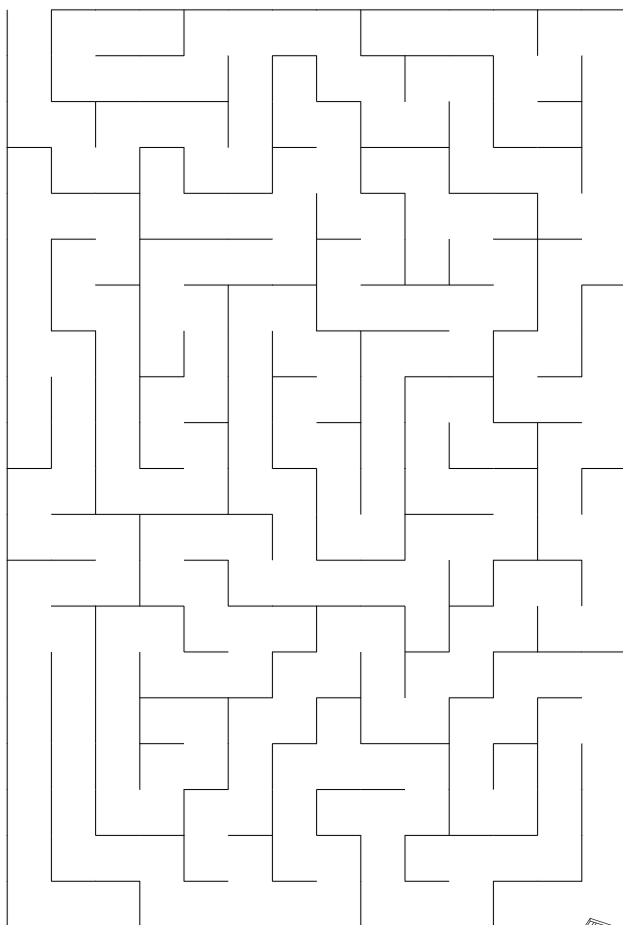


Osier, Colorado

Osier, Colorado, a former Denver & Rio Grande section town, is the lunch stop on the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad. The Dining Hall, built in 1989, serves lunch to passengers today.



Find your way from the train to the Osier Dining Hall.



Mom! I'm Hungry!

Eating Houses, Station Stops, and Food on Passenger Trains in the West

Train travel from the late 1800s to the early 1900s was often a long and boring trip. Passengers spent hours rattling and bumping down the tracks in a hard seat.

Have you ever wondered where you would get food if your rail journey lasted for days?



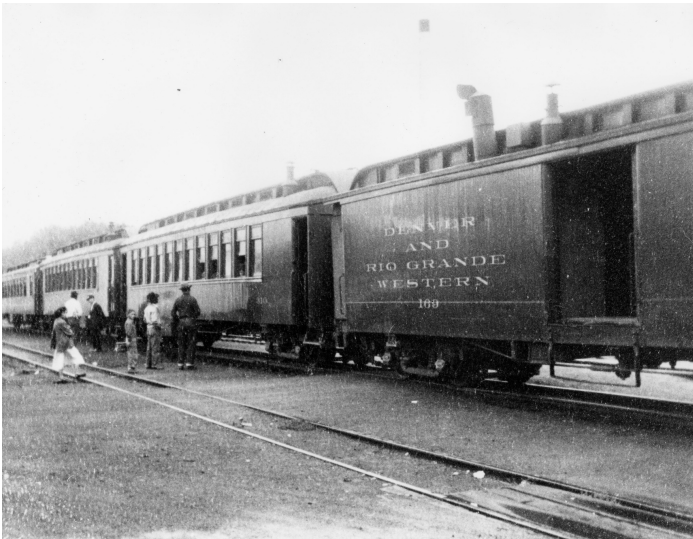
The Joyce family posed for a photo in Antonito, Colorado, in 1917. FCTSRR, RD085-023.

What's to eat?

Travelers had a small bag with clothes, maybe a toy or book, and other essentials. The days were long, and the stops were few and far between.

