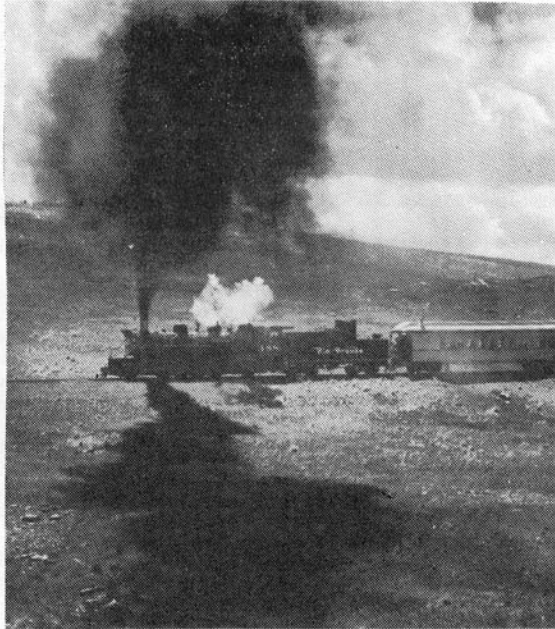


notes . . .

But the little engines and big men of the narrow gauge have won only a temporary victory over the Rockies. Someday the railroad will be completely gone, but the mountains will remain behind unchanged in thousands of years. When the gold veins petered out, the railroad staggered, but tourists from across the globe provided a shot in the arm. But even this seems doomed and the tiny railroad will be only a memory in the history books.



LOS PINOS VALLEY, 1960

Colorado once had more than 1,000 miles of narrow gauge track extending in almost a complete circle in the Southwestern corner of Colorado. Today less than 150 miles of useable trackage remain intact.

It may be gone, but for me it will always remain. I can't remember the steamers of the Fort Worth & Denver or the Santa Fe or the Rock Island too well, they all served my hometown where I spent so many countless hours watching them along with my father.

But to me, the D&RGW is the railroad I can relate to. As each rail and tie have been ripped up and sent off into the pages of history, it has become more endeared to me. The trains may be gone, but the memories remain. That's why, to me, the D&RGW is more than a railroad...it's a part of my life.

Jerry Windle

CALENDAR

NOVEMBER

14 - Puerto Penasco Excursion for the Chula Vista CoC

DECEMBER

1 - Board Meeting, 7:30pm, San Diego Trust & Savings
25 - Christmas

JANUARY

6 - Board Meeting, 7:30pm, San Diego Trust & Savings
18 - Annual PSRMA Dinner, Sir George's El Cajon, 7:30pm

D & RGW WRAPUP

The past several months have seen several dramatic changes made in the remaining Denver & Rio Grande Western Narrow Gauge system. September saw the Silverton branch hit by the worst flood since 1927. Also that month scrapping began on the Chama to Durango segment of the line.

The most promising development this past summer was the purchase by the joint Colorado-New Mexico Railroad Authority of the 64-mile Antonito-Chama line. Financed by similar appropriations of \$295,000 from each of the states, the line has been saved from the scrapers. Since that last train operated over that railroad in November, 1968, numerous slides and parallel highway construction had made much of the track unserviceable. Volunteer workers, mainly younger people from New Mexico, worked all summer removing dirt and rock from the track and repairing innumerable breaks in the rail.

The D&RGW began delivering the 10 steam engines and 142 assorted freight cars to Antonito in late August

The D&RGW began delivering the 10 steam engines and 142 assorted freight and work cars to Antonito in late August. The first train, pulled by engine 483 and manned by volunteer crews, arrived in Chama September 6, the same day the flood forced the Silverton line out of business for the year. That first trip took five days with weeds on the tracks and mechanical problems accounting for the delays. A special train was operated on October 4 for representatives of the news media and other officials.

Most of the activity on the line - named the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad - has been the movement of cars and engines to Chama. The last train operated the weekend of October 17-18, leaving only the rotary snowplow OY in Antonito. Chama has hired a full-time armed guard to watch the rail equipment.

A special train worked out of Chama on October 12, for the filming of "Shootout", a film starring Gregory Peck.

As of the middle of October, rail was being torn up and being removed between Chama and the Colorado State line at milepost 383. No scrapping has taken place in Colorado yet as the work has stopped where the railroad enters the Ute Indian Reservation. The Cole Construction Co. from Houston is salvaging the line for the D&RGW, with the scrap rail supposedly going to a buyer in Mexico.

Aside from the work in the Animas Canyon, which has only recently seen the rails once again joined and open to travel by handcar to speed delivery of men and materials along the track to restore the roadbed before the snows, the D&RGW is finally taking some steps in Durango to guarantee some sort of future operation of the Silverton line. Shop crews were only seen recently unloading a truckload of spare parts from Alamosa. So far, all shop machinery is still in Alamosa, although several stalls of the Durango roundhouse are to be converted into a machine shop, forcing engines 481 and 497 outside into the weather.

Heavy and complex machine work is to be sent to the D&RGW's Burnham shops in Denver, so the Durango facility will still not be able to service fully engines and cars. Large piles of new fencing are on hand, with the possibility of the engine and car repair facilities being fenced off from the public.

Next Summer may see the two lines again in operation. The ultimate fate of the Silverton lies in the hands of the D&RGW top management and the Chama operation may flounder without additional financing. Both lines are needed, however, and many in the region feel that they will compliment each other rather than compete for attention.

From the SILVERTON STANDARD
Friday, November 6, 1970