

METCALF STATION CAMP PROFILE

Name: Metcalf Station

Time Period: Summer, 1907

Theme: Railroading, Cimarron & Northwestern Railway

Significance in American History

Westward expansion ("manifest destiny"), gold rushes, and the portrayal of the West as a land of opportunity provided a great desire and need for the movement of people and goods to the western frontier. The Homestead Act of 1862 promised 160 acres of land for \$10 and further encouraged many more Americans to move to the undeveloped West. Also important, was the Transcontinental Railroad, which connected in Promontory Point, Utah. Here the Union Pacific and Central Pacific Railroad companies connected tracks which extended from Sacramento to Omaha.

Between 1870 and 1900 the railroads attracted millions of settlers from nearby states as well as 2.2 million foreign immigrants to the Western frontier. As settlements were established, thriving communities grew, with churches, schools, and markets for goods. The towns built opera houses, hotels, and labored to bring organization and sophistication to the west.

With this growth of the railroad and the need for lumber for ties, construction, mine props, and more, the logging industry became more important. These growing communities were places that needed timber and lots of it! Originally getting the logs to the sites where they were needed was dependent on building flumes and having rivers to float them from the forests where they were cut. As railroads spread across the country, the timber became easier to move longer distances; however the trend was still to supply endeavors close to the source of lumber as much as possible and the building of railroads was one that needed lumber for thousands upon thousands of ties.

The railroading industry attracted laborers who were recent immigrants as well as American born workers. It was a diverse and hardy breed that traveled as the railroad moved west. They worked hard and played hard. The year 1914 is significant in local laboring history because of the Ludlow Massacre 100 miles north of Philmont in Colorado on April 20, 1914.

Characters/Positions to Portray (Names & back stories TBA)

Division Superintendent – This was the individual that had authority over a section, typically between two destinations. (ex: Metcalf to Cimarron). They were responsible for track maintenance and overseeing the scheduling and other duties contributing to smooth traffic flow between these destinations.

Section Foreman - is the person in charge of a group of track workers for a section of track. The Section Foreman was also responsible for daily inspection of the entire section. On the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe, a section of track was typically six to eight miles long.

Yardmaster - was in charge of switching and yard operations. The Yardmaster and his crew helped "make up" the freight trains in the yards so that freight cars would be placed in trains going toward their destinations.

Switchman - worked in the railroad yards aligning the track switches and hooking cars together, sometimes while the cars were moving. Before automatic couplers were installed this was a dangerous position. During the early years the railroads used link and pin couplers which weren't always the same exact height and made the job very dangerous. Between 1877 and 1887, approximately 38% of all rail worker accidents involved coupling.

Telegrapher - their job was to keep the trains on schedule, notifying the train crews of any problems or unexpected trains that may be ahead of them. They also would send warning messages to other depots up and down the line, warning of such things as run-away trains or Indians on the war path.

Section Gang - Section Crews, or Section Gangs as they were commonly known, were responsible for 6-8 miles of track. They typically rode handcars to look for, and replace, rotted ties, tamp loose spikes, and tighten bolts and were under the supervision of the Section Foreman.

Gandy Dancers – An early slang term used to describe railroad workers that laid and maintained railroad tracks. Though they did not usually lay much track, as their primary job was to inspect, repair, and align ties, rail, bolts, roadbed, etc. The term is derived from their dancing motions, the tools they used (by the Gandy Manufacturing co.), and the songs/chants used to keep a steady pace and flow of the work at hand.

Historical Background of Camp

The movement of the railroad from the east into the west was a significant symbol of growth and prosperity for the United States. The movement of goods and people into a community as well as the ability to now move goods out of a new area attracted profiteers of many sorts into these expanding communities. Colfax County in eastern New Mexico was no exception.

The nearest railroad to Cimarron in 1902 was the AT&SF railway, which was closest on its route from Raton to Springer. However, in order to take advantage of the vast amount of resources available from the coal mines in Dawson, the gold mining towns of Baldy and Elizabethtown, as well as the mineral and resource rich lands that spread thorough northeastern New Mexico, the owners of the St. Louis Rocky Mountain and Pacific Railroad Company decided to expand their lines from Raton into Cimarron, with plans to continue through Elizabethtown and Cimarron Canyon into Taos, all the way to Farmington, NM. The contract was signed in 1905 and surveying and construction began soon afterward.

One of the entrepreneurs attracted to the area was a gentleman by the name of Thomas Schomburg, whose father worked for the London office of the Maxwell Land Grant Company. In 1881, at the age of 17, he decided to move to the United States. He started as an office boy for the Cimarron office of the Maxwell Land Grant Company, eventually moving to Colorado to serve as GM for the Rocky Mountain Timber Company.

When a railroad was attracted to Cimarron, its coming allowed the vast resources of timber in the area to be harvested, brought to market, and then used to support the booming towns and growing railroad to be a much easier process. (Lumber was in high demand for railroad ties, support beams for mining, and local housing.) The StL RM & P RR Company's new spur was built into Cimarron from Raton in 1906. (The RR was called the "Swastika Line" due to the use of the Native American symbol for good luck on the sides of their engine and cars.)

