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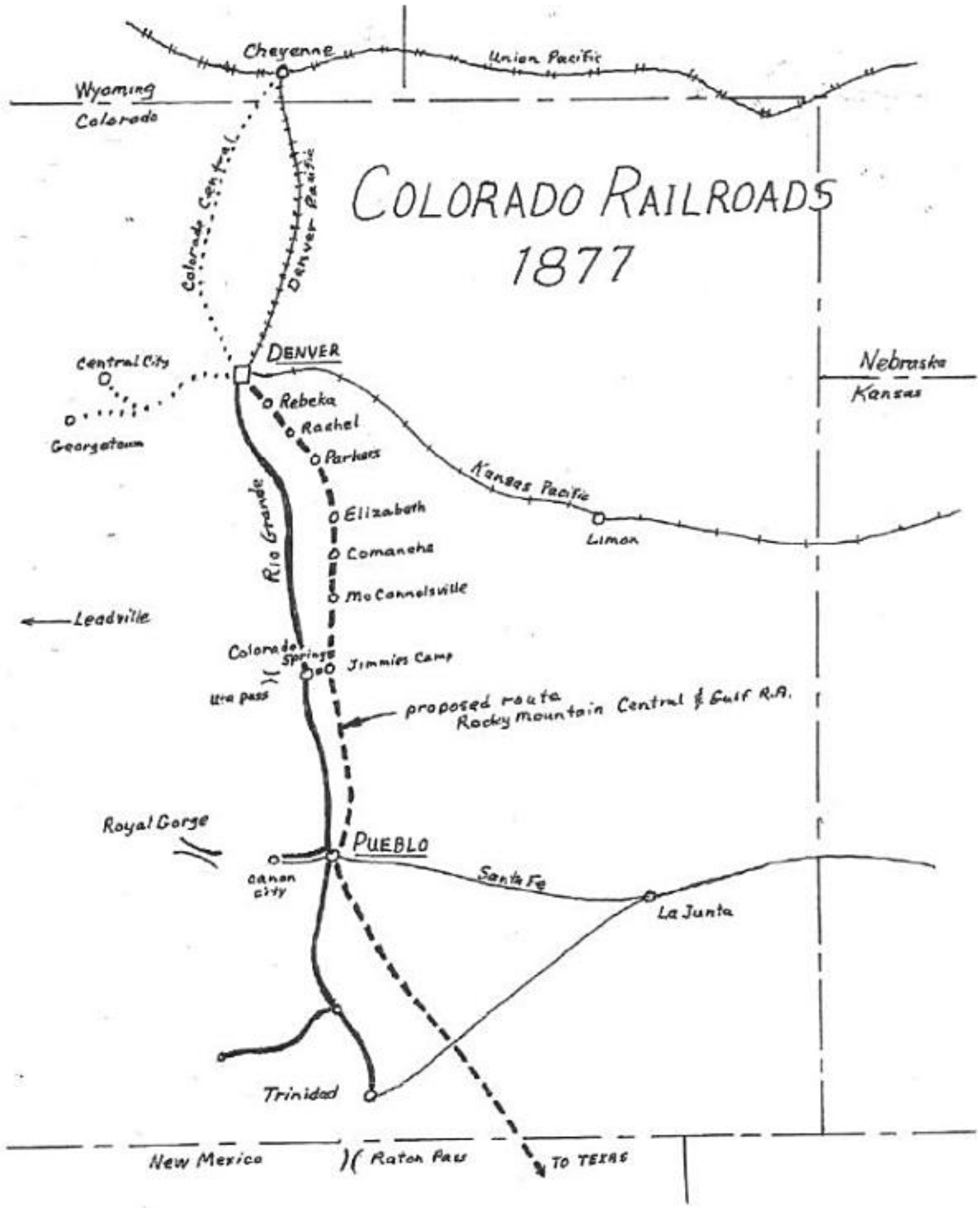
Cover art by Tiffany Malmkar

Print ISBN 978-1-944215-41-5

EPUB ISBN 978-1-944215-42-2

First Edition

Whidbey Writers Group Press is a d/b/a of Whidbey Writers Group



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PROLOGUE

A single gas light fixture cast a dim glow in the hallway as Rachel walked cautiously forward, her footsteps echoing on the wooden floor. Glimmering light seemed to radiate from her soft pink face, which sharply contrasted with her dark curled hair, black hat and black silk dress. Her dress cascaded down, to cover the black lace shoes pacing purposefully over the hardwood floor. The twenty-five-year-old heard voices from a room ahead and stopped. Her gloved hands tightly clasped the key and two matches in her left palm. Had they heard her?

