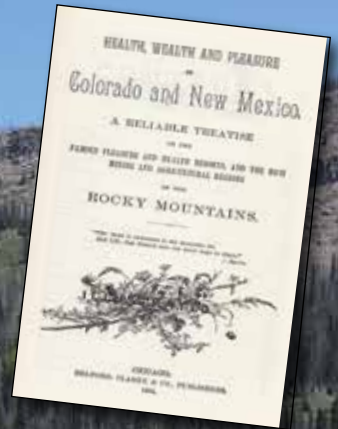




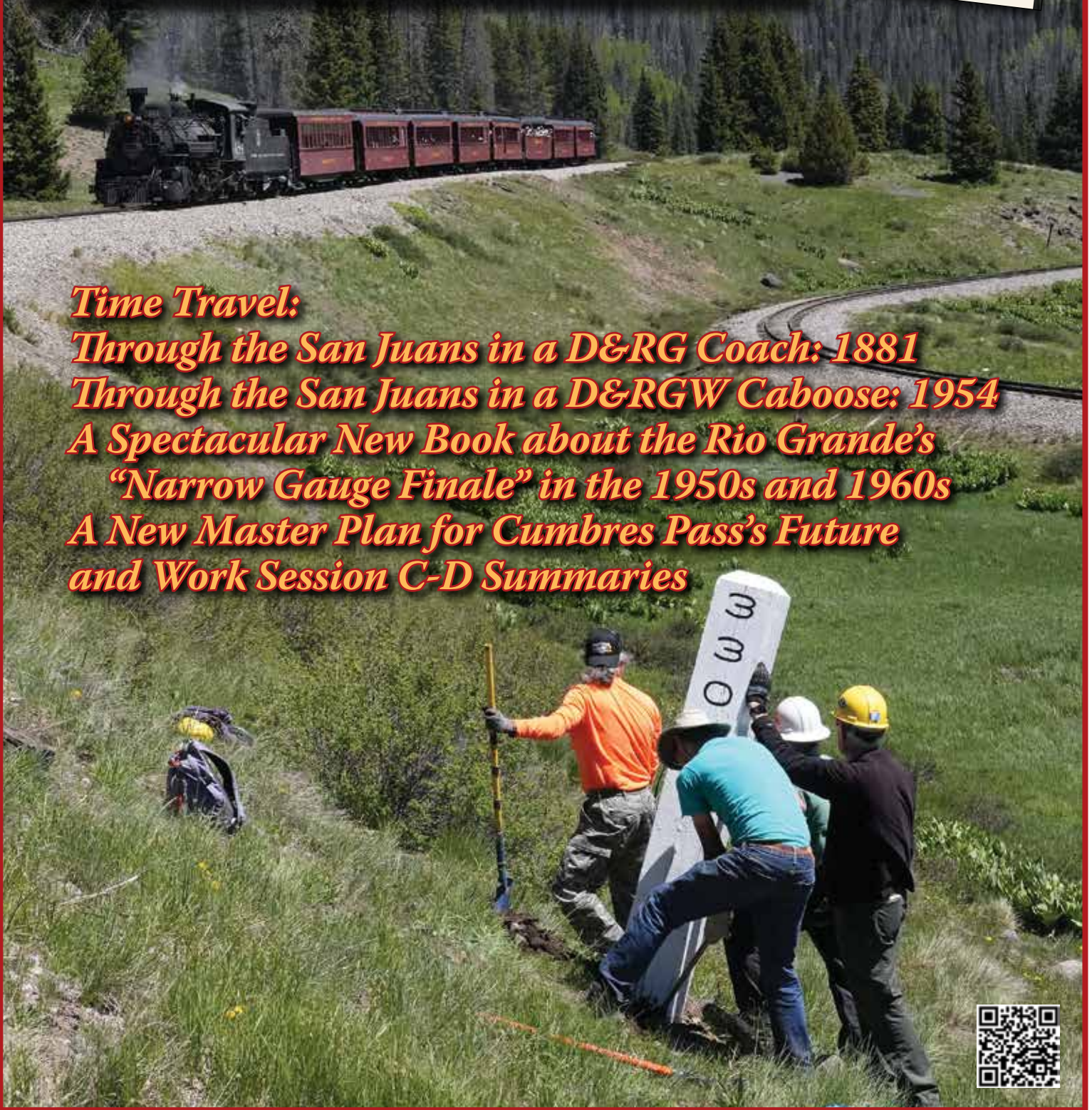
# C&TS DISPATCH

VOLUME 36  
FALL

NO. 3  
2023



***Time Travel:  
Through the San Juans in a D&RG Coach: 1881  
Through the San Juans in a D&RGW Caboose: 1954  
A Spectacular New Book about the Rio Grande's  
"Narrow Gauge Finale" in the 1950s and 1960s  
A New Master Plan for Cumbres Pass's Future  
and Work Session C-D Summaries***







# C&TS DISPATCH

Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec  
Scenic Railroad, Inc.

William Lock, Founder-1988

Vol. 36, No. 3 🍂 Fall, 2023

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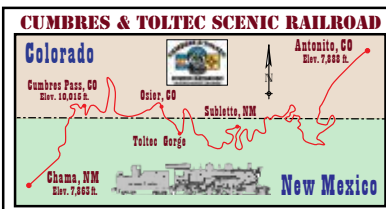
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The C&TS Dispatch is published four times each year by The Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad Inc., a New Mexico nonprofit corporation. The Friends is the official museum arm for the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, a sixty-four mile-long 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



## Where Do Members like to Volunteer?

Over the last nineteen years, I think that I may have written seventy-five “President’s Forum” columns, though I could be off by one or two. Following the recent Commission Meeting, I decided to mention some of the interesting dynamics about where the Friends volunteers members want to work. Antonito Car Repair Facility (CRF)? Chama? Along the Right-of-Way? Cumbres? Lava? Sublette? That’s quite a varied range of locations along the 64 miles of the Cumbres & Toltec.

Consider Antonito: when I arrived in 2005, the CRF was little more than a shell. Antonito-based projects had to be accomplished outside, rain or shine. Oft-times windy, Antonito was not particularly appealing. So the vast majority of work sessions were done in the Chama yard. Not only was that where the bulk of the historical freight car fleet resided, it had the draw of working around an actual railroad yard with all its train movements and activity. It was obvious that this is what members wanted. We would have 150-160 volunteers in Chama alone for Work Session C. It got to the point where the Project Committee didn’t have enough

projects to keep all the attendees active during the week.

Back in Antonito, the CRF building was still only a two-stall structure with a dirt floor, no tracks and nothing inside. I recall, not long after my arrival at the Friends, I ventured in white-out conditions from Chama to Antonito to inspect the new building with Ed Lowrance. It was still an empty shell, but the empty shell began to fill as the Friends began investing in capital improvements for the facility. Over the years, a concrete floor, tracks, tools and tool room, restroom/shower, kitchen, an outdoor cover extension, and adjacent covered car storage have been added, just to name a few. But early on, despite the ongoing improvements on the building, we didn’t see the work session turnout we had hoped for in Antonito. Along with others on the Board, I was a bit concerned that the Friends were sinking money into a facility that members weren’t embracing. Fortunately, as the improvements continued, a group of volunteers formed that really enjoying working in the CRF. Today, the facility provides the organization with a shop in which a piece of rolling stock can be left inside, a great environment out of the elements, while it is undergoing major restoration. In June, 2018, the building was renamed the *Ed Lowrance Car Repair Facility* in Ed’s memory. It has become a facility we can be proud of.

While many have gravitated towards the CRF, there are still members who simply love to work in Chama, smell the smoke, wave at the departing trains in the morning and watch them return in the afternoon. They love to be in the middle of the “action.” Crews are spread out across the yard and many of the other crews working at Cumbres or along the Right-of-Way are based there as well. This means the Chama sessions typically

Continued, p. 5



The Work Session C **Right-of-Way Railroad Signage Crew**, led by Mike Mahoney and assisted by Ben Wight, Paul Davenport and Alan Green, are “undoing the constant effects of slope and gravity on the leaning MP330 on Tanglefoot Curve.” (Not shown, team members Terry Woolsey and Jim Gross.) Most of the crew have in excess of ten years of R-of-W experience and as Mike Mahoney said, “Like the Johnny Cash song, ‘We Walk the Line.’” *Photo by Michael Mee*





## Volunteers Needed

**The Projects Committee is looking for volunteers to fill vacant positions on the Committee.**

As many of you may know, it takes many volunteers to ensure that work sessions, both scheduled or special, have the materials needed for the projects taking place. It is extremely important that these materials be at the session when scheduled. To do that it takes a number of volunteers, assigned specific jobs. We need your help. Please consider volunteering in one of the vacancies below so we can get the job done on time.

### Friends Buyer for Steel Products



The responsibilities include attending Project Committee meetings in the spring and fall; reviewing the material master list for all related requests for steel products; compiling requirements and placing requests for same with a chosen supplier using the vendor purchase list.

### Friends Buyer for Fasteners



The responsibilities include attending Project Committee meetings in the spring and fall; reviewing the material master list for all related requests for fasteners of any kind; compiling requirements and placing requisitions for same with a supplier using the vendor purchase list.

### Friends Buyer for Project Materials



The responsibilities include attending Project Committee meetings in the spring and fall; reviewing the material master list for all related requests for unusual materials that do not fall into other buyer areas (wood, steel, fasteners), including rental of equipment for special jobs, and other contracted services using the vendor purchase list.

### Friends Coordinator for the Lunch Program



The responsibilities include attending Project Committee meetings in the spring and fall; reviewing and coordinating the required materials for the Lunch Program (food, supplies and special requirements) as established by the Team Leaders for the session lunches at the Antonito CRF and Chama kitchen car; compiling requirements and placing requisitions for same with a supplier using the vendor purchase list.

Contact: [projectcommittee@fctsrr.org](mailto:projectcommittee@fctsrr.org)

### Chronicler Supervisor Needed

Beginning in 2024, a new Chronicler Supervisor will be needed. After many years, our current supervisor, Sharon McGee, is retiring. Under her leadership the program has transformed from volunteer recognition to documentation of project work. The Supervisor position involves the management of Team Leaders assigned to each work session to provide documentation and photographic chronicling of restoration projects throughout the season. Skills are necessary in the use of a computer for word processing, editing and document layout. As an essential part of the history of the C&TSRR, the manner of chronicling is changing. In essence, it is out with cameras and in with tablets. Future documentation will be stored in the cloud. The new Supervisor will be challenged with the development of a new standard for chronicling. The Supervisor is not required to attend all work sessions but must be involved when necessary.

The Supervisor is a member of the Projects Committee and attends Committee meetings during the spring and fall. The Supervisor is responsible for the chronicling program to ensure that restoration projects have a sequence of photographs and specific narratives to describe, in a logical order, a record of events taking place as the project progresses. Documentation procedures are set forth in the Standards for Chronicling and must be followed by the Team Leaders assigned to the sessions. It is extremely important to be factual and detailed in the collection of information. When questions arise, the chronicling process must continue until an answer is obtained.

The requirement for documentation of all restoration projects is mandated by the Cumbres & Toltec Railroad Commission and by the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) as a representative of the National Park Service to oversee the management of the National Historic Landmark. Annual reports are compiled from the recorded information, which become a permanent record of the Friends activities. A portion of that information is submitted to SHPO as a progress report for historic related projects and is part of the documentation necessary as a National Landmark.

If this position is of interest to you, please submit your name and a short summary of your experience and qualifications for the position to the Projects Committee at:

[projectcommittee@fctsrr.org](mailto:projectcommittee@fctsrr.org)

Submittals will be reviewed at the October Projects Committee meeting.

**Thanks for your consideration!**

## President's FORUM (cont.)

require more support people.

