



C&TS DISPATCH

VOLUME 33 NO. 2
SUMMER 2020

NOTE: All summer and fall schedules for the Friends and the Railroad are subject to change due to Covid-19. Receive updated information from the Friends at any time at cumbrestoltec.org and from the Railroad at cumbrestoltec.com.

Cumbres Pass: 1956
Lobato Trestle: 1880, 2010 and 2020
The Day of Two Noons: 1883
Friends Work Session Health and Safety and Schedule Update
C&TS Operation Schedule Update
Plus: Spring Special Session Reports



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1970-2020



C&TS DISPATCH

Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, Inc.

William Lock, Founder-1988

Vol. 33, No. 2 ☞ Summer, 2020

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C&TS DISPATCH

Editor — Christopher James

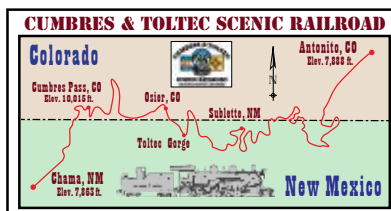
Assistant Editor — Jan Wright

Forum & Yard Cam Administrator — Jason Rose

Editor Emeritus — Rich Murray

Email—cjames@silverrailsleadville.com

The *C&TS Dispatch* is published four times each year by *The Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad Inc.*, a New Mexico nonprofit corporation. The Friends is the official museum arm for the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, a 64 mile-long railroad and museum of railroad history and technology, operating between Antonito, Colorado, and Chama, New Mexico. The railroad is owned jointly by the States of Colorado and New Mexico. As the museum arm, the *Friends* is dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of the railroad. The Friends is an Affiliate Member of the *Heritage Rail Alliance (HRA)*. Family membership in the Friends is \$35.00 per year; outside the USA membership is \$50.00. All contributions are fully tax deductible and will be gratefully accepted. For information, please write us in Albuquerque at the *Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, Inc.*, 4421 McLeod Rd. NE, Suite F, Albuquerque, NM, 87109, or call us at (505) 880-1311.



Denver & Rio Grande Railway: 1880-1886

Denver & Rio Grande Railroad: 1886-1921

Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad: 1921-1970

Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad: 1970-today

The Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad is both a National Historic Landmark and a State Registered Historic Site.

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President's FORUM



Venturing Forward

As I write this, it's approaching mid-June and what a horrendous past four months we have been through as a nation, and the world as a whole. For both the Friends and the Railroad, this has been a most challenging year to manage and navigate.

As we are all aware, due to COVID-19, C&TS canceled or modified its regular summer schedule and the Friends have suffered cancellation of a number of work sessions and events. The pre-season May work sessions were cancelled as well as Sessions C & D, but John Engs and the Projects Committee were able to reschedule some special sessions in Antonito plus other strategic locations along the Railroad. One example is Bob Conry and his crew at Cumbres reconstructing a replica of the historic Car Inspector's House (see page 4 and 19). We really appreciate those members who had the flexibility to change from a scheduled session or project to one of the special sessions that were offered.

These sessions are being conducted under CDC guidelines and recommendations and may provide some sense of normalcy to our lives, normalcy that we have not seen for months.

Our June 27th & 28th Locomotive 168 photo charter was cancelled as we did not have enough passengers to break even, and the historic passenger train we had expected to roll out on that Saturday was not completed due to closure of the shops. The Friday July 31st Moonlight & Wine Tasting Train is on, but we will have limited seating given the social distancing guidelines. The train will operate from Chama to Osier and return.

The Railroad's "Iron Horse" celebration in late August has also been cancelled and will now be held at approximately the same time and schedule in 2021. If an individual had reservations for this year's event then you automatically have reservations for next year's event. This is unfortunate but another casualty of the pandemic.

As for this year, the Railroad's opening weekend, rescheduled to June 13th & 14th, got thrown a curve ball; originally a Chama/Osier round trip was scheduled for Saturday the 13th but due to restrictions placed by New Mexico's Governor and limitations in the State of Colorado, an Antonito/Osier round trip operated both Saturday and Sunday instead. Because the Railroad operates in both States, we are required to follow two different sets of guidelines.

Until further notice, the Railroad's schedule will be limited to Antonito/Osier/Antonito round trips. By July the Railroad hopes to add Chama/Osier round trips to the schedule. Those would last through Friday, September 11th, at which time the fall seven-days-a-week trains from both stations schedule begins.

Even with some curtailment in activities, we are still working to return to normal as much as possible. With special sessions and Session E still happening, the organization can continue



On the Cover:

Over the last 30+ years of the *C&TS Dispatch* there has rarely, if ever, been a cover photo that didn't include a C&TS locomotive, a piece of rolling stock, a historic structure or a member of the Friends. The photo of the s-curve above Chama shows the unfortunate quiet pall that settled over the Railroad this spring and early summer. Hopefully, steam and steel will return soon!

Photo by Chris James



C&TS Friends Telegraph: NEWS

Operating Schedules for the Summer 2020 Season on the C&TS

to work on several important projects. Our Albuquerque office has returned to normal both with the staff and our group of Library and Photo Collection volunteers. They are happy to be back and we are glad to see them. I sense the enjoyment of these members and those participating in the work sessions that their lives are just a bit more normal than three months ago. People want to be back contributing and having some fun.

Most of you are also aware of the Chama-Antonito Relief Fund that was established. The organization has committed \$50,000 towards the goal of raising \$200,000. The Executive Committee approved donating \$150,000 towards Chama's water system repairs and \$25,000 to the food pantries in Antonito and Chama. We appreciate all those who have made contributions as we near the \$100,000 mark in gifts. If you wish to donate, send your donation to the Friends Albuquerque office and include a note that the funds are to go specifically to the Relief Fund.

As we look toward the fall, the Friends are planning for the October Banquet and Board Meeting. We anticipate these events will take place in Colorado Springs. The banquet would be held on Friday, October 23rd, with the Board Meeting on the following Saturday, October 24th. So as we continue to navigate through the remainder of the year please be safe. We will keep everyone informed as best we can and look towards some sort of normalcy in our lives. Thank you for everything you do to support us!

Tim Tennant

Oops! A couple of errors crept into the Spring edition of the *Dispatch*. On p. 4, the NPS tour was **November 1968**, not 1969. Also on p. 4, Russ Sperry's photo of the equipment transfer was taken on **September 6th**, not on the 9th. Russ' photo of #19 at Cumbres on p. 5 was taken in **1975**, not 1974.

Also the correct URL for the publisher of the Rotary pamphlet is www.periscopefilm.com, not "periscopefilms" (no S.)

Thank you Russ Sperry and Periscope Film for pointing them out. My apologies!

The first train of the season departed from Antonito, Colorado and a modified schedule of departures from Antonito only will continue through the summer season. "We are hopeful that we will have permission to run trains out of Chama, NM soon. Because the train operates in two states, we have to follow the guidelines of each state. The town of Chama, only 50 minutes from Antonito, is open for business and welcomes visitors." *John Bush, President & CEO, C&TS*

The 2020 schedule is subject to change and passengers will be required to follow all current federal and state safety precautions. Passengers are encouraged to check the website cumbrestoltec.com for the most up-to-date information.

*Beginning Saturday, June 13, 2020, there will be departures out of Antonito, Colorado only. Trains will leave from Antonito and stop at Osier for lunch before returning back to the Antonito station. There will be no half-day rides. **UPDATE!** On June 22, John Bush announced that due to increased ridership, the Railroad will now run six days a week. "We are already sold out on several departures. On July 1st we will begin six-day-a-week schedule, A-O-A until at least July 12."*

Departures from Chama, NM have been temporarily suspended due to COVID-19 restrictions in New Mexico. Once restrictions have been lifted, the Railroad intends to add departures from Chama.

From September 12–October 18, two trains are expected to depart daily and run between Antonito and Chama with a lunch stop at Osier Station, following the traditional C&TS schedule.

If you need to cancel your reservation this season, you will get a full refund if you cancel at least 48 hours prior to your trip.

Masks are required for all passengers and there will be a temperature check before boarding the train. Anyone with a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher will be refunded their ticket and refused a ride on the train.

A Letter From the Editor

Putting the *Dispatch* together four times a year is (usually) quite fun, despite the self-imposed deadline I set to try in order to get it out "on time." That said, this issue, *Summer 2020*, is a little different and a little more difficult to assemble than other Summer issues I've done in the last four years. I have always designated each Spring issue as the "History Issue" as there isn't much Friends activity going on during the winter. The remaining three issues of the year are generally "Friends-focused" because there's a lot to report from the summer work sessions.

Not so this with this Summer issue. There just hasn't been a whole heck of a lot to write about because with a couple of exceptions, there's not been a whole heck of a lot going on this spring. Thus, a *second* "History Issue" is presented here.

I'd been planning on writing up the history of the Lobato Trestle for about a year, considering 2020 is the 10th anniversary of its devastating fire. I would have included that story sometime this year, but it seems fitting to present it now. Like the amazing recovery from that disaster, the Railroad and the Friends will recover from the current "disaster" as well, stronger and ready for the future. Let the response to the Lobato fire in these viral days be an inspiration for us all.

I also dug into the *Dispatch* vault and pulled out a reprint from the April 1956 *Trains* magazine. It foreshadows a similar resilience of the Railroad that became the C&TS, a resilience we all need today.

So enjoy this second "History Issue." Stay safe and look ahead for better days. ~ Chris James, Editor



C&TS Friends Telegraph: *STILL MORE NEWS!*

COVID-19 Safety Requirements for Friends Volunteers, Summer 2020

CDC and Colorado State COVID-19 Guidelines for "Phase 1" Opening

The Friends as an organization is not considered a retail establishment so there are no specific requirements for our opening, and since we fall under the direction of the Railroad while working on the property and they have already obtained authorization to open, the Friends have no direct guidance from which we can work (e.g. work sessions). That said, we do have an obligation to follow CDC directives and those required by the States, in this case Colorado. The special sessions, scheduled this June (and beyond) are all within the State of Colorado and thus the Friends must follow Colorado's standards for "Phase 1" opening. At this writing, New Mexico has not yet opened to full participation or operation. Here is a list of the necessary actions for Colorado events:

1. Upon entry each morning, the attendee will be asked if they are sick or have been sick in the last 24 hours; if the answer is yes, they will be asked to return to their residence.
2. Upon entry each morning, the attendee or others entering will have a temperature check; if they are above 99.5° F they will be asked to return to their residence.
3. While at the work site, each attendee will wear a mask and gloves, if not work gloves then appropriate Nitrile gloves. In addition, the appropriate and required safety equipment must be worn. Social distancing must also be practiced. Nitrile gloves and face masks will be provided by the Friends if necessary.
4. Personal location and tracking will be maintained through registration and local contacts documented at check-in for the work session.
5. Disinfect all common areas at least three times a day such as eating tables, chairs and break areas, including coffee pot handles, faucets and any common areas of touch without gloves such as rest room areas and portable toilets. Hand sanitizer dispensers will be available throughout the work area.
6. No on-site food preparation and no exposed food will be allowed onto the site. All lunches will be contracted and all snacks shall be commercially wrapped. No water bottles or dispensers of liquid drink will be permitted. All drinks shall be commercially bottled. No open food can be brought into the work area. Attendees who wish to bring their lunch must leave the facility to eat.

