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Vol. 7, Issue 1 - February 2012

The Marshall-Martinek Team



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Martinek**

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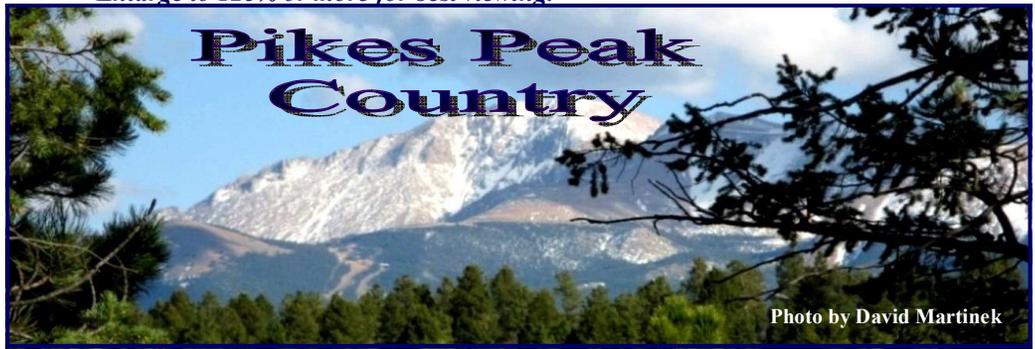
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**On the backs of iron horses
The History of the Florence and Cripple Creek Railroad**

It was July 1, 1894. The sun seemed to sparkle brighter than usual and the air tingled with excitement. Flags decked Cripple Creek from Poverty Gulch to Freeman's Placer, from Old Town to the flat above the Broken Box ranch. A celebration had been planned that promised to make even the Glorious Fourth pale in significance. For it was the day that the first train was due to pull around Gold Hill into camp.

That's how Mabel Barbee Lee, author of *Cripple Creek Days*, described the first train to reach Cripple Creek on a sunny July day more than 117 years ago. In fact, the city celebrated two mid-summer holidays that year with fireworks, brass bands and parades. And, true enough; the first celebration was probably more meaningful than the second. Because the first train to reach Cripple Creek, the narrow gauge Florence and Cripple Creek Railroad (the "F&CC"), meant that the life blood of the gold camp could be hauled down to the mills in Florence or Pueblo. They could put their wagons away; the world had come to their door.

Now there's some confusion on just when the first train really reached the gold camp. In Barbara McClellan's book, *A Colorado Short Line Railroad - The Florence and*

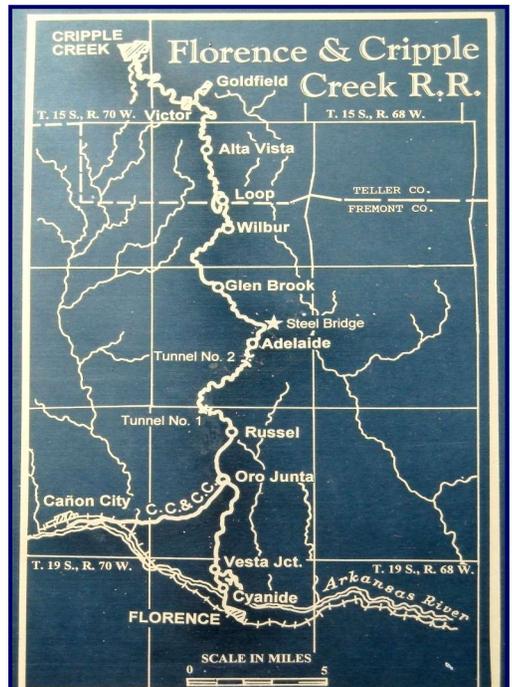
well others from Denver and Leadville. David C. Moffett was not an incorporator, but Morris Cafky (Rails Around Gold Hill) lists him as the prime mover behind the project. Their plan, no doubt motivated by a natural connection with the Denver & Rio Grande and to compete with the Colorado Midland's Midland Terminal adventure, was to build a 40-mile narrow gauge line from Florence up through the extremely rugged terrain of Phantom Canyon - a geological rift carved by Eight-Mile Creek and so deep and crooked that it would make an eagle dizzy to look down on it. The proposed route rose over a mile in elevation from Florence (at 5,187 feet) to Altman at over 10,000 feet.

