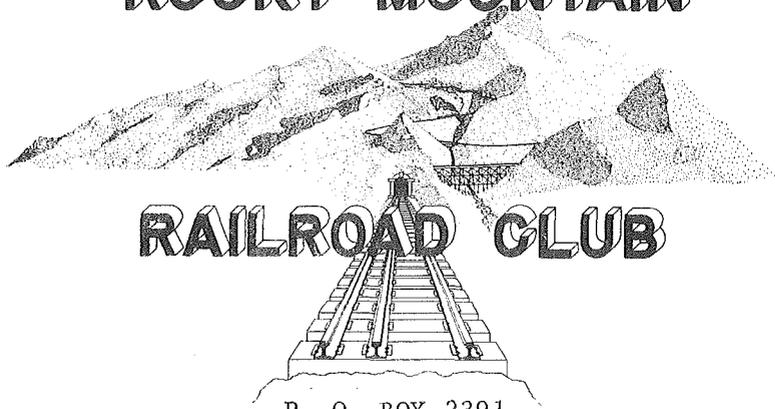


ROCKY MOUNTAIN

June, 1965

Newsletter No. 70



P. O. BOX 2391
Denver, Colorado 80201

The June meeting of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club is to be a special event! In place of the usual meeting in downtown Denver in mid-month, arrangements for our traditional annual banquet and program, after a train ride out of Denver into the mountains, are now nearly complete.

Hence, on Saturday afternoon, June 26, Club members and their friends and guests will meet at Denver Union Station for departure on a special train, bound for Winter Park, at the West Portal of the Moffat Tunnel. Our chartered train, including a dome car, will be handled by

an unusual combination of diesel units never before witnessed in Rio Grande train operations (one of the newest GP-35 freight units, put in service early this year, working in multiple with one of the ancient (1947) but handsome Alco passenger cab units) combined with the last vestige of standard-gauge steam on the railroad -- one of the two steam generator cars converted from tenders of the long-gone 3700 series Baldwin 4-6-6-4's.

At Winter Park, Mr. Lee Henderson, host at the well-known Hochlandhoff, is preparing a sumptuous prime rib feast for our banquet, and after dinner we will be treated to an extraordinary program to complete the evening's activities.

Club member Dow Helmers of Pueblo, author of HISTORIC ALPINE TUNNEL -- the detailed story of the construction and life of the first tunnel to pierce the Continental Divide in Colorado -- will present his intriguing slide show of the early and recent happenings at this shrine of railfans. Mr. Helmers was among the last to gain access to the interior of Alpine Tunnel; his flash pictures and the fascinating story resulting from his research into this last remaining monument to the old South Park Line provide both a remarkable tribute to the courageous pioneers who built and operated this facility, and a program which will be long remembered.

The enclosed announcement and ticket order blank provide the details, and you are urged to join in this opportunity to ride through the mountains and enjoy a fine dinner and outstanding program in the friendly company of fellow members of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club.

PLEASE REMEMBER -- NO meeting downtown in June -- join us at Denver Union Station on Saturday, June 26, for the Annual Banquet Trip.

* * * * *

At our May meeting a large audience gave undivided attention to an engaging talk by Club member M. C. "Mac" Poor. After a flowing and flattering introduction by member Charles S. Ryland, Mac read to us a paper which he had prepared discussing the origin of his famous history, DENVER, SOUTH PARK & PACIFIC, published in a 1,000-copy edition by the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club in 1949, in the group's first venture into the field.

Mac's first interest in the little railroad developed in the summer of 1937 when he paid his initial visit to Colorado as a railfan. Upon returning to his home in Chicago, his curiosity about the abandoned roadbeds he had seen and photographed prompted an investigation into their background. As is sometimes the case, the notes started for the pleasant purpose of learning something about the road never seemed to stop accumulating -- ten years later they had turned into a 1,100 page typewritten manuscript!

The good intentions of the organization which originally intended publication subsided in proportion to the quantity of material Mac assembled, and the search turned then to someone who would undertake publication of the story in its entirety. Happily, our organization, in which Mac holds membership card #9, after much consideration and soul-searching into the financial risk involved in a venture of such unknown quantity, agreed to back his work, with financing guaranteed by promissory notes signed by several individual Club members.

