Family Collection.

³⁶ Enrollment statistics are compiled from annual reports of the Board of Aid for Colleges and Academies in the published minutes of the General Assembly.

³⁷ *Minutes, General Assembly*, 1885, n.s. 8:806-07.

³⁸ There is no evidence that Darley's abrupt assumption of the presidency was challenged seriously. Perhaps the fact that he agreed to serve without additional pay quieted those who might have wished to question his qualifications for the job.

³⁹ George Darley to Harvey Ganse, December 20, 1884, Board of Aid Correspondence, RG-32-24-10. Darley confessed later: "We have made some mistakes, the greatest was in thinking we had to have a president or we would not be recognized by the Board of Aid." *Ibid.*, June 20, 1885.

⁴⁰ *San Juan Prospector*, March 28, 1885, p. 2.

⁴¹ Asa Middaugh to Ganse, January 12, 1887, Board of Aid Correspondence, RG-32-24-11.

of the finances of the college planted there, and resolved to attend to the case."⁴² It was hoped, at first, that student tuition would help repay these loans, but tuition payments were never a significant factor in the college's finances. Records of these transactions were haphazardly maintained, but one report showed that only \$46 had been received in tuition collection from the period July 1885 to May 1887.⁴³

Woven into all of the college's problems was the figure of George Darley. After assuming the presidency late in 1884, he went ahead with great plans to build the school's reputation. He traveled extensively to promote the interests of the college and to solicit funds. Late in 1884 he spoke at several churches in New York City, and his comments were reported in the *New York Observer*. In an article headed "A College Where One Ought to Be," he stated:

Geographically we are at the very front of the Christian army. The war-whoop of the savage has but just now ceased among our hills. On the west we are face to face with filthy Mormonism, on the south with hoary Romanism, and both [are] inexorable enemies. But these grand mountains and these vast valleys, with all their immense capabilities, are the Lord's. In his name and by his strength we intend to take possession, and today is the day to begin.⁴⁴

At the end of 1884 Darley wrote in his "Pastor's Register": "Preached only 35 sermons in 1884; and travelled over 25 thousand miles in interest of college."⁴⁵ Darley's absences were always reported in the *Prospector*. They were usually excused because of the top priority of college business, but on one occasion the editor felt it a duty to complain that no church services of any kind were being held in Del Norte. People coming in from the country had to return without the "desired spiritual food," and "the Scriptural grass seems to be getting rather short in Del Norte."⁴⁶

Even this deficiency might have been forgiven after the sudden revelation early in 1885 that the college soon would construct an observatory atop Mt. Lookout at the edge of town. It was estimated that the building would cost approximately \$5,000, and "we can imagine no enterprise more beneficial to

⁴² Ganse to Middaugh, January 18, 1887, *ibid.*, RG-32-37-1. Middaugh's claim was finally settled when the board was able to obtain a contribution of \$3,000 from the estate of Chicago philanthropist Cyrus McCormick.

⁴³ "Cash Account," July 1885-May 1887, *ibid.*, RG-32-24-11.

⁴⁴ "A College Where One Ought to Be," *Observer* (New York), clipping, n.d., Darley Scrapbooks.

⁴⁵ George M. Darley, *Pastor's Register*, Darley Family Collection.

⁴⁶ *San Juan Prospector*, December 6, 1884, p. 3. In this same edition appeared the announcement that Darley had returned to Del Norte, but there still were no services set for the Presbyterian church "owing to the fact that Rev. Darley is worn out and needs rest." *Ibid.*, p. 3.

the town and country than this, in proportion to the expense involved."⁴⁷ A few weeks later appeared the statement:

To say that this work will be beneficial to our town is drawing it mildly. This observatory will draw sightseers from all over the world, when it is known that the Lookout station will be the highest observatory in the world. . . .

Too much praise cannot be bestowed upon Mr. Darley, who has been principal in this work.⁴⁸

Darley was undoubtedly the prime mover in this astronomical extravaganza. While there is no indication that he had the

Sightseers at the deserted observatory.



funds in hand for this project at the time, as always, he plunged ahead into the wilderness of monetary manipulation with the faith that, somehow, God would provide. Faced with the problem of building a road to the summit of the mountain, he publicly challenged one and all in Del Norte to join him with pick and shovel to work on this project. Several men responded, and in one great burst of energy a passable road was constructed.⁴⁹ It was then arranged that Professor Notestein during the summer vacation would select the telescope, which late in 1885 was successfully mounted in place and ready for use.⁵⁰

Notestein's association with the telescope led to a bitter row in the college ranks, and this dispute might be selected as an example of one of several personality clashes involving Darley and others associated with the college. Early in 1887 Notestein's brother complained to the board that Notestein had paid for the telescope out of his own pocket and that Darley then allegedly refused to reimburse him for his expenditure. It was explained that because of Darley's numerous absences, the trustees had elected Notestein as vice-president to conduct college affairs while Darley was gone. The writer also insisted that Darley, piqued by this supposed slight on his ability, summarily caused Notestein to be discharged, although the suspected underlying purpose was to cheat him out of the money due for the telescope.⁵¹ Darley had insisted that Notestein had donated the telescope to the college, and finally in April 1886 Notestein was forced to resign and leave Del Norte after alleged threats to his personal safety from Darley.⁵²

The rather irrational attitude displayed by Darley in this exchange was indicative of the strain on his own well-being. On April 29, 1886, Mrs. Darley wrote that he was very sick with "brain fever." It was not until later in the summer that it could be announced that "Reverend George M. Darley . . . is able to be out, though quite feeble yet. His hair has turned quite gray."⁵³ An addendum to the minutes of the April meeting of the Pueblo Presbytery noted: "Owing to a financial stringency it was

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, March 14, 1885, p. 9.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, April 11, 1885, p. 3. Curiosity seekers were asked to refrain from writing their names on the observatory building, as a register would be provided in due time for that purpose. *Ibid.*, May 16, 1885, p. 2.

⁴⁹ "Athletics in Colorado," *Observer*, clipping, n.d., Darley Scrapbooks. This story concluded: "Such men deserve to reach the stars, and no one will object to this style of collegiate athletics."

⁵⁰ *San Juan Prospector*, June 6, 1885, p. 3; and George Darley to Ganse, December 14, 1885, Board of Aid Correspondence, RG-32-24-10.

⁵¹ J. Notestein to Ganse, January 19, 1887, *ibid.*, RG-32-24-11.

⁵² G. C. Franklin, "George Marshall Darley and his Calumniator," April 25, 1886, manuscript, Pamphlet File, Norlin Library, Western History Collection.

⁵³ Mrs. George M. Darley to Ganse, April 29, 1886, Board of Aid Correspondence, RG-32-24-10, and unidentified article (1886) in Darley Scrapbooks.



George M. Darley

anticipated that the College of the Southwest would not open for the 1888-1889 term. This proved to be the case.⁵⁴ In May Mrs. Darley disclosed that her husband had had a relapse and was now suffering from "nervous prostration."⁵⁵ At the synod meeting in October it proved to be impossible to act on college matters as no papers or reports from the college were presented.⁵⁶ Darley did not attend this meeting or the meeting of his presbytery convened at the same time, but his brethren at the presbytery meeting regretfully received and accepted his letter of resignation from the Del Norte church and college with the comment:

The Reverend George M. Darley, pastor at Del Norte for seven years, after most arduous work in connection with the College of the Southwest started by Synod some four years ago in that place, is compelled, broken in health, to seek a lower altitude. He has received and accepted a call to Ft. Morgan.⁵⁷

When he departed Darley must have been reconciled to the fact that the great college building of his dreams would never be built. The Board of Aid in 1885 had mentioned in its annual report that the Presbyterian College of the Southwest had two buildings, "one of them of stone and of fine proportions, approaching completion."⁵⁸ On the contrary, the building never

⁵⁴ Minutes, Pueblo Presbytery, April 16, 1888, p. 219, typescript, Faith Presbyterian Church, Colorado Springs.
⁵⁵ Mrs. Darley to Ganse, May 18, 1888, Board of Aid Correspondence, RG-32-24-11.
⁵⁶ Minutes, Synod of Colorado, October 18, 1888, pp. 415, 445.
⁵⁷ Minutes, Pueblo Presbytery, October 16, 1888, p. 226. See also clipping, November 15, 1888, Darley Scrapbooks.
⁵⁸ Minutes, General Assembly, 1885, p. 19.

got past the stage of an excavation for the foundation. Not everyone in Del Norte was satisfied that Darley had to bear alone the brunt of criticism for the collapse of the college. The far-off board, which was quick to extend "heartly co-operation and full sympathy" but very little hard cash, also had its critics. The secretary of the college's trustees voiced the opinion of many when he wrote to the board's secretary: "Had your kind interference never taken place with our college, . . . we would have today been in far better shape than we are now."⁵⁹

In any event, after Darley's departure the college struggled through a checkered existence until the turn of the century. Classes were resumed early in 1889 with one of the teachers acting as interim president.⁶⁰ In the next decade a number of presidents tried to breathe life into the school. Of these men, Horatio S. Beavis was fated to endure the most embarrassing in the college's many misfortunes. On November 30, 1893, George Darley received a telegram in Denver from Beavis stating bluntly: "College burned today. Library and maps saved. No insurance."⁶¹ The fire started from a defect in the furnace of the



combination church-classroom building, and the structure was badly damaged. The insurance had expired six days before, and

⁵⁹ E. F. Richardson to Ganse, March 1, 1888, Board of Aid Correspondence, RG-32-24-11. Richardson added to this accusation: "The people have lost confidence in us, and there are not a few here who go so far as to openly charge you with being the author of a great deal of our woe." Ibid.
⁶⁰ Robert C. Nisbet to Ganse, February 11, 1889, *ibid.*, RG-32-24-12.
⁶¹ Telegram, Beavis to George Darley, November 30, 1893, Darley Scrapbooks. Darley was serving a Denver pastorate then.

Beavis had been engaged in a personal campaign to beg enough money locally to renew the policy.⁶² The Board of Aid was understandably distressed by this disaster and wasted no time in advising Beavis: "We can feel little hope for the future of the institution in such hands. For a long time it has seemed to the board that the trustees of the college were not careful in its affairs."⁶³

Classes were resumed once again in makeshift quarters in other buildings; but, although some of the teachers and students expressed hope that it might receive renewed interest from unknown benefactors, its final expiration seemed inevitable. In 1897 it was reported that the famous telescope was dismantled and in storage, while, the observation building was badly damaged by vandals.⁶⁴ Five years later the board was notified officially that the corporation was legally to be dissolved, and to all intents and purposes the life of the college was over.⁶⁵ In the final disposition of the property in 1906, a member of the Board of Aid visited Del Norte and made brief notes of his impressions:

A strong resentment against the Board, a feeling of having been uncooed, promises unfulfilled. A charge that . . . Mr. Darley . . . was extravagant and incompetent, spending \$6,000 on a foolish ambition to have the loftiest observatory in the world. A very poor church in a very poor town. College building about to be advertised for taxes.⁶⁶

Despite all of the above difficulties, students were able to obtain an education of sorts at the college. Anticipating its opening in 1884, the *Prospector* explained that subjects taught would be the same as those taught in the oldest and best colleges in the United States. The teaching would be strictly non-sectarian; but, in recognition of the great importance of manners and morals, the whole work would be carried on "in the spirit of Him who is the Savior of men and the light of the world."⁶⁷ In 1896 the attendance reached its apogee of seventy-

⁶² "Educational" and "Church Burned" [1893], *ibid.*

⁶³ Edward C. Ray to Beavis, December 8, 1893, Board of Aid Correspondence, RG-32-37-6.