NOTE: It is expected that some requirements may change as Colorado State moves into Phases 2 or 3. The Friends will adjust to those changes as we move through the opening levels.

~ John Engs

News Updates!

1) Changes to opening day: The New Mexico Governor, as a part of COVID-19 restrictions, is not allowing the C&TS to open out of Chama. **UPDATE!** On June 22, John Bush announced that with increased ridership, the Railroad will run six days a week. "We are already sold out on several departures. On July 1st we will begin six-day-a-week schedule, A-O-A until at least July 12."

2) Chama Village Water System: As of this writing (June 26th), two separate water purification tests have been conducted and have passed quality standards. Currently the village is waiting for the State to give approval to the system. Until approval is received, opening of restaurants is on hold.

3) Work Session Schedule for 2021: The Railroad is in hopes of duplicating the schedule of events that were planned for 2020. That said, scheduled Sessions C, D, E, F1, F2 and G will remain the same, adjusted for the calendar. The Projects Committee will meet to decide on sessions for the early part of the season as well as to determine if to offer Sessions A & B or one split session. We do know there will be one or two Special Sessions prior to prepare Car 470 for charter on opening day. The schedule dates will be published after approval by the Board of Directors.

4) TRAINS Magazine "STEAM OVER CUMBRES: 50 Years of the Cumbres & Toltec" features many segments of the C&TS history including rotary snowplows in action and restoration of Engine 168. This is one-of-a-kind special edition. Copies are available from the Friends office for cost of \$8.00. Call the office or e-mail info@cumbrestoltec.org to order a copy for yourself, family or friends.

Special Session SS8, June 1 - July 19, continuous)

SS8 Project 1005—Reconstruct Car Inspector's House at Cumbres Pass.

In the fall of 2019, the foundation for the Car Inspector's House was completed. During the winter months the plans were drawn to match the original construction in 1911 using full dimensional lumber.

This is a complete reconstruction using the "current day" structural design. No food provided.



Come spend a few days, weeks or months working on this important project. See also page 23.

Project Updates for Work Sessions F1 (Aug. 20-25) and F2 (Aug. 25-30, 2020)

CHAMA: In Work Sessions F1 and F2 the following projects will be added:

Project 0704—General yard and Friends area clean-up, dispose of trash and re-stack storage in yard.

Project 1361—Repair wood dock, remove old surface decking and replace at the Carpenter shop. Provide three treatments of boiled linseed oil and turpentine.

Project 1316—Stencil car roof repair, remove metal repair wood sheathing, install Ice/Water shield and reinstall repaired metal roof.

These Projects now in the schedule will stay:

Project 1351—Conversion of P-Box 207 to Boxcar 3414 as a Rider-Box for charter service.

Project 1313—Reconstruct High Side Gondola Car 1000. This car is the first of the 1000 series cars constructed by the D&RGW.

All Chama support projects 200/300 series will be staffed.

ANTONITO CRF: In Work Sessions F1 and F2 the following will be added:

Project 1118—Reassemble truck frames for Tank Cars and install under Cars 11036 and 11037.

Project 1276—Upgrade Caboose 05635, install new electrical system, install pressurized water system and new toilet.

Project 1250—Construct walkway from southeast corner of the C&TS parking lot to northwest corner of the CRF building. Install walkways over four tracks and install rock fines on dirt path.

Project 0706—CRF and CSF: clean-up on Friends property, relocate ground storage and place on pallet, arrange storage to be consistent.

These Projects now in the schedule will stay:

Project 1246 and 1332 Rebuild Tank Cars 11050 & 11056 for service.

Project 1317—Rebuild Drop Bottom Gondola Car 731.

All Antonito support projects 200/300 series will be staffed.

Go to the Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec web site at

www.cumbrestoltec.org

and click on the “News” link for complete descriptions of each of the Special Sessions.

Complete descriptions of the numbered projects can be found at the FIDO link on the web site by project number.

We look forward to seeing you this summer!

DON'T WAIT! JOIN US THIS YEAR ON THE C&TS!

If you love trains, history and volunteer activities, JOIN US as we help preserve the “Living History” of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad.

For \$35 a year, you and your family can become Friends and receive the quarterly *C&TS Dispatch*, train ride discounts, invitations to special events and the opportunity to participate in restoration projects each summer, along with the satisfaction of supporting and investing in the historic cultural heritage that is the Cumbres & Toltec!

Only \$35 per year for a basic Family Membership! Foreign: \$50

Other membership levels are also available. Call us.

To join, send us this application (or a facsimile):

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Email or Phone No. _____

My check for \$ _____ is enclosed, or
Charge my Visa / MC / Discover
[circle one] for \$ _____

Card # _____

Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Mail to:

Friends of the C&TSRR, Inc.
4421 McLeod Road NE, Suite F
Albuquerque, NM 87109
505-880-1311
www.cumbrestoltec.org

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Give this to a friend!**



Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, Inc. is a non-profit, tax exempt corporation under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS Code. All contributions are deductible to the fullest extent of the law. IRS# 85-036487

INTO THE FREEZING DARKN

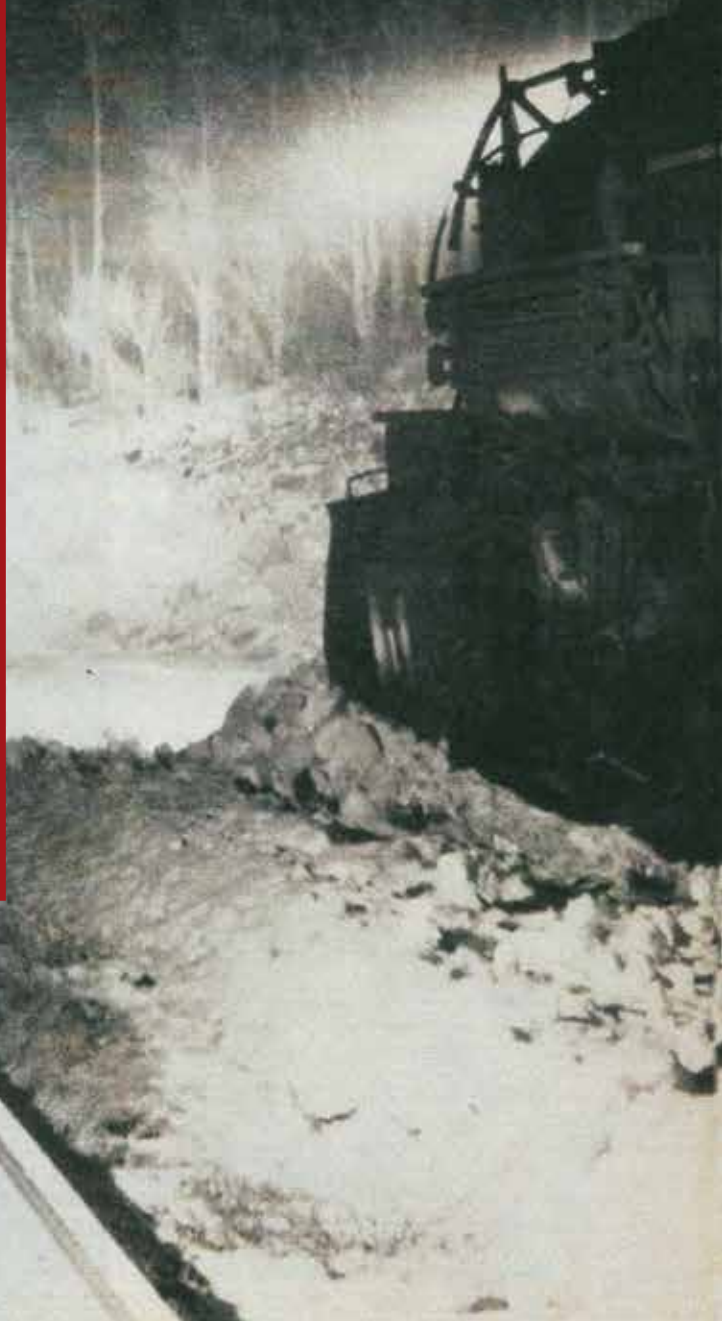
In the April 1956 issue of *Trains Magazine*, 64 years ago, frequent *Trains* contributor and photographer Philip R. Hastings traveled over the San Juan Extension through “the freezing darkness” from Alamosa to Chama and back by way of a steam powered, narrow gauge Denver & Rio Grande Western freight train.

His essay, “Into the Freezing Darkness,” was one of the earliest introductions to both the public and the railfan community to the unique nature of the right-of-way over Cumbres Pass. The article and that initial awareness was one of the seminal events that sparked the interest that evolved, fourteen years later, into the preservation effort that became the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad.

Philip R. Hastings’ 1956 article is reproduced here in full with the kind permission of Kalmbach Media, publisher of *Trains Magazine*. ~ Chris James, Editor



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A man ponders "the experience of setting forth into the freezing darkness with seven men, two venerable steam locomotives, and a little train to follow a narrow steel path over the desolate immensity of the Rocky Mountains"

BY PHILIP R. HASTINGS

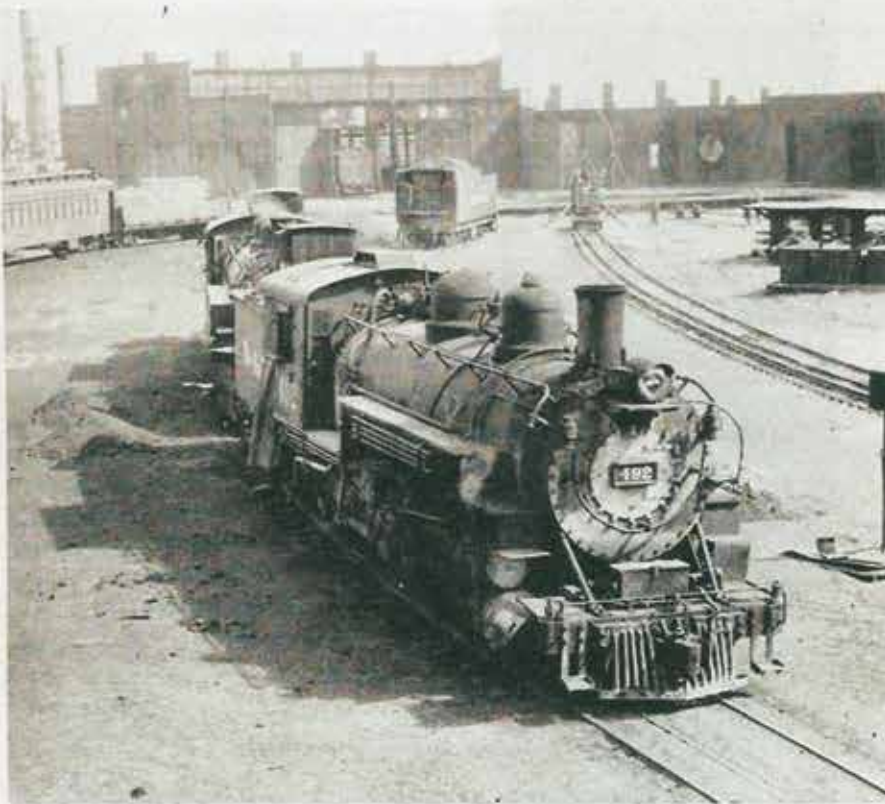
PHOTOGRAPHY BY THE AUTHOR

THE red-painted wooden water tank seemed in good repair. But as we stopped at the general store I saw the badly eroded grade on the rocky hillside and knew that the rails had been gone for several years. If I had come 13 years earlier I could have seen Tres Piedras, N. Mex., through the wood-framed window of a Denver & Rio Grande Western narrow-gauge coach instead of through the steel-rimmed glass of a Trailways bus. As it was, the bus ride north to Alamosa, Colo., with its fleeting glimpses of the crumbled roadbed of the abandoned Santa Fe branch, was emphasis enough of my good fortune at being scheduled for a ride over the largest of the Rio Grande's few remaining narrow-gauge lines in the Colorado Rockies.

