



# Newsletter

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Fall Edition 2019

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Photo by Wayne Kemp



In this issue of the newsletter I am going to discuss a few things which I have recently encountered both good and bad. These are things which need to be mentioned as they do affect the society as a whole.

First of as you may recall over two years ago, we were extremely fortunate to have a number of narrow-gauge railroad cars donated to our society by Lindsey Ashby. Ashby who for many reasons is a real hero to railroad history and railroad preservation in Colorado. He is a very decent and good man who is responsible for resurrecting and rebuilding the Georgetown Loop and the Royal Gorge Railroad operation. His wife Rosa stands tall besides him in helping oversee the Royal Gorge operations.

## A Letter From the President: Jim Jordan

Our attempts in Calhan pale in comparison to what Ashby went through in putting together both of his operations. An ungrateful Colorado State Historical Society "proceeded in a different direction from Ashby, a number of years back" at Georgetown.

But Ashby persevered and built and put another operation together in Canon City. The Royal Gorge Route Railroad. To my way of thinking Lindsey Ashby is a man cast in the mold of General Palmer or David Moffat. Willing to follow a dream and reach out and create something great.

When we were told that we could have the cars at Parkdale, we were asked to see if we could find homes for these historic cars. I contacted the Western Museum of Mining and Industry in Colorado

Springs, The Cumbres and Toltec Railroad in Chama, New Mexico, the Pine Grove Historical Society in Pine Grove, Colorado. Plus, the Denver South Park and Pacific Railway Historical Society in Como, and the Florence Historical Society in Florence, Colorado. Our society kept three cars for our project in Dumont.

In the move of cars from Parkdale we were invited by a great guy who had a lot of space at the old Florence Oil Transfer Station in Florence, Allen Knisley. We accepted his offer and found we would have to have more space than intended and again another kind and generous person, Tom Shelnut stepped up and offered space at Rockdale which we accepted. So, the cars have been stored at these two locations for some time now awaiting their owners time

## Letter continued

to clear land and lay rail. Finally, the WMMI and Pine Grove were ready for their cars. I am proud to say that the Dreshers who moved the cars came through and were able to get the cars moved safely and at a minimal cost.

Now the remaining cars which were ours. In the last year we had approached the Clear Creek Fire District and both parties agreed that we could lease a section of land in Dumont. Gus Chambers was kind enough to do the surveying on the site where we were planning to move the station.

The survey found that the only workable way the station could be located on that piece of land was to have it rest on an angle. In doing that we would be limited to one or two cars for display.

So, we are moving forward with a lot of help from a lot of sources. All I can say is thank all who are helping save our vanishing and important history.

## Update On Society Activities

By Jim Jordan

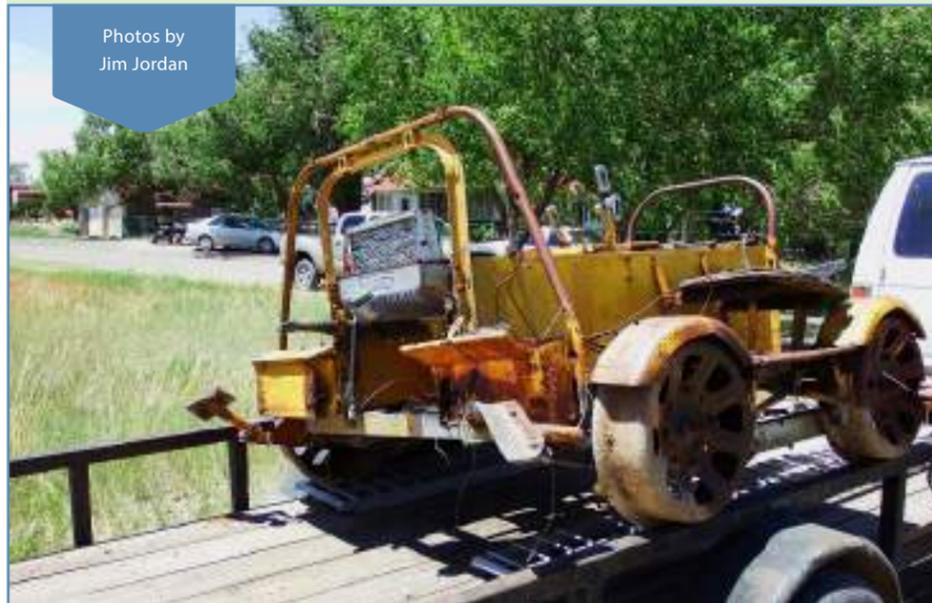
**FIRST: THE SPEEDER** - was donated to us by Mike's Museum in Las Animas County, it was brought to Calhan by John Ziegler, Bruce Yelen, Wayne Kemp. Assisting were Cindi Ryan, and her sister and brother in law.

