



# C&TS Dispatch

Vol. 5 No. 2

May 1992

## Tank Cars Arrive in Chama!

By Bill Lock

One of the major dreams of the **Friends** has been fulfilled. Six narrow-frame tank cars have arrived in Chama, New Mexico, to resume their historical role on the narrow-gauge line.

In the February 1992 issue of the **C&TS Dispatch**, we presented the detailed story of how this missing class of freight cars was located and acquired. In this issue we complete the story of how the cars came back to the Rocky Mountains.

Thanks to the Union Tank Car Company, member Charles Brown,

and all of our members, the **Friends** was able to purchase six of the original UTLX narrow-frame tank cars that roamed throughout the Denver & Rio Grande Western narrow-gauge system. These cars were used until 1963, when they were sold for scrap by the D&RGW and subsequently sold by the scrapper to the White Pass & Yukon Railroad in Skagway, Alaska.

From Vancouver to Alamosa

In the fall of 1991 the **Friends**

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In this issue we finish the series of articles about the narrow-gauge tank cars. Bill Lock describes the arrival of the cars in Alamosa, the Dedication there, and the transporting of the cars to Chama. On pages 6-7 Janet Rupley traces the route of the tank cars from British Columbia to New Mexico. And on page 8 Claude Morelli writes about the Gramps operations in and around Chama and in Alamosa, and about the oil traffic on the D&RGW between the two towns. In the February 1992 issue we presented the

story of how the missing tank cars were found and acquired, and a historical sketch of the Gramps oil field. Thank you to everyone involved in preparing these fine articles.

The July issue of the **C&TS Dispatch** will be a summer special highlighting the June volunteer work session and the role of Antonito, Colorado, in preserving the D&RGW narrow-gauge line and in the early years of the C&TS. We will also preview the July work session and the **Friends** Annual Meeting in Antonito. — The Editor



Scene in early March 1992 in the C&TS yard in Chama, showing the tank cars back home. The late winter snowfall in Chama must have made the tank cars feel very much at home after almost thirty years in Alaska. Photograph by Earl Knoob.

# C&TS Dispatch

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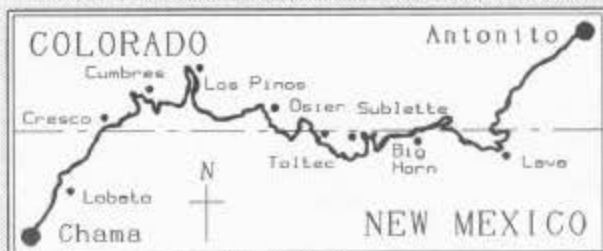
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The **C&TS Dispatch** is published by the Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, Inc., P.O. Box 222, Chama, New Mexico 87520. The Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad is a New Mexico nonprofit corporation.

The **Friends** is dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, a 64-mile-long operating railroad and museum of railroad history and technology between Antonito, Colorado, and Chama, New Mexico. The railroad is owned by Colorado and New Mexico and operated by Kyle Railways, Inc. Volunteers from the **Friends** have been especially active in restoring and preserving equipment and buildings on the line.

**Family membership** in the **Friends** is \$20.00 per year. All contributions are fully tax deductible and will be gratefully accepted. Please write to us in Chama for information about the **Friends**. The Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad is both a National and a State Registered Historic Site.

## Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad



Denver & Rio Grande Railway - 1880 to 1921  
Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad - 1921 to 1970  
Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad - 1970 to present

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## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

# The Windy Point

*In place of the regular Windy Point remarks by Friends President Bill Lock, we present the following address that he gave at the recent Board of Directors meeting.*

## PRESIDENT'S STATE OF THE ORGANIZATION TALK MID-WINTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO MARCH 7, 1992

It is appropriate to start out this very significant Board meeting with a few remarks providing you with an overview of our organization. Today, we will be going into great detail about many aspects of our organization, but it is important not to lose perspective of where we are and what we have been able to accomplish.

March 1992 is the fourth anniversary of the founding of the **Friends**. In 1988 we ended the year with just over 100 members—which was a great start. However, by the end of 1991 we had 763 members. At the present time we have 785, including many new 1992 members. It is my fond hope and goal during 1992 to pass 1,000 in total membership. If we are able to do so, we would be keeping or exceeding a 50 percent growth rate each year. Let there be no doubt: any organization that can grow 50 percent each year is doing something right!

Our contributions have similarly grown. From just a few thousand dollars in total contributions in 1988, in 1992 I anticipate and have proposed by way of a budget that we will receive almost \$40,000 in contributions. While this is a very large amount, one of the real challenges that we have before us is to find sources of significant additional revenue to fund the projects that are necessary for us to undertake in the future.

