

SPECIAL HISTORY EDITION

HISTORIAN

NEWSLETTER

**PULLOUT
SECTION**

The Ouray County Historical Society (OCHS) thanks the Ouray County Plaindealer for their assistance in printing and distributing our newsletter.

Fall/Winter 2015

MISSION STATEMENT: The Ouray County Historical Society (OCHS) is dedicated to preserve, protect, procure, exhibit, and interpret whatever relates to the natural, social, and cultural history of Ouray County and the adjacent San Juan Mountain Region of Colorado.

Share an Authentic Harvey Girl Dinner with Bertha Spears, Harvey Girl

In the late 19th Century, staffs of gracious and well-trained waitresses began serving home-cooked meals to travelers on the transcontinental railroad. Known as "Harvey Girls," these adventurous young women brought comfort and civility to the Wild West.

On Sunday, September 20, the Ouray County Historical Society will recreate the Harvey Girl experience at the Historic Western Hotel in Ouray. The evening features a one-woman, historical reenactment of a Harvey Girl's life and a four-course Harvey Girl-inspired dinner.

"Bertha Spears - A Harvey Girl" begins with Happy Hour at 4:30 p.m. followed by dinner at 5:30 p.m. and the Harvey Girl presentation at 7:00 p.m. The menu offers a dou-

ble entrée of lamb chop with creamy shallot sauce and roasted beef with mushroom gravy. A vegetarian alternative also will be available. A lavish dessert buffet will feature traditional Harvey House favorites prepared by award-winning chef and Chocolatier Rosemarie Pieper.

The evening's activities include chances to win a night's stay at the La Fonda Hotel in Santa Fe, NM and the La Posada Hotel in Winslow, AZ. Both are original Harvey House Hotels. Unique door prizes also will be presented.

The OCHS fundraiser, A Vignettes of History event, features Susan Atwood's portrayal of Bertha Spears, an actual person who was hired as a Harvey Girl in 1932. Bertha will share her story and those of other Harvey Girls who, beginning in 1883, worked for Fred Harvey at Harvey House hotels and restaurants.

More than 100,000 young women ventured across the country to find respectable employment as Harvey Girls along the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway. Fred Harvey's legendary establishments provided excellent meals and service - alternatives to bad saloon food and rough mining town lodgings.

In character as Bertha Spears, Atwood will describe the experience of boarding a train for the unknown and the rigors of Harvey Girl training. She also will explain how Fred Harvey's family business developed through 1949.

Susan Atwood has been performing for 18 years as a

member of the Legendary Ladies, a Colorado women's history performance organization. With Legendary Ladies, she has presented historical reenactments for audiences at museums, historical societies, schools and libraries throughout Colorado. Atwood has portrayed "Tomboy Bride" Harriett Fish Backus, Silver Dollar Tabor (Baby Doe Tabor's youngest daughter) and Bertha Spears.

The Harvey Girl Evening ties into Ouray County Railroad Days, an annual, four-day celebration of narrow gauge railroad history

offered September 17-20 by the Ridgway Railroad Museum. For information about Railroad Days hikes, auto tours, and other activities, see www.ridgwayrailroadmuseum.org.

Admission to "Bertha Spears - A Harvey Girl" is \$75 per person for the dinner and presentation. A cash bar will be available for Happy Hour. To reserve a table, call (970) 325-4576.

The OCHS wishes to thank the Terrance K. and Elizabeth L. Barry Foundation for their generous sponsorship of the event.

For further information concerning the Railroad Days schedule visit the website:
<http://www.ridgwayrailroadmuseum.org/RRDays.html>



HARVEY HOUSE DESIGNER: MARY COLTER

By Sharon Case

Mary Colter, architect for the Fred Harvey Company, was a pioneer in many respects. She succeeded in a male-dominated profession and designed buildings and spaces that influence southwestern architecture today. Her Grand Canyon buildings inspired the popular style now known as "National Park Service Rustic."

Mary Elizabeth Jane Colter, second daughter of Irish immigrants William and Rebecca Crozier Colter, was born in Pittsburg on April 4, 1869. Her older sister, Harriet Brierly Colter, was born in 1863. The family also lived in Texas and Colorado before settling in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1880.

