

ROCKY MOUNTAIN RAILROAD CLUB
P. O. BOX 2391
DENVER 1, COLORADO

April, 1963

Newsletter No. 44

The April, 1963, meeting of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club will be held on Wednesday, April 10, 1963, in the basement meeting room of the Western Federal Savings skyscraper, 718 - 17th Street, Denver, at 8:00 P.M. The program, to be presented by Ross B. Grenard, assisted by Bill Jones and Ken Crist, will consist of slides depicting steam power and traction around the United States. Included in the presentation will be slides of privately owned steam engines, and scenes of traction in New Orleans and Southern Iowa, besides shots of the North Shore and South Shore electric lines, and San Francisco cable cars.

Last month, over 130 railfans enjoyed John Maxwell's excellent slide-illustrated talk about the Rio Grande Southern, reviving many pleasant memories.

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Exactly 25 years ago -- in April, 1938 -- the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club began its first organized functions, with brief, informal, semi-monthly meetings at the Union Pacific freight house adjacent to Denver Union station. Probably none of the charter members, a number of whom are still active in the Club's activities, at that time ever envisioned the present-day scope of railfan interests, to say nothing of the many new friendships and enjoyable activities which have developed with the growth in Club membership from the small original group to the present number -- now approaching 900.

More than 60 new members have been accepted into the Club so far this year. We welcome them, and look forward to their participation in our activities.

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The April, 1963, issue of Trains Magazine contains an interesting article about the D&RGW mallets (the 3600's). The article was written by one of our Past-Presidents, Bob Le-Massena, with photographic assistance by Club members R. H. Kindig and Jackson Thode. Also in this issue is an excellent review of Harold Bonner's book, "The Giant's Ladder", reviewed by Club member E. J. Haley.

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The D&RGW ski train to Winter Park, Colorado, at the west portal of the Moffat Tunnel, is setting new passenger records this year. Each weekend, over 2,000 passengers are patronizing the train -- the top weekend so far having 2,157 aboard.

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Howard Fogg sent the following report on the 470-mile Alaska Railroad, owned and operated by the U. S. Department of the Interior:

For anyone visiting Alaska, a 12-hour, 356-mile trip on the single-track, standard-gauge Alaska Railroad from Anchorage to Fairbanks is a rewarding experience. Hundreds of Alaskans live in scores of tiny villages along the railroad, which passes through spectacular mountain country. To these Alaskans of the interior, the railroad is a vital lifeline. They use it to commute to Fairbanks or Anchorage. Everything they need for day-to-day existence -- food, fuel, building supplies, clothing, mail -- is delivered by the two daily trains, one in each direction.

The railroad maintains service through the worst type of weather imaginable. There have been times when an entire train has been covered by snow slides. Being delayed for as much as 12 hours is not uncommon. Snowfall as deep as 70 feet has occurred along the tracks. During spring thaws stretches of track always are washed out.

It is a railroad which goes out of its way to accommodate the whims and wishes of those who use it. Passengers may board or get off anywhere along the line. In summer, grown-ups and youngsters travel to interior streams where the fishing is fabulous. Hunters hop aboard to go after bear, moose, caribou or other big game. If the sportsman decides to go just for the day, he has ample time before catching the late afternoon train home. And his fish or trophies are carried without charge in a baggage car!

Nickname for the Alaska Railroad is "moose-bagger." Last winter more than 300 moose (or is it 'meese'?) were accidentally killed by the trains. They're butchered and distributed to Alaska orphanages and hospitals.

Railroad crews are all mostly old-timers who know everyone along the line and forever are being presented with homemade bread, pies, cakes and knitted sweaters as they stop at the isolated settlements.

It's also known as the "Square-wheeled" railroad, for in winter the roadbed heaves from frost action and the ride develops some irregularities!

Most of the tourists who use the line stop over at McKinley Park, famous for its 20,320-foot high mountain and for its wildlife. Here it is possible to drive into the wilds and see herds of Dall sheep and moose, grizzly bear, red fox, wolves and wolverines, and watch the fantastic migration each summer of nearly 10,000 caribou.

One-way fare between Fairbanks and Anchorage is \$21.35, with a round-trip ticket only one-third more.

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Here is something to look forward to this Fall: The largest railroad exhibit ever staged in the United States will be held in Chicago from October 9 to 16. Sponsored jointly by the railroads and railroad suppliers, the American Railway Progress Exposition will be held at McCormick Place, and will also include an outside exhibit on a mile of track at Illinois Central's 31st Street yards. In all, about 300 supply companies will display \$40,000,000 worth of the very latest railroad equipment ranging from rail fasteners to giant locomotives. The Exposition also will attract a large assembly of railroad people, with more than 20 railroad, industry supply and shipper organizations meeting during the event.

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A step taken by Missouri Pacific to make its passenger service more attractive is the conversion of the first of several diner-lounge cars to diner-coach cars. The car, recently completely refurbished, retains a full-size kitchen and six tables in the dining section and the former lounge portion is now equipped with 32 reclining coach seats. This is part of an overall program in which the railroad's passenger cars are being completely refurbished and modernized.

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Enclosed in this mailing are announcements for the Silver Anniversary Banquet and Excursion to Colorado Springs on Saturday, May 11th, and for the Annual Memorial Day Excursion over the Rio Grande's narrow-gauge lines to Durango and Silverton on May 30, 31 and June 1st. Happily, arrangements have been successfully made for Club members and their family guests attending the Silver Anniversary Banquet to enjoy the color movie "Ticket to Tomahawk" after dinner.

This gala occasion once again will result in steam operation south of Denver. The low cost offered for the steam train operation with photo stops, filet-mignon dinner in the Terrace Room of the famous Antlers Hotel, and the movie, is available only to paid up members of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club and their families. Special publicity is planned in connection with this important celebration, with Burlington 'Mike' #4960 working up-grade in both directions handling our special train to and from Colorado Springs.

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From the Santa Fe:

While it may be very well that we've never had it so good, we've never had it taken away so fast, either.

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J. C. Thode, President
R. A. Ronzio, Vice-President

E. R. Lewandowski, Secretary
Ane O. Clint, Treasurer