⁶⁴ Enos P. Baker to Ray, November 23, 1897, *ibid.*, RG-32-24-15. The telescope was later sent to Occidental College in Los Angeles, California. George Scibird to Ray, November 7, 1902, *ibid.*, RG-32-24-16.

⁶⁵ Scibird to Ray, July 22, 1902. A forgiving, and perhaps ashamed, college and community welcomed George Darley in 1895 to receive an honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity from the College of the Southwest. "Commencement" (1895), Darley Scrapbooks.

⁶⁶ R. M. Ringland, notes made on trip to Del Norte, 1906, Board of Aid Correspondence, RG-32-24-17.

⁶⁷ *San Juan Prospector*, January 26, 1884, p. 3. Another statement of purpose at this time showed that, since Christ and the Bible formed the center of the life of the institution, daily chapel services would be held, all regular students being required to attend. "Organization and Purpose," pamphlet (n.p., n.d.), Darley Scrapbooks.

nine, but this inflation could be attributed to addition of a new class of "special students" that included businessmen of the town, housewives, and individuals not proficient in the use of the English language.⁶⁸

The college's greatest claim to distinction in its academic offerings was a program to educate young Mexican-Americans for evangelistic missionary work among their own people. A report to the Synod of Colorado in 1891 referred to this challenge when it pointed out that there were about thirty thousand Mexicans in the synod's boundaries "whose spiritual welfare seems to have been given over to our care." The Reverend F. M. Gilchrist was commended for his work with a special class for these youths at the Del Norte college, and "here we seem to have found the key to the problem of Mexican evangelization."⁶⁹ Not everyone in the Presbyterian ranks shared this interpretation. In response to a request from the college for greater support, the secretary of the Board of Aid excused the minimal assistance of that board because the work for all "exceptional populations" was supposed to be in the domain of the Board of Home Missions. Besides, he had heard reports from Colorado that the feeling against Mexican students was much like that against colored people in the South, with the result that the presence of these students at Del Norte would "prevent the college winning or holding the interest and patronage and money of the larger part of the white population around it."⁷⁰

The president of the college objected to this charge. He found no relationship between antipathy to colored people in the South and Mexicans in Del Norte, perhaps because the college had, in his words, "some of the best Mexican young people." These youths were supposedly received into church circles on an equality with "Americans," although it was admitted that "socially there is not much, indeed very little, mingling." It was agreed that it would not be desirable to have too large a proportion of Mexicans in the school, with perhaps one-third set as a maximum. As for an adverse effect on local monetary support, this was a possibility; but, on the other hand, it was certain that their presence had brought in considerable money from those who were particularly interested in this unique challenge.⁷¹

⁶⁸ "Spring Report, 1896," Board of Aid Correspondence, RG-32-24-14.

⁶⁹ Thomas C. Kirkwood, "The Mexican Work of this Synod," *Del Norte College Record* (Del Norte), November 1891, p. 3, Board of Aid Correspondence, RG-32-24-13. The editor of this college paper decided that the school had the most favorable location in the region, "right in the very gateway between our Protestant Christianity and the Spanish-speaking millions of all America." "A Strategic Point Seized," *ibid.*, supplement, p. 1.

⁷⁰ Ray to Baker, November 22, 1895, Board of Aid Correspondence, RG-32-38-2.

⁷¹ Baker to Ray, December 7, 1895, *ibid.*, RG-32-24-14.

One of the Mexican students was Gabino Rendón. He recalled that while he was a young man teaching in New Mexico news arrived that the College of the Southwest was adding to its curriculum a seminary course for young Mexicans who might earn part of their way by preaching occasionally in small Mexican communities in southern Colorado and northern New Mexico. Rendón arrived in Del Norte in the fall of 1890 and stayed at the college for three years. He remembered the process for educating the Mexican students:

The procedure in our seminary courses was simple. We students would enter the classroom armed with paper and pencil. The Reverend F. M. Gilchrist, adjusting his glasses, would resume his slow reading of the Lane Seminary lectures at the exact point where he had left off the day before, and we painstakingly copied down his words. Thus we learned our theology.⁷²

When Rendón left the college he began his itinerant missionary work with his wife, a new yellow buggy, and a small folding organ, and "she led the singing . . . while the little organ wheezed out the tunes."⁷³ Rendón finally was ordained to the ministry in 1899, when he was obliged to appear before a presbytery for examination. He had some trepidation because he had heard that "some of them were inclined to believe that the Spanish-speaking students were of rather inferior mental ability," but he passed all tests and became a full-fledged Presbyterian minister.⁷⁴

This Mexican work at the college was usually recognized for the innovative program that it was. One critic of the school decided that it would never be likely to attain the rank of a first-class college to which parents might be inspired to send their sons and daughters, but it was doing a good work of a special kind. It was located close to the Mexican field and was training Mexican missionaries, and "this is, and it will likely remain, the supreme reason of its existence. Apart from this, and some local patronage, Del Norte College has little hold on Colorado."⁷⁵ After the college was abandoned, an inquiry was sent among the forty-four Mexicans who were known to have been students during its existence, and the response from forty showed that they had achieved the following professions or

⁷² Gabino Rendón as told to Edith Agnew, *Hand on my Shoulder* (New York: Board of National Missions, Presbyterian Church, 1963), pp. 68-71.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 82-83.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 85-87. The honor for being the first ordained student of Mexican ancestry in the Presbytery of Pueblo went to Manuel D. J. Sanchez, the first Mexican-American graduate of the College of the Southwest, who was ordained in July 1893. Clipping, n.d., Darley Scrapbooks.

⁷⁵ W. Notman, "Presbyterians and the Educational Problem in Colorado," *The Interior* 27 (July 30, 1896):996.

callings: ordained ministers, eight; evangelists, ten; teachers, nine; editors, four; ministers' wives, four; merchants, three; lawyers, one; government employee, one. When this information was presented to the Pueblo Presbytery, it was deplored that at that time (1906) the presbytery had no person of Mexican parentage under its care as a candidate for the ministry, and perhaps the College of the Southwest had deserved more from those who were always ready to give hearty endorsement but very little else.⁷⁶

In evaluating reasons for the college's demise, with the wisdom always available from hindsight, it should be suggested that George Darley permitted himself to act more from heart than head in forcing the establishment of the college at Del Norte. That small town was too isolated and too poor to provide the support which might have been secured in Denver or even Santa Fe or Albuquerque. When the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad bypassed Del Norte with its main line on the way to the San Juan mining region in Colorado, Del Norte's hopes for significant growth were shattered. Either of the cities in New Mexico might have provided a much more practical site for the "gateway" to the work of Mexican evangelization, but some of the Presbyterian brethren of southern Colorado possessed a parochial outlook that prevented their seeing the greater possibilities outside their own narrow enclave. Residents of Del Norte found it easy to become allied with the rosy expectations of the college scheme.

A final example from the *Prospector's* pages illustrated this attitude:

The great value of this institution to Del Norte and the San Luis valley cannot be overestimated. It will have the effect of causing the location at our town of a superior class of people, and, also, will cause the place to have an air of permanency not heretofore enjoyed. . . . Del Norte, within ten years, will reap immense benefits from our college, which already has the attention of the better class of people of the entire Southwest.⁷⁷

Certainly among the expected benefits to be reaped was an inflow of dollars into the town's economy from resident students and faculty and from Presbyterian purses elsewhere which would be opened to finance construction and maintenance of the great college complex. But higher benefits also were anticipated in the above article, and they should be considered

⁷⁶ M. H. MacLeod, comp., *Historical Sketch of the Presbytery of Pueblo and Proceedings of its Quarter Century Celebration* (Pueblo: Privately printed, 1906), p. 41.

⁷⁷ *San Juan Prospector*, November 1, 1884, p. 3.

along with materialistic concerns. Almost a century later one Del Norte resident could reflect that "the college brought into our midst a group of rather superior people, who gave of their best while they were here. I firmly believe that some of the cultural uplift is with us even today."⁷⁸

Turning to assessment of administrative policy, it must be admitted that the Board of Aid did not always act with circumspection in its relationship with the college. It was too far removed from the scene of action, and it allowed itself to be placed in the position of father-confessor for the college's sins without accepting the accompanying responsibility to grant absolution. In other words, the board often tried to influence college policy, but when plans went awry it was quick to "pass the buck" back to the college and the town, insisting that they find their own way out of their distress. In defense of the board it should be recognized that wisdom comes with maturity, and it had to suffer through its own growing pains at the same time that the college was in its infancy.

Extracts from later reports to the Presbyterian General Assembly showed how an eventual understanding of the church's position in college work was obtained. In 1895 it was stated:

Towns which expect to make themselves great by opening a small Presbyterian institution with a big name, and then reaping rich eastern financial fields, are visited and the futility of their project is proved to their business men.⁷⁹

In the following year it was agreed that experience had shown that it was wise to curb "the adventurous schemes of ambitious localities to plant institutions out of material considerations, rather than from a profound love for religion or learning." The Board of Aid was seen to have accepted at last the responsibility "to bar entrance into the world, of sickly enterprises doomed to an early death."⁸⁰ In 1901 the Board reviewed its work in the previous century:

The work has been largely preliminary; beginnings have been made, properties secured and improved, indebtedness wiped out or reduced, Boards of Trustees taught by experience, unwise ventures prevented and foundations tested by failure or success. Some institutions, in spite of mistakes and trials, have proved their right to exist and to be endowed by crossing safely the threshold of the Twentieth Century Door.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Mrs. Shrive B. Collins, "Presbyterian College of the Southwest" (Paper read in Del Norte, August 16, 1959), manuscript, Dyer-Benjovsky Collection.

⁷⁹ *Minutes, General Assembly, 1895*, n.s. 18:291.

⁸⁰ *Minutes, General Assembly, 1896*, n.s. 19:54.

⁸¹ *Minutes, General Assembly, 1901*, n.s. 1:323-24.

The College of the Southwest was unable to "safely cross the threshold" into the next century. Indeed, out of several attempts to establish Presbyterian colleges in the Rocky Mountain West in the late nineteenth century, only the Westminster College at Salt Lake City survives to this date. All of these institutions encountered the same obstacles in general that were met by the school in Del Norte. Beyond specific personality problems wherein the spirit of Christian brotherly love was often noticeably lacking, many of the difficulties might be attributed to an inability of the national church to adapt to the spirit of the times. It seemed to be very difficult for the Presbyterian Church to correlate modern business management with an unaccustomed role of direct participation on a broad national scale in the field of higher education.

The concept of responsibility by function in the administration of college affairs was very slow in evolving. When the new western colleges were started, their leadership fell on the shoulders of ordained ministers who, in almost all cases, had no experience or training in business procedures. The thought that a layman with experience in business matters could head effectively a denominational college seldom was recognized. Top-level decision-makers, while acknowledging new methods of proficiency in American business, were reluctant to adopt these intricacies of debits and credits, budgetary preparation, market analysis, and public relations in the church's role in higher education.

