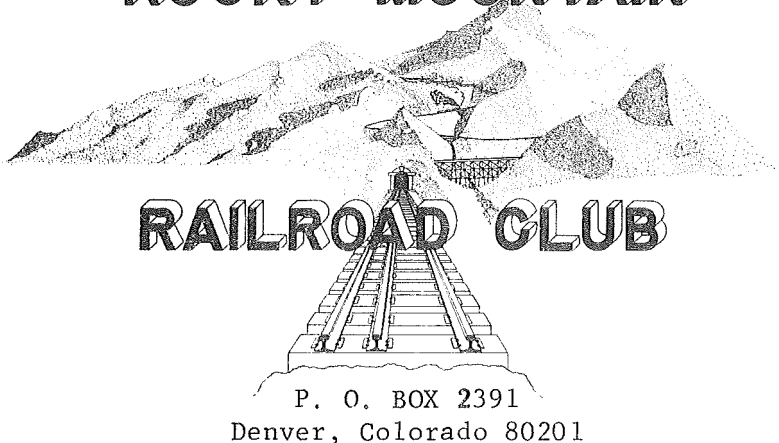


ROCKY MOUNTAIN

March, 1965

Newsletter No. 67



The March, 1965, meeting of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club will take place at 8:00 p.m. on the regular second Wednesday of the month -- March 10, 1965, in the basement meeting room of the Western Federal Savings & Loan skyscraper -- 718 - 17th Street, in downtown Denver.

A unique program is being made available for our pleasure on this evening. The dean of Colorado railroad photographers, Club charter member Otto C. Perry, will present several reels of his superb 16mm movies, and take us to view the wonders

of the old Rio Grande Southern and the Midland Terminal. Those who have had the pleasure of seeing Otto's movies in past years will be looking forward to this program; others will welcome this opportunity to become acquainted with the outstanding work of this noted railfan, whose interest and activity dates back approximately a half century. All Club members and their friends are invited to this regular monthly meeting and program.

Also available for your inspection at the March meeting will be four large portfolios of interesting photos assembled and sent to us for this purpose by Club member R. H. Kerle of Kansas City. Mr. Kerle writes that he rode most of the narrow gauge in Colorado in the 1920's when they were going strong, and was well acquainted with the line between Montrose and Gunnison, as well as the roads to Cripple Creek, Victor and Phantom Canon. His kindness in loaning these photos for display at this meeting is much appreciated; we are always pleased to hear from our out-of-town members and friends.

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The heavy snows and old-fashioned winter visiting Colorado this year give every indication of wanting to make up for lost time. On our last meeting date Denver was subdued by severe cold and a heavy snow, seriously hampering traffic and adversely affecting attendance at the meeting. But Club member Charles S. Ryland, who courageously returned home from an out-of-state trip at 5:30 that evening, succeeded in bucking the drifts and presented for our audience a series of beautiful slides of the meter gauge steam railroads and electric interurban and trolley lines of Greece. Taken on the lines between Athens and Corinth, these interesting pictures were supplemented by additional photos of Crete, the Isle of Rhodes, Istanbul (Constantinople), and southern Germany. Mixing ancient history with the modern situation, Charles presented a highly entertaining and informative program, thoroughly enjoyed by those present. Since so many were prevented from attending the meeting, however, we hope that Charles can be prevailed upon to present this program again later in the year when the weather will be more cooperative.

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Club member John M. Birmingham of Boulder, and Trip Committee Chairman Ed Haley, at our February meeting announced that arrangements were progressing for operation by the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club of a steam-powered excursion train over the Rio Grande from Denver to East Portal and return! The railroad has agreed to the use of ex-Great Western consolidated #51, now owned by Mr. Birmingham, with the ever-popular Mickey Hansen at the throttle, on Sunday, April 11. Upon completion of arrangements to satisfy the very stiff insurance requirements of the railroad, ticket prices for this exciting event will be established and announcement sent to all members by special mailing. Mark the date on your calendar -- SUNDAY, APRIL 11, 1965 -- for the first steam operation up south Boulder Creek in many and many a year.