Mary grew up around Sioux Indian territory along the banks of the Mississippi River where she became interested in Indian art and started collecting drawings. She was also interested in the nearby railroads. Encouraged by her exposure to the fine arts during her public school years in elementary and high school, Mary decided on a career in art. Her parents did not initially approve.

After her father died of a brain blood clot at 53 in 1886, Mary con-

vinced her mother to send her to art school with some money her father had left. She enrolled in the California School of Design. A four-year degree in art and design qualified graduates to teach. At that time there were very few certified architects. The majority learned their profession as apprentices. And it was an extremely unusual profession for a woman. As an apprentice, in the 1880's, Mary became interested in the California mission style and the revival of Spanish architecture that were considered more suited to California than the present Victorian style.

Even though Mary wanted a career in designing and decorating buildings she had to find a job to support herself and her mother and sister. She taught drawing and architecture for a year in Wisconsin before finding a job in St. Paul. She taught for 15 years at Mechanic Arts High School. She also lectured at the University Extension on world history and architecture and took archaeology classes for her own interest.

While visiting a friend who worked in a Fred Harvey gift shop, she became acquainted with the manager and indicated her interest in working for Fred

OURAY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESENTS

Sept. 20th, 2015

HISTORIC WESTERN HOTEL - OURAY, CO

4:30 PM - HAPPY HOUR
5:30 PM - DINNER

Followed by Performance and Dessert

HARVEY HOUSE INSPIRED MENU

SPONSORED BY THE BARRY FOUNDATION



MEET BERTHA SPEARS A HARVEY GIRL

DINNER AND PERFORMANCE

RSVP: 970-325-4576
\$75 PER PERSON
SEATING LIMITED

GIFT CERTIFICATES PROVIDED BY THE FOLLOWING

La Fonda La Posada

OCHS Receives Donation of Historic Mining Claims

Over the years, OCHS Curator Don Paulson has guided many tours along the Silverton Railroad Bed near Red Mountain Pass. One of the highlights of that tour is the famous Corkscrew Gulch Turntable, built by Otto Mears in 1889. As of last month, OCHS owns that historic site.

On August 22, Tom Hillhouse, vice president of the OCHS Board of Directors, accepted the deed to two historic mining claims on behalf of the OCHS. The ceremonial exchange of deeds was part of a public celebration at the Red Mountain Interpretive Overlook on a beautiful



▲ Photo by Dudley Case

late summer morning. Besides many OCHS members, local community leaders and former members of the Red Mountain Project attended.

Pat Willits, executive director of the Ridgway-based Trust for Land Restoration, officiated at the celebration. During the past year, TLR

► See DONATION pg 3

► See COLTER pg 2

Silverton Railroad

The narrow gauge Silverton Railroad (SRR) was built in 1887-88 by Otto Mears to reach the fabulously rich mines of the Red Mountain Mining District lying on either side of Red Mountain Pass between Ouray and Silverton, Colorado (see map on page 12). In 1887 the rails were laid from Silverton to Burro Bridge, the current location of the Ophir Pass turn off on U.S. Highway 550.

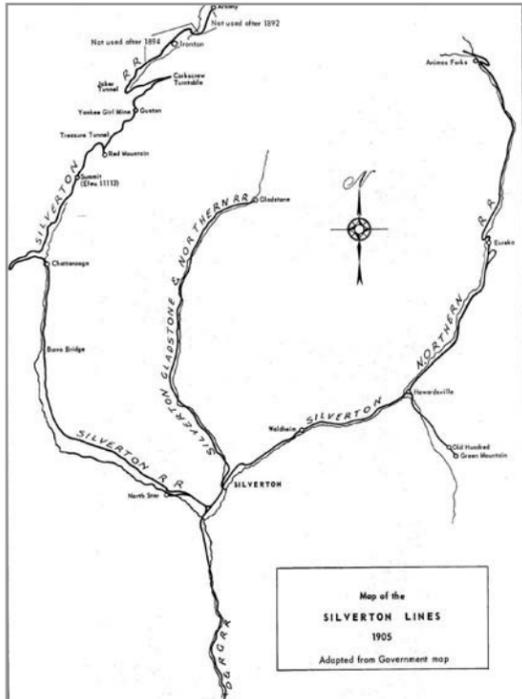
In the spring of 1888 Mears hired Charles Gibbs to complete the railroad. Gibbs employed 400 Navajo Indians and Mexicans and built the railroad from Burro Bridge over 11,113 foot Red Mountain Pass and down into Ironton in less than eight months! In 1889 the railroad was extended to the Albany Smelter in Ironton Park. Gibbs built three engineering marvels on this 20-mile railroad: the Chattanooga Loop on the south side of Red Mountain Pass; the station within a wye at Red Mountain Town; and the Corkscrew Gulch Turntable, which is said to be the only turntable ever constructed on the main line of a railroad in the United States.