The contract with the printer, our faithful and loyal friend Louis Doughty and his World Press, was signed in August, 1948. The job was so large it was necessary, after setting about half the text in type, to proceed with the printing so that the metal could be melted and reset for the second half of the book. Finally, in December, 1949, the finished book was ready for distribution to those who had sent in their money 15 months before at the pre-publication price of \$10.00 per copy. To the delight of all (and the relief of those who had guaranteed the financing) the book found an enthusiastic market, and all copies were sold by the end of April, 1960.

In thus recounting the experiences involved in publishing the first of the Club's historical works, Mac revived many memories among old-time members, and acquainted all of us with the tremendous amount of digging and persevering effort required to search out historical information of authenticity.

* * * * *

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT -- Now you can obtain special stickers that will identify you as a member of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club! The Club has purchased beautifully printed, brilliant "Scotchlite" reflective decals that carry the Club's distinctive mountain railroad-ing emblem with the words "Denver, Colorado" underneath. The decals, which measure 3x4 inches, are printed in deep blue on Silver "Scotchlite." They are available in two styles: adhesive on the back for car bumpers, camera cases, suitcases, even clothing; and front adhesive for application to car windows, etc. Both are waterless type material; all you need do to apply is peel off the adhesive coating's protective covering and press the decal against a clean, dry surface.

Both style decals -- back adhesive and front adhesive -- are available from the Club for just 50¢ apiece, postpaid. For your convenience, we have enclosed a special order blank with this newsletter. Indicate your choice of styles and mail your order today. For quick service, send your order to the address shown on the form, not to the Club's postoffice box. Checks or money orders should be made payable to the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club.

* * * * *

Two retirements of note -- both on the same railroad -- have come to our attention in recent weeks. First is the announced retirement, on July 1, of long-time Burlington president, and friend of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club, Mr. Harry C. Murphy. Starting as a messenger and station helper while still in school, Mr. Murphy devoted more than 51 years to the road, the last 16 as its very successful president, ably following in the footsteps of the highly respected late Ralph Budd.

Of greater shock, perhaps, is the news in the June issue of Railroad Magazine that another old Club friend, Burlington Class 05-b 4-8-4 steamer #5632 also is being retired. Major classified repairs costing in excess of \$100,000 are given as the reason for the untimely and regrettable demise of this magnificent machine, which has powered several excursions for our group in past years.

* * * * *

Last month's newsletter mentioned the work underway by Mr. "Phil" Phillips on the Gold Camp Railway -- an operating trolley layout at Cripple Creek, Colorado, on the west side of Pike's Peak. Now, from the same issue of Railroad Mag. we learn that car .01 being worked on the line was built in 1943 by the St. Louis Car Company for the Los Angeles Railway, where she ran as car 3101 until March 31, 1963. Purchased last July by Mr. Phillips, the 61-passenger, 42-inch gauge PCC trolley marks the return to Colorado of electric operation after an absence of 13 years, as well as return to Cripple Creek after 44 years.

* * * * *

Bad news from the west coast is seen in this quotation from the 1964 annual report of the Western Pacific: "The out-of-pocket annual loss on California Zephyr operations continues to be substantial. Even though our 1964 revenues increased, the loss trend has not materially changed and it is questionable as to how long this train can be continued without a gross disservice to our freight customers. An independent study of California Zephyr operations is being undertaken by Coverdale & Colpitts, nationally known railroad consultants. This

study will take approximately three months, and the findings will serve as a basis for determining what course of action should be followed."

* * * * *

MOFFAT TUNNEL TRIP WHISTLING SUCCESS -- On Sunday May 2, Rocky Mountain Railroad Club members and guests were treated to the finest Club excursion in recent years as member John Birmingham's ex-Great Western engine 51 steamed from Denver to East Portal (Moffat Tunnel) with our three-car special. The day was perfect, the engine performed beautifully, and the photo stops were magnificent. The Club's train heralded the first steam power over this ruggedly beautiful line (D&RGW) in some 11 years.