Cripple Creek, she wrote that *a railroad engine whistled its impending arrival...on June 30, 1894.* Perhaps she was talking about another location in the district, not Cripple Creek proper. The F&CC had its main depot just northwest of Victor which overlooked the entire district. It's possible that's what she meant. Then, too, a freight or construction train may have arrived earlier. At least one other source lists the "first" train arriving on May 27.

All references may be true. But regardless of the exact date, it was the F&CC that first reached Victor and Cripple Creek eighteen months ahead of the Midland Terminal that was still languishing in Gillett. Coming up some 42 miles from the banks of the Arkansas River in Florence through Phantom Canyon, the railroad changed the lives of just about everyone.

The "official" arrival was celebrated on July 1. Later, during the Fourth of July festivities, Barbara McClellan said that company president William E. Johnson used a golden hammer to drive a golden spike to commemorate the achievement. However, Mabel Barbee Lee wrote that David Moffat drove the spike. Whoever did it, Cripple Creek (and the gold district) "would no longer be known as a crude, uncivilized outpost cut off from the rest of the world," wrote the editor of the *Weekly Crusher*.

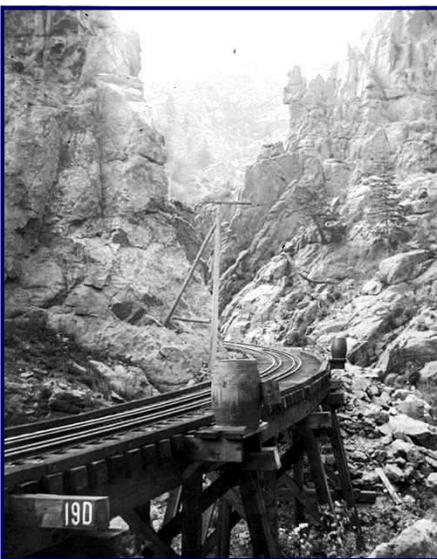
The Florence and Cripple Creek Railroad was incorporated April 17, 1893 with an authorized capital of one million dollars. The original incorporators were William E. Johnson (who became president), Eben Smith and James A. McCandless, as



See past issues of *Pikes Peak Country* at <http://www.davidmartinekc.com>

The Florence and Cripple Creek Railroad - 2

The race with the Midland Terminal, coming from Divide, was a “*race of iron horses.*” Both lines essentially began construction in 1893 and both faced unique obstacles and had difficult terrain to navigate. Both suffered tremendous delays – gravel slides and cave-ins, burnt trestles, flash floods cascading down the widening channel of Eight-Mile Creek, blizzards, howling winds and snow drifts, numerous bridges to build and a few tunnels to bore. While the foothills of Pikes Peak presented some dramatic challenges to the Midland Terminal, the deep crevices of Phantom Canyon made others feel that an F&CC train just couldn’t squeeze through them. As one story exclaimed in the 1903 New Years edition of the *Cripple Morning Times*: “*Look at that deep crack! They call it The Narrows. Why, a sunbeam is too broad to get through there, but you can see light beyond it; and – Oh Heavens! They are actually going to try to drag the train through that crooked crack – mercy, we’ll all be crushed!*” The Narrows were so narrow that the confining cliffs forced the road at one point to round one of the bends on a trestle built out over the watercourse of the creek.



The Narrows. *The confining cliffs forced the tracks at one point to round one of the bends on a trestle bridge built out over the creek.*

Starting from Florence’s union station, the F&CC tracks crossed the Arkansas River on level grade and then started a slight incline towards Cyanide (see map) where a great metallic extraction plant existed. Continuing through rolling prairie the road inched still upward toward Oro Junta where, by 1900, the short Canon City and Cripple Creek Railroad connected and merged with the F&CC main line. Beyond Oro Junta was Russell, and beyond Russell were two tunnels marking *the mouth of the narrow, abysmal canyon* leading to Adelaide. Just north of Adelaide was a long steel bridge which was built in 1897 to replace the original wooden trestle that was destroyed by fire only a couple years after the railroad began operating. The steel bridge is the only remaining landmark from that time and is currently on the National Register of Historic Places. It can be seen along the Phantom Canyon Road.