During its first three years of existence the Silverton Railroad was the most profitable railroad, mile per mile, in the United States. The rich silver mines served by the Silverton Railroad included the Yankee Girl, Guston, Robinson, Paymaster, National Belle, and Silver Bell. The Silver Panic of 1893 resulted in the closing of most of the mines on Red Mountain but Mears was able to remain in control of the railroad. In 1904 he leased the Silverton Railroad to a group of associates from Silverton who cut the railroad back to the Joker Tunnel above Ironton and replaced the original 30-

pound rail with 45-pound rail. For many years the only shipper on the railroad was the Silver Ledge Mill on the east end of the Chattanooga Loop. That mill burned in 1914 and very little rail service occurred after that time. The railroad was abandoned in the early 1920s and the rail was ripped up in 1926.

Today one can walk on most of the right-of-way of the Silverton Railroad. Every September during their Ouray County Railroad Days, the Ridgway Railroad Museum gives guided hikes of almost the entire roadbed of the Silverton Railroad (see the Museum website for details:

www.ridgwayrailroadmuseum.org).



► For more information about the Silverton Railroad and the other two Mears railroads that radiated out of Silverton see: Sloan, Robert E., and Skowronski, Carl E., *The Rainbow Route*, Sundance Publications, Silverton, CO, 1975; Smith, P. David, *Mountains of Silver*, Pruett Publishing Company, Boulder, CO, 1994.

COLTER pioneer architect

From pg 1

Harvey. Nothing came of it until 1902 when she received a Western Union telegram offering her a job.

In 1899, Herman Schweizer, a buyer for Fred Harvey, commissioned some Indian silver jewelry to be sold in Fred Harvey shops, thus beginning the merchandising of Indian arts. Mary's first job was to arrange the Indian Building containing a museum and salesroom at the new Alvarado Hotel in Albuquerque. She was hired for her knowledge of Indian art and her imagination. And so began her 40-year association with the Fred Harvey Company and the Santa Fe Railroad. She worked closely with Herman Schweizer and Fred Harvey's son-in-law, John F. Hunkel, vice president and general manager. He was also a curator of the Fred Harvey Indian Collection.

Eventually, Mary was responsible for designing and decorating many of the Fred Harvey hotels and buildings including the Hopi House, El Tovar Hotel, Lookout, Hermits Rest, Phantom Ranch, the Watchtower and Bright Angel Lodge at the Grand

Canyon. She also designed La Posada in Winslow, Arizona and La Fonda in Santa Fe, New Mexico. She was the decorator of the Harvey shops and restaurants in the Union Stations in Kansas City, Chicago, St. Louis and Los Angeles. When Fred Harvey took over the food service on the Super Chief, Mary designed the Mimbreno china.

Mary retired at 75 from the Santa Fe Railroad after a 29-year association but continued to work for Fred Harvey for several more years. At 79, she officially retired from Fred Harvey. But even in retirement she continued to work on La Fonda. During their careers, Miss Alice Steele, who hired the Harvey Girls, and Miss Colter were among the few high-ranking women in corporate America.

Mary cataloged her massive collection of Indian artifacts and books and donated them to the Mesa Verde museum.