One Presbyterian minister in the West summarized the ostensible task of all Christian teachers on the Rocky Mountain frontier when he wrote:

The work of the Christian teacher is to take these young people before their character is formed and the mischief has become irreparable, and by the influence of good example, by mental discipline, and the inculcation of correct views of life, fit them to become American citizens and take a useful part in society.⁸²

Since the "Americanization" of the western populace was a matter of great concern, surely this process could have been served quite appropriately by the program of higher education for Mexican-Americans as conceived at Del Norte in the 1890s. The program might be criticized in more recent times by those who could see in it only the goal to make "good" Presbyterians out of "bad" Roman Catholics. However, while admitting the

⁸² Robert G. McNiece, "Thanksgiving Sermon—God's Wondrous Works in Utah," clipping, November 25, 1880, Emil Nyman Scrapbook, p. 47, Westminster College Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

existence of such motivation, it still seems unfortunate that this effort in educating a racial minority group was not expanded and continued, for many students would have received exposure to numerous aspects of college training besides the theological limitations of the Lane Seminary lectures.

Therefore, although the College of the Southwest perhaps should be dismissed as a failure, a final rejection should be tempered with other considerations. When Colin Goodykoontz, in his excellent study on Protestant home missionary work in the West, wrote about evaluation of the missionaries who were participating in this work, he included questions to be considered: "How [did] they affect thought, belief, and conduct? Who found through them a meaning in life and a hope in death? Who was inspired by them to higher ideals? To what extent did they raise the moral tone and improve the social life of their communities?"⁸³ The inference is that some pioneers did find answers to these questions in their church relationship, and certainly some residents of southern Colorado in the late nineteenth century found their daily lives inspired by the hope that the College of the Southwest, as a proper Christian college, would bring that improvement of social life to brighten an otherwise drab, harsh, and isolated existence.

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⁸³ Colin B. Goodykoontz, *Home Missions on the American Frontier* (Caldwell, Id.: Caxton Printers Ltd., 1939), p. 407.

Colorado Mail Service, 1859-85

BY JOEL BARKER

Assistant Postmaster General Thomas J. Brady in his report to Congress in 1880 noted:

A peculiarity of the mail service is its more intimate relation to the daily life of the individual citizen than is sustained by the operations of any other branch of government. This is particularly true of the sparsely settled and newly developed regions of the West.¹

The Post Office Department apparently made a determined effort to provide adequate service in remote areas, although in so doing it lost large sums of money almost every year. The number of post offices in Colorado increased thirteenfold from 39 in 1862 to 506 in 1885 while the total annual mail transportation mileage increased more than one hundredfold from 22,880 miles to 3,726,315 miles.²

Although post offices in Colorado became fairly numerous by the end of this period, few were the postmasters who received a competence for their efforts. In 1877 the highest paid Colorado postmasters were those at Central City, Denver, and Georgetown, who received \$2,700 annually. From this high the pay for a full year's service ranged downward to the princely sum of \$4.59 paid one W. Z. Cozzens of Fraser, who doubtless considered himself fortunate if he learned that his colleague at the town Osage Avenue received ten cents for 274 days' service. Six postmasters received no remuneration for their labor.³

It would seem safe to assume that most postmasters were engaged in other enterprises. Establishing the post office in a

¹ *Annual Report of the Postmaster-General of the United States for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1880* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880), pp. 75-76.

² U.S., Congress, House, *Message of the President of the United States to the Two Houses of Congress at the Commencement of the Third Session of the Thirty-Seventh Congress (Report of the Postmaster General)*, Ex. Doc. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1862), pp. 155, 170; *Annual Report of the Postmaster-General of the United States for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1885* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1885), pp. 230, 261.

³ *Register of Officers and Agents, Civil, Military, and Naval, in the Service of the United States on the Thirtieth of September, 1877* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1878), pp. 545-46.



Rifle's post office, well-hidden amidst merchandise.

grocery, dry goods, or hardware store seemed especially common. Even Denver's post office for the first few years was in a building also occupied by Messrs. Woolworth and Moffat, news dealers. In 1865 William N. Byers, the postmaster, was able to report he had rented a separate, though still inadequate, building.⁴ Although Byers received much more than most postmasters, he frequently complained about his inadequate salary and in 1866 resigned to devote full time to private business.⁵ Byers was better known as first editor of the *Rocky Mountain News* during the period when he was postmaster.

Town pride in post office buildings was frequently reflected in local newspapers. A Georgetown editor noted in 1870 that "our people have a holy pride in their new post office" and

⁴ Byers to Alex W. Randall, April 7, 1865, Letterbook 1, pp. 132-35, Byers Papers, Norlin Library, Western History Collection, University of Colorado, Boulder.

⁵ Byers to William Dennison, November 15, 1865, Letterbook 1, p. 272, Byers Papers.

called it an honor to the town.⁶ The *Caribou Post* declared that the new post office "presents a fine front on Idaho street," being one of the best furnished in the territory.⁷ Newspapermen were outspoken in calling attention also to the need for new post offices, such as when the journalist in Irwin complained that the post office was "hidden away in such a manner as to appear as an out-house for the barber shop."⁸

There was a certain casualness concerning delivery, the mail not being considered inviolate by many people, including postmasters. Byers reported a complaint against the postmaster at Living Springs. When the mail arrived a bystander asked that worthy if there were any eastern newspapers in the "way pouch." Examination proved there were none, so it was suggested that he look in the Virginia City pouch. When the two were unable to get that pouch out of the boot, the postmaster proposed that they wait until the next stage, at which time the man could get whatever paper he wanted. Byers noted that there had been several complaints of lost papers.⁹

There were various other complaints of an unprofessional attitude on the part of postmasters. The *White Pine Cone* as late as 1883 reported the case of one John K. Terrell who neglected to meet the stage until he had finished his meal, by which time the stage had driven on, taking the mail with it.¹⁰ The postmaster at Keystone Ranch, Douglas County, flatly refused to open the mail sack to take out his mail, with the result that the carrier gave up delivering mail to that place.¹¹

The arrival of mail in a mining camp was a major event for the recipients, especially before mail service became frequent. The Golden *Western Mountaineer* referred to it as a sign for rejoicing.¹² A Central City editor reported that a large triangle had been placed in the post office in lieu of a bell, which undoubtedly was the common means of notifying the townspeople of the arrival of the mail.¹³

In November 1881 the editor of the *Aspen Rocky Mountain Sun* ran an article from the *Mining Index* indicating the importance of mail service to the West. The residents of the mining country, "after most patient endurance of persistent and un-

⁶ *Colorado Miner* (Georgetown), March 10, 1870, p. 4.

⁷ *Caribou Post*, October 7, 1871, p. 2.

⁸ *Elk Mountain Pilot* (Irwin), August 12, 1880, p. 4.

⁹ Byers to First Assistant Postmaster General, May 23, 1866, Letterbook 2, pp. 58-59, Byers Papers.

¹⁰ *White Pine Cone*, June 15, 1883, p. 1.

¹¹ Byers to Assistant Postmaster General, May 6, 1865, Letterbook 1, p. 152, Byers Papers.

¹² *Western Mountaineer* (Golden), August 16, 1860, p. 2.

¹³ *Tri-Weekly Miners' Register* (Central City), February 11, 1863, p. 3.

justifiable neglect in regard to mail facilities," were protesting. Residents came from areas which had good service. They considered mail and schools the "two strong beacon lights of civilization." The failure of the government to provide good service affected "the comfort of the people, . . . the rapid development of the country, and the mining interests."¹⁴ The *Ouray Times* echoed this opinion when it called mail facilities "the great requisite of any country."¹⁵ Mail service was considered a convenience, a civilizing force, and an economic factor.

In this photograph Creede's population came dressed for mail delivery.



Economics often were stressed in demands for mail service. When the residents of Denver and Arapahoe counties met in July 1860 to discuss their mail arrangements, they noted that, except for the express company's service, there had been no mail service for two years. This was declared a "serious inconvenience, and an onerous and grievous taxation" since there were almost 75,000 people living in the district and large amounts of capital being invested. Mail facilities were a necessity and would make steady growth certain.¹⁶

¹⁴ *Rocky Mountain Sun* (Aspen), November 12, 1881, p. 4.

¹⁵ *Ouray Times*, October 12, 1878, p. 1.

¹⁶ *Rocky Mountain Herald* (Denver), July 28, 1860, p. 1.

The economic advantage of government service over express service was noted after the first eastbound mail left Denver. It included seven thousand letters at \$.03 each for a total postage of \$210. The express company would have charged \$.25 each, or \$1,750. The saving of \$1,540 was important for a small town like Denver.¹⁷ Still, the journal continued: "We care not how it comes, so we have a mail, on the same terms guaranteed to other free white citizens."¹⁸

The *Boulder County News* expressed the same view in favoring a mail route from Evans to Boulder, which would "add greatly to the business of our valley" by providing more direct connections.¹⁹ One editor, referring to the detrimental effects of irregular mail, called it an "embargo" and said: "Only think of it, business men of Georgetown; letters put in the office Monday evening are still lying there. 'How's that for high?'"²⁰

Later the editor of the *Rico Dolores News* was to say that the establishment of a daily mail would give Rico's boom an impetus which could overcome almost any obstacle. Waxing a bit eloquent, he said that mail service would send a "throb of exultation through every pulsating artery that supplies the life-blood of Rico's prosperity."²¹

Large amounts of Eastern capital invested in mining required regular mail service. The Irwin *Elk Mountain Pilot*, noting this investment in 1880, pointed out that irregular mails were a disadvantage in business negotiations and therefore hurt the whole camp.²²

In addition to interest in business operations was the belief that where mail coaches came the railroad might soon follow.²³ As early as 1862 a Denver paper was urging the people of Denver, Central City, Gregory, Nevada, and South Clear Creek to join in building a mail road over Berthoud Pass, not only for the convenience of having the "Pacific mail coaches running past your doors" but also because this would be a "stepping stone to another and greater benefit, the Great Continental Railway."²⁴

The first issue of the *Rocky Mountain News* expressed another reason for wanting good mail service: "Five thousand

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, August 18, 1860, p. 3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁹ *Boulder County News* (Boulder), November 23, 1869, p. 2.

²⁰ *Colorado Miner*, January 14, 1869, p. 4.

²¹ *Dolores News* (Rico), June 2, 1880, p. 3.

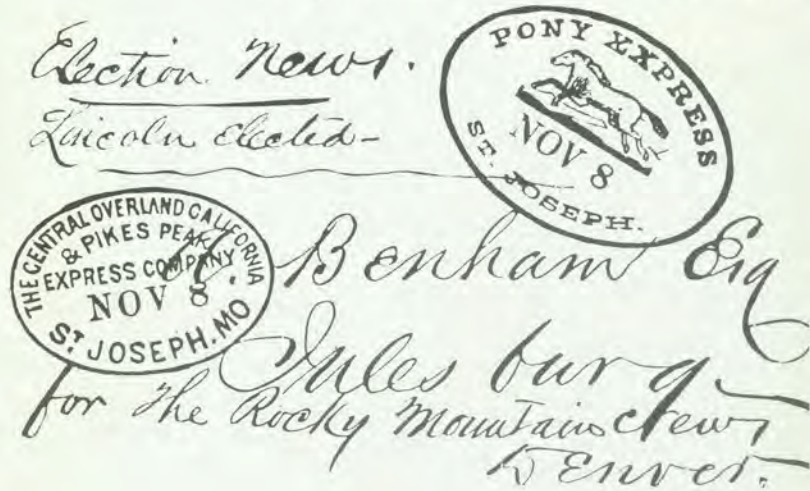
²² *Elk Mountain Pilot*, June 24, 1880, p. 4.

