

Midland Tragedies

© Steve Plutt, March 13, 2016

Well good afternoon. My name is Steve Plutt and I live in Lake George. Today we will talk about the Colorado Midland Railroad and its dangers. Keep in mind that I'm not an authority on the Midland, just a casual follower but I will try to make this interesting.

As you all probably know, the Midland was the first standard gauge line that traveled through the Colorado Rockies. Its original intent was to link Colorado Springs with the mines in Leadville but later they decided to continue west and at its peak it was 261 miles long. The route began in Colorado City¹ and went on to Leadville. From there it crossed through the Continental Divide via the Hagerman Tunnel² and continued on to Basalt and terminated at New Castle, which as you know just is west of Glenwood Springs (about 13 miles). At its startup, the Midland was one of the best equipped roads in the U.S. In our area, grading started up Ute Pass in 1885 and the actual tracks made it to Florissant on March 23, 1887 and at Lake George, the tracks through 11 Mile



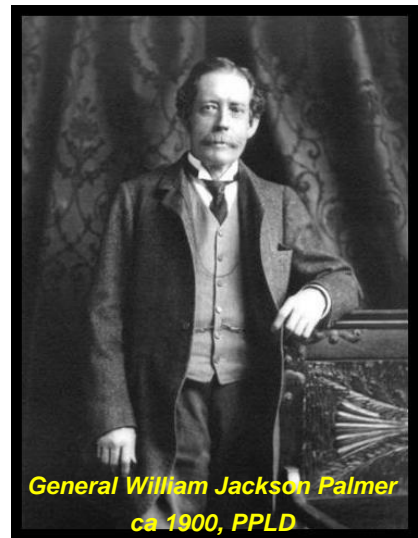
¹ Colorado City was founded on May 22, 1859 and was incorporated into Colorado Springs in 1917

² In 1893, the tunnel was replaced with the much lower, longer Busk-Ivanhoe Tunnel. Traffic was diverted back to the Hagerman Tunnel during 1897 and 1898 due to a rate dispute with the Busk Tunnel Railway Company, but this was resolved in May of 1899 and the line through the Hagerman Tunnel was abandoned shortly thereafter.

Canyon were completed 4 months later. In 11 Mile Canyon the train had to pass through three tunnels³. The canyon was also known as the deadliest stretch of the Midland in El Paso and Park Counties. You can include Teller County in that statistic too after it came into existence in 1899.

Well, the idea of building a railway up Ute Pass wasn't a new one.

In 1880 General Wm. Palmer⁴ and his narrow-gauge Rio Grande Railroad had reached Leadville from Denver via Pueblo and the Royal Gorge. But the following year he was already looking for a shorter route to the "City Above the Clouds" and started surveying up Ute Pass but he abandoned those plans after the survey party got above Green



Mountain Falls. When Palmer gave up on a Ute Pass route, a man named Homer Fisher began thinking about it with the help of his friend and fellow Colorado City businessman Wm. Bell. They put their plan into action on November 23, 1883 when they incorporated the Colorado Midland Railway. Well, at about that same time several other Colorado Springs investors who had mining interests in Park County and Leadville came up with their own idea for a railroad to their mines. These men formed

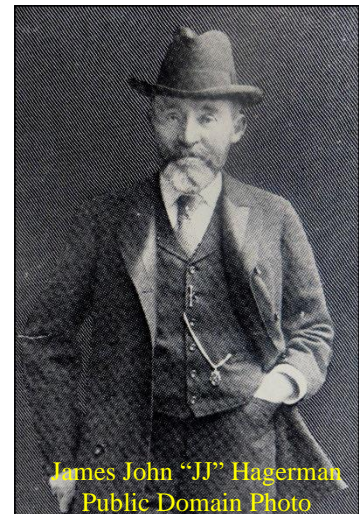
³ 9,10 and 11

⁴ Founder of Colo. Spgs

what was called the Colorado Short Line. One of those investors was yet another Colorado City businessman named Irving Howbert who had mining interests in South Park. Well, after about 6 months, the Colorado Short Line wasn't making any progress towards their goal so they decided it would be best to try and merge with the Midland, which they seamlessly did. With the merge, Irving Howbert was elected as one of the board members. So now the search was on for new investors and funding for the Midland.

It wasn't until Howbert persuaded a man from Michigan named John J. "JJ" Hagerman to join the group that big money was raised.

Almost immediately, JJ was installed on the board and shortly after that, became its president. In his position as president he quickly headed east on a very successful trip



James John "JJ" Hagerman
Public Domain Photo

to New York City, securing major investors and funding. When

Rocky Mountain News.
DENVER, COLORADO. WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24, 1886.
RAILWAY NEWS.
The Money Necessary to Build the
Colorado Midland Secured in
New York

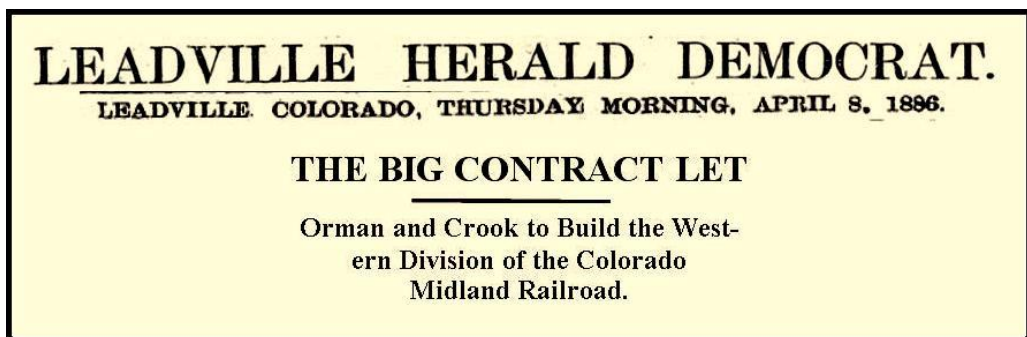
he came back to Colorado, he was armed with over 2.7 million dollars.