Over the last few years, we have experienced a dwindling number of work session attendees. The result is that it has become more difficult for the Projects Committee to find team leaders and support volunteers for such activities as food prep and the paint and tool cars. Given dwindling numbers, we've had to trim back the number of work sessions that are held in Chama. We didn't want to do this, but the lack of volunteer support staff has forced us to take this action. The organization is not trying to push people to one location or another; we know a lot of members still enjoy volunteering in Chama.

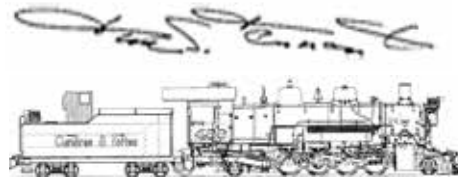
We want to remedy this and provide more volunteer work sessions but that will require more volunteers to supervise the sessions. If you have the desire to be a team leader in Chama or in a support role for food service, the tool car, paint car, or another project, contact the Projects Committee (John Engs or Don Atkinson) and make yourself available at a work session that fits your schedule. If we can do a better job filling more of these tasks, it allows us to go back to additional work session weeks in Chama. If you want to work in Chama, we need to hear from you. Don't forget that active work session volunteers get a discount on C&TS tickets to "reward" yourself at the end of the week for a job well done.

We want to provide enough locations for volunteers to work with a variety of projects, not only where they can use their skills, but where they like to work as well. By not having multiple locations and projects available for more sessions, we know there is the potential to lose volunteers and we don't want this to happen.

This past year we only held Sessions C and D in Chama. Other sessions during the season were held primarily at the CRF. We're looking at the same for 2024 but we could consider altering this with more input and participation. This is an issue which needs to rectify itself in order to

reestablish another week or two of sessions in Chama. But in order to do that, we will need your help.

It is our desire to offer as many options for work session attendees as possible. Our work session ranks have been depleted over time and we're attempting to cultivate new members and volunteer attendees. We appreciate your help, consideration and understanding. As always, we appreciate all the support our members provide for the Friends.



Tim Tennant



### **Friends Fall Member Banquet and Committee Meetings at the CRRM in Golden! Friday, October 27th!**

Join us at the Colorado Railroad Museum for an evening of camaraderie, good food and a guest presentation as the Friends' year starts to wind down. We are excited to have the Colorado Railroad Museum hold our event. Colorado Commissioner Scott Gibbs will have a presentation about the restoration of Locomotive 315. Our meal is being catered by Roaming Buffalo Bar-B-Que of Denver.

**Date:** Friday October 27th, 2023  
**Time:** 6-9:00 PM (Dinner at 7:00 PM)  
**Place:** Colorado Railroad Museum  
 17155 West 44th Avenue  
 Golden, Colorado

The meal will consist of Chopped Beef Brisket, Chopped Pork, Pulled Chicken with sweet & spicy BBQ sauces, Cilantro Lime Cole Slaw, Red Eye Cowboy Beans, Southwest Potato Salad, Santa Fe Cornbread Muffin & Homemade Jam. Hosted beer & wine bar.

To reserve:

Please call the Albuquerque Office at 505-880-1311 by October 23, 2023.

Cost: \$46 per person

**DON'T WAIT! JOIN THE FRIENDS OF THE C&TS!**



**2023 is going to be a great year for the Railroad and the Friends!**

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**

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Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

My check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed,

or

Charge my Visa / MC / Discover

[circle one] for \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Card # \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to:

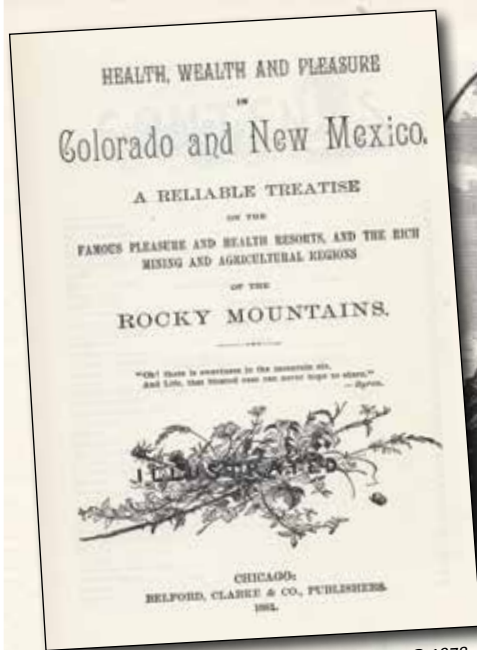
**Friends of the C&TSRR, Inc.**  
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By 1881, a mere eleven years after its founding by General William Jackson Palmer as a “little railroad a few hundred miles in length,” the Denver & Rio Grande Railway published a small booklet

entitled *Health, Wealth and Pleasure in Colorado and New Mexico* to promote travel and tourism over its new three-foot rails. While “wealth” was the primary reason for the construction and furious expansion of the D&RG, the Railroad’s general passenger agent at the time, F. C. Nims, knew that the region’s bounty of mines, farms and ranches of Colorado and New Mexico were already filling the Railroad’s freight cars. By initiating a public relations effort to generate passenger traffic, Nims and his successor, Shadrack Hooper, showed that publications like *Health, Wealth and Pleasure* could fill the Railroad’s coaches and Pullman Palace cars as well.

Written in the flowery prose of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and illustrated with woodcuts or steel engravings, often based on photographic plates by William Henry Jackson and other pioneer photographers, the booklet described the history, culture, industry and, above all, the magnificent scenery of the Railroad, though not always with great accuracy (a problem that persists today in “public relations” documents!) Accurate or not, the booklet featured spectacular sights along the right-of-way along with non-rail side trips to places such as the Taos Pueblo, the resorts at Pagosa Springs and the spectacular cliff dwellings of Mesa Verde.

*Health, Wealth and Pleasure in Colorado and New Mexico* was the first of a number of tourist-oriented booklets produced by the D&RG such as *Around the Circle*, *One Thousand Miles Through the Rocky Mountains*, published in 1882, and the 1887 volume with the impressive title, *What the Poets Have Found to Say of the Beautiful Scenery on the Denver and Rio Grande*.

Because the Rio Grande’s narrow gauge rails stretched from Denver to the southwest, the scenery between Antonito and Durango figured prominently in *Health, Wealth and Pleasure*, particularly west from Antonito through Toltec Gorge. What follows is a transcript of the booklet’s chapter, *Antonito to the San Juan*, complete with the illustrations included in the original printing, featuring Toltec Gorge. Other chapters not presented here include descriptions from Denver and Pueblo and, later in the booklet, the Silverton Branch. Still under survey and construction, a right-of-way was not completed until July 1882.

Consider that as you read what follows, you will be viewing the Denver & Rio Grande Railway through an 1881 lens, most likely written in a Denver office by Mr. F. C. Nims. Still, as you can compare the text herein with all the health, wealth and pleasure you see today as you travel over the twenty-first century C&TS, you will discover that very little has changed since *Health, Wealth and Pleasure in Colorado and New Mexico* was published over 140 years ago.

And that’s what the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad is all about.

Chris James, Editor



*Editor’s note:* This article is copied verbatim from the original booklet. Thus, it may contain grammatical or punctuation errors. The 19<sup>th</sup> century typeface, *Didot*, is the closest I could find to the design of the original typeface, along with the margins “justified left and right.” The only change that I made to the appearance of the original document was to add some additional paragraph breaks to make the page-long paragraphs of the 1881 document easier to read. Questionable text and possible inaccuracies have been left in place. ~ CJ

## Antonito to the San Juan

The San Juan Division of the Denver and Rio Grande Railway, traversing the mountains from Antonito to Durango, a distance of one hundred and seventy-one miles, and crossing the Pinos-Chama summit and the continental divide at an altitude of nearly 10,000 feet, is one of the most wonderful and romantic achievements of modern railway building, and could only be justified by the permanent and abounding wealth of the San Juan country. Looking west from Antonito, the beautiful Mesas, covered with grass and groves of scattered pines, rise with terrace-like regularity till they meet the horizon, with only now and then a rocky height, that gives no token of the difficult passes, the cliffs, and chasms, and awful gorges that lie...

*"Beyond the blue hills' purple rim"\**

The ride up these mesas, for over twenty miles, is one of the most delightful imaginable. The railway mounts the heights by an easy grade, winding in labyrinthine curves among grassy knolls and parks of dark green pines and piñons, allowing the passenger to measure the elevation by the plains below, and affording a hundred different views of Sierra Blanca, the Sangre de Cristo range and the smooth outlines of San Antonio Mountain. Climbing these mesas in a Pullman car is indeed being...

*"...carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease"\**

At one place, which has been called "The Whiplash," the railway doubles upon itself twice, on the side of smooth hill, making three parallel tracks in a distance of a little more than a stone's throw. In one of the loops, situated in a shallow ravine, is a large, neatly painted section house, whose inmates are to be congratulated that their work lie very near their domicile. As a brakeman remarked "If the train does not go at too great speed, they have time to get pretty well acquainted with the passengers before it gets past." This seemingly aimless winding among the smooth hills continues for nineteen miles from the first rise, about four miles from Antonito, and is rendered necessary by the great elevation to be overcome. Fortunately, the contour of the country enables the railway to make this ascent by an easy and uniform grade, and in all its turnings there it is no waste labor, its course being ever "onward and upward."

\*Both of the quotes above are attributed to the English poet Alfred Tennyson, 1809-1892).

## Los Pinos Valley

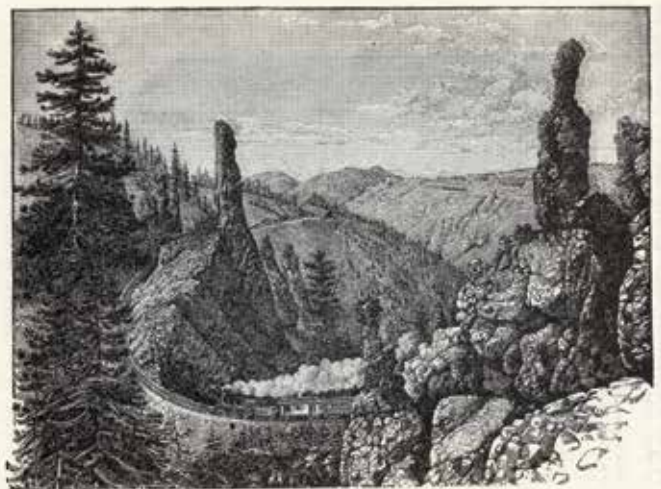
Rounding the point of a promontory-like hill, twenty-three miles from Antonito, the traveler suddenly looks down into the deep valley of Los Pinos creek. But he has only a few brief glimpses of its surprising beauty when a precipitous ravine branches off to the north and the track follows the brow of the hills in a tortuous detour of nearly four miles among the pines—expensive for the railway company, but delightful for the tourist.

Going up this ravine its full length, making a long curve around its head, and coming back nearly to the starting point, past the station of Boydville,\* and a handsome section house near some admirable springs of clear water beyond it, the passenger finds himself on the crest of a mountain overlooking one of the most beautiful of all Rocky Mountain valleys, over a thousand feet below.

The scenery for the next nine miles is unequaled by any other railway in North America. The road follows the steep mountainside just below the summit, making a great convex bend for a distance of just over four miles, and then dives into a tunnel in the granite cliffs, amid the culminating grandeur of Toltec Gorge.

For all this distance, at the giddy height of over 1,200 feet, the track describes the irregular contour of the mountains in a succession of short curves, cutting through projecting masses of rock, and running over high fills made necessary by deep and rugged gorges. Before the road was built a mountain goat could scarcely follow its present course.

