

FIRST DRAFT



The front page of The Daily Sentinel on May 31, 1920, proclaimed the news of the Gunnison River train wreck that claimed two lives.

RAILROAD TRAGEDY

Train derailment marred Memorial Day 1920 in Grand Junction

As Grand Junction residents prepared to honor fallen soldiers and sailors on Memorial Day 1920 — or Decoration Day as it was often called — news of a tragic railway accident reached the city. Early on Monday morning, May 31, a locomotive pulling a Denver & Rio Grande freight train plunged off the tracks of a soggy railbed and tumbled into the raging floodwaters of the Gunnison River near Dominguez Canyon, some 20 miles south of Grand Junction. Engineer R.D. “Lonnie” Ray and fireman Glen M. Clute, both of Grand Junction, were killed in the wreck. Ray’s body was recovered two days later, pinned under the sunken locomotive. Clute’s body was not found. Brakeman P.W. Newman was also thrown into the water, but managed to swim to safety. Other members of the train crew were spared from the river, so they survived. Livestock on the train also lived. There was no mention in newspaper reports of the stock cars going into the river.



BOB SILBERNAGEL

The Daily Sentinel called it “one of worst rail disasters in the history of the Denver & Rio Grande railway.” However, if one examines Colorado newspapers for 1920, it is apparent that the Memorial Day wreck near Grand Junction was far from the worst that year. Three people were killed and 13 injured when cars on a passenger train overturned near La Junta in June. One person was killed and 13 injured that same month when a train derailed near Alamosa. Seven people were injured at a wreck near Mancos, and a D&RG engineer was killed on La Veta Pass. The worst rail crash of the year in Colorado occurred on Labor Day just north of Denver, when two electric interurban trains crashed head on, killing 13 people and injuring 200. The list of railroad accidents in Colorado in 1920 wasn’t unusual for the time. Ever since the first trains rolled onto tracks, railroad



COURTESY OF THE EAGLE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Here’s what it looks like when two locomotives smash head-on into each other. This crash near Dotsero in January 1909 killed 26 people.

travel had been dangerous. Exact numbers of wrecks and fatalities are hard to come by because no single agency kept track of railroad accidents. The National Postal Museum at the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., estimates there were 6,000 wrecks involving trains carrying mail from 1890 to 1900. The total number of fatalities is unknown. And not all trains carried mail. But they all faced similar dangers. Tracks gave way and trains derailed. Bridges collapsed. And, too frequently, poor communications between train crews and tower dispatchers led two trains to slam head-on into each other. That’s what occurred in the worst railroad disaster in U.S. history. On July 9, 1918, near Nashville, Tennessee, the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railway’s No. 1 passenger train from Memphis plowed head-on into the No. 4 passenger train, which was leaving Nashville to go to Memphis. Both trains were traveling at more than 50 mph. At least 101 people were killed and another 171 were injured. Some reports put the number of fatalities above 120. The Interstate Commerce Commission pointed to human errors, both by the crews of the two trains and by tower workers at Nashville. A combination of poor operating practices and lax enforcement of operating rules led to the wreck, the agency said. Additionally, the ICC said the wooden construction of the passenger cars greatly increased the number of fatalities. Consequently, the 1918 Nashville train wreck prompted one major safety change in railroad operations. Most railroads in the country began switching to all-steel passenger cars. Poor communications are also believed to be responsible for the train collision in Vaughan, Mississippi, on the night of April 30, 1900, when a passenger train from Memphis rammed into a stalled freight train. The engineer on the passenger train was unaware of the stalled freight train until the last minute, but he did everything he could to slow his passenger train. As a result, there was only one fatality: Engineer John Luther “Casey” Jones.