**SECOND: THE SEMAPHORE** - We are to be the recipient of a real early style semaphore later in the fall. It will be used at Calhan (we already have a station mounted semaphore that was the type used from the 1860's until the 1920's for the Dumont Project. It came out of a railroad station in Northern Minnesota that closed in the 1920's.

The paddle blade semaphore is the type of semaphore we are being given, again courtesy of Mike's Museum, Las Animas County, Colorado. It is the same style that can be found in use today (Springer, New Mexico, BNSF main line) soon to disappear forever. We will need help on moving it to Calhan, and reassembling it, after we deconstruct it for moving. Again, the help will be in removing it from its pedestal, welding it back up when we get to the depot and placing it on the apron at Calhan. We have the handles for it, and the rods maybe be covered with dirt in front of the bay window. It can be made to operate as one once did at the Calhan Depot.

**ADVERTISING:** From membership feedback we are implementing a change from our policy which was no commercial advertising in the newsletter. We now are going to be running business card advertisements. Please noted the last page of the newsletter as shown in the current newsletter along with cost information. There will be limited space.

Photos by  
Jim Jordan



Photos by  
Wayne Kemp



## After Promontory – Exhibit and Publications

By Wayne Kemp

2019 is the 150th Anniversary of the driving of the Golden Spike at Promontory Summit, UT and the completion of the first Transcontinental Railroad. Many feel that the meeting of the rails at Promontory was an ending, mission accomplished kind of thing. Reality disagrees ... it was just the beginning. By 1900 there were a total of 5 active Transcontinental Railroads. The rail network that developed from the 1860's through the early 1900's is one of the main driving forces for America's emergence as a world power.

The Center for Railroad Photography and Art (a non-profit group that supports railroad history, photography, and art) has put together a traveling exhibit of historic and modern photography along with works of contemporary artists documenting what happened after Promontory. The special project, After Promontory: 150 Years of Transcontinental Railroad includes a book, conferences, and traveling exhibitions that examine the significance and lasting impact of the transcontinental railroads on the American West.

After Promontory takes a wide view, considering the events at Promontory to be the start of a larger phenomenon, an entire era of transcontinental railroad construction that stretched over nearly 5 decades and drove technology changes that impacted the industrialization of America. The basic premise is that, collectively, the transcontinental railroads profoundly reshaped the human geography of the West by efficiently transporting people and materials, creating the basic structure of the region we recognize and live in today.

### THE AFTER-PROMONTORY EXHIBIT SCHEDULE:

#### CURRENT VENUES

- Brigham Young University Art Museum, Provo, Utah, March 29 - October 5, 2019
- Cheyenne Depot Museum, Cheyenne, Wyoming, April - October 2019
- Denver Public Library, Denver, Colorado, May 1- August 31, 2019
- San Mateo County History Museum, Redwood City, California, May 10, 2019 - May 1, 2021

#### UPCOMING VENUES

- Hastings Museum, Hastings, Nebraska, September 19, 2019 - March 15, 2020
- Carnegie Arts Center, Alliance, Nebraska, September 24, 2019 - January 4, 2020
- Architectural Heritage Center, Portland, Oregon, October 30 - April 24, 2020
- Temple Railroad Museum, Temple, Texas, June 1 - August 31, 2020

All the venues are in areas that have historic ties with railroads and historic ties to the American West. There are some amazing things out there ... take the time to follow the non-Interstate path and visit those smaller cities ...

For more information on the CRP&A and After Promontory please visit their website: <http://www.railphoto-art.org/exhibits/after-promontory/>

## Upcoming Events

As a service to our members and readers, we try and list upcoming events for all railroad happenings. Please if you have an event you would like to have us mention, contact us at GrafSpee40@yahoo.com or telephone us at 303-961-5929.