As you review our 1992 Proposed Budget, you will see that completing our responsibilities in the area of acquisition of new cars will limit the amounts we have available to go into restoration activities. While I regret this limitation, we must keep a proper perspective. In the last fifteen months we have completed the acquisition of fifteen new pieces of rolling stock for the Railroad—two standard-gauge boxcars, a short refrigerator car, six stock cars, as well as the six tank cars. Counting the Colorado Railroad Museum's two tank cars and valuing the donated transportation, the tank-car project came to \$100,000—a massive project for any organization, yet alone a new one.

We have also made tremendous progress in delegating various responsibilities of the organization. The Newsletter Committee, under the leadership of Art Nichols and Steve Schroeder, is a wholly self-sufficient committee composed of basically non-Board members. The Projects Committee under Glenden Casteel has continued to do outstanding work, and the Organizational Committee under the leadership of Bill Kepner has done marvelous work looking to the future of the **Friends**.

I think that you will see today the challenges that we have in front of

*Please turn to page 5*

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## Fourth Annual Moonlight Train

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Tickets are selling fast for the running of the Fourth Annual Moonlight Train. This event, sponsored by the **Friends**, began in 1989 and has been a very popular event with both members and non-members.

The train leaves Chama for Osier at 3:15 on Saturday afternoon, June 13, 1992. After two photo runbys, the train is

scheduled to arrive at Osier at 7:00 that evening for a complete steak dinner. The new dining hall at Osier is a wonderful facility for this event and not only allows warm indoor dining but also an opportunity for a visit to the spacious, well-stocked gift shop.

A discount on tickets for the event is another one of the many benefits of membership in the

**Friends**—the tickets are \$55 for adults, but **Friends** receive a \$5 discount. A portion of the ticket price is tax deductible as a donation to our work. Profits from the Moonlight Train have enabled us to purchase much-needed materials and equipment for the restoration of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad.

If you have not purchased your

ticket and would like to do so, please write to the **Friends** office in Albuquerque as soon as possible (7801 Academy NE, Building 2, Suite 102, Albuquerque, NM 87109).

A slide show is planned for Friday evening, June 12, in Chama. There will be no charge for this always interesting show.

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## The Friends Say "Thank You"...

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...to the **Chama Valley Supermarket** for all its kindnesses during our work sessions, and especially for its generosity in donating a significant amount of food to our volunteers during the 1991 work sessions. Proprietor **Maureen Gonzales** has really gone out of her way to make us feel at home in Chama and to demonstrate her belief that our volunteers are making a real

difference in the preservation of the Railroad.

...to **Cedco Publishing** and its owner **Charles Ditlefsen** for donating 1992 calendars to our summer volunteers this year. The calendar is the beautiful Colorado Narrow Gauge Calendar from the Colorado Railroad Museum. Cedco also publishes other very interesting calendars and books. If you want to receive their catalog

or be placed on their mailing list, please write Cedco Publishing, 2955 Kerner Blvd., San Rafael, CA 94901.

...to the **First National Bank in Albuquerque** for its support of the **Friends** in a number of ways. The bank has helped us with our checking account for several years, and during the March 1992 Board of Directors meeting the bank hosted the restoration seminar and

the all-day Board meeting in the historic and restored First National Bank Building at Third and Central in downtown Albuquerque. We are especially pleased to thank the Trust Department of the First National Bank for allowing us to use this stately facility.

Please support the businesses that have helped us!

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## Tools Needed

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Charles Emery, Leader of the Tool Car crew, has released a list of tools needed to upgrade and enlarge the Tool Car inventory. If you want to donate any of the following items, bring them with you to either the June or July work session.

- tap and dies, up to and including 1 in. and machine screws
- wood and metal files
- wood rasps
- steel bits: fractional set, numbered drills, and letter set

- hammers: claw, rip, and sledge
- shovels: square pointed and tile spade
- wrenches: combination, pipe, and crescent
- hand saws
- squares: framing and

- combination
- pop riveter
- chisels: cold and wood
- goose-neck wrecking bars
- screwdrivers
- channel locks
- pliers: standard and diagonal

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## Special Offer to Friends

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You will notice that mailed with this issue of the **Dispatch** is a catalog and order form from Mountain Automation Corp., a publisher in Colorado Springs. The President of Mountain

Automation has been a long-time member of the **Friends** and supporter of our preservation efforts. As we have done in the past, we would like to give our members an opportunity to

purchase the quality books and tapes that they distribute. We are sure that you will enjoy these fine full-color booklets and video tapes. In addition, Mountain Automation will pay the **Friends** 25% of the

revenue generated. Therefore, when you are ordering, be sure to mention the **Friends** and if possible use the enclosed order form. Thank you for your support.

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## C&TSRR Decals

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Dedicated **Friends** member Roy Blizzard, who regularly travels from New Jersey to work on the Railroad, has made a wonderful and substantial donation to the **Friends**. He has prepared and had manufactured custom model decals featuring the railroad as it

now exists today—the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad. These decals in HO scale are also appropriate for SN3 modelers. The sets feature all of the lettering needed to make a complete train, including engines, passenger equipment, and all freight

equipment lettered for the C&TS. Roy has donated these decals so that they can be sold to **Friends** members for use on their model railroads. Prices are listed below. They can be ordered through the **Friends** office in Albuquerque.