Although some of Mary's buildings are still standing, she passed away at 88 in January 1958 just after La Pasada closed and El Navajo was torn down. Mary was quoted as saying, "There is such a thing as living too long."

Ouray Branch of the Denver and Rio Grande (Western) Railroad

By Don Paulson

General William Jackson Palmer established the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad (D&RG) in 1871. It was planned to connect Denver with Mexico City but after confrontations in southern Colorado with the Santa Fe Railroad, Palmer headed west from Pueblo through the Royal Gorge to reach the mines of Aspen and Leadville.

Eventually, Palmer extended the road through Salida, Gunnison, Montrose and Grand Junction to the Utah border where it met his D&RGW railroad from Salt Lake City. He also built an extension into the San Juan Mountains through Alamosa and Durango to Silverton. Palmer had seen narrow gauge railroads in

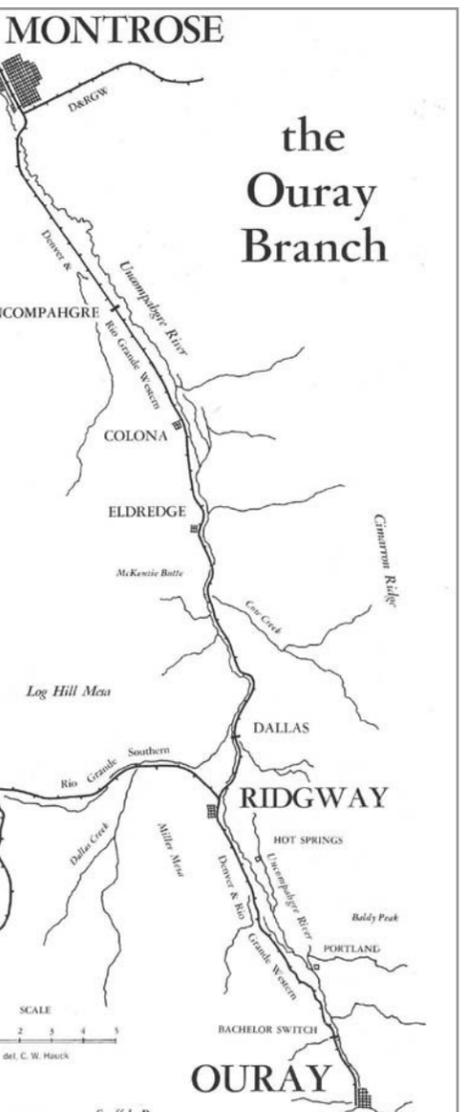
Wales and was convinced that it would be much cheaper to build his railroad narrow gauge (three-feet between the rails) in mountains where extensive rockwork, excavation and sharp curves would be required. By 1889 the D&RG had more than 1700 miles of narrow gauge track. In 2009 only the 50 miles from Durango to Silverton and the 80 miles from Antonito, Colorado to Chama, New Mexico remained.

The narrow gauge rails reached Montrose, Colorado in 1882

but the branch line 30 miles south to Ouray was not constructed until 1886-1887 (see map on page 8). The arrival of the railroad resulted in increased prosperity for Ouray, and most of the city's prominent Victorian commercial buildings were constructed in the first few years after the railroad was extended into Ouray. The D&RG branch originally had a station at Dallas about half way between Montrose and Ouray. The Town of Ridgway was not founded until four years later with the construction of Otto Mears' Rio Grande Southern Railroad.

The movement of ore out of Ouray and supplies into Ouray as well as passenger service ensured that the branch would prosper well into the 20th century. The depression of the 1930s took a toll on the railroad and the town. Passenger service ended in 1936 and the beautiful Ouray depot burned in 1948.

The rails were removed from Ouray to Ridgway in 1953, and the remaining Ridgway to Montrose section was standard gauged. This



route lasted two more decades until low traffic and the impending construction of the Ridgway Dam forced abandonment in 1976.



► Ouray train depot.



► Rocky mountain sheep visit the Ouray train depot.

► For a history of the Ouray Branch of the D&RG see: Chappell, Gordon, "Train Time in Ouray," in Hauck, C. W., Ed., *Colorado Rail Annual No. 11*, Colorado Railroad Museum, Golden, CO, 1973.

