

ASPEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ASPEN AND THE RAILROADS

ROARING FORK FELLOWSHIP

SUPERVISED BY

JODY MCCABE, DIRECTOR OF THE ASPEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BY

W. CLARK WHITEHORN

ASPEN, COLORADO

JANUARY, 1993



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the Aspen Historical Society for their help with the research on this project. I would also like to thank Ruth Whyte for sponsoring the Roaring Fork fellowship.

Thanks also go out to Lysa Wegman-French and Anne Gilbert who studied the daily life of farmers and miners in the Roaring Fork Valley. Once again, thanks to Patty Limerick for her help with this ongoing project. Her excellent editorial skills have helped make these projects much better than they would be without her help.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 1. THE RACE: THE DENVER AND RIO GRANDE AND THE MIDLAND RAILROADS BUILD TOWARDS ASPEN.....	10
CHAPTER 2. GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS.....	19
CHAPTER 3. ASHCROFT: WHEN RAILROADS NEVER ARRIVE.....	26
CHAPTER 4. AFTER THE SILVER RUSH: RAILROADS ATTEMPT TO SAVE ASPEN.....	33
CHAPTER 5. A ONE-ROAD TOWN: ASPEN FROM 1918 TO 1969.....	50
CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION: THE LAST WHISTLE BLOWS.....	58
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	62

INTRODUCTION

Mining represents one of the great communal efforts in the conquest of the West. Miners depended on farmers to supply them with food. Storekeepers provided miners with tools, candles, clothing, and other implements necessary to the tasks of mining. Ultimately, though, miners depended upon the men running transportation services to take ore to smelters and bring back mining supplies. The most important transportation service was the railroad. Other types of transportation services--burro pack trains and wagons--initially served to get Aspen's mining boom underway, but the railroads were capable of moving ore in greater quantities as well as bringing more goods and services to Aspen. The railroad put the community on solid economic footing, and when the silver market collapsed in 1893 the railroad saved the town by continuing its service for the region's farmers and miners who remained after the 1893 collapse.

Starting with its inception Aspen had an advantage over other Colorado mining towns such as Leadville, Black Hawk, and Georgetown. Aspen's founders had participated in the Georgetown and Leadville mining booms. They understood the necessity of early organization to attract outside

investments. Henry B. Gillespie witnessed the messy growth of Leadville in the 1870s. He also saw the first prospectors returning from the Aspen area and knew he had an opportunity to make a fortune. In 1879 he organized the camp on the Roaring Fork River. He invested in two claims on Aspen Mountain and convinced the prospectors in the region that the region would grow if he could persuade the federal government to establish a post office there. On his way to Washington D.C. he invited Abel D. Breed to come in with him as a partner.¹

While Gillespie sought eastern investors and federal recognition, B. Clark Wheeler crossed Independence Pass from Leadville and entered Aspen early in 1880. Although he claimed the title "professor," Gillespie was really a promoter without a job. He found in Aspen the opportunity to put his promotional skills to work. With the backing of a Philadelphia corporation Wheeler formed the Aspen Town and Land Company in 1880.²

That year two more men who would become important in the growth of Aspen came to the Roaring Fork region. D. R. C. Brown and H. P. Cowenhaven left Black Hawk to find work in Arizona, but they were in no hurry to get there. Brown had

¹Malcolm J. Rohrbough, Aspen: The History of a Silver Mining Town, 1879-1893, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 19-20.

²Ibid, pp.20-22.

been Cowenhaven's clerk at a grocery store. After stopping in Leadville to collect debts due him, Cowenhaven ran into a prospector, William Blodgett, who was returning to Aspen through Independence Pass. Blodgett told the two men that if they wanted to make some money, they should head to Aspen. He warned them against trying to get their wagons over Independence Pass, but if they would take the more circuitous route through Taylor Pass, they would be able to cross over into the Roaring Fork drainage and descend to Aspen by way of Castle Creek.³ Despite Brown's description of Blodgett as a man who "handled the truth carelessly," the Arizona-bound party decided to investigate the new region.⁴

Their journey over Taylor Pass illustrates why railroads became so important in the survival of Aspen.

In the morning we loaded up and started again. In about a mile or less, we came to a drop of about 40 feet--practically a straight bluff. We unloaded the wagons, packed the stuff around and got it down. We then lowered the wagons by ropes, and got everything down in good shape. We continued for several days in much the same manner, unloading the wagons and lowering them when we came to impossible places. This made our progress very slow, in fact it took us two weeks to go ten miles.⁵

In 1880 the Taylor Pass route was the only east-to-west route into Aspen that could accommodate wagons.

³Len Shoemaker, Pioneers of the Roaring Fork, (Denver: Sage Books, 1965), pp.44-45.

⁴Ibid, p.45.

⁵Ibid, p.47.

Independence Pass was barely a burro trail. There was no way to make money shipping ore to Leadville using wagons.

Aspenites quickly recognized that the only way to support their town was to first create transportation routes to the outside world. Although the easiest route out of Aspen was westerly down the Roaring Fork River to its confluence with the Colorado River at Glenwood Springs, the route that would connect Aspen to the railroads was easterly over Independence Pass or the Taylor Pass route south from Aspen and then north to Leadville. In 1880 Gillespie organized the Roaring Fork Improvement Company, which built a toll road over Taylor Pass and into Buena Vista. B. Clark Wheeler built a road over Independence Pass that opened in 1882. Several stage lines then began operations over the pass to take passengers to and from Leadville.⁶ These stage lines established way stations at Bromley on the east side and Lincoln Creek on the west side to aid the drivers. There were also inns at Four-Mile Park, Seaton's Ranch, and Blower's Place that made the journey somewhat easier.⁷

The concept "ease" as applied to these early stage lines, however, was relative. Compared to the first wagon trip over Independence Pass, the stage trips were certainly easier. The first wagon crossed the pass in 1880, but not

⁶Ibid, p.90, and Rohrbough, pp.36-39.

⁷Shoemaker, p.91.

in one piece. Before reaching the top the drivers had disassembled the wagon, lashed the pieces to their mules, then crossed through the snow-packed pass, often having to tow the wagon pieces on hand sleighs while the unburdened mules struggled through the drifts.⁸ The entire trip took one month. From this inauspicious start various entrepreneurs set about "improving" the road. On the west side of Independence Pass men in Aspen had built toll bridges across the streams and ravines that crossed the path. Each crossing cost twenty-five cents for every animal in the pack train. Despite the toll costs, the Independence Pass route was somewhat cheaper because the Taylor Pass route was eighty-two miles as compared to fifty-two over Independence to the ore smelters at Leadville.⁹ In addition, the route over Independence only had to cross one mountain range as compared to the two via the Taylor route.

Even after road improvements the route was hazardous for several reasons. Ice and snow were the foremost hazards. The Leadville Daily Herald described what happened on one winter crossing:

In many places ice has thus formed in the roads through the mountains which promises to do damage during the

⁸Don and Jean Griswold, "Twin Lakes Toll Road," Vol. 15, The 1959 Brand Book of the Denver Westerners, (Boulder: Johnson Publishing Co., 1960), p.80.

⁹Ibid, p.84.

winter months to those whose business calls them to the outlying settlements...They [J.C. Carson's express stage] had just left Everett's about two hundred yards when there was a very short turn and a steep downgrade encountered. The driver slacked the pace of his steeds but was unable to keep the vehicle in an upright position, for the hind wheels slid off on the ice striking against a stone careening the wagon over the side of the hill. It didn't turn over, but simply fell on its side, dumping the passengers in confusion and throwing the driver into the bottom of the wagon...¹⁰

For miners and the men who did the banking for the mines there were worse problems. The Farwell Consolidated Mining Company of Independence sent three gold bricks worth \$20,000 by way of the stage. Because the stage was so heavily loaded the driver put the gold bricks in an ore sack and strapped them to the lead horse on his team. Somewhere along the road one of the bricks slipped through a hole in the bag. Eventually, a passenger found the brick, but clearly, the road was a dubious way of transporting large amounts of wealth.¹¹

Toll roads, however, met their end when the railroad reached Aspen. By 1887 only one stage company was still in operation. J.C. Carson continued his service to Aspen until the Denver and Rio Grande railroad reached the city. The railroad could reach Leadville much quicker than the stages and at less cost for the shippers. After 1888 no records exist of any toll roads in operation. As the Leadville

¹⁰Ibid, p.89.

¹¹Ibid, p.91.

Herald Democrat reported the situation, "another relic of the early days gives away before the great civilizer, the iron horse."¹²

Many aspects of mining life gave way before the iron horse, but the trains could not reach many of the mines. Miners still had to get their ore to the rail stations and loading platforms. Many of the mines around Aspen were located on grades too steep for rails. Pack and wagon trains remained the sole means of getting the ore out of the mines and down to the town. William Wardell, whose mother brought him to Aspen over the Independence stage route in 1885, described how ore got to Aspen:

The narrow and rutty roads were so steep in places that the brakes would not hold and it would be necessary to "block" the wheels, which was done by hanging a large log in front of the rear wheels, supported by chains from the body of the wagon. This restrained the wheels so that the wagon actually slid down the road as the horses pulled it along. This arrangement worked very well unless there was a large rock in the middle of the road which would raise the log, causing the whole load to come tumbling down the hill on top of the poor horses.¹³

Wardell went on to note that even when the wagoners kept their wagons under control, the narrowness of the road caused problems when teams came up the road. Mine owners decided that the up-bound team should yield the right-of-

¹²Ibid, p.103.

