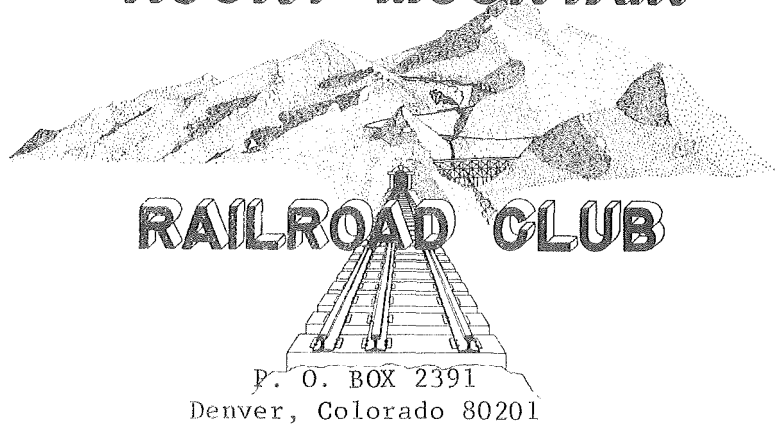


ROCKY MOUNTAIN

April, 1965

Newsletter No. 68



The April, 1965, meeting of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club will convene at the regular time -- 8:00 p.m. on the second Wednesday of the month -- April 14, in the basement meeting room of the Western Federal Savings & Loan skyscraper at 718 - 17th Street in downtown Denver.

Another outstanding program is on the agenda for this meeting. One of the newest members to join the Club -- Mr. Donald F. Smith of suburban Arvada -- is a noted authority and

lecturer on the Chalk Creek area and its inhabitants and happenings. For our April meeting, Don has kindly agreed to narrate and project his very interesting and highly informative program of slides and information on the history and activities of the ghost town of St. Elmo, famous as the home of the Stark family and as a station on the old South Park line over Alpine Pass.

Some of the material presented in this remarkable story of Don's is almost unbelievable, even after having been recorded on film, and all members are invited to bring their friends and enjoy this unusual story.

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At our meeting last month, an unspoken tribute was paid to Charter member Otto Perry -- very probably the largest attendance ever present at a regular meeting turned out to enjoy the five reels of 16--mm. color movies presented by this well-known railfan and photographer. While billed as covering the old Rio Grande Southern and Midland Terminal, Otto's pictures really also ran the gamut of nearly all of Colorado's railroads in the days of steam. Stirring scenes of narrow gauge in service on the old Chili Line at and near Santa Fe, in the Black Canon and on Cerro Summit west of Gunnison, as well as of the Burlington -- Rock Island and Union Pacific north and east of Denver, the Denver & Salt Lake to the west, and the Rio Grande, Colorado & Southern and Santa Fe south of town -- were most enjoyable. Vivid action shots of the Laramie, North Park & Western through the Medicine Bows west of Laramie, and a magnificent sequence of the last cab-in-front over the Sierras on a special Southern Pacific passenger excursion, added a great deal of interest.

His wintertime scenes of big engines in action were truly notable; the whole of these interspersed with brief views of Colorado's lovely fall colors and such non-railroad subjects as capsized long-haul trucks, fire departments in action, and highway mishaps, all tied together with Otto's inimitable comments, held the intense interest of the audience until the last scene flickered from the screen. Please come again, Otto -- we are always ready to enjoy more of the same!

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In view of the high hopes which were evident earlier in the year that arrangements could be successfully completed to operate Club member John Birmingham's ex-Great Western consolidation #51 on a Rocky Mountain Railroad Club sponsored excursion to East Portal in April (as announced in the March Newsletter) it is a matter of great disappointment to advise our members that all the hard work and time consuming and complex negotiations undertaken by Trip Committee Chairman Ed Haley and President Ted McKee have come to a frustrating end.

Insurance coverage, operating and contractual costs and obligations, which were being continually presented to the Club, finally reached an insurmountable height. With deep-seated regret, therefore, your officers concluded that our organization could not, and indeed, should not be subjected to all the liabilities present in the various aspects of the insur-

ance policies and contractual terms. While work will continue on negotiations looking toward possible operation of such an excursion at some future date, the Moffat Tunnel trip originally planned for this spring has been cancelled.