²³ As soon as a town, such as West Gunnison, had a railroad, it felt that mail service was justified if there was none.

²⁴ *Weekly Colorado Republican and Rocky Mountain Herald* (Denver), May 1, 1862, p. 2.

people have each left friends in 'America' from whom they wish to hear occasionally, and who wish to hear from them and the gold mines."²⁵ Two weeks later it reiterated: "Hundreds of people have now been here for many months totally cut off from all kinds of postal facilities."²⁶ The *Dolores News* echoed this sense of isolation for another area some twenty years later, when it ran an editorial from the *Denver Tribune*: "All along the frontier there is a class of men separated . . . from their families, their friends and their business connections. . . . To them the mail is everything—wife and children and money."²⁷

Even presidential election news was a scarce item.



Another account said that lack of mail in the San Juan country made life a "torture" and was a serious drawback to immigration.²⁸

A favorite device used in trying to improve this situation was to circulate a petition bringing attention to what the *Aspen Times* called "our isolated condition" and the need for mail.²⁹ San Miguel petitioned for a route to Ouray because "the necessities of the camp demand mail communication."³⁰ After Ouray's service to and from Lake City was increased to bi-weekly in response to a petition, the *Ouray Times* observed wryly: "Guess

²⁵ *Weekly Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), April 23, 1859, p. 3.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, May 7, 1859, p. 5.

²⁷ *Dolores News*, August 21, 1880, p. 1.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, May 22, 1880, p. 2.

²⁹ *Aspen Times*, June 4, 1881, p. 2.

³⁰ *Ouray Times*, June 16, 1877, p. 2.

we live in the United States after all. The Postoffice department has finally ordered an increase of our mail facilities."³¹

Even after regular weekly or twice-weekly service was established, most communities seemed to continue agitation for more frequent service, as a few sample editorials will indicate. The *Elk Mountain Pilot* noted that Crested Butte, which only polled 76 votes, and Gothic, with only 100 voters, both had daily mail; but "Irwin, with well over 500 voters, has only a 'try-weekly' mail."³² The *Colorado Chieftain*, reflecting the needs of southern Colorado, called the increase from tri-weekly to daily service to Santa Fe an "imperative necessity" and called on the people to begin a letter-writing campaign to achieve this.³³ A Rico editorial stated that tri-weekly service was insufficient in May and a daily service would be a necessity in the summer.³⁴ The *Dolores News* declared: "The wants and needs of the people of this section demand" an increase in service to tri-weekly.³⁵ Ouray called a direct tri-weekly route to Silverton a "prime necessity" and urged the people to petition for that service.³⁶

Another theme running through the demands for service, aside from economic and social reasons, was that it was a convenience due all men. A Georgetown paper noted that a wagon road was being completed to the Snake River and the people of Summit County could be better served over this route. Georgetown had a daily mail; but Peru, Montezuma, and Breckenridge only had weekly service. These towns could be supplied twice weekly by this route as easily as weekly by the South Park route. The editor called it a disgrace for these "worthy and industrious" people to have to travel twenty miles to get their mail.³⁷

The *Colorado Chieftain* called the discontinuance of mail to Trinidad "an evil" which was being felt more each day. Everyone was upset because it took ten days to get a reply from that town, and the paper warned ominously that this was about as much inconvenience as would be endured.³⁸ The month before the editor had called attention also to the "extreme inconvenience" caused by poor connections with Denver, largely because the outgoing mail left before the incoming mail was sorted.³⁹ The irregular connections with both Denver and Trini-

³¹ *Ibid.*, October 27, 1877, p. 3.

³² *Elk Mountain Pilot*, November 11, 1880, p. 1.

³³ *Colorado Chieftain* (Pueblo), May 6, 1869, p. 3.

³⁴ *Dolores News*, May 22, 1880, p. 2.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, December 20, 1879, p. 1.

³⁶ *Solid Muldoon* (Ouray), May 7, 1880, p. 3.

³⁷ *Colorado Miner*, July 7, 1870, p. 4.

³⁸ *Colorado Chieftain*, February 18, 1869, p. 1.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, January 14, 1869, p. 2.

dad caused "much inconvenience" and should be promptly investigated "in justice to our people."⁴⁰

The fact that Ouray had only a none-too-reliable weekly service was seen as "an imposition." The *Ouray Times* succinctly summed up the demands of all towns when it said: "We want our mails regularly, want them badly, and want to know that anything entrusted to them will reach its destination in a reasonable time."⁴¹ It noted that the people of the San Juan region desired better service and had proposed a new route open all winter "for the accommodation of that rapidly growing region."⁴²

The government mail service was the target of other complaints. The *Western Mountaineer* pointed out in 1860 that mail arrived in Denver on Mondays but was not sent to Golden until Friday.⁴³ This was an "intolerable nuisance" and far more inconvenient than the express service had been.⁴⁴ As late as two decades later Irwin charged discrimination because it only had service six days a week while Gunnison received it every day. Sunday was the only day the miners could come to town to receive and answer their mail, and to accommodate them was not only a courtesy but a duty.⁴⁵ Although a town had a daily mail, its miners might complain because the post office closed so early in the evening.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, that the people of Colorado availed themselves of the service is seen in the fact that in 1880 Colorado led all states in the number of letters mailed per capita.⁴⁷

Denver, of course, occupied a special position in the Colorado mail system. As the postal center of the state most of the eastern mail went through that entrepôt. This tended to arouse the envy of other towns, and Denver was blamed for delays in service. William Byers stated:

It is almost the universal practice of people coming to this country to have their mail matter addressed to Denver. Subsequently many of them settle in other portions of the Territory and after their letters are advertised [in the newspapers] they order them forwarded.⁴⁸

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, September 24, 1868, p. 3.

⁴¹ *Ouray Times*, August 4, 1877, p. 3.

⁴² *Ibid.*, August 17, 1878, p. 3.

⁴³ *Western Mountaineer*, August 30, 1860, p. 2.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, August 23, 1860, p. 3.

⁴⁵ *Elk Mountain Pilot*, September 16, 1880, p. 2.

⁴⁶ If his work was far-removed from the post office, a miner could not get his mail in the evening before the office closed.

⁴⁷ *Annual Report of the Postmaster-General of the United States for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1881* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1881), p. 90.

⁴⁸ Byers to Third Assistant Postmaster General, August 12, 1865, Letterbook 1, p. 221, Byers Papers.

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When the transcontinental railroad missed Colorado,
Denver became a major shuttle point.

Byers received various protests from mountain postmasters that Denver delayed mail service. H. M. Orahood of Black Hawk accused him of stopping newspapers to that town. Byers warned him to desist telling subscribers that and offered him ten dollars for "even presumptive evidence" that any papers were stopped in Denver.⁴⁹

Another Denver editor noted an article in the *Rocky Mountain News*, reflecting upon Denver for having better mail facilities than did the mountains. He argued that it was no fault of Denver's—that nothing would give the town more satisfaction than to see adequate service established to all parts of the mountains. He observed that Denver depended on the mountains and should do all it could to help that area.⁵⁰

Although Denver received better service than the mountain towns, it was none too regular in the first years. The *Western Mountaineer* reported in 1860 that Denver had a new brick post office on Larimer Street, but when Golden would receive mail was "known only to Divine Providence, and Mr. E. F. Bruce, of St. Joseph."⁵¹ This complaint came despite an earlier assurance that the mails would run with "unfailing regularity" and that no one need fear any delay.⁵²

There were various reasons for poor service, such as governmental neglect, Indians, incompetent postmasters, weather, terrain, railroads, and fraudulent mail contractors. Despite many real impediments to good service, the territory sometimes considered itself a neglected stepchild of the Post Office Department, and the editors of the area vented their spleen against those in authority. A Canon City journalist complained that the Post Office Department had done nothing to establish mail service between that city and Denver, although he blamed this neglect on the attention the Civil War was receiving.⁵³ A Georgetown paper stated that the people of that town had petitioned unsuccessfully four months previously for daily mail to Central City; it concluded sarcastically that apparently Colorado was only a territory with no right to ask the government for anything.⁵⁴ A Denver paper suggested in a more conciliatory tone that Colorado was a new territory and that it would take Washington a while to get the postal service straightened out.⁵⁵

When in March 1868 the legislature sent a petition to

⁴⁹ Byers to Orahood, August 8, 1865, Letterbook 1, p. 294, Byers Papers.

⁵⁰ *Weekly Colorado Republican and Rocky Mountain Herald*, July 20, 1861, p. 1.

⁵¹ *Western Mountaineer*, July 12, 1860, p. 6.

⁵² *Rocky Mountain News*, October 6, 1859, p. 2.

⁵³ *Canon City Times*, September 5, 1861, p. 4.

⁵⁴ *Colorado Miner*, July 28, 1869, p. 4.

⁵⁵ *Weekly Colorado Republican and Rocky Mountain Herald*, July 20, 1861, p. 1.

Congress "expressive of the unanimous demand of our people" for the same postal rates and privileges as the East, the *Weekly Colorado Tribune* predicted gloomily that Congress would ignore the petition for fear that receipts would fall off if rates were lowered.⁵⁶ The *Western Mountaineer* reported that farcical meetings had been held in Denver regarding mail grievances, and a memorial had been sent to the "venerable, old Public Functionary in the White House, and the ancient fossil at the head of the Post-Office Department."⁵⁷ An Irwin editor concluded in disgust that post office officials were a "set of incompetents and don't-care-a-damn set of fellows."⁵⁸ The *Dolores News* held that the reason for their neglect was that the authorities could not realize the rapid growth that was occurring and were not planning ahead.⁵⁹

During the 1860s Indians frequently interrupted mail service, in the mountains to some extent but more especially between Denver and the East. The height of Indian troubles occurred from 1865 to 1867. The report of the postmaster gen-

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New Holidays

FROM THE
ATLANTIC
TO THE
Pacific States
Proprietor.



Denver City May 31st 1865
Received from The First National Bank Denver
in payment post order, one letter and Package
Gold Dust valued at \$5412.00, paid at \$410.00 in Post Notes
MARKED To Wm. A. Brewster & Co Philadelphia Pennsylvania.

IT IS AGREED, and it is part of the transportation of this service, that the OVERLAND STAGE LINE are not to be held responsible for any loss or damage through no negligence only - and for any loss or damage by the negligence of piloted, or other navigation, leakage, breakage, fire, or from any cause whatsoever, unless the same be proved to have occurred from the fault or gross neglect of the proprietors, agents, drivers or conductors thereof, in the case for the interest against cargo or baggage, and in no event to the Company to be held second their route to be fully received. Value over Five Dollars, unless otherwise herein stated.