### SEPTEMBER 14TH

Workday at Calhan, Colorado  
10:30 AM - 3:00 PM

### SEPTEMBER 21ST

Roy's Model Train Swap Meet, 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM at Hotel Elegante: 2886 South Circle Drive, Colorado Springs, CO. For more info call 719.728.0503.

### SEPTEMBER 28TH

RMRHS – Annual Membership Meeting. Time & Place TBD.

### OCTOBER 3RD

RMRHS – BOD Meeting at Penrose House: 1661 Mesa Avenue, Colorado Springs, CO

### OCTOBER 12TH-13TH

TECO Fall Show at the Chapel Hill Mall, Colorado Springs, CO

### NOVEMBER 30TH & DECEMBER 1ST

TCA Show - Loveland, CO  
The Ranch Exhibition Complex at the Budweiser Event Center  
Saturday: 9:00 – 5:00 PM  
Sunday: 9:00 – 4:00 PM  
Information call 303-570-2761

## Wyoming's Deadliest Train Wreck

### By Eric Hartman

On Thursday the 27th of September 1923, Train Number 30 of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad crashed into the rain swollen Cole Creek about 16 miles east of Casper, Wyoming. A flash flood had destroyed the wooden bridge over the creek. For several days it had been raining heavily and steady. That Thursday, the roadmaster had inspected the wooden bridge several times that day and into the evening. In fact, the roadmaster on duty that night had inspected and traveled over the bridge at 6:15 p.m. on a local freight train. He indicated the bridge was secure and the creek's water level was "under than 16 inches."

Engineer Ed Spangler a very experienced engineer, replaced Roy Jackson who was regularly assigned to trains 29 and 30. Jackson "had laid off on arrival of No. 29 on the morning of Sept. 27," Engineer Spangler was informed that the bridge had been inspected at 6:15 PM and was told to use extreme caution in traveling." The train departed for Denver at 8:30 PM. Some of the passengers who chose the sleeping cars went to bed soon after boarding.

Somewhere about 9:00 to 9:15 p.m. the flood waters washed the bridge out ahead of the train's arrival at Cole Creek. The 100-ton steam locomotive, Colorado & Southern Engine No. 350, nose-dived into Cole Creek about 45 minutes after leaving Casper. Several of the cars the e crashed into the creek and plowed each other, the wooden mail car, express car, day coach, smoker car, and one Pullman car went off the tracks. Out of the trains consist only two Pullman cars remained upright on the tracks.

The trainman, who rode on the car farthest to the back, jumped from

the train after the crash and started running the four miles to the Fry way station east of Casper to call officials. It was reported that the flagman said, "I've lost my train in the river."

It was reported that a passenger, one Dan J. McQuaid crossed a bridge over the North Platte River west and upstream, then swam across Muddy Creek to reach Muddy Station and telephone the CB&Q dispatcher's office in Casper with the first news.

A rescue train arrived out of Casper by 11 p.m. Its headlight shone upon the tragic and horrific scene, made even more horrible by the screams and crying of the passengers who were trapped in the devastating wreckage. Darkness, flooding and continuing rain hampered the rescue and created a scene of utter devastation of the train cars.

Some of the bodies were swept by flooding waters into the North Platte River about 200 yards away.

Estimates of the number of casualties vary, but it was clearly the worst train crash in Wyoming's history. Some reports estimate 30 or 31 were killed in the accident out of 66 total passengers who rode the train.

Though the water had receded, the locomotive had sunk disappearing out of sight in the mud of the creek bottom. A rescue worker commented, "One end of the mail or baggage car was sticking from the sand near the opposite bank with a coach car laying on top of the shattered and broken car".

"The only body I viewed," he added, "was a man's legs protruding from under the end of the mail car."



Photos courtesy of Casper College, Casper, Wyoming

## continued...

Rescue workers from Casper, Wyoming and Alliance, Nebraska, including roundhouse, maintenance of way, and bridge gangs from both Casper and Alliance, Neb. Wrecker from Alliance crews also assisted in the cleanup, which lasted from September 27th - October 15th, 1923.