"Have you seen the stacks of express down in the baggage room?" the voice boomed.

"Yeah! There must be twenty baggage carts full."

"If any more arrives before morning we'll have to add an extra express car to the morning train to Pueblo."

Rachel felt a wave of relief wash over her, realizing that there were only two employees in the nearby Denver and Rio Grande Railroad offices. She ignored their discussion and searched the doorways in the hall in front of her. Six more careful steps took her to the doorway she sought.

She had stepped deliberately, trying to keep her footsteps from echoing and alerting the men in the D&RG office. She halted at an unmarked wooden door, then quietly inserted the key into the lock.

One sharp click rattled up the hallway and she swiftly stepped into the room and gently pushed the door home to its jamb. She inserted the key on the inside of the lock and gave it a quick turn.

The room was nearly dark. Its only light came through the windows overlooking Denver's dimly lit streets. Not much light was available at two o'clock in the morning. She cautiously made her way across the room, reaching out in front of her so she wouldn't knock over the lamp on the top of the desk. Her gloved fingers found it and swiftly removed the chimney and struck the match on the stone by the base of the lamp.

She felt safe in the light as she adjusted the wick. The door she'd entered was solid wood with no window glass and she was sure that no one in the street below would notice another light in one of the second-floor windows of Denver's Union Station. Rachel swiftly scanned her father's private office connecting to the main offices of the Rocky Mountain Central and Gulf Railroad. To her right was the door to the main office flanked by a coat rack and a large map of Colorado, showing rail lines that existed in 1882. It also showed, with different colored ink, those lines her father hoped would exist within a few short years. Below the window was a low buffet where her father, J.C. Bannon, kept a modest supply of liquors. She turned to her left to face a tall bookcase and a large dark walnut desk with six drawers and a roll top hiding the contents. Three large chairs obstructed her way in the ten-foot square room.

She lifted a thin leather-covered book from the second bookshelf from the top of the case and caught the key that fell out into the palm of her glove. She'd once observed her father slipping the key from the book. After seating herself in one of the chairs on wheels, she inserted the key into the lock, turned it and rolled the cover back. The open top exposed a maze of cubbyholes sprouting a mass of papers.

At first her gloved fingers poked and raked through the packets of papers before her as if she knew what she was searching for and merely had to lift it out of the mess. After a few minutes Rachel pulled the chair closer and removed her gloves. Apparently down

to business, she took more time, carefully reading first pages of documents before scanning the last pages briefly to insure herself that she was fully aware of the contents. Then she would poke the papers back into their cubbyhole. Stacks of old train orders were laid aside. Unimportant. Right of Way contracts, land purchases, and official enactments of city councils across the State of Colorado became more important as she studied them in detail.

The first drawer on her right revealed ledger sheets and reports of freight agents, road masters and superintendents of motive power. From out of the second drawer Rachel lifted a packet of papers bound in heavy paper, string, and labeled "Utah"

Articles of Incorporation—Utah Eastern Railway

Article I	The name of this company shall be the Utah Eastern Ry
Article II	The purpose of the corporation shall be to construct and Operate a railway from a depot and rail yards in Salt Lake City, territory of Utah, to Park City, territory of Utah. Thence by the shortest route, to extend to the State of Colorado, to connect with existing railroads.

Rachel stopped reading and exchanged the papers for another bundle.

Articles of Incorporation—Utah Western Railroad

Article I	The name of this company shall be the Utah Western RR
Article II	The purpose of this corporation shall be to construct and Operate a railway from a depot and rail yards in Salt LakeCity, territory of Utah, to San Francisco, State of California.

