

## The Story of Spiral Drive

In the fall of 1921, R.L. Hampson and his fellow Commercial Club members (who were dedicated to Salida commerce) started clearing a road up Tenderfoot Hill. For the next few months, several men would go up Tenderfoot and dig away at the side of the hill building road. They were so stealthy that barely anyone in town knew it was happening.

By February of 1922, Tom Nevens (father-in-law to Salida's own Donna Nevens) had spilled the beans at the Lion's Club meeting. The response was immediate. Everyone wanted to have a stake in the project. Nevens immediately rebutted with a 'money where your mouth is' comment: "Come out with a pick and shovel and let pep and service have a holiday. We have all the bosses we need. We want nothing but hand-picked pickmen."

The mayor of Salida issued a proclamation a week later:

"Washington's Birthday, a legal holiday, offers an opportunity to the citizens of Salida to do some real, constructive work in the upbuilding of the community. Therefore, it is requested that all businesses, which can conveniently do so, be closed and those citizens who desire to do so are urged to assist in the building of Tenderfoot Road."

About 150 people turned out for the holiday and cleared a good quarter mile of road. The Salida Mail reported:

"The get-together spirit in Salida which has become so evident in the last few weeks is the hopeful sign of the future. The good feeling extends out into the country precincts, and for the first time in many, many years, business man, farmer, and wage earner, appear to be viewing their citizenship from the same angle."

Not to be outdone, on March 24<sup>th</sup> it was 'Railroad Day on the Hill.' Railroad men (representing all the railroad brotherhoods) "cut long stretches of sidehill, filled up several gullies and built a bridge, bringing the road around the first hill in sight of Salida....(then) the ladies' auxiliaries of the railroad organizations were on hand with hot dog sandwiches and coffee and kept the workers in good cheer. Joining the railroad men were several farmers and for the first time in the history of Salida, business men, railroad men, and farmers have united in putting a project over."

During this time, local businessman R.L. Hampson wrote the song 'The Tenderfoot Road' and sang it at a Lion's Club meeting. The song was "full of pep and made a splendid campaign song." Hampson was also the chairman of the Tenderfoot Road committee, in charge of all activities on Tenderfoot.

A gentle rivalry formed when Railroader's Wednesdays and Businessmen's Thursdays were designated to see who could accomplish more with the road building.

And to raise funds for the effort, the ladies' auxiliaries of the railroad organizations set up dances, entertainments, and 'home cooking sales' which, over the months, raised hundreds of dollars.

Then Warden M.P. Capp from the Buena Vista reformatory boasted "Give me one day and I will finish the road for you." The Denver & Rio Grande Railroad donated the use of a train to transport around 150 inmates to and from Salida to work on the road. At the end of March, the inmate crew had helped complete over half the road.

April 20<sup>th</sup> was designated Elks Day on Tenderfoot. The call was broadcast: "Every stray elk who drifts into Salida will be harnessed and put to work." The Salida Mail reported the success on the 21<sup>st</sup>:

"Nearly 200 men were on Mount Tenderfoot with the Salida Elks yesterday and the biggest amount of work done in any one day except (by) the reformatory boys was the result. The road has now swung round in the front so that those working on it can be seen from Salida... Picks and shovels were flying aplenty. Chalk Dinkins was on hand at noon with one of his famous luncheons... And after the day's work, the Elks and their workers were invited to attend a dance at the Rink. It was well attended and a good time was enjoyed (by all) with regular intermissions for picking water blisters that developed during the day on the hands of the workers."

Work was progressing steadily. Then on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 150 Denver & Rio Grande employees walked off their jobs at the railroad. It was the start of the Great Railroad Strike of 1922.

This nationwide strike was instigated by railroad labor organizations to protest wage reductions for railway workers across the country. But happily for Salida, these men were now free to work on Tenderfoot Road.

By July 14<sup>th</sup>, thanks to the efforts of the railroad strikers, the road was nearly complete. And by September, the Salida chamber of commerce was taking out-of-towners up to the top of Mount Tenderfoot to show off Salida.

In October of 1922, Professor Elmore Petersen of CSU visited Salida and had this to say about our town:

"Salida presents an unusual manifestation of the results of actual cooperative effort. One of these days, her 'Tenderfoot Spiral Drive' will be nationally famous. It is an automobile

boulevard which winds around the cone shaped Tenderfoot Mountain just opposite the city, forming a cork-screw to the top, 600 feet above the streets below. From this summit the view of Salida itself, the Arkansas River Valley, the Sangre de Christo and Collegiate ranges of mountains, is too much for words. And over it all spread the snowy wings (literally of snow) of The Angel of Shavano such as may be seen nowhere else in all the world. But what I started to say was that this road is entirely the product of cooperative effort and not one dollar has been spent for labor, excepting what money was donated to the cause....The next time anyone in your town crabs around that there is nothing the local chamber of commerce can do, I respectfully refer you to Salida, that has struck a stride worthy of emulation.”