With this fair amount of startup money, the Colorado Midland Construction

Company was then formed with Homer Fisher⁵ and Irving Howbert as president and treasurer. If some of these men's names sound familiar, you might have heard them mentioned here and there just from living around here. Places like Hagerman Tunnel, the town of Howbert, Fisher Woods north of Woodland Park etc.

So, things were now moving towards actual construction. While designing the construction of this railroad, Hagerman decided on a standard gauge road because he felt that the narrow-gauge system had too many disadvantages. Disadvantages such as not being able to transship plus being restricted to lower speeds and not able to interchange rolling stock easily with the standard gauge lines. Trans shipping alone was very expensive because it took lots of manual labor to transfer goods from the narrow-

gauge cars to the broad-gauge units.

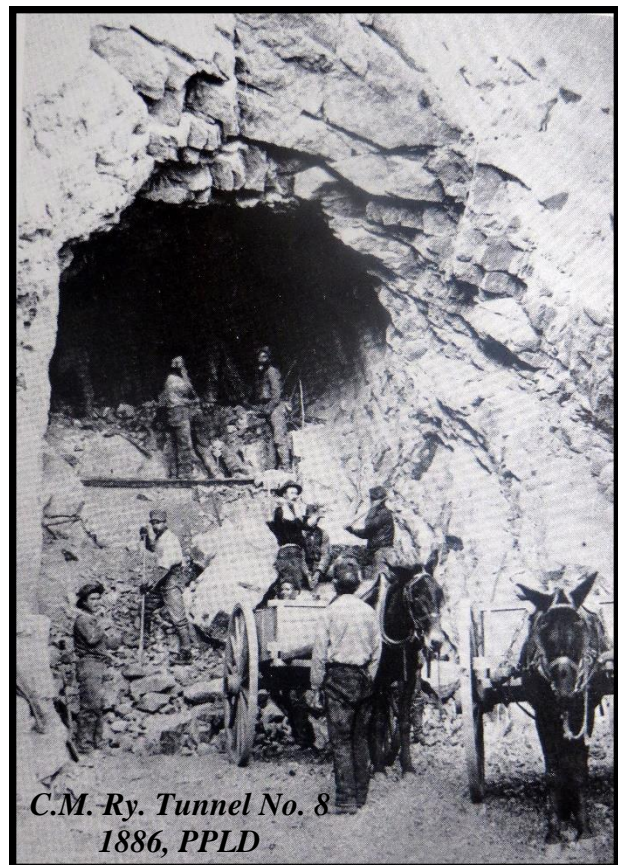


So, with a plan and some money in the bank, Hagerman started letting contracts out.

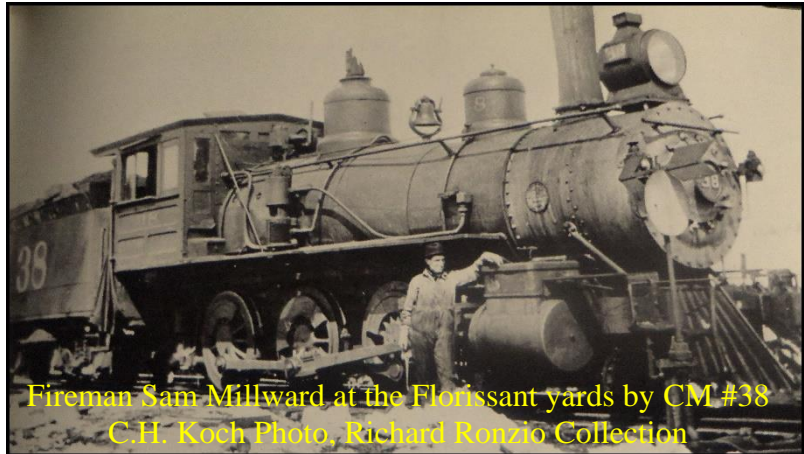
⁵ Fisher Woods north of Woodland Park

The first one was awarded on April 6, 1886. This was about 2 ½ years after the incorporation papers were filed. With the contracts awarded, the grading was to start from Leadville, but it didn't take long for the Midland officers to see that that was a bad starting point. The trouble being that all of the supplies for building the road would have to be shipped via the Midland's competitors, the Denver, South Park & Pacific or the Rio Grande. Hagerman negotiated with both companies and could not get reasonable rates from either, in fact those railroads wanted to charge Hagerman up to three times the going rate to deliver his supplies. So construction was all but stopped at Leadville not long after it started, but began right away in Colorado Springs going up Ute Pass. Hagerman ended up making a deal with the Denver, Texas and Gulf railroad and that line shipped all needed supplies to Colorado Springs and then the Midland transported them on their own system as their road progressed.

The construction in Colorado Springs started in July of 1886 with 3000 men spread between Colorado City and BV.



Eight months later, the track was completed to Woodland Park and, as already mentioned, to Florissant on March 23, 1887.



