

TRACK N' FEATHERS



A LOOK BACK AT THE RGS: THE CREATION OF MOTOR NUMBER ONE

In a quest to cut costs during the Great Depression, Victor Miller, who had taken over as receiver of the Rio Grande Southern two years before, and Forrest White, the superintendent, undertook a challenging experiment in the spring of 1931. They wondered if a gasoline powered, automobile based, railcar could be built that could carry the mail, small amounts of freight, and a few passengers. Such a railcar would replace a daily steam powered train the RGS had to operate to fulfill its mail contract with the U.S Post Office. A steam powered train required an engineer, fireman, brakeman and conductor, where as a gasoline powered railcar would require only one person to operate, cutting labor costs by about 75 percent.

The RGS's first experiment went into service in June 1931, and was christened **Motor 1**. Its basic components were the frame, body, engine, and drive train of a 1926 Buick Six open touring car. The railcar was created at the RGS roundhouse in Ridgway by newly hired auto mechanic Jack Odenbaugh. It had an enclosed cab that could carry the motorman and one passenger and an open, stake-bed freight compartment for the mail and light freight. It was about 21 feet long, weighted 5,300 lbs., and cost \$852.58 to build. A pivoting four-wheeled front truck and a fixed, two-wheeled power truck in the rear provided the means for *No. 1* to ramble the winding rails of the RGS.

Motor No. 1 was assigned a daily round trip between Telluride and Dolores, a distance of 143.6 miles at a scheduled speed of 18 mph. In just two weeks of service, Superintendent Forest White estimated No. 1 had saved \$462.19 over operating a steam powered train and would pay for itself in its first month of operation. Despite this early success, No. 1 faced some operating challenges. The two rear wheels, while steel rimmed, retained the wooden spokes of its Buick heritage and were prone to break, leaving the mail, freight, and passengers to be "rescued" hours later by a steam engine and caboose.

Complaints from the Post Office that the mail was exposed to the weather and possible theft by overflow passengers riding in the back, resulted in a 30" x 66" wooden extension to the cab to accommodate a second passenger seat and a fully enclosed wooden box to protect the mail. According to the RGS, the rear seat could hold four passengers—at barely 16" per passenger! The freight box was described by Mr. White, as "about the size of a tall, two-hole outhouse."

By May 1933 and just shy of two years operation, No.1 was taken out of service after logging 36,250 miles. By this time larger railcars, **Motors 2, 3, and 4** were in service, making No, 1 obsolete. In late 1933 No. 1 was scrapped and some of its parts were later used to build **Motor 6**, a non-revenue vehicle used by the RGS road master and track maintenance crews.

About seven decades later, No. 1 re-emerged when Karl Schaffer, a retired railroad machinist living in Ridgway, built a beautiful replica of No. 1, using a 1925 Buick Six automobile that he purchased from a rancher in Montana. The replica of No. 1 can be found at the Ridgway Railroad Museum along with several restored Denver and Rio Grande freight cars. Karl's replica has operated on the Durango and Silverton Railroad, and last fall operated with No. 5 during our Fall Color Special.



Photo by Lew Matis

Karl Schaffer's remarkable replica of Motor No. 1 is shown at the Colorado Railroad Museum in Golden, Colorado in 2009 at the first reunion of five of the Galloping Geese since the RGS abandonment in 1952. Karl's Motor No. 1 and Goose No. 5 from Dolores joined Geese Numbers 2, 6, and 7 that reside at the CRRM for that memorable occasion.

NEEDED MAINTENANCE ON NUMBER FIVE AFTER A BUSY SUMMER

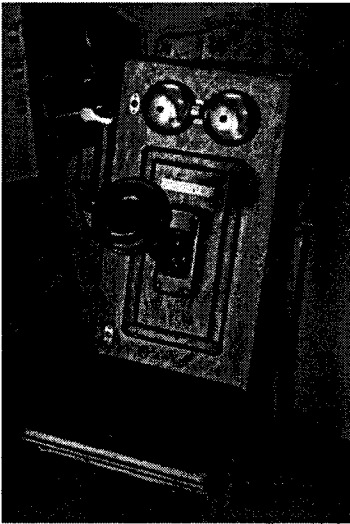
After logging 17 days and about 800 miles during three separate excursions in 2013, we decided it was time to do some preventative maintenance on the front truck of Goose No. 5. This required jacking up the front of No. 5 and, after removing the large pivot bolt, rolling the front truck out. This allowed us to inspect and grease the pivot bracket where the truck mounts to the Goose. Also we were able to disassemble and inspect the four brass bearings and the axles where the bearings fit.