Along the way are scores of the monumental rocks for which Colorado is so famous, rising in



PHANTOM CURVE.

\*"Boydville" was the early name the townsite that is now Sublette. According to Doris Osterwald's book, *Ticket to Toltec*, Third Edition, 2013, "Why the name was changed is not known."





LOT'S WIFE.

fantastic columns nearly as high as the pines beside them. The engraver has made a good picture of one of these, called "Lot's Wife." One projecting point is cut through by a well-timbered tunnel.

Passing the most southern point of the bend, the first glimpse of Toltec Tunnel is obtained at a distance of about six miles by the course of the road. It appears as a small black spot in the face of the cliff, at a point where it is cut in twain by a great chasm. From here the tunnel appears and disappears at intervals till it is reached.

Soon after passing the timbered tunnel, a sharp curve takes the train into a cove among the hills with monument-shaped rocks on one side, and fantastic castellated cliffs rising five or six hundred feet on the other. This is known as Phantom Curve.

It is indeed a wild spot, with the valley so deep below the weird red monumental rocks around, and the tall shelving cliffs above. At one

point near the track, there is a small cave, in which is found a beautiful green moss.

A mile beyond Phantom Curve the railway crosses the head of a ravine on a high bridge of trestle work. From this point the track runs directly toward the valley, on a line almost at right angles to it, where it narrows into a mere fissure in the rocks at Toltec Gorge.

The ledge along which it passed is really a great wall across the head of the valley or cañon, commanding a full view of it for many miles. Here the beauty and grandeur of the scenery are beyond description. All the features of the landscape are on a Titanic scale. The track over which the train has just passed can be seen circling the brow of the mountains for miles, a tiny, yellowish thread. Far beyond the distant heights that shut in the valley rises the round top of San Antonio mountain, while across the valley the opposite mountain rises higher and higher in vast, receding wooded slopes. The narrow vale with its silvery stream and park-like groves of pine and aspen which would be delightful to camp during the long days of summer, recalls the happy valley of Abyssinian princes.

Nor is color wanting to complete the charm of the picture. The dark hue of the pines, the light green and white of the shimmering aspen, and the red and gray that alternates in the cliffs, add their subtle charms to the sublime panorama. When the train approaches the end of the wall, the passengers look almost straight down to where the stream emerges in foaming cascades from the jaws of

## Toltec Gorge

Down! Down! How little and how much the word may mean. Gazing from some lofty church spire or from the top of one of the towers of New York and Brooklyn Bridge, more than 200 feet high, who

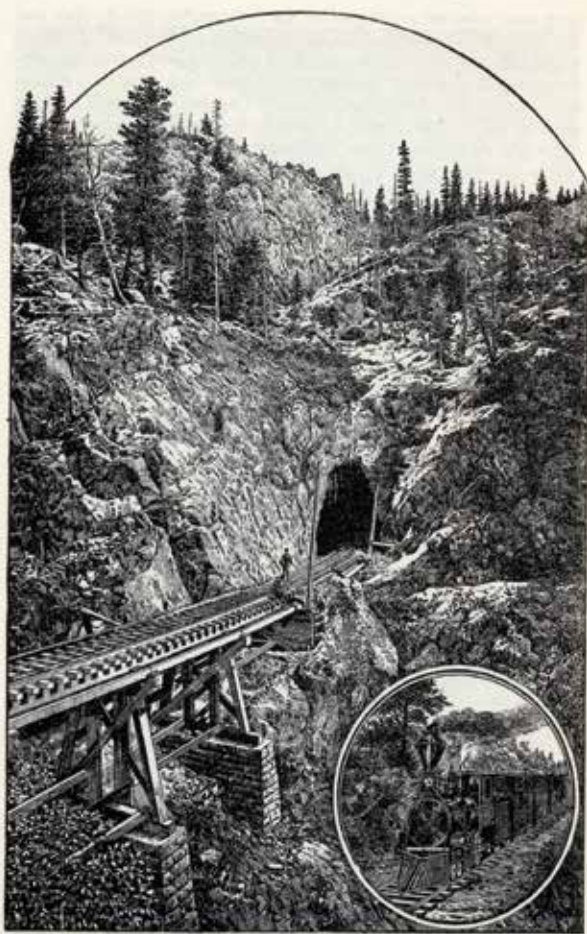


TOLTEC GORGE ABOVE THE TUNNEL.





EASTWARD FROM TOLTEC TUNNEL.



TOLTEC TUNNEL.

does not grow faint and pale, and feel his heart throbbing fiercely in his breast? But do you call that depth? Double that distance downward from the railway track at Toltec Gorge, and you have hardly begun the descent. The pebble you toss from your hand drops far below, and you hear it strike again and again hundreds added to hundreds of feet distant, and yet silence does not signify that it has reached the bottom. It is simply out of hearing. Double the distance again, so far that the strongest voice can scarcely make itself heard and when that terrible gulf is passed you might still look downward upon the tallest steeple in America; for the railway track at the brink of the chasm of Toltec Gorge is over 1,100 feet above Los Pinos creek.

But in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, the scene is changed. One parting glance at the far stretching valley and its mountain barriers, a giddy look down the precipice among the jagged rocks, and then all is hid from view in the darkness of the tunnel. For 600 feet the way is cut through solid granite. The train emerges upon the other side of tunnel on the brink of a precipice, looking directly into the gorge, across which the opposing cliffs rise abruptly to over 2,100 feet.

At the most critical point, here the downward view takes in the deepest depth of the gorge, lined with crags and splintered rocks, and boulders as large as churches, fallen from the cliff above in which the stream dashes downward in snow white cataracts, the train runs upon a solid bridge of trestle work set into the rocks, as if it were a balcony from which to obtain the finest possible view of this most wondrous scene.

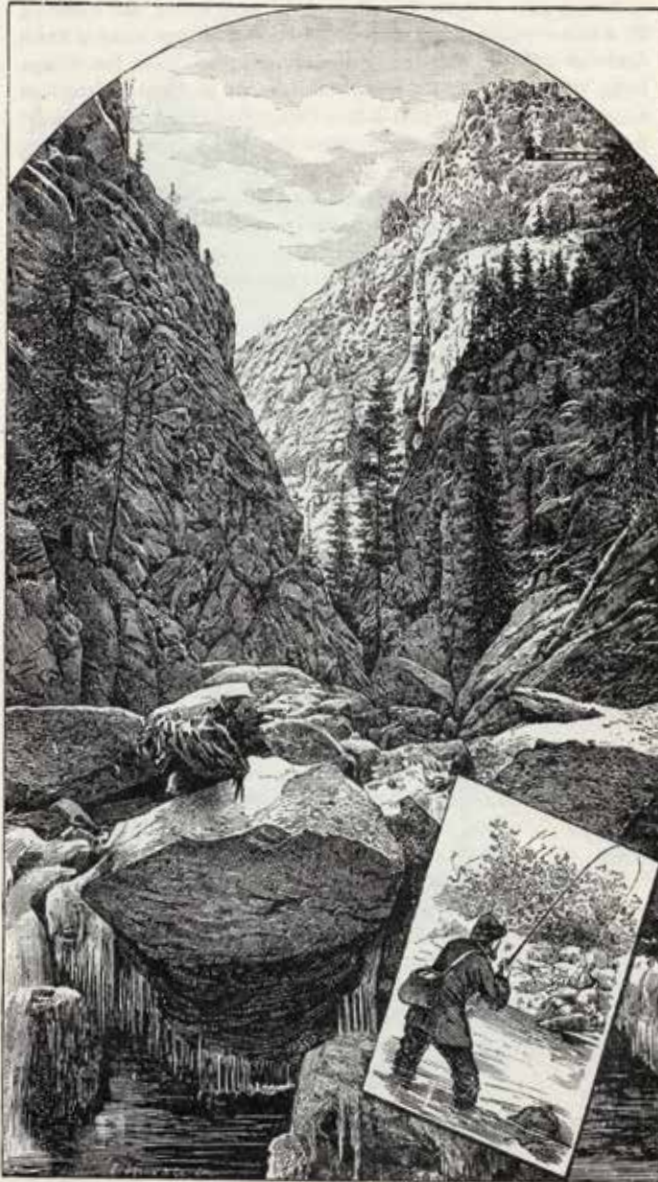
### Toltec Gorge to Durango

Marvelous, sensational and grand as is Toltec Gorge, the climax is not reached until the railway comes to the summit which separates the waters of the Pinos from those of the Chama. From Toltec Gorge to Osier, eight miles, the elevation of the track above the torrent gradually lessens, until the valley bottom is almost reached. From Osier for some miles westward the grade of the railway is greater than that of the valley, and soon carries the line up among the topmost turrets which crown the summits of the surrounding mesas.

The country here is very broken and confused and the road clings to and winds around these lofty crags like a huge serpent trying to reach the sky. Suddenly, as the traveler is rapt in wonderment, and is very naturally thinking about what's next, why this fantastic piece of engineering, the train glides out from among the pinnacles at the summit and commences a very rapid descent into the dense pine forests of the Tierra Amarilla, through which the tranquil Chama wends its way.

And here we would say that no Coloradan, be he never so well-traveled, has ever dreamed of such forests as cover the entire country northward from the railway to the San Juan mountains. Between the Chama river and Durango the line crosses here and





TOLTEC GORGE.

they are especially noteworthy for a few miles east and west of the Chama — some of the southward extensions of this vast forest, which covers a scope of country one hundred and thirty miles east and west by from twenty to forty miles north and south, Pagosa Springs lies in the center of it, twenty-five miles north of the Amargo\* station and a good idea of the forest is obtained while traveling to this most interesting group of thermal springs. Here the pines grow tall and straight, and of enormous size. No underbrush hides their bright, clean shafts, and, curiously enough, no small trees are to be found.

These monarchs of the forest seem to be the last of their race, and are destined, like the Indians, very soon to disappear. From a utilitarian point of view, however, they are of immense value for that forms a vast storehouse of the finest lumber in a country poorly supplied in general timber fit for the saw.

After crossing the Chama and still among the pines, the line passes imperceptibly from the drainage of the Atlantic to the Pacific — from the basin of the Chama to that of the San Juan — and the nearest station to Pagosa Springs is reached a few miles west of this continental divide, we will digress for a short space to describe them.

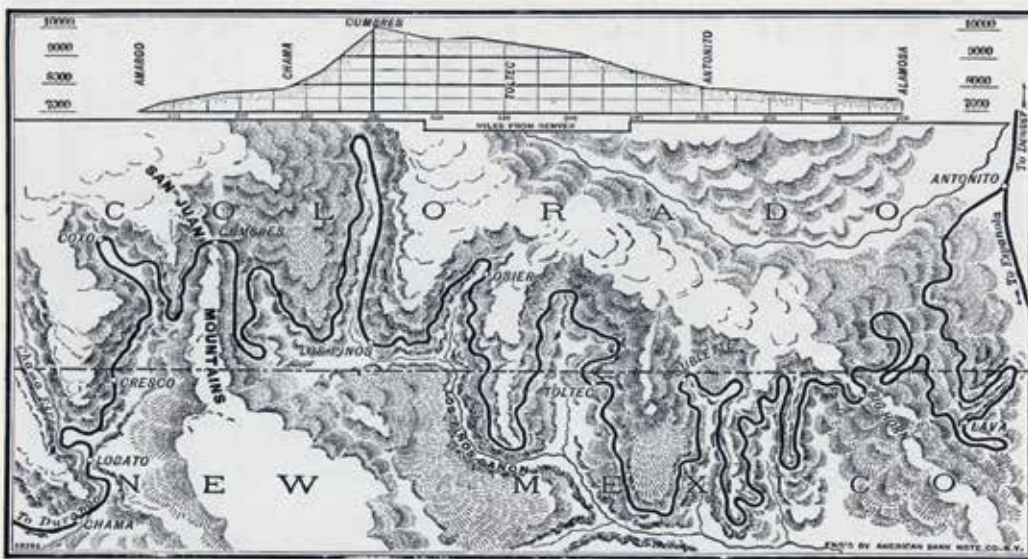
\* \* \* \*

The booklet continues with descriptions of Pagosa Springs and Durango and notes that Durango was founded “three miles south of Animas City,” typical of General Palmer’s non-benevolent tactics to establish his own town by building a town near an existing village to absorb its population and businesses in order to sell lots and generate business for his railroad.