For the Overland Stage Line, C. S. Walker

eral for the latter year said, referring to troubles in February 1867, that despite the military's efforts Denver received no mail from February 23 to March 2. In March there were eighteen failures to deliver the mail, caused by Indians driving off the mail contractors' stock. The Indians also attacked mail coaches and in June of 1867 killed all aboard the mail coach

⁵⁶ *Weekly Colorado Tribune* (Denver), March 25, 1868, p. 4.

⁵⁷ *Western Mountaineer*, July 26, 1860, p. 7.

⁵⁸ *Elk Mountain Pilot*, November 11, 1880, p. 1.

⁵⁹ *Dolores News*, May 22, 1880, p. 2.

to Chicago.⁶⁰ The editor of the *Colorado Miner* ran an article from the *Register* which suggested that "a few more of Colonel Chivingtons would be a good thing."⁶¹

In making his quarterly report in April 1865 William Byers noted that Indian hostilities on the plains frequently had interrupted regular service for that quarter.⁶² He reported earlier that trouble had begun east of Denver, causing mail to be turned back. He said he was going to send the mail by a special agent accompanied by a force of two hundred men.⁶³ That summer Byers wrote to the Post Office Department that no westbound mail had left Denver for three days because of Indian hostility, "the savages having possession of sixty miles, or more, of the road through the mountains beyond Fort Halleck."⁶⁴

Mail contractors were forced on occasion to provide armed escorts for the mail coaches because of Indians. During a period of comparative quiet a Denver editor cautioned the contractors not to remove the guards lest depredations break out again. He said the only way to insure safety was to teach the Indians "humanity and civilization by a thorough punishment."⁶⁵

Feuds between postmasters of various towns also were credited with causing delayed service. An Irwin paper expressed the hope that the Gunnison postmaster would lose his official head because of his indifference to mail to and from the mountains. "We never knew of such another jassack of a p.m."⁶⁶ The *Colorado Miner* charged that Georgetown was "indebted to the negligence of the Central City Postoffice" for the absence of their mail.⁶⁷ Rico complained that postmasters along the route to the San Juan were stealing small packages and concluded that "the complication of the mail system in San Juan is as mysterious as spiritualism and considerably less certain."⁶⁸

Weather and poor roads and bridges came in for their share of blame, too. The complaint of a Boulder County paper was

An accident on the "Chicago and Quincy . . . train to Pike's Peak."



fairly typical when it noted that eastern mails had failed to arrive for several days because of railroad bridges' having been washed out by high water.⁶⁹ William Byers reported on one occasion that the mail had arrived well dampened because the coach had fallen through the bridge over Kiowa Creek.⁷⁰ He noted another time that the mail from Salt Lake City arrived very wet, much of it destroyed, as a result of a severe rain and snowstorm. He cautioned that more care should be taken to keep mail dry. Snow, of course, was a major problem in winter and caused numerous delays in delivery.⁷¹

After rail service was established in the mountains, the railroads also were blamed sometimes for poor service. The *Fairplay Flume* charged that coach mail service had been destroyed with little to replace it because of the "utter disregard" of the Denver and South Park Railroad for the people along the line. Service was "far worse than before the advent of the railroad."⁷² The *Elk Mountain Pilot* held the railroad responsible for getting the mail service "out of whack again." Instead of receiving mail daily as previously, Irwin received two deliveries on one day and none on the next.⁷³ The *Montezuma Millrun* said that when the former contractor delivered the mail it was thought that he ran the worst possible mail route; however, the town learned, to its chagrin, that he was "the pink of punctuality compared to the Denver and South Park Railroad." Mail that was supposed to come daily arrived only two or three times a week, and it took three days to get mail from Denver.⁷⁴ Out-of-state railroads also could cause delay, for an irate editorial in the *Colorado Miner* complained that the route agent on the Chicago and Northwestern from Council Bluffs was sending Colorado mail to California. This was "very provoking" to the

⁶⁰ U.S., Congress, House, *Message of the President of the United States and Accompanying Documents, to the Two Houses of Congress at the Commencement of the Second Session of the Fortieth Congress (The Annual Report of the Postmaster General)*, Ex. Doc. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1867), pp. 4-5.

⁶¹ *Colorado Miner*, June 27, 1867, p. 2.

⁶² Byers to Third Assistant Postmaster General, April 4, 1865, Letterbook 1, p. 126, Byers Papers.

⁶³ Byers to First Assistant Postmaster General, January 14, 1865, Letterbook 1, pp. 104-05, Byers Papers.

⁶⁴ Byers to First Assistant Postmaster General, June 17, 1865, Letterbook 1, p. 193, Byers Papers.

⁶⁵ *Weekly Colorado Tribune*, July 10, 1867, p. 5.

⁶⁶ *Elk Mountain Pilot*, September 29, 1881, p. 2.

⁶⁷ *Colorado Miner*, October 31, 1867, p. 4.

⁶⁸ *Dolores News*, June 12, 1880, p. 1.

⁶⁹ *Sunshine Courier*, May 27, 1876, p. 3.

⁷⁰ Byers to First Assistant Postmaster General, July 6, 1865, Letterbook 1, p. 205, Byers Papers.

⁷¹ Byers to First Assistant Postmaster General, April 9(?), 1866, Letterbook 2, p. 32, Byers Papers.

⁷² *Fairplay Flume*, August 21, 1879, p. 2.

⁷³ *Elk Mountain Pilot*, December 1, 1881, p. 3.

⁷⁴ *Millrun (Montezuma)*, February 17, 1883, p. 2.

businessmen of the town, but the editor speculated that there was little hope for improvement "unless that idiot should happen to wink out."⁷⁵

Few things raised the ire of a newspaper editor as much as the belief that mail contractors were an almost universally larcenous class. These complaints apparently were justified to a large extent since many of them came during the time of the star route frauds of the 1870s.⁷⁶ However, charges against contractors began long before then and lasted until the end of the period under study. In the same story that reported the arrival of the first United States mail to the Pike's Peak region, the *Western Mountaineer* charged that there was "gross blundering or scoundrelism or both" in the mail arrangements.⁷⁷

Due to the low salaries for postmasters that office was apparently not sought so vigorously as were contracts for carrying the mails. In 1863 the average salary paid to postmasters was \$98.13, which increased to \$234.57 in 1880.⁷⁸ It was not uncommon for a dozen men to bid for the contract on some of the better routes, which could amount to several thousand dollars.⁷⁹

Advertisements for bids on mail contracts commonly were made in the newspapers. An advertisement stipulated the route to be covered and usually the schedule to be maintained, although occasionally bids on service ranging from daily to weekly were encouraged. The bids were made directly to the Post Office Department, which awarded the contracts.

It was a fairly common practice for the original contractor to let a subcontract to another individual, who might sublet to still a third. This pyramiding tended to confuse the issue of who was responsible for what and made those who had posted surety bonds for the contractors uneasy. William Byers reported that a G. M. Woodworth came to Denver inquiring about Miner,

⁷⁵ *Colorado Miner*, November 18, 1869, p. 4.

⁷⁶ These frauds in granting mail contracts were revealed in an 1881 investigation. Star routes were western routes on which mail was carried by horse and wagon.

⁷⁷ *Western Mountaineer*, August 16, 1860, p. 2.

⁷⁸ U.S., Congress, Senate, *Message of the President of the United States, and Accompanying Documents, to the Two Houses of Congress, at the Commencement of the First Session of the Thirty-Eighth Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1864), pp. 22, 31, 73; *Annual Report of the Postmaster-General, 1880*, pp. 57, 88, 559.

⁷⁹ U.S., Congress, House, *Offers for Carrying the Mails*, Ex. Doc. 191, 44th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1876); *Offers for Carrying the Mails*, Ex. Doc. 43, 44th Cong., 2nd sess. (1877); *Offer for Carrying Mails, Land and Water Mails Established, Etc.*, Ex. Doc. 51, 45th Cong., 2nd sess. (1878); *Offers Received for Carrying the Mails*, Ex. Doc. 88, 45th Cong., 3rd sess. (1879); *Offers for Carrying the Mails, &c.*, Ex. Doc. 47, 46th Cong., 2nd sess. (1880); *Offers and Contracts for Carrying the Mails*, Ex. Doc. 55, 46th Cong., 3rd sess. (1881); *Contracts for Carrying United States Mail*, Ex. Doc. 40, 47th Cong., 1st sess. (1882); *Offers for Carrying the Mails*, Ex. Doc. 93, 47th Cong., 2nd sess. (1883); *Offers and Contracts for Carrying the Mails, Etc.*, Ex. Doc. 84, 48th Cong., 1st sess. (1884); *Contracts for Carrying the Mails*, Ex. Doc. 266, 48th Cong., 2nd sess. (1885).

Peck, and Company, mail contractors. This firm had the contract to carry mail from West Las Animas to Bent Canon. They sublet to a Mr. Watts, who in turn sublet to a Perry Wilson. Woodworth and others had made bond for Wilson and wanted to be released.⁸⁰

Most of the charges of malversation seemed to come from the San Juan region. The *Dolores News* kept up a running feud with the mail contractors of the area in the late 1870s and early 1880s. It called the mail service of the region a "farce" because of the failure of the firm of Gilmer, Salisbury, and Company to prevent such things as mail robberies by their subcontractors.⁸¹ It called for "more reliable and responsible mail contractors" and mail agents who would report delinquent contractors.⁸² The editor wrote the second assistant postmaster general to complain about interrupted service and to suggest an investigation.⁸³ In an editorial on December 27, 1879, he stated that "Gilmer, Salisbury & Co. are frauds. . . . Their [agent] Tibbetts is a fraud." He inquired: "Will the people of this section present their fraudulency with a gold headed cane or a club?"⁸⁴

Most of Rico's trouble with mail contractors came in 1879-80. In January of the latter year it was charged that one Brewster, "a d—d fraud," who had the contract to carry the mail to Silverton, had failed to fulfill it. The editor said he dumped the mail in an old cabin and left it.⁸⁵ Two weeks later he suggested in boldface type: "San Juan will yet send a delegation to hang or impeach fraudulent mail contractors."⁸⁶

Service to that area apparently improved little during the summer, and once again the mail contractors were blamed. They were charged with controlling the Post Office Department through the use of paid agents who arranged to have complaints and petitions pigeonholed. The *Dolores News* said that the contractors could provide good service if they would and suggested that if they were too poor to buy another horse for the mail route, the citizens of Rico would buy one. "We don't care for the expense but we do want the mail."⁸⁷ This gentleman undoubtedly would have agreed with the Silverton journalist who blamed contractors for poor service and suggested that they

⁸⁰ Byers to Second Assistant Postmaster General, July 11, 1879, Letterbook 6, p. 81, Byers Papers.

⁸¹ *Dolores News*, November 22, 1879, p. 1.

