

MP 258: Empire Junction

Empire Junction is the beginning of the *Berthoud Pass Auto Tour* from the south or east. Mileage Post 258 is where Interstate 70 meets US Highway 40.

Route	Mile Marker	X	Y	Longitude	Latitude
¹ U. S. Highway 40	258	444233.48	4401312.56	-105.651034	39.759908



Township No. 3 South Range No. 74 West of the 6th Principal Meridian, Colorado Dated: September 25, 1922
Bureau of Land Management - BLM

Empire Junction has had many names. Bloomington was its first name and then it was changed to Empire Forks. Later it would be called Junction City (1866), Swansea (1870), Empire Station (1877), Swansea again (1878) and Marshall Park in 1922, which had a post office.² The Denver Public Library's *Colorado Place Names* also list Peckville and Russell Park for Empire Junction.

¹ Taken from the Colorado Department of Transportation's website:
<http://apps.coloradodot.info/dataaccess/Highways/index.cfm?fuseaction=HighwaysMain>

² Harrison, Louise C. *Empire and the Berthoud Pass* published by Big Mountain Press, Denver 1964
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“Empire Junction from Silvercreek looking northwest – 1911”

Photo from the U. S. Geological Society
Photographer: E. S. Bastin Number: 220

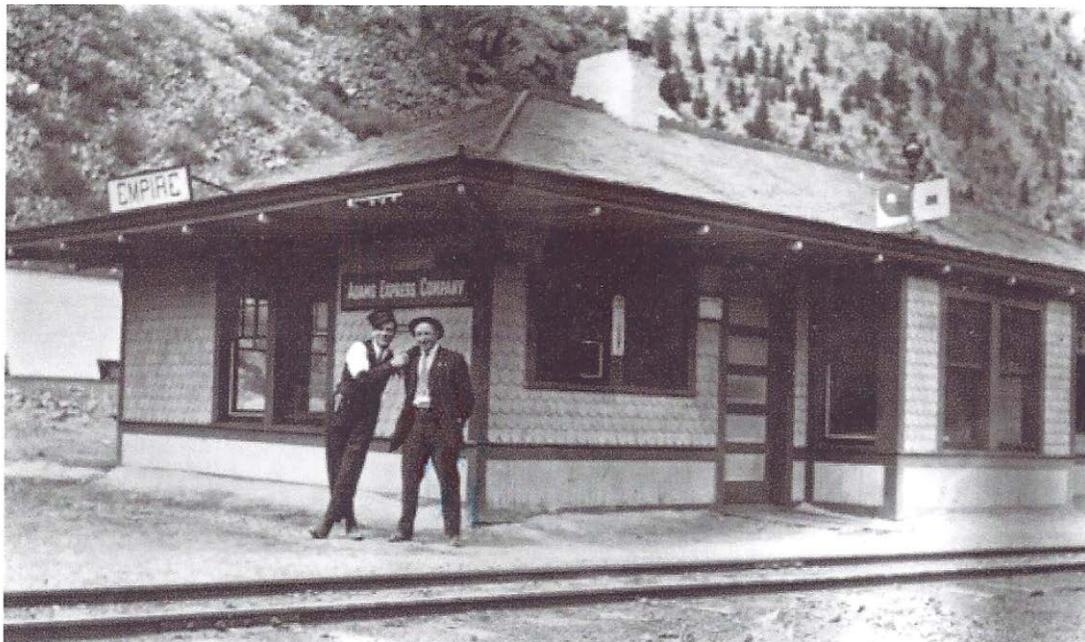
The earliest reference to activity in the Junction is in an article by William E. Wilson called *Louis Vasquez in Colorado and the Uncertain Histories of Fort Convenience and a Hunter’s Cabin*¹. This excellent article discusses the possibility of Louis Vasquez building a “hunter’s” cabin at the base of Douglas Mountain about 1834 in what is now Empire Junction. Clear Creek was originally called Vasquez Fork, but early miners renamed it to Clear Creek. The cabin was described as substantial with dovetail construction. The cabin sat on a terrace



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between the two creeks, not far from *a large boulder* that had tumbled down from Douglas Mountain. Descriptions also included reference to the large number of animal bones found at the site by miners coming into the area in 1859 - 1860.

In the same article the author writes: “One of the problems with searching for field evidence in the Empire Junction area is that extensive alterations to the landscape have been made over the years. The Colorado Central Railroad came through in 1877, U. S. Highway 6 was relocated in the 1930’s, and Interstate 70 made a major impact in the 1960’s – including the re-routing of a segment of Clear Creek.”



Note with Photo reads: “A train conductor and his friend pose in front of the train depot in Empire, Colorado. It is a single story building with imbrication (sic) on the sides and rectangular bays. Two signs read: Empire ’and, ‘Adams Express Company.’”

Photo provided by and used with permission from the Denver Public Library
Date – 1890-1900

Empire Junction, as stated above, was also the site of the Empire Train Depot for the Colorado Central Railroad, later the Colorado and Southern. The train ran from Denver to Silver Plume. The section between Georgetown and Silver Plume has been restored and is now known as the Georgetown-Silver Plume Loop.



The railroad track is between the (Empire Hill) road and the (Clear Creek) stream.

Photo provided by and used with permission from the Denver Public Library

The location of the Empire Depot changed at least once. Its first location was west of where the frontage road (and west of US Highway 40) now crossed Clear Creek. Only a few years ago, by standing on the bridge on the frontage road, a small section of the train trestle could still be seen. Recent high spring run-offs of Clear Creek have taken out the remaining sections of the trestle.

The photo on the right was taken on May 10, 2011 by the author. All remains of the trestle are gone, but the footprint of where it was located, can still be seen. This photo was taken with permission of the land owner.



Many years ago, the depot building was moved to the east side of what is now US Highway 40 and remodeled into a home. It is still recognizable by the shape of the roof lines. The old train roadbed remains in areas of the Junction, but they are on private lands.

Across I-70 on the south side is now Rocky Mountain Village, Easter Seals Colorado's summer camp, which can be recognized by the red roofs of the cabins and other buildings.



Stonehenge Lodge – Empire, Colorado

Photo taken from an old postcard... no other information given.

Prior to the establishment of Rocky Mountain Village, the property was known as **Stonehenge** in the 1940's and operated as a lodge for Loveland, Berthoud Pass, and Winter Park ski areas. Easter Seals' Vice President of Programs, Roman Krafczyk, said that the Stonehenge building has now been incorporated in the main complex of the camp. Before Stonehenge, the property was a truck farm as well as an unpatented mining claim known as Gold Valley Placer. Evidence of the early mining activity of the Junction remains on the hill and mountain sides today.

Read more information about the [history of U.S. Highway 40](#).