

ROCKY MOUNTAIN RAILROADER

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Edited by
Carl Hewett

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THANKS, EVERYONE

Aluminum painted tires and sleek sides gleam in the sunlight as a massive, spick-and-span giant of the rails awaits at Denver's fine Union Station to whisk us away to the wonders of the Royal Gorge and the roof of the world for this trip our special train takes us in fancy over the "Scenic Line of the World".

As the last preparations are being made, we'd like to take a few minutes out and express a few words of appreciation to the ever-widening circle of friends and well-wishers who have been making all of our club activities so highly interesting and successful. To Mr. Neger of the Union Pacific and Mr. Sagstetter of the Rio Grande for making possible our highly interesting and instructive field trips to the Pullman and Burnham shops of their respective roads; to Mr. R. V. Cadman and Mr. C. V. Harshaw, Agents of the CB&Q at Brush for showing us all the intricacies of the longest installation of automatic train control in the world; to Mr. Lawrence, Tunnel Watchman at East Portal for explaining all the details of the Moffat Tunnel ventilating plant; and to literally dozens of other railroad men who have made it possible for our members, both in groups and singly, to pursue our fascinating hobby. Maybe it's just good old Western hospitality, but whatever it is, we could use up a great many pages describing all the help we have received in our efforts to find out what makes the wheels go around.

Besides expressing our thanks to all our good railroad friends who have helped us so much, we'd like to thank those who make publication of the "Railroader" possible, especially Miss Swanson, whose mimeographing needs no further comment, and the Happy Home Bakery for their co-operation. (By the way, those Happy Home cakes do taste simply grand, so keep an eye open for the yellow bakery wagon that comes by your house.) Finally, your Editor wishes to express personal thanks to the other members of the Bulletin Committee, Dick Kindig and Lester Logue for their indispensable co-operation.

It's time for our special to leave now, and as the powerful exhaust blasts tell us we are settling down for the long pull to Palmer Lake, we have an opportunity to let our minds wander back over the months since we ran our first little special on a mythical trip over the Union Pacific. We'll be seeing plenty more of the Denver & Rio Grande Western in our feature article this trip, when we pay our tribute to "The Baby Railroad That Grew Up".

CLUB NEWS

That the railroads of the Rocky Mountains present a fascinating and thrilling panorama of interest for all of us who are fortunate enough to be Colorado railfans is becoming increasingly apparent at every club meeting. One of the highlights that forcibly impresses us with this fact was the showing by Miss Helen McGraw, at our July meeting, of her moving pictures of a trip over the famous old South Park narrow gauge to Leadville. Everyone who was present on that occasion will agree that not only did Miss McGraw have abundant supply of excellent scenes

The Best 32¢ worth in Colorado

Thirty-two cents isn't very much money, in fact it's slightly more than the price of two packages of cigarettes. Yet that is all it costs to take one of the finest rail trips in the whole world. Any day in the year, without having to make any special arrangements or wait for any special excursion, it is possible to take a round trip from East Portal to West Portal and back again, all for only 32¢. On the occasion of our field trip to East Portal in June it was a momentous experience for a group of our members some of whom had never been through the tunnel before, to leave E. Por-

at her disposal to portray, but that her photography was fully equal to the occasion. To see again the ancient little engines and cars snaking their way around myriads of curves as the slim tracks wind over the rugged heights that will never again hear the chuffing of the little locomotives, we are convinced that Miss McGraw has captured and preserved a vista of mountain railroad history of the first magnitude. Railroad fans who have seen this film shown will unanimously agree that as far as we're concerned, nothing has ever come out of Hollywood to compare with it.

Other railfan groups might promote more and longer excursions than we have to date, but we can safely proclaim to the whole dog-gone world that our excursion over the M&PP on Aug. 27 reached the very "peak" of all such excursions, both literally and figuratively speaking. Yes, sir, 14,110 Ft. above sea-level can safely be claimed as the highest point ever reached by an organized railfan excursion. Sort of makes us throw out our chests and remind ourselves how fortunate we all are to live here in the Rockies. The chartered steam train that carried that group of our members to the top of Pike's Peak recalls one of our earliest aims that could be very seriously considered at this time by our club. That is the development of a sticker for use on correspondence, showing a picture of an M&PP steam train.

The result to date of our individual and co-operative research into the railroads of the Rockies has impressed us all very seriously with one important fact, namely that the material we have at hand is so inexhaustible that in spite of all our efforts we have only scratched the surface, so again we extend our heartiest invitation to all fans who are interested in railroading on the roof of the world to join up with us. Even if you haven't anything to contribute, you're always welcome just to come and listen, and our old timers are well worth listening to. Don't forget the time and place. 8:00 P. M., the second Wednesday of each month, in the Auction Room of the Union Pacific Freight Depot, 19th & Wynkoop St., Denver

at 11:19. The 64 minutes wait at W. Portal before the arrival of Eastbound No. 2 seems all too short to anyone who appreciates such magnificent scenery as abounds at W. Portal, or who is interested in the glowing future of W. Portal as a winter sports center, as outlined by Mr. Kilgore, D&SL agent. We wonder if all the people along the route of the Moffat realize what a progressive and wideawake group of boosters those railroaders are for the communities they serve. Some of the best advice we can give our readers is the next time you go on a fishing trip or picnic outing to E. Portal, by all means take this grand trip. Just 32¢ and 78 minutes of your time. You will probably be fortunate enough, as we were, to ride with Conductor Holliday. Your editor has often wondered what it must be like to ride as an honored guest in the private car of a railroad president, and a trip with Cond. Holliday gives one a good idea of what it must be like.

