

# WHEN THE FLOOD CAME TO PUEBLO

“Once more it was demonstrated that the spirit of the Long Lines Department ever lives.”

By H. E. Schreiber, St. Louis  
*From notes furnished by those  
on the scene*

**W**HEN the shrieking sirens warned the citizens of Pueblo that the continuous rains, followed by a severe storm and cloudburst, were causing the Arkansas River and Fountain Creek to overflow their banks, they little dreamed that the results would be so disastrous. An unknown toll of human lives was taken. Thousands of cattle were drowned. Millions of dollars worth of property was destroyed.

To those engaged in the telephone industry the ruin meant — **HARD WORK, SELF SACRIFICE, HEROIC DEEDS, AND THE ONE THOUGHT: RESTORE SERVICE.** This represents the telephone employee's duty to the public and is exactly what was given by every Bell System employee. Not that others did not do the same, but this is a story of the Long Lines end of the work and we all join in saying: “You have done your part well.”

When the storm was at its height on Friday evening, June 3rd, Byron Thady, of the Mountain States Company, was testing with our test-board at Denver. Several circuits had already failed when Thady informed the Denver test-board that he was standing in water a foot deep and it would be useless to continue with the testing as the water was rising rapidly.

In order to save the storage battery and prevent the possibility of a fire due to the short circuiting of the wires, Thady then pulled the main fuses on the storage battery, cutting off all communication with

Pueblo. He then directed his attention toward saving office records. In the course of this work he returned time after time to the testroom, carrying valuable cable records to safety on the third floor.

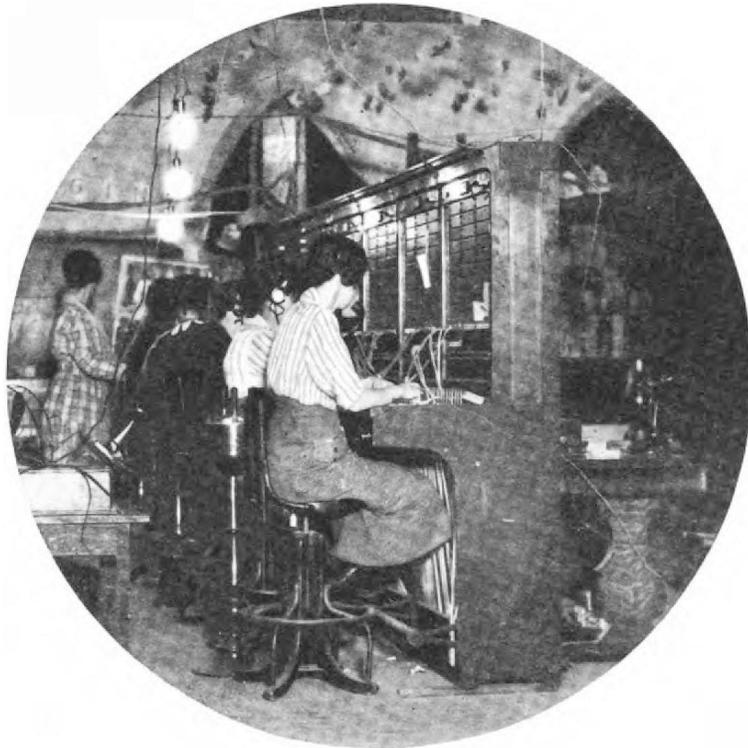
On the floor above the testroom thirty-five loyal operators were sticking to their jobs, warning the public to flee to a place of safety. Each time Thady passed the operators he shouted a word of encouragement. Once more Thady returned for records, this time with water up to his arm-pits, and as the whirling waters rushed through the broken windows the door leading to the stairway to the upper floor slammed shut, cutting off his only chance of escape. With the water now up to his chin Thady was struggling to open the door; he finally succeeded with the aid of a piece of board in forcing the door open enough to squeeze through. He then struggled through the water to the stairway, which meant safety.

On top of all of this, Thady saved the life of a man who was clinging to the top of a garage in the rear of the telephone building by leaning out on the fire escape and pulling him in with the aid of a stick. Thady is a young man twenty years of age and when complimented on his heroism, modestly replied: "I simply did my duty. Why all this ado?"

Chief Equipment Man H. C. LaChappelle, and Section Lineman H. J. Carper, of the Long Lines force at Denver, left Denver at 4 P. M. Saturday, June 4th, for the scene of action. Five miles out of Denver they had to wade their Ford through a half a mile of water two feet deep. Thirty miles from Denver, at Box Elder Creek, they found the bridge was gone. However, the railroad bridge was still standing, but this meant a mile of ties to ride with a Ford, and nothing but a rushing torrent beneath. Did they take a chance? Sure; they made it without a puncture.