Rachel glanced back at the signatures on the last page. Many were names of Mormon leaders she'd heard her father mention. But there on the top sheet was her father's signature: Julius Chas. Bannon. Her lips parted in a proud smile, revealing white, straight teeth, when she read the stockholders' list. Her father owned ten percent of both railroads. She'd known he owned stock in other railroads but not that much. Then a stray thought annoyed her. The articles of incorporation specified the initial capital at one million dollars for each railroad. She mentally calculated that her father's investment was two hundred thousand dollars. Where did he get that much money? Considering the financial distress that RMC&G was in, she knew that much capital was difficult to come by.

Rachel stretched and placed the "Utah" packet on top of a small pile of papers she'd stacked beside the lamp on the top of the desk. She'd study them in more detail when she got home. She found nothing more to interest her in the second drawer and opened the third, which revealed a pile of maps. They were neatly folded and marked in blue ink on the outside, an indication of the nature of the railroad lines, painstakingly hand drawn by a draftsman. One marked "Ute Pass survey, 1882" caught her attention. Something her father said a couple of years ago stirred in her memory. She unfolded the new, off-white paper, laying it across the cluttered desktop. The City of Colorado Springs was clearly outlined on the right side of the page. Two black lines snaked across the faint blue lines indicating the mountain peaks to the west. She recognized the topographic map of the mountain pass west of Colorado Springs. A dashed line represented the Denver and Rio Grande survey through the steep canyon walls. A few hundred feet south, on the opposite canyon walls, was the darker solid line of the surveyed route marked "Proposed railroad line to Leadville." A single page document from the Geological Survey Office in Denver simply stated that the survey of the Rocky Mountain Central Land and Development Company, Julius C. Bannon, agent, did not interfere with that of the D&RG RR, and was legally filed, April 18, 1882.

Rachel trembled with excitement as she quickly folded the

document back inside the map and placed it on the stack beside the lamp. Her father had taught her a few things about running a railroad. She knew she'd found a valuable piece of paper, one that Governor Evans had no claim to. She began to hum a gay tune as she opened the top drawer to her left, then suddenly remembered she was not supposed to be there. She stopped humming and listened for people in the hallway, or the main office of the RMC&G. No one seemed to be around the office, and she found nothing but pens, ink and paper in the top drawer.

More reports from the Superintendent of Rail Cars filled the second drawer. A complete listing of box cars, flat cars and stock cars took up much of the space, along with thick drawings of equipment the railroad owned. Below those, she found and quickly thumbed through a copy of the minutes of the corporation. It was a one-inch-thick bound volume of lined, high-quality paper. A sheet slid out onto her black satin dress.

It was a receipt of some kind, for a total of $100,775 in payment for 6950 shares of stock at $14.50 per share. Rachel slumped back into the chair in shock. The payee was J.C. Bannon, and the buyer was Walter S. Cheesman. A second certificate stuck in the minutes named the buyer as John Evans, the former territorial governor of Colorado. She refused to believe it. Her father sold out! She quickly calculated two blocks of 6950 shares and realized her father only had a hundred shares of RMC&G in his name.

She frantically read through the minutes of the last few board meetings for clues as to what went wrong. Surely her father had not intentionally diminished his power among the stockholders. He couldn't have! She couldn't help but feel cheated, when she slammed the book into the drawer and jerked open the lower left one. By then, she didn't care if anyone in the hallway heard it. She quickly rifled through the papers it contained but found nothing of value.

She swiveled the chair around a full circle staring at the walls. The chair squeaked but she scarcely noticed. There had to be more documents explaining her father's actions of the past month—but

where? No evidence turned up in their home when she'd nearly turned the secretary desk in the parlor inside out. His private car #100 had been thoroughly cleaned by the steward and nothing turned up there. There had to be more here.

Before the end of the next half hour, she'd searched the buffet, resisting temptation to swill down a bottle of brandy. She'd taken books down from the case, one by one, and shook the pages. Twice she peeked into the main office with the lamp to check the time marked by the Roman numerals on the clock.