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Not so, however, for the annual Memorial Day excursion being sponsored again this year by the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club between Alamosa, Durango and Silverton. Announcement brochures and ticket order blanks for this traditional three-day, steam-powered, 500-mile journey over the Rio Grande's narrow gauge lines, scheduled for Saturday, Sunday and Monday, May 29, 30, and 31, soon will be in the mail to all members. Meanwhile, Club Treasurer Ane Clint is accepting ticket orders -- round trip fare for adults remains at \$21.00 with costs for children five and under twelve years of age at \$11.00, not including meals and lodging for passengers. Be on the lookout for the forthcoming announcement, and make your reservations early.

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COLORADO MIDLAND, the newest (and largest) historical publication of the Club, is on its way at last! Comprising 486 pages of text and illustrations, and weighing 5 lb.10 oz., this magnificent new book telling the story of the first standard gauge railroad to breach Colorado's Continental Divide, is being well received, to judge by the enthusiastic comments being received by the Club and author Morris Cafky. Almost half the entire printing of 6,000 numbered copies already has been sold and mailed or delivered to purchasers.

Bound copies first became available on Friday, March 5, and that evening the volunteer packing crew assembled at Bryant McFadden's to begin its arduous labors. Barring Saturdays and Sundays, and excepting only Club meeting night, March 10, this faithful crew matched labels to assigned book numbers, stuffed map pockets, folded boxes, packed, sealed, stamped and carried piles and piles of heavy books through each evening's snow for the next eleven consecutive nights, turning out about 250 copies each evening to keep abreast of the day's production by the bindery.

During the first two or three nights the work required 3½ to 4 hours, but as assembly line techniques smoothed out and proficiency improved, production time dropped to a low of 1-3/4 hours per night near the end of the term. (Perhaps this resulted also because everyone had run out of jokes by the end of two weeks!) Monday, March 22, saw the last handling of ordered copies, with a final 350 books being packed and mailed that night, to the accompaniment of glad cries of relief from a work-weary crew!

Not enough tribute is available to recognize the efforts of these loyal Club members for their diligent and faithful work. Participating in this lengthy task were Bill Gordon, Bill Van Patten, Ed Lewandowski, Morris Cafky, Mac Poor, President Ted McKee, Secretary Dick Kindig, Treasurer Ane Clint, Ed Schneider, Rev. Garret Barnes, Dick Ronzio, Francis Rizzari, Ed Haley, Wilson Ruid, Charles Ryland, Jack Morison, Bob Stull, Marilyn Stull, Jackson Thode, and the whole McFadden family -- Bryant and Shirley, and sons Ellis and Bob (home from college between terms).

Perhaps some additional information regarding this latest production of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club will be of interest to our members. Negotiations with the World Press and its president, Louis J. Doughty, first were inaugurated almost exactly three years ago, when it was estimated the book would run to 480 pages. Type-setting, paper, printing, engraving, binding and packaging expenses now aggregate in excess of \$50,000, not including costs for postage, advertising, or original paintings prepared by artists Howard Fogg and Philip Ronfor. Of this amount approximately \$33,000 has been paid, the money having become available from orders received, as supplemented by reserves previously accumulated in the Club's book and operating funds.

Copies actually produced number in the neighborhood of 6,000, with the surplus intended both to replace imperfect copies as they are found, and to provide reviewers' copies, as well as complimentary books to those good folks who were kind enough to entrust the Club with their priceless and irreplaceable original Colorado Midland material for the time necessary to integrate it into the story.

The efforts of Club members who have acquired copies of COLORADO MIDLAND in publicizing

and encouraging others to purchase this fine new book will assure not only that the Club was justified in underwriting a print order of 6,000 copies, but that the book will be placed in the hands of people truly interested in these efforts to preserve the history and heritage of Colorado pioneers.

Brochures, order blanks and books are available from the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club at 2561 South Cook Street, Denver, Colorado 80210 -- \$14.00 postpaid.

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Again it is our sad duty to record the passing of another old-time Club member -- Mr. Lawrence M. Cowen of Colorado Springs, who passed away on February 10. One of the unique activities of this faithful, enthusiastic and loyal member was the operation of a 1½" scale live-steam, 1,000-foot long railroad at this home, offering free rides to children. Built in 1958 for Mr. Cowen by the late Albert Wagner of Plainfield, Illinois, the stream-lined 4-4-4 locomotive used on the line boasted 100 pounds steam pressure, developed by a special coal which Mr. Cowen purchased in 50# lots from a mine in Virginia.