Passengers waited to get on and off the train, but often, the stops were only for a few minutes. At mealtime, the train kept on rolling.

Many passengers brought food on the train with them. There was no refrigeration on the train, so food choices were limited. Often, passengers brought hardtack (dry hard bread or biscuit made of flour, water, and sometimes salt), bread, and dried meat.



*The D&RGW San Juan passenger train at a station stop in Chama, New Mexico.
FCTSRR, RD010-018.*

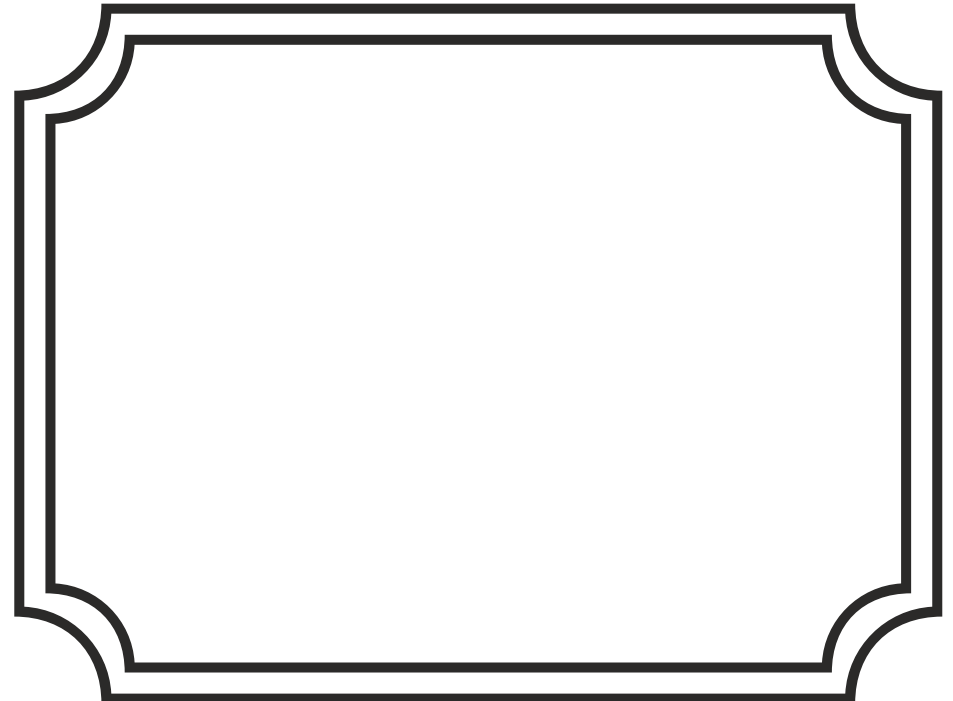
Flatware & Dinnerware

As locomotives advanced, railroads no longer required as many stops. They created dining cars with kitchens and trained staff. Passengers could then eat fresh meals on board the trains.

Many railroads that served meals on board the train created custom plates, bowls, cups, and silverware with the railroad's name or logo.

My railroad's name is:

Draw the dinnerware your railroad would use in the box below.



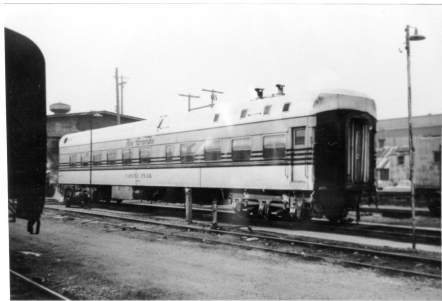
Eating on the D&RG

While the Denver & Rio Grande did not have Harvey houses, there were several towns and stations where passengers could get a meal. In the late 1800s, near the Chama, New Mexico depot, there was a hotel and eating house not far from the railroad tracks.

When the train stopped at Osier, Colorado, passengers and railroad employees could get a meal from the section house at Osier, Colorado. Meals in places like Osier, were often provided by the station master or the section foreman's wives. Today, Osier is the lunch stop on the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad.



In the late 1900s, some Denver & Rio Grande Western trains had dining cars to serve meals to passengers onboard the train.