Speeding on, a train would cross bare, grassless gravel, the dry wash of Eight-Mile Creek – dry as the Pyramids until the rush of winter snow melt or a heavy summer thunderstorm turned it into a destructive, raging torrent. Further north the tracks looped around themselves above Wilbur at just about the boundary between Teller and Fremont Counties – a spot called Rocky Point. From there, though the climb was steep (about a

four percent grade), the canyon widened out into a more picturesque narrow valley with soil and shrubbery until Alta Vista and the smoky chimneys of Victor came into view.

“*But here we are at Alta Vista (i.e. High View),*” writes the *Cripple Morning Times* author, “*where we obtain our first glimpse of the great Cripple Creek gold mining district.*”

As the tracks wound their way to Victor, around and north of Bull Hill and though Goldfield and Independence, they linked with the Golden Circle



The steel bridge is the only remaining landmark of the F&CC and is currently on the National Register of Historic Places.

Railroad (opened for traffic in 1896), an interurban narrow gauge subsidiary of the F&CC, and proceeded on to the highest point in the district at Altman – *in sight of most everything within a radius of a hundred miles.* The Florence and Cripple Creek’s main terminal in the district, a *pretty station* called the Vista Grande, was at Altman, once *the highest incorporated town on the face of the globe.* A branch line continued from there around Gold Hill into Cripple Creek.

From the summit at Altman *the golden hills of the district were in full view – Battle Mountain, Squaw Mountain, Bull Hill, Raven Hill, Gold Hill, Beacon Hill, Globe Hill and Tenderfoot Hill, all dotted over with bustling towns and freckled with the dumps of mining pits.* And beyond these was Pikes Peak, twenty-five miles away.

Known as “The Gold Belt Line,” (and also the “String Line” – because its winding route resembled a dropped string) at the peak of its operation the F&CC operated three passenger trains



daily between the district and Florence, connecting with the Denver and Rio Grande running west from Pueblo. Overnight Pullman service was also available to Denver. Numerous trains ran between Cripple Creek and Victor each day and the Golden Circle line reached out

from Victor to the surrounding rich mining fields for the ore shipments, passing through Goldfield and around Battle Mountain to a point on Bull hill. At one time, the F&CC laid claim to over 300 freight cars and sixteen passenger coaches. It’s Baldwin and Schenectady locomotives were named for individuals, gold mines and local landmarks – names like: the *Victor* (the number one engine), the *Cripple Creek*, *Elkton*, *Anaconda*, the *W. S. Stratton*, *Goldfield*, *Portland*, *Vindicator*, *Strong*, *Gold Coin* and the *Last Dollar*.

During its first eighteen months of operation, the F&CC was extremely successful, earning enough to pay for itself and recover all its construction costs – becoming for a short time one of the most profitable railroads in Colorado. But once the Midland Terminal arrived in December 1895, along with the Colorado Springs and Cripple Creek Railroad (the “Short Line”)

The Florence and Cripple Creek Railroad - 3

some time later, both standard gauge, the F&CC never made a profit again.

By the early 1900s, the F&CC was in serious financial trouble, having been taken over by the Denver and Southwestern Railway Company in 1899. Around 1903, it merged with other railroads in the area under the Cripple Creek Central holding company which was locally owned.

Suffering from constant flash floods in Phantom Canyon which regularly washed out track and bridges, its maintenance costs were exorbitant. With the Colorado Springs area slowly replacing Florence as a milling capital, ore shipments on the F&CC dwindled. So when five miles of track and over a dozen bridges along the right-of-way were washed away by a 30-foot wall of water in a July 1912 flood, the new owners decided to abandon the line rather than rebuild it, in spite of a distracting lawsuit by Canon City. This effectively forced the closure of the mills at Florence. Several of the towns along the Phantom Canyon route were also abandoned.



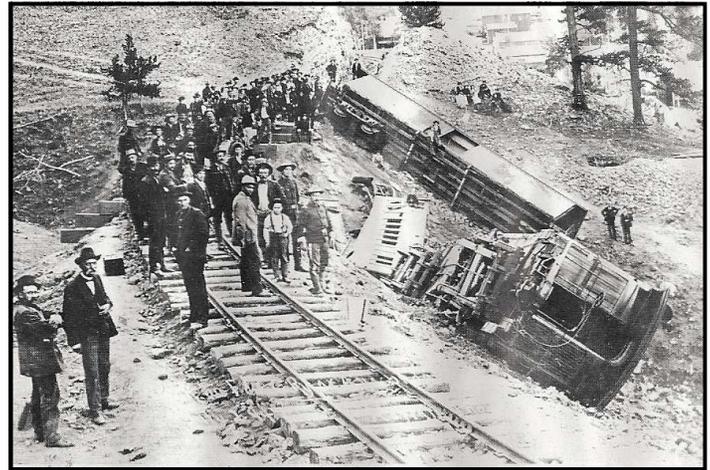
The Portland can be seen at the Colorado Railroad Museum in Golden, CO.

