

ROCKY MOUNTAIN RAILROAD CLUB

P. O. Box 2391

January, 1965

DENVER, COLORADO 80201

Newsletter No. 65

The January, 1965, meeting of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club will be held at 8:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 13th, in the basement meeting room of the Western Federal Savings building -- 718 - 17th Street, Denver.

Presenting the program for the entertainment of our members and their friends will be Club member Neal R. Miller of Longmont, who has prepared a special collection of 35mm color slides sure to revive memories of excursions of years back. Neal will present a series of scenes, together with appropriate remarks, covering trips sponsored by the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club over Colorado narrow-gauge lines during the years from 1948 to 1955. Those who are familiar with presentations by Mr. Miller at previous Club meetings will enjoy this opportunity to see more of his work. All others are invited to become acquainted with the talents of this long-time Club member.

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As a result of the balloting by members in good standing and present at the annual meeting and election in December, President Ted McKee was re-elected to that office for the year 1965. Herb O'Hanlon, Vice President, and Ane Clint, Treasurer, were also elected to another term in office. Dick Kindig was elected to the position of Secretary.

For three positions open on the Board of Directors, the slate of six candidates presented was comprised of Club members who not only indicated a willingness to serve, but who have demonstrated more than ordinary interest in the organization. From the nominees -- George Esbensen, Tom Gray, Jr., Neal Miller, Jack Morison, Wilson Ruid and Ed Schneider -- Mr. Gray, Mr. Miller and Mr. Morison were elected for two-year terms as Directors.

Our thanks to all these Club members who are willing to take time from their busy schedules to involve themselves in the administrative duties of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club.

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Following the election an interesting and enjoyable program of old-time "Serial Queen" movies was presented by Club member Carl E. Steele. More than one oldtimer present was heard to exclaim when Helen Gibson appeared in the two reeler, "Ghost of the Canon", and Helen Holmes made her appearance as star of "The Open Track", another two-reeler, and "Pay Train", a one-reel thriller. These silent films, made on branch lines of the "San Pedro" (L.A. & S.L.) near Los Angeles about the time of World War I, were of great interest with their display of railroading of long-ago.

Trains departed without so much as a backward glance by the hogger for a signal from the conductor; with no evidence of train orders, comparison of watch times, or even staying on duty by the lady telegraph operators, who seemed to depart their assigned tasks whenever the spirit moved them! No wonder the youngsters of yesteryear were enthralled. Would the operator get back to her instrument before the next train order came over the wire??

Thank you, Mr. Steele, for this brief insight into yesterday's Saturday matinee and the railroad melodramas which brought the crowds to the theatre.

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The press run of 6,000 copies each of the four-color plates to be incorporated into Colorado Midland, being published by the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club, was completed on Friday, December 18th. These elegant illustrations, as well as a major portion of the printed text and cuts, have been transferred to the bindery, and we expect the first copies of the book in the mail before the end of January.

Circulation Manager Bryant McFadden advises that orders for more than 2,800 copies of this newest quality railroad history have been received to date. The corps of packaging and mailing volunteers are anticipating quite a bit of work as orders are filled and books mailed.

Orders will continue to be received by the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club at 2561 South Cook Street, Denver, Colorado 80210, at a price of \$14.00 postpaid, until the supply of books is exhausted. Copies of the announcement brochure are still available.

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Among other new railroad books coming to our attention in recent weeks is The Alaska Railroad, a photo history, 7x10 inches, of the government railroad serving the 49th state. Prepared by Bernadine LeMay Prince, editor of the railroad's "Railbelt Reporter" employe paper, this 800-page work will contain more than 1,600 photos telling the story of the railroad and its people from the turn of the century and the Alaska Central Railroad, through the 1964 earthquake and part of the reconstruction.

Mrs. Prince advises that only 1,000 first editions are being printed, available only from herself or the publisher, at \$20.00 per copy. All orders should be accompanied by check or money order, and copies will be autographed upon request. Write:

Mrs. Bernadine M. Prince
624 "F" Street
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Ken Wray's Print Shop, Inc.
336 East Fifth Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Also of interest is the second volume (designated No. III) of Colorado's Mountain Railroads, compiled and written by Club member Bob LeMassena, and published by the Smoking Stack Press. Soft bound, with a vivid photo of a staged holdup on the South Park at the Palisades for the front cover, this 150-page book covers 57 operating railroads ranging from the Denver and Salt Lake to the Wasatch and Jordan Valley, in the states of Colorado, Utah, New Mexico and Wyoming. Forty passes, some of extreme rarity, are shown, together with 170 superbly reproduced cuts of engines, equipment and scenes, including little known lumber and industrial lines.

