

ROCKY MOUNTAIN RAILROAD CLUB
P. O. BOX 2391
DENVER, COLORADO 80201

May, 1964

Newsletter No. 57

The May, 1964, meeting of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club will be held on Wednesday, May 13th, in the basement meeting room of the Western Federal Savings Association skyscraper building, 718 - 17th Street, Denver, at 8:00 P.M. The program for the evening will consist of three reels of spectacular 16-mm color sound movies.

Two of these unique films are releases of Morrison-Knudsen -- world famous, heavy construction contractors -- the first entitled "Jungle Railroad," described M-K's part in rehabilitating a railroad through the jungles of Brazil; the second, entitled "Tequepala," covers construction of a new railroad in Chile which, in its 125-mile length, rises from sea level to 11,000 feet elevation! Then, to cap the program, Herb. O'Hanlon has arranged to show "End of an Era," Rayonier Corporation's story of the end of steam locomotion in their logging operations in the State of Washington.

To our knowledge, none of these films has ever been shown here, and the program thus promises to be of unusual interest. All members of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club and their friends are invited to attend this meeting and enjoy these new films.

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Vice-President Herb. O'Hanlon's presentation of "Resolute Rambles by Road and Rail of a Roving Railfan Reincarnating Recent and Remote Recollections of Railroads in Removed Regions" at the April meeting took us on an extremely interesting and enlightening tour of little out-of-the-way railroads throughout the country -- without once touching Colorado! Adding to the pleasure of the scenes shown in his slides was Herb's humorous running commentary regarding some of the difficulties or other unusual situations encountered in the course of seeking out and photographing these remote operations. The program was greatly enjoyed by all in attendance.

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At its meeting on April 3rd, the Board of Directors of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club, on the basis of expected availability of a steam engine later in the year, voted unanimously to postpone, until a later date, the annual dinner and excursion which heretofore has been held generally in April or May to celebrate the anniversary of the Club's founding. Therefore, while no definite commitments presently are possible, it is hoped the members will tolerate this delay with their usual good grace until negotiations now in progress can be concluded.

Also at the April meeting, the Board voted to expand the printing of Morris Cafky's "Colorado Midland", the Club's next publication, to an edition of 6,000 copies. While not all of these will be bound at the outset, it is believed that an order of this size, the largest ever undertaken by the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club, will make copies available over an extended period of time to all those who are interested.

As soon as possible after receipt of the final painting for this new book from Club member Phil Ronfor, noted eastern artist whose color plates have been the illustration highlights of previous Club publications, appropriate announcements and order blanks will be prepared by the Publications Committee and sent to each Club member.

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What must be a speed record of sorts for freight train operation on the Rio Grande was set by westbound symbol ACD7-PBX8 on Wednesday, April 8th. Handling "hot" auto parts and piggyback business, this train of 32 loads and one empty (the caboose), aggregating 1,438 tons, left Denver's North Yard at 5:05 A.M. that morning. Thirteen hours and ten minutes later, having covered 564 miles at an average speed of 42.8 mph (including three stops for changing crews), GP-30 units 3026-28-25-27 pulled their train to a stop at Salt Lake City's Roper Yard at 6:15 P.M. that evening.

This high-speed performance compares with a schedule of 13'20" for the westbound California Zephyr between Denver's Union Terminal and Salt Lake City's Union Depot, over a distance some five miles longer. To cap the performance, Southern Pacific business on this symbol was moved to Ogden and delivered to that connection at 7:25 P.M. the same night -- 603 miles and 14'30" after having left Denver.

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Rio Grande's new all-steel, narrow-gauge coaches being built at Burnham shops for Silverton Branch service this summer have been making good progress. Coach 332, first of this year's lot of six cars, was shipped to Alamosa on Friday, April 17th, with coaches 333, 334 and 335 following on April 22nd, 24th, and 28th, respectively. These new cars represent some improvement over the two cars built last year in that the interior ceiling is raised into the clerestory, providing more adequate ventilation.

To many of our Club members and other narrow-gauge adherents, it still is almost inconceivable that open-platform, narrow-gauge coaches actually are being built in the United States in this day and age. All our experience had taught us that the art of such construction had expired long years ago; it is indeed gratifying to learn that we were wrong.

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A 16-year bridge reconstruction project came to an end recently as Chesapeake & Ohio completed renovation work on the 50-year-old James River viaduct in Richmond, Virginia, at a total cost of \$12 million. Over 37 million tons of steel were used in rebuilding the three-mile-long, double-tracked bridge. Work was phased over the long period of years to avoid interrupting traffic!

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On Wednesday, April 15th, Union Pacific submitted petitions to the Interstate Commerce Commission requesting authorization to abandon the far ends of three outlying branch lines in Colorado. Easily located on Hotchkiss' Historical Map of Colorado Railroads published last year under auspices of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club, the three segments comprise 14.26 miles of the Greeley Branch between Barnesville and Briggsdale, northeast of Greeley, Colorado; 11.64 miles of the Fort Collins Branch between the Boettcher Cement Plant and Buckeye, north and west of Fort Collins; and 3.78 miles between Hebron and Coalmont, Colorado, at the far end of the former Laramie, North Park & Western, now designated by the Union Pacific as the Coalmont Branch.

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In response to our request some months ago for railroad information gathered by Club members during their travels, we have been pleased to receive some interesting communications from A. D. "Mike" Blecha of Denver, L. D. Mitchell of Colorado Springs, Francis Rizzari of Denver, and Al Oppliger of St. Louis. We hope the following resume, prepared by Mr. Blecha after a trip to the southeast earlier this year, during which he tracked down some little-known locomotives, will prove of interest to our readers, and plan to use the material received from the other members named, and other information as it is submitted by members, as space permits in future newsletters!