¹³William W. Wardell, "Memories of Aspen, Colorado," The Colorado Magazine, (Denver: State Historical Society of Colorado, April, 1958), p.116.

way, but sometimes the wagons had no place to get out of the way. If there was no room to pull off to the side of the road, the wagoneers of the empty wagon had to unhitch their teams and carry the empty wagon around the ore-laden wagon. Wagoneers began attaching large sleigh bells to their teams to warn other wagon teams that they should try to pull off the road.¹⁴ What became apparent early on in the railroad era was that railroads did not solve all problems. The railroads merely replaced old problems with new ones.

These anecdotes illustrate the importance of railroads in making Aspen an important mining center. Although the railroads could not replace all animal transport, the trains did speed up service to the town as well as providing Aspen with luxuries such as exotic foods, manufactured clothing, and ornate housing furnishings. Even after the failure of the mining industry in Aspen the railroads would continue their service along the Roaring Fork to capitalize on the growing agricultural interests in the region. The shipping of produce from the region, along with the remnant mining operations, made the journey up the Roaring Fork profitable for the town as well as the railroad. In the late 1930s and early 1940s Aspen began to exploit its most basic natural resource--snow. The tourism arising from the ski industry

¹⁴Ibid, p.116.

brought increased automobile and truck service to Aspen, which doomed the railroads. From the repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act to the ski business, however, the railroads ensured that Aspen would survive. The times might have been lean, but without the railroads there would have been no town at all.

CHAPTER 1

THE RACE: THE DENVER AND RIO GRANDE AND THE MIDLAND RAILROADS BUILD TOWARDS ASPEN

The key to running a successful railroad in the nineteenth-century depended on a railroad's ability to engage in cutthroat competition with other railroads. Mining towns loved this competition because it meant that freight rates would be lower than those charged if only one railroad served a particular town. Aspen was particularly fortunate because of its emergence at a time when railroad competition was reaching its zenith. Two railroads--the Denver and Rio Grande (D&RG) and the Midland--hungrily eyed the booming town on the Roaring Fork and fought each other over who would control the mining industry. The result of this greed was a track-laying race to Aspen that the D&RG won, but the D&RG could not keep the Midland out of Aspen.

William Jackson Palmer built the D&RG to capitalize on mining activity along the Front Range between Denver and Colorado Springs. He used narrow gauge track (three feet) as opposed to the standard four-foot eight and one-half inch

gauge to keep construction costs down.¹ Service along this "Baby Road" began on January 1 between Denver and Colorado Springs. At the same time construction began between Colorado Springs and Pueblo. From Pueblo the D&RG extended a branch line up the Arkansas River valley towards the coal fields near Canon City.² Leadville's mining boom in 1878 drew Palmer's attention towards the headwaters of the Arkansas River. To Palmer's dismay the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad also witnessed the Leadville boom and hurried to begin building up the Arkansas. Geography, however, changed the nature of the race to Leadville. The Royal Gorge through which the Arkansas flowed near Canon City was only wide enough for one set of tracks. Both railroads went to war in the most common battlefield of the American West: the courtroom. Although the famed "Royal Gorge War" featured much armed posturing on both sides, the real fight occurred in the state's Supreme Court. Eventually, the D&RG emerged victorious, but the financial cost was devastating. The D&RG received the right to build to Leadville, and did so in 1880, but in return the AT&SF demanded and got one-half of the DRG's business in southwestern Colorado and one-fourth of the business from

¹Robert Athearn, Rebel of the Rockies: A History of the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), p.14.

²Ibid, pp.15-29.

Denver. AT&SF also received \$1,400,000 for labor costs and structures built in the Royal Gorge.³ Despite their financially precarious position, the D&RG was now prepared to exploit the mining towns of central and western Colorado.

As the D&RG laid tracks toward Utah in the early 1880s, another Colorado-based railroad formed in Colorado Springs. James John Hagerman created the Colorado Midland Railway Company to build a railroad between Colorado Springs and Leadville. Hagerman had invested heavily in Aspen's silver mines and desired to extend the rails past Leadville and into Aspen. Like all railroad men, Hagerman needed eastern capital to finance his railroad. He brought Jerome B. Wheeler--no relation to Clark Wheeler--into a small circle of investors. J.B. Wheeler was a principal owner of R.H. Macy and Company in New York, but he had invested in mines near Aspen and could see the benefits in having a railroad servicing his mining interests.⁴ Hagerman had an advantage over the D&RG; he had seen the troubles that afflicted the "Baby Road."

In letters to business associates Hagerman noted that the D&RG made \$6,000,000 per year but \$2,000,000 of that sum came from the Leadville region alone. He believed that he could build a route one-hundred miles shorter than the D&RG

³Ibid, pp.49-88.

⁴John L. Lipsey, The Lives of John James Hagerman, (Denver: Gold Bell Press, 1968), pp.28-30.

line from Denver to Leadville. Furthermore, people would prefer the Midland because it would be a standard gauge with larger cars. These larger cars would reduce shipping costs because fewer trips would be necessary to carry ore.⁵

The D&RG discovered Hagerman's plan and attempted to buy him out. The D&RG, however, was in a poor position to buy out anybody. In 1884 Judge Moses Hallett appointed William S. Jackson as receiver for the struggling "Baby Road."⁶ While Jackson struggled to pay off bondholders and other creditors the Midland laid tracks. By 1886 the Midland had reached Leadville through Ute Pass and seemed well enough along to build towards Aspen. Jackson increased efforts to buy into the Midland. Hagerman, however, would have nothing to do with the D&RG, so Jackson set about trying to race the Midland to Aspen.⁷

The race was on and the Midland had the early lead. Jackson had no intention of surrendering Aspen to Hagerman. He set forth his dilemma in a letter to a friend:

The Midland question is a very troublesome and annoying problem...once built it would be there and would cut a very important figure, if in no other way than in making rates for the other roads to do business on. Its strength has been and is (1) the presence at Colorado Springs of a rich, ambitious, and restless invalid [Hagerman]...(5) the expectation that the prosecution of the Midland Co's. work with vigor will tend to discourage

⁵Ibid, p.36.

⁶Athearn, pp.145-146, and Rohrbough, p.151.

⁷Athearn, p.155, and Rohrbough, p.151.

construction by the Rio Grande and perhaps prevent it absolutely...⁸

Jackson sent survey parties from Red Cliff to find a route along the Eagle and Grand [Colorado] rivers to Glenwood Springs. Jackson's proposed route along the Colorado River placed him in direct competition with the Burlington and Union Pacific railroads, which wanted to extend lines westward from Denver. Jackson decided to build anyway.⁹ Aspen was too important a mining center to allow it to fall into the hands of the Midland.

David Moffat succeeded Jackson as president of the D&RG in 1887 and pushed Jackson's plan forward. Although the D&RG got a late start, the Midland found itself bogged down building the Hagerman Tunnel roughly seven miles due west of Leadville.¹⁰ This tunnel played a key role in the competition between the Midland and D&RG because it was expensive to build and costly to use. The Midland had to cross the Continental Divide at Cooke Pass (later renamed Hagerman Pass). A route over the Pass was infeasible, so the Midland decided to drill a tunnel. The tunnel's elevation was 11,530 feet, which meant that just getting to the tunnel in winter would be a chore. In 1890 the Midland contracted a private company to build a new tunnel from

⁸William S. Jackson, "Railroad Conflicts in Colorado in the 'Eighties," The Colorado Magazine, (Vol. XXIII, January, 1946), p.13.

⁹Athearn, p.159.

¹⁰Athearn, pp.158-161, Jackson, p.18, and Rohrbough, p.154.

Ivanhoe on the west side to the town of Busk on the east side of the Divide. This new tunnel was only 581 feet lower in elevation, so it too was subject to the mountains' rough winters. For the Midland this tunnel would cause economic problems because they had to purchase special snow clearing trains.¹¹ Even though the workers had completed the first tunnel rather quickly--2,164 feet of tunnel in ten months--they still faced the daunting tasks of bridging both Castle and Maroon Creeks.¹² Moffat pushed his crews relentlessly to force them to catch up with the Midland. On the route from Glenwood Springs to Aspen Moffat allowed supervisors to raise wages.¹³

Aspenites eagerly awaited the arrival of the two railroads. The Midland was the early favorite of the people in Aspen. The Aspen Daily Times believed that the "Denver and Rio Grande people would not have started to build an extension to this part of the state if the Midland had not become a certainty."¹⁴ There was validity to this claim, but Aspen need not have felt slighted because competition between railroads was a basic reality of Western mining life. None of the railroads believed that a competitor

¹¹Clarence L. and Ralph W. Danielson, Basalt: Colorado Midland Town, (Boulder: Pruett Press Inc., 1965), pp. 43-56.

¹²Rohrbough, p.154.

¹³Athearn, p.161.

¹⁴"The Midland's Progress," Aspen Daily Times, 4 March, 1887, p.4.

should receive an advantage in making money, thus, when word got out that the Midland was heading for Aspen, the D&RG raced them for the profits.

If Aspenites felt slighted in March by the D&RG, those feelings quickly changed when the D&RG neared Aspen. Editorials in the paper reached giddy heights. "HIP! HIP! HURRAH!! the railroad has at last reached Aspen."¹⁵ Officially, the railroad had not reached Aspen. Men were still laying track into the town. The process demonstrated some of the fury in which the race between the two railroads progressed:

A half mile more in advance is a gang of men distributing the ties on the grade. Behind them comes a man who lays a line to which the ties are adjusted. Following him are two or three gangs of men who get the ties in their places ready for the rails, and then comes the track-laying gang proper. A car is run forward by mule power, and the rails are slid forward and dropped in their places. The spikes are distributed behind by boys, and the fish plates are quickly adjusted and bolted fast. The spike-drivers bring up the rear...Each pair of men on either side are kept well separated and the work moves along about as fast as they can walk. The construction train, loaded with iron and supplies, and pushed by two engines, brings up the rear, and the mule cars are loaded from it as fast as the iron is wanted.¹⁶

Clearly, Aspen's early distrust of the D&RG changed to adoration when the town's perceived savior approached.