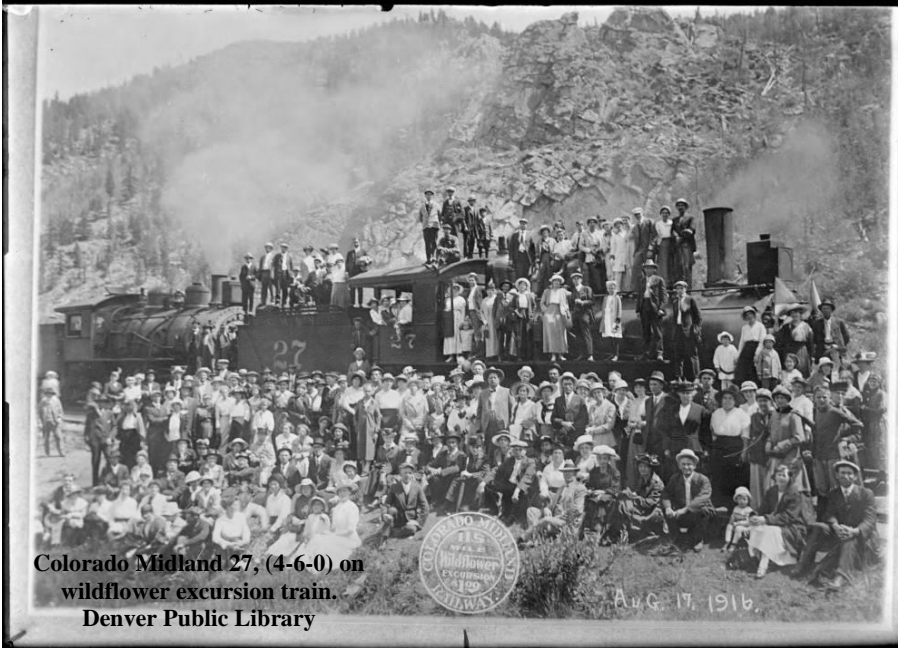
Fireman Sam Millward at the Florissant yards by CM #38
C.H. Koch Photo, Richard Ronzio Collection

In Lake George, the tracks through the 11 Mile Canyon weren't completed until 4 months later and then continued on to Buena Vista, reaching that point in July.

On the 13th of July, the Colorado Midland ran a special ceremonial train to Buena Vista the day before regular its business started. That first train held over 1200 members of the Colorado Springs Methodist church and went up through 11 Mile Canyon and on to Buena Vista. When regular passenger



service started, combined with excursion trains, it provided much needed income to the railroad.



In the meantime, the Midland push continued westward and at last reached Leadville on August 29, 1887. So about 16 months from start to finish

getting to Leadville.

The entire route was totally completed from Colorado City to New Castle on October 1, 1888 at a total cost of just short of 20 million 1887 dollars! From a website inflation calculator that 20 million would be over \$500 million today.



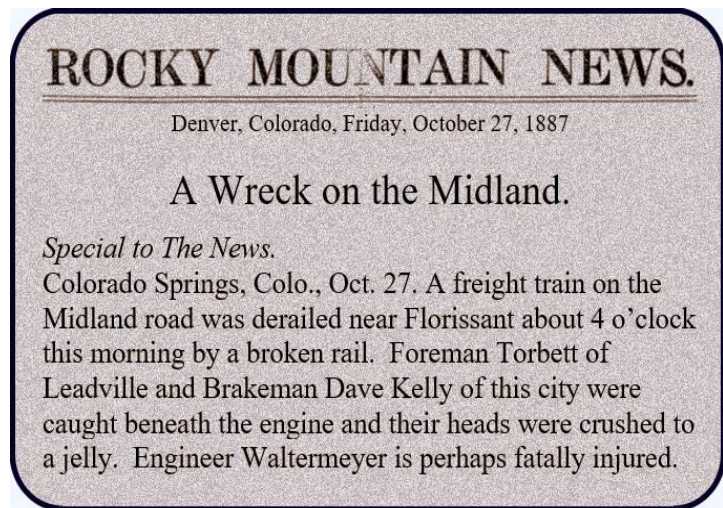
The Midland road had a total of 17 tunnels, with eight of those in Ute Pass between Manitou and Cascade and the three here in 11 Mile Canyon. As this railroad was under construction and then when it was in operation, there were unfortunately many accidents as that era of railroading was a very dangerous



occupation. In our area alone, an accident near Florissant killed three workers and in 11 Mile Canyon

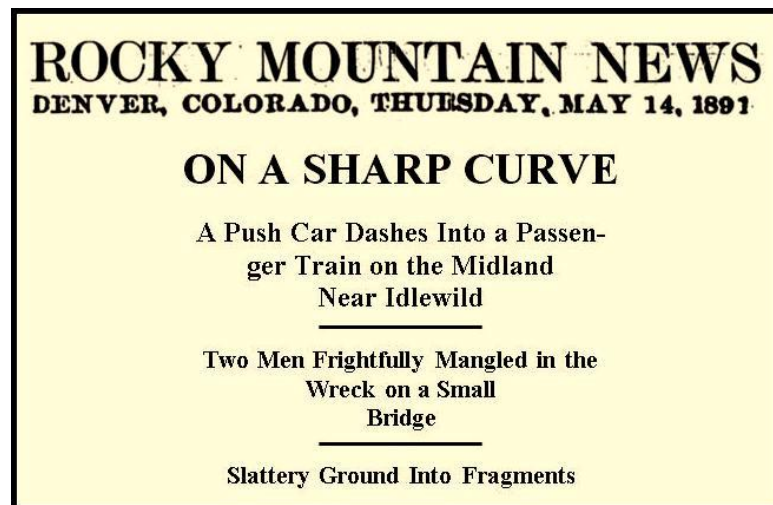
there were 5 accidents resulting in 7 deaths.

The three deaths near Florissant happened on October 27, 1887; seven months after the rails reached here. On the morning of the accident, freight train number 13 was steaming west towards South Park. A mile and a quarter west of Florissant (about by Stohl Rd.), running at about 12 miles an hour, the train struck a broken rail which threw the



engine and three cars off the track and into an embankment. Inside the cab were Engineer William Waltermeyer of Salida, the fireman named Torbett from Leadville and the front brakeman, David Diltz of Colorado Springs. The men were thrown out and the engine rolled over crushing Diltz and Torbett. The engineer,

Waltermeyer was seriously injured and taken to the Colorado Midland Hospital and died the next day. The general consensus at that time was that these kinds of accidents are unavoidable and that no blame was attached to the company. By the way, the Midland Hospital was the first hospital in Colorado Springs, and is the predecessor of what we knew as St. Francis Hospital.



