

## “OUR LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE A FAMILY HISTORY”

*By Zorene Thompson*

### ADDENDUM TO: Chapter 5 (Version 12 - 3/30/23)

*By Ray Mack Thompson*

Readers of this book will be interested in this ADDENDUM, which presents additional information not available when the book was published.

Information in this ADDENDUM comes from two amazing new sources; read details below...

Speaking as the co-author / publisher of “Our Little House on the Prairie,” I am reminded that my Mother’s brief account of a shocking event in Ricardo was the genesis for an entire chapter in the book, *Chapter 5 - Murder!*



Dorothy Mizysak & Daughter Mary Crull

The details I found and added to Zorene’s brief account came primarily from a long and rewarding e-mail correspondence with **Dorothy Mizysak**, Fontana, California (sadly, now deceased). Dorothy was the niece of **C. Frank Brushnahan**, the man killed by **Della Carley**. Dorothy had grown up with the story of the murder in her family and, over many years, had devoted herself to recovering family letters about the murder and traveling to Ricardo to recover pictures and court records. More information about the murder came from other online contacts, validating and adding details to Dorothy’s story.

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## ADDENDUM SOURCE ONE: JACALYN CARLEY

**Jacalyn** is the granddaughter of **Della Carley**, the woman who shot two of the citizens of Ricardo in the Post Office on September 12, 2012, as detailed in Chapter 5 of the book.

Although **Dorothy Mizysak** and I corresponded some with **Jacalyn**, we did not ask and did not receive the **Carley** side of the story. Indeed, Jacalyn told us that she planned to write her own book about the tragedy!

Of course, a murder is a murder, and from either side of the story, there is the promising life of a young lawyer cut short, plus the lingering shock of the injury to his girlfriend, **Oakie**. However, the story is incomplete without knowing more about the life of the murderer, **Della Carley**. Indeed, the rest of the story is surprising and, in some ways, a triumph out of tragedy...

*Ray M Thompson, Co-Author, and Publisher ([raymack@mac.com](mailto:raymack@mac.com))*

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## JACALYN CARLEY

Dear Ray Mack,

What a weekend spent with your book! Thanks, not only for making the effort to send it to me but much more, for the enormous effort you put into making a book that not only honors your mother but also brings so much up-to-date and makes it interesting for so many. Truly, as one who has a few books published and a husband in the newspaper business, we have tremendous respect for what you have accomplished. Kudos on this book!!!!

So... My first thought while reading was, DANG, why didn't I follow that Facebook Group, New Mexico Homesteads, a bit more? I

could have contributed so much; there were questions I could've answered as the quest proceeded. But my resistance to FB doesn't have to do age as much as a clear political revulsion to its info gathering etc., from its users.

Anyway, together have inspired me and I am going to add quite a bit right now. Hopefully, you can post this as a pdf file on FB for our readers to find and read.

Jacalyn Carley

**L**et's start with one of your mother's wondrous photos of the flower garden at the Ricardo RR station; it had to have been my grandmother's, *Ira Della Squyres Carley!* She went by Della.

The Squyres show up in Ricardo on the 1910 census. This was unknown to our larger family, so I was a bit gobsnacked upon finding this. Turns out Della's youngest brother, Alf Squyres Junior, came to Ricardo probably around 1908 to work as Night Operator at the station (that means he was a telegrapher). As Ricardo was one of the four important stops on the Belen Cutoff Railroad (Clovis to Belen), the station was manned day and night. The station also had electricity and a telephone.

Alf Squyres, Sr. had died on their family farm in Lubbock, Texas. However, he chose to leave the farm to one of Alf's siblings, cutting Alf Jr. out of an inheritance he thought was his. Thus, his move to Ricardo was a new start for the young man and he was enthused about his new job and homesteading in Ricardo.

Alf Jr. soon encouraged his brother, Sam, and his wife and two kids to homestead in Ricardo. Sam also brought their mother, Margaret, called Maggy. (She had no place to live as the family farm had been left to a son who was not hers!) Upon arrival, Sam

and their family set up one homestead, and Alf Jr. and Maggy set up another.

At this point in time, the original Station Agent, Mr. Small, and his family were leaving Ricardo. (Seeing a dead child on the roster with this name, I'm thinking this was a reason the Smalls left town...)