⁸² *Ibid.*, December 13, 1879, p. 2.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, December 6, 1879, p. 1.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, December 27, 1879, p. 1.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, January 10, 1880, p. 1.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, January 24, 1880, p. 1.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, July 24, 1880, p. 2.



either attend to their duties or let someone have the job who could. According to this editor the San Juan was no place for a tenderfoot and mail carrying was best left to those who "have the manhood to perform their duty faithfully."⁸⁸

During the winter the *La Plata Miner* complimented the people of Silverton for the patience with which they bore the "short-comings and omissions" of the San Juan contractors. Then, with his own patience nearly breaking, the editor charged: "The average specimen of this mercenary though necessary class, . . . while wearing the semblance of the human species, yet must still be regarded by common mortals as a kind of strange, curious and awe-inspiring creature. . . . When the sun is shining, they say it is storming, when mules get lame, they say there is danger of avalanche, etc." He warned that the people were beginning to get tired of "feeding and pampering these fat mail contractors."⁸⁹

Despite all the threats and imprecations made against these public servants, petitions, complaints, and editorials seem to have been the extent of efforts to force compliance. In fact, only one instance was found of a contractor's being prosecuted for malfeasance, despite warnings from irate editors. A Georgetown paper noted in 1867 that the Post Office Department had filed charges against Wells, Fargo for "gross neglect" in transmitting overland mail. The company was charged with throwing mail off heavily loaded coaches and leaving it to rot.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ *La Plata Miner* (Silverton), February 8, 1879, p. 4.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, January 3, 1880, p. 1.

⁹⁰ *Colorado Miner*, October 24, 1867, p. 2.

Some five years earlier, though, a Denver editor had noted "with great delight" that the Overland Mail Company had received a stiff warning from the government for similar actions. The line had been throwing mail off at Omaha to make room for more expensive express. Overland mail agents had been ordered not to accept any more freight in consequence of their neglect of mail matter. The editor noted with satisfaction that Denver residents could now expect to receive mail from Omaha in one week rather than three.⁹¹

Trouble with mail contractors had begun almost simultaneously with Colorado settlement. The *Rocky Mountain News* reported in August 1859 that the contractor had failed to fulfill his agreement to carry mail to Fort Kearny, Nebraska. Nevertheless, the postmaster entered into a new contract with Jones, Russell and Company to provide tri-weekly service at \$.25 per letter in addition to U.S. postage, and the townspeople were told they should consider themselves fortunate to receive this.⁹²

Less than a year later the *Western Mountaineer* also was complaining about service, saying: "There is no hope whatever, or relief through the sham contract of Mr. Bruce." This was because no contractor ever had been prosecuted for not fulfilling his contract and because the terms of the contract said service was to start July 1 or "as soon thereafter as practicable," which could mean a day or a year.⁹³ The newspaper also complained that a Mr. Weibling, contractor for the Colorado [City] to Denver route, was not carrying enough mail to justify his contract.⁹⁴

An Aspen editor noted sarcastically that there was an old-fashioned idea that mail contracts should be carried out. He supposed, however, that it was of no importance whether Aspen received regular mail so long as the contractor got his money. He appealed to Colorado's congressmen to "see that a portion of their constituents receive semi-annually what is justly their right, i.e., a mail."⁹⁵

Instances such as these seem to be reflected in the terms for mail contracts. For example: (1) seven minutes would be allowed at intermediate offices to sort the mails; (2) no pay would be given for trips not made, and if no satisfactory reason were given for failure, three times the pay of the trip could be deducted; (3) for leaving behind or throwing off the mails to

⁹¹ *Weekly Colorado Republican and Rocky Mountain Herald*, January 9, 1862, p. 4.

⁹² *Weekly Rocky Mountain News*, August 27, 1859, p. 2.

⁹³ *Western Mountaineer*, July 26, 1860, p. 2.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, August 9, 1860, p. 7.

⁹⁵ *Rocky Mountain Sun*, July 16, 1881, p. 2.

carry passengers or for running an express conveying intelligence in advance of the mails, a quarter's pay could be deducted; (4) if the contractor allowed the mail to get wet, injured, destroyed, robbed, or lost, he could be fined; and (5) the postmaster general could order an increase or decrease of service on a route.⁹⁶

Not all mail contractors were dishonest or incompetent, for some did receive praise from the people they served. However, performance of duty is something that by its nature does

"Mrs. Benjamin," Creede's mail carrier.



not elicit as much comment as bad performance, as Postmaster General Horace Maynard recognized: "[The Postal service's] efficiency . . . is not demonstrated by popular applause so much as by the absence of complaints."⁹⁷

Although Colorado's mail service was unsatisfactory in some respects and the people wanted better, it was not inadequate for the functions it served. Despite the clamor for service for economic reasons, it is doubtful that any town or area failed

to develop due to lack of postal facilities. It would seem likely that if an area had anything approaching the potential wealth usually claimed, mail service would be supplied soon; most complaints about poor service came within a relatively short time after an area began to develop. As a symbol of civilization, apparently, mail service was important to Colorado's settlers, for it was among the first things they demanded and one of the things they demanded most vociferously.

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⁹⁶ *Colorado Miner*, November 4, 1869, p. 2.

⁹⁷ *Annual Report of the Postmaster-General, 1880*, p. 44.

Attempts to Saddle the Iron Horse in 1885

BY LAVANDA JOAN BOOTH

"Come over into Macedonia and help us"¹ was the cry of the early Christians to the Apostle Paul. This same cry was sent out by the citizens of Colorado to the early railroad builders. They were afraid that if the railroads were not drawn into Colorado, the state would die. Frank Hall spoke of the tremendous disappointment of the people when the Union Pacific Railroad decided to bypass Denver with its transcontinental line,² for emigration from Colorado to the towns springing up along the railroads in Kansas, Nebraska, and Wyoming was heavy. Those were "dark and despairing days when everything appeared to work disaster and to threaten annihilation. . . . Colorado seemed to be cut off and set aside as a barren region not worth saving."³

Due to its geographic position Colorado did desperately need the railroads in order to survive and to grow. Water commerce did not exist, and wagon travel was so expensive that it was prohibitive. In fact, the entire Rocky Mountain region was dependent upon the railroads.⁴ This dependency, along with the peculiar situation existing in Colorado, led to some of the abuses—real and imagined—charged to the railroads by the people of Colorado.

These complaints began early in Colorado railroading history. The roads were charged with discrimination, inefficiency, high freight tariffs, rebates, and high passenger rates. By 1876 when the state constitution was being drafted, there were demands for regulation of the railroads. The Grangers in



The spectacle of passenger and freight trains at the Kansas Pacific-Denver Pacific joint depot set Denver's hearts and hopes aflutter.

particular spearheaded this drive.⁵ The drafters of the constitution took a moderate attitude toward the railroads, and the railroads were able to block any further attempts at regulation during the late 1870s and the early 1880s. Nevertheless, pressure steadily grew in the state. By 1885 the people were demanding action so strongly that the legislators found it difficult to resist.

The regulation of railroads was not considered to be an issue in the 1884 campaign, as the state was involved in a sharply contested struggle for the United States Senate.⁶ Only one state legislator was thought to have been elected on the railroad issue. This was Representative Barney O'Driscoll of San Juan County.⁷

By the time when the assembly met in January, the legislators apparently felt the people were ready for action. Bill after bill was presented calling for some form of railroad legislation. This writer was able to find twenty-four bills introduced to the 1885 assembly dealing with railroads,⁸ although, no doubt, not all of them were sincerely intended; for many legislators merely wanted their names before the public as champions of the people against the railroads.

¹ Bible, Acts 16:9.

² Frank Hall, *History of the State of Colorado*, 4 vols. (Chicago: Blakely Printing Co., 1889), 1:396.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 416, 493.

⁴ John Burton Phillips, "Freight Rates and Manufacturers in Colorado: A Chapter in Economic History," *The University of Colorado Studies*, 7 (December 1910):10.

⁵ Colin B. Goodykoontz, "Some Controversial Questions before the Constitutional Convention," *The Colorado Magazine* 17 (January 1940):10.

⁶ *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), March 21, 1885, p. 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, February 25, 1885, p. 1.

⁸ Colorado, General Assembly, Senate, *Journal*, 5th sess., 1885, pp. xlix-lxv; House, *Journal*, 5th sess., 1885, pp. xxi-xl.

The people responded to their efforts with fervor. Petition after petition was received in favor of specific bills. Many called for railroad legislation in whatever form the assembly chose to deliver it.⁹ An interview with Senator James Bucklin of Grand Junction expressed the sentiment of the times:

There is a feeling among his [Bucklin's] people that there is a necessity for regulation of existing railroad abuse. People of Grand Junction complain of railway discrimination against them and want a system of railway freights established which will give every town the opportunity to realize its natural advantages and enterprise of its citizens.¹⁰

The editor of the *Denver Tribune-Republican* caustically pointed out:

Railway officials kick and protest against any legislation which has for its object the firm settlement of rates and the enactment of rules which must be obeyed implicitly. This seems a trifle queer, to say the least, when the past history of railroad management shows that railway managers are utterly powerless to accomplish those objects which they themselves, as well as the public, so earnestly desire.¹¹

The Denver Chamber of Commerce resolved that it "heartily favors such judicious legislation . . . as shall convince all persons seeking homes in Colorado that they will be free to pursue any lawful occupation without railroad obstruction or undue railroad burdens."¹²

The idea that railroads were discriminating against Colorado manufacturers was widespread. Representative Rodelphus Gilmore of Arapahoe County offered a resolution to the house to appoint a committee of five to inquire into the alleged discrimination, and this resolution carried.¹³ The committee was duly appointed, and Gilmore was the chairman. It held extensive sessions throughout January and February of 1885. At times the sessions were held in secret, because Representative O'Driscoll feared the power of the railroads to ruin witnesses' business.¹⁴

A central problem brought out in the sessions was rates for raw materials. Many of the raw materials needed for manufacturing in Colorado had to be brought in from the East. In

⁹ *Rocky Mountain News*, February 7, 1885, p. 2; February 11, 1885, p. 2; February 19, 1885, p. 2.

¹⁰ *Denver Tribune-Republican*, January 8, 1885, p. 2.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, January 18, 1885, p. 8.

¹² *Ibid.*, January 28, 1885, p. 8.

¹³ *House Journal*, 1885, pp. 19-20. The committee consisted of Rodelphus Gilmore of Denver, chairman; Nathaniel Rollins of Leadville; P. T. Hinman of Hahn's Peak; Barney O'Driscoll of Silverton; and E. I. Stirman of Lake City.

¹⁴ *Denver Tribune-Republican*, January 17, 1885, p. 2.

the language of the frontier one of the witnesses testified: "We ain't got the timber; . . . we ain't got nothing here, everything has got to be imported."¹⁵ Since raw materials were limited in Colorado, citizens wanted them brought in at a rate that would allow goods which were manufactured here to be sold more cheaply than those from the East. Added to the problem was the scarcity of labor in the West at that time. Labor was much higher than eastern labor.¹⁶ Notwithstanding these difficulties, Colorado citizens wanted to manufacture goods.

Testimony indicated that they felt the railroads were basically at fault for the problems. A manufacturer of mattresses

By the 1880s Denver, "the metropolis of Colorado," was built around the railroad.