On November 2, 1887 the "official" D&RG train arrived bearing Colorado governor Alva Adams and various railroad

¹⁵Aspen Daily Times, 28 October, 1887, p.4.

¹⁶Aspen Daily Times, 27 October, 1887, p.4.

officials. Mayor Harding of Aspen greeted the dignitaries with a prepared speech stating that the railroads entered Aspen into an "era of prosperity which will be unprecedented in our history."¹⁷ Each dignitary responded with similar banalities, but perhaps no speechmaker exceeded D&RG's chief counsel E.O. Wolcott in sheer hyperbole:

And to-night [sic] on the threshold of our business relations I ask you to remember that the prosperity of the Rio Grande and the prosperity of Colorado are one and synonymous. We must stand or fall together, and in this connection having the common interests, I want to say a word on the subject of interference in railroad legislation. No complaint, no serious complaint so far as I have known has ever been made against the Rio Grande system...¹⁸

Probably the most uninformed men in Colorado had heard of the D&RG's problems. If Wolcott had never heard a complaint, then the man was deaf as a railroad tie. Residents of the Colorado Springs area had complained about the D&RG almost from its inception. Their number one complaint was that the railroad charged inordinate rates to ship goods.¹⁹ In future years Aspenites would learn to sympathize with Front Range towns that depended on the D&RG to ship and carry freight. In a foreshadowing of these problems, Donald McLane's dairy cows became terrified and bolted their pasture when they heard the first train

¹⁷"The Denver and Rio Grande's Welcome," ADT, 2 November, 1887, p.unknown.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Athearn, p.35.

whistles. McLane, a Roaring Fork rancher, discovered after recovering the wayward cows that the cows could give only a trickle of milk.²⁰ McLane's cows eventually were able to give milk again, but Aspenites were to learn that the D&RG would try to milk them when there was nothing to give.

On February 2, 1888 the Colorado Midland sent its first passenger train into the town of Aspen. The distance from Colorado Springs to Aspen was 216.2 miles and the trip took approximately twelve hours. The Midland tracks had reached Maroon Creek by December 1, 1887, but they lacked materials to build a trestle across the creek. The Midland began running service to Aspen on December 6, but the train had to stop on the west side of Maroon Creek. On January 21, 1888 the rest of the materials necessary to complete the bridge trestle arrived, and the Midland was operating in early February.²¹ Although the Midland's arrival seemed anticlimactic to many townsmen, its arrival heralded a short-lived boom period which made Aspen the third largest city in Colorado until 1893.

²⁰Ibid, p.164.

²¹Aspen Times 6 December 1887, and AT 21 January 1888.

CHAPTER 2

GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

Like miners throughout the West, Aspenites extracted ore from the surrounding mines with furious intensity. This activity literally hollowed the mountains around Aspen while at the same time blinding Aspenites to the precariousness of an economy dependent on mining. The clamor over the arrival of the railroads underscored why Aspen would ignore the many mining busts occurring all over Colorado. Railroads were a sign of permanence; a symbol that the mining camp had evolved into a place which people could call home. Certainly, the railroad was an indicator that a town had achieved economic prominence, but absentee railroad owners and the vagaries of the mineral market meant that Aspen had little control over its own destiny. For six years, however, Aspen could ignore the sufferings of other Colorado towns. After all, they had railroads, and these railroads meant that the mines were running, men had jobs, and men with jobs could afford to buy goods shipped in from the outside world.

The first task for the new railroads was to ship out the tons of ore which Aspenites had been unable to transport. Malcolm Rohrbough estimated that Aspen shipped 400 tons of

ore for the forty-five days following the arrival of the D&RG. He estimated the value of one month's ore shipments at \$1,000,000.¹ In 1888 the railroads transported 2,700 tons of ore from Aspen. By 1892 that figure had risen to 4,000 tons a week. For the same period the value of the yearly production of ore rose from \$2,360,000 to \$9,200,000.²

The increase in ore shipments meant that miners could hew more rock from the surrounding mountains. The railroads must have misjudged the miners' ability to produce ore because in 1890 the Aspen Daily Times complained about the "scarcity of rolling stock [ore cars] on both railways..."³ Actually, the railroads were even further behind than the paper suggested. The biggest hindrance to the miners was the location of the mines. Many of the mines were high on the mountainsides where no train could reach. To get ore down from the mines, the miners had to build trams to transport ore down to the samplers. The Tourtelotte Tram shipped one-hundred tons of ore a day and could ship more if railcars were available to transport the ore out of town.⁴

Property values rose in correspondence with the increase in the value of ore shipments. These rising property values

¹Rohrbough, pp.158-159.

²Ibid, p.160.

³Aspen Daily Times, 20 November 1890, p.3.

⁴Ibid, p.4.

caused problems for the Midland. In response to the need for railroads to reach the mines on Aspen Mountain, the Midland proposed extending its line along the base of the mountain. The Midland wanted the city to grant it a right of way through this area so they would not have to buy up the land from property owners. Alderman Pearce supported the Midland's request because "property owners were demanding exorbitant prices."⁵ The counsel for the Durrant Mining Company, which stood to benefit from the new spur, officiously suggested that the owners would not mind having a railroad running by their front doors. He was not far wrong. Billy Mitchell, a property owner along Ute Avenue, said a railroad twelve feet from his door would bother him; however, for \$5,000 he thought maybe he could "retire" from the dispute.⁶ Two weeks later the town granted the right of way. Mitchell, ever the good citizen, tried another ploy. He offered to sell his property for \$2,500, but he feared that the railroad would endanger the lives of children. He played the martyr at the end. "If the council was disposed to adopt the ordinance and destroy his home it could do it; that he would urge his protest no further."⁷ Mitchell was merely doing what everyone in Aspen was doing; the railroads

⁵ADT, 4 October, p.5.

⁶Ibid, p.5.

⁷ADT, 18 October 1892, p.6.

offered opportunities to make an easy buck and Mitchell tried to reap what he thought was his due. He was not the first Aspenite to try to tap into the economic benefits the railroads brought.

The booming economy also meant that Aspenites could afford to buy luxury items. Entrepreneurs wasted no time in taking advantage of the railroads' ability to supply these items. The Theo. Blohm Merchandise Company of Aspen ran a quarter-page advertisement with the bold-faced heading "THE RAILROAD ERA IN ASPEN." The advertisement went on to boast that "each day our trade increases...Our prices named elsewhere in this paper cannot be beaten. We have goods from Spain. Goods from Scotland, Goods from Germany, Goods from Italy...altogether the finest and most complete stock of goods ever brought to Colorado."⁸ Two weeks after the first train in Aspen, merchants were capitalizing on the mining boom.

The arrival of luxury goods in Aspen might seem trivial at first glance, but the effect upon visitors was enormous. When visitors saw most Western mining towns, the first things they noticed were the pollution, squalor, and generally unkempt appearance of the town. Aspen, however, looked much different to visitors. The red light district was small and the city council tried to keep it out of

⁸Aspen Daily Times, 19 November 1887, p. unknown.

sight. In addition the railroads brought to Aspen a sense of longevity. People believed the town would last, so they settled there with their families. One visitor observed that "Aspen became noted locally for its unyielding respectability and force of character. The advantage of this can be seen to-day [sic] in the unusually large proportion of women and children in the population."⁹

The town's respectability grew directly from the entry of the railroads into Aspen, but the railroads had their drawbacks. Not least of these were the physical dangers the trains presented to the people of Aspen. Since the beginnings of the railroad age children have been fascinated with trains. Children early on learned that railroad tracks were an incredibly fun place to play. In 1893 one child narrowly escaped death when a railroad worker spotted a child playing on the tracks in front of an oncoming train. He raced one-hundred yards and pulled the child from an untimely death.¹⁰ Livestock, however, tended to be less fortunate.

Colorado law said that railroads had to pay exemplary damages for livestock they killed along their right-of-way. Exemplary damages meant that railroads paid twice the value of the livestock killed if the prosecution could prove

⁹William W. Howard, Harper's Weekly, 19 January 1889, p.unknown.

¹⁰ADT, 24 August 1893, p.unknown.

negligence. If the railroads agreed to settle without litigation, they only had to pay the actual value of the livestock. In the case of *Watson v. the D&RG*, the county court fined the D&RG \$300 for damage done to livestock.¹¹

A more constant problem for the railroads was natural disasters. The D&RG wasted almost no time in suffering its first wreck on the Aspen line from Glenwood Springs. Three and one-half miles west of Aspen lay a slate bluff which workers had blasted to make the road bed. A thaw after wet, freezing weather had loosened rocks cracked by extensive dynamite blasts. On December 9 the rocks slid down and covered the tracks. The D&RG ran into the slide, injuring the head brakeman and the conductor. The paper predicted that "this fortunate accident will probably avert others."¹² The sheer volume of rail traffic, which increased the probability of accidents, made the paper's prediction look absurdly inaccurate.

If wrecks were not bad enough, the D&RG also had to deal with the Midland. Since the Midland used standard gauge rails, their railcars could carry more ore per trip than could the D&RG. Even as the D&RG built towards Aspen the company's owners realized that to be truly competitive they needed a standard gauge track. With standard gauge track

¹¹ADT, 21 July 1893, 22 July 1893, and 22 December 1893.
¹²ADT, 10 December 1887, p.4.

the D&RG could ship more ore and lease track to competitor railroads. Starting in 1887 the D&RG began changing its rails along the Colorado River to standard gauge.¹³ In 1890 D&RG workers converted the narrow gauge on the Roaring Fork to standard gauge. The task required seven work trains responsible for widening six miles of track apiece.¹⁴ The work required men to tear up the old rails and drive spikes for the new ones. Many of the workers came from Aspen. Once again, the railroads were helping to support Aspen's economy.