This is a great opportunity for

those **Friends** who are modeling the Cumbres & Toltec.

5 Color Herald . . . . .	\$ 3.00
3 Color Herald . . . . .	\$ 3.50
Passenger Car Names (1 complete set) . . . . .	\$ 7.00
White Herald (3 sets) . . . . .	\$ 4.00

# Tank Cars

*Continued from page 1*

purchased the six cars (plus the two cars that went to the Colorado Railroad Museum with the assistance of the **Friends**). Donated transportation from the Burlington Northern Railroad, the Union Pacific Railroad, and the Southern Pacific/Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad brought the cars from Vancouver, British Columbia, to Alamosa, Colorado. The eight cars were shipped together to Pueblo, Colorado, where the two cars going to the Colorado Railroad Museum were separated from the other six and sent north up the "joint line" to Denver and subsequently to Golden.

The eight cars left Vancouver, British Columbia, on February 17, 1992, after they had been loaded and tied down on standard-gauge flatcars provided by the Burlington Northern. BN took them south to Portland, Oregon, where on February 19, 1992, they were exchanged with the Union Pacific. The UP then carried them through eastern Oregon, Idaho, and into Utah. They arrived in Salt Lake

*BELOW: Three of the tank cars (nos. 64, 62, and 50) in string of cars on the siding in front of the Alamosa depot during the Dedication. Photograph by Bill Lock.*



City in the early morning hours of February 22. The next day, Sunday, they were exchanged with the Rio Grande in Salt Lake City. On Tuesday, February 25, they made their way through Grand Junction, Colorado, over Tennessee Pass, and into Pueblo that night.

On Wednesday WP&Y cars 58 and 59 headed north to Denver, and in the early morning hours of Saturday, February 29, they arrived in Golden. The six cars destined for the C&TS—nos. 50, 51, and 62-65—left Pueblo before dawn on Thursday, February 27, and arrived in Alamosa at approximately 8:40 a.m. that same day. The D&RCW thoughtfully spotted the cars in front of the historic Alamosa depot.

## The Dedication

On Saturday, February 29, a Dedication ceremony was held in Alamosa to celebrate the arrival of the tank cars. A good crowd was in attendance, and the Dedication was a great opportunity to publicly thank our corporate sponsors without whom the return of the tank cars would not have been possible. Although representatives of the Union Tank Car Company and the Union Pacific Railroad could not be present, Ron Phillips, Alamosa Trainmaster for the Southern Pacific/Denver & Rio Grande Western was present, along with Steve Ketcham, Division Trainmaster, and Dave Hopkins of the Burlington



Northern, who had traveled from Trinidad for the Dedication.

After remarks by these railroad representatives and Joe Vigil, General Manager of the C&TS, the cars were officially dedicated to the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad. On hand to accept the dedication were Commissioners from both Colorado and New Mexico. Carl Turner, one of the New Mexico Commissioners and Chairman of the Commission, officially accepted the dedication. Colorado State Representative Lewis Entz, one of the Colorado Commissioners, reminded those in attendance of the appropriateness of the setting in Alamosa for the dedication of these historic tank cars. We were very honored to have these two Commissioners at the ceremony. Mr. Turner had traveled from Santa Fe, and Mr. Entz had come from Denver, where the Colorado Legislature was in session.

Very much a part of the ceremony were five representatives from the Colorado Railroad Museum. Executive Director Charles Albi thanked the **Friends** for making it possible for the museum to acquire two of the cars. He also thanked the BN, UP, and SP/D&RCW for transporting the tank cars from Vancouver.

We worked very hard to get publicity for our corporate sponsors and the C&TS as a part of the dedication ceremony. Representatives from four newspapers were present, and terrific stories later appeared in the

*ABOVE: Dignitaries standing at the front of the tank cars (with the **Friends** banner displayed) at the Dedication in Alamosa on Saturday, February 29, 1992. People playing a role in obtaining the tank cars and in accepting them on behalf of the Railroad included, from the left, Joe Vigil, Chama, NM, General Manager of the C&TSRR; Carl Turner, Santa Fe, NM, Chairman of the C&TSRR Commission and one of two New Mexico representatives on the Commission; Colorado State Representative Lewis Entz, Hooper, CO, also a member of the C&TSRR Commission and one of two Colorado representatives on the Commission; Bill Lock, Albuquerque, NM, President of the **Friends**; Ron Phillips, Alamosa, CO, Trainmaster for the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad; Steve Ketcham, Trinidad, CO, Division Trainmaster for the Burlington Northern Railroad; Dave Hopkins, Trinidad, CO, with the Burlington Northern; Charles Albi, Denver, CO, Executive Director for the Colorado Railroad Museum in Golden, CO; and Randy Worwag, Englewood, CO, long-time **Friends** volunteer and volunteer at the Colorado Railroad Museum, who coordinated the purchase of two tank cars through the **Friends** on behalf of the Colorado Railroad Museum. Photograph by John Rupley.*

*Pueblo Chieftan, the Valley Courier, and the Alamosa News. In addition, stories were published*

in the *Denver Post*, the *Rocky Mountain News*, and the *Albuquerque Tribune*, among other publications.