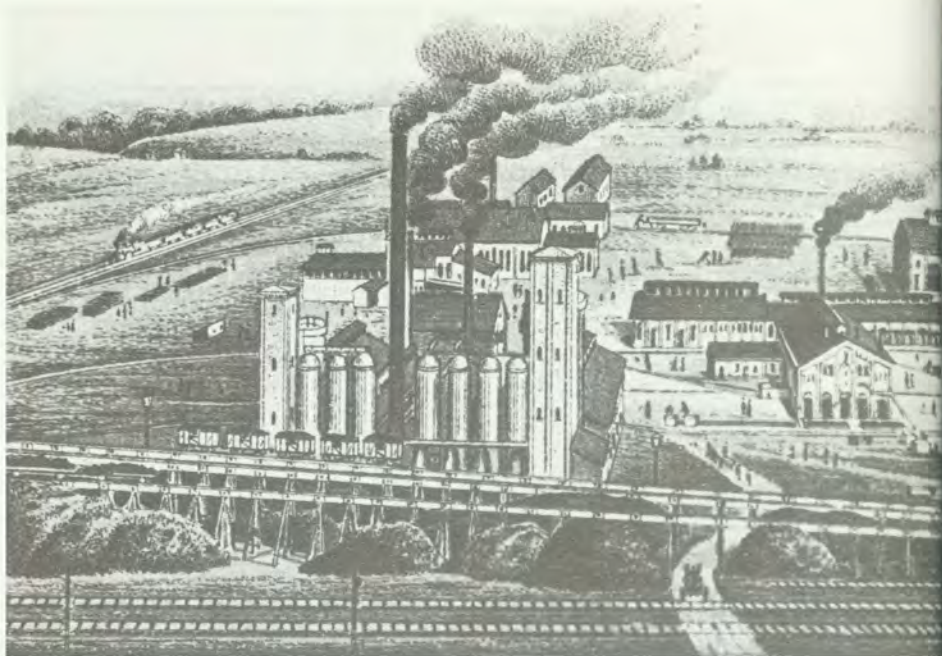


testified that the raw materials for mattresses were brought to Denver at the same rate as the manufactured article.¹⁷ A box manufacturer felt discriminated against because boxes knocked

¹⁵ *Evidence Taken before the Special Railroad Committee of the House of Representatives of Colorado, 1885* (Denver: Collier & Cleaveland Lith. Co., 1885), p. 89.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 143. A Mr. Gartner, a furniture dealer, tells of the difference: "They hire laborers at three dollars a week; I have to pay—the cheapest boy I have is five dollars a week."

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 31.



Pueblo's Colorado Coal and Iron Company.

down were brought in from the East at the same rate as lumber. In order to sell boxes as cheaply as eastern manufacturers, he was "forced to use Colorado lumber."¹⁸ Knocked-down furniture also was delivered at the same rate as assembled.¹⁹

The railroads were accused of deliberately preventing manufacturing from establishing in the state. A Mr. Woodworth had intended to build a paper mill in Colorado in the summer of 1884. He and Joseph Bailey of Denver selected a piece of ground and were ready to buy it. When he checked with the railroad about rates, he was told that they would be so high that he could not make paper. He had planned an investment of \$200,000.²⁰

When a match factory was started in Denver, the freight on matches was lowered from \$3.60 to \$2.00. When it was discovered that the match factory would be able to compete, matches were brought in under a false classification. According to the witness, they were classified as wood and willow ware; wood and willow ware freight was \$1.00.²¹

The president of the Denver Manufacturing Company

wanted rates from the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe on wooden stirrups to be shipped into Texas. The agent reported that he would have to write to headquarters for the rates; but when he was told the name of the company, the agent replied: "The name will kill this thing, because you are manufacturers."²² True to the agent's prediction, the manufacturer's request was refused.

The roads often had special contracts with coal mines. Those mines that were not under contract with a railroad could not always secure cars for shipping coal. The Denver and Rio Grande refused to furnish cars to the Caldwell Coal and Iron Company although there were empty cars in the railroad yards.²³ Consequently, the Caldwell Company had to stop work. This resulted in a layoff of about eighty men.²⁴ It was alleged that the Union Pacific hauled coal for its Boulder and Welch Mines at \$.25 per ton. The freight for the Steward Mine at Erie was \$1.15 per ton.²⁵

The dilemma was brought out also by the testimony of an iron manufacturer. The companies which manufactured ma-

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 24.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 83.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

chinery wanted iron shipped in at a lower rate. W. G. Brown, general agent of the Colorado Coal and Iron Company, felt the proposed lower rate would result in a monthly loss of \$1,300 to his company.²⁶

Another man was attempting to ship carbolic acid to Silverton. He discovered it could be shipped from St. Louis cheaper than from Denver.²⁷ Shipping into Montana, Arizona, and Idaho was higher than shipping from the Missouri River. In order for him to get rates from Denver to those points low enough to compete with Missouri River merchants, he had to guarantee the railroad his entire business from the East.²⁸

The chairman frequently asked the witnesses if they knew anything about rebates. The local people were reluctant to admit knowledge of such. The witness would refer the committee to someone else and deny having received a rebate himself. One merchant accused a competitor of receiving rebates. He felt that rebates were the reason his competitor was in favor of an exceedingly high rate of freight and opposed to railroad legislation.²⁹ Wolfe Londoner, a Denver merchant, conceded that he had received rebates from the Union Pacific several years before.³⁰

The major roads serving Colorado were members of the Colorado Railway Association, which pooled the Colorado trade and divided the profits according to an agreed percentage.³¹ The pool was considered an unethical procedure.³² One witness called upon the assembly to pass a law to prohibit pooling.³³ Although the editor of the *Denver Tribune* agreed that pooling limited competition, he felt a law could hardly prevent it.³⁴ Apparently the *News* had no complaints against pooling, for the editor spoke of the association's being composed of expert railway men and of their difficulty in establishing rates satisfactory to all parts of the state.³⁵

Railroad men were in Denver in force during the winter of 1885. They very definitely considered the proposed legislation as antirailroad. The president of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy was quoted as saying that his company would do nothing more in Colorado until he saw what action the assembly took toward railroads. If the legislation were hostile to railway

interests, his company would not construct more lines in Colorado.³⁶

Representatives of the roads were called before the special committee to testify in behalf of their interests. P. P. Shelby, general freight agent of the Union Pacific, was questioned regarding shipment of raw materials to Denver at the same rate as manufactured goods. He was of the opinion that the rate on mattresses and raw materials for them differed enough to allow production in Denver.³⁷

Testimony had been received regarding soap's being shipped from Chicago at such a low rate as to undermine soap manufacturing in Colorado. Shelby conceded that rates on soap had been low during 1884. This began during the rate war which lasted from February to August of 1884. During this period his company had made a contract with Kirk and Company of Chicago which did not expire until the end of the year. He felt obligated to carry out the terms of the contract even though the rate war had ended in August.³⁸ The *News* accused the roads of not providing for such a situation in contracts made during the rate war.³⁹ When it was pointed out to Shelby that a bill of lading which had been presented in evidence before the committee was dated in November 1884, he replied: "It was done by an unauthorized person."⁴⁰

Shelby brought out one of the hazards of manufacturing in any state. He said Kirk and Company sold soap in Colorado as cheaply as they did in Chicago to keep competitors out of the business. If they could not force the competition out of business, they would make a deal to share the territory involved.⁴¹

The matter of false classification of goods was discussed by George H. Crosby of the Baltimore and Maryland Railroad Company.⁴² Matches were first class. If they were shipped as wood and willow ware, it was a deception on the part of the merchant. Crosby said the roads had to keep a very rigid system of inspection to prevent contraband articles from being smuggled through.

In reply to the charges against railroads of discriminating against certain coal companies, the railroads denied some of the charges but admitted some to be true. In the case of those admitted to be true, the officials claimed that the discrimination had been done away with in recent months.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

³¹ *Denver Tribune-Republican*, January 29, 1885, p. 2.

³² *Evidence Taken before the Special Railroad Committee*, p. 94.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

³⁴ *Denver Tribune-Republican*, February 1, 1885, p. 4.

³⁵ *Rocky Mountain News*, February 12, 1885, p. 4.

³⁶ *Denver Tribune-Republican*, February 7, 1885, p. 5.

³⁷ *Evidence Taken before the Special Railroad Committee*, pp. 223-24.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

³⁹ *Rocky Mountain News*, February 12, 1885, p. 7.

⁴⁰ *Evidence Taken before the Special Railroad Committee*, p. 226.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 182.

The Union Pacific had been involved in a rate war in Utah in 1884 which had affected the company's policy in Colorado. Due to its difficulties with the Denver and Rio Grande in Utah and that railroad's opposition to a line being built in Colorado by the UP, the Union Pacific placed an embargo on the shipment of any coal coming from the D&RG's lines.⁴³ This action prevented Colorado merchants from shipping coal into western Kansas and Nebraska in the fall of 1884. Shelby denied that special rates were being given to the Union Coal Company. Some years before there had been a rate of \$.25 a ton in effect between Erie and Denver, but only because of a rate war with the Denver, Longmont, and Northwestern road.⁴⁴

Shelby went on record for the UP as being in favor of promoting local endeavors. He admitted that "there has [sic] been a few isolated cases in the past where we made rates which had a tendency to cripple one or two endeavors of this city, but that policy was abandoned more than a year ago."⁴⁵ In a letter to the Denver Chamber of Commerce, Charles P. Adams, president of the Union Pacific, stated: "To its local traffic the Union Pacific must hereafter look for its salvation."⁴⁶

A. S. Hughes, traffic manager of the Denver and Rio Grande, knew nothing about the denial of the request of the Caldwell Coal and Iron Company for cars. He was interested in his company's receiving more coal business from Colorado. Since his road received a very small interest from the pool, it would be a great help to be able to ship outside it.⁴⁷

The price of coal was to be examined by railroad commissioner William B. Felker in his report of 1885. Felker was of

the opinion that high coal prices had not been so much attributable to high rates of transportation as to unwarrantable profits for the dealers. The dealers, in his words, have "managed through the assistance of the railway companies to secure a monopoly of the business."⁴⁸ During the period his report covered, he received three complaints of rates being too high on coal transportation. These were settled either privately or by following his recommendations.⁴⁹

Shelby pointed out that rates on machinery had been established some years ago at a level to promote mining in Colorado.⁵⁰ "It may be true," he said, "that the rates upon some of the articles used in the manufacture of machinery are more than the rates upon machinery, but this inconsistency we are endeavoring to wipe out."⁵¹ On January 1, 1885, the Union Pacific reduced freight from Denver to Idaho and Montana to 80 percent of the freight from the Missouri River to those states. Rates from Denver to Utah were reduced to 70 percent of the rate from the Missouri River to Utah. His road also had proposed to the other lines operating in Colorado that rates be established on raw materials at 90 percent of the manufactured article.⁵²

Several general statements also were made in regard to freight rates in Colorado by Shelby.⁵³ Among the factors to be considered in establishing rates were injury to local manufacturers, the long haul versus the short haul, and the fact that the volume of westbound freight was much heavier than eastbound. He also mentioned the cost and risk of Colorado railroading. The cost of hauling in Colorado was more than in any other area where his company had lines, and his road was not meeting expenses in Colorado. According to Shelby, it was not fair to compare freight costs of a short line carrying light traffic with a longer line carrying heavy traffic. The Union Pacific also was forced to set its rates lower in areas where there was water competition. He considered rates to be too low in other areas rather than too high in Colorado.

The railroad men were more willing to admit giving rebates

William B. Felker



⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

⁴⁶ *Rocky Mountain News*, March 6, 1885, p. 8.

⁴⁷ *Evidence Taken before the Special Railroad Committee*, p. 188.

