

July 7, 1933



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The Flood of 1896

From a newspaper account of the events of July 24, 1896:

Friday evening the fierce black clouds in the west brought early darkness. A light rain drove the people into their houses, lamps were lighted, and the children were put to bed. Up town there were the usual loiterers in the stores and some stood by the open doors watching the rain fall. The air was calm and still and there was nothing to even indicate the change that was coming.

Suddenly a sullen roar, resembling thunder, yet more sustained, so that none mistook it for that noisy sound. Among those in the store, several had heard that sound before and knew its meaning. Their faces paled as they shouted, "A flood, a cloudburst!" Around the bend came the monster, appearing as a log-crowned curling wave ten feet high. It did not look like water, having more the appearance of a solid mass, dark as night, with a luminous crest.

It seems to move with almost lightening-like rapidity. When it reached the bridge above town, the first object that seemed to be in its path, there was no clash; the bridge hesitated but an instant, moved slowly from its piers, then went rolling end over end down past the depot until the railroad bridge was reached. Here there was a moment's resistance, but the water simply paused to wait for reinforcements.

Following the 1896 flood, the Rocky Mountain News reported that

"Less than two days ago Morrison was considered the most delightful, quiet and peaceful summer resort in Colorado. Today [July 26, 1896] it is a mass of wreckage and ruin, the people panic stricken and a number of those who were inhabitants are either lying at the morgue awaiting burial or are buried under an enormous mass of debris somewhere between Denver and Morrison, perhaps never to be found until Gabriel sounds the last trumpet on the day of judgement."

A day later, an update appeared:
"Morrison Will Live"

"The disastrous flood at Morrison has caused the active circulation of a rumor to the effect that the town would be abandoned by the people there. There is no reason or truth for the foundation of such a report. While Morrison has received a severe blow, she will recover promptly and there is not the slightest danger of a repetition of such a flood, for several years at least. ..."

The Terrible Red Hill Disaster

6/14/1902:

Last Saturday morning, two hay rack parties from Denver passed through Morrison enroute to Turkey Creek canyon where they enjoyed themselves very highly in the canyon gathering flowers, climbing the stupendous mountains and enjoying the purities of the mountain air. The young people were from West Denver High School where only last Thursday a number of members of the party had graduated.

It was late in the afternoon before the gay and happy young people started for their home in Denver. As they approached the Red hill from leaving the mouth of the canyon, the second hay rack team became frightened and started to runaway. There were four spirited horses attached to the wagon. They ran at a terrific speed and the driver lost all control of them, being thrown down on the doubletrees. Just before striking the narrow bridge at the foot of Red hill, the team swerved to the left, striking the approach of the bridge, throwing its occupants madly to the bottom of the chasm, fully ten feet below into darkness.

Mr. Fred Lawrence, Captain of the West Denver High School Cadets, dispatched Frank French, driver of the first wagon, posthaste to Morrison for assistance. He drove directly to the livery stable of Abbo & Lewis and made inquiries where a physician could be found. Dr. F. L. Luce was immediately notified and accompanied by John Kirby (who drove team to the scene of the tragedy). James Abbo, Charles Cochran, and several others went full speed to the aid of the ill-fated party. On arrival at the place of the heart-sickening scene, Dr. Luce hastened to make examinations and immediately temporarily fixed them up and they were loaded on the wagon and brought to town.

Upon arriving in town they were taken to the Cliff House and other places, where Dr. Luce was joined by Dr. Haxby and they both used every effort and did all possible to alleviate the sufferings of the unfortunate victims. Quickly, but tenderly, the broken bones were placed in position and the dreadful cuts were sown together, though the room resembled in a manner the rude hospital of a battlefield, and the sufferings and moans were pitiful in the extreme. It was noted by all, that the kindness of the Morrison people was exemplified by the tenderness in which they handled and cared for every want and request made to them.

At the Cliff House Miss Edith Withers, who seemed to be the most seriously injured, was carried into the sitting room where Dr. Luce bent over the prostrate form and felt the feeble pulses for a sign of life. One moment it flickered and then silently she passed to the other world. A shake of the head from the surgeon announced that the first victim of the dread occurrence had joined the great majority.

More Floods

Aug 7, 1906:

"Bear Creek again assumed flood proportions, doing much damage but no lives were lost."

--Jefferson Co. Graphic

Sunday, Aug 30, 1925:

"... many picnickers were in the canon. Two or three bridges were washed out, automobiles were caught in the water and washed into the creek, but minor damage was done the road, and no loss of life was reported."

--Jefferson Co. Graphic

Thurs 7/13/1933:

"...one of the most devastating floods last Friday afternoon [7/7/1933], ever to visit the Bear Creek water shed in Jefferson county. A cloud burst at about 1 o'clock sent a wall of

water down Saw Mill gulch leading to Bear creek at Idledale and another raging torrent down Vernon creek, which empties into Bear creek at Mt. Morrison. At Idledale the flood waters were estimated to have been 200 feet wide and with a depth of eight feet as the torrent swept into Bear creek. At Mt. Morrison the Vernon creek water reached a height of about fifteen feet as it swirled down in the narrow passge between business houses and out onto the Main Street and on across to Bear creek, which had already assumed flood stages by the surging water emptied into the creek at Idledale. ..."

A victims gratitude 7/13/33: In the midst:

"Threshing water cooming down Mt. Vernon caught us in the alley before we could reach the Cliff House. We made it as far as the board fence and held on until the fence gave away, as also did my sister-in-law. I caught her around her neck with my right are and with my left arm strove to work our way to some sheds, fighting desperately to keep from going into the current which would have carried her into Bear creek.

"We were only in the midst of it a few minutes but it seemed ages as I frantically fought to save my sister-in-law from going under the raging water. My strength was exhausted just as the men came to my rescue. So again I wish to extend my gratitude for their assistance."

--Mrs. Gladys Blakeslee

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