Incidentally, as feature article in our next issue, we hope to bring you a tale of "Rails To The Moon", the story of Dave Moffat and the railroad that is best known by his name.

TRUE TALES OF THE ROCKIES

There are undoubtedly many of our members and acquaintances who have first hand knowledge of a wide variety of incidents that would make thrilling and fascinating chapters in the story of railroading in the Rockies. Your editor would be very glad to receive suggestions and material for this section, which will receive a prominent place in future issues of the "Railroader" whenever available. If you have such a tale in mind, which has never been published before, and is typical of mountain railroading, we'd be very glad to hear from you. All tales published will appear under the contributors name. Just drop a line to Carl Hewett, 2521 Front View Cres., Denver, or call GRand 4256. Any other suggestions or criticisms regarding our publications will be equally welcome. This is your paper, fans, and we'll try to carry out your wishes.

THE BABY RAILROAD HAS GROWN UP

History tells us that the idea of building the Denver and Rio Grande was born when Gen. William Palmer, the builder of the Kansas Pacific, became engaged in conversation with a man selling a wagon load of firewood on Larimer St. in the vigorous frontier town

of Denver, The load of wood came from Sedalia, South of Denver, and from that prosaic and humble beginning sprang one of the most colorful and fascinating panoramas of railroad history in the entire saga of the iron trail. Through the years the Rio Grande and Colorado have helped each other grow until today the Grande is as inseparable from the history of our state as Pike's Peak or Gregory's Liggings.

Historical facts are too well known to require any great amount of elaboration on our part. Everyone knows that with Gen. Palmer, to think was to act. No sooner had he conceived the idea of a railroad extending South from Denver than he started looking around for ways and means of putting it into effect.

In those days considerable attention was being attracted in the railroad world by the highly successful and profitable operation of the Festiniog Railway in the wild and rugged mountains of Wales. This little pike, with a gauge of 23½ inches, was proving that narrow gauge railways were a practical solution of the problem of building tracks in mountainous country where the cost of building a broader gauge would be practically prohibitive, and General Palmer and his associates were not slow in seizing upon the narrow gauge idea in projecting their new railroad from Denver to Mexico City.

People called it "The Baby Railroad" as soon as it began to take form. A gauge of only three feet was a radical innovation in an age when some American railroads were using a gauge as wide as six feet. The tendency toward large motive power and equipment was already becoming increasingly apparent throughout the country and by way of contrast, the little Rio Grande trains of four wheeled boxcars, each only twelve feet long, appeared more like playthings than practical equipment intended for one of the sternest and most difficult jobs of railroading ever attempted anywhere, especially when viewed against their gigantic mountain background.

Things happened fast on the early day Rio Grande. Bitter struggles with nature who resented the intrusion of the slim tracks and their tiny trains in the fastnesses of the lordly Rockies and equally bitter struggles with competing rivals in the heyday of rugged individualism. The "Royal Gorge War" and the lifelong struggles with the Colorado Midland and the South Park are only a few of the many old time contests from which the Grande emerged victorious. It wasn't just in order to provide an advertising slogan that the Rio Grande found its way "Through the Rockies; Not Around Them". The commerce of the Rockies themselves became a sufficiently valuable objective to divert the Rio Grande builders from their original plan of building South to Mexico City. There was "Gold in them that hills" and most of it would probably still be there if it were not for the little diamond stacked engines chuffing along their precarious mountain tracks with a few cars of ore.

What would General Palmer say if he could see his "Baby Railroad" now? He might be interested in stowing the quaint little brass bound "Montezuma" in the coal bunker of one of the massive but fleet footed 3700's and seeing how much space is left over. The mountains are still there with their stupendous canyons and dizzy precipices, but today the Grande is monarch of all it surveys. Even along the portions of the system where tracks of the original slim gauge still wind over passes at timberline altitudes and follow the same harpin roadbeds laid out by General Palmer's old time surveyors the modern Rio Grande meets nature on even terms. There's nothing puny or diminutive on the narrow gauge any more. It's grown up along with the rest of the "Baby Railroad" now.

As for the standard gauge main line, well, perhaps sometimes the ghosts of General Palmer and the other old timers of the diamond stack days look in on some of the titanic displays of the terrific magnificence of perfectly functioning steam power working at its utmost capacity in such a place as the Eagle River Canyon. You can visualize the scene and time perhaps; a bitter cold, clear night in the dead of winter. One of those nights when the stars seem so close they appear as if one could hit them with a stick, and the air so still the bark of a dog can be heard five miles down the canyon. Suddenly the stillness is broken by the shriek of a distant locomotive whistle, softened by distance and the twisting curve of intervening canyon walls. The echoes of the whistle die away to be followed by a faint rumble, slowly increasing to a roar telling of the

rapid approach of three giant locomotives bringing their long train up the 3% grade. The roar grows louder, occasionally muffled as the engines successively pass through tunnels; then a louder metallic roar as the train crosses a steel trestle. For a few minutes the exhaust blasts come in perfect unison, smiting the canyon walls in thunderous fury until it seems that if any man-made disturbance can shake the granite crags from their foundations, this must be it; then a slip of a set of drivers breaks the rhythm and the blasts merge into a continuous roar growing louder and louder as the headlight sweeping around reverse curves lights up one snow covered peak after another. So vivid is the scene that a deaf and blind person could as easily identify the occasion as anyone else, so much do the laboring giants shake the earth as they thunder past the observer. A brilliant flash as a fire-door is opened; sparks dropping into ashpits; the rattle and clank of brake gear and rail joints; the squeal of powdered snow crushed by cold steel; two marker lights fading away around a curve of the canyon and it is gone.

Yes, General Palmer, your "Baby Railroad" has grown up.