

'Traqueros' at the Colorado Railroad Museum Tells the History of Mexicans and Mexican Americans Who Built the Railroads

GOLDEN, CO, UNITED STATES, October 14, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Colorado Railroad Museum](#), the largest museum in the state dedicated to the history of Colorado railroads and the people who built and operated them, will open a new exhibition on October 14, 2025: "Traqueros: Mexican Trackworkers and the American Railroad". This exhibit examines the little-known story of traqueros, Mexican and Mexican American railroad workers who were recruited to build and expand the U.S. railroad network from mid-19th to early 20th century.



Santa Fe Railway traqueros, image courtesy Chillicothe Historical Society

Recruited by Spanish-language ads appearing in newspapers in Mexico and the Southwest, tens of thousands of Mexicans and Mexican Americans were recruited and hired to work as track crews, doing the essential, arduous work of laying tracks, digging tunnels, and constructing bridges. These traqueros often faced exploitation, racism, and difficult living conditions, but they also filled a labor void left by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which curtailed Chinese labor, making Mexican workers instrumental to building and maintaining America's railroads.

The exhibit focuses on the unique aspects of railroad worker recruitment, which encouraged laborers to bring their families with the idea that this would create a more stable and loyal work force. Using photos, documents and oral histories, the exhibit will focus on the traquero culture of women and families that developed in communities where workers lived in boxcars, trying to adapt to new American food, poor housing, and oftentimes terrible working conditions. Their contributions to connecting the nation by rail is an important and often overlooked part of American labor and immigrant history. Extensive Mexican American settlements that still exist in the U.S. today, throughout the Midwest and Southwest, are largely attributable to 19th- and

20th-century railroad workers. Only agricultural work surpassed railroad work in terms of Mexican employment in the U.S.

The exhibit also examines the Bracero program, another chapter of American history in which the Federal government during World War II recruited Mexican men to work in agriculture as well as other essential industries including railroads, taking the places of American men who were off fighting the War. These Mexican men were not allowed to bring families, lived in sometimes brutal conditions, and as the war ended, were deported, often first being sent to internment camps. As a final insult, some of their pay was never sent to Mexican banks.

The all-new bilingual exhibit opens on October 14, 2025, and will continue through August 2026.

COLORADO RAILROAD MUSEUM

Consistently ranked by Visit Denver as one of the top 10 attractions in the Metro region, the Colorado Railroad Museum features the most comprehensive collection of railroad history in the state with more than 100 narrow- and standard-gauge steam and diesel locomotives, passenger cars, cabooses and freight cars. Located on a spectacular 15-acre site in Clear Creek Valley in Golden, CO, the Museum has a half mile circle of operating track offering weekend train rides, along with a working roundhouse and turntable, railroad research library, exhibition galleries, outdoor programs and performance pavilion, and a huge indoor HO model railroad and outdoor G-scale garden railway. Year-round, the Museum offers interactive family fun mixed with authentic Colorado railroad history.

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