PIONEER PUEBLO RAILROAD MAN PASSES AWAY IN CALIFORNIA

John Kelker Was Master Mechanic Here for 27 Years and Brought First Locomotive to Steel City

John Kelker, for twenty-seven consecutive years master mechanic of the Denver and Rio Grande in this city and the man who brought and erected the first locomotive ever placed in commission in Pueblo, died at his home in Los Angeles, Cal., yesterday morning at 3 o'clock, aged 81 years. The direct cause of death was kidney trouble which brought about what is known as intermittent fever. The funeral will take place in Los Angeles this afternoon, where the remains of Mrs. Kelker, his wife now lie. Two of his sons, Grant and Harry, reside in Pueblo both of whom are railway engineers on the Rio Grande.

Before coming to Pueblo in 1878, Mr. Kelker had been employed for fifteen years as traveling engineer for the Baldwin locomotive works of Philadelphia. He was 50 years of age at that time and was sent to this city with six engines, the first that the Rio Grande received here. The locomotives, while very light in comparison to those of this time were sent to th west in installments and it was Mr. Kelker's duty to superintend their erection on the tracks here.

His work so pleased the officials of the Denver & Rio Grande that when his task was completed they afforded him a position which he could not well afford to refuse. He accepted and was made master mechanic immediately. He held the position until three years ago when he decided to retire from active life and moved with his wife to California, where they erected a delightful home.

Two years ago Mrs. Kelker was taken sick and died. Her demise seemed to weigh heavily on Mr. Kelker but he bore up remarkably well and only last fall paid a visit to his sons in this city, remaining throughout the state fair which he seemed to enjoy very much. It was remarked at that time by his old friends about the city that he looked better than when he left. He weighed more during his last visit than ever before in his life and while in Pueblo was in the best of spirits.

At the close of the fair he returned to his California home but began to fail immediately. His condition was not considered serious, however, until about three weeks ago when he was taken down with fever.

He was a member of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and the Masons order and the funeral will be under the auspices of those orders.

Of his twelve children, but five survive. They are Grand and Harry who are following the same business as their father, and who are now considered among the most competent engineers of the city. John Kelker who is now traveling for the Baldwin company, the same position that his father held half a century ago. J. F. Kelker, who reside at Indianapolis, and one daughter who resides in North Platte, Neb.

CLAIMS HE OBTAINED PROPERTY