The first fatal wreck in 11 Mile Canyon was logged 4 years later in 1891. On the morning of May 13, train number 4 was headed for Colorado Springs from Hartsel, running at a high rate of speed

and was moving though Idlewild. The eastbound train was on the downgrade when three men aboard a push car, identified only as Slattery and O'Brien and one unknown man, were westbound on the same track coming towards the train. They collided just east of Idlewild on a small bridge that crosses a dry creek bed. The Rocky Mountain News reported at the time that Slattery was "ground into fragments" and that O'Brien died later from his injuries.

The unidentified man escaped injury. The newspaper also explains that there were sharp curves on either side of that bridge and that at the speeds the train and push car were

traveling, there wasn't much time to take evasive maneuvers. The push car tried to stop but the brake was out of order and had little or no effect. It is believed that Slattery and O'Brien are buried in the Lake George cemetery.

August 21, 1894 was the next fatality in the canyon. It happened in the early morning following a heavy rainfall the night before. Here is the account from the Leadville Herald Democrat concerning the accident; *John B. Blocker, an engineer well known in Leadville and all over the state, was killed on the Midland yesterday morning. Blocker was in charge of freight 941 and was running in Eleven Mile canon between tunnels 10 and 11 when the engine was caught by a slide*



and turned over. It became detached from the tank and no other damage was caused, the tank and cars remaining on the track. As she tipped the engineer found it too late to save himself and was caught by the engine and crushed to death. Only one hand protruded from under the wreck and the body cannot be recovered until the wrecking engine arrives.

As a side note on Mr. Blocker, at 30 years old, John was very well known in the railroad circles in Colorado. He was a

member of El Paso Lodge 47, Knights of Pythias ⁶ and a member of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. Mr. Blocker was engaged and his wedding was but two days away at the time of his death. His fiancée was Miss Mary Love, the daughter of Wm. Love of Colorado City. Not long after Blocker started working on the Midland, he had taken out a life insurance policy in favor of his mother, because according to a letter he wrote her, he was “*in a hazardous calling and that he was employed upon a dangerous road bed.*” But sometime after Blocker became engaged, he changed the beneficiary to Miss Love without telling his mother. So a few months later the mother filed a lawsuit against Love. After court testimony given by Blocker’s mother and his sister, who was a telephone operator in Cripple Creek, the court found for the mother and awarded her the full \$3000 (\$75,100.00).

And another side note; Blockers future father in law, William Love, came to the area in 1859 (known as 59er’s) and was instrumental along with the likes of Irving Howbert and others in forming the county of El Paso. This was before Colorado Springs⁷ was even established. In later years, the two of them set up a meeting at Love’s home and with others, made plans for

⁶ The Fraternal Order of Knights of Pythias is international and non-sectarian and its members are dedicated to the cause of universal peace. They believe that men can live together on this earth in peace and harmony. founded in Washington, DC, February 19, 1864.

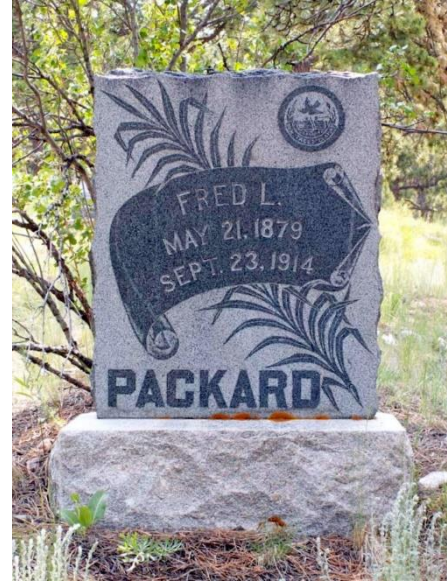
⁷ Plat’s laid out in 1871

opening the First National Bank in Colorado Springs. So Blocker apparently was going to marry into money.

Well, let's skip up in time to September 23, 1914. That's when Midland passenger train No. 5 left Colorado Springs at 12:20 on a Wednesday afternoon double heading up Ute Pass. It was a typical run as they headed west past Florissant and entered 11 Mile Canyon at 20 miles an hour. At 2:20 when the Number 5 reached Lidderdale, that's the present Boy Scout Camp, both engines were ditched. The cause was reported as spread rails in one local paper and a broken rail in another. Never the less, there was no warning of danger to anyone in the cab until the engines left the track. Fireman F.L. Packard of Florissant was instantly killed.

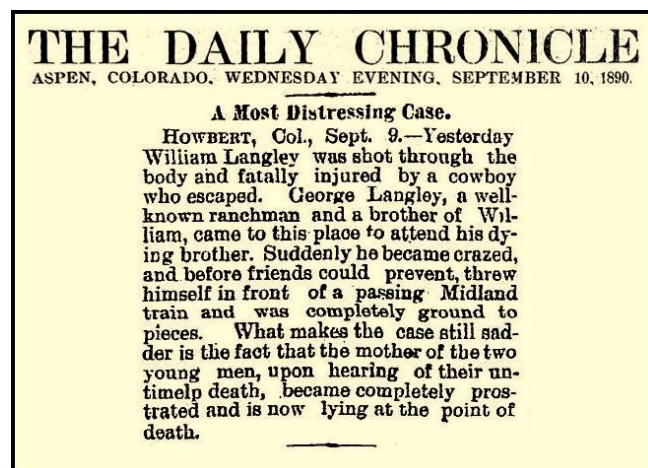
The other fireman S.A. Wilson of Colorado City sustained a broken arm and was badly scalded. He was rushed to the Midland Hospital which was by now St. Francis hospital. Neither fireman had an opportunity to jump, the locomotives falling on the side on which they were seated. Being on the opposite side of the cab were Engineers Hemenway and Oren who both narrowly escaped death by jumping as the locomotives rolled over. No cars left the track and no passengers were injured.