Following our train was a second section, diesel powered, with a tender full of water for our engine made thirsty by the ruling 2% grade to the tunnel, a water car and other equipment for control of any fires kindled by sparks from 51's stack (final toll: some 20 fires of various sizes, one barbed wire fence and two telephone poles), a baggage car which was coupled into our train at East Portal and, of course, the Grande's well-known black and gold caboose. Thanks to the railroad's precaution in providing fire fighting facilities, all of the blazes were quickly extinguished by Second 51's alert crew.

To water our train, the following section pulled up next to 51's tender on a siding and pumps quickly transferred thousands of gallons of water in a few minutes. The procedure proved fascinating for passengers and the event was thoroughly recorded by scores of still and movie cameras.

By far the finest photo stop, however, was on the horseshoe curve just above Tunnel 16. After depositing passengers at the west end of a cut on the curve's far side, #51 backed downgrade, around the curve, through two tunnels and into a third. Then with a heart-warming blast on the whistle and a gorgeous display of smoke and siderod action, she steamed out of the first tunnel, into the second, appeared in the clear for a minute or so, then plunged into still another tunnel, around the horseshoe and blasted through the cut, beautiful and melodious all the way with engineer Birmingham at the throttle.

After two more picture stops, our train arrived at the East Portal about 4:00 p.m. (after a 10:00 a.m. departure from Denver Union Station). There, #51 was turned on the wye, the baggage car was coupled in and the entire train backed into the Moffat Tunnel so that photographers could once again record steam power thundering out of the East Portal.

There followed the busiest few minutes East Portal has seen in quite a number of years. Second 51 remained on the wye while our train shunted on to the house track. Within minutes an eastbound symbol freight with GP power droned out of the tunnel and screeched to a halt on the long siding. Hardly had the 80-car drag cleared the main, than the westbound California Zephyr blasted around the curve and into the tunnel's gaping maw. And there you have it: four different trains at East Portal at the same time!

If you missed this excursion, you passed up a real history-making event, and an enthralling ride through Colorado's towering Rocky Mountains. Take our advice: Don't miss any Club excursions -- every mile is well worth the price of your ticket! We would like to urge every member, whenever possible, to support Club excursions by riding these special trains provided for your pleasure (at great expense) in this day of diminishing steam power. Your Board of Directors authorized the Moffat Tunnel trip knowing full well that the Club would lose money on it. This occurred because the train's limited capacity would not permit enough tickets to be sold to cover all the expenses involved. Yet we went out of Denver with some seats unsold, and a great number of non-paying chasers enjoyed the run and thereby contributed to our loss. The Club should not have to subsidize excursions and it is highly doubtful that your Board will again authorize a trip that cannot pay its way.

* * * * *

With the scheduled operation by the Club of its traditional Memorial Day weekend excursion over the Rio Grande's narrow gauge, it appears that the railroad, buffeted by the worst winter in the past several years, will not much more than just have the line cleared in time for the Club's train. While snow clearing operations on the Silverton Branch, and work on the

new steel bridge just below Elk Park, were started in early April, the weather on Cumbres did not permit work over the Pass until the first week of May. By Thursday, May 13, up to 10 feet of heavy wet snow had been cleared away by a rented bulldozer on the west side of the mountain, making it possible to start use of the Company's machine which had been buried up there all winter.

Meanwhile, engine 487 and a work train, accompanying two dozers on the east side, was working its way west, and had cleared tracks to Osier by the same date, leaving 12 difficult miles yet to be covered. But the work was done, and a week later, on May 20, the first westbound through freight over the line since before Christmas moved out of Alamosa, handling 1,500 tons with two locomotives. Snow at the top was reported as 12 feet deep and packed, with a water content of 33 inches.

* * * * *

The SILVERTON STANDARD of April 29 tells us that a group of cheerful nuns coming over the Million Dollar Highway for the confirmation and pot-luck dinner at St. Patrick's was impressed with the high country's scenery and the little things that make Silverton what it is. But on the way over, so the paper was informed, they encountered one of the several slides that ran that day and, full of vibrant curiosity, they inquired what the name of the slide was. The Silvertonian of whom the question was asked paused before he decided to take the bull by the horns and stick to the high country lore at its most accurate. The nuns had been held up by the slide called the S.O.B.

* * * * *

Ted S. McKee, President

Richard H. Kindig, Secretary

Herbert O'Hanlon, Vice President

Aue O. Clint, Treasurer

Jackson Thode, Newsletter Editor