The booklet was published before the completion of the Silverton Branch in July, 1882. Thus, the booklet only describes the “difficulties of locating” the right-of-way to Silverton. Still, “the scenic features of this link are not

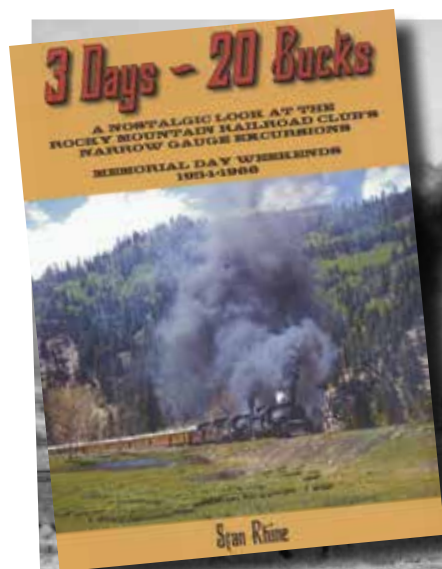
excelled by any portion of this most marvelous railway. Indeed, it promises attractions so novel and striking as to establish it as a fitting climax to what may be aptly likened to a beautifully rounded poem.”

\*Amargo (MP 366) was the stop for stage travel to Pagosa Springs. When a lumber railroad was built to Pagosa in 1899, the rail junction was at Gato, 24 miles east of Amargo.



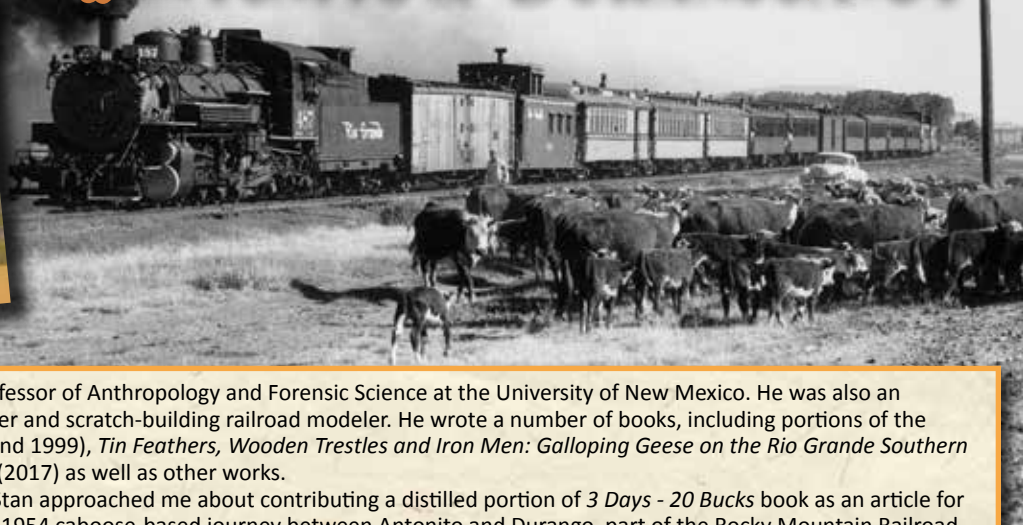
ALIGNMENT OF TOLTEC GORGE DISTRICT.





**The 1954 trip west of Alamosa.** This consist featured the usual ten wooden passenger cars with three cabooses subbing for the Silver Vista which was lost in the Alamosa Car Shop fire of 1953. Since Baggage Car 126 was used as a concession/bull session/photo car, Long Reefer 153 was added for baggage.

## ANTONITO TO DURANGO, 1954



**Stan Rhine (1935-2020)** was Professor of Anthropology and Forensic Science at the University of New Mexico. He was also an avid railroad historian, photographer and scratch-building railroad modeler. He wrote a number of books, including portions of the *Colorado Rail Annual No. 9* (1971 and 1999), *Tin Feathers*, *Wooden Trestles and Iron Men: Galloping Geese on the Rio Grande Southern* (2012), and *3 Days - Twenty Bucks* (2017) as well as other works.

Shortly before he passed away, Stan approached me about contributing a distilled portion of *3 Days - 20 Bucks* book as an article for the *C&TS Dispatch*, focusing on his 1954 caboose-based journey between Antonito and Durango, part of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club's (RMRRRC) annual excursions from Alamosa to Silverton and back. He was all of nineteen years old. (Oh, the envy!)

The RMRRRC trips continued until 1966 when the D&RGW ended all special trains on the San Juan Extension. I accepted his story of fer but I didn't have column-inch space at the time and his story ended up in the *Dispatch* "vault" for future use. But after Stan's passing, I realized his account of this excursion was too good to keep in the vault, especially when compared to a similar journey seventy years earlier as described in *Health, Wealth and Pleasure in Colorado and New Mexico* (pp. 5-9).

*Health, Wealth and Pleasure* and *3 Days - 20 Bucks* pair well, one with the flowery language of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the second from the view of railfanning in the mid-1950s, written with Stan Rhine's descriptive eye and wry humor, twenty years before the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, like wine and cheese, paired well. Enjoy.

Chris James, Editor

All photos and captions: Stan Rhine, *3 Days - 20 Bucks*, © 2017, White River Productions.

The *Silverton* was a train name as familiar to a subset of railfans as "The City of Los Angeles" was to others. The last of its kind, the *Silverton* was not protected by any Endangered Species Act. As readers of the *Narrow Gauge News* knew, it was living on borrowed time. And 1954 was rumored as likely to be its last year. Denver's Rocky Mountain Railroad Club had been running railfan trips around Denver for almost two decades, and in the late 1940s turned their attention southward into narrow gauge country. So after several trips on the D&RGW's Third Division west of Salida, and the Rio Grande Southern, the Club's narrow gauge options were narrowing—including the 3' 6" Denver Tramway. With the last rites having been given to the RGS and D&RGW narrow gauges west of Salida, the only activity there was salvage operations.

As the calendar closed out 1953, the only active three-foot rails left were the lines west of Alamosa. Thus it was that the Rocky Club decided on a blowout three-day narrow gauge excursion from Alamosa to Durango, Silverton and return, a 488-mile journey for \$18.00, about 3.7 cents per mile. This was in line with the *Silverton* fare of \$3.30 including 30 cents excise tax. Meals and lodging, of course, were extra.

From his aerie at the Narrow Gauge Motel & Museum in "South" Alamosa, the self-anointed Abandoned Lines Reporter, Robert W. Richardson, kept a gimlet eye focused on all matters narrow gauge. All the bad news that was fit to print was dutifully reported in *The Narrow Gauge News* by Richardson and partner Carl Helfin. The focus was often on dire predictions of the imminent demise of the last of the Rio Grande's once-grand tri-state narrow gauge empire. Richardson feared the avalanche of abandonments was about to sweep the *Silverton* line away, to be quickly followed by the Alamosa-Durango mainline and the Farmington Branch. All that would be left would be a few sad relics of those glory days stuffed and mounted in parks, like ten-wheeler 168 in Colorado Springs.

Fearing that the last bastion of narrow gauge passenger service was in the verge of disappearing, some three hundred of us signed up for that 1954 trip. But not only would I get to ride the Club's special, my dad somehow wrangled a Rio Grande pass for me to ride in a caboose all the way from Alamosa to the Utopia of Durango, by some fans' reckoning, the Narrow Gauge Capital of the World. It seemed likely that I was among the last passengers to arrive in Durango by freight train. This was two years before

This story is Stan Rhine's "distillation" of the Alamosa-to-Durango portion of his book, *3 Days - 20 Bucks, A Nostalgic Look at the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club's Narrow Gauge Excursions, Memorial Day Weekends, 1954-1966*, © 2017 White River Productions. His "distillation" was written specifically for the *C&TS Dispatch*. A few portions of Stan Rhine's story have been augmented or clarified with small pieces of *3 Days - 20 Bucks* with the permission of the publisher. The complete book, *3 Days - 20 Bucks*, is available from White River Productions at <http://www.whiteriverproductions.com>. Ed.



**Westbound No. 487** on Cumbres Pass in 1954.

Philip R. Hastings' trip published in the October 1969 issue of *Trains* and reprinted in the Summer 2020 issue of the *C&TS Dispatch*.

Lying in the rain shadow of the San Juan Mountains to the west, the San Luis Valley is quite arid, 7,546 feet high, Alamosa receiving some 7.31" of precipitation a year. Nonetheless, it had gained fame as an agricultural exporter, the major crop being potatoes. A vast underground lake is tapped by farmers, who use this artesian abundance to grow their crops. Potato warehouses lined the tracks at virtually all of the small towns across the valley.

In contrast to Hastings' late afternoon departure, this 1954 departure came in mid-morning. I was waiting on the Alamosa station platform, J.C. Penney pressed-paper suitcase in hand, when the crew arrived to board the caboose standing near the two-story Alamosa brick depot. I presented my little paper trip pass to the conductor, who obviously had much more important things to do than to usher some skinny kid aboard his caboose. He studied the pass intently. It was signed by passenger traffic manager H. F. Eno, and while not good on the California Zephyr, it said it was valid on narrow gauge freights.

A pass to ride a narrow gauge caboose to Durango was obviously a novel matter, and as the conductor scrutinized it at length, I began to worry. Would I be banished from the depot platform? Would I have to take a Continental Trailways bus to Durango? This was not my backup plan—I didn't have one. "All right," he finally said, "but keep out of our way." Not exactly "welcome aboard." But, whew! No Trailways bus after all.

I watched out the back door as our pair of

2-8-2s lumbered down the roundhouse lead, lurched over to the adjoining track and clumped past. Imprisoned in the caboose, I could see little of the preparations for departure. We were soon disconnected from yard air, and after coupling to the front part of the train, the two engines eased back across State Avenue and made the joint with our cars. The air was cut in, tested and we leaped into motion. After conducting the running brake test, we moved sedately past the power plant, the pickler yard, and at the edge of town, the baseball field where two de-trucked gondolas rebuilt as sight-seeing cars for the Chicago Railroad Fair of 1948-49 were used as bleachers.

