

Rocky Mountain Fuel Company

The Rocky Mountain Fuel Company was envisioned in 1892, as noted in an Aug 18 letter written by its founder, Edgar Edmund Shumway. (*"Am thinking of trying to organize a coal company to handle coal in Colo, office at Denver with a capital stock of about \$5000. I have been awfully cramped ever since I have been in business here in Denver for money to do business with and particularly as the business increases faster than the capital does. Have now a good coal trade worked up..."*). Shumway hoped to place half the stock with family, and keep half.



In Oct 1892 Shumway says, " ...

Trade is getting better all the time, sent out 60 tons coal in the last six days and we expect a trade of 20 tons a day for the winter months. It is to warm and pleasant to sell much coal yet... "

In January 1893, operating as Shumway & Co., Hay & Grain Dealers, the company was "able to

make a contract the other day which is worth to us at least \$100 a month as it makes our goods cost us that much less than we were paying before. Wood trade is first rate. Have handled three cars this month so far.

Jan 1st [?] invoice is as follows; five teams, ten wagons, stabling, coal and lime sheds, office, office furniture and fixtures including two safes one worth \$75 and the other \$350; set of scales, Wood machinery, \$600 all [?] for handling coal and office stationery &c put in at \$40 a share or \$4200. Cash \$10 a share or \$1050 in all \$5250. Now I hold 60 shares of the 105 but hold them in blocks



of fifteen shares each of course I can dictate the whole thing but should expect to let them have one director as against our two and my idea was to make H P Shumway and E.E. Shumway & J C Dresser directors and

then the directors could elect officers as follows H P Shumway President, E.E. Shumway V P and Manager and J C Dresser Sec & Tr. At present it takes \$50 a share to handle it but the chances are that in the spring when we get to putting out a good deal of lime we will have to put up \$25 a share more.

letter dated 03/10/1893 - *"Business is very good and at a fair profit, our coal sales was 921 tons for the mo of Feb and we handled in addition to that nine cars of wood. If it had been a long mo. we would have reached 100 tons. That largely went on the books but will be mostly paid within 30 days as we haven't over 300 or \$400 out on accts prior to Feb 1st. My idea never has been to get a piece of coal land and hold onto it as a speculation but to begin here in Denver with a retail trade and keep extending as fast as we can profitably but always at a profit. The lignite mines will of course have to be attended to at first as that is the bulk of the trade in Denver at present- that part can be handled with little additional capital so far as operating a mine is concerned but it would throw us of course into the wholesale trade and that would take more capital and then expand as you might say by a process of absorption. ...*

letter dated 08/30/1893 - *"We are in real good shape as yet, all bills paid up and a little money on hand for next months bills but to do this every collection has been made and we absolutely have no reserve against any combination of circumstances that can not be seen and of course can not be provided for - all the profits were more than lost in those three days and now the coal men are in a fight amongst themselves. I do not know where it will end but before it is through there will be less coal men than at present that is sure. "*

letter dated 09/13/1893 " *... Our business is real good for the time of year but as long as the fight is on we can not make anything. \$3.25 a ton is just what it costs. So far this month we have had 19 cars of coal and 3 of wood so you see we do some business every day and manage to keep payments up so far . ..*

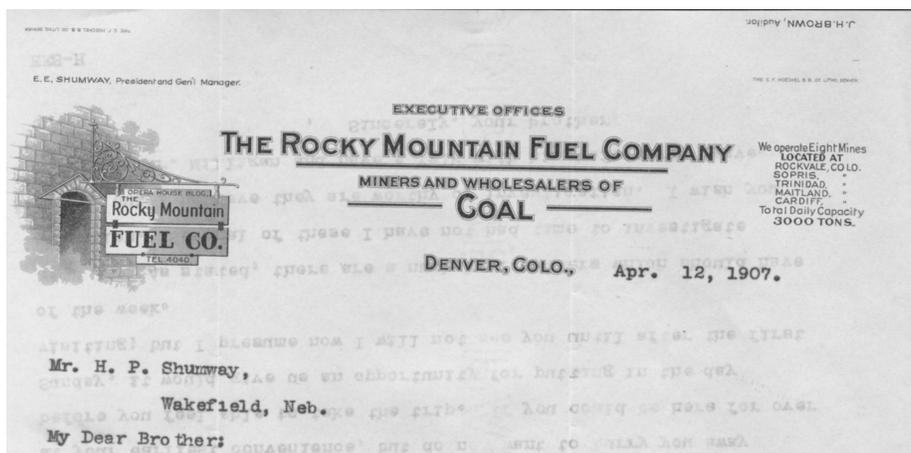
09/23/1893 " *... We find it harder evry month to make payments, got through this month by the skin of our teeth, in fact we are not through yet as we still have \$100 to pay Monday and that is all until next month but I really can not see where it is coming from for sure - "*

By April 1898 the company had become Rocky Mountain Fuel Co., with E E Shumway as general manager, and in June 1903 the company letterhead informs the reader " We operate eight mines located at Rockvale, Colo; Sopris, Colo; Trinidad, Colo; Maitland, Colo; Cardiff, Colo; Total Daily Capacity 3000 tons" Shumway, now listed as President and General Manager, says " Please find enclose certificate No 164 for one hundred shares capital stock of the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company in favor of J O Milligan. This, I believe, is in accordance with our understanding. I have written Mr. Milligan to that effect.

"You remember I told you that we expected to place quite a block of stock with Omaha parties. Mr. Creighton was ready for us and gave me his check for \$25,000 in payment of two hundred fifty shares. This, I think, will start us. I anticipate no serious trouble in placing \$100,000 with the Omaha parties that I mentioned to you

within the next thirty days."

In a letter dated 4/24/1907 ... *"We had our stockholder's meeting yesterday, and the authorization of the increase in capital stock from one million dollars to two million dollars was voted unanimously. The meeting lasted for some time, as we had to go somewhat into detail as to the outlook of the Company, its present condition and the purposes for which we expected to use the money. I presume the Board of Directors will authorize the issuance of \$250,000 of this capital stock at this time. The present stockholders of record are the ones who*



would be entitled to their pro rata share. As I presume some of the stockholders will not be in position to take much of this, we will probably be able to give some of our stockholders even a little additional amount, if they should want it. "

And after - The company continued to thrive as industry and domestic demand increased in the midwest. This also was the time when labor unrest and attempts at formation of unions increased (see links below) In December, 1913 there was a disastrous explosion in the [Vulcan Mine](#), and as a result of exposure to the poisonous gases in the mine, Edmund Shumway died.

A lot of the stock was held by family members, and I know that my grandmother had some shares. Operation passed to one of the original officers, John J Roche, and on his death in 1927 to his daughter, Josephine. Despite her efforts (including allowing unionization of her workers) the company folded, according to Wikipedia, in 1944.

Miscellaneous links

http://www.colorado.edu/geography/cartpro/cartography2/spring2005/muhovich/CoalMiningProject/Columbine_Massacre.htm.

<http://digital.denverlibrary.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15330coll22/id/15786/rec/38>

http://games.historycolorado.org/ripsigns/show_markertext.asp?id=816

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,742196,00.html>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rocky_Mountain_Fuel_Company (some errors here)