It was past three a.m. when she sat back down in the swivel chair. Outside the window she heard the shrill whistle of one of the steam engines chuffing up and down the depot tracks. She thought she could smell the acrid coal smoke seeping through the windows, or perhaps down the hallway. If she wanted to hide important documents in this room, where would she put them? Her blue eyes scanned the room for the twentieth time. Secret compartments? Where? Hiding documents was highly unlikely for her father. He wasn't a secretive man. But Willard had told her about his father's desk and the sliding panel on the side. Without really thinking it possible she reached down between the right side of the desk and the wall, placed her palm against the wood and lifted upward. Oh, my God! It moved!

Rachel knelt down, disregarding the dirty floor that would soil her dress and peered into the blackness of the corner. She lifted up on the panel again, moving it more than eight inches and searched the hole. She discovered that the compartment was merely two inches deep but was nearly as wide and tall as the entire side of the desk. Her slender fingers touched a packet of paper in the far corner. Letters! The packet included over a dozen letters wrapped in string. She groped inside again and again but found nothing else. On her knees she crawled to the other side of the desk and lifted up on that side-panel. It didn't move. Damn! There was no secret compartment on that side. In desperation she loudly whacked the side panel with her hand before she realized she was making too much noise. A solitary sheet of paper from the desktop fluttered to the floor in front of her as she suddenly listened for noises in the

hall.

Only the normal routine humdrum of a nearly silent Union Station drifted up to her ears. Somewhere she heard distant voices. Maybe a train crew was walking through the halls. Or, the voices were a few passengers in the waiting room below, or perhaps some drunkard outside in the street. She sat back on her heels, knees on the floor and picked up the "flimsey" that fell to the floor. A flimsey was conductor's jargon for the thin sheet that the train orders were written on, so the crew knew which siding to stop at and what times they were to arrive and depart. She stood up, placed the flimsey back on the desktop and sat down in the chair. She had to admit to herself that there was only one secret compartment.

A tear trickled from her eye as she stared blankly down at the packet of letters. She felt frustrated and dejected at finding no more evidence. She feared the corporate battle she felt certain was looming on the horizon.

The top letter was dated May 12th, 1882, addressed to her father from a nameless address in New York State. Rachel knew immediately that the delicate writing style was female.

> Dearest Julius,
>
> You have a daughter. She was born at nine o'clock last night and weighed five pounds, nine ounces. She's healthy and has your dark hair.
>
> I miss you so much...

Rachel skipped over to the signature and recognized the woman's name immediately. She read more but then dropped her hands with the letters to her lap in a daze. Her mind drifted to the blond-haired woman she'd met on their last trip to New York. She suspected then that the woman and her father were not total strangers when they were introduced. The image of Rachel's dark-haired mother flashed into her mind. Obviously, her father had cheated on her mother. A smile flickered on her lips and her eyes brightened. So, she had a baby sister! A bastard sister at that!

Rachel placed the packet of letters on top of the stack of papers she'd been collecting and slid the roll top down over the desktop once more then locked it. She checked the right side to make sure the hidden panel was back in place and replaced the desk key in the center of the book. She laid her shawl on the chair, placed the papers and maps on it and carefully wrapped them up. Then she straightened her dress, brushed off the dust spots at the knees and reached for her gloves. With a gloved hand she tucked the curls at the back of her head under her hat. She picked up the bundle and blew out the lamp.

Once her eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, she stepped carefully up to the door, turned the key and summoned the courage to peek into the hallway. It was empty, as she expected. She stepped out into the hallway as if she belonged there, quietly locked the door, and strolled toward the stairs.

She walked down one stairway, across the waiting room and out the door to where Willard was waiting in the carriage. Hopefully, no one in the main waiting room would even remember she'd been there.

PART ONE

1877
The Gulf Route

CHAPTER ONE

A slight September breeze rippled through the open windows of his private rail car and rustled the maps on his desk. Julius Charles Bannon welcomed it although he had to chase after a paper that fluttered to the floor. He welcomed the breeze because, although it was still morning, the day was turning out to be a hot sultry one. The tracklayers had undoubtedly already removed their shirts as they pounded spikes into the new ties a mile south of where the brown Pullman-built car was parked. It had been shoved off onto a hastily pounded together spur at 6:04 A.M. that morning at milepost forty-five.