Everything was in good condition with one minor exception: one of the bearings has always run 20 to 30 degrees warmer than the other three. We use an infrared, electronic thermometer to record bearing temperatures when operating. This bearing showed enough wear that a small groove across the inside of the upper half of the bearing was nearly worn away. This groove distributes lubrication across the full width of the bearing. Gary Gregory, our newest crew member, spent about 25 to 30 minutes deepening this groove with a short piece of hacksaw blade, then polishing the bearing surface with extra fine emery cloth. At a second work session in January the front truck was re-installed. We'll have some photos in the next newsletter.

FOUR NEW DONATIONS TO MUSEUM COLLECTION

Arlene Orton, a long time member and former volunteer, last summer donated a set of color slides taken in 1950 or 51 by a relative of her family. Many of the slides were taken on the Silverton branch of the Denver & Rio Grande Western, but about six slides were taken during a ride on a Galloping Goose on the Rio Grande Southern! If we can find a way to scan the slides, we'll put some in a future newsletter.

An antique crank wall telephone was donated in July 2013 by Neil Reich of Durango, CO. When Neil purchased the phone in 1979 from Cleta Poor in Denver, an attached note from Mrs. Poor's deceased husband, M. C. Poor, read, "This old Western Electric, hand crank wall telephone came out of one of the depots along the Rio Grande Southern R.R. between Lizard Head & Durango." The telephone will be an excellent addition to our museum and will enhance the museum's historic appearance. Thank you, Neil, for your generous donation.



All Photos by Lew Matis

The locomotive and caboose shown below are one inch scale models (1 inch = 1 foot) of Rio Grande Southern Locomotive No. 20 and Caboose No. 0404. The beautifully detailed models were built by Bob Walker of DeKalb, IL, and Bob decided they needed a new home where more people could enjoy them. What better place than the Rio Grande Southern Museum in Dolores!

The work Bob put into these models is very impressive: No. 20 took over 1,300 hours spread over eight years to build and has over 8,000 parts. It won 2nd place in Rod Locos at the 29th National Narrow Gauge Convention in Colorado Springs. The caboose required 135 hours over one year and has over 1,500 pieces.

Ole Bye, a local volunteer, is building a display base for the two models. In addition to information about Bob and the models, we'll have photos and information about the original equipment. For example, No. 20 had a lead role in the 1950 movie, *A Ticket to Tomahawk!*



UPDATES AND UPCOMING EVENTS

Winter is the time when the GGHS starts planning for next summer's museum operations and the special excursions of Galloping Goose No. 5 on the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic R.R. and the Durango and Silverton R.R.

Summer Museum Schedule: For the summer of 2014, the museum will be open six days a week (Mon.–Sat.) from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, beginning Mon. May 19th and ending Fri. Oct. 17th. In addition to the new items featured on page 3, President Lew Matis promises to have his long delayed History of the Galloping Geese display completed. Marie Richmond, Board member, is working to complete a new display of Goose operations during the tourist years 1950 and 51.

Tentative 2014 Excursion Schedule: This year we are scaling back the number of excursions to two from three last year. We are dropping the C&TS excursion during the week of July 4th because there has consistently been one or two days of low ridership the past two years. This will also give our operating crew time off during this holiday. We've notified the D&S we'd like to participate again in Railfest ,which is scheduled Thur. Aug. 14th to Sun. Aug. 17th. The Fall Color Special on the C&TS in late September is always successful and extremely popular, and we've requested doing it over the last weekend in September from Thur. Sept. 25th to Sun. Sept. 28th.

These are tentative dates and the daily schedule for each excursion has NOT been set, so "pencil in" these dates, knowing they may change. We hope to have more firm information in the Spring newsletter.



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