DONATION claims

From pg 1

had facilitated the purchase of 120 mining claims in Ouray and San Juan Counties. The 16 mining claims in Ouray County were acquired with the help of the Toan-O' Brien Foundation.

TLR donated 14 of those claims to the U.S. Forest Service, and two others to the OCHS. Those two are prized for their historic significance – the ruins of the Corkscrew Turntable and portions of the Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad grade.

"The Silverton Railroad's Corkscrew Gulch Turntable is an icon of railroading in Southwestern Colorado," said Don Paulson. "The Ouray County Historical Society's Board of Directors is proud to take ownership of and protect this historic site for the enjoyment of generations to come."

Don presented a brief history of the Red Mountain Mining District to the crowd at the overlook. He said the Silverton Railroad, built in 1888 to serve that rich mining area, made more money per mile in three years than any railroad in the United States at that time. He outlined the growth and decline of booming mining communities such as Red Mountain Town, which once boasted a population of 3,000.

Bob Risch described the work of the Red Mountain Project, a public/private partnership that began as a grass-roots task force in 1998. The Red Mountain Project acquired 10,000 acres in the San Juan Mountains over six years and returned those lands to the public domain. Risch, who directed that effort, is now a board member of TLR.

Pat Willits explained TLR's new mission to carry on and expand the legacy of the Red Mountain Project. He acknowledged the work of many individuals who helped make the new mining claims acquisition possible including Bev Rich, chair of the San Juan County Historical Society, and Silverton resident Ryan Bennett. He purchased and preserved from development the 104 mining claims in San Juan County.

Willits urged the audience to remember the original inhabitants of those spectacular alpine landscapes. "Think of the Ute Indians who hunted here for hundreds of years before the miners came," he said. "We stand on the shoulders of people who came before us. It's now our privilege to save these lands for our children and their children."

How the Galloping Geese Saved the Rio Grande Southern

By Karl Schaeffer

Victor Miller was appointed Receiver of the Rio Grande Southern (RGS) in December of 1929.

The railroad, which ran from Ridgway to Durango via Dolores, was in bad financial condition and broken into two disconnected pieces by a large mudslide at Ames (south of Vance Junction). Miller appointed Forest White as Superintendent, cleared the slide and made many other changes, but it was not enough and the railroad was at risk of going under.

In 1931 the RGS was running steam passenger trains every day with an average of one passenger per day between Telluride and Dolores and a few more in other areas. These trains had a minimum of five employees and were using very old and unreliable equipment. The RGS also had a US Mail contract that was a prized source of income and required regular and reliable scheduled service.

Miller decided to try using converted automobiles, called 'Motors' by the RGS, to run on the rails and replace the daily steam passenger trains. One salaried Motorman who would receive no overtime would operate it. The railroad would still run freight trains for ore, coal, lumber, livestock, etc. White hired Jack Odenbaugh from Dolores and brought him to Ridgway. Jack, with the help of Lee Elwell and Jack Martin, built all the RGS 'Motors'. The first 'Motor' was a 1925 Buick touring car that cost \$50 to buy and about \$800 to convert. It went into service between Telluride

and Dolores on June 17, 1931. White reported that it paid for itself in avoided labor costs in about 3 weeks!

The RGS shop immediately went to work on more and larger machines (Motors) and eventually built seven of them in Ridgway. The first two were



▲ Motor No. 4, 1940s. Wolford Collection, Ridgway Railroad Museum.

Buicks and the rest Pierce-Arrows. The later machines could carry about six people and up to ten-tons of mail, milk cans and express freight. They were the UPS of their time and kept the RGS going for another 20 years.

On April 1, 1950, the US Postal Service cancelled the mail contract because of poor performance. As a last resort the RGS decided to go into the tourist business. They converted the freight box on 'Motors' 3, 4, 5 and 7 to all passenger versions that could now carry 30 people but no freight. This is when the railroad officially acknowledged the unofficial name of 'Galloping Goose' in an attempt to promote the tourist business. There are many theories about the origin

of the name, but they did honk, waddle and flap their wings (engine hoods opened for additional cooling). They ran excursions from Ridgway to Lizard Head Pass for \$5.50 per person. They did not create enough revenue to make up for losses in other areas and the RGS ceased operations in the fall of 1951.

