

*A drive across Fall River Road June 1926 as reported in the Estes Park Trail*

## **Famous Fall River Pass Opened to Traffic on Regular Schedule Time**



Two o'clock Sunday afternoon the large steam shovel of the National Park Service removed the last portion of the drift blocking the Fall River Pass. The shovel has been working almost continuously since May 15<sup>th</sup> and has handled an unusually large amount of snow.

*(Shovel is coming back down Fall River Road)*

The first bus to make the trip over the Fall River road this year left the village of Estes Park at 8 o'clock Monday morning with Supt. Roger W. Toll, Asst. Supt. Thomas J. Allen, Jr. of the Rocky Mountain National Park, Supt. C. N. Rockwell of the Rocky Mountain Parks Transportation Company, Fred Payne Clatworthy, the nation's famous autochrome artist; Ranger Ronald C. Walker, who will have charge of the Grand Lake checking station, Wm Manning, Grand manager for the Rocky Mountain Parks Transportation Company, and A. B. Harris, editor of the Estes Park Trail.











The top was reached in regular schedule time, where the party stopped for a number of pictures, and then started on its way down the western slope of the Continental Divide to Grand Lake.







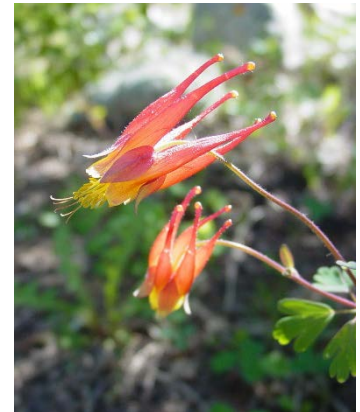
Never has the park been more beautiful than at this time of the season, nor have the roads been in better condition. As the bus passed the section in the road where the old faithful snowslide ran seven times this year, the last being on June 11<sup>th</sup>.

And just beyond where the fan slide was early in the month, careening rocks and trees before it, the party could look up to the summit of Mount Chapin perhaps a mile or more above the road and see the huge snow cornices overhanging the chasms below.





Everywhere a profusion of flowers was to be seen and growing right at the very edge of the huge snow banks were to be found round masses and masses of the pretty little marsh marigolds and everywhere the arnica were also in bloom. The elderberries which lined the roadside were breaking into blossom and here and there were to be found the blue columbine, the official state flower and a smaller but pretty, red columbine. Many other flowers were to be seen everywhere.







A number of startled deer sprang forth from their feeding grounds as the motor passed, and even at the top of the Continental Divide, far above timberline were to be found birds singing their sweet songs.

The work of the National Service in building water breaks on the road, eliminated all washing of road surfacing by the melting snow.



The road was dry all the way to the big drift a few hundred feet east of the top of Fall River Pass where the huge steam shovel went through a snowdrift several hundred yards long and reaching the depth in one place of 26 feet. As the busses went through this deep cut in the snow banks they looked small indeed. This drift has settled 18 inches in four days and will probably disappear before the first of August.





On the western side where the road passes through an expanse of loose soil the usual difficulty with mud slides will be experienced. These, however, seldom if ever, hold up traffic.

The road passing through the source of the Colorado River valley is being put in good condition for the season's traffic by men, teams and graders. Never have we found the entire road in as fine condition through the month of July as it is at the very opening of the Pass this year, and this in face of the fact that the past winter brought a greater amount of snow than the previous four years. Only once since the building of the Fall River road has the Pass been opened earlier than this year, it being opened June 13<sup>th</sup> last year to traffic, two days earlier than this season.



Arriving in Grand Lake at noon, we took lunch with Manager E. A. Francis at Grand Lake Lodge.





An interesting feature of the opening of the road this year is the method employed by the steam shovel crew in negotiating the 25-foot drift, when the elevator machine had a reach of only 16 feet above the steam shovel level. The machine travels on a caterpillar truck and to enable it to free the bucket of snow; five huge wooden mats were constructed of three-inch planks, about six feet wide and eight feet long.



These mats were used to form a platform for the machine to operate on so that it might travel several feet above the ground on the snow and thus obtain clearance for the dumping of the bucket. The machine stood on three of the mats and as it passed on to the fourth and left the fifth, the crane picked up the fifth mat at the rear of the machine and placed it in front.



It traveled six or eight feet above the ground in this fashion for 180 feet through the heaviest depth of the drift. This is a novel arrangement which worked very satisfactorily and after the machine had passed; all the snow in the year was scooped out down to the road bed.

The fact that the road was dry almost immediately after the passing of the shovel is due to the 14 foot width of the channel cut by the machine in the snow, thus exposing the drainage ditches and permitting the melting snows to run off in the proper channel and not down the track in the center of the road as it has done in other years when opened by hand. The shovel handled a total of 120,000 cubic yards of snow this spring. To reach the shovel where it had been left last fall required the removal of 5000 cubic yards of snow by hand.



On the west side Contractor McQueary and his force shoveled the road from the floor of the Colorado River valley to near Fall River Pass, handling a total of 40,973 cubic yards. On this side the channel was cut wide enough for the passage of machines.



Considering the heavy snows of the past season, the National Park Service is to be congratulated on its success in opening this, the nation's highest and most scenic automobile highway, so early and in having it in such splendid condition at the beginning of the season. Only twice in the past has the Pass been opened as early as this year. In the year 1921 the Pass was not opened to traffic until July 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Last season 43,000 private automobiles passed over the Fall River road and this figure will no doubt be far surpassed this season. It is also expected that the Rocky Mountain Parks Transportation Company's business over this road will also greatly increase over other seasons.