### Off-Loading Technology

At Alamosa each tank car had to be lifted by a crane straddling the standard-gauge flatcar. First, the crane picked up the tank car's trucks (which were removed from the car in Vancouver) and positioned them on a flatbed highway tractor/trailer. Then, the crane lifted the tank car and lowered it on to its trucks. The car was tied down aboard the tractor/trailer and driven almost eighty miles to Chama. There, the tractor/trailer was backed up to the end of the track at the west end of

the yard.

Diesel no. 19 used a flatcar as an idler car and rolled it on to the trailer, coupling to the tank car. Actually, it was not possible to couple directly to the tank cars because on the White Pass & Yukon the original D&RGW couplers had been replaced with three-quarter-sized couplers. Thus, when the first car arrived in Chama the couplers of the idler flatcar and no. 50 were chained together. In off-loading the other five cars, no. 50 was used as an additional idler car so that the couplers could be joined directly.

### From Alamosa to Chama

On the Monday following the Dedication, the tank cars began

their journey to Chama. Number 50 was first, followed by nos. 62 and 64 on Tuesday, March 3. An old-fashioned spring snowstorm came in on Tuesday afternoon and completely stopped the moving operations with three cars in Chama and three cars still in Alamosa. The operations got underway again on Tuesday, March 10. Tank car no. 65 arrived in Chama that day, and no. 51 followed on Wednesday. Finally, on Thursday, March 12, 1992, the last car, no. 63, arrived in Chama and was off-loaded.

Again, my most sincere thanks to everyone—corporate sponsors, and every member of the **Friends**—for bringing the tank cars back to the narrow-gauge line after a twenty-nine-year absence.

We can all be very proud of this great accomplishment.

*BELOW LEFT: Scene at the site of the Dedication on Saturday, February 29, 1992, with four tank cars in the background and Friends President Bill Lock explaining to those assembled the journey of the tank cars from British Columbia through Alaska and the lower 48 to Alamosa. Photograph by John Rupley.*

*BELOW RIGHT: Friends Director John Rupley hanging the Friends banner at the Dedication ceremony on WP&Y tank car no. 65. An excellent crowd was on hand on February 29, 1992, to dedicate the tank cars. Photograph by Tracy Griffin.*



## President's Address

*Continued from page 2*

us. Getting more members actively involved in committees, as they have on the Newsletter Committee, is going to be tremendously important. A few minor changes are needed in our Bylaws in order to keep our legal structure up to speed with the growth that we have experienced. We need to understand fully our mission and that involves several

aspects, including the adoption of a final Mission Statement, a definition of how we fit in with the Commission and the Operator with regard to the property, and issues on how we can best preserve this precious resource known as the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad. We need to look at sources of additional revenue and additional membership as well. Finally, we must plan for the future and the important needs that the Railroad has both in preservation and interpretation, including the preservation of written and human resources that are fast disappearing.