We don't know why, but Alf Jr. preferred the Night Operator telegraph position. He informed his sister, Della, and husband Barton, who were living in Mountain Park, Oklahoma, that the job of Station Agent was open. Barton had started the public school in Mountain Park and was teaching three grades as well as being the principal. (A possible change of scenery was fortuitous timing. Barton's staunch and vocal atheistic beliefs were meeting resistance in Mountain Park.) Barton was keen, anyway, to follow in the steps of the Andrew Carnegies and other wealthy magnates who started as telegraphers and became magnificently wealthy. He'd spent evenings in Mountain Park teaching himself Morse with courses by mail...

There are many books about telegraphy and its importance at the time; some think of it as the first internet. It's hard to underestimate how formative it was in making America one of the most wealthy nations on earth.

Barton, Della (who, by the way, was anything but illiterate), and the children arrived in Ricardo *in a COVERED WAGON, with Inga, their cow, in tow!* Their two children were Ira, Joseph Loren (my dad, whom they called Loren), and Verdi.

Note on Della's mental health: Della lost an infant named Bryce in Mountain Park, whose gravestone is still there. She must have gone into severe depression. Her father, Alf Sr., had come to nurse her back to health. On Alf Senior's long train trip back to Lubbock, he overnighted in drafty stations and caught pneumonia, and died a week later. This set up the inheritance situation, and



let's assume the family was angry at her and Barton for this death. Certainly, Della felt guilt.

On the road in their covered wagon, the family watched Model T's pass by and wondered why in the world they were about to take on such a coveted new position with the railroad yet were traveling by covered wagon! This reveals so much about Barton's grueling stinginess. *And why schlepp an old milk cow when she could have been sold and brought in some money? Who knows!* Inga the cow would prove pivotal to the story of the murder...

Barton was a bastard of a person; no better way to say it and no reason to beat around the bush with nicer words. He was, because of a horrific childhood, with regular beatings in the 'Name of the Lord,' averse to all religion. Barton was stingy; he liked 'women,' beat the children, and was a workhorse. During this time, Thomas A. Edison was writing and giving interviews in the national press with his arguments for an atheist republic. Barton was, I can only imagine, deeply interested in anything that gave him a feeling of superiority over the 'Believers.'

Upon arrival, Barton got the job as Ricardo's Station Agent. He decided that, despite the charming and well-appointed apartment in the station, they should homestead as well; if you owned property, you were rich! This was undoubtedly a significant hardship on Della, who ran their home and managed the three children living at the station and also had to take care of the homestead. Barton was unable to leave the station seven days a week. You were required by law to inhabit the homestead in order to eventually own it.

About the station buildings and Ricardo itself, here is some information: There were 'better' and (for lack of a better word) 'lesser' stations built by the AT&SF. Only four stations on the Belen Cutoff Railroad were the 'better' type, built with upstairs apartments. It had a 'pebble dash' finish and other trimmings. The office had electricity and telephone, although it's unclear if the

apartment even had running water. Steam engines needed water every twelve miles. Most of the so-called stations on the Belen were simply jerkwater stops, maybe had a ramp for loading sheep or crops, but were much smaller and simpler affairs with a single sleepy Station Agent to mind the telegraph during the day and see about shipping orders and oncoming trains.

The Belen Cutoff had only one track. In order for trains to pass one another, one train had to be 'sidetracked.' (Yep, that's where that word originated!) This took careful coordination, with communications done via telegraph.

No wonder diesel trains were off the drawing boards and quickly coming into service on the Belen Cutoff as our story unfolds! They could go long distances without water and could carry fruit and vegetables in refrigerated cars. From about 1914 onwards, when many homesteaders were giving up in Ricardo due to lack of water, big fast diesel trains began barreling through. That long, hard sound of a whistle as the diesel sped through the town was ultimately Ricardo's death knoll. Ricardo, I like to say, had a high-flying youth but was nearly dead by puberty.

Before I get to the murder, one further note about the station building in Ricardo. It was probably not destroyed; the ATS&F often came and carried structures away, according to Ted McCullom, the owner of the big farm that would eventually acquire all the land that was once Ricardo. He was a wonderful, humble, and well-spoken man, and it was a true pleasure to have met him with some luck on my first visit there. A model of this very station was seen by me standing in Ft Sumner; it could have been the Ricardo building!

Ray tells me that a descendant of the McCullom family is on the mailing list for his book! I am personally so glad to be in contact with Bob Peck via Ray, who comes from the Oakie Zimmerman family.