As in any disaster heroes come forth, a civil engineer, M.A Robinson from Salida, Colorado, who was traveling with his pregnant wife, the conductor on the Pullman car named Jack Coburn and a porter named George Littleton were heroes, heroes who used a rope made of bell cords as a guide to help rescue people. The trio returned three times to a submerged compartment in one of the cars to assist others. Robinson, the report said, was on the train traveling home with his wife. By the time of newspaper reports, she was in the hospital in Salida giving birth to their child.

Recovered bodies were returned to Casper and laid on railroad stations apron for identification.

Contemporary articles list names and dates of some of the deceased who were found much later; Conductor Guy Goff, May 24, 1924; Engineer Ed Spangler, January. 22, 1925. When workmen were rebuilding the bridge. Four years after the accident IN 1927, a mailbag from the mail car was recovered.

The accident, with the losses to the railroad cars totaling \$98,000, made national headlines. Reports indicated that the engineer had applied brakes shortly before the crash.

An investigation conducted by the Interstate Commerce Commission and the railroad in the, ruled that the wreck was "accidental and unpreventable," according to one news report. The railroad paid \$60,000 in settlements to survivors and estates of the deceased. The locomotive was eventually raised from the creek bed and rebuilt at the C& S shops in Denver, a job that took many months. It operated for 27 more years until it was scrapped.



Photos courtesy of Casper College, Casper, Wyoming



## The Calhan Depot Update

By Jim Jordan

The Calhan Depot was initially built and owned by the Chicago, Kansas and Nebraska Railroad, a separate, but associated company of the Chicago, Rock Island and Chicago Railway. It existed from 1888 to 1891 when it was absorbed into the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad.

In the late 1880s, the officials from Illinois-based Rock Island Railroad Company found good quality shallow groundwater in Calhan and thought the virtually treeless land would make an excellent stopping point between Limon and Colorado Springs.

The first train passed through Calhan on November 5, 1888, according to Larry L. King's book, "The History of Calhan and Vicinity 1888-1988." That prompted the opening of the town's post office 19 days later.

The elevation of the Depot is 6,509 feet above sea level and is the highest elevation of any depot that had been on the Rock Island Railway. The distance to Chicago from Calhan is 996.0 miles and to Colo. Springs terminus is 37.4 miles.

In addition to the depot, a section house, bunkhouses, water tower, pump house, and stock pens were built at the same time. There were two tracks in front of the depot and one behind it.

The best that can be determined is that Calhan's original depot was like those at Arriba and Seibert, which were two-story buildings made of wood, painted a dark reddish-brown. In 1902 or 1903 it was modified to the single-story building that stands today.

Again in 1936 depot was modified once again and upgraded with a cinder block foundation and a concrete floor that remains today. It was painted a dark yellowish-brown with dark brown trim on the doors, and an art deco porthole front door window.

Sometime in early 1980, it was painted a white with turquoise trim by the then occupants, the Cadillac and Lake City railroad.

The depot was registered as a historic place on the National Register of Historic Places in 1995.

Photos By  
Wayne Kemp



## ... continued

### RESTORATION

Society became aware of the depot in 2013 and took it on as its first project. A deal was struck with the town of Calhan for the Rocky Mountain Railroad Heritage Society to buy the building and develop the site into a railroad heritage park. The price was \$25. The Society will repair the building, lay some rail and place at least three rail cars on the tracks. We have obtained an original Rock Island caboose, an early passenger car, and a flatcar which need to be restored. The vision is that the passenger car can become a gathering place for local groups, maybe even a coffee shop or perhaps the local farmers market/museum. When the restoration is complete, the Society will then sell the restored park back to the town or a local non-profit for the same \$25.

The building needs much work, and we have begun the process. The biggest problem we currently face is the replacement of the roof, as it is in very poor condition; there are holes in the roof, and the gutters have broken off.

The gutters should be rebuilt (as we do have the original steel gutters) and be replaced on the roof line. Repairing the soffits go together with the roof work.

### THE RAIL YARD

The first 30 feet of track were laid by amateurs in 8 hours. We concluded that the people who put the 996 miles of track from Chicago to Calhan would not hire us to lay more. We now have 120 feet of track, thanks to a group of professionals, the track is now perfect!