In 1893 the silver mining industry changed drastically due to the repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act, but the railroads continued their service to Aspen. The continuation of rail service to Aspen was the most important reason Aspen survived as a community. People in Aspen call the period from 1893 to the 1930s the "Quiet Time," and while that may be true for the demography of Aspen, the expression does nothing to explain how active Aspenites were in struggling to keep their town alive. The single most important entity around which Aspenites organized their struggles were the railroads. More so than in 1887, the railroads saved Aspen from becoming a ghost town.

¹³Athearn, pp.166-167.

¹⁴ADT, 13 November 1890, p.4.

CHAPTER 3

ASHCROFT: WHEN RAILROADS NEVER ARRIVE

Historians typically portray railroads in the West as sinister but necessary implements of conquest. J.P. Morgan, E.H. Harriman, and Jay Gould were the leading railway men of the late nineteenth-century, and their names evoke images of eastern capitalists sucking the lifeblood from struggling western cities. The image may be comforting to Westerners because it allows them to blame the East for their troubles, but the reality of the railroads in the West was that a majority of Westerners asked for the rails. Like the vampires of horror story myth, they will not enter a home until someone invites them in. Unlike vampires, however, the railroads often turned down invitations. In Pitkin County Ashcroft was one of those towns that desperately wanted a railroad, and when the rails failed to arrive, the town collapsed.

Carroll Coberly, a miner from Aspen, first came to Ashcroft in 1906 to work in the Montezuma mine. He blamed Aspen and not the railroads for Ashcroft's demise. He said that the development of Aspen's silver mines in 1880-1881

"doomed" Ashcroft.¹ Certainly, the boom in Aspen drew away many miners who found working in Ashcroft difficult due to the nine-month winters, but Coberly ignored Ashcroft's tenacious struggle to attract railroads to the town. Even his own narrative pointed out that it was the lack of reliable transportation that ruined Ashcroft. He told of going to Aspen to lease pack animals to carry supplies to the mines. His experience demonstrated Ashcroft miners' need for reliable transportation:

I enjoyed the packing experience, and came to think a lot of my jacks [burros]. There was just one that would not keep up on the trail. No amount of mauling would speed him up. When I told Al about him, he suggested that I load him heavy with rock and when the other jacks left him, to go around him and let him stand. I tried this. When I got back from my trip to the mine with the other jacks, this stubborn one evidently was standing just where I had left him. He hadn't moved...I felt like leaving the pack on all night, but didn't.²

Thirteen years after the collapse of the silver market, miners were still working the mines with their stubborn burros. There must have enough ore left to justify the effort. Coberly noted that many of the "old stopes sometimes had ore of considerable value and could be milled to good profit."³ All the miners needed was a form of

¹Carroll Coberly, "Ashcroft," Colorado Magazine, 37, No.2 (April, 1976), pp.81-82.

²Ibid, p.90.

³Ibid, p.89.

transportation which could carry this lower grade ore out at a profit.

The D&RG's arrival in Aspen in 1887 cheered the few miners left in Ashcroft. They felt certain that the railroad would lay tracks up Castle Creek and save their mining enterprises. Their certainty stemmed from the desperate realization that they had nothing else which could save them. In January, 1886 the treasury of Ashcroft had \$5.60, and treasurer O.D. Smith guarded this sum jealously. The town's population had fallen to one-hundred foolhardy souls, down from five-hundred in 1882.⁴ With so little going for it, Ashcroft depended and lived on hope.

At first, their hope seem well-grounded in reality. The D&RG surveyed a route from Aspen to Ashcroft in the spring of 1888.⁵ This survey was all the D&RG could offer Ashcroft; they did not have the resources to build track up the Castle Creek valley. The costs of changing their rails to standard gauge, and competition with the Midland to get rails into Utah meant that the D&RG would not be Ashcroft's savior.

Throughout the 1890s Ashcroft's miners continued to work the Tam O'Shanter and Express lodes, but the work force was

⁴Charlene Kay Knoll, "Memories Worth Saving: The Story of Ashcroft, Colorado", Thesis Western State College, Gunnison, 1977, p.115.

⁵Ibid, pp.124-130.

minimal and the only ore shipped out of the district was high grade. Records on what was going on in Ashcroft during the 1890s are almost nonexistent because the Aspen papers removed their correspondents from the region.⁶ The repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act seemed to have killed Ashcroft, but a rescuer in the form of the Taylor Park Mining Company (TPMC) appeared in 1895.

The TPMC intended to begin mining in the Taylor Park region twenty miles southeast of Ashcroft. With the enthusiasm that infested every mining region in the West, the TPMC helped organize the Taylor Park Railroad Company which would aid in the boom the TPMC predicted would follow the railroad.⁷ Little more was heard of this railroad until 1902. Aspen reported that the "survey of the Taylor Park railroad has been completed for the entire distance from this city to Buena Vista..."⁸ The Aspen paper boasted: "Much could be said favorable to the vast mineralized region this new road will open up and cause to become the mecca and permanent habitat of the Colorado miner." The paper concluded more realistically that "this new road is preeminently a life giver to Aspen."⁹ Only one problem

⁶Ibid, p.136.

⁷Rex Myers, "Rails to Taylor Park," The Colorado Magazine, XLV/3, 1968, p.228.

⁸Aspen Daily Times, 2 February 1902, p.2.

⁹Ibid, p.2.

remained; the road existed only in the imagination of the TPMC.

A month later the paper thought work would commence as soon as the snows melted. There seemed to be good reason for this hope. In April a Boston company purchased \$800,000 worth of bonds from the TPRC.¹⁰ In mid-summer the paper again reported optimistically that "work will begin with as little delay as possible."¹¹ The next day the paper claimed that the railroad was "now an assured fact." The railroad would run 115 miles from Buena Vista to Aspen.¹² Almost three weeks later the paper again reported that work would commence within thirty days.¹³ If hope were dollars citizens in Aspen and Ashcroft would have been rich.

By mid-September the paper continued to report that Ashcroft was currently without "railroad facilities but a new line...is soon to be built."¹⁴ Never one to let reality stand in the way of a good story, the paper reported in November that "it is coming...A few days ago the welcome news was received from one of the officials...there could no longer be a shadow of a doubt...it was a sure thing." Work would begin in the spring.¹⁵ On the Aspen/Ashcroft side of

¹⁰Myers, p.231, and ADT, 4 March 1902, p.4.

¹¹ADT, 2 July 1902, p.4.

¹²Ibid, 3 July 1902, p.4.

¹³Ibid, 22 July 1902, p.4.

¹⁴Ibid, 13 September 1902, p.4.

¹⁵Ibid, 26 November 1902, p.2.

the mountain, word of the railroad died out. Miners in Taylor Park, however, continued to believe that the railroad was on its way. They stepped up the mining of lower grade ores in the belief the railroad would soon show up and make mining this ore profitable.¹⁶ A Gunnison paper in 1904 encouraged the miners: "The Taylor Park Railroad project is by no means dead, indeed its prospects were never brighter than today."¹⁷

In 1906 the Taylor Park Railroad fooled the papers one last time. The Colorado Republican ran a story on February first stating that the line was "almost assured."¹⁸ The paper was of course wrong, and the railroad dreams faded into obscurity. Ashcroft's last hope for a railroad came in 1907 when the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company suggested they might want to exploit the iron ores in the Ashcroft region. The Aspen papers interpreted this suggestion as absolute assurance: "This railroad to Ashcroft is a sure thing. Boost for it."¹⁹ In railroad terms "sure thing" usually meant a slim probability of success. For Ashcroft the slim probability of success never happened. The town literally eroded into the landscape until the Aspen Historical Society

¹⁶Myers, p.236.

¹⁷Gunnison News-Champion, 15 July 1904, in Myers, p.238.

¹⁸Myers, pp.240-241.

¹⁹Aspen Democratic Times, 15 August 1907, p.1.

intervened to save Ashcroft as a ghost town memorial to failed dreams.

Ashcroft exemplified the importance of the railroads. Other arguments might assert that Ashcroft would have failed anyway due to either Aspen's growth or the harsh winters, but Leadville was at a higher elevation than Ashcroft and it managed to survive because railroads continued to service Leadville's smelters and mines. Aspen's survival was based on a combination of luck, a good location, and early organization by the town's citizens. Aspen was more accessible than Ashcroft, and unlike most boom towns, had a citizenry made up of families and businessmen who intended to make Aspen a home. The nature of Western mining, however, suggests that if transportation to move lower grade ores was available, Ashcroft might have attracted the sort of citizenry that would stay in one place for an extended period of time. Aspen had always benefited from the limited mining that occurred at Ashcroft. Aspenites believed a boom at Ashcroft would create a boom in Aspen centered on transportation of supplies and ore. The Aspen papers followed events in Ashcroft closely because Aspen would have benefited from large-scale mining in the upper Castle Creek drainage. The failure of Ashcroft to obtain railroad services forced Aspen's citizens to work even harder to retain their own railroads.

CHAPTER 4

AFTER THE SILVER RUSH: RAILROADS ATTEMPT TO SAVE ASPEN

The years following the repeal of the Silver Purchase Act were demographically disastrous for Aspen. The discovery of gold in Cripple Creek in 1891 drew off many of the miners who worked in Aspen's silver mines. Worse still, a serious depression began in 1893 due to collapsing markets in Europe and over extension of the economy in the United States. The stock market collapsed in early 1893 which created a frenzied rush of traders trying to exchange paper notes for gold. The depletion of the gold reserves caused banks to begin calling in their debts. Institutions such as railroads, which had expanded rapidly through the 1880s and incurred high debts, had difficulty paying off their loans. Banks closed down, companies shut down, and wages went down as the nation suffered from its most severe economic depression in the nineteenth-century.