My hat is off to each Director

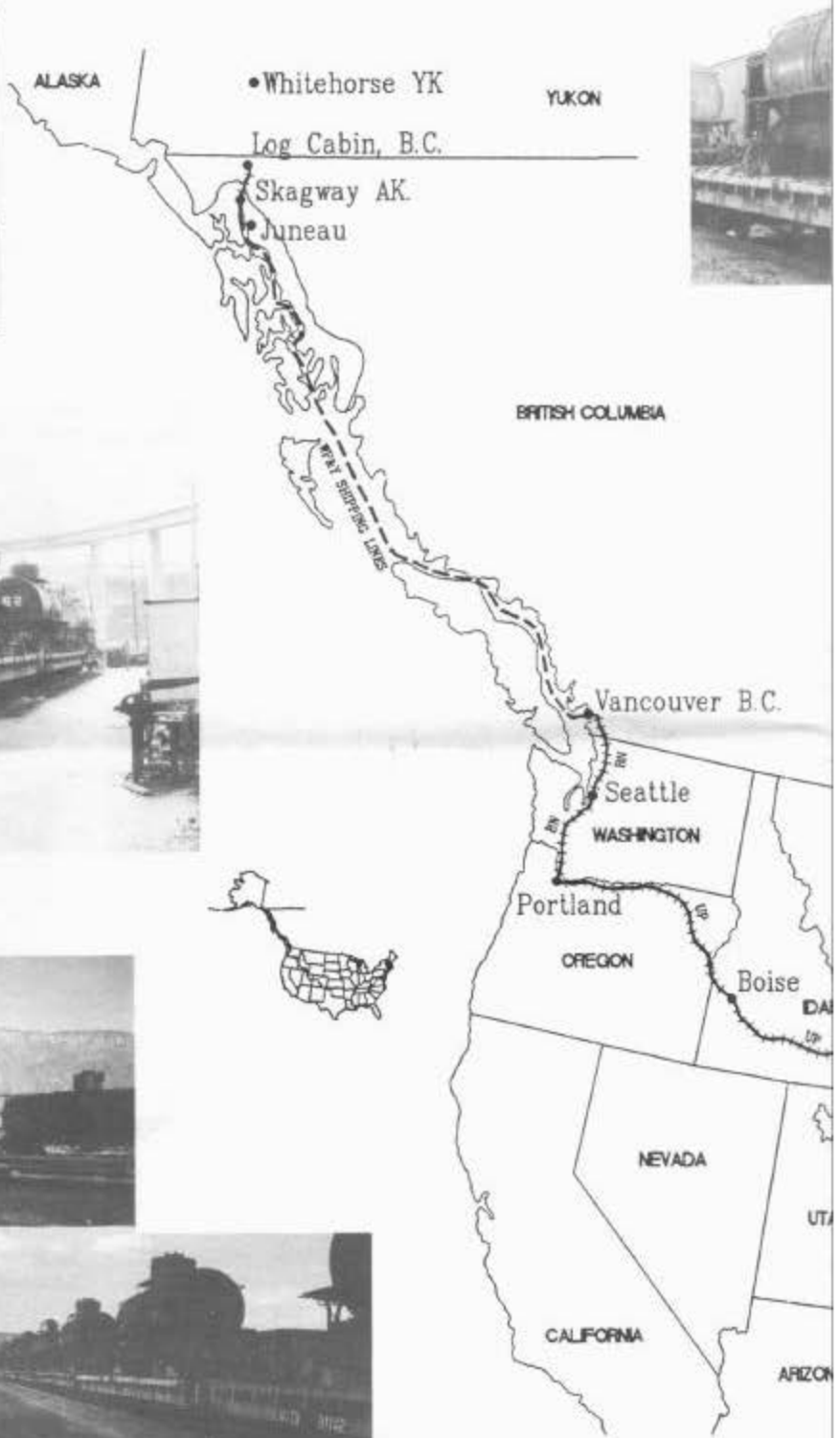
for your personal dedication in serving as a Director and in most cases coming many hundreds of miles for this important meeting. Our organization is not only strong and sound, but vibrant and futuristic, and I can assure you that with your continued support we will remain one of the leading preservation entities anywhere.

— Bill Lock

Craig and Renee Story proudly announce the birth of their son, an upcoming volunteer

"Beau"  
Beauregard  
Bernard Story

April 19, 1992  
Easter





## ROUTE OF THE TANK CARS A 4000-MILE JOURNEY

Organized by the Friends  
of the Cumbres & Toltec  
Scenic Railroad

© 1992 Janet Rupley



PAGE 6, TOP TO BOTTOM:

1. The tank cars began their journey at Log Cabin siding, British Columbia. On October 7, 1991, a number of the tank cars sit awaiting rail transportation by narrow-gauge rail to the port of Skagway, AK, where the cars were loaded on the freighter Frank H. Brown for shipment to Vancouver. Photograph by Bill Lock.

2. String of tank cars loaded on board trailer train flat cars in Vancouver, BC, awaiting shipment on the Burlington Northern Railroad. The cars had arrived aboard the steamship Frank H. Brown and were transported around Vancouver harbor by highway and then loaded, with their trucks off, on standard-gauge flat cars. Burlington Northern transported the tank cars from Vancouver to Portland, OR. February 1992. Photograph by Trish Holmes of Ranger Transport, the company the Friends engaged to move the tank cars around Vancouver harbor and load them aboard the standard-gauge flat cars.

3. Union Pacific Railroad transported the tank cars from Portland, OR, into Salt Lake City, UT. Because transportation in and out of Salt Lake City occurred at night, the first photos of the tank cars in Utah were taken

near Thompson, east of Salt Lake City, on Monday, February 24, 1992. Photograph by Friends volunteer, Marvin Sandmire.

4. The Southern Pacific/Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad transported the cars from Salt Lake City, UT, to Alamosa, CO. Here the cars were in the Rio Grande's yard at Grand Junction, CO, on Tuesday, February 25, 1992. Photograph by Friends Director, Wade Hall.

PAGE 7, TOP TO BOTTOM:

1. The cars went over Tennessee Pass and down into Pueblo, CO. There, the eight cars were switched and two cars (nos. 58 and 59) destined for the Colorado Railroad Museum were sent north on the "joint line" to Denver, CO. The Friends six cars were taken into Alamosa, CO. On Wednesday, February 26, 1992, the cars were in the Pueblo yard. Photograph by Friends volunteer, Bill Nimon.