The year Casey Jones died was one of the worst for train fatalities in the nation’s history. More than 200 people died in train fatalities in 1900, according to one account. By 1920, things had improved considerably. According to a New York Times story from December 1921, “Fewer persons (were) killed in 1920 than in any other year since 1898.” From 1919 to 1920, there was a 25% drop in train fatalities when compared to total passengers carried, the newspaper reported. The improvements were attributed to better communications and better awareness by all railroad workers about safety issues. Safety did improve, and fatalities dropped for a time.

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TRAGEDY:

➤ Continued from page 1B

But rail and automobile traffic increased, and that proved a deadly combination.

In 2024, the most recent year for which Federal Railroad Administration figures are available, 231 people — both motorists and pedestrians — were killed at rail crossings of highways.

Those sorts of accidents continue to occur, as demonstrated by the May 6 crash near Rifle involving a luxury train and a semi, tanker truck. There were no fatalities in that wreck.

Altogether, 954 people were killed in railroad incidents in 2024. So, trains are still dangerous, but in different ways than they were early in the last century.

In 1920, in the West, water was the biggest culprit, not highway crossings, head-on collisions or poor communications.

As the Rocky Mountain News put it on May 20, 1920, “Floods roaring through the Grand and Gunnison rivers as a result of remarkable thaws in snowcapped mountains” caused a multitude of problems that month.

A Garfield County commissioner and his road overseer were drowned in the Colorado River near Grizzly Creek when their car was swept into the water as the river bank collapsed.

Meanwhile, a railroad bridge near Paonia collapsed, marooning a train on the south side, fruit lands in Delta, Montrose and Mesa counties were threatened by high water, and according to the Rocky, “Dead Cattle Choke Streams.”

Even farther south, high water caused problems for trains. On May 25, 1920, a passenger train derailed along the Rio Grande River near La



PUBLIC DOMAIN THROUGH WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

A large crowd examines the destroyed passenger cars of a train outside of Nashville, Tennessee, after the worst train wreck in U.S. history. More than 100 people were killed in the crash in July of 1918.

Joya, New Mexico, due to a flood-softened railbed. The engineer and fireman were killed, and 30 passengers were injured.

The Memorial Day wreck south of Grand Junction was not reported immediately because there was no modern communications technology available.

According to the Sentinel, “The absence of telephones near the scene of the wreck delayed reports reaching this city (Grand Junction) for a number of hours after the accident.” Surviving members of the train crew walked several miles before they

found a farmhouse that had a telephone, the Sentinel reported.

On June 3, three days after honoring soldiers and sailors who had fallen in all U.S. military conflicts through World War I, Grand Junction laid to rest the 42-year-old husband and father of three, Engineer R.D. Ray, in a funeral that drew large numbers of railroad men and their families. If a memorial service was held for fireman Clute, it was not reported.

Sources: Historic newspapers at www.newspapers.com and www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org; “Train

Wrecks,” Smithsonian National Postal Museum, <https://postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibition/mail-by-rail/train-wrecks>; “List of rail accidents 1920-1929,” Wikipedia; “The Great Train Wreck of 1918: Tragedy on the Rails,” by Ben Haas, Steam Giants, <https://steamgiants.com/wiki/events/great-train-wreck-of-1918>; “Railroad Incident Table,” Federal Railroad Administration, <https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/home-and-community/safety-topics/railroad-deaths-and-injuries>.

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MEALS ON WHEELS

Dining Sites:

Clifton Community Campus, 3270 D½ Road, noon–12:30 p.m., Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, dine in only.

Palisade Community Center, 711 W. Seventh St., Palisade, noon–12:30 p.m., Tuesdays and Thursdays, dine in only.

Fruita Community Center, 324 N. Coulson St., Fruita, noon–12:30 p.m., Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, dine in only.

Grand View Apartments, 1501 N. First St., noon–12:30 p.m., dine in only.

Ratekin Towers Apartments, 875 Main St., serving residents only, noon–12:30 p.m., Monday–Friday.

Collbran Congregational Church, 2003 High St., Wednesdays, available upon request.