The photo of the Post Office, which Ray retrieved from his dear friend Dorothy Mizysak, intrigued me. In 1993, Mr. McCullom showed me a stone fundament and stone corner he said was the remains of the Post Office—but he may have gotten that wrong. Mary's photo shows a wooden structure. I also saw the ruins of a two-story structure that he called the hotel whipping around in the wind. Of course, we visited the single gravesite of C. Frank Brushnahan, with iron bars surrounding it.

Ricardo housed railroad workers; it was a busy place, as the tracks for the Belen Cutoff were laid one mile at a time. So, Ricardo had numerous brothels and bars. By the way, the names of towns and streets along the Belen were those of railroad executives. The railroad just drew streets on paper and then marked them in the dust. And, as said, they were in cahoots with the government, who assisted their plans by creating homesteads and telling all takers that 'Rain Follows the Plow!' A more cynical ploy cannot be imagined to trick entire families into supporting the railroad's plans. The railroads got rich.

About the Ricardo school: My grandfather was instrumental in its start. He was on the school board (I have documents) as he, like Ray's grandfather, was invested in education. Della's mother, Maggy, was highly educated, and as we'll see, she was inadvertently instrumental in saving Della from being hung for murder. Maggy was half 'Red' Indian and quite an old maid when Alf Sr. married her.

BTW, via this family, we are related to the Acuffs, who have a history of great voices, including Cousin Roy, who was a country singer and star who turned the local Grand Old Opry into a national landmark. Here, much later, Clyde, the child Della was carrying when she committed the murder, would spend much time hanging out backstage with Cousin Roy. Clyde was also a Readers Digest writer.

One last anecdote in my father's family, each child got one pair of shoes a year. Dad often told the story that he and his brother buried a new pair because they wanted to play in the desert and their shoes shouldn't get dirty. But they never found them again and had to walk barefoot the entire winter! Thorns and all. I guess the shoes are still out there ...

Back to *the* story – Brushnahan's homestead bordered Carley's, and Inga, the Carley cow, was apt to wander. According to one newspaper account, Brushnahan and Oakie had taken to shooting a firearm to 'shoo' the cow off Frank's homestead; there was an altercation. Della had a temper, and she was known to fly off the handle. (There was speculation even at the time that she was 'manic depressive'—a diagnosis confirmed by a team of doctors during her stay in the Las Vegas, NM county jail and used to bolster her insanity plea—which can explain her extreme temper outbursts.) Della was a volatile personality.

Here's what I could glean about C. Frank Brushnahan: He was trained as a lawyer and had a certificate from a college in Indiana indicating he was also certified in telegraphy. He lived in Ricardo. Nearby Ft. Sumner was a big town full of lawyers and only a 12-minute train ride from Ricardo. Is it possible there wasn't a lot of lawyering opportunity in Ricardo when young Frank hung out his shingle? It's entirely possible that young Frank and Oakie, who was six or seven years older, were romantically involved. They were on his homestead together and at the post office when the shooting happened. What if they wanted to marry? Wouldn't he need a paying job? She was Post Mistress, which was, by the way, a well-respected position. If Frank was serious about Oakie, then a job as a telegrapher would be a good thing!

In the meantime, Alf Jr. got an offer to be a telegrapher for the Associated Press at their headquarters in Chicago, probably in the summer of 1912. This was a big step up the professional ladder

for him and off he went, thus creating an opening for the Night Operator position in Ricardo.

My Grandfather Barton, in his capacity as Station Agent, immediately proposed Della for the position and possibly arranged for it to be given to her. Yes, she had no Morse skill or experience whatsoever, but Barton slept directly above the office. *'Just hit the broom on the ceiling, Della, and I'll come running downstairs so all you have to do is stay awake all night; let me know when the dots and dashes start and I'll run down to transcribe whatever comes in.'* and then he could just go back to bed! Barton also knew that most telegraph messages arriving in the night were routine notices about freight weight, shipping stops, etc. *In other words, Della became Night Operator at Barton's insistence.*

It's hard to imagine what she had to do on any given day. She shopped and cooked meals for the family and probably hauled the water to do so. *Surely tending that flower garden was a small joy!* Who milked the cow? She cleaned the station office and waiting room and the four-room apartment upstairs. She cared for three young children, got them to school, and kept them clean. She had to 'live at' and 'farm' the homestead if they were to gain the deed, this meant planting seeds and 'cultivating' the gypsum. She began studying Morse as soon as she got the job. Add to that, we know she suffered severe post-partum depression after the birth of her first child (Ira) and again at the death of infant Bryce back in Mountain Park.