J.C. Bannon placed a new spike on the corner of his maps to act as a paperweight and returned to his calculations. The slender, gray-haired president of the Rocky Mountain Central and Gulf Railroad had already removed his coat and tie. He always wore a suit to work, even at the railhead, though no one else was in the car to see him in his shirtsleeves. Through the open door at the north end of the car, he heard a heavily laboring steam locomotive as it reached the crest of an upgrade of track.

"That should be number two," J.C. said to no one in particular after glancing at the watch beside the map. No one else was in the car. Eleven thirty-two. Locomotive number two was thirty-two minutes late coming from Denver with its trainload of new rails

and ties. J.C. could see it through the end door of his car, coming into view around a curve in the new grade.

Number two whistled a shriek and a puff of black smoke billowed skyward from the stack. J.C. could see that the first brownish-red flat car was piled high with new ties. The line of loaded flat cars was being pushed toward J.C. by the locomotive behind it. Two brakemen were perched on top of the load at the front of the first car, watching the track rushing at them only a few feet away. One after another the cars trundled over the new track, sending up flurries of dust from the sandy colored cuts and fills that made a snake-like streak across the gray-green pastures.

A crew of 185 men, tracklayers, graders, bridge builders and foremen, were building the Rocky Mountain Central and Gulf Railroad south from Denver. Track climbed and curved through the prairie land along the foothills east of the Rockies. Their immediate goal was a Pueblo connection with the Santa Fe, which reached there the previous year. But ultimately their aim was Houston, Texas, and the Gulf of Mexico.

J.C. ignored the first two flat cars as they rolled past the open windows less than fifteen feet away. Then like a small boy seeing his first train, he stared in fascination as the dirty brown flat cars hauling ties rolled past. Those led a string of more flat cars hauling gray steel rails. He was so engrossed with the simple work train on his very own railroad that he forgot about the smoke and cinders and the open windows. As the Rogers-built 4-4-0 locomotive chugged past, pungent black clouds of smoke rolled into the car like a fog.

J.C. muttered to himself as he got up from his desk and walked down the aisle to check for hot cinders on the plush blue velvet seats. With pride he brushed his hands through the tasseled fringe of each parlor chair. He liked blue. He liked it so much he had George Pullman special order the fabric instead of using the standard Utrecht velvet of and olive-bronze color that Pullman favored. The blue wasn't perfectly compatible with the dark brown exterior paint of the fifty-foot-long wooden car, but so what? He worked inside the car, not outside. The blue fabric worked well

with the dark walnut wood interior.

"Rachel will like this," he said, thinking of his daughter. He'd have to show it to her soon. He returned his attention to the passing work train.

The way car was directly ahead of the locomotive at the end of the string of loaded cars. Railroad men used the term way car for the caboose. A heavy-set man in a brown suit, tie and round Derby hat jumped down from the passing way car and stumbled down the dirt embankment toward the end of J.C.'s car. James Neff, Vice-president, and general superintendent laboriously climbed the steps at the back of the car and entered, brushing soot and dirt from his suit.

"James," J.C. greeted the pudgy man warmly.

"I'll be damn happy when grass grows on the grade again," James muttered. "It won't be so dirty." He removed his spectacles and fumbled around in his pockets to find a handkerchief with which to wipe them.

"Ride up front with the Hogger, not in the way car," J.C. said, slapping his friend on the back. That sent up a small cloud of dust. Around the railroad the man that operated the locomotive was known as a hogger, not an engineer. An engineer was the man who designed the track location, buildings and bridges.

"It really doesn't make much difference," commented James. "In the way car you get dusty and in the locomotive you get sooty."

They walked past the five rotating parlor chairs on each flank of the aisle and sat down at the desk jutting out from a window at the side of the car. The desk had been bolted to the floor in place of the eleventh parlor chair, which had been stored in a warehouse. Across the aisle chair number twelve had been replaced with a small table. Dividing the fifty-foot-long car in the middle was a doorway in the center. To the left side of the doorway a mirrored buffet graced the wall, and to the right was a secretary with a fold-down desktop and several shelves concealed behind a pair of ornately carved cabinet doors. Beyond the center door of the car were two toilet rooms, men's on the left and women's on the right.