Mesa Community Center, 48973 KE Road, Mesa, Tuesdays, available upon request. Call 970-298-9844 ext. 3 for meal site reservations/ cancellations by 4 p.m. at least one business day in advance. Call Friday by 4 p.m. for Monday reservations. Call if you have not received your meal by 12:45 p.m. Volunteers are always needed. Suggested donation for a meal is \$3.50. Fee for guests younger than 60 is \$10.75.

All meals served with 1 percent milk:

Monday — CLOSED, Happy Memorial Day!

Tuesday — Hamburger on a bun, lettuce and tomato, baked beans, chateau vegetables, and applesauce.

Wednesday — Egg and sausage bake, chopped spinach, fresh oranges, peanut butter cookies, and multigrain bread.

Thursday — Meatloaf and gravy, baked potato with sour cream, broccoli, fruit cocktail, and whole wheat bread.

Friday — Swiss steak with sauce, au gratin potato, herbed green beans, mandarin oranges, gelatin, and multigrain bread.

THE ACES

BARRY REGAL

“You don’t realize that you’re intelligent until it gets you into trouble.”

— James Baldwin

Zach Grossack and Tom Paske overstretched to six spades in our final deal from the 2025 World Bridge Tour, but Grossack made up for it with some sparkling declarer play.

Whereas I might have bid a simple three spades over three hearts on the North hand, Paske opted for a negative double. Thus, he was guessing whether to act again when South freely bid four spades over four hearts. When he did, Grossack deemed his three key cards and the spade queen sufficient for slam.

West could have led his singleton club, which would have torpedoed the slam immediately, but he chose a diamond. Grossack took that with the king, unblocked the heart ace, then pulled two trumps (preserving an entry to hand) and ruffed a heart.

Next came the first stroke of genius — declarer called for the club nine from dummy. Grossack was hoping to pin a singleton eight in the West hand. The effect was similar, however, when East mistakenly covered with the 10. Grossack took that with the ace, ruffed his last heart and cashed his two remaining trumps, discarding a diamond from dummy to reach a four-card ending with a diamond and K-7-6 in clubs facing A-x in diamonds and two clubs in hand. What could East discard? Reducing to two clubs would be immediately fatal, with declarer poised to duck a round, so East bared his diamond jack. Alas, declarer could then cash the diamond ace and lead a club to the six, endplaying East to lead back into the king-seven tenace. Bravo.

NORTH
♠ K 10 8 6 3
♥ A
♦ K 8 7
♣ K 9 7 6

05-23-A

WEST
♠ 9 2
♥ K 10 6 4 3 2
♦ Q 10 9 4
♣ J

EAST
♠ J 4
♥ Q J 9
♦ J 6 3
♣ Q 10 8 5 2

SOUTH
♠ A Q 7 5
♥ 8 7 5
♦ A 5 2
♣ A 4 3

Vulnerable: North-South
Dealer: East

The bidding:
South West North East
1 ♠ 3 ♥ Dbl. Pass
4 ♠ Pass 5 ♥ Pass
6 ♠ All pass

Opening Lead: Diamond 10

BID WITH THE ACES

05-23-B

South holds:
♠ K 10 8 6 3
♥ A
♦ K 8 7
♣ K 9 7 6

South West North East
1 ♠ Pass 2 ♥ Pass
? ?

ANSWER: Not everyone agrees with me (no surprise there!), but I’m firmly of the opinion that even though we are in a game-forcing auction, a bid of three clubs should show extra values; so here you can bid either two spades or two no-trump. With poor spades and stoppers everywhere, put me down for the latter.