2. After the dedication in Alamosa, CO, the cars were reassembled on their trucks and transported by highway on flatbed trucks to Chama, NM. Here, car no. 63 is being lifted by the overhead crane in Alamosa to the flatbed trailer (where the railroad trucks have already been placed) in preparation for its move. Note that this was after a major snowstorm that delayed the moving of the tank cars by over a week. Wednesday, March 11, 1992. Photograph by Friends member, Bill Davis.

3. Unloading no. 63 from the flatbed truck involved lining it up with the stub end of the track at the west end of the Chama yard, connecting the rail, and hitching up to the car with other rail cars, since they are lighter than an engine. Here, in addition to a flat car being used as an idler car, the first tank car to be unloaded (no. 50) served as a 3/4 size coupler idler car. (The White Pass & Yukon had changed the couplers from the full-size couplers used on the C&TS, as well as the historic Rio Grande narrow-gauge, to a 3/4 size coupler). Thursday, March 12, 1992. Photograph by Friends volunteer, Fred Folk.

4. On Thursday, March 12, 1992, C&TS Diesel no. 19 brings two tank cars across the Chama highway crossing. Evidence of the recent snowfall is apparent as well. Photograph by Friends volunteer, Fred Folk.

# Some Notes on Oil and the D&RGW Narrow Gauge

By Claude Morelli

*When long-time Friends member and former Director Claude Morelli called me last fall, I was very pleased to hear that he was planning to research the oil-field operations in the Chama basin and their links to the D&RGW narrow-gauge line. During the holiday break from his graduate studies in political science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Claude studied the appropriate records in both Albuquerque and Alamosa. Rather than waiting to tell the story until he had delved further into the material, I asked Claude to prepare some notes for this issue. Here they are, and thanks very much Claude! — A.N.*

## I.

The history of oil exploration and development in the Chama Basin began long before the discovery of the Gramps field in 1935. Edgar Biggs, lumberman and builder of the Rio Grande & Pagosa Springs Railroad, financed the basin's first exploratory wells in 1895. He had realized that oil seeps along the Navajo River near Pagosa Springs, Colorado, were an indication of production quantities of oil. None of the wells, however, was successful.

Deterred only briefly by this failure, Biggs was soon planning another attempt. In 1901 he hired professional geologist Arthur Lakes to undertake a geological survey of a portion of Archuleta County to determine its oil-producing potential. According to Gordon Chappell, Lake's investigation covered the area from the town of "Edith to Pagosa Springs, and from the Conejos Range to the San Juan" River. This was land mostly under the control of Biggs's New Mexico Lumber Company (Chappell, *Logging Along the Denver & Rio Grande*, p. 51).

Lakes's findings were optimistic enough to spark a small oil boom

in the Pagosa Springs area in the late summer of 1901. Acting on Lakes's encouraging findings, Biggs and a number of his associates incorporated the Colorado Exploration, Land and Oil Company. Following quickly on the heels of the Biggs group, investors from Denver, Florence, and elsewhere soon formed at least seven other new oil companies in hopes of cashing in on the expected bonanza. It quickly became apparent, however, that the experience of 1895 would repeat itself: exploratory wells yielded no production quantities of oil. Although sporadic exploration efforts continued in the Chama Basin after 1901, the discovery of a commercially viable oil field would not materialize until the Gramps discovery well was drilled in 1935.

## II.

The discovery and development of the Gramps oil field in the Depression years of 1935 and 1936 foreshadowed the start-up of a welcome and significant source of new traffic for the D&RGW and the Cumbres Pass line. The D&RGW, like most other American railroads, suffered a severe decline in carloadings since the beginning of the Depression in 1929 (this, in fact, sent the company into bankruptcy in 1935). In the 1930s the railroad had an excess capacity in track and equipment, much of it quite new. Despite this situation, the railroad found in the new Gramps business a sufficiently assured and steady source of future income to justify (or to arrange) investment in the relatively major new capital expansion projects that were required to properly service the business.

Most important of these projects was the acquisition of new narrow-gauge tank cars. At the time of the discovery of the Gramps field, the Rio Grande did not have enough tank cars available to transport the new

crude oil traffic out of Chama. Although I have yet to find or know of any archival or other evidence to verify this, it seems reasonable to assume that the twenty or so frameless narrow-gauge tank cars that UTLX (Union Tank Lines) added to its D&RGW-assigned roster in 1936 and 1937 (see Robert Sloan's article on the UTLX narrow-gauge cars in the July/August 1978 issue of *The Narrow Gauge Gazette*) were added specifically in anticipation of the new Gramps traffic.

From what I have been able to piece together, none of this traffic could have begun moving until the spring of 1937 at the earliest. Apparently, the first sales of Gramps crude were to a Denver refinery (or refineries?). These sales apparently went on until the Gramps, later the Oriental, refinery opened in Alamosa (see below).