With his new found knowledge of the lumber business, and his experience in Cimarron, Schomburg moved back in 1907 and started the Continental Tie & Lumber company. Ponderosa Pine (Western Yellow Pine to the loggers) and Douglas Fir (Red Spruce to the loggers) were the most prominent types of timber in this area, with ties, mine props, and lumber made from them being in very high demand at the time!

With a lumber company in place, Schomburg needed a convenient and economic way to move the logs and timber out of the forests they were harvested from. He decided to start a railroad, which would connect to the new line that was just built into Cimarron. The Cimarron and Northwestern Railway (the C&N) was organized on January 16, 1907. Investors for the new railroad included Frank Springer and W.H Delker of the Rocky Mountain Lumber Company, amongst others. The C&N was incorporated on January 16, 1907.

Plans were soon underway to purchase rights of way up the Ponil Canyon into the vast timber rights that had been purchased from the Maxwell Land Grant Company. Construction began on June 13, 1907 on the east side of Cimarron. It crossed the corner of the French Ranch and continued through the Chase Orchard. (Schomburg had to pay top dollar for 30 of the Chases' prime fruit bearing trees that had to be cut to build the railroad!) The C&N then went from the Chase and forked at what we now know as Six-Mile Gate and continued up the North Ponil

Canyon. It crossed the Ponil fifty-one times and was 22 miles long. The grade was steady at 2% as it climbed a total of 1400 feet. There was also a telephone line established parallel to the railroad to make communication easy between construction crews, mills, and headquarters in Cimarron. The C&N made its first run on January 6, 1908.

Foremen from the lumber company established timber camps up and down the railway route. In areas with many trees, small sawmills were built as well. Otherwise all the trees were sent by rail to the CT&L planning mill in Cimarron. Skids, wagons, mule teams and the train were all used to move lumber from harvest sites to the mills. With the huge quantities of virgin timber available, they were able to create huge loads of logs to be hauled out by the railroad and delivered to the mills for processing. In one year alone, 14 million pounds of lumber were moved by the new railroad! This translated into huge profits for the new companies in their early years.

Along the railroad, camps sprouted up to support the harvesting, movement, loading, and sometimes milling of the lumber. Two of the biggest camps in the area were at the crossing of the Metcalf and North Ponil Canyons, and at Ring, northwest of Ponil Park and ten miles north of Philmont. Life in the camps meant many hours of hard work, with time off to head to town being a treat. The only phone in these camps was located at the Metcalf camp. Loggers and cowboys would use the phone to arrange for dates on their trips to town. Others with families would load into their wagons for their visits to town for supplies and entertainment.

Though not designed for passenger service, members of the community could ride the caboose to Ponil Park or beyond if there were interested in seeing life in the camps or to visit friends or family. The train would stop for lunch breaks, which often included hunting turkey and deer or even fishing. The train would depart at 7 or 8 am every day and travel all the way to Bonito. Loading of lumber and logs would begin there, with stops along the way at the various mills, ultimately arriving back into Cimarron in time for everyone to have supper.

Future of Camp

The first five years of the railroad were the most profitable, but, by 1916, timber in the Bonito area was exhausted. 5 miles of the line was abandoned and pulled from Bonito to Ring in 1916. By 1920 the 6 miles from Ring to south of Ponil Park was abandoned, with the next 15 miles from there to modern day "6 Mile Gate" coming up by 1923. The line was then built up the South Ponil by 10 miles to Ponil camp, with a branch line extending up to Pueblano as well.

Also at this point in history, the use of trucks was quickly taking over the need for railroads. Vehicles were becoming more able to handle the heavy loads, were faster, cheaper to operate than trains, and cut the need for mules, muleskinners, feed, etc. By 1927, a road was built to the top of Wilson Mesa and trucks were doing the majority of the hauling off of the Mesa and from the Pueblano, and the South Ponil areas.

By 1930 the Cimarron & Northwestern Railway abandoned all of its remaining roads, and by 1932 had sold all of the remaining rail as scrap. The Continental Tie & Lumber Company operated until 1937, when its contract with the Maxwell Land Grand Company concluded.

Characters' Clothing and Appearance

One clothing stereotype to avoid immediately is the striped overalls and hats that we associate with railroad engineers today. Most of the overalls and hats in this time period were plain with no pattern, with the striped outfits we think of becoming more prominent later in the 20th century. Conductors often wore a pretty typical suit of the time period, with a jacket, vest, trousers, tie, nice hat, and of course, a pocket watch. The foreman of a section crew would have dressed slightly better than his crew, perhaps wearing a vest, or even a jacket, and always had a pocket watch as well. Most railroad workers wore heavy work clothing, work boots, suspenders or overalls, most clothing having just solid colors, and some with patterns like stripes or checks, but

not often. Usually there was nothing specific about a RR worker's clothing that differentiated them from other working class men of the time period.