BOOKISH TYPES

Find the answers to today’s puzzle further into this section

PREMIER CROSSWORD

By Frank A. Longo

ACROSS			DOWN							
1	Delectable	50 — Locka (Miami suburb)	89	Powerhouse	133	Miserly types	37	Spud	84	Endorsed
9	L.A. and S.D.'s region	51	Batting game for tykes	90	Invite (to)	41	Driver's aid in hazy weather	86	Frequently, in odes	
14	Prescribed amount	52	Actress Thurman	91	Release	2	Theater guide	87	Before, in odes	
20	Hockey Hall of Famer Phil	55	Late, great actress Catherine	94	— kwon do	3	Bingeing jag	91	Indian dress	
21	Merry song syllables	59	Grumble	95	One might terminate a round, for short	4	Annual mint collection	92	Net 'zine	
22	Beat in a 10K, say	61	Poehler of "Moxie"	97	Cousins of acting coaches	5	"The Present" actress Fisher	93	Wolfs down	
23	Iconic outerwear in a 1983 video from the "King of Pop"	62	Spoken-word competition	100	Together, in music scores	6	Qatar export	96	Holiday tree	
25	Employing	64	Prying tools	103	Equal: Prefix	7	Wombs	98	Pertains	
26	"Ava" actress Davis	66	Battle vestige	106	Special time	8	"Hercules" star Kevin	99	Enter quickly, as a cab	
27	Slugging stat	69	See 109-Down	107	One might terminate a round, for short	9	Depot: Abbr.	100	In the hub of	
28	Heroic verse	70	Mont's neighbor to the north	108	Secret cults	10	Tolkien fiend	101	Powerhouse	
30	Astrologer Dixon	71	"It's all clear"	114	Insect stage	11	Bundt, e.g.	102	Loan shark	
31	Mine metals	72	Dave Barry wrote one for the Miami Herald for 22 years	118	Put in a burial vase	12	A, in Hebrew	104	The "S" of CBS: Abbr.	
32	A&E spinoff of 1998, with "The"	77	A.M. TV program since 1975, for short	119	Toxin fighters	13	Sister of Michael, Janet and Jermaine	105	Threat ender	
36	Zeta follower	79	Very, very	120	Hosp. figures	14	Homer's cry	109	With	
38	Pop singer Rita	80	Op-ed pieces	121	Has supper	15	Séance board	69	Across, just between ourselves	
39	Zero in	82	Frighteningly bad situation	122	Think just maybe you can	16	Fortes	110	Writer Jong	
40	Wanders (about)	85	Tip of a boot	124	What the starts of eight long answers in this puzzle are	17	Pop's Grande	111	Mont's neighbor to the west	
41	1980s TV series featuring Mr. Roarke and Tattoo	88	Sun-dry, e.g.	128	Like wet makeup	18	Revved, as an engine	112	Root used in perfumery	
48	Ex-Giant Mel			129	Script unit	19	Collaborator with Marx	113	Lance Bass' boy band	
				130	Idle	24	Irish dance	74	Hardness scale	
				131	Rich desserts	29	— -fi	75	Buncha	
				132	Relieved	32	Foundation	76	Smile center	
						33	Throw dice	78	Color shade	
						34	Shrunken sea of Asia	81	Tiny particle	
						35	Med. group	83	Very special indulgence	
								127	Slender fish	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12	13		14	15	16	17	18	19	
20									21						22						
23								24							25						
26						27					28			29		30					
31					32				33	34					35						
				36	37				38					39				40			
41	42	43					44	45	46				47		48	49					
50					51								52	53	54		55		56	57	58
59				60			61					62				63					
64						65			66	67	68			69					70		
71						72	73	74					75					76			
77					78					79					80	81					
82				83					84				85	86	87		88				
89							90				91	92				93			94		
			95		96			97	98								99				
100	101	102				103	104	105		106					107						
108					109				110				111	112	113			114	115	116	117
118							119						120				121				
122						123		124			125	126				127					
128								129							130						
131								132							133						

#2,300 Average time of solution: 67 minutes

EXA HRH IXC QCZBIRTBSSA TNYUCH QZDCS
ZMMCZY NL NWCY Z HNFCL UZDZFRLC KNWCYV?

QCKZBVC RI EZV Z YNSS UNHCS.

Today’s Cryptoquip clue: H equals D

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Totally 80s and 90s