The Narrow Gauge Motel turned out to be an admirable place to spend the night in Alamosa. Situated just across U.S. Highway 285 from the D&RGW's 200-mile narrow-gauge mainline to Durango, the motel not only provided first sight and sound of the San Juan Extension trains of today but also displayed a yard full of retired Rio Grande and Rio Grande Southern locomotives and rolling stock which eloquently recalled the days when a 600-mile circle tour of the Colorado Rockies could be made entirely by scheduled narrow-gauge passenger service. Sleep, in such surroundings and at the 7500-foot altitude of Alamosa, was blissful.

A brilliant morning sun in the deep blue sky of mid-April made the broad San Luis Valley seem like a vast stage on which the Rio Grande yards were

"We were running 200 tons light because of a reported snowstorm"



ALAMOSA: Mikes 492 and 499—members of class K-37—typify the most powerful narrow-gauge engines on Rio Grande, were once standard-gauge 2-8-0's.

set against the 14,000-foot backdrop of the snow-white Sangre de Cristo Range. In the afternoon by special prearrangement I would ride a narrow-gauge freight over Cumbres Pass

on the line to Durango, but in the meantime there were the storied dual-gauge yards to explore.

Frustrated by the Santa Fe in its push southward toward the Mexican

TOWARD ANTONITO: Empty tanks bound for loading at Chama and truss-rodded box cars making long haul to Durango roll over 29 miles of dual gauge.

border, the narrow-gauge Denver & Rio Grande of 1875 had turned westward from Cuchara Junction to exploit the mineral strikes of the southwestern Colorado mountains. The vast ancient lake bed which is called San Luis Valley provided a breathing space between the toils of the jagged Sangre de Cristo and San Juan ranges on the route across southern Colorado; and by 1882 the rail-conceived village of Alamosa had become terminus for three-foot lines diverging to the four points of the compass. In the following decade the trackage over 9200-foot La Veta Pass from Pueblo on the east and the branch west to Wagon Wheel Gap were standard-gauged, but the main line southwest to the San Juan Basin and the branch north to Durango remained narrow. Alamosa was headquarters for the big-gauged Alamosa Division, including all trackage west of La Veta, until shrinkage of the narrow gauge brought incorporation into the Pueblo Division in 1953.

My inspection of the Alamosa yard began at the tan brick depot, near the center of a railroad town which has become a bustling county seat of western ranchlands. Its red-tile roofs and ornate ironwork, in harmony with the Spanish heritage of the area, are now concealed from the rail-bound tourists, for Alamosa lost its last rail passenger service in 1954. An *Official Guide* of a few years back reminded me that the Alamosa station once thronged with travelers bound in all four directions by rail — to Denver via La Veta or Salida, to Santa Fe,





TOLTEC SIDING: Skipper has paperwork, flagman relaxes with his coffee.

to Durango. The tripled rails of the freight yard held numerous cars of both gauges.

But things were quiet except for standard-gauge Consolidation 1146 which was switching narrow-gauge cars into the freight which I was to ride. Near the enginehouse I found narrow-gauge engines 492 and 499 on the turntable lead, already hostled and hot for the afternoon run. These chunky outside-framed Mikados represented class K-37, most powerful — with 37,000 pounds tractive effort — on the narrow gauge. Their fat boilers testified to their having been converted from standard gauge Consolidations a generation ago. Off to one side sat a string of idle narrow-gauge passenger cars, drab with dust. The tender of one of the massive 1400-class 2-10-2's bulged from the standard gauge side of the roundhouse. In the fall the 1400 would be in steam and busy, helping trainloads of prod-

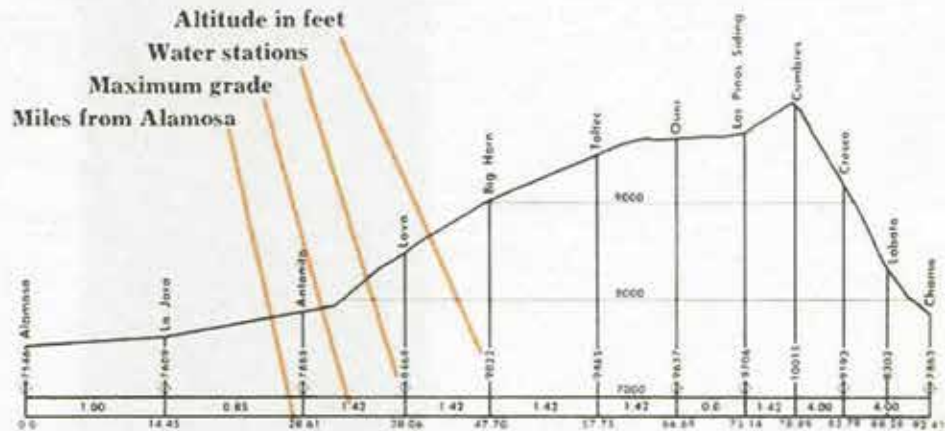
uce cast out of the San Luis Valley. With the lumber and mineral traffic from the mountains largely a matter of history, the D&RGW has been favored by the flowering of the valley under irrigation from the headwaters of the Rio Grande River, and about 25,000 carloads of vegetables originate through Alamosa yearly.

Noon had passed when I finished looking through the car shops, and a thick haze was reaching across the sky from the San Juans, obliterating the sun. The 1146 had taken my train out to the "Farm," a small yard stretching south along the line leading toward Durango, but there was time for a steak from a San Luis-fattened steer before call time. Δ : 4:15 p.m. I was at the depot with the train crew and I swung into the cab of the 499 as the two narrow-gauge Mikes paused to pick us up for the short ride out to the Farm. It was a new wrinkle for me to find that the air on our 51-car train had already been pumped up by car inspectors from a ground line, and it was only a matter of minutes until the engines were coupled and

Conductor Frank Young waved a highball.

Caboose 0503 seemed every bit as cozy as and not remarkably smaller than a standard-gauge buggy. As a matter of fact, as Rear Brakeman Harold Thayne pointed out, we were actually riding over standard-gauge iron—with an extra rail for our three-foot-gauge train—for the first 29 miles south through the valley toward Antonito.

As the 0503 drummed along over the flats past stock loading pens, grain elevators and vegetable warehouses, Thayne described how both widths of equipment are shuttled back and forth over this busy section of track by engines of either dimension, using an idler car. Young, working on his bills at the desk, looked up to explain that other crews handled the valley work and thus our 1500 tons were all destined for the far side of the San Juan Range. Except for a string of empty tank cars for oil loading at Chama, the entire train would make the 200-mile trip to Durango, at the head of the San Juan Basin. Most of this was pipe and



"The engines were periodically thrown into bold relief by the pulsating



MEET with Extra 494 East . . . "no sight of glowing brake shoes — just the quiet clackety-clack of the joints."



CHAMA: Helper crew, first in, gets the job of making up train. Caboose next to train is bound for museum site.

other related supplies for the new oil fields of northwestern New Mexico and would continue on down the Farmington Branch, but there were a few covered flats carrying new autos and tractors for Durango itself. Young indicated that the oil fields accounted for the bulk of present-day traffic over the San Juan Extension, that currently it amounted to a tonnage freight nearly every day, and that this traffic might last a few more years. After that, the future looked dismal. Turning to his work with a sigh, Young dismissed me with a comment that we were running 200 tons light because a snowstorm was reported ahead of us on Cumbres Pass.

From the cupola there was no sign of snow, but a dust storm had blown up which at times obscured the twin exhausts of the Mikados 51 cars ahead. It was dusk when we stepped off in Antonito yard and unquestionably colder. When Thayne and I reached the head end we found the 495 and the 492 under the lee of a large timber cooling tower; their firemen were carefully trimming the tender coal pile into tall pyramids. I was told there would be no more fuel in the 64 long miles over the 10,015-foot summit of Cumbres Pass to Chama. Recalling a spread in *Life* a few years ago of a Rio Grande train snowbound for several days near Cumbres, I appreciated the diligence, and when we stepped to a nearby café for coffee I bought a few bananas

and doughnuts to add to my lunch "just in case."

In the café the crew was jovial and familiar toward the waitresses and local citizenry with the easy rapport which seems more natural to rail-readers than to any other occupational group. They seemed so unhurried that I was finally moved to comment uneasily on the anticipated storm to Conductor Young. He explained that an eastbound freight which we were to meet up on the mountain had been delayed.

After our leisurely snack the 499 was separated from the 492 and was coupled to the front of the train; the 492 was then spliced in 30 cars back. Doubleheading from Alamosa had expedited engine servicing at Antonito but now the locomotives had to be split because of the 136-foot-high Cascade Creek trestle up toward the top of the pass — highest bridge on the D&RGW narrow gauge.

Snow flurries were beginning as we swung onto the caboose again, but I could still see where the tracks used to go straight south toward Santa Fe as we curved off toward the west at Antonito station. Young sat down beside the stove to finish his paperwork by lamplight and I climbed into the cupola with Thayne. We could barely distinguish the train stretched out across the last expanse of valley toward the San Juan Range, looming dimly in the distance. The engines, outlined against the circumscribed

projections of their own headlights, were periodically thrown into bold relief by the pulsating orange halo of an open firebox.

Thayne indicated the end of third rail at the outskirts of Antonito and went below to get supper, leaving me alone to meditate on the experience of setting forth into the freezing darkness with seven men, two venerable steam locomotives, and a little train to follow a narrow steel path over the desolate immensity of the Rocky Mountains in quest of the next outpost of civilization 64 miles away. But come — men and engines like these had been doing it in January as well as in April since 1881, and not too many had failed to reach the security of Chama. Not too many.

The reassuring odor of coffee and frying liver allayed my apprehensive thoughts, and shortly Young joined me in the cupola to point out that we had begun to climb in earnest. As we watched the engine lights trace back and forth across the darkened landscape ahead we talked of other narrow gauges and their glimmering prospects for the future. It struck me that this was the very last line in the U.S. with a really big-time narrow-gauge operation. The curves seemed to be getting progressively sharper and finally we wound around one which Young said would go 30 degrees and which heeled the 499 around so that its headlight shone almost directly into our eyes.

halo of an open firebox”



LEAVING CHAMA: “We headed into a lovely, sun-bathed mountain vista.”

Soon we could see lights in the black void which Young identified as Antonito. A few minutes later as we continued to climb he pointed out the lights of Alamosa, almost 40 miles away. Obviously we were still scaling the eastward slope of the Conejos Range and had not yet entered the valley of the Los Pinos River, which would lead us to Cumbres Pass. The increasing elevation was indicated by the appearance of snow along the track, since the storm was still limited to intermittent flurries. Frequently the metronomic impulse of the locomotives beating up the steady 1.4 per cent grade was transmitted through the caboose windows as one curve after another bent them back toward us. Young apologized for his “hard-riding caboose” on the basis of a flat-wheeled gon just ahead, but it felt as comfortable to me as any I had ever ridden.