Next were four sleeping sections, two on each side of the aisle. During the daytime the four upper berths folded up toward the roof and the four lower berths folded backward into seat cushions. Mattresses were stored in the upper berths during the day. The arrangement allowed for space for sixteen passengers to sit during daytime travel. Tables could be attached to the walls for use as card tables, or dining tables; the meals were prepared in a separate pantry at the far end of the car.

"I bring you good news," James announced, leaning back in the parlor chair across from the desk. "The Colorado Springs city council voted to give us our right-of-way into town."

"Hallelujah!" J.C. banged his fist on the desk with a big grin.

"They granted us the use of Moreno, Sawatch and Huerfano streets."

J.C. pulled a map from the pile on his desk. It was a map of Colorado Springs showing the location of the streets. Moreno Street was an east-west street south of the business district. Colorado Springs had been growing steadily since General William Palmer started it six years earlier. Sawatch ran north and south a few blocks east of General Palmer's Denver and Rio Grande railroad yards. The Rio Grande had reached Colorado Springs in 1871, pushed on through to Pueblo the following year and was at that moment building toward coal fields near Trinidad. The Rio Grande was their major competitor.

"It's not perfect, but it's better than nothing," J.C. commented. He needed a break. Problems had abounded since they laid the first mile of track south of Denver.

Finding a pen, he dipped it into the ink well and began scratching a thin line down the middle of the street labeled Moreno. Not having a definite right-of-way into the city had posed a problem to the RMC&G for the past several months. Engineer Lowry could not survey a route into town until a depot and yards were secured, and the Rio Grande was fighting them tooth and nail. The two men discussed alternate routes as J.C. drew lines down the streets on the map.

The two men were a study in contrasts. J.C. was prematurely

gray at age forty-four, but he looked good, some might say handsome. He wore a small bushy, dark moustache with flecks of gray in it. His face was thin and when seen with his slender, five feet eleven-inch frame, he looked tall. He carried himself with a military bearing, most likely from his service as an officer in the Union army during the war.

James, on the other hand, was five years older, five feet seven inches tall and several pounds heavier. His round face was darker, as was his thinning hair, still making him look younger of the two. James had been J.C.'s friend for years. Both had worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad, fought together during the War Between the States, and after the war, became partners in a freight company.

J.C. began working as a clerk for the Camden and Amboy Railroad at age nineteen, not being content to work in his father's store. At age twenty-three he courted and married Rebekah Anne Kensington, the daughter of a prominent backer of the railroad. He was soon hired as Assistant Commercial Agent for the Pennsylvania Railroad and in November 1856 he moved Rebekah, five months pregnant, and their belongings to Allentown by boxcar.

There he met James, a freight clerk, who had married Margaret Van Boening, a Dutch farm girl from Berks County. They had a year-old son named Willard at that time, and when Rachel was born to J.C. and Rebekah in March, Margaret was there to assist. During the war the friendship of the two men grew stronger, but the relationship between their wives waned. Margaret took Willard, their only remaining child after a stillborn infant, back to the farm in the hills. Rebekah packed a few belongings, and her children, Rachel, John, and Elizabeth, and moved to Middleton, New York. There the family lived with Rebekah's father Patrick until the end of the war. In spite of their husband's partnership, the two women ran in different social circles and saw little of each other after the war.

J.C. looked over at his friend. J.C. had been a captain in the Union Army, while James who was a lieutenant, had always viewed his friend as subordinate. If they hadn't formed such a

bond during the war, he most likely wouldn't have hired him as Vice President and General Superintendent of the railroad. War makes strange alliances.

The war, yes, the war. When J.C. returned home from his unit in Georgia in 1865, he found out his only son, four-year old John, had not survived.

J.C. asked, "What news have you heard of the strike in the East?"

"About the same as last week," James replied. He pulled out a packet of thin paper from a vest pocket and peeled one off. "The strikers blew up a dozen more locomotives, burned another roundhouse and a couple dozen freight cars."

"Which railroads?"

"All of them," James removed a tin of tobacco from his coat. "Damn near every railroad has been affected. Strikes are as far west as Missouri. Several governors have called out the National Guard. They'll bust the strike soon."