Barton was more than aware of Della's emotional fragility but that wasn't his way of looking at things. In fact, he spared her nothing. When she was taking care of all of the above, and at the time she shot Frank and Oakie, Della was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy—*yet another child was on the way!* I'm not defending a person who committed murder, but the situation Della found herself in was extreme by anyone's definition...

Not only Frank, Oakie, and Oakie's father, but many people in town saw a woman who often talked to herself, who didn't have control of her children, who was married to a raving atheist (no church group to help out), and who was generally at loose ends. The same disturbed person had pointed the old rifle (a most likely useless one that the Carley's kept at the homestead) at Frank and Oakie during altercations about the cow. Della was pregnant, unable to get a night's sleep, and under pressure from every side because of a job she was forced to take and living with a husband who beat the children regularly.

*Consider this:* Della surely would have heard about women taking over telegraphy posts in small railway stations, earning less money than men yet able to support their families with a decent income! There were novels and stories galore! Did Della dream of being able to leave Barton by getting just such a job? I like to think so, even if the dream was only to get herself and the children out of harm's way.

She didn't belong in the night operator job, and she was *troubled*. *(There was also a bizarre story of watermelon-smashing on the train platform, documented in newspaper articles.)* Oakie's father started a petition to have Della removed from the Night Operator position, and it was signed by many in town. The petition was sent to AT&SF headquarters in Clovis, New Mexico, and a telegram response ensued.

The telegram arrived on a Saturday morning, my own father, Joseph Loren's 10<sup>th</sup> birthday. Barton would have called her downstairs after transcribing it. She was relieved of the position immediately.

Family lore from a side of the family that knew more (and whom we didn't know at all growing up) maintained that Barton put her up to the shooting, that he said something along the lines of: 'they took your job, Della, now you do something about it.')

I have found evidence that a company firearm assigned to any station should be kept in a safe! Believe it or not, that was company policy, as children might come into contact with a firearm lying around; that was dangerous. As a new state, New Mexico wanted no more murders and no problems with guns. My grandfather, by the way, had no reason to give Della the safe combination. She needed nothing from it in the night.

It's a fair assumption that Barton had the firearm on the desk as he shoved the bad news telegram toward her. In a short sentence, her position was terminated, as of, immediately. It was midday and she then left the station with the gun. She did what she set out to do—what she may have been goaded to do. She shot to kill. Frank and Oakie were at the Post Office, easy enough to find. The hard sun, the dust, the blood. The smell of gunpowder and the hot gun resting in the folds of her skirt as she walked back to the station... It's all hard to imagine and awful. But even worse, did she then make a birthday supper for 10-year-old Loren? What happened next? We don't know. There was chaos in town, though...

Sheriff Duran of Guadalupe county picked her up two days later, according to his receipt and notes. He brought her to the county jail, brand new and swanky for the times. In his handwriting, Della is listed in the jail log as an inmate accused of murder. That log lists a number of other colorful characters like horse thieves, forgers, and one other murderer. Housing a woman in a man's jail with the press breathing down his neck indeed presented a number of challenges for Duran, who was also responsible for preparing and actually carrying out public hangings for murders in his jail, some of whom had been there for months. Many sheriffs at the time had mental breakdowns.

Within several weeks, however, after examinations and testimony that can be found in state archives and Ray's book, Della Carley was declared insane and taken to the asylum in Las Vegas, New Mexico.

A grand jury that had been convened for the other case was implored to stay on. New Mexico, after many attempts, had just become a state, and it was imperative that they present a 'civilized' way of dealing with women who committed murder. The reason NM had been denied statehood several times was that it was too 'Wild West,' too 'gun-crazy.' State officials knew the state's reputation would suffer immensely if they hung a woman in public, even if they waited until after the birth.

As you know from Ray's book, Della was declared insane by several doctors. Barton was most certainly aware that insanity was now an acceptable plea in the US; such cases were often in the newspapers. Arguments for insanity, including intimate information about her post-partum extreme behavior and her 'red-Indian' blood being the source of her fiery temperament, would have been added by Barton. *He knew what he was doing: he had no intentions of raising four children alone.*

The asylum, ironically enough, was one of the most advanced 'insane' asylums in the U.S. at the time. *Serendipitous for her!* I have much information on that asylum and met with the director in 1993. It had running water, good care, green lawns, and gardens tended by inmates to help mental healing and central heating in the winter. All this probably irritated my grandfather to no end, who was still in Ricardo with the three children under the age of twelve! He didn't reckon with her having it so good and surely resented the idea that she would be visited by the clergy!

