

## Guide to the School Bus Accident 1961 Collection – 2007.68

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**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 8<sup>th</sup> 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** Subseries  
**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 school 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, moving at 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 did not suffer serious injuries 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 Museums' 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)

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

## **Contents**

### **Series I: Photographs**

Consists of 46 photographs. The photos depict the accident site and wreckage, as well as Duane Harms.

### **Series II: Correspondence**

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

### **Series III: 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 usually rode the bus but did not that day and of those who survived.

### **Series IV: 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 V: Report**

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

### **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 the job they were performing the day of the accident.

## Container List

### **Series I: Photographs**

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder(s)</b>
1	1-3

Oversized images rehoused in IM-006

### **Series II: Correspondence**

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
1	4

### **Series III: Newspapers and Journals**

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
1	5

Oversized newspapers rehoused in 2-D Oversized Box 1

### **Series IV: Scrapbook**

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
1	6

### **Series V: Report**

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
1	7

### **Series VI: Maps**

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
1	8

Oversized maps rehoused in 2-D Oversized Box 1

### **Series VII: Personal Records**

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
1	9