### WHY SAVE THE DEPOT?

To keep the history of railroading alive in Colorado, El Paso county and the Calhan community.

For more information see our Facebook page CRI&P Calhan Depot Project.

Photos By  
Wayne Kemp





Photo from Denver Public Library

## Colorado & Southeastern Railway **By Dr. Robert Bruce**

Among one of the small railroads in Colorado's history was the Colorado & Southeastern Railway. The line ran from Barnes, Colorado to Hastings, Colorado. It was primarily a railroad which hauled coke for the mills in Pueblo. The line from Barnes to Hastings was originally constructed by the Canon d'Agua Railroad in late 1888-1889.

The Canon d'Agua Railroad was at that time a subsidiary of the Union Pacific's, Denver & Gulf Railway, that at that time period had trackage rights on the Denver and Rio Grande's line running from Pueblo to Trinidad.

The Colorado & Southeastern Railway was incorporated on May 16th, 1903, as a subsidiary of the Victor-American Fuels Company, the owner of the Hastings and Delagua mines. The line

was then extended from Hastings to Delagua in 1903.

On August 18th, 1909, the assets of the C&SE Railway were sold to the C&SE Railroad, incorporated only two weeks prior. Eventually the line became a subsidiary of the Colorado & Southern Railway.

In addition to their own 6.5 miles between Barnes and Delagua, the C&SE also had trackage rights to Trinidad over the C&S and owned 1.2 miles of connecting branch line between Chandler Junction and the D&RG Junction on the Chandler Creek Branch.

By 1925, a Las Animas County business directory reported that Hasting had a population of a thousand, including 75 miners. By 1929, the town's population

had dropped to just 300, which included just four Victor-American employees – an electrician, a mine surveyor, a tippelman, and a watchman. By 1939, the formerly busy mining camp had become a ghost town and in 1948, a business directory listed only one inhabitant.

The final cleanup of the site was completed in 1952 and the railroad tracks were removed. In February 1963, the Denver Post reported of Hastings: "a long row of dilapidated coke ovens and the foundations of a few old buildings are all that remain. Not even a wooden sign marks the location on the dusty road."

The rail route was abandoned between Hastings and Delagua in 1952 and removed entirely from Hastings east in 1959.

## Laramie Train Depot **By Wayne Kemp**

In mid-May a few of our members traveled to Laramie, Wyoming to witness the return of the largest type of steam engine ever built.

The Union Pacific's "Big Boy", an ALCO built in 1944 Originally constructed to pull the grade in Weber Canyon for the war effort. The 4014 was used until the late 1950's then luckily retired and saved from the cutters torch. The story of the 4014 will be discussed at length in an upcoming issue and it is a fascinating story.

The Laramie Union Pacific Railroad Depot is an interesting story in itself. Built by Union Pacific to replace a station and hotel which burned down in a fire in 1917 the new depot was first opened for passengers in 1924.

Most named Union Pacific passenger trains stopped at this depot until the event of AMTRAK which utilized the station until it shifted its train service south into Colorado.

The Museum was donated to the Laramie Historical Society then again donated to the Laramie Railroad Depot Association.

The depot looks a lot smaller from the outside than it actually is. Inside you could place both of our depots side by side and have room left over. It truly is beautiful and in such pristine condition. The museum section does have a lot of items rarely seen in any museum anywhere. A curve gauge for example is on display.

The people running this great structure are to be commended for the work they have accomplished with this great depot.

It was decided that the members of this great edifice will be one of the groups that are chosen to receive this year's award for Excellence of a Small Depot".

Well done guys.

Photos by Wayne Kemp

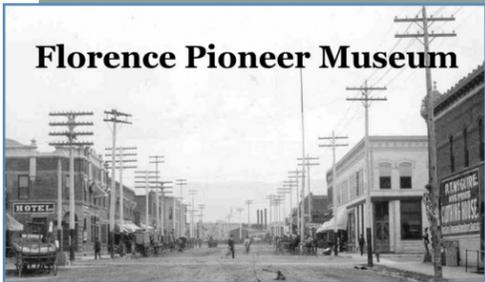


## Railway cont...

The final cleanup of the site was completed in 1952 and the railroad tracks were removed. In February 1963, the Denver Post reported of Hastings: "a long row of dilapidated coke ovens and the foundations of a few old buildings are all that remain at the disaster site. Not even a wooden sign marks the location on the dust main road."