When Fred Packard died he was 35 years old and a lifelong bachelor, he left no will or worldly possessions. His widowed mother Angie Packard, who also lived in Florissant, filed suit against the Colorado Midland for a wrongful death. According to probate records, the Midland claimed no responsibility for the death and further claimed that his demise was his own fault as he knew the dangers of the road when he signed on. It was decided by Mrs. Packard that any litigation would be lengthy and just benefit attorneys, so after a little over a year, Mrs. Packard settled out of court for \$2200 (\$52,143 today) from the CM.



Rick McVey Photo, Find a Grave

F.L. Packard is buried in the Florissant Cemetery.



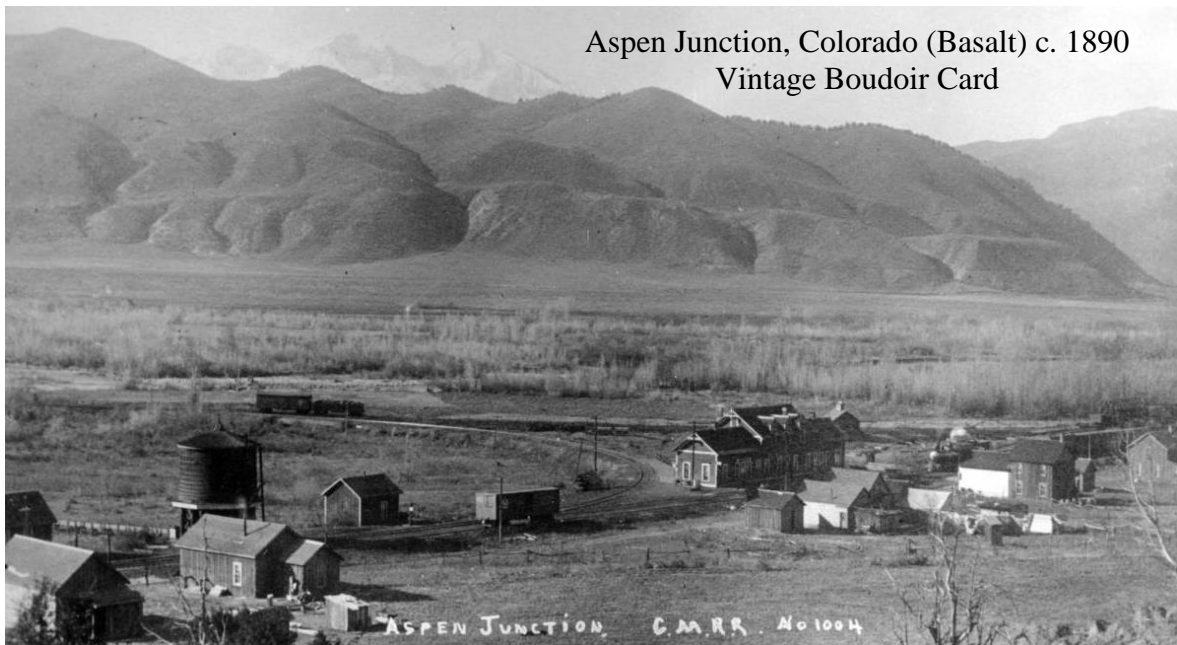
There was one death on the tracks of the CM that definitely wasn't the fault of the railroad, it just involved it. On September 9, 1890 at the town of Howbert, which is upstream a little from the 11

Mile dam and now under water, a man named Wm. Langley was fatally shot by an unknown cowboy. George Langley, local rancher and brother of Wm., arrived at the scene to attend to his dying brother and

suddenly became so distraught that he without warning threw himself in front of a passing Midland train and was “ground to pieces” according to news reports.

So with that many deaths just in the Lake George Florissant area, it’s not hard to imagine that there were other fatal accidents on the CM, and unfortunately, there were many.

One of the most horrific of these happened at Aspen Junction⁸ in July of 1891. The passenger train involved was an excursion



train⁹ known as the “Laundry Train.” That train would make a trip every Saturday night from Aspen to Glenwood Springs to the pool. This particular evening the train was on its return to Aspen at about 10 p.m. When it arrived at Aspen Junction it went straight for the water tank to take on water. In the

⁸ Present day Basalt

⁹ An excursion train is a chartered train run for a special event or purpose.

meantime, a freight train with engine #22, was made up and standing on the side track. Long story short, there was a mix up on which train should start moving again and consequently both started moving very slowly but simultaneously. When the brakeman saw this he signaled for both to stop but they didn't stop fast enough to avoid the passenger car from slightly glancing up against the 22 engine and knocked a 2 inch steam valve off the boiler. The steam from the 2 inch hole shot out at the passenger car and shattered one of its glass windows. All the other windows and doors of the car were closed. As the boiling hot steam filled the car containing 15 people, 7 were scalded to death, 2 died later and 6 were critically injured. What a terrible fate.