Sixty miles from Denver, at Bijou Creek, they found the bridge standing in the air with both approaches washed away; but this did not stop them. They secured two large planks, placed them from the bank to the bridge, and up went the Ford. They pulled the planks up after them and again used the planks to descend from the other end of the bridge. Sunday night they landed in an inland town 140 miles from Pueblo. They slept in the basement of a store that night and at 4 A. M. were again on their way.

At this part of the story the writer



*Temporary telephone quarters in the First Baptist Church, Pueblo.*

would like to quote the information as it was received by him: "They came to a hill, looked down at a wicked-looking stream without a bridge, but not very wide. Slim said: 'Hold tight, she ought to jump it, she has done everything else.' Shorty said: 'Not with me in it.' With this he jumped out and waded the stream. Slim made a running start from the hill while Shorty prayed from the other side. ZIP—and the car landed on the north bank with clear sailing ahead, except for a hill, which Shorty pushed the top off of getting Slim and Lizzy over."

After many other hardships they reached Olney Springs, Colo., where they caught a relief train which took them within twenty miles of Pueblo. Again they were fortunate and were given a lift by the Pueblo coroner, who was returning to Pueblo to look after the dead.

Upon arriving in Pueblo they found



*Wreckage in Peppersauce Bottoms,  
Northwest Pueblo.*

one circuit working to Denver and immediately got in touch with headquarters. They then continued east, making good one circuit through the breaks where the line had been washed away until a junction was formed with the Division forces, who were working west.

Division headquarters, working in conjunction with the Denver office, dispatched Division gangs to the flooded district.

General Foreman Skill and two gangs under Foremen Wall and Lee arrived on the job on June 7th. Skill and Wall left Newton, Kans. at 4.15 P. M., June 6th and arrived at Lamar, Colo. at 3.30 A. M. At Lamar they found the wagon bridge washed out and approximately 300 feet of the railroad company's bridge gone with rails and ties suspended in the air. They borrowed a hand-car, loaded on the tools, pushed it across the suspended rails and continued three and a half miles farther before auto trucks could be obtained.

At 6.30 P. M. they started

*Grand Avenue near the north  
underground terminal of the  
Denver-El Paso line.*



for the first break, near Las Animas, and after floundering through mud, rain and darkness, reached their destination at 10.30 P. M. It was found that service had been restored on one circuit, so efforts were made to locate a place to stay over night. Unable to locate a place, they drove seven miles east to the Naval Hospital at Fort Lyon, where they were royally received by the com-

manding officer, Dr. Garrison.

On the next day the Division forces met La Chapelle and Carper and all hands pitched in to restore service on the remaining circuits. During the course of this work Carper was testing with the Denver testboard and while standing in eight inches of mud and water was knocked unconscious by a bolt of lightning which struck the wires some distance east.

General Foreman Skill and Section Lineman Mosier who were working with Carper at this break applied the treatment for resuscitation from electric shock as contained in the booklet furnished field forces. After ten minutes of hard work, during which the results were always in doubt, Carper was

restored to consciousness.

All of our circuits were in service at 11 A. M., June 8th, and considering the conditions under which the work was done, the highest commendation is due all who participated. Once more it was demonstrated that the spirit of the Long Lines Department ever lives and that personal sacrifice, hardship, even life itself are freely offered on the altar of duty whenever and wherever the summons to duty is heard.



#### Section Lineman Carper's Flood Report

All A. T. & T. wires out to Kansas City. The old war-horse says to Shorty and Slim: "Crank up the Ford and get there." Then the two birds started from Denver to Pueblo at 5.00 P. M. to locate the breaks. When they got five miles out of town they had to wade Lizzy one-half mile through water two feet deep. When they got thirty miles out they came to Box Elder Creek, one-half mile wide, awfully deep. Bridge gone. They had one chance—the railroad bridge (a mile of track without any



*Front of the Pueblo central office. Note the high water marks near top of windows.*

dirt between the ties). Shorty says to Slim: "Let's go," so Slim started down the railroad with a death grip on the wheel. You can see Shorty's finger prints on Lizzy's sides yet. . . .

Sunday night they finally made an inland town sixty miles from a railroad south of Limon, Colo. and ninety miles to Ordway, which is fifty miles east of Pueblo. Shorty and Slim bunked in a basement of a store—tired, hungry and wet. The next morning at 4.00 A. M. Shorty had shivered so hard that he was thirty feet from Slim. . . .

Arrived ninety miles south at Ordway, Colo., at 9.30 A. M., sent telegrams by the way of Great Bend, Kans. and then headed west. They got to Crowley, Colo. and there had to run the Lizzy through

one-half mile of water over the running boards. Here they burned the heart out of the Ford. Shorty had to push again to get her in high.

They finally got the wreck to Olney Springs, Colo., where they caught a relief train which took them within twenty miles of Pueblo.



*Removing mud and debris from the central office basement.*