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The winter weather mentioned above in connection with the February meeting has caused difficulties even more serious than missing a Club program! For instance, late in January, heavy snows in the mountains on the Western Slope resulted in some hindrance to railroad operation; Rio Grande manifest #77 with GP-30 #3009 in the lead, left Pueblo at 2:10 p.m. Saturday, the 27th. At Milepost 286, between Mitchell and Pando just west of Tennessee Pass summit, the train lost 17 minutes bucking out a snow slide, then spent another 56 minutes at Minturn, at the bottom of the hill, digging snow out of the lead unit before they could proceed.

On January 29 a snow clearing train was operated west out of Minturn to Glenwood. On the 30th, and again on February 2, similar operations were undertaken up Tennessee Pass from Minturn to Malta, near Leadville, and from Denver to Phippsburg over the Moffat Route. Since then, however, regular train operation has been more than adequate to keep lines open, and delays due to snow have been at a minimum.

Snow depths on Cumbres Pass continue to prohibit operation of the narrow gauge, as reported originally in last month's Newsletter, with information now available in more detail. On January 11 and 12, Rio Grande and Colorado State Highway Department representatives surveyed snow conditions in a "Snow Cat," going into Los Pinos basin over La Munga Pass -- the regular highway route over Cumbres from the east. Snow was found to be 12 feet deep at Los Pinos tank, and farther west drifted snow almost buried a high snow fence, with depth at one location estimated at 30 to 35 feet over the track.

At the big loop -- Tanglefoot Curve in the old days -- winds blowing out of Wolf Creek basin through the bare saddle had piled up 15 to 20 feet of extremely hard snow. A few rails on the low side of the loop were bare, but from the upper end of the loop into Cumbres depth was uniform at 7 to 9 feet of hard snow.

At the Pass, three dump cars of Company coal were buried; box cars spotted on the house track lacked only about 18" of being covered. At Windy Point drifts were very hard and irregular, with depths averaging 15 to 20 feet. The phone booth near the highway crossing at the west (lower) end of Coxo siding had about one foot of the roof peak showing above the snow, indicating an average depth of 8½ to 9 feet over the track in that area.

Mr. J. B. Norwood, Operations Coordinator on the staff of the Vice President-Operations, was one of the railroad representatives making the survey. Having served as Trainmaster at Alamosa during the terrible winter storms of 1952 and 1957, Mr. Norwood is thoroughly familiar with snow conditions on the mountain, and he advises that the snow this year is about the same as it was in 1957 as to depth, but is grainier and more icy, with a high water content.

Five weeks after this survey, on February 18, a New Mexico State Game Warden visited Cumbres and reported that the U.S. weather marker at the Pass read 12 feet of snow, or about three feet more than was found by the January 11 party. He also reported that a Company bulldozer, loaded on a flat car near the Cumbres section house, was buried, except for the tip of the exhaust stack!

To clear the line when weather conditions become more settled, the railroad is considering the use of bulldozers, accompanied by a supply and commissary train with a locomotive at each end headed in opposite directions. Ninety miles by bulldozer is a long journey!

From the foregoing it would appear that passengers on the annual Memorial Day excursion sponsored by the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club from Alamosa to Durango and Silverton and return (scheduled this year for Saturday, Sunday and Monday, May 29, 30 and 31) will find more snow on Cumbres than has been evident on trips during the past several years. Announcement brochures for this traditional operation are being prepared, and will be sent to all members by special mailing in the near future. Be looking for it.

Time seems to drag so slowly when the final phases of a publication are underway, yet progress on Club member Morris Cafky's monumental history of the Colorado Midland is being hastened to the greatest extent possible consistent with the high quality production established in previous books published by the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club. All test material has been printed and is now in the hands of the bindery. Then comes the manufacture of shipping cartons, which cannot be designed until a complete bound copy is available for measurement. But Publications Committee Chairman Dick Kindig seems confident that the first copies of this large volume will appear early in March, and that distribution to all purchasers will be making good progress shortly.

Although anxious inquiries (and orders) are being received daily, the patience and understanding being shown are remarkable, and are deeply appreciated by all the volunteers engaged in this voluminous labor-of-love.

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Enthusiasm for historical matters in the little town of Silverton, strengthened by the recent purchase of the "Casey Jones" railbus which ran for a time on the Silverton Northern's tracks between Silverton and the Sunnyside mine and mill at Eureka, is beginning to assume real substance. Formation of the San Juan County Historical Society earlier in the winter was for the purpose of purchasing the little car and establishing and operating a museum this summer in the old county jail at Silverton. The board of directors of the Society met early in February and set May 29 as the opening date of the museum, with an open house for residents and friends. Formal opening with admission charge, as reported in the Silverton Standard, "would then be May 30, the day of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club's excursion on the narrow gauge." We are pleased that our group will be able to participate in the inauguration of this important new community activity, and we extend heartiest good wishes for its success.