The F&CC operated for only eighteen years. At the end, their well kept Consolidation freight locomotives and Ten-Wheeler passenger engines were quickly sold to other narrow gauge lines, and the tracks and bridges (save one) were eventually dismantled. However, the Golden Circle Railroad, which inherited some of the F&CC's track, continued to operate its commuter service within the district for several more years. The old F&CC railroad grade was opened to automobile traffic as "Phantom Canyon Highway" in 1915.

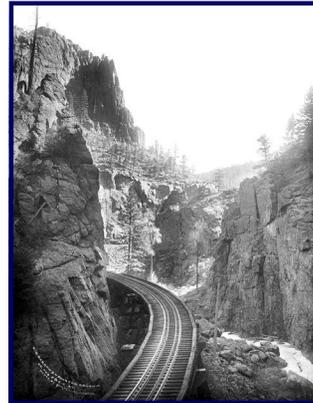
Looking back on that sunny July 1st day in 1894 when the first F&CC passenger train rolled into Cripple Creek, the Honorable J. B. Orman, of Orman and Crook, the contracting builders of the road, told the gathered crowd that "he never had constructed a line that opened up better country or was of greater commercial importance than this." Surely he was right. For it was the Florence and Cripple Creek Railroad that first linked the Cripple Creek and Victor Gold Mining District with the world – on bands of steel, and on the backs of iron horses.

by Dave Martinek

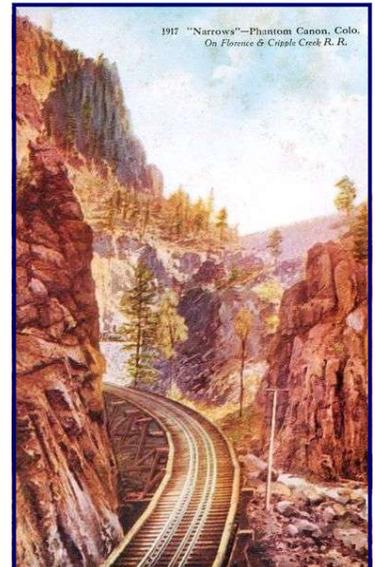
Sources: Passages and quotes from: the 1903 New Years edition of the *Cripple Creek Morning Times*, *Cripple Creek Days* by Mable Barbee Lee and *A Colorado Short Line Railroad – The Florence and Cripple Creek* by Barbara McClellan; Reference: *Cripple Creek Railroads – A Quick History of the Great Gold Camp Railroads* by Leland Feitz; *Rails Around Gold Hill* by Morris Cafky; *Tracking Ghost Railroads in Colorado* by Robert Ormes; Rootsweb; Wikipedia; the Bureau of Land Management; Photos from the Denver Public Library and Archives Net.



Wreck of the Florence and Cripple Creek. Returning to Florence on July 2, 1894, the day after its initial arrival in Cripple Creek, several passenger cars derailed on a sharp bend near Anaconda. One person was killed and more were injured. After this inauspicious start, the F&CC went on to be extremely profitable for the next 18 months.



The 1917 poster (right) showing the narrow route along Eight-mile Creek in Phantom Canyon - compared to the original photo above.



The Coldwell Banker 1st Choice Realty office is located at 18401 E. Highway 24 in Woodland Park, Colorado - about 14 miles west of Colorado Springs. The brokerage is a residential realty specializing in improved properties and vacant land, and some commercial properties. Our main office telephone number is: (719) 687-0900. Our fax number is: (719) 687-0488. Our website is: www.1stchoicerealtycb.com. Email us at: info@1stchoicerealtycb.com.