*And here is a game-breaker! A stipulation of the asylum was that no children – and no pregnant women – were allowed to reside there!* In our family, the story (which my father confirmed) was that the station telephone rang about six months later. Barton was told she would be allowed to escape (called 'elopement' back then, and one person is on record of having eloped that year, so that would be her!) if Barton would send someone to pick her and



the baby up in the cover of night and insure she was over the state line by morning!

My father was sent! Traveling by train from Ricardo to Las Vegas meant changing trains and being somewhat savvy, but obviously, my father, with Della and Clyde, made it back to Mountain Park!

Sam and family and Della's mother were either already back in Snyder, OK, or would follow shortly, having given up all hopes of owning land in Ricardo. Della moved back into the house that she and Barton built when they lived in Mountain Park before moving to Ricardo.

Barton stayed on for two years in Ricardo, waiting for a telegraphy job to open up near Della, who was living with Joseph, Verdie, and Clyde. Barton kept Ira with him to do his chores. Finally, they left Ricardo (there is an oil painting in the family of this) and traveled back to Mountain Park in a covered wagon with – yes – Inga in tow! Everyone and their brother in America are heading west as fast as they can, but the two of them were in a covered wagon heading east! It's said that Ira painted the picture, trying to idolize his shame.

During the two years she was alone back in Mountain Park, Della welcomed preachers into her home. Newspapers noted social visits and events. Obviously, she was returning to the fold of her own deeply religious family.

After Barton returned to Mountain Park, another child was born, Barton Jr. Shortly after the birth, Loren and Ira left home to sweep stations in small railroad towns in OK in exchange for learning the Morse. They would have been about 15 and 17 when they left home, which was most likely to get away from Barton. Verdi was 'adopted' by neighbors at about the same time. Before the youngest child was two, Della abruptly left Barton. She left behind Barton Jr and Clyde—the baby that she was pregnant with at the murder. (Note: Barton then hired a local teenager as live-in

help—whom he went on to infect with syphilis. He squarely blamed this innocent, very young girl for bringing it into his house, and she was so thoroughly disturbed by the accusation that she ended up in a mental institution. Her mother took Barton to court seeking financial aid for her, so we have much documentation.) There's no question in my mind that Barton was a disgusting person, to say the least.

Morse skills propelled my father, Joseph Loren, to much bigger places. He was transcribing Morse on Black Friday in NYC! He became a successful businessman and philanthropist and lived a very long life. We are all infinitely proud of him to this day. He was born in 1902, I was born in 1952. What a distance in time...

But well after the murder, in order to escape from Barton's brutality in Mountain Park, she left two of her children with him. The older boys were gone, and a neighbor had adopted Verdi, but Clyde and a new brother, Barton Jr., were left behind when she took off.

Barton went on to do truly evil things, it's all on record, and the two oldest boys, my father, Joseph Loren, and his older brother, Ira, left home at 15 and 13. They slept on floors and swept dust in various stations in exchange for learning 'the Morse.' That propelled my father to a job on Wall Street, where he was transcribing Morse on the day the market crashed. Dad was born in 1902; I was born in 1952. That's a time span!

I once met Della, but she'd become aloof and hard to talk to. She'd remarried a nice man, and there's evidence that her deeply religious beliefs helped her overcome the psychological ills that were indeed part of her personality.

My father remained an atheist his whole life, although he never talked about religion ever, except to feel my mom's hurt when the Catholic church rejected him as a husband due to a prior marriage. He saved her and her entire family from poverty, but

the church didn't care. His feelings about religion remained clear, even if he never vocalized them. Ira and his family were and are more eloquent and vocal ...

How dysfunctional families can trace a heritage is now becoming obvious – but who knew back then? Since my research, I've grown close to Ira's oldest daughter, Carolyn Carley, and Clyde's daughter, Jane Carley. Those two families (Ira, the oldest, and Clyde, the second youngest) were plagued with serious mental illness that all goes back to their fathers. Yet so much was considered normal back then, and family is often reluctant to talk about the past. Life was always about the future...

I like what Ray quoted:

*"We are all just walking each other home."*

—Ram Dass

We can do that now...

#### POSTSCRIPT:

RAY:

Jacalyn, I am so grateful to you for providing this addendum to my mother's book! It answers so many questions that I (and dear Dorothy Mizysak) had wondered about. And I have one last surprise for YOU! As you and I have corresponded about publishing this addendum, I've discovered another connection between our families!