ABOUT the time we passed the switchstand of the loop for turning snowplow trains at Lava, Thayne called “Supper!” and we climbed down to find the table clothed with a recent copy of the *Denver Post* and the food set out. Thayne wiped off the stove top so I could toast my sandwiches, placed spoons in the tin coffee cups to inhibit slopping, and we sat down to eat while the snug little caboose trundled higher and deeper into the Rockies. After supper Thayne got out a dishpan, Young reached for a

towel and they wordlessly did the dishes with a methodical efficiency which bespoke years of teamwork.

A water stop at Sublette fixed our location as now being within the Los Pinos intervalle, and as we progressed farther the jagged rock piled higher and closer on the right side of the track and the black emptiness on the left seemed to get even blacker. I would have given a lot for daylight. I knew we were snaking along a narrow groove carved into the precipitous backside of the Conejos Range, with the Los Pinos River hundreds of feet below.

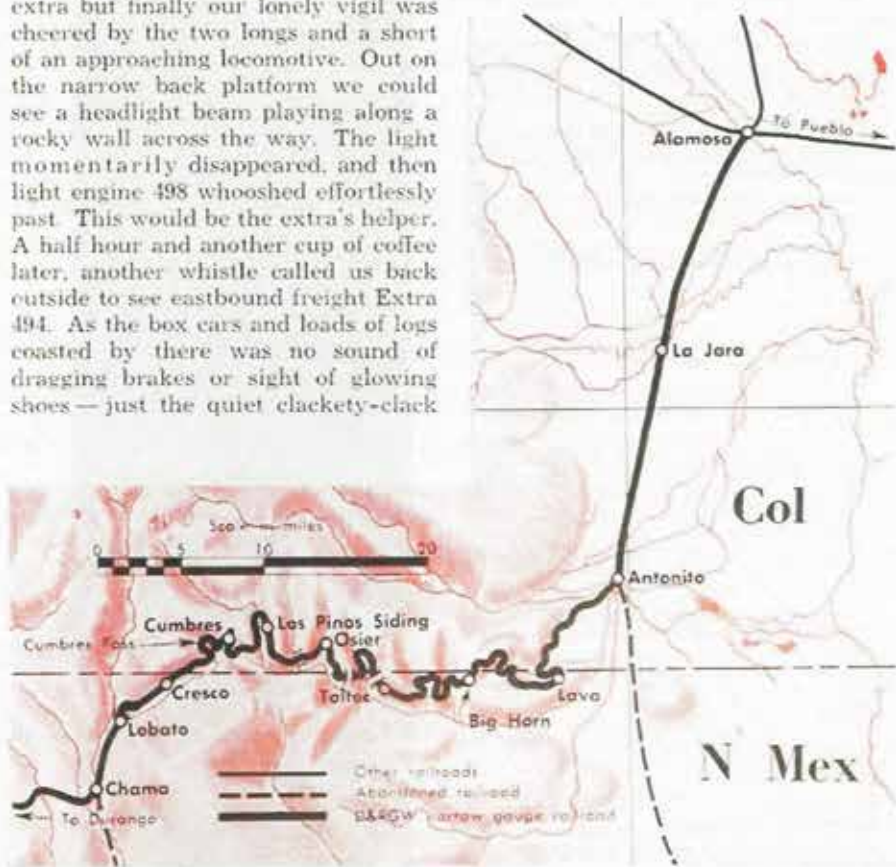
When we crawled into the siding at Toltec for our meet with the eastbound freight I got out in hopes of seeing something of this famous scenery but found my perception limited by the relatively infinitesimal beam of my flashlight to the immediate environs of the roadbed. It was as quiet as it was dark; the only sound was a barely perceptible shushing which I interpreted to be water rushing in the bottom of the gorge, although it could have been wind stirring the branches of jack pines higher on the mountainside. Slogging ahead through the absolute darkness for a picture of the engines I sensed the utter loneliness of this isolated little passing track high in the mighty San Juan Range and felt thankful that the 51 cars were not standard length.

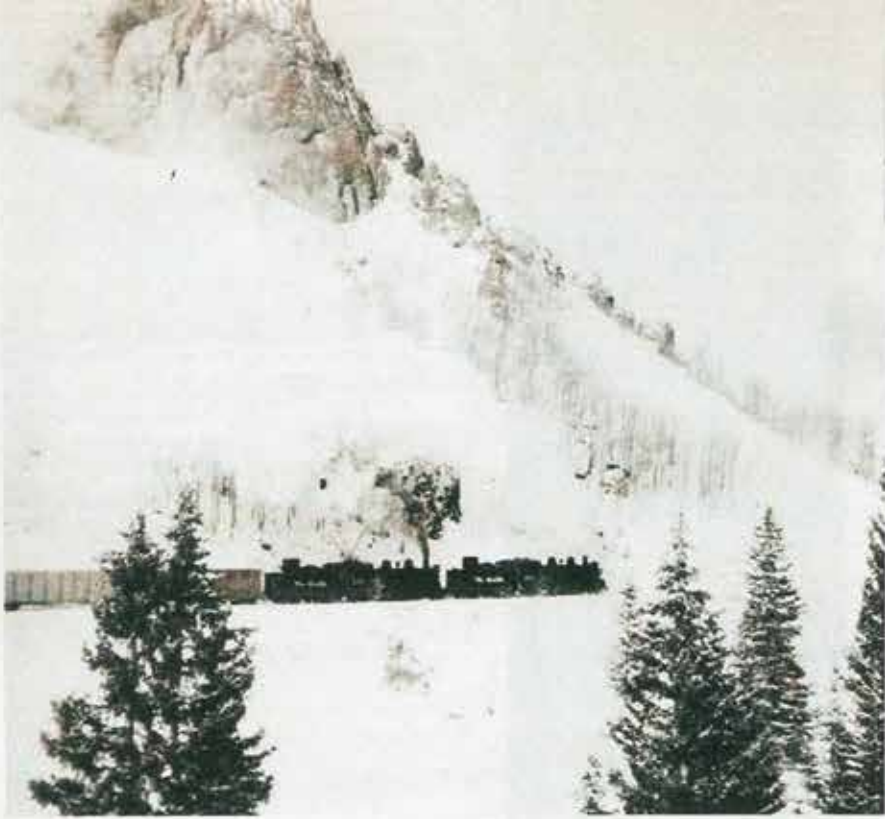
Long after I returned to the caboose we were still waiting for the opposing extra but finally our lonely vigil was cheered by the two longs and a short of an approaching locomotive. Out on the narrow back platform we could see a headlight beam playing along a rocky wall across the way. The light momentarily disappeared, and then light engine 498 whooshed effortlessly past. This would be the extra’s helper. A half hour and another cup of coffee later, another whistle called us back outside to see eastbound freight Extra 494. As the box cars and loads of logs coasted by there was no sound of dragging brakes or sight of glowing shoes — just the quiet clackety-clack

of wheels on rail joints; and it appeared that engine air, the cold weather, and the sharp curves were enough to restrain this long train on the easy grades of the Los Pinos intervalle. The wheel clicks echoed back through the cold-deadened silence for several minutes as we watched engine 494’s light snake down the mountainside for a mile or more, but they had died out by the time our own engines whistled off.

Several tentative sallies by the 499 and the 492 were reflected by brief tugs on the caboose, then they could finally be heard working in concert and we began rolling slowly through the snow-clogged siding. At the far end the train did not stop because the engines were hidden around the curves ahead and after closing the switch Thayne had quite a workout, chasing after the caboose through ankle-deep snow by the light of his lantern. He made it, and after we had gone a few hundred yards he waved an emphatic highball at the momentarily visible helper engine. This resulted in no apparent reaction, but after another few hundred yards we could see the lead engine and it responded promptly to his lantern signal with two long drawn-out wails. Shortly the caboose snapped forward and our speed picked up a little.

We were back in the cupola when Thayne called my attention to Mud Tunnel, although in the dark-





WINDY POINT: "Through snowbanks half as high as the train and finally about on a tight horseshoe to hug the winding shelf." Elevation: 10,000 feet.

ness I had to sense this 349-foot timber-lined structure largely by the change in sounds. Thayne told me this was one of only two tunnels on the D&RGW narrow gauge; the other lay about four miles ahead, right beside Toltec Gorge. We had not gone far past Mud Tunnel when the sky began to clear and stars appeared over the outline of the mountaintops. The scene continued to brighten, as though we were watching the protracted fade-in of the latest Cinerama. Soon from my cupola box seat I watched entranced as the awesome grandeur of these Rocky Mountain fastnesses was revealed in the mystical mood of moonlight.

As the 0503 creaked along, the surrounding peaks closed in and became more rugged. As long, tight curves laid the entire train out for my inspection, the locomotives were highlighted against towering slopes, glistening with snow. After a few minutes of this moving spectacle Thayne suggested that I take his seat on the left side of the cupola, pointing ahead to a dark area where the canyon narrowed. This he said would be Rock Tunnel, overlooking Toltec Gorge. I readily complied, having thrilled during years past to descriptions of this scenic high point of the fabulous narrow gauge Grand Circle Tour.

As we approached, an unimpressive rocky shelf on the left suddenly broke away before we entered the tunnel to

reveal a vast chasm yawning at the very edge of the track. My involuntary shudder was cut short by the enveloping security of the tunnel, but as we emerged from the other side I again found myself suspended over an apparently bottomless gorge. Once more the breathless sensation was immediately relieved by the reassuring wall of a rock cut, and from then on as we wound along the edge of Toltec Gorge for several miles there was no view so awful as those at the ends of the Rock Tunnel. I was anxious to get a better description of the spectacle I had glimpsed briefly by moonlight, so I consulted the tourist guide book of 1891 which I had brought along. I found this paragraph.

The approach to this great scenic wonder prepares the traveler for something extraordinary and spectacular. A black speck in the distance against the precipitous surface of a frowning cliff is beheld long before Toltec is reached and is pointed out as the entrance to the Tunnel which is the gateway to the Gorge. As the advance is made around mountain spurs and deep ravines, glimpses are caught of profound depths and towering heights, the black speck widens into a yawning portcullis, and then the train, making a detour of four miles around a side canon, plunges into the blackness of Toltec tunnel, which is remarkable in that it pierces the summit of the mountain instead of its base. Fifteen-hundred feet of perpendicular descent would take one to

the bottom of the gorge, while the scarred and wrinkled expanse of the opposite wall confronts us, lifting its massive bulwarks high above us.

"Fronting heaven's splendor,
Strong and full and clear."

When the train emerges from the tunnel it is upon the brink of a precipice. A solid bridge of trestlework, set in the rock after the manner of a balcony, supports the track, and from this coigne of vantage the traveler beholds a most thrilling spectacle. The tremendous gorge, whose sides are splintered rocks and monumental crags and whose depths are filled with the snow-white waters of a foaming torrent, lies beneath him, the blue sky is above him and all around the majesty and mystery of the mountains.

Too bad it was not now daylight!

As we rolled along at the steady 18 miles an hour prescribed by time-card (sharp curves — 15), the valley gradually widened again and the track drew nearer the level of the Los Pinos River. By now it was nearing midnight and I was getting sleepy, so I went below and stretched out on the cushions near the stove. The rolling rhythm of the caboose quickly induced sleep, and I drifted off as the train was slowing to take water at Osier. About an hour later I came half awake to sense that we were halted at Cumbres Pass, but did not rouse to watch as the helper engine was cut out and the retainers were turned up to a full 20 pounds for the 14 miles of unremitting 4 per cent downgrade into Chama.