This new book is available postpaid at a cost of \$4.00 (Colorado residents add 8 cents sales tax, please) from the Smoking Stack Press at 1795 South Sheridan Boulevard, Denver, 80226.

Two additional books worth your consideration are being published by Sage Books of Denver. The first -- William Gray Evans, 1855-1924 -- is a study by Dr. Allen duPont Breck of the University of Denver of the son of the famed second Governor of Colorado. Dr. Breck outlines in interesting detail some of the corporate life of the Denver Tramway Company and the Denver & Salt Lake Railroad under the presidency of Mr. Evans. Of especial interest is the corporate chart of the Tramway, and the story of the part played by this influential western executive in bringing the Moffat Tunnel into being.

The second book by Sage, to be available in January, is a reprint of General Grenville M. Dodge's long-out-of-print How We Built the Union Pacific, in either soft or hard binding. Both these new books are available through regular book store channels, or from Sage Books, 2679 South York, Denver 80210.

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In Smoke Across the Prairie James Ehernberger and Francis Gschwind pay a tribute to the steam engines of the Nebraska Division of the Union Pacific, principally in the last 20 years or so of operation before they were supplanted by diesels and turbines. The trackage of the Nebraska Division, including its branches, provides the locale for this 64-page volume of excellent action shots and stills of the major classes used on the Nebraska Division before these engines vanished from the heavy iron of the Union Pacific. Added are short descriptions of the main line and branches, some drawings and a painting, a 1946 list of stations on the division and end-paper maps from a Nebraska Division employees' timetable. The book may be ordered from the Intermountain Chapter, N.R.H.S., Box 921, Golden, Colorado, at \$4.95.

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As our many California and other West Coast members no doubt know, the recent destructive storms in the Pacific Northwest have played havoc with railroad facilities. Western Pacific's main line through Feather River Canon was closed by washouts and water trouble

on December 23. Because Southern Pacific's main line west of Ogden also suffered intermittent interruptions from the same causes, it was necessary to detour the California Zephyr west of Salt Lake City via Union Pacific to Barstow and Santa Fe to San Francisco. East-bound, these streamliners were coming to the Rio Grande some eight hours late at Salt Lake.

SP is now restored to service, and the Zephyr was detouring over that line until January 4th, when the WP hoped to reopen its trackage. However, the SP line up the north coast to Oregon and Washington is in bad shape, with passenger service out of the question at least until January 10. And the Northwestern Pacific has suffered tremendous damage, particularly in the Eel River section. It is not expected that this railroad will be able to resume operations for at least three months.

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Last fall, Model Engineering Works of Monrovia, California, a well-known importer of HO gauge model equipment, arranged for a limited production run of an operating model of Colorado Midland ten-wheeler #25. A surprising amount of interest was shown in this engine, according to the importer, and they are now planning to follow up the ten-wheeler with a Colorado Midland HO gauge consolidation, probably #53, a low-drivered, tall-stacked Baldwin built for the line originally in 1896. Details are available from M.E.W. at Box 261, Monrovia.

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For our bit of history this month we turn to the third annual report to the stockholders of the Denver and Rio Grande Railway. Issued in the summer of 1881, this report discussed the activity of the little railroad from August, 1874, to the end of 1880, during which the company was involved in the strenuous contests with the Santa Fe over Raton Pass and through the Royal Gorge.

The following information is from the "Report of Manager of Construction" to General Palmer, dated March 16, 1881, at Colorado Springs:

"Gen. W. J. Palmer, President D. & R.G. R'y Co.:

"Dear Sir -- In compliance with your directions I give you below a summary of the work in the Construction Department, since operations were resumed in the autumn of 1879.

"Prior to that time, our engineering parties had been examining the mountain range dividing the waters of the Rio Grande from the waters of the San Juan, with a view of securing the best line to the town of Silverton, in the heart of the San Juan mining country. Lines were run over Cunningham Pass, South Fork Pass, and Alamosa Pass, and barometric examinations made of other parts of the range, and late in the summer of 1879 the route along which we are now constructing was adopted. Its general direction is as follows:

"Commencing at Alamosa and running south to Antonito, a distance of 28.7 miles, thence westerly along the slopes of San Antonio, Conejos and Los Pinos creeks to the Divide between the waters of the Los Pinos and the Chama, thence westerly to the junction of the Little Chama with the Chama, thence westerly to the Continental Divide, thence down El Amargo Canon, Navajo Creek and the San Juan River to the mouth of the Piedra, thence in a westerly direction to Durango, in the Animas Valley, thence north to Silverton, the total distance being 245.3 miles.