Prior to 1893 Aspen's potential for continued economic prosperity appeared strong. Aspen had two railroads and shipped approximately four thousand tons of ore a week.¹ The railroads in Aspen, however, were having problems of

¹Rohrbough, p.209.

their own before 1893. In late 1892 the Midland yard workers in Aspen went on strike. Like other strikes of this era, the dispute began over wages.²

Switchmen in the Aspen railroad yard demanded wages equal to those the Leadville yardmen received. They wanted three dollars a day for ten hours work. This amount was a thirty-four cent raise over previous wages.³ The Midland refused to grant pay raises, reasoning that work was much more difficult in Leadville because of the higher altitude. Ironically, on the day the strike began Superintendent Lawrence and Trainmaster Bowdish of the Midland Railroad Company filled in for strikers and had to do their work in a blinding snowstorm.⁴ The situation deteriorated from there. On the nineteenth the Taylor and Brunton Sampling mill was forced to close due to lack of ore. All the Midland ore cars were full, but there was no way to get them moving due to lack of yardmen. The sole movement in the yard "was a single engine puffing and a-u-n ching on a sidetrack..." An official for the Midland said he was willing to recruit strikebreakers to get traffic moving.⁵ On the twenty-second police escorted an eighteen-car train out of Aspen. The leader of the yardmen, Mike Healy, when asked what he would

²ADT, 17 November 1892, p.8.

³Ibid, 18 November 1892, p.8.

⁴Ibid, 17 November 1892, p.8.

⁵Ibid, 19 November 1892, p.2, 20 November 1892, p.6, and 21 November 1892, p.7.

do, said "Give it up." The next day strikebreakers came in from Colorado Springs and effectively broke the strike.⁶ The strike had a temporary negative effect on mining productivity, but its symbolic meaning lasted much longer. In the summer of 1893 Pitkin County commissioners granted \$900 to the Midland for payment of special officers used during the switchmen's strike.⁷ The townsmen protested the payment, but there was little they could do about it. They were at the mercy of the railroads.

The D&RG gloated over the Midland's problems. Someone had spiked the Midland's switches at the Pride of Aspen mine during the strike, and townsmen blamed the strikers. With all the Midland's cars stalled or incapable of getting on the right track, the D&RG profited.⁸ Every possibility exists that D&RG men spiked those switches, but eventually, the D&RG would have their own problems to deal with.

Throughout the 1890s the D&RG earned steady annual profits with the exception of the years 1893 and 1894. The nationwide depression of 1893 hurt the D&RG. Compounding this problem was Eugene Debs American Railway Union's strike of 1894. The strike began as a protest against the Pullman Car Company, and Debs spread the protest by calling on western railway workers to strike. By July most of the

⁶Ibid, 22 November 1892 p.8, and 23 November 1892, p.6.

⁷Ibid, 25 August 1893.

⁸Ibid, 23 November 1892, p.6.

D&RG's rail service had halted. Edward T. Jeffrey, president of the D&RG, asked for assistance from federal Judge Hallett. He issued an injunction prohibiting interference with interstate commerce. Jeffrey succeeded in getting his railroad moving again while at the same time breaking the strike in Colorado.⁹

Aspen clung to the railroad empire like a small child in a vicious game of crack-the-whip. Economic and labor gyrations at one end of the line slung Aspen around, but Aspen remained determined to maintain their hold. The key to survival in the "quiet years" was people's ability to diversify. Some entrepreneurs such as general merchandizer W.E. Turley recognized this need to diversify. He ran the following advertisement in the paper:

"Money or Bust!
Bank will not loan a dollar and we must have money to
pay our creditors.
1/4 off on all cash bought furniture.
W.E. Turley
Undertaking and Embalming a specialty."¹⁰

This odd combination of services was not unusual after the repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act.

Aspen's need for an undertaker declined because people were leaving the town willingly. In 1890 5,108 people called Aspen home. By 1900 that number had dropped to 3,303

⁹Athearn, p.185.

¹⁰Aspen Daily Times, 27 July 1893.

people. Similarly, the population for Pitkin County had fallen from 8,929 to 7,020 residents by 1900. The surrounding rural areas were retaining their population while the city's population dropped by nearly 40%.¹¹

These rural areas, however, began to lose people after the turn of the century. Diversification was much more difficult on a farm because there was little cash flow. People needed to pay for the transport of their agricultural products, but the return for the sale of animals or dairy products barely covered transportation costs. As one rancher's wife defined the economic realities of ranching in the Roaring Fork Valley, "you rob Peter to pay Paul."¹²

Throughout these difficulties the railroads continued their service to Aspen, and Aspenites were fortunate because the two railroads servicing their town maintained their interest in keeping their rails busy. An unidentified railroad man told the Aspen Daily Times "that it would pay the railroads to haul ore at a slight loss in order to keep the mines running in order to get the hauling of supplies required by the various mining camps..." This man claimed that the hauling of supplies "was the most profitable business done."¹³ Aspen miners lived off the hope fueled by

¹¹Rohrbough, p.160, 228.

¹²Bob and Elizabeth Sinclair, Interview by Anne Gilbert, 9 July 1991. Aspen Historical Society Oral History Collection, Aspen, CO.

¹³ADT, 17 May 1902, p.2.

such statements. Work continued in the Free Silver, Mollie Gibson, and Smuggler mines near Aspen.¹⁴ Although their productivity steadily decreased, these mines produced enough ore to keep the railroads interested in rail service to Aspen.

Mining, however, did not produce enough business to support the railroads' continued service to Aspen. Attempts to diversify Aspen's economy led to an intensification of the love-hate relationship between the people who used the railroads and those who owned them. Both of these groups took part in the diversification process. The men who owned the railroads understood that the failure of the high-profit mining industry meant that they too would have to adapt to meet the changed needs of Pitkin County residents.

One area that railroads increasingly involved themselves in was the transport of agricultural commodities. Railroads had long served as a conveyor of agricultural goods, but in Aspen the railroads took an even more direct interest in the lives of farmers. According to a report from the Kansas City Packer, a daily paper concerned with agricultural issues, potato farmers in the Roaring Fork Valley produced less than 300 car loads of spuds, and even that amount was "pretty badly mixed stock." The Packer suggested that growers were inexperienced and needed to learn how to

¹⁴Rohrbough, p.230.

prepare their crop for market.¹⁵ Beginning in 1908 the D&RG sponsored a special train which traveled over western Colorado teaching farmers how to improve their potato crops. The Colorado Agricultural College [Ft. Collins] believed yield could be improved if farmers were trained in proper techniques for potato growing. They held twenty-two special sessions on the D&RG's "Spud Train." Farmers left the special training session "convinced that the potato like the hog, is 'the mortgage lifter.'"¹⁶

Of equal importance to the people of the Roaring Fork Valley was the shipment of cattle and sheep. Contrary to the Western myth which says cowboys drove herds pell-mell across the countryside, the reality was that trains carried the animals almost everywhere. Some people found the railroad ride as exciting as historians have found the cattle drives. Bernice Vagneur Morrison said her father use to take the train to Denver to sell his cattle. On the ride he rode in the caboose because "all the guys did; all the real men did."¹⁷ Apparently, the ride in a caboose was a little like a ship cruise in rough weather--a rocking, pitching trip that determined a person's ability to

¹⁵Aspen Daily Times, 22 October 1902, p.3.

¹⁶The Aspen Democrat, 10 March 1908, p.1, and 19 March 1908, p. 1.

¹⁷Bernice Vagneur Morrison, Interview by Anne Gilbert, 17 July 1991. Aspen Historical Society Oral History.

withstand suffering. The main purpose of the trip, however, was to get the higher rates that buyers paid in Denver.

This transport of animals made sense because long drives caused the animals to lose weight, thus, decreasing their worth on the market. Railroads understood this problem as well. Jack McAllister, a sheep rancher, said "the railroad" at Aspen would build corrals for him to help hold his animals. Furthermore, the railroad was carrying his stock from Utah to the Holy Cross "reserve." He sent his animals to Utah over the summer, but the poor snowfall in 1907-1908 forced him to bring his sheep back to Colorado. Since the railroads were moving his animals and received transportation income every time they moved his animals, the sensible act for them was to make moving the animals easier for him.¹⁸

As good as this situation seemed for the railroads, problems still existed in making a profit. In 1912 the D&RG reported income averaged about \$4.80 per mile per day in the West as compared to \$8.86 for Eastern railroads. The D&RG's numbers reflect the West's smaller population, and consequently, the smaller fares collected for passenger and freight service. In addition transportation was more expensive in the West because the steep mountainous grades

¹⁸Ibid, 16 February 1908, p.1.

required trains to use more coal.¹⁹ The D&RG attempted to overcome these problems by luring settlers to the West. The D&RG sent out thousands of brochures in 1912 proclaiming the "agricultural, mining, and stockraising possibilities" of the West. To assist newcomers, the railroad offered "lands...upon favorable terms."²⁰ Although details were vague the railroad demonstrated an awareness that the problem of Aspen was their own: there was not enough money.

Unfortunately for the railroads' passengers, the lack of money would inconvenience them as well. In 1902 the Aspen Daily Times reported that an "evil influence is at work" on the railroads. Although no serious accidents had occurred on the D&RG and Midland's stub lines into Aspen, there had been horrendous accidents on other branches of their tracks. The paper reported optimistically that the prevention of accidents could be maintained if the railroads continued to use the best rails, heaviest cars, and sturdiest bridges. Unnoticed by the author of the article was the fact that the railroads were not living up to even minimal safety standards.²¹

On June 6, 1908 the railroads' neglect of their roads led to a major disaster near Aspen:

¹⁹Aspen Democrat-Times, 24 June 1912, p.1.

²⁰Ibid, 24 June 1912, p.1.

²¹Aspen Daily Times, 23 September 1902, p.4.