RAY:

Jacalyn, I've just realized my mom (Zorene 1901-1994) and your dad (Joseph Loren 1902-????) were contemporaries! Surely they knew each other as kids? They *must* have attended school together! Mother tells of crossing the tracks and running into town, and kids probably hung around the train station where your dad lived. I know we kids loved to visit the T&P Depot growing up

in the 40s. I remember being fascinated by the clicking of the Morse sounder box!

JACALYN:

*Ray, INDEED! my dad would have known your mother. DUH! Of course!* Geez, Ray, I wonder why neither of us had put that together? My goodness - talk about not seeing the forest for the trees! It's impossible they would NOT have known each other! My dad was definitely in the school but dropped out in 8th grade.

The school was originally a one-room schoolhouse, so they would surely have been together there. Besides, the town not being all that big, and your grandfather was Justice of the Peace and on the School Board! Mr. Todd would have had a lot to do with Barton Carley, Station Master! Since Ricardo didn't have a mayor, these 'official' people carried a lot of weight for many things a town needed.

Ray!!! You really got me thinking about *so much...*

Stay well, and best from Berlin.

Jacalyn ([jacarley@mac.com](mailto:jacarley@mac.com))

Feb 24, 2023 — Berlin

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## ADDENDUM SOURCE TWO: RANDY DUNSON

Randy joined our Facebook Group, "New Mexico Homesteads," and soon became the source for some first-hand information about the AT&SF Belen Cutoff and the environs of Ricardo. Because the railroads were such an important part of the homesteading era, his contributions were much appreciated.

Randy pretty much grew up on the Belen Cutoff! Both sides of his family homesteaded and worked on or around the railroad over many years.

Randy's dad worked as a gang foreman from 1950-1958. During most of that time, his family lived in a "bunk car," which was really nothing but an

old boxcar converted to living quarters. They moved along with the work as it progressed down the track, and Randy would go to the nearest school. So, read and enjoy Randy's interesting addition.

*Ray M Thompson, Co-Author, and Publisher ([raymack@mac.com](mailto:raymack@mac.com))*

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## **RANDY DUNSON**

**A**t the time of the building of the Belen Cut-Off, all train movements were controlled by a dispatcher in Clovis, and instructions to various trains were sent via telegraph to the stations along the line, like Ricardo.

There were 39 stations on the 242 miles between Clovis and Belen; 23 of these had a depot at one time or another. Most were frame construction, a few were boxcars, and ten were concrete and pebble dash construction. Those at Blacktower, Melrose, Lalande, Ft. Sumner, Ricardo, Encino, Willard, Mountainair, and Becker had living quarters on the second story.

Westbound trains leaving Ft. Sumner had a steady uphill climb for the next 83 miles! The search for water all along the Cut-Off had yielded very disappointing results. Water that was suitable for locomotive use was found only at Clovis, Taiban, Negra, Willard, and Becker.

A westbound freight train left Clovis with a full tank of water, topped off again at Taiban, 45 miles west of Clovis, and then headed for the end of their run at Vaughn. Somewhere between Ft. Sumner and Vaughn, they would have to take on water. But, there was no suitable water within that stretch...

The El Paso & Northeastern (later El Paso & Southwestern, still later Southern Pacific) had the same problem and built a pipeline

from Bonito Lake to the railroad track and then to various stations along the line. Santa Fe contemplated doing the same thing but instead decided to move water to various locations. The locations for these water stops between Ft. Sumner and Vaughn were Ricardo, Yeso, Buchanan, and Duoro.

A side track was built about a quarter mile long, about a mile uphill from each station. A concrete ditch connected to a large concrete storage tank was between the rails. Tank cars full of water were spotted in these water tracks, the valves opened, and the water flowed into the storage tanks. The water tank at Ricardo was located about 1-1/2 miles west of the depot at Ricardo. There was sufficient grade difference to provide water pressure for the "Stand Pipe" near the depot. This pipe was used to fill the locomotive tender with water. Likely this was why the depots at Ricardo, Yeso, Buchanan, and Duoro were usually manned 24 hours a day.

