



# Uintah City Railroad Snippets

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## **The Railroad, Track Walkers and Mountain Lions**

By Mark Stuart

The coming of the Railroad in 1869, provided many Uintah residents a steady source of employment. One of the most common jobs was that of track walkers. Track walkers were men who walked the railroad tracks up Lower Weber Canyon to Mountain Green in Morgan County and back. Their job was to check the tracks for any rocks or debris that had fallen on to the tracks from the steep slopes of the canyon and clear the tracks to keep trains from derailing causing costly delays and destruction of railroad cars and freight or passengers. In case of serious landslides or track wash outs, the track walkers carried a signal lantern to warn on coming trains to stop. Their job was to keep the tracks clear and safe 24 hours a day, rain, sleet, snow, sunshine, heat or cold.

Claude E. Stuart of Uintah had recently married Ellen Fernileus of Little Sweden Dec.21, 1912 and accepted employment as a track walker. His assigned route was to walk the tracks from the mouth of Weber Canyon to Devils Gate/Horse Shoe Bend in the middle of Lower Weber Canyon and back during the night shift. As a rest area and break room, the track walkers had constructed a dug out in the side of the hill at the mouth of the canyon. It was furnished with a table and chairs and a pot belly stove to cook on and furnish warmth in the winter. A tarp served as a covering for the door.

In the winter of 1913 on a bitterly cold night, Claude had just finished his route and was wet and freezing from the inclement weather. He was looking forward to the warmth of the pot belly stove and a hot lunch in dug out shelter. As he pulled back the door way tarp and entered the dugout, he received the shock of his life. There, sitting on the table eating his lunch. was the biggest Mountain Lion he had ever seen. He later recounted that he didn't know who was more scared the Lion or He as they both frantically ran around the dugout screaming. They both quickly exited the dug out into the darkness and cold of the night. After that frightening encounter with the Mountain Lion, Claude and Ellen decided that he needed safer job and sought employment with the US Postal Service in down town Ogden where he worked for over 40 years.