My sleep thereafter was somewhat fitful as the caboose was intermittently jerked and slammed by the braking of the long train on the heavy grade. But I did not struggle into full consciousness until I sensed that the windows were becoming light. It was only 5 a.m., but I hated to miss any of this extraordinary trip. I pushed myself up into the cupola again. In the half light of a gray, cloudy dawn I could see the train whipping back and forth around tight curves, with the engine infrequently visible. We were traversing rather close terrain covered by considerable wooded growth and it wasn't particularly spectacular—quite suggestive of the uplands of Vermont or northern Idaho. After 10 or 15 minutes the train unscrewed itself into a mile-long tangent reaching across a little valley, and began slowing. The only signs of human habitation were a few half-completed sawmill buildings until we passed through a silver-painted bridge and curved through a grove of scrub oak, when a water tank, coal tower and some houses became visible as the train halted. It was snowing again. This scene of a

"The winding rails were as much a part of the Rockies as the cliffs"

tree-bordered village beside a stream looked surprisingly New Englishish, even though I knew it was Chama, N. Mex.

Walking forward with Young and Thayne as they turned the retainers to release I found that the Chama yard was a neat little terminal. An imposing timber coaling tower and a corpulent double-spouted water tank overshadowed the half dozen or so tracks which contained few cars besides those of our long train. Engine 492, our helper on the climb to Cumbres, was sitting beside a small engine shed in company with another K-37 Mike, the 495. Across from the enginehouse were a neat gray frame freight shed and a depot, and in front of the depot a genuine narrow-gauge rotary snowplow. Fronting the railroad yard was the main — and apparently only — street of Chama. Here the New England resemblance was defaced by the false store fronts associated with Western frontier towns. Indeed, the most ostentatious structure was proudly labeled in Gay '90's-style lettering GENERAL STORE SINCE 1881. It had evidently gone into business the year Denver & Rio Grande rails reached and created this division point at the western foot of the San Juan Range, nearly half way from Alamosa to Durango.

The crew used the 499 to cut out the Chama tank cars, spot a couple of cars of company supplies, and bring the rest of the train up into the yard, then they repaired to Annie's Cafe for breakfast. Behind a most unprepossessing exterior I found a clean, homey little cafe and an excellent breakfast. Best of all, as I enjoyed my "short stack," eggs, ham and coffee (80 cents) I could watch everything that was going on in the yard. A hostler coupled engines 499, 495 and 492 together and moved them as a group to the ashpit, coal tower and water tank. I finished breakfast in time to get a picture as he took the trio down to the west end of the yard and turned them on the wye.

Young, Thayne and the others had by now "sacked in" at the caboose to get their eight hours rest before the return trip to Alamosa, but I rejected the thought of sleep to make the most of my brief visit at this slightly narrow-gauge railroad town in the Rockies. Over at the depot I found the waiting room locked. The operator couldn't even find the key but he ushered me in through his office. Layers of dust on the benches reminded me that passenger service had been discontinued in 1951, and the ticket

window glass was cracked clear across as though by the person who had slammed it shut for the last time four years before. The train bulletin board was still lettered CHAMA TO DULCE, reflecting the final few months of passenger service when legalities forced the temporary operation of an abbreviated train over the 30-mile section of the line in New Mexico after the through *San Juan Express* between Alamosa and Durango had been taken off the timetcard.

The op told me that the extra from Durango bringing our tonnage for the trip back was expected within the hour, so I walked back down to the west end of the yard for a picture of its arrival. The skies had partially cleared and the spring sun was melting the fresh snow from exposed surfaces. Chama was a beautiful spot to see the narrow gauge — not a broad stage like the San Luis Valley of the day before but an intimate nook cradled in the mountains, whose nearby slopes were now revealed by the rising coiling. Evergreens were plentiful on the hillsides and the whine of three busy sawmills was the only sound of activity in the morning stillness. At first I mistook a black wisp on the horizon for the smudge from a sawdust burner, but suddenly it mushroomed and split into twin columns of billowing smoke — one black, the other white. A doubleheader steamed into view in the distance.

It pulled up to the wye and stopped; the lead engine uncoupled and ran ahead. This was another K-37, No.

497, but I could tell by the tall stack and low boiler of the second engine that it was one of the smaller Mikados. As it in turn brought part of the train up to shove into a sawmill spur I was pleased to find that it was K-28 class No. 473, an engine long active in passenger service on the line and even now used during the summer season on the celebrated mixed train to Silverton, last passenger run on the Rio Grande narrow gauge. After the 473 and 497 had filled two sawmill tracks with cars they brought the rest of their train into the yard and went to the house.

With rail activity at a standstill and my crew not due back until 2:50 p.m. I decided to go to the Shamrock Hotel behind the depot for a shave. The barber seemed to make a ceremonial ritual of this ordinarily mundane task, and his deliberate pace appeared geared to that of the locale. My conversational attempts were discouraged by hostile-sounding grunts as long as the procedure continued, but no sooner had the shave been completed than he became affable and loquacious, as though he had suddenly shed priestly robes and stepped down from the altar. Thus blessed and revived, I turned again to Annie's Cafe for lunch and gave the 473 a thorough examination as I ate. About 1:30 the crew began drifting in to eat. They made a point of joshing the waitress, but the most important part of their meal appeared to be the wrapping up of scraps to take to the roundhouse dogs.

The helper crew, since they were



CUMBRES PASS: While Conductor Young fetches fresh drinking water, helper 492 noses out of the snowshed-protected wye to start her return down to Chama.

first in, were the ones to take engine 499 and start putting together our train. Their initial move was to take caboose 0503 and give it a mighty shove, propelling it clear to the west end of the yard. They then ran down the adjacent track, picked the 0503 up on their point, and slapped it on the rear of the train which had come in from Durango. The last car in this string was unusually interesting in that it was a caboose from the abandoned Rio Grande Southern, weather-beaten and tipsy, now bound for the safe haven of the Narrow Gauge Motel at Alamosa.

As the 499 did further switching around the yard, the 492 and the 495 backed out and went for water. Thereafter a masterful shuffling of engines took place and when the action settled down our train was made up and pumping air, with engines 499 and 495 coupled at the head end and the 492 cut in about 20 car-lengths back. Brilliant sunshine dramatized Chama yard at the moment of our departure, although dark clouds ominously shrouded Cumbres summit in the distance. The smoke plumes from five husky engines against the blue sky and stark mountains, the long cuts of cars of various types, and the preceding tempo of activity created a scene

striking than its predecessor. I ravenously shot pictures in monochrome and color, feverishly changing films in an effort to catch as much of it as I could. The freezing air and the bouncing of the gondola served only to heighten the challenge of the moment.

The first 4 miles out of Chama were through a rather narrow, wooded valley with a progressively wider perspective of the lofty eminence of Cumbres as the engines struggled upward around ever-tighter curves. By now the sky had cleared completely and the summit stood forth in snowy splendor. We paused briefly at Lobato Trestle to permit the 499 to cut off and run across ahead of the 495 in deference to a restriction against double-heading over this 91-foot-high steel structure, second highest on the narrow gauge. During this interval I changed to another gondola several car lengths ahead so that I could shoot back toward the 492. Within moments the lead engines had recoupled and were again corkscrewing upgrade with gusto. Soon we had climbed into a broad interval, whose open terraces gave me an unobstructed view along our entire train. Looking at our string of empty flats and gondolas, the realization came to me that there was not one revenue car in the train — with the possible exception of the RGS caboose. All this struggle and effort and no money coming in for it! I began to have a better understanding of why D&RGW management is not exactly enthusiastic about its remaining narrow-gauge trackage.

Snowbanks were beginning to appear. By the time we crossed State Highway 17 at the 9000-foot level the snow was quite general and the highway was deeply drifted in. Pushing steadily higher, we entered a wooded area by the Cresco water tank and passed and repassed state boundary signs as we wove back and forth over the Colorado-New Mexico border. An opening between the trees revealed a transverse line about half way up a great rocky cliff which was looming ahead. It did not seem possible that our track could get so high in such a short distance, but I felt that this must be the renowned Windy Point, since we were getting very near Cumbres Pass.

Sure enough. The engines bore left in front of the rock wall through snowbanks half as high as the train and finally came about on a tight horseshoe to hug the winding shelf along the face of Windy Point. The magnificent spread of landscape laid out below, as my gondola creaked around the apex of the Point, was the most outstanding of the trip. In moments this too was lost behind and we

were cradled between closely adjacent slopes. The torrent of sound from our three laboring locomotives suddenly died away and I looked ahead to see the bright yellow frame station buildings of Cumbres Pass.

Here at the crest of the San Juan Range, 10,015 feet above sea level, it looked like the dead of winter. Drifted snow reached over the window sills of the depot and half way up the snowshed which protected the wye. I became aware of the cold as the excitement of the climb faded and the warm caboose seemed suddenly desirable. Thus I paid little attention as the 499 uncoupled and disappeared down the other side of the pass toward Alamosa. Instead I joined Thayne when he came ahead to help cut out the 492 and rode with him on the pilot steps as the rear helper backed around the wye to return to Chama. Passing through the close confines of the snowshed brought me into intimate contact with the warmth and animation of the brawny little engine and I was loathe to step off when it stopped near our caboose.

The cupola cushions did feel good though after 24 hours of railroading in the cold, thin mount, in air, and I relaxed to enjoy the ride down to Alamosa. However, Young and Thayne were anxious for me to photograph the loop just east of Cumbres and when I saw it I was glad I had summoned the energy to get out my camera. Engine 495 kept turning and turning until it was aimed straight toward the caboose, finally veering away to pass us in the opposite direction within a snowball's throw of the cupola. This was the first time I had ever seen a railroad loop which actually seemed to offer the fabled opportunity to expectorate in the fireman's eye. From then on I just settled back to drink in the fabulous beauty of the mountains.

Yesterday blackness and snowstorm had fostered a feeling of apprehension as I started my narrow-gauge trip over the backbone of America, but then the enchantment of moonlight had created a mood of mysterious grandeur. Thayne and Young, the narrow rails, and the sturdy K-37's had taken me safely across Cumbres Pass and back again, and I had had intimate experience with the cliffs and snowdrifts in sunlight. Now the snowy peaks were crested by the friendly golden glow of sunset and I felt secure on the narrow gauge. It seemed as though the weatherbeaten little cars and the winding rails were as much a part of the Colorado Rockies as the ageless granite cliffs. It was deeply painful to accept the possibility that in a few more years they might be gone.



MIKADO 495 is framed in left rear window of caboose on her own train!

easily misidentifiable as a standard-gauge operation.