Skipping past many other wrecks and fatalities, we'll move back in time to September 10th of 1897 just west of New Castle, (the CM terminus) on the jointly owned CM and the Denver & Rio Grande track between New Castle and Grand Junction. On that Friday morning, just after midnight, CM freight train #22 was eastbound and a Denver and Rio Grande passenger train was westbound. Running at a high rate of speed and 10 minutes late, the Midland was trying to make up for lost time. They wanted to get past the siding west of New Castle before the Rio Grande did so they wouldn't have to wait "in the hole", putting them further behind schedule. The passenger train was travelling at about 40 miles an hour while the freight was steady at 30 miles an hour. Suddenly the headlight of the Rio Grande was straight

ahead. The inadequate brakes of #22 were set, but to no avail. The two engines slammed head-on into each other with incredible force. Adding to the horror of the scene, there was an explosion and the cars caught fire and spread so fast that many passengers who were uninjured from the initial wreck but trapped in the coaches, were burned to death before help could reach them. Casualty reports for this accident were conflicting after the crash, but at least 20 people were killed.

The fact that two competing railroad companies shared the same tracks between New Castle and Grand Junction was a contributing factor. With this joint agreement, trains always raced to make the journey without stopping at the siding and yielding to oncoming trains. Accidents were not uncommon.

The negligence causing this wreck was assigned to the Midland's conductor and engineer. Claims against the railroad totaled \$117,300 (3.25 million today) not counting the loss of rolling stock. The engineer died in the wreck while conductor was later arrested and placed in jail.

That next evening, the coroner's jury met and did indeed lay all blame on the engineer and conductor but did not find any criminal negligence by them and the conductor was released.

Oh yea! Besides the passengers killed, one thief was shot dead by the sheriff while he tried to carry off goods from the wreck.

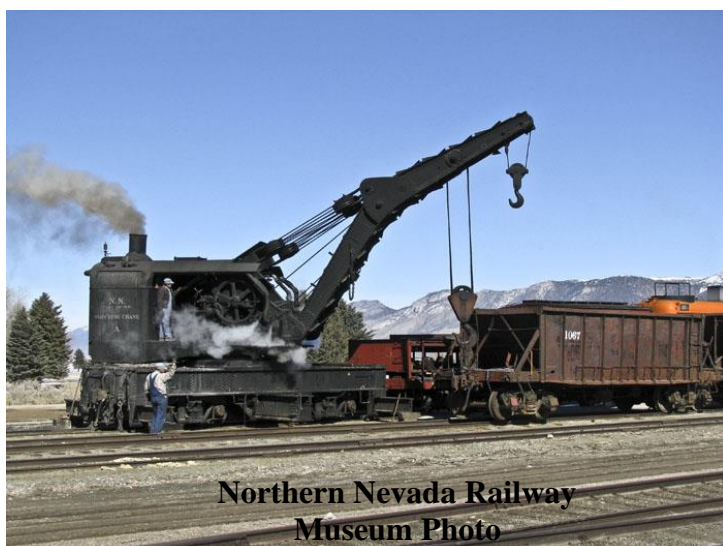
So here is a side note on this Midland Engine 22.

It seems that the 22 was an engine possessed with bad luck.



If you noticed, both of the above wrecks involved Engine 22. Then it was involved in yet a third wreck. The town of Rifle was the location on Nov. 15, 1902, when two locomotives pulling freight and cattle cars plowed head-on into each other just east of the Rifle rail yards, again on the jointly owned track of the CM and Rio Grande. In the collision, Fireman Asa Tharp was standing in the gang way between the tender and the engine. The impact caused him to fall below the train and was cut in two at the waist, scalded and burned, killing him instantly.

So besides the loss of human life, accidents were very costly for



the railroads. When a wreck tears up the track, the result is a stoppage of business on the rails and everything is at a standstill until the wreckers show up and clear the tracks.

Therefore, all railroads

kept on hand several wrecking trains, often known as the “Big Hook”, which were ready to go at a moment’s notice.

Sometimes these wreckers were idle for a month or more, but when there was a wreck, they were needed quickly. As soon as a wreck happens, the telegraph operator at the nearest station sends a dispatch out along with specifics of the wreck. Specifics such as; the place, anyone injured, is main track obstructed, is the track damaged and several other details. As soon as the dispatch arrives the wrecking train and a gang of men are on the way to the scene. The crew’s motto was “Speed! Sacrifice everything for speed!”.

Typically, the wrecking crew is made up of a foreman and about 20 experienced men. These men were experts at rope and cable splicing, positioning jacks etc. With these men were three very clean, and well supplied and organized cars. The first is a sturdy, specially constructed flat car with a revolving platform steam powered derrick. Underneath this derrick are stout extension bars which can be pulled out and had counterweights installed on them. The flatcar also kept a few spare trucks and rails. Side note: trucks are the steel wheels the train sets on.

Next comes a box car loaded with blocking and timbers. Additionally, there were always lots of both large and small rope, some of it as big as your arm and many chains of different sizes. They also kept canvas covers to protect the wrecks perishable freight from rain and snow.

The third and last car is the tool car. That car is usually divided up into three rooms. One of these rooms is for the men and has a cook stove and all utensils and a pantry with a supply of canned meats, coffee and pots and pans. The foreman has a room with a desk for writing up reports, a telegraph machine, batteries and supplies. The telegraph is hooked up with wires and ran outside of the car to the railroad wires and then they are in communications with the whole railroad system. In the tool room will be found everything that was needed in the past to upright an engine and cars. Tools such as a couple of dozen jacks, each capable of lifting up to 20 tons. There are also hand winches, more rope, lanterns, axes, saws and large and small hammers, crowbars, torches, drills and numerous other aids. Anything from a six penny nail to a 2" steel cable.



The job of up righting expensive passenger coaches was a very time consuming job and great care was taken to do this.

But, if saving the Pullman meant a delayed opening of the track, the Pullman was always sacrificed.

The approximately 50 plus ton Midland engines were no small job to upright and get back on the rails. But the worst part of the wrecker's job is pulling up to the accident site and hearing the

moans of the dying and the shrieks of the injured. Even getting to the wreck is dangerous enough as the derrick flat car has to be in front of the engine. Since the engineer now cannot see what is in front of him, the conductor stands on the derrick flat car and hand signals back to him. At night the conductor uses a lantern as a signaling device. Even in subzero temperatures, rain, snow, sleet or hail, the wrecking crew works as fast as they can. If there were dead and injured in the wreckage, the first job was the removal of the unfortunates.