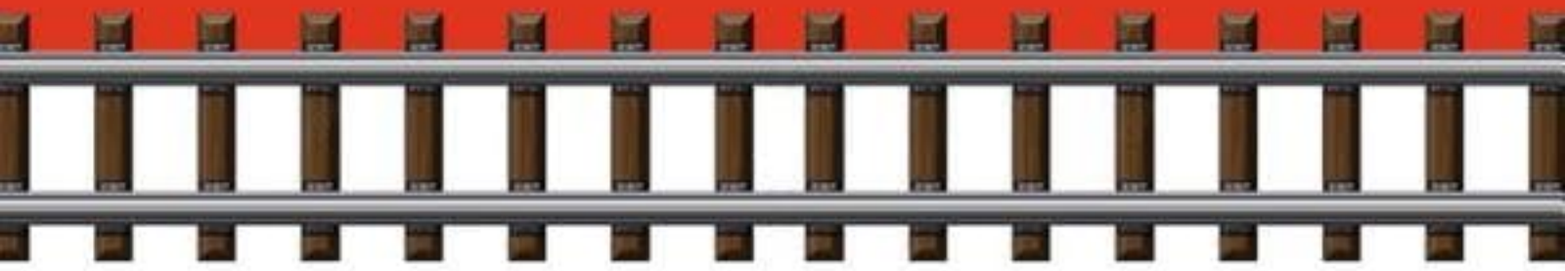
"Thank goodness it hasn't affected Colorado that much."

But it had. Earlier in the spring J.C. was optimistic when the organizers had finally agreed on a corporate purpose, agreed on a route and signed purchase agreements for locomotives, freight cars, rails and ties. When capital finances began arriving, J.C. purchased the first passenger car, this one, which could double as a first-class coach with twelve parlor chairs, and as a sleeping car for eight at night. It had arrived only four days earlier. This was its first trip and he'd been sleeping in it for two nights.

"The great railroad strike isn't only affecting the East," James said, and shook his head.

"Don't I know it."

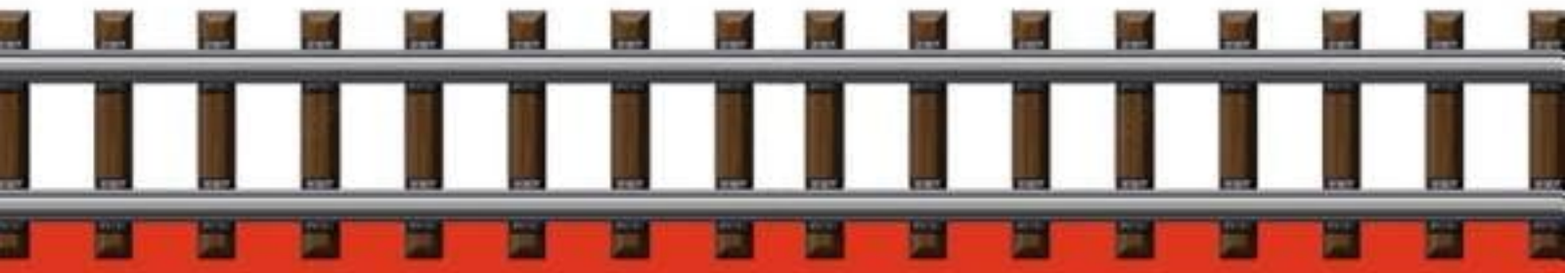
After the great railroad strike hit in July very little freight moved from the East. The strike came on top of the recession that started in 1873 and was still not over. The RMC&G languished in a small yard and rented office space at the Wewatta Street Station in Denver until August. In August they finally hired a crew and kept them at the railhead and out of the bars and red-light districts for over a month. They got paid once, but had nowhere to spend it,



Building railroads in Colorado in 1877 is a formidable task.

J.C. Bannon is the president of the Rocky Mountain Central and Gulf Railroad, known as the Gulf Route. He's building the railroad from Denver to Pueblo, and the going is tough. His competitors, the Union Pacific, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe, and the Denver and Rio Grande are blocking him every chance they get.

Rachel is J.C.'s pretty and vivacious daughter. Against her better judgement she's attracted to one of her father's track workers, Sean Dunigan. He's handsome, and strong, but the one thing that concerns her parents is that he's Irish.



ISBN 9781944215415