As our engines whistled off I braced myself in the empty gondola five cars behind the 492 which I had chosen as a photographic vantage point for the 14-mile climb back up the 4 per cent grade to Cumbres Pass. Curving out of the yard past the scrub oak grove and through the silver bridge, we headed into a lovely, sun-bathed mountain vista. From then on the ride seemed almost dreamlike, with each curve bringing a view more

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FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN

LOBATO TRESTLE: ITS HISTORY, THE FIRE AND RECONSTRUCTION

BY CHRIS JAMES

Photo by Roger Hogan

While it may feel that the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad is currently living under a dark, viral cloud, it may be worth remembering that ten years ago in June the Railroad had to survive under dark clouds as well, although that time the dark cloud was smoke and not disease. And perhaps ironically, just as we are planning our 50th anniversary celebration, it was during the Railroad's 40th anniversary that those dark clouds descended over Cumbres Pass. Thursday, June 24th, 2010 should have been another regular day of railroading on the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad. Regular trains were scheduled to leave Chama and Antonito and a special Cinder Express was going to delight kids and families and introduce them to steam railroading. Unfortunately, June 24th did not turn out that way.

Late on June 23rd, after the last westbound train passed over Lobato Trestle, four miles east of Chama, a tiny spark, probably a hot cinder from a K-36 Mudhen, fanned by evening breezes funneling through Wolf Creek gorge and fueled by the creosote-saturated cross ties, grew in size and slowly began to consume the wooden deck of the trestle. The trestle is far enough away from Highway 17 that no one noticed the growing fire until it was well underway and by then it was too late. The initial call was made to the Chama Fire Department at 11:00 PM and several units responded but the men and equipment were no match for what had now become a major conflagration.

The wooden portion burned through the night and was still smoldering on the morning of June 24th. Overnight, the Railroad had to come to grips with a monumental disaster.

The San Juan Extension of the Denver & Rio Grande Railway was built over Cumbres Pass in 1880 and arrived in Chama in January 1881. Building fast and cheap to reach Durango and then north to the rich mines around Silverton, the D&RG had to contend with two major

chasms between Antonito and Chama: Cascade Creek west of Osier, and Wolf Creek, east of Chama. According to former C&TS employee Earl Knoob, the original plan was to build wrought iron trestles over the two gorges.

According to the *Journal of Preservation and Technology*, a design for a cast iron bridge at Wolf Creek was already on the drawing board.

“The earliest date...on the surviving drawings of the Lobato Bridge is November, 1880...” However the D&RG management felt that the line over Monarch Pass, being constructed around the same time, took precedent and requisitioned the cast iron structures for that route, leaving the Cumbres right-of-way bridge-less. So, typical of so many western lines, available materials were used; the two gorges were spanned by tall timber trestles constructed by the carpenters of the D&RG Bridge and Building crew.

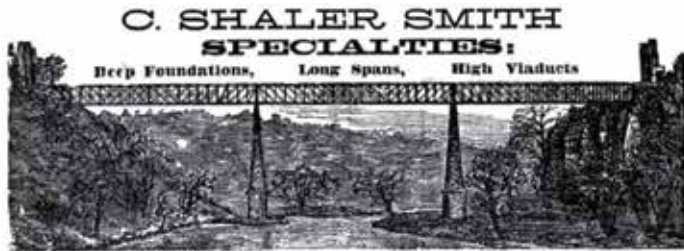


Locomotives 419 and 406 pull a stock train across Lobato Trestle, ca. 1908. Later No. 406 was renumbered 346 and is preserved at the Colorado Railroad Museum.

FCTS Dorman Collection, RD103-024

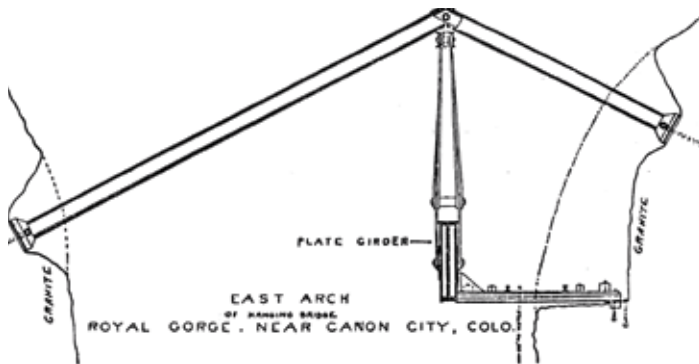
Little is known of the two wooden structures and no photos have been located. It could be surmised that, because the rails reached Cumbres in December 1880 and Chama in January 1881, much of the Wolf Creek trestle construction may be done in the fall and winter months.

With the San Juan extension completed through to Silverton in 1882 and the Monarch Pass right-of-way operational, the 1880 plans were pulled off the shelf, carrying the name of the foremost bridge designers of the post-Civil War era, C. Shaler Smith, and put to use.



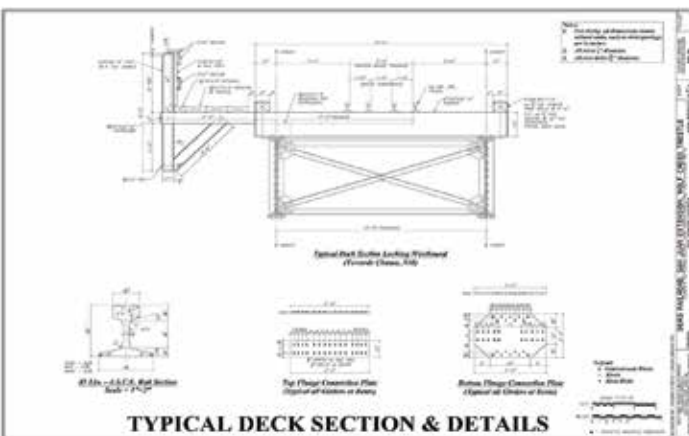
Kentucky River Bridge, Length, 1,138 feet, Height, 276 feet,
"BRIDGE ENTRANCE," ST. LOUIS, MO.

HistoricBridges.org. Public Domain



C. Shaler Smith's Through Girder Rafter Bridge, "The Hanging Bridge" in the Royal gorge.

Doris and Becky Osterwald Collection, used with permission



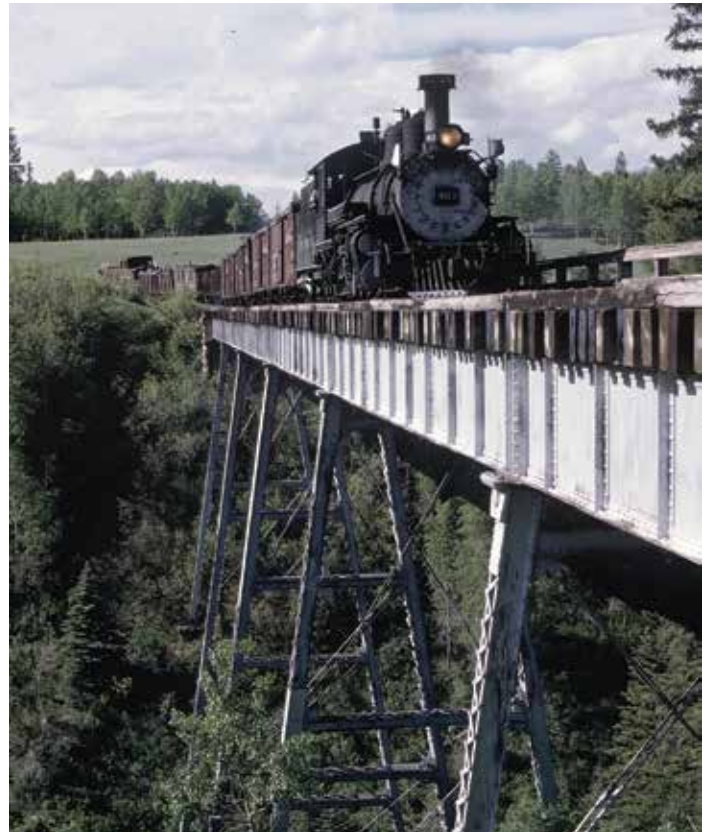
A similar cross-section of Lobato Trestle showing some of the connection plates and rivet patterns.

Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), Library of Congress

Rail historians familiar with the D&RG/Santa Fe Royal Gorge War will recognize C. Shaler Smith's name. He was the 1879 designer of the "through girder rafter bridge," built to support a section of track in the narrowest part of the Royal Gorge, partially on land and partially over the Arkansas River, a location that was not wide enough to cre-

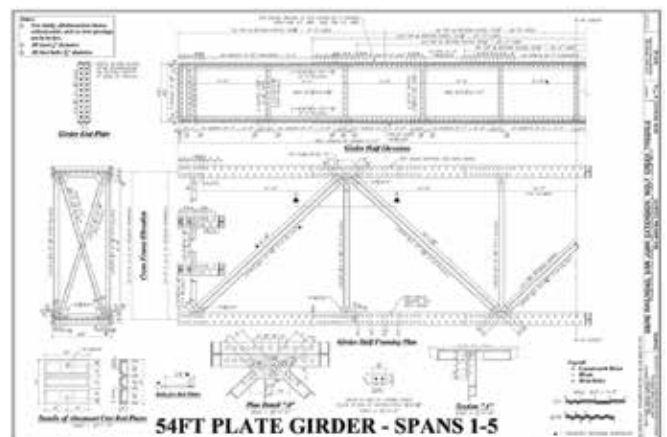
ate a full-width roadbed. The structure soon became known as the "Hanging Bridge" and for years was a favorite stop for passenger trains in the Gorge. While the bridge is always associated with the Rio Grande, Smith built for the Santa Fe who still controlled the canyon at the time of construction.

The "Treaty of Boston" ended the Royal Gorge War and the right-of-way was transferred to the Denver & Rio Grande in 1880. With "the earliest date...on the surviving drawings" being 1880, it would appear that Smith began the design for the Lobato Trestle soon after completing the Hanging Bridge, though it would be another three years—1883—before the cast iron bridge would be constructed at Wolf Creek.



C&TS No. 463 crosses Lobato Trestle, June 25, 1995

Photo by Thomas H. Goldersleve, FC&TS Dorman Collection
THG01-195



The complex engineering of the Lobato Trestle is easily observed in the drawing of this typical plate girder.

Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), Library of Congress

How a formidable timber structure could be replaced by a wrought iron structure without a major interruption of important rail traffic on the San Juan Extension is a mystery that doesn't appear to have been addressed. Nonetheless, the bridge was fabricated in Pittsburgh by the Keystone Bridge Co. and shipped to New Mexico. Six individual spans, five measuring 54 feet and the sixth measuring 40 feet—totalling 310 feet in length—made up the bridge. Five vertical bents, the longest being 100 feet above Wolf Creek, supported the six spans, with stone abutments at either end. The bridge was a complex structure made up of wrought iron and thousands of rivets, designed to support the locomotives and traffic rolling at that time. The timber trestle at Cascade Creek stood until 1889 when it too was replaced by a C. Shaler Smith project, a structure similar in design and construction to the Lobato Trestle.



that day, “including one that was fairly close to the trestle.” The Public Regulation Commission, the group overseeing the Fire Marshall’s office concluded, “There is no evidence that a criminal act was committed in regard to the fire,” but still concluded, “The cause of the fire has not been determined.” The phrase, “a fire of undetermined origin” is still the overall conclusion today, ten years later.



Before and after.
Photos: Left: Roger Hogan Right: Marvin Casias

Regardless of the cause of the fire, the Railroad was in deep trouble. It was clear that the trestle was seriously damaged, but how seriously damaged could only be assessed by a professional structural evaluation. Could the ties and rails be replaced, and the trestle put back to work? Did the fire damage the wrought iron-plate girders that support the track? Did it damage the vertical bents as well? Would the entire historic structure need to be replaced, right down to the footers, bents and foundations? Was the trestle safe to any degree? Could the trestle be repaired in time for the C&TS’s late-summer anniversary celebration?