We stopped in northwestern Arkansas at the yard of the Dardanelle and Russellville Railroad, where we were informed that their last steam locomotive had been sold to the Mid-Continent Railway Museum at North Freedom, Wisconsin, and had been shipped in the latter part of 1963. (This engine is shown on page 12 of the April, 1964, Trains -- Ed.) They now operate with two diesels, and as one was stored on that date, we saw only one, which had a home-made look about it.

In southwestern Arkansas we rode the Reader Railroad, which operates from Reader to Waterloo, Arkansas, and return. The round trip is 46 miles. Until 1963 this railroad was a steam-powered freight-only line, and when financial problems could not be met, they bought a coach and combine and started advertising for passengers. During 1963 they had 2,900

paying fares. They operate three days a week, Monday, Wednesday and Friday, with a 2-6-2 Prairie type locomotive that is in beautiful condition. They leave Reader at 10:30 A.M. and return at 4:30 P.M. In their brochure they mention that they make a "runpass" on each southbound trip. A "runpass" is what I call a photo stop for movie cameras, where the train stops, passengers unload, the train backs up and comes forward with plenty of black smoke. Even though my wife and I were the only two passengers that day, and had but one movie camera, they still had the "runpass" as they advertised. If you want more information on this railroad, write the Reader Railroad, Postoffice Box 6049, Shreveport, Louisiana, for their colorful brochure.

On the highway near here we saw a road crew building a bridge and using two steam-driven pile drivers. These had the old upright boilers.

Our next stop was at Keltys, Texas (near Lufkin), where the Angelina County Lumber Company has a 2-8-2 which is used to switch at a paper mill at Harty one day a month. The day we were there, of course, it was sitting inside a shed.

Fifteen miles south of there at Diboll, Texas, the Southern Pine Lumber Company has a 2-8-0 consolidation that is being kept for stand-by purposes. Within 150 feet of this locomotive there was a green caboose from the Texas South Eastern and an open-end observation business car from the Kansas City Southern.

Another twenty miles south and six miles east -- at Camden, Texas -- we found one of the largest graveyards of steam locomotives left in the United States. Ten Moguls, Consolidations and Shays, some with cabbage stacks, some with balloon stacks, and others with plain stacks, all are sitting in the yard of the Moscow, Camden and San Augustine Railroad. Only one is in working condition, while some of the others look complete and could be put into working order. Some of the old cars, and a couple of the engines, have link-and-pin couplers. This little road operates a mixed train, five days a week, from Camden to Moscow and return, which is powered by a 44-ton diesel. The passengers ride in an ancient Long Island Railroad combine.

About 150 miles northeast to Fisher, Louisiana, at the Louisiana Longleaf Lumber Company, there is a 2-6-2 Prairie type with a balloon stack, wood burner, used for yard switching five days a week. It starts work around 6:00 A.M. and switching lasts about two hours.

Seventy miles southeast of Fisher -- at Elizabeth, Louisiana at the Southern Maid Paper Company, we found two oil burners that hadn't been used for some time. One I couldn't get near because of a construction job; the other was a 2-6-2 Prairie type and it looked in fair condition.

South of Baton Rouge about fifty miles, at Paincourtville, Louisiana, we stopped at the Westfield Plantation and saw their two thirty-inch-gauge steam locomotives sitting in a shed. These were used two months a year as part of the power for a cane-sugar plantation railroad. The manager told me they both had been sold to what he thought would be amusement parks; at least he assured me they would not be scrapped. One was going to Alexandria, La.; the other to Hammond, Louisiana.

Down in New Orleans we rode the Canal Street and St. Charles Street, street car lines. The story appeared in a local paper while we were there that the St. Charles car line was to be abandoned. In talking with some local citizens, one commented, "Why spend five million to take out a street car line and install busses, which will probably give us worse service than we have now!"

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Treasurer Ane Clint advises that more than 250 reservations have now been received for the Club's annual Memorial Day weekend excursion over the Rio Grande's narrow gauge lines between Alamosa, Durango and Silverton May 29th, 30th and 31st. A very fine TV spot on

Channel 7's 10:00 P.M. news program on Thursday, April 23rd, brought this traditional Club operation to the attention of the local public, and a close-to-capacity crowd is assured as of this date. Have you ordered your ticket yet???

Club member Thomas G. Cox of Des Moines, Iowa, whose outstanding 16-mm sound-synchronized color movies we have had the good fortune to see at regular Club meetings in times gone by, has volunteered to present a program for our excursion passengers at Durango on Saturday night, May 30th, following the journey to Silverton. Through the kindness of Mr. Earl A. Barker, Jr., Manager of the famed Strater Hotel at Durango, the Diamond Circle Theatre at the Hotel is being placed at the disposal of the Club for Mr. Cox's presentation of "Head End," "Trestle to Oblivion," and "Phantom Train."

Arrangements between Trip Committee Chairman Ed Haley and Rio Grande officials Hubert Meek, Trainmaster, and Claude Davis of the Passenger Department, covering schedules and "Runpass" photo stops, are now virtually complete, assuring full readiness for this outstanding event. And Durango Conductor Al Lyons, who was in Denver a few weeks ago, advises that the crews are looking forward to this annual visit from their many friends in the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club. See you there!

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Ted S. McKee, President

Fay L. McKee, Secretary

Herbert O'Hanlon, Vice President

Ane O. Clint, Treasurer