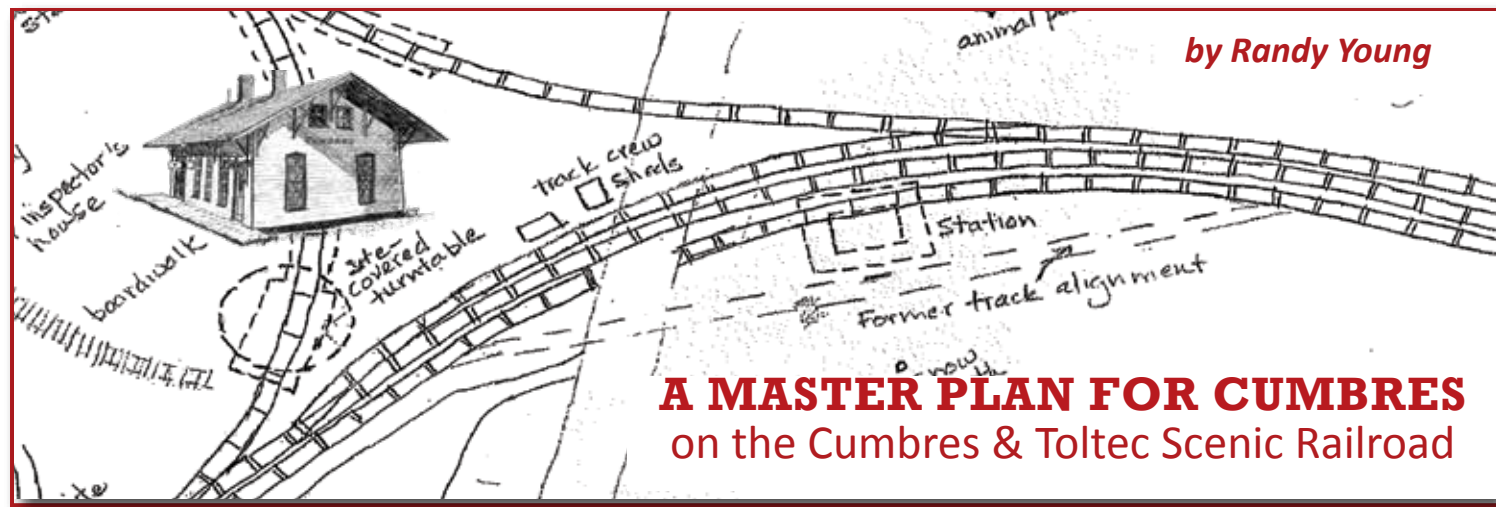
Two-lane Highway 285 closed in and we rattled past what seemed like endless strings of narrow gauge boxcars, reefers and gondolas stored on these dual gauge tracks. The yards behind us, in the distance off to the right appeared a large building that looked like a railroad depot. It was surrounded by a flock of cars and locomotives in much fresher paint than most of those in the Alamosa yards. This was undoubtedly the most famous hostelry of the San Luis Valley, the Brown Palace of the boonies, the Del Monaco of the dunes, the Narrow Gauge Motel and Museum.

Out the side windows and the open back door, one could see mountains off in the distance, but the Valley floor was as disappointingly flat as a recent high school graduate's resume. Even so, it was a very pleasant ride, the caboose swaying gently from side to side, its wooden structure creaking, brake beams jangling, front coupler sawing up. It was a warm, mid-May morning, both doors open; it was the kind of day you



**On May 29, 1954**, the RMRRRC Special winds around Tanglefoot Curve on its way up to Cumbres Pass.





**A MASTER PLAN FOR CUMBRES on the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad**

The Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec have embarked on the creation of a comprehensive Master Plan for Cumbres Pass, Colorado. There has been a desire to recreate structures that were significant to Cumbres. Over the years, several have become projects by the Friends. These have resulted in the restoration of the Section Foreman's House, reconstruction of a portion of the snowshed that once covered the entire wye, reconstruction of the Car Inspector's (Repairmen's) House, now nearing completion of the first-floor interior, and a few other smaller railroad support elements, including the semaphore atop the Section House. The Pavilion at the rear of the wye, built in 2012 to support special events (not a historic structure), collapsed last winter due to the heavier-than-usual snows. However, it will not be rebuilt any time soon.

Why develop a comprehensive Master Plan for Cumbres Pass in Colorado? Cumbres is a significant historic site which holds great cultural, natural and historical value as a part of the former Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad in an earlier era. A Master Plan will:

- 1) define its preservation and enhancement by outlining a strategy that builds upon the present value to the railroad and,
- 2) define a strategy to protect, promote and manage the site effectively to chart a course for the conservation of its historical significance. This would provide an enriching experience for visitors, not just something to look at as you pass through by train or car, but a living history

of what life was like at the Pass for Railroad operation and the people that lived and worked there as a community.

Elements of the Master Plan will consider:

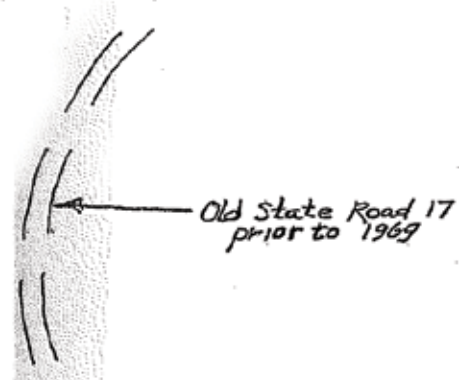
- A comprehensive site assessment and documentation of the historically-significant structure, artifacts and natural features that existed during the period of significance of the National Historic Landmark for the D&RG/D&RGW's period of operations 1879 through 1930.
- A conservation and development plan to ensure the preservation of the site's historic structures, landscapes and archaeological aspects. This may also include rebuilding structures or defining representative monuments at several locations that existed long ago but have been lost to abandonment and demolition.
- The creation of engaging interpretive displays and exhibits to provide visitors with a deeper understanding of the site's historical significance. Establish guided educational tours led by volunteers, offering insight into the site's cultural and natural history. Multimedia, interactive and technology-based displays may also ultimately enhance a visitor's experience.
- Improved access, including ADA access, enhancing parking, restrooms, picnic area and interpretive trails, all to increase visitor interest, comfort and longer stays. A form of "visitor center" might be envisioned, providing historical context, maps and resources beyond the covered kiosk that exists today.
- Potential collaboration with communities and institutions to raise awareness of the site's historical significance, and tourism development to promote Cumbres Pass as a must-visit historic destination. These could include possible relationships with the Colorado Department of Transportation, the Department of Natural Resources and outdoor recreational organizations such as the Boy Scouts by integrating the nearby compatible hiking and camping amenities with access points and relevant designated areas.

These and other ambitious ideas must take into realistic account the available and potential resources of the Friends and the Cumbres & Toltec Railroad to accomplish the plan in a sequenced, affordable and maintainable manner. To that extent, the Master Plan will define the era to be represented, establish priorities for development of the recommended structures and elements, make budget estimates for planned improvements and include recommendations for maintaining and operating the plan sustainably.

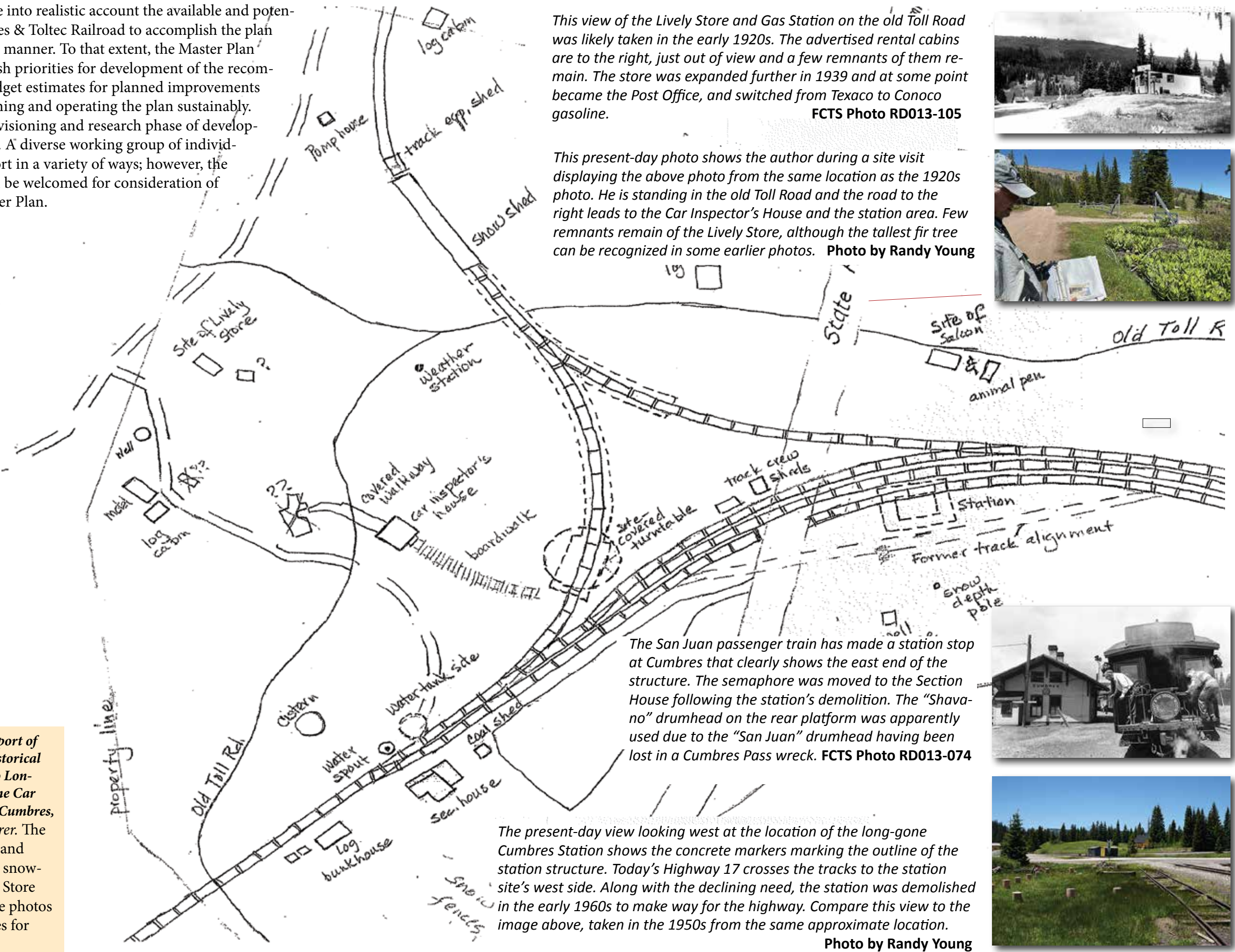
The Master Plan is currently in the early visioning and research phase of development and many ideas are being considered. A diverse working group of individuals is supporting the Master Planning effort in a variety of ways; however, the thoughts and dreams of all the Friends will be welcomed for consideration of incorporation into the Cumbres Pass Master Plan.



The Car Inspector's House, originally built in 1907, was completely rebuilt to historical accuracy by the Friends beginning in 2020. Reconstruction and restoration is on-going. Photo by Vance Behr



Sketch from a 2011 archaeology survey, *Report of Limited Archaeological Investigations and Historical Research for Marking Locations of Certain No Longer Extant Structures and Reconstruction of the Car Inspector's House Outbuilding Assemblage at Cumbres, Colorado*, by Dave Ferro and Linda Kammerer. The map shows a number of present structures and former features, including the extent of the snowsheds, turntable, water tank, and the Lively Store and Cabins as well as the old Toll Road. The photos are placed near their corresponding features for easy identification.