The “historic appearance” of the trestle was, and is, important to the overall mission of the

Railroad as well. The Railroad and the designers had to confront the difficult balancing act of preservation and public safety along with financial and schedule considerations. The financial consideration for trestle repair was especially dire. The Railroad had insurance on the trestle to the tune of

The Railroad posed four questions:

- Could the damaged metal be repaired in place?**
- If not, could replacement be limited to damaged members only?**
- If repaired in place, could the repaired structure meet modern structural requirements as well as the requirements of the Federal Railroad Administration?**
- If total replacement were necessary, could the historic appearance be retained, or should a modern railroad bridge be constructed?**

As soon as news of the Lobato Trestle fire hit the railfan universe, speculation of the cause spun out of control. In discussion forums and print and video news, there were initial claims that an “explosion” was heard before the fire. There was talk of fireworks, a lightning strike, vandalism, even a terrorist attack. In the end, the State Fire Marshall “definitively ruled out fireworks and lightning” as possible causes. In all likelihood, it was cinder from a westbound locomotive that was the culprit. The Fire Marshall noted that the log of the Fire Patrol that followed the westbound train on June 23 showed that six small spot fires occurred in the wake of the train’s passage



The damage, as seen from below

Photo by John Mathews

\$360,000 with a \$50,000 deductible. It was going to take a lot more than that to repair the bridge.

But first: What was the condition of the damaged trestle?

Inspection of the bridge showed that almost all of the wooden portion of the bridge, the ties and walkway alongside the track, were destroyed. The heat generated by the burning creosote cross ties was so intense that it resulted in the bucking of the rails and the underlying support beams. At the eastern end of the bridge, the main girders showed severe damage, having lifted completely off the supporting stone abutment. That meant that it was cantilevered from the next interior support, 54 feet away. Temperatures on the upper parts of the girders, close to the burning ties, were much hotter than the lower parts, as evidenced by the discoloration of the paint. It was determined that the vertical bents, farther away from the fire, suffered no permanent damage, though on two of the vertical bents, the rivets on connecting plates were either sheared off or distorted. It



Some girder damage was less obvious, but more dangerous
Photo by John Mathews

was determined that the four eastern spans had suffered “irreparable damage.” And that was just what was visually apparent during the initial inspection.

The inspection and evaluation continued with the collection of the almost-invisible data. Metallurgical samples from 1880 “as built” areas with no damage were compared to samples from “as built” locations that had been subject to the considerable heat from the fire. Testing of samples for tensile strength were also made on variety of the structural components. All in all, the testing suggested that the supporting bents were not severely damaged by the fire and could be left in place with some repair of the footers and abutments, and the trestle would not need to be completely demolished and rebuilt from the ground up. This *in situ* approach would save construction dollars but the cost advantage would be lost to the addition of structural upgrades to improve the overall strength of the historic structure. While all the load factors were taken into consideration, it was noted that the trestle had been designed for 19th century rolling stock and locomotives that weighed considerably less than the 1926 K-36 locomotives now in use on the Railroad. Analysis determined that the condition “at the bridge spans, the pre-fire bridge was overstressed by 20 to 30 percent when loaded...by the current (heavier) trains.” Ultimately, it was decided to replace

the underlying beams, the girders and bracing and leave the bent supports to remain as original except where the heat might have affected the connecting points between the girders and bents. The design would also upgrade the overall strength of the trestle to modern standards to create the “maximum...factor of safety.”

There was also the issue of historical accuracy. Lobato Trestle was constructed with wrought iron and rivets, a process as antiquated as an 1880 horse and buggy; cast iron fabrication on that scale simply doesn’t exist anymore. But that didn’t matter; the bridge simply had to be repaired or replaced, but it still had to be done with a nod to historical preservation. Ultimately the decision was made to fabricate the new girders out of steel and utilize “tension-controlled bolts,” (TCBs). The bolts have a rounded, rivet-like head on one end. They weren’t historically accurate for fabrication but when used on the external and visible places of the structure, and viewed from a distance, they gave the appearance of rivets. That would have to do.

Throughout all the inspection, evaluation and decision making, the Railroad had to keep running. In the days fol-



Moving Locomotive 488 from Chama to Cumbres. 488’s tender and multiple passenger cars were also transported to the pass by flatbed truck. Captured from videos by Roger Hogan

lowing the fire, Locomotive 488 was trucked up to Cumbres to add to the stable of locomotives already on the Antonito end of the line. The Railroad decided to operate on a truncated route and timetable. Passengers with Chama reservations were bussed by motor coach to Antonito and the trains would run Antonito-Osier-Antonito, with the passengers bussed back to their cars in Chama at the end of the trip. Antonito passengers had the same “A-O-A” route, minus the motor coach. Because of the shorter train ride, along with the inconvenience of two 50-minute bus trips, the Railroad reduced ticket prices by 10%.

Unfortunately, major coverage of the fire in print and video media resulted in a large number of cancellations and ridership remained down throughout the reconstruction process.

Estimates for reconstruction ranged from \$1.5–\$2 million dollars. Fortunately, donations, grants and loose change was collected by the Railroad from individuals, foundations and others. New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson pledged \$1.1 million dollars. Insurance, minus the \$50,000 deductible, covered some, but not all of the balance.

With the inspection complete and a report on the findings presented, bidding for a contractor began. Design of the reinforced structure would take place during the winter months of 2010. Reconstruction would begin early in the spring and would continue on an accelerated schedule to facilitate completion and certification, hopefully by Opening Day, 2011. The winning bid went to Reiman Corp. of Cheyenne, Wyoming (“*Our Core Values: Build Bridges, Don’t Burn Them*”). To achieve that date, the contractor estimated thirty days to completion.

In early April, an access road was completed to the trestle and replacement ties were staged in the Chama parking lot. Dismantling of the damaged structure began in mid-April with the “rivet busters” breaking the joints between the bents and the girders and other connection points.



The “rivet busters” begin the tedious task of breaking the riveted connections between the bents and the girders and between each of the girders themselves. *Photo by Roger Hogan*

Reiman Corp. designed a unique gantry crane that would travel out to each damaged section supported on temporary beams connected to the original bents. The gantry could roll out over the structure, lift out the damaged pair of girders and pull it back to solid ground where they would be carted away. Each of the six new spans arrived by



The gantry crane hauls a damaged section of girder to the western end of the trestle. *Photo by Roger Hogan*



A pair of new girders, manufactured off-site, arrives to await installation on the trestle. *Photo by Steve Forney*

truck and were installed in the reverse order with the gantry crane, rolling them out into position one by one and placing them on the tall bents. New ties and rails were then laid. The new ties replicated the dimensions of the burned ties, which had been replaced more than once since the initial 1883 construction.

An interesting discovery had been made during the initial investigation and planning: for an unknown reason, the original track had been laid slightly off the center-line of the bridge. The new track was correctly centered during reconstruction.

The thirty-day reconstruction plan was complete but the Railroad could not open until final testing of the structure was complete. The first railroad equipment to cross the bridge was C&TS Diesel #19 plus two M-O-W cars, followed by an empty Chama-bound passenger train. The trestle passed the load testing with flying colors and while the bridge wasn't quite completed by Opening Day over Memorial Day Weekend, Locomotive 497 pulled the first revenue passenger train traveling west across the trestle on June 10, 2011, four days short of one year since the fire. “Train crew and passengers ‘high-fived’ the Reiman team, who, in turn, took photos and slapped hands with the people on board the train.”

In the end the States of New Mexico and Colorado

chipped in financial help, the insurance was applied and donations rolled in from the Friends, railfans, foundations and funds that covered the final \$2 million cost of the bridge repairs.

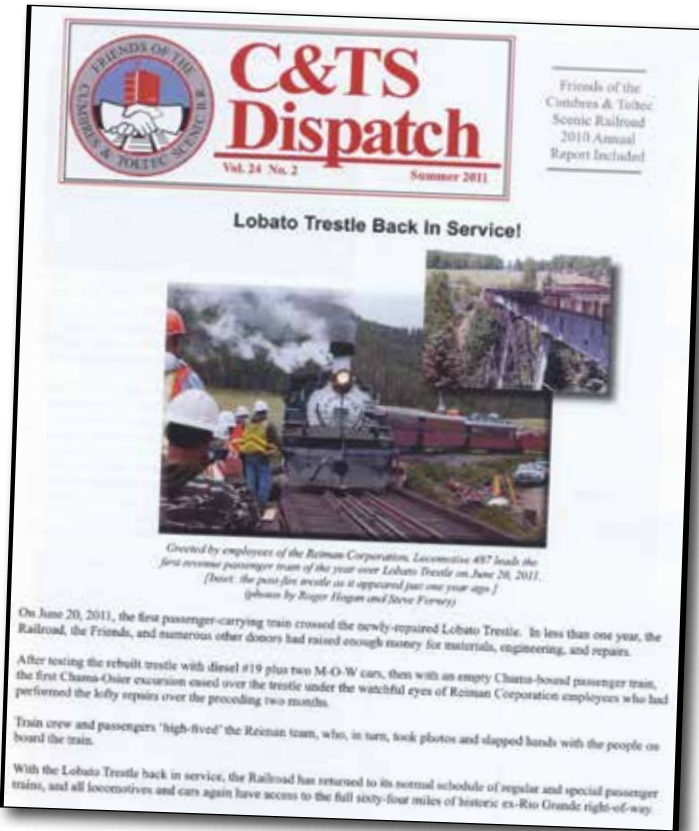
It was a heroic effort on all parties; the Railroad, the contractor, the donors and the supporters who all came together to make sure that a replacement for Lobato Trestle would be a safe and strengthened but yet historically accurate structure and the Railroad could continue running the full 64 miles of narrow gauge steam for years to come.

The Sad Demise of Rory the Snowman

Operation Lifesaver promotes safety around trains, tracks and crossings. Unfortunately during the winter Rotary Snow Plow event,



Rory the Snowman failed to pay attention to the oncoming plow and paid the ultimate price. Let Rory the Snowman be a lesson to all: Always be safe and alert around railroad property and trains!



Data, information and photographs for this story came from a variety of sources. Special thanks to Roger Hogan, John Mathews, Marvin Casias and Steve Forney for sharing their on-the-spot photographs of the fire, the immediate aftermath and the reconstruction process.

Much of the investigative, design and reconstruction data was sourced from "Fire and Reconstruction at Lobato Bridge in New Mexico" by Fredrick R. Rutz, Todd M. Riley and Peter Foster, published in *APT Bulletin: Journal of Preservation Technology*, 45:1, 2014 and is referenced here with their permission. The entire article is available online at: <https://www.apti.org/assets/docs/Rutz%20article%20for%20web.pdf>

Additional information was found in the *Historical American Engineering Record, National Park Service, US Department of Interior, Denver & Rio Grande Railroad, Wolf Creek Trestle, (HAER) NM-16*, Vernon J. Glover, Principal Author.

Complete drawings of the design of Lobato Trestle are available from the Library of Congress at: <https://www.loc.gov/item/nm0318/>

The *Lobato Trestle Bridge 339.78 Foundation Inspection Report* can be found online at:

<http://www.drgw.net/info/uploads/Main/HDREngineeringReport-Aug2010.pdf>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_dMbBIfjKD0

Train Time!

by Chris James



Photo: railswest.com

It's the early summer of 1883. The snow is finally gone from Cumbres Pass and trains are rolling in both directions over the San Juan Extension. The line was completed to Silverton the previous year and ore, freight, mail and passengers are traveling smoothly—or as smoothly as might be expected—over the line.