Transport of the oil to Denver, of course, required transferring it from narrow-gauge to standard-gauge tank cars at Alamosa. To accomplish this, the Rio Grande constructed a gravity-feed oil transfer facility near the locomotive shops in Alamosa. The March 25, 1937, issue of the *Alamosa Daily Courier* reported that:

The transfer depot, which is being built near the railroad shops, will accommodate twelve standard gauge cars and twelve narrow gauge cars. Eighteen men are employed in the building of the station. Tracks for the cars and pipes for the transfer of the oil are being installed. An elevated track is being constructed for the narrow gauge cars and a depressed track for the standard gauge so that oil may be transferred by gravity.

The article went on to note that seven cars of oil per day were expected to be shipped from Chama to the transfer facility at

Alamosa. Another article appeared on May 1, 1937, in the same newspaper announcing the opening of the facility, and it revised this figure by stating that "[o]fficials of the railroad announced...that they expected to load 60 cars of oil per week at the transfer station...." They were referring to 60 standard-gauge cars. A more-concrete figure appeared in the June 3, 1937, issue: "The [s]teady shipments of oil from the oil fields near Chama...for May totaled 209 cars...."

Thus the Gramps business was undoubtedly important to the D&RGW narrow gauge. It is reasonable to assume that the figure cited above of approximately 200 cars per month is about average. If this were the case and keeping in mind that the oil-loading facility in Chama operated only ten months of the year, the Gramps operation probably added at least 2,000 carloads-worth of business to the Cumbres Pass line every year during the late 1930s.

By the end of 1958, according to Robert Bieberman, total production in the Gramps field had reached 4,711,578 barrels. Since 100 percent of this oil moved over the narrow-gauge line to Alamosa, and since a narrow-gauge tank car could carry 150 barrels of oil, the average annual carloadings for the entire period from 1937 to 1958 may have been around 1,500. Note, however, that this is only an average for all twenty-two years. Carloadings probably climbed as high as 2,500 in the record output years during the Second World War, when the Gramps field was producing around 1,200 barrels per day, but carloadings likely dropped off in the postwar period.

## III.

Sometime after the Alamosa oil transfer facility opened in May 1937, Gramps began refining its own crude oil at a small refinery it

constructed immediately southeast of the D&RGW shops in Alamosa. Later, the company sold this operation to the Oriental Refining Company. Sales of the refinery's output were undoubtedly restricted to Alamosa and other points in the surrounding San Luis Valley.

The opening of the Alamosa refinery probably changed operations on the narrow-gauge line very little: there was still a need to move the crude from Chama to Alamosa. For the D&RGW standard gauge, of course, the new refinery meant the loss of the Alamosa-to-Denver movements.

The Oriental Refinery handled all of the crude output of the Gramps field until at least 1958. In that year Lafayette Hughes, the owner of the field, died, and "the Hughes brothers [began] shipp[ing] part of the oil to Alamosa and part [again] to Denver." ("The Gramps Oil Field,"

*C&TS Dispatch*, February 1992, p. 6.) After 1958 the refinery operated at a reduced level. The remaining narrow-frame UTLX tank cars on the D&RGW narrow gauge were retired in 1963, leaving only the late 1930s-era frameless cars in operation on the system (see the *C&TS Dispatch*, February 1992, p. 6, for the photographs of the tank cars taken by George Swain at the Chama oil dock in January 1964). These retirements were an indication that a further slowdown at the refinery had probably occurred. This may have been the result of a small explosion and fire at the refinery (*Valley Courier*, January 25, 1963).

The refinery and accompanying narrow-gauge crude oil transport operation did not shut down completely until October 1964 (*Valley Courier*, September 21, 1964). After closing its refinery in 1964, the Oriental Refining Company continued operating a bulk plant and gas stations in

Alamosa until at least 1976. The refinery is shown on page 12.

#### Sources

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Robert Bieberman, "Exploration for Oil and Gas in the Chama Basin," *Guidebook of Rio Chama Country* (Socorro: New Mexico Geological Society, 1960), p. 110.

*C&TS Dispatch*, February 1992. *Chama Valley Tattler*, Summer 1989.

Gordon S. Chappell, *Logging Along the Denver & Rio Grande* (Golden: Colorado Railroad Museum, 1971), p. 51.

Robert Sloan, *The Narrow Gauge Gazette*, July/August 1978. *Valley Courier*, January 25, 1963; September 21, 1964.

#### Correction

Because of an error in editing, in the February 1992 issue of the *Dispatch*, page one, column two, the date for the closing of the Gramps refinery at Alamosa, CO, is given as 1963. The correct date is 1964.

#### George Stiehl

George Stiehl of Albuquerque, NM, a member of the Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, died on March 29, 1992. The Customer Satisfaction Department of Cadillac Motor Car Division, General Motors Corporation, has made a donation to the historic preservation work of the Friends in memory of Mr. Stiehl.



## LETTERS TO THE FRIENDS

Readers are encouraged to write on any topic pertinent to the work of the *Friends* and the history, preservation, and interpretation of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad. Send your letters to the editor at: 1307 45<sup>th</sup> Street, Los Alamos, NM 87544. All letters will be acknowledged and some editing may be done to conserve space.