Clothing Notes: Henley knit shirts, flannel collared or cotton (banded) collarless shirts; fuller button-fly trousers of the period in heavy cottons (pants were worn about a size larger than we do now), twill, denim and wool; button on suspenders; and leather work boots. For the campfire or other more formal occasions: Nicer cotton shirts with collars, some vests of wool or leather for warmth, or jackets, roll neck sweaters, cardigan sweaters with collars or V-neck in dark and neutral colors and long johns; rougher, serviceable fabrics and clean shoes or boots.

Accessories include: Handkerchiefs, white or subtle print, no bandanas; Pocket watches, especially for the foreman or conductor; Socks, dark or earth tone colors; Leather work gloves; Hats, period narrow brim, newsboy and bowler styles were popular but not brand new looking, usually well-worn. Most workers wore a shapeless slouch hat. (See photos in the books listed in the reference section.)

Appearance: Clean and orderly as much as possible; dirty only as work has made you; railroad equipment and tools, well organized, hairstyles of the period were short -- to the ears and above nape of the neck -- but without "buzzed" or shaved areas. Some could be a little stragglier, but no long (shoulder) hair. No obviously dyed hair colors or personal jewelry. Some beards were worn, but most railroad workers wore a mustache or were clean shaven.

Language

Railroading language is more filled with more slang and lingo than one might imagine! A detailed list of terms/lingo/slang is available in the camp reference materials. English is the language spoken although flavored whenever possible with indications of the characters' first country origins. Accents and railroading lingo need to be accurate. Research, practice and do the best you can to portray the characters respectfully. "Beverly Hillbillies" or other similarly ridiculous/stereotypical accent portrayals would not be appropriate.

Props

Railroading equipment and tools, lanterns, pocket watches, musical instruments, and other historic artifacts in the railroad office and company store will help set the scene and tell the story of railroading from different perspectives.

Activities

Laying ties and rails, Rail Maintenance, Railroad Office & Company Store, Blacksmithing, Use of Railroad Hand Cars, Telegraph, and Campfire.

Staff Roles and Responsibilities as Historical Interpreters

Staff roles will include Division Superintendent, Section Foreman, Switchman, Telegrapher, Blacksmith and other roles as needed. (Gandy Dancers and Section Crews as an example.)

Greeting Crews – In character, first person interp

Check in – Out of character, third person interp

Railroad Building -- In character

Blacksmithing -- In character

Campfire -- In character with period appropriate clothing, theme (railroad), music, stories and entertainment

Campers' Roles

New Section Crew laborers, or "Gandy Dancers" for the Cimarron & Northwestern Railway. Other roles could include other entry level roles found in a yard, including Wipers, Firemen, Track Layers, Axemen, etc.

Positive Values to Depict at this Camp

- Willingness to work hard
- Diversity of class, nationality, and ethnicity working as a team
- Perseverance through ups and downs of fortune
- Knowledge and respect of the forests and natural resources
- Appreciation of music and how it describes different experiences and bridges people's differences
- Respect for one's living conditions, represented by the way the Railroad Office and Company Store is kept

Relationship to the Goals of the BSA

- Respect for laboring class people, their hard work and contributions to society
- Emphasis that all people, regardless of birth status, can aspire to become successful through hard work and diligence, despite the separation of social classes that existed at this time in history.
- Knowledge of how railroads supported logging and other commerce in Colfax County as well as shaped and changed Western America
- Acknowledging the diversity that has made America the country it is

References

The American Railway: by Thomas Clarke and Others

The Railroaders: By the Editors of Time-Life Books with text by Keith Wheeler. Time-Life Books Series: The Old West, 1976.

The Train Stops Here, New Mexico's Railway Legacy: by Marci L. Riskin

The Last Train to Leave Cimarron, New Mexico: by Ronald E. Bromley

New Mexico's Railroads, A Historical Survey: by David F. Myrick

Sam Johnson: The Experience and Observations of a Railroad Telegraph Operator: by Samson & John Albert Clippinger. Kessinger Legacy Reprints

The Loggers. By the Editors of Time-Life Books with text by Richard L. Williams. Time-Life Books Series: The Old West, 1976.

Glory Days of Logging. by Ralph W. Andrews

This Was Logging. by Ralph W. Andrews

Out in God's Country: A History of Colfax County, New Mexico. by Larry Murphy

Philmont : A History of New Mexico's Cimarron Country. by Lawrence R. Murphy

New Mexico: A Brief Multi-History. by Ruben Salaz Marquez

Translating Property: The Maxwell Land Grant and Conflict Over Land in the American West, 1840-1900, by Maria Montoya

New Mexico: A History by Joseph P. Sanchez, Robert L. Spude, and Arthur R. Gomez.

Railroads and the American People. H. Roger Grant, 2012.

Special care is needed to ensure music and stories at the campfire are appropriate for the time period and for railroading. They should not be heard anywhere else at Philmont and be specific to the characters, period and history of the camp.