In Antonito, the conductor of a westbound freight sets his pocket watch with the help of a Railroad Regulator Clock, a highly-accurate timepiece in the dispatcher's office. His train heads west but by

minute there; what's the big deal? Add up the accumulating seconds and minutes over any distance and it is a big deal if you are trying to run a railroad. Fortunately, the D&RG had adopted its own time standard so, regardless of what the sun was doing, the trains could usually navigate the rails safely. However, the D&RG standard was most likely different from standards on larger lines such as the Union Pacific or the Santa Fe. That would soon change.

Today we generally take time for granted.

Time. It's on our wrist. It's on our phone. It's on our desk-top and kitchen wall and standing tall in the living room, quietly tick-tocking and chiming on the hour. It helps control when we eat and sleep and work. And we hardly give it a second thought.

It also runs the trains, not only between Chama and Antonito but virtually every other train in every other railroad in America. Train time.

And "train time" is no longer Sun Time, but *Standard Time*. For those of us around the C&TS, it's Mountain Standard (or Daylight) Time but the "time zones" across the United States and North America range from Hawaii

A traveler going from Maine to California would change their watch some twenty times during the journey.

-Aleutian Standard Time to the west to Newfoundland Standard Time to the east. Across the lower

the time his train reaches Sublette, about thirteen air-miles (and twenty-five milepost miles) west, the actual time in Sublette would be about one minute earlier when compared with the time at Antonito. When his train reached the division point at Chama, 33 air-miles (and sixty-four milepost miles) west, his train would be arriving about 2 minutes, 25 seconds earlier than an Antonito-set watch would indicate. And when the freight reached Durango, another 100 or so air-miles west, there would be close to eight minutes difference between Durango time and Antonito time on the conductor's watch.

The problem is not the conductor's timepiece. The problem is the sun, and the fact that most towns in America, and the world, created their own local time based on the transit of the sun at noon: Sun Time.

As the earth turns, Sun Time gains or loses time at a rate of about one minute every thirteen miles or one second every 1,144 longitudinal linear feet. Thus, the conductor of that westbound freight would be viewing an increasingly inaccurate time (based on the Antonito clock) throughout his journey and wouldn't be able to coordinate with crews of eastbound trains by means of telegraph and train orders—where to stop, where to wait, when to go—without some kind of time coordination along the Railroad

On top of that, in 1883 seasonal variations had to be added into the mix; the exact Sun Time at a given location will be different in January than in June. A minute here, a

forty-eight, of course, there are four time zones, Pacific, Mountain, Central and Eastern, each separated (in theory) by 15° of the earth's circumference, corresponding to one hour's difference between each time zone. Of course, the accurate thirteen-second difference per mile still applies but the time zones artificially codify the times, so they are "standard" across each zone. The only time we pay attention to any of them is when we cross from one zone to another.

Much of our "taken for granted" attitude toward time we owe to one source: The railroads. In the "Golden Age of Railroads," the correct time was king and was the only way to keep the trains running smoothly and safely. However, for much of the 19th century there was no "correct time," only "local time," time based on the transit of the sun at noon, town by town, station by station: Sun Time.

Case in point: According to the pamphlet, *The Day of Two Noons* from the Association of American Railroads, "In the Chicago district the New York Central and the Pennsylvania used Columbus (Ohio) time, which was six minutes faster than Cincinnati (Ohio) time and nineteen minutes faster than Chicago time..."

"When it was noon in Chicago, it was 12:31 in Pittsburgh; 12:24 in Cleveland; 12:16 in Toledo, 12:13 in Cincinnati, 12:09 in Louisville, 12:07 in Indianapolis, 11:50 in St. Louis, 11:48 in Dubuque, 11:39 in St. Paul, and 12:27 in Omaha..."

"A traveler going from Maine to California...would

change their watch some twenty times during the journey.”

The movement to adopt a “standard time” began in May 1872 when railway superintendents met in St. Louis to arrange their summer passenger train schedules. From that meeting grew the Time-Table Convention, which became the General Time Convention, which then became the American Railway Association that, in 1934, became the Association of American Railroads, today the railroad industry’s policy, research, standards and technology organization.

In St. Louis, the secretary of the General Time Convention, William F. Allen, pushed for the adoption of a standardized time system to be used by the railroads. And because the railroads were the powerhouse industry of transportation, the standardized time structure would naturally (they hoped) spill over into the localities along the right-of-way.

The adopted plan, known as “Intercontinental Time,” divided North America into the five time zones we know today, the four zones we normally consider, plus a fifth for the eastern coast of Canada, based on the mean Sun Time of the 75th, 90th, 105th and 120th meridians, approximately on the longitudes of Philadelphia, Memphis, Denver and Fresno.

Secretary Allen directed that all railway clocks governing the operation of trains be set to the new standard at exactly 12 o’clock noon on Sunday, November 18, 1883.

Not everyone was pleased with the decision.

“There were those...who felt that, by the adoption of Standard Time, they were being robbed of some of their daylight, or that they were being compelled to reckon time ‘contrary to nature.’” [One local] “...flourished his hickory cane...saying, ‘Damn old Vanderbilt’s time! We want God’s time!’”

In Columbus and Cleveland, “Standard time has proved to be so inconvenient...that the councils of those Ohio chiefs have voted to return to the local stand of solar time. Local time still prevails in Cincinnati and Chicago (the two cities with a nineteen minute difference in Sun Time) and the authorities of Louisville are daily importuned to reinstate solar time, by which most of the factories of that city continue to run.”

Still, 12 o’clock noon on Sunday, November 18—a date that became known as “The Day of Two Noons,” as noon-time clocks were set back or ahead—began the adoption process. It did not, however, happen instantly. While based on the four meridians, the four time zones were not established as meridian-straight lines. The actual boundaries had to be negotiated between the states and municipalities so as not to split cities or adjacent cities into two different time zones; a look at today’s time zone map shows these deviations, sometimes by hundreds of miles to keep population centers under one time zone. These changes

were also dictated by the railroads so major cities served by the lines—Denver, St. Louis, Chicago, New York—would all be well within each zone. This was less a problem in the sparsely-populated western states than the more densely-populated eastern quarter of the country. However, a St. Louis newspaper speculated that it wouldn’t make much difference which time zone Dodge City, Kansas was in, “except for a man about to be hanged...He will be good for another hour of life if he can induce the sheriff to stage the act by Mountain instead of Central Time.”

In Colorado, now fully within Mountain Standard Time, it seems that there was very little discussion, at least in print. In the run-up to the magical “Day of Two Noons,” there appears to be little mention of the time standardization in the available historic Rocky Mountain papers. In several papers around the state, the Denver & Rio Grande,

operating under its own time standard—six minutes faster than the new standard—decreed that at 9 AM Saturday December 1st 1883, two weeks after the official change, all employees in the operating department would set their watches and clocks back by six minutes.

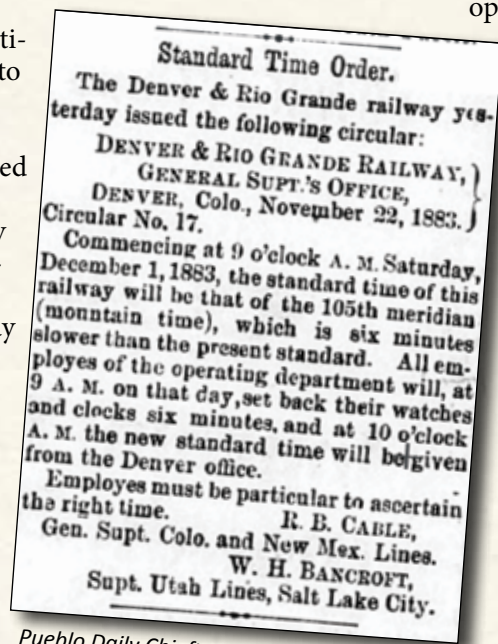
Slowly towns along the D&RG, and subsequently around the state and the nation, began to accept Standard Time, nudged on by the all-powerful railroads. There were still questions and contention. Some wanted one uniform time zone for the entire country; others wanted a 24-hour time as used by the military. Some railroads briefly adopted the 24-hour time for their time tables and schedules but being in the minority, they reverted to the 12-hour clock within a few months.

By dictating the need for time zones, the railroads not only held sway over local

time, it also dictated the time for the nation. The time zones were put into effect by the railroads without any federal legislation of any kind. In fact, it wasn’t until thirty-five years later, on March 19th, 1918, during the First World War, that Congress passed the Standard Time Act, that codified the railroads’ designs. The Interstate Commerce Commission was empowered “to define...the boundaries of each Standard Time Zone and to make such boundary changes as it deemed necessary.”

Today, riding the trains between Antonito and Chama, neither the passengers nor crew need to be concerned with what time it really is. The dispatcher, in Chama, communicates with all trains by radio and notes the time and location of every interaction, arrival, departure, grade crossing, in Mountain Standard or Daylight Time.

Sit back and enjoy the ride, knowing the clock that you take for granted is keeping you safe—and on time.



Pueblo Daily Chieftain, November 24, 1883

Much of this story was built from “The Day of Two Noons,” (1957 edition) by Carlton J. Corliss, published by the Association of American Railroads. The author wishes to thank John Engs for providing him a copy of the document.

AT 50 HISTORIC PRESERVATION ON THE C&TS, 2020 1970-2020 SPECIAL SESSIONS, JUNE, 2020

Photos by Don Atkinson and Tom Simco

Unlike like usual Spring Work Sessions, projects were reduced to Special Sessions only due to the virus. That doesn't mean nothing got done. Special Sessions were held during the spring at the Colorado Springs Work Site and in June in Antonito. Regular work sessions are scheduled to resume with Session F-1 (August 20th) and additional Special Sessions are scheduled as well. See pages 4 and 5 and the Friends website for details.

CUMBRES, COLORADO

Proj. 1005: Stabilization, Repair and Restoration, Car Inspector's House: June 1—19, continuous

In the fall of 2019 the foundation for the house was completed. During the winter months the plans for reconstruction were drawn to match the original construction in 1911, using full dimensional lumber.



With the foundation in place, the crew installed the base for the chimney, and laid in the floor joists for the first floor of the structure.



Also installed was a water drain line and a sump filled with four feet of gravel. This will drain accumulated water from around the foundation to protect the structure.



The project is proceeding at a rapid pace, too fast to keep up with, as Tom Simco's photos arrive almost hourly and the *Dispatch* is about to go to press. There will be a complete story on the reconstruction in the next issue.



COLORADO SPRINGS WORK SITE

Proj. 1115: Restoration of D&RG Tourist Sleeper No. 470, continuous



Though slowed by the closures, the restoration of Tourist Sleeper continues with many small finishing tasks and details to complete the project.



Opening Day, 2020



Photo: Don Atkinson

It might not have been a "typical" opening day for the C&TS, but it was a "Grande" success, nonetheless. The train was twelve cars long with only 15 passengers per car, but everyone was well masked and the three open gondolas allowed everyone to be "socially distant" while they enjoyed the ride. It was the beginning of another great season, regardless of the circumstances.



Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, Inc.
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