Dave's Buyers' Guide

Cabins, second-homes and land specials from Coldwell Banker 1st Choice Realty

Prices and status effective as of January 31, 2012



\$459,500

570 Pembroke Dr, Woodland Park Fine Living - Exquisite custom home in the Reserve at Tamarac. 1.66acre lot is landscaped. 4BR/4BA/3GAR with 3514 S.F. Main level living, cultured stone FP in living room. Another FP in the master BR. Luxurious! #734444

2011 Housing Sales Statistics for the Pikes Peak Area

Michael J. Podoyak, marketing manager for Empire Title of Colorado Springs, LLC, says that the number of property listings is currently at the lowest point since 2003. There were less than half of the listings at the end of 2011 than there were in July/August of 2008.

Podoyak says that when the number of sales remain steady, which they have throughout 2011, while the number of listings decline, the ratio of sales to active listings increases.

Units priced from \$100K to \$400K accounted for 76% of all residential property sales in 2011. Generally, there appears to be about 4 months of inventory for properties priced below \$200K, and only a slightly higher level in the range of \$200K - \$250K.

But most of the leading indicators are pointing in the right direction for 2012, said Podoyak.

(from the 1/30/12 issue of the Colorado Springs Real Estate Journal)

2011 vs 2010:

- Average Price - (down) 4.6%
- Median Price - (down) 4.5%
- Res. Units Sold - (Up) 3.5%
- Inventory Levels - (down) 9.5%
- No. of Listings - (down) 16.1%
- Foreclosures - (down) 25.4%
- Interest rates - at an all time low!

To inquire, email or call 719.687.1516

(Martinek Team listings are BOXED)



\$418,900

1340 Masters Dr, Woodland Pk Custom Home! 4BR/4BA/2GAR, 3940 S.F. on 0.38 acres. Gourmet kitchen w/ island, cherry cabinets. Lot of windows, floor to ceiling FP! Large lower family room for games & entertaining. #764018



\$324,900

2505 CR 42, Florissant Easy Rancher! 4BR/3BA/3Gar, w/ 3511 S.F. on 2.28 acres. Main level living, vaulted ceiling, gas FP, great floor plan, large deck. Land fire mitigated. 21,500 gal. cisterns. 5 acres sold separately #762821



\$243,000

881 CR 32, Florissant Lake George! 3BR/3BA/0GAR and 2894 S.F. on 5.82 acres. The kitchen floors, cabinets, appliances updated 2008. New roof. Cozy pellet stove in living room. Land is fenced & crossed fenced. #752536



\$149,900

453 Willow Rd, Divide Remodeled! Renovated top to bottom. 2BR/2BA/1GAR and 1408 S.F. New roof, decks, hardy board siding. New floors, bathrooms, paint and FP. Main level master BR. Convenient easy access; a great mountain home. #781124



\$149,900

357 Kutsu Ridge Dr., Florissant Handyman! 2BR/1BA/2GAR, 1152 S.F. on 0.7 acre. Rustic home, nicely treed lot. A great summer home for someone willing to complete some interior carpeting and trim work. All the basics are here, just waiting for you. #775507



\$145,900

127 West Street, Cripple Creek Step back in Time. 1909 renovated log home in Knob Hill area. 2BR/1BA/1GAR, 1268 S.F. on 0.22 acres. Natural wood beams, T&G ceiling, loft bedrooms, modern country kitchen. Family room added recently. Beautiful! #723177



\$33,900

127 Carlton Cir, Florissant Building Plans! This 2.04 acre lot is ready to go. Perc test done, fire mitigation trees cut, building plans available. A well permit is waiting. This is a beautiful parcel overlooking the CME valley. A dream lot for a dream home.



\$19,900

2847 N. Mountain Est. Florissant Two Lots! Two adjacent lots on a corner that total 1.18 acres. Several building sites are among the many Ponderosa and Fir trees. A selective build produces a great view of Pikes Peak.



\$15,000

317 Blue Spruce Dr, Florissant Scenic! 1.61 acres lot with the building sites is on the ridge line. Then the lot slopes severely down to Four Mile Road. View of the Dome Rock area. Secluded and very private. #756145



\$16,000

1001 S. Mtn Est. Rd, Florissant Meadow! Two acres of meadow and trees and some nice building sites in beautiful Colorado Mountain Estates, south of Florissant. Easy access to nearby Fossil Beds and Cripple Creek. #530773



\$16,000

2856 Blue Mesa Dr., Divide Fronts Water! This heavily treed lot in Highland Lakes (1.67 acres) slopes down to Beaver Lake No. 2. Strategic tree cuts will make room for a driveway and a building site. See this beautiful lot. #457747

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