This view of the Lively Store and Gas Station on the old Toll Road was likely taken in the early 1920s. The advertised rental cabins are to the right, just out of view and a few remnants of them remain. The store was expanded further in 1939 and at some point became the Post Office, and switched from Texaco to Conoco gasoline. FCTS Photo RD013-105

This present-day photo shows the author during a site visit displaying the above photo from the same location as the 1920s photo. He is standing in the old Toll Road and the road to the right leads to the Car Inspector's House and the station area. Few remnants remain of the Lively Store, although the tallest fir tree can be recognized in some earlier photos. Photo by Randy Young



The San Juan passenger train has made a station stop at Cumbres that clearly shows the east end of the structure. The semaphore was moved to the Section House following the station's demolition. The "Shavano" drumhead on the rear platform was apparently used due to the "San Juan" drumhead having been lost in a Cumbres Pass wreck. FCTS Photo RD013-074



The present-day view looking west at the location of the long-gone Cumbres Station shows the concrete markers marking the outline of the station structure. Today's Highway 17 crosses the tracks to the station site's west side. Along with the declining need, the station was demolished in the early 1960s to make way for the highway. Compare this view to the image above, taken in the 1950s from the same approximate location. Photo by Randy Young



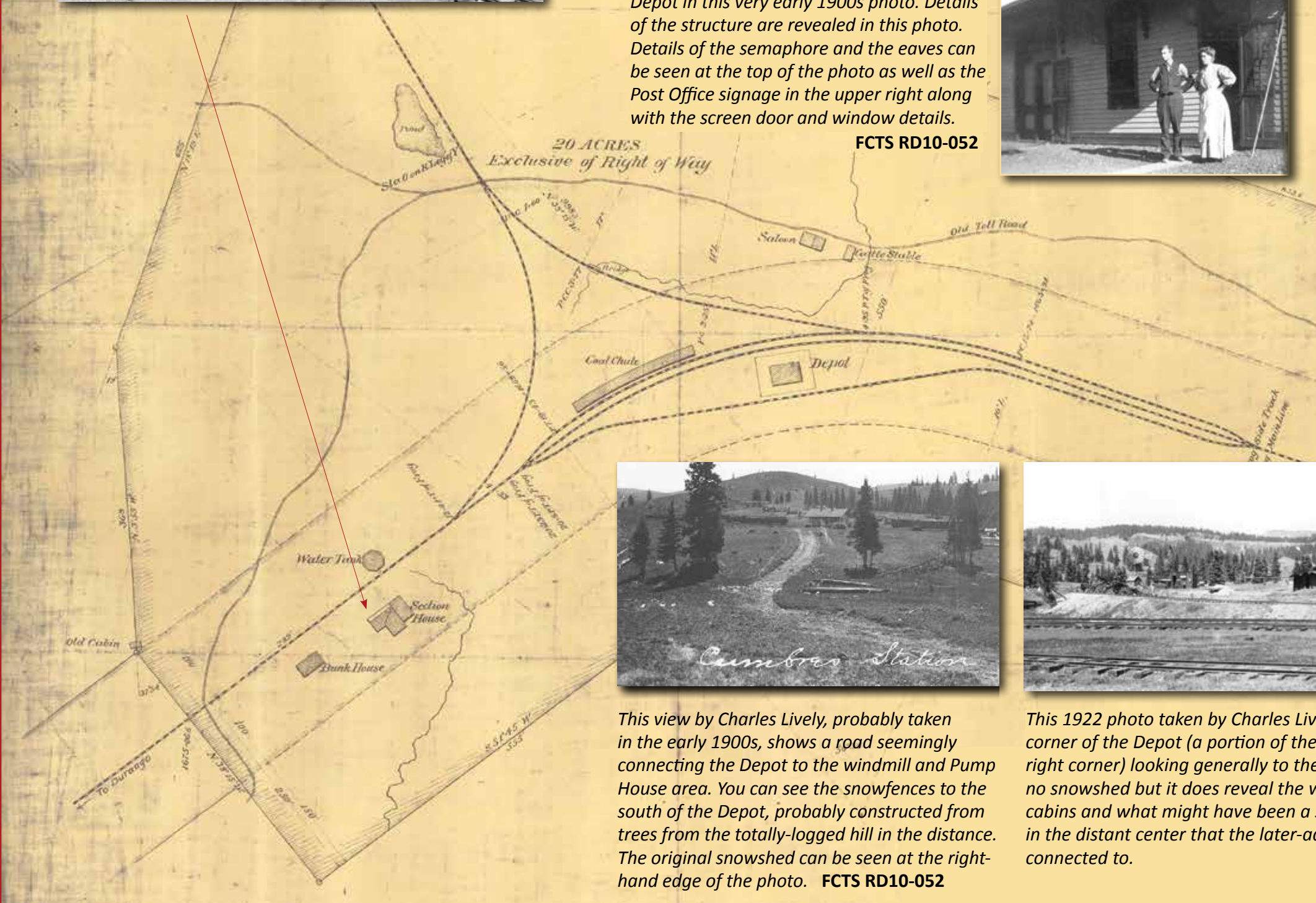




An eastbound freight with Caboose #0517 passes the Cumbres Section House in this photo by John Krause in the early 1960s. Not long after this photo was taken, the Cumbres Depot, just left of center, was torn down to make way for the rerouting of Highway 17 which will cross the tracks just in front of this west end of the depot. **FCTS RD13-086**

D&RG Station Agent Charles Lively and his wife Ida Mae are standing by the Cumbres Depot in this very early 1900s photo. Details of the structure are revealed in this photo. Details of the semaphore and the eaves can be seen at the top of the photo as well as the Post Office signage in the upper right along with the screen door and window details. **FCTS RD10-052**

**PLAT**  
of  
**CUMBRES**  
DEPOT GROUNDS  
SAN JUAN LINE  
Surveyed 1852  
Scale  
100 feet to the inch



This view by Charles Lively, probably taken in the early 1900s, shows a road seemingly connecting the Depot to the windmill and Pump House area. You can see the snowfences to the south of the Depot, probably constructed from trees from the totally-logged hill in the distance. The original snowshed can be seen at the right-hand edge of the photo. **FCTS RD10-052**



This 1922 photo taken by Charles Lively looks from the corner of the Depot (a portion of the eaves are in the top right corner) looking generally to the north. Note there is no snowshed but it does reveal the windmill, Pump House, cabins and what might have been a single engine house in the distant center that the later-added snowshed was connected to. **FCTS RD013-026**

The master planning effort is being led by **Randy Young**, an architect practicing in Sandy Springs (Atlanta), Georgia. Randy brings a lifelong passion of trains—especially the C&TS—to this master plan process, and decades of experience in master planning, design, construction and long-range care of non-profit, religious and historic facilities. Randy says that as a member of Friends for many years and for the last six years working as a volunteer at Chama work sessions in Chama, working on the Cumbres Master Plan is an ultimate spiritual experience.



The Friends Board of Directors and a working group of Friends individuals are bringing knowledge of the Railroad at Cumbres Pass and will be a support in many other ways as the Master Plan is developed.

In the meantime, in this article we are sharing for your interest a few maps and photos from the Friends archives that we have accumulated so far in our research, and that will help form the Master Plan.

You are also welcome to contribute your comments, ideas, concerns, photographs, historical knowledge or any other information regarding the master planning process. Contact Randy via email at:

[CumbresMP@fcts.com](mailto:CumbresMP@fcts.com).

wished you could record so you could call it up and play it back long after the railroad had vanished into legend.

Nonetheless, it was a bit disappointing. The words and pictures presented by Lucius Beebe and others focused not on this sedate 28.3 miles to Antonito, but the heavy grades and tight curves that had two or three chunky Mikados belching volcanoes of black smoke thunderingly from their stacks. Finally, after more than two hours of this pleasant panorama, we arrived in Antonito. My dollar pocket watch said it was time for lunch—and it was still a long way to Durango (about 170 miles I later learned). It looked as if we would arrive in Durango well after dark. But, what? Me worry?—these guys knew what they were doing. Even if I didn't.



**Engine 476 backs down** to couple to the Silverton Train a few days after the Club's excursion. 476 was temporary reduced to a single digit for a movie, May, 1954.

The engines were cut off and backed down to the depot. We all trooped across the street to their favorite restaurant. The enginemen were intrigued with the presence of the tag-along. "Who's the kid?" Explanations were offered and they also wanted to see the pass. Narrow gauge railroaders all appeared to be closet railfans, and took inordinate pride in their unique status. They apparently decided to have a little fun with this greenhorn and advised tying into a bowlful of chile. Sure, why not? This dish, I concluded, had apparently garnered some local fame as the most volcanic of all the café's offerings. It was served in a bowl that must have been specially forged to withstand the pyroclastic mixture bubbling therein. I determined to finish it if it killed me. It was a near thing.

Back aboard the caboose, having apparently passed the initiation ritual, I was invited into the cupola to watch as the engines took on their own nourishment. The lead engine coupled to the train, moved about 2/3 of it to clear, the second engine coupled to the remainder, moved ahead and coupled to the rest. Air test completed, the conductor waved a highball, and with some back and forth tooting, we were once more under way.

There had been a quite steady, but unnoticeable increase

in elevation since leaving Alamosa, most of it no more than an inconsequential grade of 0.85%. Looking back from the cupola after crossing Highway 285, which headed south into New Mexico, the outside third (standard gauge) rail abruptly ended. This was truly "narrow gauge country." Almost immediately the track began to tilt upward and the exhausts of the two engines became more emphatic. Soon we were climbing at the steady rate of 1.42% necessary to lift us up into the clouds at Cumbres Pass.

The brakeman pointed to the Big Horn section house—"We'll pass it three times," then the Big Horn wye. The cupola, the narrow gauge's "vista dome" offered the perfect post for surveying the twisting, snake-like progress, higher and higher. This line also features the only two tunnels to be found on the Rio Grande's narrow gauge. Near Toltec Gorge, the first one is the timber-lined Mud Tunnel. The second, five miles on, Rock Tunnel, opened up to an incredible vista, the Garfield Monument and the thousand-foot-deep gorge, at the bottom of which foamed the Los Pinos River. This was a daily stop for the San Juan, but not for freight trains. Another water stop was made at Osier, where snow still lingered in crevasses.

Finally we reached the summit of Cumbres Pass at an elevation of 10,015 feet. Old photos showed a depot, but the only thing left then was a section house, a large, heavily weathered wooden snowshed over the wye and a small house on a hill back of the water plug. There was a long pause; the helper was cut out and sent down the hill ahead of us, as the crew walked the length of the train setting up retainers.

The grade dropped off just beyond the water plug, so a bit of throttle-jockeying was required to get the train in motion, each car past the summit adding its weight to the descending train. Then, bam! The caboose slammed into the car ahead. For most of the next thirteen miles, the loaded cars would be pushing the engine, the retarding force coming from the brakes on each car as regulated by the engineer. It is at times like this that even a callow youth could appreciate the genius of George Westinghouse and his remarkable automatic air brake, especially the innocuous-looking but important little retainers. The crew, of course, were aware that a runaway on a 4% grade like this one could spell disaster in 72 point type. That it never happens here is a testament to the ever-adaptable Westinghouse Air Brake and the skill of the crew.

Approaching Chama, we crossed back into New Mexico, after having stitched a zig-zag course back and forth across the state line. By the time we arrived, it was late enough that one-story buildings were casting two-story shadows. It had become evident that this was as far as we would go.

*Continued on p. 17*





*The 1954 trip in the siding at Lobato, waiting for a K-37 eastbound freight to resume its battle with gravity. The freight will quickly encounter the steep section of 4 percent grade up to Cumbres, while the RMRRC train will drift down the remaining four miles into Chama.*

today. The crew from Durango had just arrived and the entrance hall of the Foster Hotel and the adjoining restaurant were crowded with railroaders. For \$2.00 a night, the Alamosa crew insisted, the Foster was the place to stay. By this time, the after-effects of the Antonito chile had largely subsided, so it was time to see what sort of delicacy was on Chama's menu.

Next morning, the bathroom at the end of the hallway was a busy place. The toilet seat had barely enough time to cool off as patrons came and went. By this time, the Alamosa crew had told the Durango crew about "the pass," so I handed it around again, intrigued that a little piece of green paper could excite such interest in a roomful of seasoned narrow gauge railroaders.

During the night, one engine had been busy, adding some cars of lumber and tank cars of oil to the train from Durango, subtracted some empties for Chama from the Alamosa train and had either added or removed some gray-painted maintenance of way cars. The aroma of coal smoke drifted away from the yard teeming with squat, compact 2-8-2s, two headed west and two or three being readied for the first of two Cumbres turns. After a second night in Chama, the Alamosa crew would take the final twenty or so cars up the hill, assemble their seventy-car train, send one engine off light to Alamosa and follow with their train, a three-day trip. The Durango crew had a simple out and back. Their third day was on the other end, when they brought the

loads from Alamosa down to Farmington and returned with Farmington's empties.