With the dead and injured removed, the wreckers tackle the work of clearing the track. Each wreck was like a brand new puzzle for the wreckmaster to solve. There were generally two rules that he must follow; first open the road for traffic in the quickest possible time; the second, save as much of the equipment as possible. Often though it was impossible to follow the second rule in order to complete the first as many times, as just mentioned, passenger and freight cars were sacrificed for speed in clearing the tracks.



Ok, now I want to go back and talk about the construction of the Midland again. Specifically in the Lake George area. There were three deaths in two separate incidents during this time that need to be told.

As you can imagine, working for the railroads in those days was a grueling task. Track laying meant that a gang of railroad laborers worked from sunrise to sunset. The working conditions of these early trackmen were harsh and dangerous.

Starting with the last death first, it happened on December 10, 1886. As you know, a lot of rock had to be removed in 11 Mile Canyon to establish a road grade. This naturally required explosives. In 1867



Alfred Nobel invented dynamite and then in 1875 a more powerful form of it, which was a blasting gelatin commonly referred to as Giant Powder.

However, there was a problem using this dynamite gelatin in cold weather. It would freeze at about 44 degrees, become hard and would not explode. So what did miners and construction workers do when their Giant Powder was frozen? Well naturally, being of the male species, they heated it up over a fire so it would thaw out. *Side note, notice the bottles of Gin and Rye on the pack!* The Giant Powder Company actually did have an approved method of thawing the powder when frozen but their advice was generally not followed and their method still produced many deaths. Anyway, now that you have a little background on dynamite in the 1880's here is the short story of

Italian laborer Joseph Machintie, a worker on the Midland grade as it progressed through 11 Mile Canyon.

It happens that on December 10, 1886, Mr. Machintie was employed in warming some giant powder at an open fire. The

Fairplay Flume reported that “the powder exploded with a fearful noise and literally blew the man into bits”.

The paper went on to say that a coffin was sent for from Fairplay and the remains, “what

could be found of them” were buried near the scene of the accident. We believe that he is also in the Lake George cemetery.

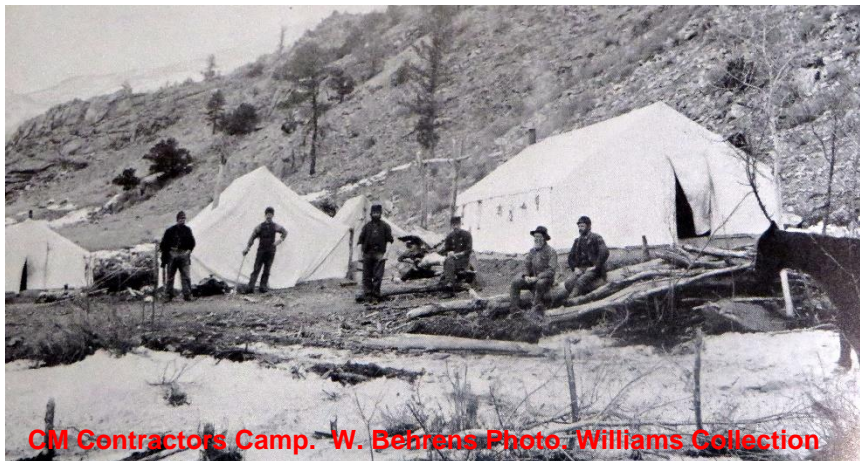
But there was an additional danger that existed in the construction of the Midland at the time, at least here in Lake George. That danger was racism and Italian immigrants were the target. The Colorado Midland employed a lot of workers to build this railroad and Italian labor was used a lot. On a Tuesday early morning, just past midnight on August 24, 1886 pistol shots filled the quiet night air, near present day Lake George.

Park County Bulletin.

ALMA, COLORADO, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1886.

An accident on the Midland grade near Rocky last Friday resulted in the death of an Italian laborer named Joseph Machintie. The man was employed at the time in warming some giant powder at an open fire, for blasting purposes. The powder exploded with a fearful noise, and literally blew the man into bits. As the fire was removed to some little distance from where the other men were working they were unhurt by the explosion. A coffin was sent for to Fairplay, and the remains, what could be found of them, were buried near the scene of the accident.

Three bigots from Texas named John Brady, John Williams and Jack Peoples decided to rid the camp of some “dagos” as reports wrote. Those three Texans were described at the time as “tough ruffians known to resort to the six shooter at the drop of a hat”. According to the newspapers, sometime on Monday the three headed into Fairplay and “began to fill their tanks with fighting fluid”. Later that evening they left the local saloon and headed back to the tent encampment that housed about 20 men located near the mouth of 11 Mile Canyon.



According to the official coroner’s report of August 30th, the foreman of the scraper gang awoke when gunshots broke out at midnight.

He stepped from his tent and saw Peoples and Williams outside and asked if they were doing the shooting to which they said yes. The foreman told them to get back in their tents and settle down. About 20 minutes later more noise was heard outside and witnesses saw Brady, Peoples and Williams, each holding Colt revolvers. Peoples was heard to say he was going to “*kill all the damned Dagos*”. Then more shots rang out. Witness accounts are unclear who actually did the shooting, but some or all of the Texans walked up to the Italian tent and fired 6 shots into it.