The depot agent was in charge of all the other employees at the depot. At small depots, like the four between Ft. Sumner and Vaughn, the agent was the daylight telegrapher, and there would be a second trick telegraph operator (4 to midnight) and a third trick (midnight to 7 am) as well, plus a relief operator to work the days off of the other three. Husband and wife station teams were very common in the early years of railroading, which obviously was the case at Ricardo. All of these jobs were secured on a seniority basis and I believe all agents had to be bonded as they were responsible for Railway Express and Western Union funds. Because of this, there was a 38 pistol kept in each safe, which may have played a part in the story!. A section crew stationed at Ricardo likely repaired the tracks as well, but I am not sure. I do know that there was a section crew at Agudo, the station east of Ricardo, and at Evanola, the station west of Ricardo. There might have been a water service employee or two there as well - again, I don't know for sure. In any case, the railroad provided a number of good-paying jobs at these stations.



**PAGE 1: TIME TABLE NUMBER 38 - DECEMBER 7TH, 1933.  
THIS IS ONE OF THE EARLIEST TIMETABLES  
FOR THE BELEN CUTOFF.**

**The Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway Co.**

**WESTERN LINES.**  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT.

 

**PECOS DIVISION.**

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**EMPLOYEES' TIME TABLE No. 38.**

**IN EFFECT**  
**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7, 1913,**  
**AT 12:01 O'CLOCK A.M.**

MOUNTAIN STANDARD TIME.

Superseding Time Table No. 37, Dated December 8, 1912, and any Supplements thereto.

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This Time Table is for the Government and Information of Employees of this Company only.

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<b>F. C. FOX,</b> General Manager, AMARILLO, TEXAS.	<b>G. C. STARKWEATHER,</b> General Superintendent, AMARILLO, TEXAS.	<b>C. B. STROHM,</b> Supt. Transportation, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.	<b>J. E. McMAHON,</b> Superintendent, CLOVIS, NEW MEXICO.
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CHASE & CO., TOPEKA

**PAGE 2: TIME TABLE NUMBER 38 - DECEMBER 7TH, 1933.**  
**SHOWS STATIONS BETWEEN CLOVIS AND VAUGHN**  
**(AVERAGE SPEED: 35 MPH.)**

<b>33</b>	<b>113</b>	Capacity Sliding.	Fuel, Wat Turn Tables Wyon.	Rolling Gr Ascending	No. 38, December 7, 1913.	Rolling Gr Ascending	Distance Atchita	Telegram Telephone	<b>118</b>	<b>34</b>
Mexico and California Fast Freight.	California Express.								Kansas City and Chicago Express	Fruit Express.
Leave Daily.	Leave Daily.	No. Cars.			STATIONS.		Miles.		Arrive Daily.	Arrive Daily.
<b>PM</b> 12.25	<b>AM</b> 11.20 <sup>114</sup>	1000	W F T Y		<b>CLOVIS.</b>		656.7	N P	<b>AM</b> 4.30	<b>PM</b> 5.05
12.50	11.32	125		28.0	5.4	12.7	662.1	D T	4.20	4.40
1.12	11.41	125		29.0	BLACK TOWER.	11.1	667.4		4.11	4.24
1.35	11.51	125		29.0	5.3	13.7	672.8		4.02	4.07
2.05	<b>PM</b> 12.05	148	W	19.0	GRIER.	11.1	680.7	N P	3.48	3.42
2.35	12.17	105		26.0	5.4	26.4	687.1		3.38	3.20
<b>3.00</b> <sup>84</sup>	12.27	130		0	MELROSE.	31.7	692.6		3.28	<b>3.00</b> <sup>38</sup>
3.25	12.38	81		0	CANTARA.	31.7	698.4	D T	3.19	2.35
3.45	12.48	126	W F	0	5.8	31.7	702.7	N P	3.12	2.15
4.15	1.00	95		26.4	4.3	31.7	710.0	D T	3.00	1.41
4.45	<b>1.10</b> <sup>84</sup>	135	W Y	26.4	TAIBAN.	31.7	716.7	D T	2.48	<b>1.10</b> <sup>118</sup>
5.30	1.25	97		31.7	7.3	0	724.5		2.35	12.38
6.06	1.37	90	W	31.7	LA LANDE.	15.8	730.3	N P	2.25	12.21
6.50	1.52	68		31.7	6.7	0	737.0		2.14	12.01 <b>PM</b>
7.30	2.06	120	W F	31.7	FT. SUMNER.	0	743.9	N P	2.02	11.39
8.13	2.21	70		31.7	7.8	0	750.5		1.50	11.19
8.48	2.33	97	W	31.7	AGUDO.	0	756.1	D T	1.40	11.02
9.23	2.45	68		31.7	5.8	0	761.8		1.30	10.44
10.09	3.00	97	W	31.7	BUCHANAN.	31.7	769.0	N P	1.17	10.22
10.50	3.15	69		31.7	5.7	10.2	776.0		1.04	10.00
11.30	3.30	101		31.7	CARDENAS.	0	782.7		12.53	9.40
<b>AM</b> 12.01 <sup>118</sup>	<b>3.40</b> <b>PM</b>	650	W F T Y	31.7	7.2	0	787.5	N P	<b>12.45</b> <sup>38</sup> <b>AM</b>	<b>9.25</b> <b>AM</b>
					<b>VAUGHN.</b>					