Compared to the thrills of two tunnels, Toltec Gorge, Tanglefoot Curve and the winding descent into Chama, west of there was almost boring. Well, almost. From 7,833-foot Chama, the track made a series of up and down roller-coastery dips and rises, crossing the Continental Divide to 6,520-foot Durango. For the whole journey, then, the track rose 2,469 feet to Cumbres, then dropped 2,352 feet to Chama and another 2,469 feet to Durango. From east to west, the railroad lost 1,026 feet.

Between Antonito and Chama, there were no towns, villages or settlements of any sort other than railroad facilities—water tanks, section houses and the like.

But west of Chama, the land became more open and small villages huddled near unpaved roads crossing the track. There was a water stop at the Navajo Tank, just past Dulce. Instead of sawmills and tracks full of flatcars loaded with dimensional lumber for the next eastbound train, Lumberton's sidings were filled with stock cars, presumably stored out of the way there until the autumnal stock rush.

Following the Navajo River back into Colorado (the last stateline crossing) the railroad negotiated the winding, scenic Navajo Canyon to Juanita on the San Juan River, which it then follows through Gato (Pa-



Still a mixed train in the early summer of 1954 (just one boxcar this day), the Silverton prepares for its departure from Durango.

gosa Junction), a water stop where a branchline once ran to Pagosa Springs on Highway 160.

Another six miles was Carracas, which boasted a couple of trees, a station sign and a passing siding. Despite its unprepossessing appearance, Carracas loomed operationally important; up until only three years before, this is where the east- and westbound San Juans daily met, their uniformed conductors stepping down to exchange pleasantries and perhaps, news of what to expect ahead. Closer to Durango lay the crossroads villages of Allison, Tiffany, Ignacio, Oxford and Falfa, a string of places, most so small you could miss them if your head was turned the wrong way.

Finally emerging from this very rural area, where spotting a person or a vehicle was a rare event, the train crossed Highway 160 and began its descent of Bocea Hill. Just outside of Durango, the highway drops more rapidly and past the intersection of Highways 160 and 550, is a trestle on the Farmington branch. The track continues downgrade, crossing 160, this time at a steep angle, which called for sustained, vigorous whistling. Just past that crossing, the Farmington Branch comes in from the south and joins the main at Carbon Junction. From there, it is only two miles along the banks of the Animas River to the biggest town on this trip, Durango, population 7,459.

So there we were, in Durango after two days and two hundred miles. The caboose came to a halt east of the stockyards. Conductor Alva Lyons, and Brakeman Myron Henry grabbed their grips, swung off the caboose and waited for the helper engine to back down to pick us up. Even though my pass said nothing about riding

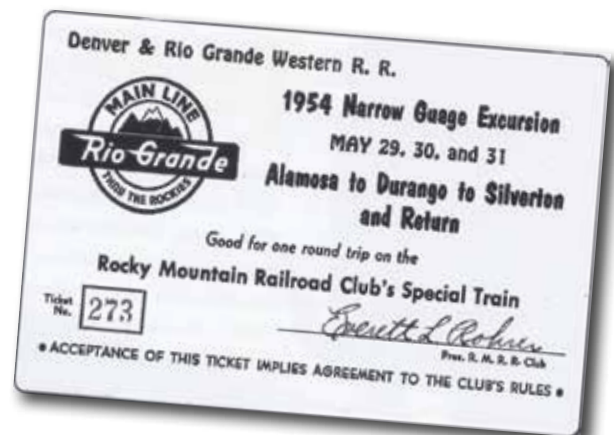
in locomotive cabs, I stood with the crew on the heaving apron as we rolled up to the long wooden 1881 depot. Al Lyons stepped inside to register. We had officially arrived in Durango.

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Stan Rhine, *3 Days—20 Bucks*, White River Productions, Bucklin, Missouri, 2017.





# Living and Working atop Cumbres Pass

Photos by Charles and Ken Lively



A portion of a 1936 photo showing of the Water Tank, the Cumbres Section House, Bunk House, and vicinity. The Water Tank was later replaced by the standing water plug. To the right of the tank is the Sectionmens' Bunk House, now long gone, looking similar to bunk house buildings found elsewhere on the line. That might even be Ida May Lively's laundry strung through the high-altitude breeze behind the Section House.



Centered in this portion of a larger photo, above the horses and between the Water Tank and the Roundhouse, is a structure that, by all appearances, is a typical retired boxcar converted into some kind of railroaders' living quarters. However, its location doesn't appear on the 2011 archaeological map. Perhaps an additional survey of that site might reveal additional data.



One of the most notable features at Cumbres was the store, Post Office and gas station due north of the Section House beside the Colorado Highway 17, at that point still a dirt track. The small sign, apparently placed by the US Forest Service, reads, "Cumbres Pass, Elevation 10,025 <-Antonito 37 miles, Chama, 13 miles->." Photo was probably taken around 1922. The vehicle is most likely Charles Lively's first automobile.



The store was originally established by Ken Lively, son of Station Master Charles Lively. They must have done fairly well as the store moved and expanded into a more substantial structure as traffic increased over the pass. Other than the Railroad, Highway 17 was the only efficient way to get from the Rio Conejos Valley to the Rio Chama Valley. Today the store is gone and the cabins have collapsed. The photo is likely from the 1930s.



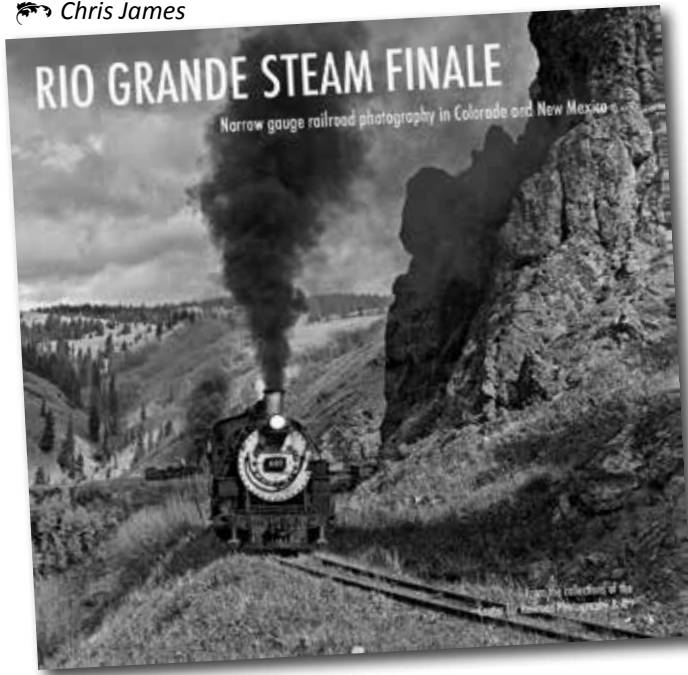
(Far left) The Cumbres Depot and the eastern leg of the Cumbres Snowshed are gone, but around 1930 both were still standing. (Center) But a snowshed can only do so much and at Cumbres, even the snow can stall a locomotive inside the snowshed. (Above) Milk cans of fish, just off the train at Cumbres, are carried by burro to a lake or stream for release. This image would be from before 1922 when the Covered Turntable was dismantled..

All photographs are from the Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec photo archives.



## A C&TS Friends Book Review

Chris James



## Rio Grande Steam Finale:

Narrow Gauge Railroad Photography in Colorado and New Mexico

Edited by Scott Lothes and Elrond Lawrence

Center for Railroad Photography and Art, Madison, Wisconsin, 2023  
\$60.00 + \$5 shipping. For Canadian and international shipping,  
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If you are like me and somewhere close to my age, and I have a hunch many of you are, you grew up enamored with trains. Like me, you probably acquired, either by way of gifts or on your own by spending your allowance, some of the railroad books of the day like *Rio Grande*, *Mixed Train Daily* and *Narrow Gauge in the Rockies* by Lucius Beebe and Charles Clegg and other author-photographers.

These hardbound gems were filled with incredible photographs of steam locomotives pulling heavy loads through mountainous terrain, and narrow gauge trains creeping through narrow canyons among the towering mountains of Colorado and New Mexico. They transported you back to the days when traveling along a narrow gauge line was a real adventure, not just a tourist experience. Even if it was only through photos and words, you could still feel the power and smell the smoke.

Funny thing: by the time you entered adulthood in the seventies, not only had most of those narrow gauge railroads been abandoned or converted to standard gauge and diesel,

many of the big hardbound books of that style were disappearing as well, replaced by thin, floppy soft-cover volumes full of average color photographs, accompanied by interesting but not necessarily inspiring text. Fortunately, like the Cumbres & Toltec, the Durango & Silverton, and other survivors who managed to dodge the scrappers' torch, beautiful new hardbound railroad books still occasionally appear.

One of these new books is *Rio Grande Steam Finale*, edited by Scott Lothes and Elrond Lawrence and published by the *Center for Railroad Photography and Art*. To all of us Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec this magnificent publication hits close to home. Subtitled "Narrow gauge railroad photography in Colorado and New Mexico," it features photographs from the 1950s and 1960s by six of the finest photographers of the era, including Tom Gildersleeve, John Gruber, Victor Hand, Jim

Shaughnessy, Fred Springer and Richard Steinheimer, as they documented the Denver & Rio Grande Western's final years of narrow gauge steam railroading. It





also includes two essays with accompanying photographs by Don L. Hofsommer and Karl Zimmerman that capture the “how” and “why” we still love narrow gauge railroads and their surroundings, even after all these years.

The content, however, is more than just steam and smoke. The stunning photos also include the railroad crews, the shops, structures along the right-of-way, and the San Juan scenery that, put together, made the narrow gauge lines so unique. The volume concludes with a gallery of recent images of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad and the Durango & Silverton by more contemporary photographers.

At ten-by-ten inches and 228 glossy pages, with nearly 200 black-and-white and color photographs, **Rio Grande Steam Finale** is a book you will want to own, not only to enjoy on its own but to help tide you over during those long winter months when you are not riding on the C&TS or participating in one of the work sessions.

The book is divided up into chapters based on important places along the Denver & Rio Grande Western narrow gauge: Alamosa, West to Chama, Chama to Durango, Silverton, Farmington and more. The endpapers of the book

provide an excellent “system map” from the height of the narrow gauge era, along with a condensed profile of Alamosa to Silverton and Farmington and everything in between.

As a photographer, one of the many things that struck me about the book was that, unlike the Beebe and Clegg-style books, many of the photos in **Rio Grande Steam Finale** show a different perspective:

there are few “portraits” of locomotives and trains. Many of the photos in the book are more like “street photography,” such as one might capture of people and events in New York City. Here we are not viewing portraits, but images that are more like fleeting memories, as captured on film by some of the best photographers of their time.

At \$60.00 (plus \$5.00 shipping) you may think it is “expensive,” but when you consider how many lawns you had to mow to get the \$9.95 you needed to purchase a Beebe and Clegg book, \$60.00 isn’t so bad after all.

**Rio Grande Steam Finale** will be available directly from the *Center for Railroad Photography*

*and Art* beginning October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, and can be ordered at <http://railphoto-art.org/books>. You can also order it through your local independent bookstore.



# HISTORIC PRESERVATION ON THE C&TS, 2023

## SESSION C (JUNE 19-23), SESSION D (JUNE 26-30)

PLUS: AN UPDATE ON EXPRESS CAR 163 RESTORATION IN COLORADO SPRINGS

Photos by Michael Mee and Don Atkinson. Photos are shown when available. Reports are based on Team Leader submissions to FIDO. Reports not submitted to FIDO are not represented. The Editor regrets any errors in content.