A re-creation of the first 'Motor' resides at the Ridgway Railroad Museum.

Numbers 2, 6 & 7 are at the Colorado Railroad Museum in Golden, Colorado. No. 3 is at Knott's Berry Farm in Buena Park, California.

In 2012, the Ridgway Railroad Museum completed restoration of No. 4 (see photo, left) in cooperation with the Telluride Volunteer Fire Department, which owns that motor. No. 4 now resides in Telluride next to the San Miguel

County Courthouse.

The re-creation of Number 1 was done by Ridgway Railroad Museum President Karl Schaeffer in 2000 and is now the property of the Ridgway Railroad Museum. It was built out of the same model of Buick as the original. It is a least 98% accurate based on the only information available, which consists of seven photos and one sketch. It is fully operational and has run on the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad, the Durango and Silverton Railroad, and at the Colorado RR Museum in Golden. Motor No. 1 also runs on the demonstration track at the Ridgway Railroad Museum during special events.

Rio Grande Southern Railroad

By Don Paulson

The narrow gauge Rio Grande Southern Railroad (RGS) was built in 1890-91 by Otto Mears in order to tap the mineral wealth in the mines surrounding Telluride, Ophir and Rico, Colorado as well as provide transportation for the communities lying between Ridgway and Durango, Colorado (see page 10 for a map). Mears built numerous toll roads and several railroads in the San Juan Mountains of southwestern Colorado and was known during his lifetime as the "Pathfinder of the San Juans."

The northern terminus, railroad shops and the administrative offices were located in a new town called Ridgway, named after Robert Ridgway who was construction superintendent for the northern half of the RGS. The construction was financed partly through the enormous profits provided to Mears by the Silverton Railroad.

The D&RG relocated its right of

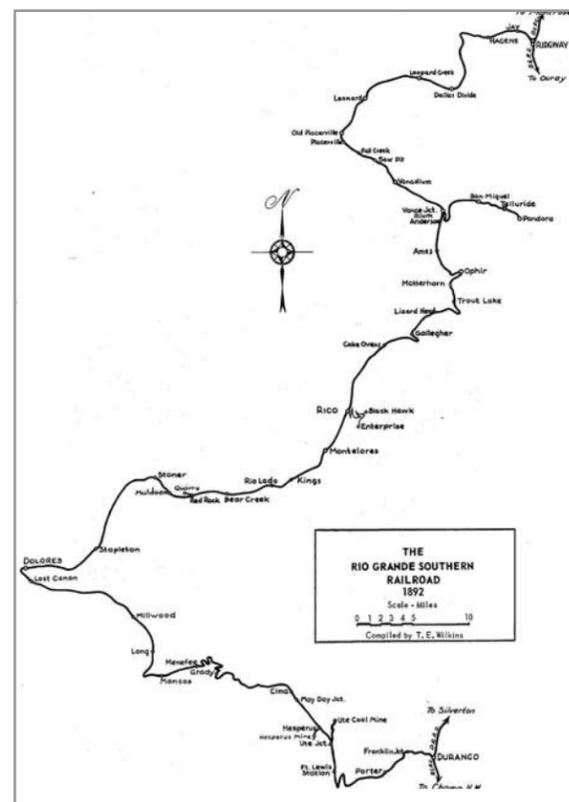
way to meet the RGS at Ridgway, which resulted in the rather quick demise of Dallas as the merchants moved their businesses to the new town. The railroad was completed only two years before the Silver Panic of 1893, and it went into receivership which resulted in Mears losing control of the RGS. For the next 30 years the RGS was the poor stepchild of the D&RG railroad.

The D&RG lost control of the RGS in 1929 when Victor Miller was appointed as receiver. Miller put the railroad back on a financially sounder basis with many innovations. The RGS was in danger of losing the lucrative mail contract, but they could not afford to run two passenger trains requiring five crewmen each and many tons of coal. Miller had Jack Odenbaugh build RGS Motor No. 1 in 1931 in which a single motorman and a few gallons of gasoline replaced an expensive steam train. The motor paid for itself in less than a month. The railroad built a total of seven motors in the next five years and they kept the railroad running for two more decades.