The killers then ran for the cover of the nearby heavy timber. Inside the tent one worker lie dead and another seriously wounded and would die a few hours later. A messenger was at once sent to Fairplay and notified the Sheriff. A posse was recruited and sworn in and they headed for the scene. By the time the posse got there, Peoples had already been captured and held for the sheriff. There were already threats of a lynching, but never carried out. While Williams and Brady alluded capture, the state offered a \$150 reward and Park County matched that amount too. On September 14, Brady was almost caught when a gun battle broke out between him and a posse. It seems Brady was hiding in a mining tunnel and the posse sent volley after volley of rifle and revolver shot into the opening of the tunnel. Imagining no one could have survived the amount of lead that went into the mine, the posse approached the opening and were then fired upon, with one of the pursuers wounded in the left shoulder. Retreating, the posse decided to take the wounded man down and return with giant powder and send that into the tunnel. While they were gone, Brady naturally left and wasn't seen again for weeks. Finally about 2 ½ months after the shooting, Brady was captured. He was found to be working under another name at a ranch in Gunnison County. Sheriff Shores of that county and his men found Brady asleep in his bunk and he was awakened surrounded by rifles pointed at his head. He did not resist and was handcuffed and taken all the way to Fairplay by the Sheriff and a few men. Brady was described as about 30 years old but rather young looking and

smooth faced. He had an unusually shaped head and his eyes were dark and piercing. The Leadville newspaper stated that his looks would surely go against him at trial. As for the third man Williams, I never could find anything on his capture, but he was indeed jailed for the murder at some point.

In the meantime while Brady and Williams were on the run, Jack Peebles was tried and convicted of being accessory to the murder of the Italians and sent to Canon for a term of three years.

Brady and Williams' day in court started over a year after the murders. At the trial, Jack Peoples was brought up from his prison cell to testify against the two men. But when put on the stand, Peoples refused to testify, alleging that his life was in danger if he did so. It was supposed that he feared Brady would be sent to the same penitentiary and seek revenge. On April 25 all the evidence had been heard and the jury deliberated.

Twenty minutes later they returned and announced a verdict of "not guilty" for both Brady and Williams. The Fairplay Flume reported that both men were obviously very happy over their release and that Brady even attended a dance that same night.

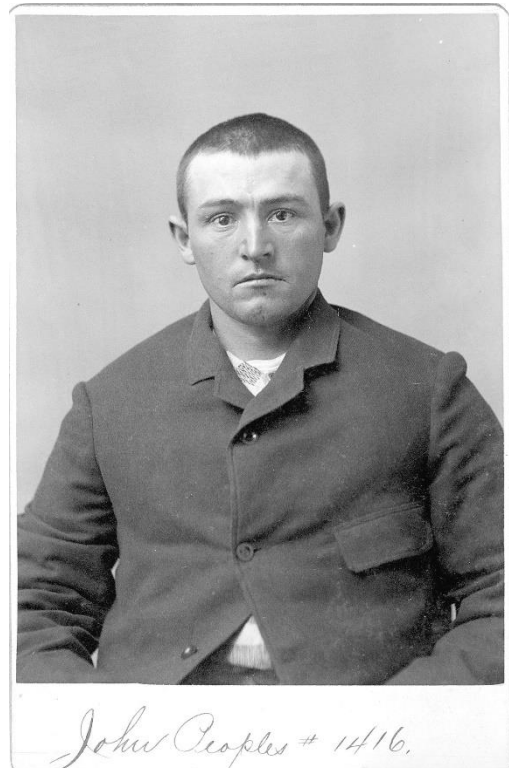


Photo from Colorado State Penitentiary records.

The Flume also noted that the trial cost Park County about \$3000¹⁰.

So the “not guilty” verdict begs the question; If People’s was sentenced to three years in Canon for being an accessory to murder, how did Williams and Brady get off?

In closing, how could a Wild West story about a train be complete without a train robbery? On Wednesday, January 30, 1889 the RMN reported that a daring robbery took place today four miles west of Florissant (that would be Lake George). It seems that a man named Owen Dougherty got on the train at Colorado Springs and later a man named Hayes boarded. They both recognized each other as old friends. Hayes had a bottle of whiskey and they took several drinks out of it. Well the report says that Dougherty passed out. A few minutes later, Hayes suddenly left his seat next to Dougherty and rushed to the door and jumped from the train. The Roadmaster of the train witnessed this, woke Dougherty and asked if he was missing anything. Dougherty searched his pockets and found all of his possessions were gone. The Roadmaster stopped the train and Dougherty was pursued, found, ordered to surrender but refused and then was shot and captured. On his person the thief had \$35 in cash, a \$75 certified check and a gold watch and chain. So Lake George is famous for a train robbery, so to speak!

¹⁰ \$75,100.00

Divide also had an attempted train robbery. Only this one was more along the lines of what we would envision to be a real train robbery. On September 1, 1910, Colorado Midland passenger train #3 was westbound and took the siding about 3 miles west of Divide to let an eastbound train pass. While slowing for the siding, three highway men crawled over the top of the tender. When the locomotive did come to a stop Engineer Stewart turned to see his fireman Paul Bachman standing with his hands above his head and heard one of the robbers say, "*put up your hands or I'll blow your head off*". The robbers then forced both men out of the engine and marched them back towards the express car, firing several shots above the heads of the passengers who looked out the windows to see what was happening. This whole robbery plan was foiled when they got to the express car and the fireman bolted underneath that car to escape. One robber leaned down to shoot at the escaping fireman and at that point the engineer slammed a large rock down on his head as hard as he could. The robber got off one shot then fell dead. The rest of the train crew had run to the scene by then and drove the other two off with rifle fire. A posse was formed later by the sheriff and the two eventually captured.

Before we go, here are a couple of photos taken in 11 Mile Canyon of an Italian camp and those “Chinese Ovens” you might have heard about over the years.

However, that is

strictly folklore as no Chinese worked on the construction of the



Photo by Steve Plutt

Midland. The main immigrant work force were Italians.



Photo by Steve Plutt