We are advised by Club members L. D. Mitchell and his wife, "Rusty," of Colorado Springs, who prepared this item for the Newsletter, that the little line used six red cars and a caboose, all built by Mr. Cowen, each with a seating capacity of four youngsters or two adults. Grades were as stiff as 3.8%, with curves of 23' radius for the aluminum rails laid to 7½" gauge on 2x4 ties. Climax of the nearly two-scale-mile journey around the Cowen residence grounds was the ride through the scale 460' dark curved tunnel Mr. Cowen had excavated beneath his landscaped garden.

Souvenir tickets used by Mr. Cowen advised his passengers that the "Diner does not run on this section between September 1 and August 31," but he always passed out refreshments to the tariff-free young people making the trip. Among the children who were treated to rides were those from the Rocky Mountain Rehabilitation Center, Christian Home for Children, Myron Stratton Home, Child Day Care Center, Colorado Springs Day Nursery, Colorado Springs Boys Club, and various Boy and Girl Scout groups. The train has been featured in various publications, including Clues, a national magazine published by the Ford Motor Co.

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In the February Newsletter it was mentioned that President Ted McKee was the featured speaker at a luncheon meeting of the Denver Mining Club early in that month. Ted reports that his efforts in discussing the "Early Day Railroads in Colorado" with a group of old-timers who were rather intimately familiar with the subject at hand, were enlightening and entertaining. The talk was well received; we note an item in a local paper that our current presiding officer again was invited to speak, this time on March 26 before the Knights of Columbus Friday Luncheon Club, his subject being "Otto Mears, Pathfinder of the San Juan."

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King Winter was no respecter of the first day of spring in Colorado this year! On March 26 it was reported that in the first four days following the official opening of spring (March 21) Aspen, Colorado, had been doused with 43 inches of new snow; the town's recorded snowfall of 60 inches since the first of the month was the heaviest since 1934. As our readers may have gathered, severe snow conditions have occurred in a number of places elsewhere throughout the state. Early in the morning of March 22, for instance, the eastbound Prospector, train #8 of the Rio Grande, was delayed between Fraser and Winter Park, approaching the Moffat Tunnel, being forced to follow a small herd of horses which ran up the track ahead of the engine. The trench of snow along the course of the right of way was so deep the horses were unable to escape over the sides, forcing the train to lose 25 minutes patiently following along at a "trot" until the animals succeeded in finding liberation from their terrifying confines.

Another delay was encountered on March 25th by the eastbound California Zephyr when the dispatcher put them through the siding at Tabernash to run around a motor car stuck in the snow on the main track there. Drifts on the siding were so deep, however, that the crack flyer lost 21 minutes bucking out the snow!

Shades of the winter of '99 on the Colorado Midland!

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Our roving reporter, Club member Mike Blecha, recently had the opportunity to spend some time in the vicinity of Kit Carson, Colorado, along the line of the original Kansas Pacific. While there he privately observed the 87th anniversary of the abandonment of the early K.P. branch which was constructed in 1872 south to Fort Lyons and Las Animas from Kit Carson, by walking the grade. Starting on the old grade about three miles south of town, Mike reports he walked in to the junction of the branch with the present Union Pacific track on the main line between Kansas City and Denver, about three-quarters of a mile west of the main part of Kit Carson.

Mike advises: "From where I started walking the grade continued on south, but that area has been under cultivation so the grade can't be found, although I had seen it earlier about five miles south of town. The part I walked over is grazing land and has never been plowed; thus, the old grade with its cuts and fills can be followed easily. Where it crossed one creek piling stubs can still be seen, but there was no wood that I thought was ever part of a tie. I did find a dozen spikes and a few track bolts and nuts and they are in very good condition, with very little rust. After all, it seldom rains out here!"

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The following bit of philosophy, which was found in James A. Noble's "From Cab to Caboose" (Univ. of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Okla., 1964), may serve to give some insight into the feeling and attitudes of a professional railroad man. This very interesting book (reviewed in TRAINS for July, 1964, page 51) relates many incidents in the long-time career of this gentleman who retired as Chief Engineer, Western Lines, of the Santa Fe after some 50 years of service, much of it spent on the Arkansas River Division headquartered at La Junta, Colorado:

"The worth of any experience or incident is its survival value in memory. In connected narrative, as in an autobiography, memorable incidents are, of course, the significant stuff of a lifetime. Railroading is by its very nature full of vignettes, quickly experienced and only thinly spliced, like the items in an old-fashioned newsreel. The engineman, the station agent, the engineer, the conductor see life in little flashes which intrude upon routine, enliven it, and give to experience its amusing and human aspects."

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