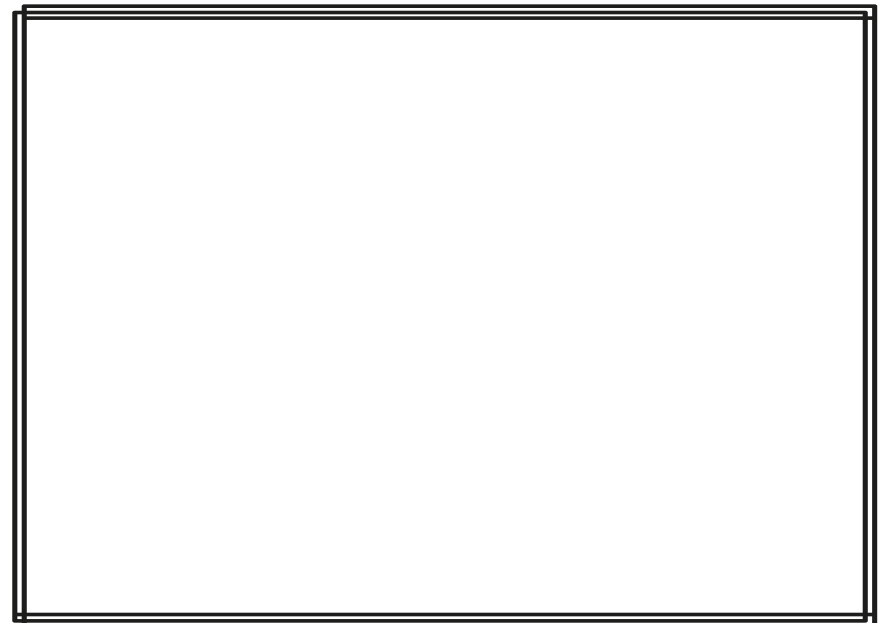
*Top: Passengers and the conductor have coffee in the dining car on the D&RG passenger train. FCTSRR, ERNG19500400-0245.
Bottom: D&RGW dining car Castle Peak. FCTSRR, SR47-064.*

On a warm day, in a car filled with people, the odors of food, good or bad, filled the car, often unpleasantly. The smell of food mingled with the scent of people who had not bathed or changed clothes in quite a while.



What would you pack to eat on the train?

Imagine what it would be like to travel for several days on the train without a way to keep your food cool or warm. What would you take to eat and drink?



Eating Houses

In the early days of train travel, the train made stops to power the train, adding water and fuel, such as wood or coal.

Sometimes the stops were in a town or place where food could be purchased. These places often had eating houses. An eating house was a place along the railroad tracks that served food to railroad employees and passengers.

Eating alongside the tracks was often very expensive and there were not multiple options, like we have today.

D&RG eating house and hotel in Chama, New Mexico, circa 1905. FCTSRR, RD011-014.



The food in eating houses was often terrible. A typical meal was bitter black coffee, stale bread nicknamed sinkers, and dry, tough, salty ham.

Due to the time limit before the train left, passengers sometimes paid for meals they never ate because they had to get back on board or risk being left behind.

An untrustworthy establishment would return any uneaten food to the pan and serve it again to the next train.

Harvey Houses

By the 1870s and 1880s, some railroad companies were trying to help passengers by providing clean eating houses and inns. While not run directly by the railroad, the railroad hired companies to run them.

Fred Harvey's Harvey Houses on the Santa Fe Railroad were the most famous. He had high standards for cleanliness, good food, and staff. The company hired young ladies called Harvey Girls to cook and serve. They were well paid and came from all over the country to work and travel the West.

*The Belen, New Mexico, Harvey House in 2010.**



Many of the Harvey Girls met their husbands while working at the Harvey Houses. However, once married they were no longer eligible to work for the Harvey Houses.

Today, several Harvey Houses have been preserved and restored. Many Harvey House recipes have been recorded and can be found online today.

*File: Belen harveyhouse.jpg. In Wikipedia. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Belen_harveyhouse.jpg