At Ricardo, reading from left to right: Number 33, a westbound Fast Freight, is scheduled at Ricardo at 6:06 pm (it may or may not stop at Ricardo, depending on the need for water), Number 113, the westbound California Express is scheduled to stop at Ricardo at 1:37 pm. The siding holds 90 cars, the W indicates that there is water at Ricardo, 31.7 is the ruling grade westbound, meaning you climb 31.7 feet per mile, 730.3 the distance from Topeka, and this is the Milepost reference, N means Ricardo is a day and night telegraph office, P means that it is a day and night telephone office, Number 118 the eastbound Kansas City Chicago Express is scheduled to stop at Ricardo at 2:25 am, eastbound Number 34, the Fruit Express, is scheduled by Ricardo at 12:21 pm but will not stop as it is going downhill and will have no need for water.

The trains in the timetable run on "timetable authority," meaning other trains must stay out of their way. (That is kind of a complicated and boring process, so I will not go into it here.) It is these other trains that the dispatcher and telegraph operators along the way will give instructions to. Interestingly, even when I "hired out" in 1968, train orders were still sent via telegraph. Only in the last few years of the train order era in the 1980s were operators allowed to copy a train order over the phone instead via telegraph.

From what I can find, the depot at Ricardo and most others opened in 1908 with the official opening of the Belen Cutoff. With drought and the depression years, business declined drastically. According to my timetables, it seems that the depots at Ricardo, Buchanan, and Duoro were closed around 1931, as were many others. The only one left open between Ft. Sumner and Vaughn was Yeso.

I have been told that many of the little depots were re-opened for a while during World War II. During that war period, trackside signals were installed all across the Cutoff. The dispatcher could

control the signals from his office, thus eliminating the need for movement by train order and telegraph.

The Santa Fe began to get a few diesel freight locomotives in 1940, but when the war broke out, they were all sent to Arizona as the water situation there was even more critical than on the Cutoff.

With the big business increase of the war, Santa Fe was frantically wondering how it would ever haul enough water to supply the tanks at Ricardo, Yeso, Buchanan, and Duoro. *Miraculously*, a big spring appeared at Yeso! It was good water and in large quantities. There was enough water at Yeso that a train would only have to stop for water in an emergency at Ricardo, Buchanan, or Duoro. In such cases, the engineer would be called in on the carpet to explain why he had to take water there!

Water really helped Yeso to survive until the end of the steam era in the 1950s. When my parents got married in 1947, my dad was one of five water service employees at Yeso. My mother worked in the Overton Mercantile store; she said payday on the railroad was a nightmare. My parents said that there were 28 people working for Santa Fe in Yeso when they moved there. My, how times have changed!

These little towns often hung on only because of the railroad. It didn't take homesteaders long to find out how hard it was to survive on a homestead. My mother's parents homesteaded in 1905, two miles north of Grider, the second railroad station west of Melrose. In 1916, my grandfather got a job on the railroad section gang there at Krider.

With that paycheck through the depression, he not only survived but bought more land, as did many other homesteaders who worked for the railroad.

By the way, it is true that water was needed about every ten miles in such places as the Colorado mountains, with their steep grades

and small locomotives. The large steam locomotives of the Santa Fe would dwarf those little tea kettles!



**JACK DELANO'S PHOTO IN RICARDO, 1943.  
THE "MADAM QUEEN" (LOCOMOTIVE 5000),  
IS SITTING IN THE SIDING AT THE WEST SWITCH.  
NOTE THE WATER STANDPIPE NEXT TO THE TENDER OF THE  
LOCOMOTIVE.**

Please let me know if any of you ever come to this area and want to visit Ricardo. Kim McCollum still lives here and she is a wonderful lady.

Again, I'm delighted to add this additional information to a fascinating story!

Randy Dunson

crdunson@yucca.net  
575-760-3341