*Additionally ... this area is a couple of miles west of the Ludlow massacre memorial just off I-25. The Hastings Coal mine was the site of the worst coal mine disaster in Colorado, a 1917 explosion/ fire that killed at least 121 miners ... probably a combination of methane and coal dust).*





**Florence Pioneer Museum**



## Florence Pioneer Museum and Research Center

100 E Front St  
PO Box 131  
Florence CO, 81226  
719.784.1904  
florencepioneermuseum.org

Hours  
Tuesday - Friday: 1:00 - 4:00 pm  
Saturday: 10:00 am - 3:00 pm  
Sunday & Monday: Closed

## Florence Pioneer Museum & Research Center By Wally Balou

One of the most interesting associate members in our organization is the Florence Pioneer Museum and Research Center. Florence, CO started with a railroad hauling coal which had been discovered in the area of Rockvale and Coal Creek in Fremont, County. The first oil in the region was discovered there in 1862.

In about 1870 a Scottish Immigrant named James McCandless began homesteading the area where the present-day city of Florence is located. His homestead was next to the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad trackage which had been laid to the coal fields. Knowing that the railroad would bring other settlers, he wisely plotted his property as a town site. McCandless named the town Florence after his three-year-old daughter "Minnie" Florence. In 1874 Florence consisted of an orchard, a few stores and a small railroad depot.

In 1881 oil was discovered in quantity which caused a boom as oil wells and oil fields were developed. The town was incorporated in 1887 with a booming population of 450 citizens, also the first brick building on Main street was built. By 1890 there were 50 oil wells producing black gold, 60 new homes were built, and businesses were appearing.

Florence was an incredible place to be at the end of the 19th Century. It had 1300 oil wells, 185 coal mines, 26 oil companies, 12 newspapers, 8 churches, 5 oil refineries, 5 brick yards, 6 ore mills, 2 cement plants and 3 railroads with a joint line depot. It was a transportation center that was the first oil center west of the Mississippi in 1862. Florence had three railroads which served it, the Denver and Rio Grande, the Santa Fe, and the Florence and Cripple Creek railroad.

In 1890 gold was discovered in Cripple Creek north of Florence. By 1892 Florence's Fathers built a road to the gold mines that hauled the miners in and hauled the ore out. On July 4, 1894 a narrow-gauge railroad opened up Phantom Canyon to bring down the riches from the mines to the railhead in Florence. This was to become known as the famous Gold Belt Line.

By 1898 Florence entrepreneurs had built 8 reduction mills to process the gold ore which stood beside 7 oil refineries and 5 brick factories. These local industries were soon joined by the Ideal Cement Plant. Florence was enjoying its finest hour as a western boom town. By the turn of the century ore production slowed down and oil recovery became too expensive. As the gold ore production and oil recovery slowly disappeared from the Florence area, the town slowly became, as a lot of towns in Colorado did, a sleepy pleasant community. It wasn't really until the Federal Bureau of prisons built "Super Max" that Florence started to wake from its slumber and became an interesting place to visit.

Florence and its history are well preserved via the Florence Pioneer Museum. The Florence Pioneer Museum was dedicated September 12, 1964 the museum contains donations of historical significance and pioneer relics of great interest. It offers an ever-changing lineup of exhibits. It is worth coming back as there are many new and exciting items of the history of the area. The extremely energetic and enthusiastic Director of the Museum, Gayle MacKinnon is always welcoming guests who visit this really fun museum. Their website is a great opportunity to learn more about Florence Pioneer Museum. You can read about its history, get to know the team or stay up to date on related news and events. We encourage you to visit this great town and fantastic museum. We think you will like it.

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## Advertise your business here in the upcoming winter edition of the RMRHS Newsletter!!

The cost to run an business card sized ad (2 x 3.5 in) is \$10 per issue or \$35.00 for a year - 4 issues total. Space is limited so if you would like to advertise please call 303-961-5929. Digital files are encouraged, high resolution pdf or jpg or we can scan existing business cards. Ads will be due by Friday, November 22nd.

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## Rocky Mountain Railroad Heritage Society

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