The railroad ran annual fall stock

rushes to move cattle and sheep to market. At one time Placerville, Colorado had the second largest livestock loadings in Colorado. In addition, the RGS served the mines above Telluride and Rico, the coal mines near Durango, and the lumber mills near Dolores. In February of 1949 the water level in Rotary No. 2 was allowed to run low and the boiler exploded. No funds were available to rebuild the rotary, and without a means to clear snow blockades, the railroad was severely crippled.

The RGS lost the mail contract in 1950 and in the spring of 1950 converted four of the motors to Galloping Geese for hauling tourists. The tourist operation lasted 18 months but did not provide enough income to keep the



▲ RGS System Map. Colorado Railroad Museum Collection.

railroad solvent. The receiver filed for abandonment in December of 1951 with final approval for abandonment coming in April of 1952.

The last train from Ouray

By Don Paulson

In October of 1952 the Denver and Rio Grande Western (D&RGW) Railroad received permission from the Interstate Commerce Commission to abandon the line between Ridgway and Ouray. The abandonment of the Rio Grande Southern Railroad in 1951 had removed the last need for a narrow gauge connection between Ouray and Montrose. The trackage between Montrose and Ridgway would be standard gauged.

During the fall of 1952 and the following winter, D&RGW section crews used bulldozers to widen the right of way between Montrose and Ridgway and replace the narrow gauge ties with standard gauge ties. By early March the roadbed was ready for widening the track to standard gauge and the little narrow gauge Ouray branch was doomed after more than 60 years of service.

The last train from Ouray left town in a light snow shower late in the afternoon on March 21, 1953 (see photo on page 105). In its March 27th issue, the Ouray Herald carried a short article toward the bottom of the front page describing the scene. D&RGW narrow gauge 2-8-0 No. 318 departed with engineer L. S. Braswell at the throttle, as he had been for more than 40 years, along with fireman Frank Wright, conductor John Collett and brakemen Joe Mozza and John Chiodo. The train to Ouray earlier in the day was a "caboose hop" consisting of the engine, tender and caboose. It left Montrose in bright sunlight but the weather deteriorated to a wet spring snow by the time it reached Ouray.

The final out bound trip added three cars of ore concentrates from the Camp Bird

Mine, four empty coal gondolas and the two boxcars that had served as the depot after the original depot burned in 1948. The Camp Bird Mine was one of the few loyal shippers to not switch from railroad to truck transport of ore concentrates. The train arrived back in Montrose at 7:28 pm. Fortunately, the 318 was saved from the scrapper's torch in 1954 by Cornelius W. Hauck and is currently located at the Colorado Railroad Museum in Golden.

No one seemed particularly sad about the demise of the narrow gauge. The last regularly scheduled passenger train had left town on September 14, 1930 and even mixed train passenger service ended on July 5, 1936. The March 3, 1953 edition of the Ouray Herald mentioned how excited the shippers were to get broad gauge train service from Ridgway that would eliminate transfer of goods from narrow gauge to standard gauge cars in Montrose.

Grand Junction Trainmaster Harry Brooks soon had 100 men between Montrose and



▲ Last Train from Ouray, 1953. Photo by Bob Richardson, Colorado

Ridgway moving the rails out to standard gauge width at the rate of 5 miles per day. In less than a week the tracks were readied for D&RGW GP 7 diesel engines.

The April 3, 1953 issue of the Ouray Herald noted the first arrival of a standard gauge diesel freight train in Ridgway. It was 10 hours late because of a broken rail at Kelly's Crossing. Its only paying freight was a gondola of coal destined for Rice Lumber. However, the yards in Ridgway were a beehive of activity as facilities for loading stock, ore concentrates and other merchandise were being newly constructed for standard gauge cars. At the same time the narrow gauge track between Ridgway and Ouray was quickly removed.