Near the place of accident is a slight curve in the track. After the curve was passed the track gave way under the rear half of the train, which continued on its way for about twice its length when the two coaches and three freight cars were thrown violently on their sides, the forward half of the train being safe on the track beyond [sic] the break. The accident was due to the breaking of rotten ties...The road-bed is in bad shape and has been so for some time, and it is reported that the big trestle across the Roaring Fork, near the Smuggler is in a dangerous condition, and an awful accident there may be expected at any time...²²

Clearly, the railroads had long neglected to service the apparatus upon which the railroads ran. Railroad companies spent so much time, effort, and money competing with each other that they neglected their basic responsibility of passenger safety. Although no one was killed, sixteen people were injured, but more frustratingly for Aspenites, the accident demonstrated that the railroads considered them as little more than opportunities to make money.

By 1907 Aspenites were tired of their role as economic ciphers for the railroads. The Aspen Democrat said the "railroads should now come to the aid of their redeemer." This plea addressed the plight of the mining slump of Aspen. "In the past the miners of Aspen never registered an objection with the officials of these railroad companies, nor have they asked a reduction in the freight rates." The time had arrived, however, when Aspen could no longer sit back and allow the railroads to play an economic form of Russian roulette with them. What the paper wanted most was

²²The Aspen Democrat, 6 June 1908, p.1.

a one dollar reduction in transportation costs per ton of ore. Both companies charged Aspen two dollars per ton of coal shipped from 48 miles away while Leadville paid \$2.25 per ton of coal for an 84 mile trip. "Is this treating Aspen square? The Democrat says NO! most emphatically...Cut the freight rates on ore! Cut the freight rates on coal!"²³

Another important excuse to cut rates came in the form of the Democratic Convention held in Denver that year. The Democrat pled with the railroads to "reduce rates and adjust them so people would stay longer in the state. By getting one capitalist interested we are bound to get others and so on, the results being beyond computation." Aspenites clung to the hope that if people could just see Aspen they would want to stay and invest in the "legitimate opportunities we have here."²⁴ Their hopes, however, suffered severely when the railroads' rates affected the daily life of the town.

The trains had always meant more to Aspen than a means of transporting ore. Both railways had become a part of the everyday life of Aspen. The train which ran from Aspen to Glenwood Springs on Saturday nights was known as the "laundry train," when Aspenites traveled down valley to take advantage of the hot springs. These train rides turned into

²³The Aspen Democrat, 31 December 1907, p.1.

²⁴The Aspen Democrat, 22 December 1907, p.1.

a weekly event of "riotous, bawdy revelry."²⁵ Another popular trip was the annual Strawberry Day at Glenwood Springs. People along the Roaring Fork packed these trains to participate in the events at Glenwood Springs. Moreover, these trains had helped a growing new part of Aspen's economy: tourism.

Part of the tourist business was based on the region's excellent trout fishing. Since 1893 Aspen's newspaper editors had argued for stricter enforcement of laws concerning fishing. One editor complained that young boys were taking fish that were too small and of no use to anybody.²⁶ Editors also asked ranchers in the valley to help protect the fish from pollution and overfishing. Some of these requests must have had effect because the fishing remained quite good going into the twentieth-century. The railroads soon found a way to exploit the region's excellent fishing opportunities. The Colorado Midland would often drop fishermen off at prime fishing spots along the Roaring Fork and Frying Pan rivers. To ensure that the fishing remained good, the railroad often picked up cans of trout at the Leadville hatchery and dumped them into the streams along its route.²⁷ Much to Aspen's frustration, the

²⁵Lena M. Urguhart, Glenwood Springs: Spa in the Mountains, (Taylor Publishing Co., 1970), p.71.

²⁶Aspen Daily Times, 12 May 1893.

²⁷Danielson, p.66.

railroads offered "to sell [fishing] tickets to parties of three or more on one ticket at rate of one fare for round trip to points between Leadville and Grand Junction and to points on Aspen branch up to but not including Aspen." A committee representing the citizens of Aspen failed to see why the railroads would sell these "fishing" tickets to "every station along [the railroad's] lines except to Aspen."²⁸ These special tickets were blatant discrimination against Aspen said the committee, and they wanted the railroads to do something about it.

The railroads responded slowly. Aspen's mining decline had made the train trips up the Roaring Fork Valley a marginal economic venture. Although both the Midland and the D&RG wanted to promote passenger traffic, the big money came from ore transport and carrying supplies for the mining industry. Conversely, the railroad companies could not afford to ignore the tourist trade while waiting for the mining industry to recover as it often did throughout the West. Some concessions to Aspen had to be made or the town would collapse as had Ashcroft.

In an effort to promote goodwill between the railroads and the towns they served, the railroad companies began to make rate concessions for certain events. In addition to sponsoring the special fishing tickets, the D&RG offered

²⁸The Aspen Democrat, 13 June 1908, p.1.

single event specials. When the Western Teachers' Association held their meeting in Montrose, the D&RG sold round trip tickets at the price of a one-way fare for teachers wishing to attend the meeting.²⁹ This rate concession probably seemed inadequate for most Aspenites because the railroads always found a way to make up for lost fares.

One particularly obnoxious fare was the "dog fare." Many hunters traveled the branch lines to the fine hunting areas in the Aspen area. These hunters often brought dogs along to help with the hunt. In 1902 the D&RG began charging one-fourth a cent per mile for dog passengers. For areas like Aspen this kind of fare was more a nuisance than a crippling economic blow.³⁰ The dog fare, however, was symbolic of Aspen's position in the railroad world. Even the dogs were subject to the decisions of railroad magnates unfamiliar with how closely the people were tied to the railroad.

Aspen's citizens, perceiving the second class treatment afforded them by the railroads, struck back. Aspen's town marshal noted an increase in crime at the Midland and D&RG depots. He had accumulated a large collection of gunny sacks and sleighs which Aspenites were using to steal coal

²⁹"Western Teachers' Association," Aspen Democrat-Times, 3 April 1912.

³⁰Aspen Daily Times, 17 January 1902, p.4.

from the railroad yards. The townsmen felt the railroads owed them something due to their "heavy-handed treatment of Aspen," but the railroads were not as unsympathetic as Aspenites thought.³¹

As in Ashcroft's situation, the railroads tried to promote new business schemes which would help Aspen as much as the railroads. An Aspen paper reported in 1912 that "the Roaring Fork Gray Granite Company (to be incorporated) has arranged for the exclusive use and possession of about 500 acres of the finest granite land in the world." The article went on to note that both railroads were "anxious for the tonnage that these quarries will, and they will offer rates that will encourage shipment to Denver." Both roads seemed to have reached a desperate stage when almost any scheme seemed good. They promised to build spur lines to these quarries as soon as "heavy demand shall require."³²

Typically, stories of the granite potentiality of the upper Roaring Fork valley disappeared from the paper. No one ever incorporated the Roaring Fork Gray Granite Company, and the railroads continued to try and survive on the slim tourist trade.

The Midland, however, had done all it could do. Survival became impossible in the steadily collapsing

³¹The Aspen Democrat, 16 February 1908, p.1.

³²Aspen Democrat-Times, 30 March 1912.

railroad world. In 1918 the Midland ceased operations. The company had held on as long as it was able, enjoying a mini-economic boom transporting war material in 1917, but nothing could rescue the debt-ridden line. On August 4, 1918 the last Midland passenger train left Grand Junction for Colorado Springs; the Midland was dead.³³ For the people who lived along the Midland trackage, the death of the Midland was a severe economic blow. Many of the railroad workers who lived in Basalt had to leave the region. Most migrated to Glenwood Springs or Leadville, but a few remained to work on the ranches in the valley.³⁴

A poem found in the Koch Lumber Company files expressed the feelings of Aspenites for their lost railroad:

We have heard the throb of your square exhaust
Loud and sharp on the mountain grades,
Soft and low thru the meadows green and wide
Or in flower decked open glades.

You were faithful and true on the high divides
Or down by the streams in the canyon's rough bed,
Around the sharp curves and thru rocky cuts
And along dizzy heights where the crooked track led.

On both the night and the daylight runs
We took our turn with the "varnished cars:"
We pulled our train in the shining sun
And under the light of the silent stars.

When we whistled in at the junction point
The second division crew would say,
As they heard the sound of your mellow chime,

³³Clarence L. and Ralph W. Danielson, Basalt: Colorado Midland Town, (Boulder: Pruett Press Inc., 1965), p.49.

³⁴Ibid, p.108.

"It's the 21, and 5 is on time today."

But the track is torn up and abandoned now
 And you and I have both fallen from grace--
 You are hauling logs in a low Texas swamp
 Am I am old and useless and out of the race.³⁵

William Walker, the poet and a veteran railroad man, summed up the emotional state of a whole town. Perhaps they were not quite useless, but one leg of their support had collapsed under them.

One last event punctuated the life of the Midland:

On Saturday, August 10, 1918, sensing the impending dissolution, abandonment and dismantling of the Colorado Midland trackage, the Silver Queen [Mine] stirred restlessly. As if to retain unto herself some of the Midland railroad which had transported a wealth of silver ore from her, the Silver Queen reached forth and clutched to her bosom trackage and cars of the Midland in the vicinity of the Durant Tram station. The cave-in was slow, but steady, and in a short time, two lines of railroad track, two freight cars, one loaded with ore, returned to the subterranean passages of Aspen Mountain.³⁶

Aspen was a one road town, and the post-war depression left the town in a grim situation.

³⁵William Walker, "Colorado Midland Engine No. 21," in The Aspen Times, 20 December 1984, Section B, p.1

³⁶No date or author on this excerpt was found. I found this passage in the Midland Railroad file in the Aspen Historical Society's files.