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
STATE CAPITOL  
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO 87503

(505) 827-3000

BRUCE KING  
GOVERNOR

March 27, 1992

William J. Lock  
Friends of Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad, Inc.  
7801 Academy NE  
Albuquerque, NM 87109

Dear Bill:

Thanks for sending the information about the arrival of the historic tank cars. Although I saw only a brief item in the Albuquerque newspapers, I understand it received more attention in Alamosa, Durango and Farmington.

I'm sorry we were not able to send anyone from the Governor's office to attend the arrival ceremony. As you know, we have restrictions on out-of-state travel and, unless the Governor can go personally, the approval process for staff travel is cumbersome.

I hope we can schedule the Governor to ride the railroad sometime this summer or early fall and I will be sure to let you know if we are successful.

Yours truly,

  
John A. McKean  
Press Secretary

Letters to the Friends appeared first in the March 1991 issue. Since then your letters have given the *Dispatch* a personal touch—and that's good. Your letters have also presented valuable information and opinions. Please keep sending your letters. There are many things to write about: What have you enjoyed most from being a member of the Friends? Do you have ideas about the future of our organization? Do you remember an incident on the narrow-gauge line from the D&RGW or early C&TS days? Is there something about historic preservation that you want to tell others? Have you a comment about something that has appeared in the *Dispatch*? Do you know a little-known fact about the narrow-gauge line? Let's hear from you. — A.N.

## Updated Tank Car Numbers

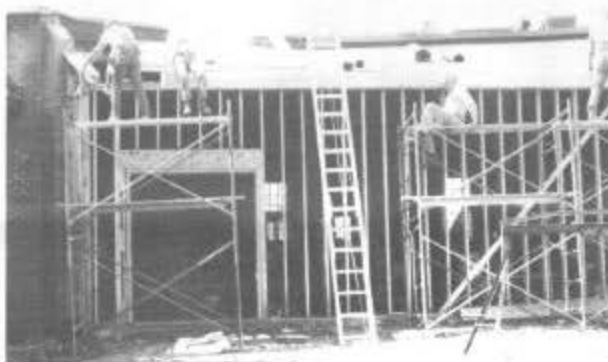
Thanks to some good detective work by Earl Knoob on the tank cars once they were back in Chama, we now know the original 1927 D&RGW car numbers for the tank cars that returned from Alaska. These cars were converted from standard gauge to narrow gauge in February 1927 and are all of a 6500 gallon capacity (updating information on capacity given on page 1 of the February 1992 *Dispatch*):

1927 D&RGW Numbers	1947 D&RGW Numbers	1956 D&RGW Numbers	WP&Y Numbers
12918	88100	11012	64
12962	88101	11013	62
13168	88103	11015	63
12757	88106	11018	65
12977	88110	11022	59
13084	88112	11024	50
12739	88113	11025	51
12720	88125	11027	58

**TOP AND MIDDLE RIGHT:** Work was progressing well on the Chama Engine House addition at the special work session on September 14, 1991. During the weekend the work was completed so that the facility was ready for winter. Photographs by Bill Davis.

**BOTTOM LEFT:** C&TSRR Commission Chairman Carl Turner reminiscing during the Dedication of the six tank cars from Alaska. This Dedication was held in front of the historic Alamosa D&RGW depot. From the left: Carl Turner from Santa Fe, New Mexico; Colorado Representative Lewis Entz from Hooper, Colorado, one of the Colorado Commissioners on the C&TSRR Commission; and Friends President Bill Lock. Saturday, February 29, 1992. Photograph by Earl Knoob.

**BOTTOM RIGHT:** On March 28, 1992, nationally known artist Ted Rose spoke at the Friends Annual Dinner Meeting in Albuquerque. He used slides in his talk as a means of demonstrating "art as a historic preservation form." Thanks to Ted for his excellent program and for again helping us with the Moonlight Train brochure. This year's color brochure features a magnificent painting of the Railroad, actually inspired by an earlier Moonlight Train. Photograph by Bill Lock.



## 1992 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

May 23, Saturday  
Opening Day on the C&TS

June 10-12, Wednesday-Friday  
Volunteer Work Session  
Chama

June 12, Friday  
Program  
Chama

June 13, Saturday  
Moonlight Train  
Chama

July 30-August 1, Thursday-Saturday  
Volunteer Work Session  
Antonito

August 1, Saturday  
Annual Meeting and Program  
Antonito

October 11, Sunday  
End of Season on the C&TS



The Alamosa, CO, refinery is shown in the left background in this 1953 photograph taken by Phil Hastings in the Alamosa yard. Also in the background is the standard-gauge roundhouse, from which protrudes the tender of a 2-10-2. To the right is the narrow-gauge roundhouse. Narrow-gauge locomotives nos. 492 and 499 are moving out on the dual-gauge track. Reprinted with permission from *Colorado Memories of the Narrow Gauge Circle*, Carstens Publications, Inc., 1979.



### Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, Inc.

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