The dieselized and standard gauged Ridgway branch survived for another two decades until it too succumbed to low traffic and the Ridgway Reservoir that inundated several miles of its track.



▲ Bridge below Oak Street.

What Remains of the Rio Grande Southern Today?

By Karl Schaeffer

Only a few structures and some rolling stock from the Rio Grande Southern Railroad still exist today. The Ridgway Depot is now a private home that was moved across Railroad Avenue and turned 90 degrees. About two-thirds of the former freight end of the depot was removed and the remaining third is used as a garage.

The Placerville Depot was cut into two pieces with the major section moved one block from Highway 62 and now used as a home. The smaller section is attached to the side of the general store in Placerville. The Telluride Depot was onto a new foundation, was restored and survives as the Ah Haa School of the Arts. The Dolores Depot was dismantled in the 1950s but in 1993 the Galloping Goose Historical Society completed an exact replica of this depot. There may also be some small railroad structures used as farm storage sheds that have not been identified.

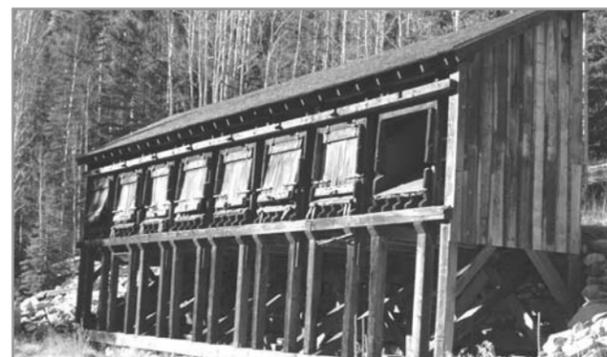
Motor No. 1 was scrapped but the remaining six Motors (or Galloping Geese) survive. Nos. 2, 6, & 7 are at the Colorado Railroad Museum in Golden, Colorado. No. 3 is at Knott's Berry Farm in Buena Park, California. In 2012, the Ridgway Railroad Museum completed restoration of No. 4 in cooperation with the Telluride Volunteer Fire Department, which owns that motor. No. 4 now resides in Telluride next to the San Miguel County Courthouse.

Four of the RGS locomotives survive. No. 41 is operated daily at Knott's Berry Farm. No. 42 is in the Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Museum in Durango. No. 20 is owned by the Colorado Railroad Museum in Golden and in Summer 2007 it was sent to Strasburg, Pennsylvania for restoration to operating condition. No. 74 has been renumbered back to Denver, Boulder and Western No. 30 and is on display in Boulder.

Four of the RGS cabooses survive. Caboose 0400 and 0404 are at the Colorado Railroad Museum. Caboose 0402 is at Knott's Berry Farm and caboose 0409 is at Disney Land Tokyo. Passenger coaches 0252 and 0254 are in Monte Vista, Colorado and passenger coach 0256 is in Dolores. An outfit car, refrigerator car 2101, and superintendent's car "Rico" are at the Colorado Railroad Museum. Passenger coach 0257 is in use on the D&SNG. Otto Mears' private car "San Juan" (now "Edna") is restored and used at Knott's Berry Farm.

Water tanks still exist at Trout Lake, Rico, and East Mancos. The Rico tank recently received a new roof. The coal tipple survives at Vance Junction and has been restored by the US Forest Service (see photo below). In the fall of 2005 the US Forest Service also restored the last large trestle on the RGS, which is located at the south end of Trout Lake. Finally, a tender shell left over from a wreck on Keystone Hill some 100 years ago sits beside Forest Road 625 just north of the Illium Power Plant (church camp) near Telluride.

Books published about the RGS, including the twelve-volume RGS Story, total more than 8,000 pages. That is over 50 pages per mile! To put that in perspective, today's Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad would require almost 5000 350-page books to receive the same printed coverage per mile. The RGS, a small railroad that ran from 1891-1952 and was largely a financial failure, has developed a strong cult following among railroad enthusiasts. In the model railroad world many more people model Ridgway than live here today.



▲ Vance Junction Coal Pockets, 2006. Photo by Don Paulson.

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- Camp Bird \$1,000 - Up
- Business Member \$50 - Up

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