CHAPTER 5

A ONE-ROAD TOWN: ASPEN FROM 1918 TO 1969

Aspen seems to have had quite a few poets. A man calling himself Sunset Joe, "Poet of the Southwest," described life in a one-road town:

We have a one-horse railroad running into Aspen Town,
Which usually doesn't arrive 'till the sun has gone
down.
I asked the station agent the cause of the delay,
And quickly he replied: "Well, friend, it's just this
way:

"This apology for a railroad is only just a branch,
For they pause to unload baggage at every mountain
ranch.
Sometimes they don't leave Glenwood just exactly on
time,
And the grade up hill to Aspen is pretty steep to climb.

"They halt an hour at Carbondale to drop some cattle-
cars;
The fireman stops at Snowmass for his favorite cigars;
At Watson the engineer shuts off the head of steam
And from the cab descends to fish a trout from mountain
stream.

"The genial brakeman's weakness tho the train is five
hours late,
Is to try to shoot some rabbits while the passengers
just wait;
And the business-like conductor near Woody gets a hunch
To take an hour for dinner with desert to follow lunch.

"An extra heavy letter in a sack of U.S. Mail
Will cause a serious breakdown to the engine on the
rail;
The train crew fear that service will cause friction on
the track
or, if they meet a burro, it's reverse and ten miles
back."

Concluded then the Agent: "'tis better not to wait--
 they won't be here
 by midnight if they travel at this rate.
 They report the train left Watson ten hours ago,
 alright,
 But it won't get up to Aspen until twelve o'clock
 tonight."¹

The broken meter and strained rhyming pattern aside, this poem perfectly detailed the life of the Denver and Rio Grande after the death of the Midland. The train often ran late, misplaced mail or delivered it late, suffered from track blockage, and generally frustrated Aspen's citizens.

A typical day in the life of Aspen occurred on February 24, 1920. A west bound freight train from Grand Junction was hit by a snowslide near Glenwood Springs. That same day a rockslide struck an east-bound train and blocked the track. For several days no trains could move while repair parties went out to try and clear the tracks.² Aspen sat at the end of its branch line cut off from the world. Sadly for Aspen, the really bad times had not hit yet.

The paper continued to boost Aspen as a potential mining mecca, but the reality of silver's failure was apparent to everyone except Aspen's newspaper editors. More realistically, the editors noted the potential of the

¹Sunset Joe, "Dedicated to the Glenwood Springs-Aspen Branch," (August 31, 1925), in the Midland file at the Aspen Historical Society.

²"Aspen in Same Boat," Aspen Democrat-Times, 24 February 1920.

ranching industry in the Roaring Fork Valley.³ The problem with an economy based solely on one industry was that any kind of failure within that industry meant the destruction of that economy. Aspenites should have been aware of that problem, especially since their earlier reliance on silver mining had dealt a near fatal blow to Aspen.

In 1929 Aspen began to learn their lesson. The front page of the paper proclaimed in boldface, "FARMERS NEED THE MINERS!" Businessmen from all over the state meet at the Brown Palace Hotel in Denver to discuss the economic problems of the state. The businessmen, however, failed to heed the lessons Aspen had learned. One man gave a speech criticizing Coloradans for their "mental apathy" towards mining. He believed a revival in mining "would do more than anything else to help develop our agriculture...for it would provide a nearby market for the farm products."⁴ His argument made sense but it came at the wrong time. Geologically at least, mining was still potentially viable as an economic enterprise. A 1926 report on mining in Colorado said Pitkin County contained large zinc-lead-silver ore veins. The report noted that the mines had performed much "development work" in 1921, but output of ore had

³Aspen Democrat-Times, 29 January 1918.

⁴"Farmers Need the Miners," The Aspen Times, 19 April 1929, p.1.

decreased.⁵ The Depression began to discourage capitalists from investing in Colorado's always risky mining opportunities. Mining was not going to resuscitate Aspen.

By fall of the same year Aspenites began to realize that railroads could not save Aspen's economy. Grand Junction's chamber of commerce circulated a letter listing the poor treatment western Coloradans had received from the D&RG Railroad Company. The letter listed all the problems West Slope towns endured because of the railroad. Western towns complained of high freight rates, poor mail service, and unpleasant passenger service (riding behind livestock cars or cars loaded with dynamite). Grand Junction wanted all West Slope towns to write letters of complaint to the D&RG. They believed results would be "almost certain" if the railroad received enough complaints. Somewhat naively, the Aspen Times told Aspen's citizens that if they sent their complaints to Grand Junction, that city would "do the rest."⁶ As in every case where Aspen placed its hopes in someone else's hands, the hope fell apart. The Depression gradually worsened in Colorado, and economic recovery looked more and more like a forlorn dream.

⁵Charles W. Henderson, Mining in Colorado: A History of Discovery, Development, and Production, (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1926), p.46.

⁶"File Your Kicks," The Aspen Times, 27 September 1929, p.1.

Daily life received several severe blows from the Depression. A seemingly small loss was the Sunday train service to Aspen. In 1929 Aspen had fought hard enough for this service to remain that the Colorado Public Utilities Commission ordered the D&RG to continue its Sunday service although the company had tried to cancel it.⁷ In 1930 the D&RG managed to cancel the Sunday train to Aspen. To make the situation worse, the D&RG changed its mail service. From that point on the train would stop in Aspen for one hour only. With this new service came a four and one-half hour layover in Glenwood Springs. The train arrived there at 1:30 a.m. and left at 6:00. At this point Aspen was reduced to petulant whining: "Poor old Aspen gets another swipe from the D&RGW Railway Co."⁸ Aspen's ability to attract the railroad was gradually eroding.

The loss of the railroads during the Depression years would have meant the death of Aspen. The Times reported that "without the payment of the railroad taxes, it would be impossible to maintain schools and special funds in the different districts of Pitkin county."⁹ The D&RG tax assessment supported the county treasury and ensured that basic services for the people of the Roaring Fork Valley remained in operation. The actual transportation services

⁷Ibid, 5 April 1929, p.1.

⁸Ibid, 30 May 1930 and 27 June 1930.

⁹The Aspen Times, 7 March 1935, p.1.

of the railroad, however, were beginning to receive competition from the automobile industry.

The only automobile route into Aspen was a narrow and dangerous rutted road from Glenwood Springs. The use of automobiles was a dangerous proposition on this road (and still is). Aspen boosters proposed that the state begin to improve the road which would make travel safer and give jobs to unemployed citizens of Aspen. These boosters especially wanted to improve the road from Independence Pass to Aspen, arguing that the scenery would attract many more tourists to the region.¹⁰ Despite the work on the road, the paper reported in 1935 that "a good many citizens of the county are refusing to drive over the road at all, claiming their cars are too valuable to subject them to the punishment this highway deals out."¹¹

The railroad reponded to this new transportation threat by attempting to improve service. The D&RG worked to install air condition and better shocks on their Pullman passenger cars. They also dropped the fifty percent surcharge on Pullman tickets. They also lowered freight rates. Instead of the varied rates they had charged for different goods, the D&RG established a fixed rate of eightyfive cents per hundred pounds of goods shipped from

¹⁰Ibid, 12 December 1930, p.1.

¹¹Ibid, 14 March 1935, p.1.

Denver to Aspen. Equally important to Aspenites and ranchers were the reduced rates for shipping goods out of Aspen. Cattle shipping rates dropped from forty to thirty-six cents per hundred pounds as did the price for sheep.¹² The only exceptions were poultry, petroleum, perishables, and explosives.¹³ These acts bordered on desperation because the trains could not compete with the automobile industry. This drop in freight occurred because the D&RG had finally completed its long-planned Dotsero cut-off. This cut-off reduced the distance from Denver to Aspen from 401.3 miles to 226.3. The cut-off allowed trains to travel due west from Denver rather than having to go south to Pueblo and then up into the mountains.¹⁴ The cost for the cut-off was 3.6 million dollars.¹⁵ As was common in railroad construction, the company had incurred a huge debt and was unable to pay the interest on their loans and bonds. The U.S. District Court placed the D&RG under a board of trustees who ran the company for the next twelve years.¹⁶

Trains were expensive to run, and the constant wrecks that tormented the Aspen branch line drove up costs. In 1936 and 1938 the D&RG wrecked just a few miles below Aspen. Two months after the 1938 wreck a snowslide buried 300 feet

¹²Ibid, 28 June 1934, p.1.

¹³Ibid, 4 January 1934, p.1, and 17 May 1934, p.1.

¹⁴Athearn, p.285.

¹⁵Athearn, p.298.

¹⁶Athearn, pp.301-308.

of track on the same site of the previous wrecks.¹⁷ That same year a car of potatoes and a passenger car derailed near Woody Creek. The trains ran late, as usual, because workers had difficulty righting the derailed cars.¹⁸

The railroad's last attempt at creating a new service which would save the struggling branch line into Aspen came in 1937. The D&RG started the "Snow Trains" designed to bring skiers and other winter enthusiasts to Aspen. These special trains had Pullman diner cars and sleepers so that travelers could get to Aspen in comfort. Over the summer the D&RG had spent \$50,000 trying to revamp the branch line into Aspen to handle the winter traffic.¹⁹ At this same time the highway department of Colorado was searching for ways to reduce the costs of keeping the state's mountain highways clear of snow. This problem enabled the railroad to dominate the ski industry for the next decade, but competition from automobiles meant that railroad passenger service would eventually fail. In 1949 the last ski train entered Aspen, but the railroad had helped make Coloradans aware of the economic potential of the ski industry. Aspen had finally found its savior.

¹⁷Ibid, 7 July 1938, p.1, and 29 September 1938, p.1.

¹⁸Ibid, 5 May 1938, p.1.