"The grade between Alamosa and Antonito had been completed in 1878, and before the end of 1879, contracts for the grading and bridge building as far west as Durango, 200.3 miles from Alamosa, were made, but the winter set in so severely that the work was seriously retarded until the end of April, 1880. A great deal of very heavy rock work was encountered, and mainly on account of the difficulty of securing enough efficient labor the work dragged more or less during the summer and autumn, so that the early snows of the past winter found the end of the track 15 or 20 miles east of the Los Pinos-Chama Divide.

"The winter proved to be even more severe than the previous one, and the track which was completed to Chama, January 18, 1881, was laid in the face of almost continuous storms, and under extraordinary difficulties. The bad weather still continues, and at the present time the end of the track is only 15½ miles west of Chama.

"The grade, however, is nearly completed as far as the mouth of the Piedras, and well under way as far as Durango. Unless we should have an unusually late spring, the track should reach Durango in May. Between Durango and Silverton some very heavy rock work is encountered, and upon the heaviest of it a large force is now engaged. The probabilities are the track will be completed to Silverton about the middle of September.

"Soon after the letting of the contracts on the San Juan line, contracts for the grading and for building bridges on the New Mexican line, extending from Antonito southerly to Espanola (91 miles) were let, and the work pushed with as much vigor as the scarcity of labor would permit, until its completion, February 4, 1881.

"In April, 1880, the contest with the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad Company being ended, the work of completing the line from Canon City to Leadville was commenced, and vigorously pushed until completion. The track reached Malta July 5, 1880, and Leadville August 2, 1880. In the meantime, surveys from Leadville across Ten Mile Pass, and from Malta across Tennessee Pass, were being made, and before the Leadville line was completed the contractors were at work grading on both these lines. Winter came on before the work could be completed; nevertheless the rails were laid to Robinson's Camp, 16½ miles from Leadville, and to near Tennessee Pass, 9.6 miles from Malta. Most of the track laying was done after the winter set in, and finally we were obliged, by reason of the heavy snow, to suspend the work upon these lines.

"In September, 1880, contracts were let for grading the line from South Arkansas to Gunnison City, a distance of 73 miles, and from Poncha Springs to Maysville, a distance of 7 miles. The latter has been completed, and the track laid on the former from South Arkansas to a point 10 miles from South Arkansas. The winter along this line has also been very severe, but excellent progress has been made. The work is thoroughly under way, and unless we should meet with unexpected obstacles the track should reach Gunnison City by the middle of July.

According to the reports of the Engineers, there were employed on the different lines during February an average of 3,205 men and 655 teams, which fairly represent the present force. The most serious difficulty we have had to encounter has been and is still the securing of a sufficient quantity of good labor. Had the contractors been able to keep their grading camps full all of last summer, we could have easily completed all our lines (except the Gunnison Extension) to the valleys west of the Continental Divide, before the snows, and should have made much better headway this winter. The highest wages ever paid to railroad laborers in Colorado are now paid by contractors, who are exceptionally responsible, yet it has been with the utmost difficulty that the force has been kept up to its present efficiency.

"Since November, 1879, there have been an average of at least 1,000 laborers per month shipped from Denver and Pueblo to the various grading camps. In addition to this our Company has advanced the fares of 200 men brought from Canada, 250 from St. Louis, 300 from Chicago, 1,000 from Kansas, the laborers in each case agreeing to refund the amount when earned in our service.

"In nearly all cases the men deserted, many went to the mines, a few returned to their homes, and the Lord probably knows where the rest are.

"Our experience in this line clearly demonstrated that the class of labor secured was the least desirable. Any number of worthless fellows were anxious to get a free ride to Colorado, and I made up my mind that unless a man could raise enough money to pay his railroad fare and expenses that the chances were he was an undesirable man to have.

Respectfully,

R. F. WEITBREC,

Manager of Construction"

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Even though the year-end and Christmas bills are now arriving, we hope that dues for membership in the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club for 1965 also will receive your attention. Many members have already taken care of this matter; for others this will be another reminder that dues of \$3.00 per year for Colorado residents and \$2.00 per year for non-resident members are now being received by Treasurer Ane Clint.

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Club member Mrs. John R. Barry sent us our closing note, which might have slight overtones of a New Year's celebration. In extending to each of you our best wishes for a Happy New Year, we hope none encountered the difficulties confronting two hobo friends, somewhat less than entirely sober. As they stumbled along the track, one remarked, "These are the widest steps I ever walked up in my life." To which the other replied, "It's not the wide steps that are killing me -- it's this low handrail!"

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A Happy, Healthful and Prosperous 1965 to you all!

Ted S. McKee, President

Richard H. Kindig, Secretary

Herbert O'Hanlon, Vice President

Ane O. Clint, Treasurer

Jackson Thode, Newsletter Editor

