

Guide to the School Bus Accident 1961 Collection – 2007.68

Reference code US CoGrCGM 2007.68
Title: School Bus Accident 1961 Collection
Processed by Katalyn Lutkin
Finding aid prepared by Katalyn Lutkin

Name and location of repository Hazel E. Johnson Research Center
Greeley History Museum
714 8th Street
Greeley, CO 80631
Phone: (970)336-4187
Email: museums@greeleygov.com
URL: <http://greeleymuseums.com/>

Collection Summary

Dates December 14, 1961 – February 4, 2007
Bulk dates 1961-1962
Level of description Collection
Extent .75 cubic feet
Creator(s) Mr. James A. Shelton and Mrs. Virginia Shelton et. al.

Administrative/Biographical History

On December 14, 1961 the worst accident, to date, in Greeley's history took place. The Union Pacific 'City of Denver' No. 111 train was traveling to Denver from Chicago, three hours behind schedule. In Greeley, Duane Harms was warming up his bus to start his route in the rural area of Weld County. Between 7:30am and 8:00am, Harms picked up a total of 36 children ranging in age from 6-16, with plans to take them to Delta School, Arlington Elementary School, Meeker Junior High School, and Greeley High School.

At 8:00a.m. Harms moved to cross the railroad tracks when the 'City of Denver' No. 111, going 79 m.p.h., collided with the bus, cut the bus in half and destroyed the back end of the bus. In all, 20 children died at the accident and 16 children were seriously injured. Harms walked away from the accident. The bodies of the deceased were taken to the old Armory in Greeley, which had been set up as a temporary morgue, and the 16 injured were taken to Weld County General Hospital.

Harms was charged with involuntary manslaughter. The trial started in March 1962, after a postponement for Harms' wellbeing. During the trial, a controversy arose as to whether Harms

had stopped at the tracks or not. Witnesses say that he did, the train engineers said he did not, and Harms himself could not remember. The trial lasted a total of four days with a jury of ten men and two women. The jury found Harms innocent of all charges.

As a result of this accident, and many others nationwide, stricter bus regulations regarding train crossings were put in place to ensure the safety of the children on board.

Scope and Content

This collection consists of records of the school bus accident of 1961, including newspaper and journal articles detailing the events of the accident; photographs of the wreckage and investigation; a scrapbook of the trial of the driver; a report of the accident that includes the names of the children who died and those who were injured; a letter from a senator regarding the accident; maps of the bus route and location of the accident; and the personal records of the railway drivers. Many items in the collection have no known creator.

System of arrangement

As no original order could be established, materials from this collection have been interfiled in an imposed order by subject.

Conditions governing access

There are no restrictions on the access of this collection.

Conditions governing reproduction and use

There are no restrictions on the use or reproduction of this collection.

Languages and scripts of the materials

English

Immediate source of acquisition

This collection was donated by Virginia Shelton.

Notes

Preferred citation: City of Greeley Museum's Permanent Collection, #2007.68.
Social Security Numbers on personal records of railway drivers were redacted on April 30, 2014 by Katalyn Lutkin.

Names

Adamson, Ross
Alhorn, Karl R.
Alles, Linda (1951-1961)
Alles, Nancy (1950-)

Baxter, Gerald (1951-1961)
Bohlander, William E.
Brantner, Kathy (1952-1961)
Brantner, Mark (1955-1961)
Brown, Cheryl (1948-)
Campbell, George C.
Carpenter, Donald A. (1907-1993)
Carroll, John A. (1901-1983)
Courtney, Raymond W.
Craven, Calvin (1951-1961)
Craven, Ellen (1953-1961)
Dorn, Cynthia (1950-1961)
Ford, Bruce (1952-)
Ford, Glenn (1950-)
Ford, Jimmy (1948-1961)
Freeman, Joy (1951-)
Freeman, Melody (1953-1961)
Freeman, Smith (1954-)
Geisick, Randall (1953-)
Girnt, Donald
Harms, Duane R. (1938-2007)
Harms, Judy
Heimbuck, Kathy (1948-1961)
Heimbuck, Pamela (1951-1961)
Hembry, Jerry (1945-)
Larson, Alice (1950-)
Larson, Steven (1952-1961)
Lozano, Luis (1951-)
Lozano, Mary (1950-1961)
Mitchell, Sheryl (1955-1961)
Munson, Gary (1953-)
Munson, John (1952-)
Munson, Vicki (1955-)
Murphy, Ralph W.
Paxton, Janet (1950-1961)
Paxton, Marilyn (1948-1961)
Robison, Adam V.
Shelton, James A.
Smock, Robert (1951-1961)
Sommers, Herbert F.
Stromberger, Alan (1951-)
Stromberger, Debra (1954-)
Swanson, Melvin C.
Walso, Linda (1948-1961)
Warner, Loyal (1911 -1982)
White, Elaine (1950-1961)

White, Jacqueline (1947-)
White, Juleen (1953-1961)

Places	Greeley (Colo.)
Subjects	Mass Casualties Railroad Accidents School Bus Accidents
Document forms	Correspondence Journals Maps Newspapers Personal Records Photographs Report Scrapbook

Contents

Series I: Newspapers and Journals

Consists of three newspapers, ranging from December 1961 to February 1962. Two newspapers detail the events of the accident and one newspaper details a family's further loss months after the accident. Also included are two journal articles that recount the accident and include the stories of those who skipped the bus that day and of those who survived.

Series II: Photographs

Consists of 33 photographs. The photos depict the accident site and wreckage, as well as Duane Harms.

Series III: Scrapbook

Consists of one scrapbook containing numerous newspaper articles that follow the trial of Duane Harms, as well as later articles covering the anniversary of the accident.

Series IV: Report

Consists of one report of the accident that details the accident and lists the children who died and were injured.

Series V: Correspondence

Consists of one piece of correspondence from a United States senator regarding the accident and his actions to prevent similar accidents.

Series VI: Maps

Consists of seven maps. Four detail the same area. The maps show where the accident occurred, a new bus route to avoid the accident site, and the time required to get to the crossing for both the train and bus.

Series VII: Personal Records

Consists of personal records for various railway employees detailing what job they were doing the day of the accident.

Container List

Series I: Newspapers and Journals

Box	Folder
1	1

Series II: Photographs

Box	Folder(s)
1	2-4

Rehoused with IM-006

Series III: Scrapbook

Box	Folder
1	5

Series IV: Report

Box	Folder
1	6

Series V: Correspondence

Box	Folder
1	7

Series VI: Maps

Box	Folder
1	8

Rehoused with 2-D Oversized Box 1

Series VII: Personal Records

Box	Folder
1	9