¹⁹Ibid, 25 November 1937, p.1.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: THE LAST WHISTLE BLOWS

The death of the D&RG in Aspen was a drawn-out affair as the railroad company gradually retreated from Aspen. In 1947 the company had begun to pull up rails and ties from some of the old spur lines which had tapped the mines around Aspen. Sheriff Otto Johnson requested that townspeople not take these old ties because the company planned to use them to repair the even more worn tracks on the main line from Glenwood Springs. These old ties were in relatively poor shape but the D&RG was intent on minimizing expenses. As usual, Aspenites felt cheated by the company; these old ties had creosote coatings which made them excellent cribbing for cesspools.¹ Even the sewage system in Aspen suffered when the D&RG made a decision. The love-hate relationship of Aspenites and their railroad, however, was coming to an end.

The increasing viability of automobile travel as compared to the passenger service of the railroads doomed this latter service. In 1949 the D&RG ended passenger service to Aspen, but freight service continued until 1969.² Automobiles, however, have created an unpleasant problem for

¹Ibid, 25 September 1947.

²The Aspen Times, 16 January 1969, p.7-A.

Aspen. Traffic problems such as pollution and congestion have led to a renewed cry for railroads. An editorial in the Aspen Times suggested that trains were a "reasonable solution" to problems that Highway 82 have created. This claim has a certain legitimacy. Most of Aspen's work force comes from down valley to work in Aspen. These commuters create traffic jams each morning and evening.³

This reasoning harkens back to the Aspen of the early 1880s. A group of citizens viewed their town's problems and decided that trains were the solution. Certainly, trains would create tourist revenue and cut down on some of Aspen's current transportation problem, but the economic vagaries of railroad operations would subject current Aspenites to a similar sort of absentee determinism that tormented Aspenites a century earlier. Contemporary Aspen critic Hunter S. Thompson claims that Aspen is already suffering from this sort of economic exploitation. He says "absentee greedheads are taking over the town like a pack of wild dogs, reducing the once proud local population to shame and degradation."⁴ Thompson's complaint is the age-old claim of any small town that depends on tourist revenue for its

³Paul Anderson, "There's Nothing Quite Like a Train Whistle," Aspen Times, 27 March 1986, p.23-A.

⁴Hunter S. Thompson, Songs of the Doomed: More Notes on the Death of the American Dream, (New York: Summit Books, 1990), p.271.

income. Some people will look back on a perceived "golden age," and wish that those good old days will return.

In Aspen's situation the golden age of the railroad era is really the view of present-day antiquarians. A century ago, Aspenites complained about absentee railroad agents determining Aspen's fate, but only after inviting the railroads to come to Aspen to save the town from economic stagnation. After the arrival of the railroads, Aspenites discovered that the railroads were a mixed blessing. The railroads helped stimulate the economy, but to the dismay of Aspen's citizens, the railroads operated to turn a profit for themselves. The people they served tended to be secondary in the thoughts of the railroads, which seemed to surprise many of the town's citizens. Aspen discovered a common rule of the West; small towns needed the railroad, but the railroads could determine which towns they needed to make money.

Aspen, however, was fortunate because the town's location made it a centralized location for mining and agricultural interests. In addition, the beauty of the surrounding region attracted many tourists. When mining failed and agriculture was just getting by, tourism to the area increased. The railroads tapped into this new industry which eventually made the railroads unnecessary. The skiing and fishing industry used the railroads, but the automobile

made these sports available to almost everyone. This twentieth-century revolution in transportation doomed the railroads.

Today, all that's left of the D&RG is a running and walking trail on the north side of the Roaring Fork River. The tracks are gone and most of the old railroad property is now private property, with "No Trespassing" signs reminding visitors that the railroads' opening of the West was a short-lived process. The Midland's legacy is the Highway 82 bridge over Castle Creek. The railroads might be dead in Aspen, but they serve as reminders that Aspen is not quite the oddity that most Coloradans perceive it to be. Aspen struggled throughout most of its existence to survive the vagaries of outside economic forces. Aspen suffered through the same sort of booms and busts that struck other Colorado mining towns. Aspen's only real oddity was its extreme good luck. The town happened to be situated in a region that twentieth-century recreational industries would be able to exploit. After World War II Aspen would gradually emerge as one of the West's premier recreation spots, but the town's legacy was its struggle to survive. Unlike many mining towns, Aspen's struggle was successful.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ARTICLES

- Coberly, Carroll H. "Ashcroft." The Colorado Magazine. 37, No. 2 (1960), pp.81-104.
- Griswold, Don. "Twin Lakes Tollroad." The 1959 Brand Book of the Denver Westerners. 15 (1960), pp.75-105.
- Jackson, William S. "Railroad Conflicts in Colorado in the 'Eighties.'" The Colorado Magazine. 23, No. 1 (1946), pp.7-23.
- Myers, Rex. "Rails to Taylor Park." The Colorado Magazine. XLV, No. 3 (1968), pp.225-242.
- Wardell, William W. "Memories of Aspen, Colorado." The Colorado Magazine. XXXV, No.2 (1958), pp. 115-120.

BOOKS

- Anderson, George L. General William J. Palmer: A Decade of Colorado Railroad Building, 1870-1880. Colorado Springs: Colorado College, 1936.
- Athearn, Robert G. Rebel of the Rockies: A History of the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962.
- Brayer, Herbert O. William Blackmore: Early Financing of the Denver and Rio Grande Railway and Ancillary Land Companies, 1871-1878. Denver: Bradford-Robinson, 1949.
- Danielson, Clarence L. and Ralph W. Basalt: Colorado Midland Town. Boulder: Pruett Press Inc., 1965.
- Davis, E.O. The First Five Years of the Railroad Era in Colorado. Denver: Sage Books, Inc., 1948.

- Knoll, Charlene Kay. "Memories Worth Saving: The Story of Ashcroft, Colorado." Thesis. Western State College, Gunnison, CO, 1977.
- Lathrop, Gilbert A. Rio Grande Glory Days. San Marino, CA: Golden West Books, 1976.
- Lipsev, John L. The Lives of James John Hagerman. Denver: Gold Bell Press, 1968.
- Shoemaker, Len. Pioneers of the Roaring Fork. Denver: Sage Books, Inc., 1965.
- Urquhart, Lena M. Glenwood Springs: Spa in the "Mountains. Denver: Taylor Publishing Co., 1970.

Newspaper Articles

ADT=Aspen Daily Times

AT=Aspen Times

DEM=Aspen Democrat

DT=Aspen Democratic-Times

In chronological order:

- ADT, 12 March 1887, 2.
- ADT, 13 October 1887, 4.
- ADT, 14 November 1887.
- ADT, 10 December 1888, 4.
- ADT, 3 January 1888, 1.
- ADT, 6 November 1890, 4.
- ADT, 12 November 1890, 4.
- ADT, 20 November 1890, 3.
- ADT, 30 January 1892, 4.
- ADT, 29 September 1892, 2.
- ADT, 4 October 1892, 5.

ADT, 18 October 1892, 6.
ADT, 17 November 1892, 8.
ADT, 18 November 1892, 8.
ADT, 22 November 1892, 8.
ADT, 26 November 1892, 5.
ADT, 21 July 1893, 4.
ADT, 5 August 1893.
ADT, 24 August 1893.
ADT, 25 August 1893.
ADT, 17 January 1902, 4.
ADT, 18 January 1902, 4.
ADT, 22 January 1902, 4.
ADT, 25 January 1902, 4.
ADT, 2 February 1902, 2.
ADT, 5 February 1902, 4.
ADT, 11 February 1902, 2.
ADT, 15 February 1902, 2.
ADT, 4 March 1902, 4.
ADT, 27 March 1902, 2.
ADT, 1 April 1902, 3.
ADT, 8 April 1902, 3.
ADT, 17 May 1902, 2.
ADT, 2 July 1902, 4.
ADT, 3 July 1902, 4.
ADT, 22 July 1902, 4.
ADT, 7 August 1902, 1.
ADT, 22 October 1902, 3.
ADT, 26 November 1902, 2.
DEM, 2 July 1907.
DEM, 15 August 1907, 1.
DEM, 18 September 1907, 1.
DEM, 20 November 1907.
DEM, 22 December 1907, 1.
DEM, 26 January 1908, 1.

DEM, 16 February 1908, 1.
DEM, 10 March 1908, 1.
DEM, 19 March 1908, 1.
DEM, 7 April 1908, 1.
"Serious Wreck on Rio Grande," DEM, 6 June 1908, 1.
"A Discrimination Against Our City," DEM, 13 June 1908,
1.
DT, 12 January 1912.
DT, 24 February 1912, 1.
DT, 30 March 1912.
DT, 3 April 1912.
DT, 6 April 1912, 1.
DT, 15 May 1912.
DT, 24 June 1912, 1.
DT, 29 January 1918.
DT, 29 October 1924, 1.
DT, 28 November 1924, 1.
AT, 5 April 1929, 1.
AT, 30 May 1930.
AT, 27 June 1930.
AT, 12 December 1930, 1.
AT, 4 January, 1934, 1.
AT, 22 February 1934, 1.
AT, 17 May 1934, 1.
AT, 4 October 1934, 1.
AT, 7 March 1935, 1.
AT, 14 March 1935, 1.
AT, 2 April 1936, 4.
AT, 21 May 1936, 1.
AT, 1 October 1936, 1.
AT, 13 January 1938, 1.
AT, 24 February 1938, 1.
AT, 5 May 1938.
AT, 7 July 1938, 1.

AT, 29 September 1938, 1.

"1028 to Aspen," Rocky Mountain News, 5 January 1947,
3-B.

"Rio Grande Says Ties Are Not Free," AT, 25 September
1947.

"Train Service Ends After 81 Years," AT, 16 January 1969,
7-A.

"Aspen Railroads: a Tie to the Past," AT, 20 December
1984, Section B.

"There's Nothing Quite Like a Train Whistle," AT, 27
March 1986, 23-A.