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In the 1880 "Annual Report of the Denver and Rio Grande Railway," previously mentioned in the Club's January newsletter, Chief Engineer J. A. McMurtrie submitted a rather detailed report to President William J. Palmer, outlining the work of the Engineering Department during previous years. In addition, supplemental information described the work on extensions begun in the spring of 1880; one of these was the "Leadville Extension, or Arkansas Valley Division," about which Engineer McMurtrie reported:

"After the injunction (obtained by the Santa Fe to prevent construction by the Rio Grande through the Royal Gorge) nothing was done on this Extention until about the first of February, 1880, when the Engineer Corps, having commenced and partially completed the location of an independent line between South Arkansas (Salida) and Leadville, were notified from New York that papers had been signed settling all controversies, and that we were to take possession of our original line between Canon and Leadville and all the material pertaining thereto. Contracts were made at once for completing the grading and bridging to Leadville, but owing to numerous vexatious delays, hard to forget but too numerous to mention, the road and material were not turned over to us until about April 5th, 1880, at which time tracklaying was commenced where the Atchison Company were stopped, and was completed as follows --

To Vallie, 38½ miles west of Canon (City)	April 27, 1880
To So. Arkansas, 56 miles west of Canon	May 20, 1880
To Nathrop, 75 Miles west of Canon	June 1 , 1880
To Buena Vista, 87½ miles west of Canon	June 9 , 1880
To Granite, 98½ miles west of Canon	June 20, 1880
To Malta, 112½ miles west of Canon	June 29, 1880
To Leadville, 117½ miles west of Canon	June 20, 1880."

The desire to reach the fabulous riches of Leadville, and the urgent necessity to win out over the threatening Denver & South Park is illustrated by the speed with which track was put down. Note, for instance, that 19 miles from South Arkansas (Salida) to Nathrop, through the crooked confines of Browns Canon, were spiked in 12 days, while through the less difficult country between Nathrop and Buena Vista, 12½ miles were put down in eight days. It is doubtful that any time off was available to the workmen under that schedule!

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Turning to a more modern time, the Interstate Commerce Commission in mid-January authorized the Santa Fe to build and operate a new 37½ mile branch line from French, New Mexico, on the main line 31 miles west of Raton, to York Canyon in Colfax County, New Mexico. Purpose of this new construction is to serve a proposed mining operation by Kaiser Steel Company for shipment of metallurgical coal to its blast furnaces at Fontana, California.

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During recent years interesting developments have occurred with regard to obtaining pictures from original negatives and glass plates of some of the more prominent steam locomotive builders. No doubt many Club members are acquainted with the photos from original Baldwin negatives obtainable at reasonable prices from H. L. Broadbelt of Hershey, Pennsylvania. Until the recent demise of the late Henry C. Ritchie, photos from original American Locomotive Company negatives, including products of Brooks, Schenectady, Pittsburg, Richmond and other works were available from the Alco collection deposited with the City of Schenectady, New York.

Now we learn that photos from the negatives of the Lima Locomotive works have become available, and that lists can be obtained from Mr. P. E. Percy of 313 Singleton Avenue, Lima, Ohio 45805. Mr. Percy, a retired Lima employe, has just issued a list of all Lima engines that were photographed, detailing considerable data on each locomotive. This list is obtainable at a cost of \$1.50; in addition, Mr. Percy also has a list of Lima's Shay-g geared engine photos, which can be acquired at a cost of 50 cents.

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Last month's newsletter related an anecdote about the activities of famous old Dave Day and his SOLID MULDOON during the 1880's at Ouray, Colorado. Another story about this witty editor has to do with a local political rally which was being addressed by Congressman James Belford. As the Congressman's remarks became more and more extended, Day stretched himself at full length on some chairs just below the speaker's platform. Noting this, Mr. Belford said that he would soon conclude his remarks.

"Don't hurry, Jim," Day replied. "We can lie down here as long as you can lie up there!"

It's too bad that television isn't a two-way affair, at least during political campaigns.

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