⁴⁸ *First Annual Report of the Railroad Commissioner of the State of Colorado, for the Year Ending June 30, 1885* (Denver: Collier & Cleaveland Lith. Co., 1886), p. 63.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 557, 612, 698.

⁵⁰ *Evidence Taken before the Special Railroad Committee*, p. 222.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 222.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 220-52.



The D&RG's staff, with portly A. S. Hughes slightly to left of center, had Pike's Peak's strength behind them.

than the local people were willing to admit receiving them. Hughes said: "I guess they all get them at times, when the railroads get to cutting."⁵⁴ Shelby testified that all of the large jobbers in Denver got rebates during the rate war of 1884.⁵⁵

The work of the Special Investigating Committee was thorough. It presented a report to the assembly containing 272 pages.⁵⁶

But the effect upon the assembly of this committee is difficult to assess. The bills presented contained provisions to rectify many of the complaints received; yet, before the session ended petitions were being received to modify the stiff railroad bills.⁵⁷ Also, as shall be seen, very little railroad legislation came out of the 1885 assembly.

Bills offered to the assembly of 1885 covered many phases of the railroading industry. The Stuart Bill was considered to be

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 191.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 239.

⁵⁶ *Rocky Mountain News*, February 26, 1885, p. 2. The members were criticized for not making recommendations. Rodelphus Gilmore explained the reason as being that the resolution for the committee did not call for them to do so. He thought that it would have been an impertinence for the committee to make recommendations under those circumstances.

⁵⁷ Ibid., February 27, 1885, pp. 3-4.

the most extreme. This was House Bill 56.⁵⁸ Interest in the bill was high among Colorado citizens, and many petitions were sent to the assembly calling for its passage.⁵⁹ The senate chamber was filled to capacity when the Committee on Incorporations met to hear arguments on the bill.⁶⁰ Railroad men thought it worthy of their attention; representatives of the major lines serving Colorado appeared before the committee to argue against it. Local people spoke for and against it.

The Stuart Bill called for a strong railroad commission.⁶¹ The commission was to be composed of a lawyer, an engineer, and a practical businessman. It was to give force to all the provisions of the act and make such regulations as might be in accordance with it. This act would have placed a great deal of power in the hands of the commission. The bill prescribed the form and the charges for tickets. All tickets were to be assignable.⁶² Free passes were prohibited to anyone except employees.⁶³ Railroads were not to be allowed to cut passenger or freight rates. The commissioners were to be required to fix the schedule of freight rates upon the present cash value of the railroad operation. Archer Williams, lawyer for Union Pacific, pointed out that this ignored the actual cost of the lines.⁶⁴ In the event the railroads refused to submit to rulings of the board, it was instructed to place the matter before a district court. The court would be required to enforce the order of the commissioners, the order then to be treated as a judgment of the district court. This action, in effect, would have given the board of commissioners judicial power. The court would have had the power to throw the railroads into the hands of a receiver. The commissioners were not bound to their rulings although the roads were, and appeal from the decision of the commissioners was to be to a petit jury. Williams considered this to be abhorrent.⁶⁵

The bill picked up many of the complaints of the people. It prohibited pooling and made it a criminal offense for anyone to act as a pool commissioner. Rate wars also were prohibited. A road must not conduct its business with the intent of injuring or breaking down manufacturing interest in the state.

⁵⁸ House Bill No. 56, Prescribing Certain Duties of Railroad Companies, and Fixing Penalties and Punishments for their Violation, and Locating a Board of Railroad Commissioners, and Prescribing their Duties; House, *Journal*, 1885, pp. 119, 145-46, 2146-47.

⁵⁹ *Rocky Mountain News*, February 10, 1885, p. 2.

⁶⁰ Ibid., February 18, 1885, p. 8.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 2.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 8.

Railway Age stated that this bill would have tended to annihilate railroading in Colorado. The legislators apparently agreed for the bill failed to pass the assembly.⁶⁶

The issue of connecting railroads was a particularly vigorous contest. Former Governor John Evans led the demand for a law on connecting railroads. Evans was the president of the Denver and New Orleans, which was a north-south line from Denver to Pueblo. The D&RG ran parallel to this line. The

Industrial Pueblo quickly became a goal for rail business.



Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe was an east-west line terminating in Pueblo. Evans attempted to force the AT&SF to do business with his line as well as with the Rio Grande.⁶⁷ The fight finally was carried to the United States Supreme Court. In ruling against the Denver and New Orleans, the Court held that there would have to be legislation to put into effect the provisions of the constitution calling for connecting lines.⁶⁸ Not easily defeated, Evans set out to accomplish this goal. He was

⁶⁶ House, *Journal*, 1885, p. 2146.

⁶⁷ *Rocky Mountain News*, March 2, 1883, p. 8.

⁶⁸ Interview with Ex-Governor Evans, p. 2, H. H. Bancroft Papers, Norlin Library, Western History Collection, University of Colorado, Boulder.

a man of influence in the state, and he personally helped to draft legislation for connecting.⁶⁹

The provisions for connecting were contained in Senate Bill 1, introduced by Mason B. Carpenter of Arapahoe County,⁷⁰ and in House Bill 19, by Nathaniel Rollins of Lake County.⁷¹ Every road in the state would be required to connect and do business with all other roads. They also would be required to carry each other's cars on their tracks for a reasonable compensation. Also unlawful would have been the diversion of freight intended for one road to a competing line.



The opposition to the bill labeled it special legislation. Colonel David C. Dodge of the D&RG pointed out:

It will have a tendency to stop railroad building in the state. . . . A railroad company is not going to the expense of constructing a line of road into different parts of the State if it is known that some other company by building some little short line and connecting with the first road can tap its business.⁷²

The Senate Committee on Corporations agreed with the op-

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Senate, Journal*, 1885, p. 15.

⁷¹ *House, Journal*, 1885, p. 103.

⁷² *Denver Tribune-Republican*, February 7, 1885, p. 5.

position. In the majority report it was shown that the only road wanting the legislation was the Denver and New Orleans. The committee protested the clause which would make it unlawful to reduce rates. This limitation would tend to weaken competition. The committee feared its only effect would be to deprive an already existing railroad of its business to be shared with another. It also would put existing lines in peril. Railroad companies could build to the state line and force roads in Colorado to connect without building a mile of road into the state. The majority report recommended that the bill not pass; the minority recommended passage.⁷³ The connecting bill passed the house by a two-thirds majority, and it failed the senate by only one vote.⁷⁴

The major railroad bill to pass the 1885 assembly was House Bill 217 by Nathaniel Rollins.⁷⁵ In its original form the bill called for a board of commissioners with regulatory powers. One of those powers was to fix maximum rates.⁷⁶ The senate amended the regulatory powers of the commission, and a compromise between the two houses resulted in the creation of the office of the commissioner. The commissioner was to have advisory duties.⁷⁷ The commissioner was to inspect the railroads and notify them in writing of any changes necessary. He was to report any violations of the laws of the state to the legislature each year. He would have authority to fix loading points in consultation with the railroads. The roads were required to report to the commissioner each year, and he in turn would report to the governor.

Upon written request the railroads were required to furnish cars to any and all persons who might apply for them.⁷⁸ If cars were not available, they were to be furnished in the order of request. Discrimination in freight charges was forbidden as were rebates. No railroad could charge unreasonable prices, and a freight schedule had to be posted in passenger depots.⁷⁹

The *News* was in favor of the Rollins Bill if it was "a measure which will benefit the whole state."⁸⁰ After amendment by the senate the editor accused the senators of cutting the heart out of the bill. He wanted to leave railroad legislation to the next assembly. He was afraid that the amended bill would not

be adequate and that apathy would prevent further action from being taken.⁸¹

The objection of the *News* was based on the cost of a board which would serve in an advisory position. In the opinion of the editor: "If the Rollins Bill as amended by the Senate must pass, we think the cost . . . should be assessed upon the railway."⁸² In final form the Rollins Bill provided for one commissioner.

Also, an act was passed in the 1885 assembly to amend the General Statutes concerning the killing of stock by railroads.⁸³ It established the method of collecting damages and a schedule of payment for stock. The bill was agreed upon by both cattlemen and the railways as satisfactory. The bill increased the price to be paid by the railway company, and dairy cows and thoroughbred cattle were to be paid for by appraised value. The stock agent of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe, called for a clause providing for proof of fault of the railroad when the tracks were fenced.⁸⁴ This clause was not included.

Subtle references to undue pressure being brought to bear by the railroad men are found in the newspapers of this period. The editor of the *News* accused enemies of railroad legislation of attempting to create a feud between the two houses of the assembly to prevent compromise on the amendments to the Rollins Bill.⁸⁵ He also thought the senate showed petty spite in its treatment of the bills introduced from the house. A resolution was offered in the house to investigate the pressure being brought to bear by the railroads to stop legislation⁸⁶ but was tabled.

A commissioner, as provided in the Rollins Bill, was selected by Governor Benjamin Eaton. The commissioner, W. B. Felker of Denver,⁸⁷ made an adequate report for 1885 but was unable to function in 1886 due to no funds' being allocated for his salary or his needed operational activities.⁸⁸ In 1893 the Rollins Act was repealed. The final action of the 1885 assembly was removed from Colorado statutes.⁸⁹

When one evaluates the Rollins Act, it appears to have been an effective measure to handle railroad problems. With the aid of the railroad men it could have become such, but by August of 1885 the old complaints again were appearing in the Denver

⁷³ Senate, *Journal*, 1885, pp. 1047-60.

⁷⁴ Interview with Ex-Governor Evans, p. 2.

⁷⁵ House, *Journal*, 1885, p. 216.

⁷⁶ *Rocky Mountain News*, March 21, 1885, p. 4.

⁷⁷ Colorado, *Laws Passed at the 5th Session of the General Assembly* (Denver: Collier & Cleveland Lith. Co., 1885), p. 308.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 309.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Rocky Mountain News*, March 4, 1885, p. 4.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, March 18, 1885, p. 1; March 21, 1885, p. 4.

⁸² *Ibid.*, March 25, 1885, p. 4.

⁸³ *Laws Passed at the 5th Session*, pp. 304-06.

⁸⁴ *Denver Tribune-Republican*, January 28, 1885, p. 2.

⁸⁵ *Rocky Mountain News*, March 23, 1885, p. 3.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Report of the Railroad Commissioner*, pp. 1-68.

⁸⁸ Phillips, "Freight Rates and Manufacturers in Colorado," p. 49.

⁸⁹ Colorado, *Laws Passed at the 9th Session of the General Assembly of the State of Colorado* (Denver: Smith-Brooks Printing Co., 1893), p. 405.

press. The *News* reported of complaints of overcharging, refusal to exchange business, of being ordered to establish loading points, and of the Denver and New Orleans' filing complaints against the AT&SF.

The fact that the Rollins Act was repealed indicates that it may have provided more regulation than the railroads wanted. As it was, Colorado had to wait for another year to regulate railroads effectively.

In conclusion, attempts at antirailroad legislation in the 1885 assembly were either blocked or watered down. Only two bills of regulation survived the onslaught of railroad opposition. The railroad men adequately defended their position. They argued before the investigating committees, were interviewed by the press, and undoubtedly had much private contact with the legislators. At the end of the session they provided an excursion trip for all legislators to Salt Lake. The railroads undoubtedly were looking ahead to other years and other attempts by the legislature to saddle them.

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