### FRIENDS SUPPORT SERVICES

#### Proj. 0200-0201: Site Leaders, Antonito and Chama

The Site Leaders in both Antonito and Chama keep the projects running smoothly. **Craig McMullen** (below) in Chama and **Don Atkinson** in Antonito are essential members of the work session teams.



#### Proj. 0230-0231: Food Preparation, Chama, Sessions C and D

Like the military, the Friends travel (and restore) on their stomachs. Thus, the lunches, snacks and especially the liquid refreshments are important. In both Antonito and Chama, the Food Preparation team are an integral part of the Friends' success.



#### Proj. 0263: Chronicling, Antonito and Chama, Sessions C and D



Photographer **Mike Mee** of Denver worked both sides of the Pass, not only as a chronicling photographer but also supplying the *Dispatch* with some great images you'll see here.



And Don Atkinson's photograph of Mike photographing Don and Don's photograph of Mike...it must have been an important event for the press corps to show up for John and Rob.

#### Proj. 0294: Hauling and Vehicle Operation, Ongoing

There wasn't a Team Leader Report (ahem...) but we all know **Bob Reib** is always on the job.



#### Proj. 0210: Work Session Check-in, Session C and D

**Mary Jane Smith** checked in volunteers on Sunday and Monday. Additionally, five-, ten- and twenty-five year volunteer awards were given out.

#### Proj. 0222: Friends Merchandise Sales, Antonito and Chama, Sessions C and D

Hats, T-shirts, calendars and other Friends of the C&TS swag sell like hot cakes to arriving volunteers and visiting railfans.



### ANTONITO, COLORADO: ED LOWRANCE CRF

There was a limited number of work Sessions scheduled for Antonito during Sessions C and D. Most of the activity was centered in Chama, documented later in this summary.

#### Proj. 0722: Painting, Antonito, Sessions C and D





There's always a need for painting on both newly-restored cars and buildings and existing stuff that needs some touch-up.



Team Leader **Don Stewart** was joined in the projects by his wife Jill and anyone else willing to handle a brush or a roller.



**Proj. 1382: Repair and Upgrade Concession Car, Sessions C and D**

The Concession Car (a.k.a. the "Potty Car") had some of its plumbing and flooring damaged in last winter's freezing weather. TL **Don Atkinson**, assisted by Steven Stallings, completed most of the repairs to make the car ready for summer special excursions.



**Proj. 1197: Building Period Passenger Trucks, Sessions C and D**

**Ian Kelly** continued the scratch-building of trucks for a variety of the C&TS restored passenger cars, including RPO 54 and Cook Car 053.



**Proj. 1390: Repair Windows and Repaint RPO 54, Sessions C and D**



Continuing previous sessions' repairs on RPO 54, Lynn Aldrich and Dean Barlin scraped and painted windows for later installation. **Don Atkinson** was the official Team Leader but these folks didn't need much "supervision."

**Proj. 1391: Rebuild Flat Car 6649 for MoW Use, Session C**

Flat Car 6649 has been designated for use by the Railroad in M-of-W work. **Fuzzy Anstine** completed welding on the frame by cutting out the crack and welding in new material.



**CHAMA, NEW MEXICO**

**Proj. 0720: Rolling Stock Painting, Chama, Sessions C and D**

Team Leader **Don Stewart** moved his painting crew over to Chama to work on a variety of rolling stock, including boxcars and two refrigerator cars, one yellow and one orange.







**Proj. 0700: Landscaping, Session C**



Team Leader **Elizabeth Dyer** (R) and LuEllen Schoen, dangerous women with dangerous tools, worked the garden patches around the Chama Depot, dealing with weeds, mulch and weed-barrier cloth. Mulch is especially tenuous and needs frequent replacement.

The inspection included the checking and, if needed, maintenance of brakes, couplers, bolsters, gaskets, air lines and more. Inspection date and location were then stenciled onto each car.



**Proj. 0730: Rolling Stock Lettering Session D**

Painting done? It's time for lettering! Team Leader **Steve Jorgenson** was joined by Tim Fraide and Gayle Meca. The team added period 1926-37 lettering, including the "Royal Gorge Route" herald to the yellow thirty-foot A.R.T. Reefer No. 55.



**Proj. 0780: Mechanical Inspection and Maintenance, Sessions C and D**

**Roy Lorentz** supervised a crew consisting of John Sutkus, Mike Wissler, Ken Sellers, Kailey Sellers, and Phil Gray doing the annual mechanical inspection of the Cumbres & Toltec fleet of rolling stock, better known as COTS: Clean, Oil, Test, Stencil.



The number of cars they COST'd is downright astounding. Don't ask!

**Proj. 1186: Prepare Locomotive 483 for Display, Session C**



Moving on to the forty-foot Reefer No. 163, newly repainted in A.R.T. orange, they applied the 1949 "Flying Rio Grande" logo and reporting marks.



Locomotive 483 looks gorgeous. Remember how it looked when they started back in about 2017? Team Leader **Robert Schoen** and Assistant Team Leader **Ben Sargent**, crew members Larry Springer, Mark





Opperman, Chuck Armstrong, Shawn Aukland and Dave Shannon winched the tender into position, wooden components were primed and painted, the tender was lettered on the engineer's side, the fireman's side of the tender was painted gloss black, now awaiting lettering, installed a custom fabricated cylinder saddle and pilot beam, stripped and primed the coal bunker doors, and much, much more. The result? Take a look! Wow!



**Proj. 1312: Restore and Rebuild High Side Gondola 1000, Sessions C and D**



**Marcus Hagemann**, returning once again from Germany, and William Hobbs, Johnny Ruhr, Rich Wisneski and Tim Bristow continued the complete reconstruction of High Side Gondola 1000. Much of the work focused on the brake rigging, brake shoes and preparation of the frame for the floorboard installation.



The car is now ready to be moved out of the Swamp by the Railroad.

**Proj. 1376: Restore Boxcar 3566 for use as Hollywood Movie Car for Display, Sessions C and D**

The Hollywood Movie Car is underway! The car must be road worthy. Replace with - the roof will be removed and a weather barrier installed. before the roof is reinstalled and siding on the car will be replaced.



The process began with major deconstruction of the ragged portions of the car. Since the car will remain a static display, similar to Locomotive 483, the car will not be made "road worthy."



It is anticipated that this will likely be the extent of completion to be accomplished in the two work sessions. Upon completion of Work Session D, the car will be wrapped and secured with tarps to withstand the winter and preparation for the 2024 season. The car will be relocated to Antonito when complete.



"Why did it have to be snakes?"  
*Indiana Jones*

**Proj. 1286: Build Chama Storage Building, Sessions C and D**

**Bob Conry** and crew continued construction of the off-site Chama equipment storage shed.



They spent all of Session C framing the walls. Two walls in the south east corner were drywalled on the back side because there is no access to sheetrock later. Walls were put together in 8'-9" sections because of the weight of the twelve gauge studs.



**Proj. 1307: Erect Sign Garden at Chama Depot, Session C**

After Covid delays, the Interpretive Sign Garden took shape near the east end of the Chama Depot. Team Leader **John Ferrell** and crew members Bill Beaver (direct from the UK) and Rick Lively, a distant relation of Charles Lively, the photographer and resident of the Cumbres Station, install a variety of the signage that a C&TS passenger might see along the route, such as mile posts, whistle boards and such.





## CUMBRES, COLORADO

### Proj. 1005: Reconstruction of Car Inspector's House, Sessions C and D

Work continued at the Car Inspector's House at Cumbres, with the main focus being the interior. **Vance Behr** and **John Pierce** co-lead the crew of Bryce Templeton, Remington Templeton, Pete Dahlberg and Clayton Buttram.



During the two sessions they installed the remaining walls on the first floor and began to install the sheetrock where appropriate. All the installed sheetrock was taped and mudded and leftover sheetrock was carried upstairs for working on the second floor.



Other walls and the ceiling were covered with more traditional bead-board planking, similar to the interior of the original structure.



Remington Templeton was back at work for his umpteenth work session, a quick draw with a nail gun. Work on the interior will continue in Special Session H.

## C&TS RIGHT OF WAY

### Proj. 0710: Right of Way Removal of Plant Materials, Section D

Plants grow and it's an annual need to keep the plant matter out of the R-of-W. A large crew including Alan Green, Ben Wight, Larry Marquess, Mike Smith, Keith Dameron, Greg Pringle, and Mike Mahoney was supervised by **Paul Davenport**.



Following the mandatory safety training, the crew successfully removed trouble vegetation along approximately seven miles of cutting during 3½ days on the right-of-way's west side and a full day on the east side.



It should be noted that the Railroad, due to a shortage of personnel, was unable to provide Project 710 with logistical support in the form of a work train or a track car with utility trailer.

### Proj. 0740: Wood Preservative Treatment, Session D

In a place like the high San Juan Mountains, wood takes a beating from the weather. One of the Friends volunteer tasks is to keep that wood in good shape. This applies to building, platforms, bridges and more.



### Proj. 0750: Right of Way Signage, Session D

Repair or replace damaged signage of all types located along the 64-miles of track. This work is done annually.



This year the crew, lead by **Mike Mahoney** and assisted by Terry Woolslly, Alan Green and Ben Wight, worked both the east and west ends of the line from a car or truck and walked to the job site. Most of the Chama to Los Pinos area is short walks. After the heavy winter, they expected to find more issues than they did. There





were three “must do” tasks: MP327 had rotted at the base and was on the ground; ditto the eastbound whistle board for Mud Tunnel; the Cascade trestle bridge mileage sign suffered from both exposure and a direct hit from a shotgun. The only reason we were not able to fix the Mud Tunnel whistle board was lack of speeder support.



As Team Leader Mike Mahoney said, the righting of MP 330 at Tanglefoot Curve was “undoing the constant effects of slope and gravity.” Like the flag raising on Iwo Jima, the mile post was hoisted back into place with the effort of many men. While it may not be converted into a memorial at Arlington Cemetery, Mike Mee’s photos, here and on the cover of this issue, are certainly iconic.



Those major tasks completed, the team spent the rest of the work session dealing with yard signs, whistle boards, depot signs and more. All in all it was a highly successful (and very busy) week.

## D&RG EXPRESS CAR 163 RESTORATION AT THE COLORADO SPRINGS WORK SITE, JULY-SEPTEMBER, 2023

Work at the Colorado Springs facility was a little less frequent during the summer months as the crew was spending their time in Chama and Antonito work sessions. Still, in **July**, they removed the remaining sheet metal around the old Delco light plant location, removed an additional two rows of interior siding, reworked new wood replacements of the uprights, and cleaned and organized the work site and made repairs to the tent that covers the baggage car.



In early August, Joe The Welder fabricated sleeves for connecting the vertical truss rods that connect the connect the upper sill of the roof to the lower sill of the car. These vertical truss rods had to be cut and removed in order to remove the old outside sill. Some of the vertical wood members had to be because of rot on their ends. When replaced it enabled the tie rods to be welded back together that anchor the angled truss rods, and drilled and installed bolts that hold the outside sill to the bolsters. They also routed reliefs on the bottom side of the sill for the metal blocks that anchor the side of the truss rods and drilled and installed bolts that hold the outside sills to the bolsters.



Later in August, they were able to weld more vertical truss rods, installed more spliced vertical structural members and installed the bolts holding the outside sill to the bolsters.

*Photos and notes by Don Atkinson*







**Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, Inc.**  
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Locomotive 168 and the participants in a C&TS Special Charter, a pre-convention event of the 43<sup>rd</sup> National Narrow Gauge Convention in Denver, pause for a photo at Ferguson's Trestle west of Antonito on August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

*Photo by Don Atkinson*