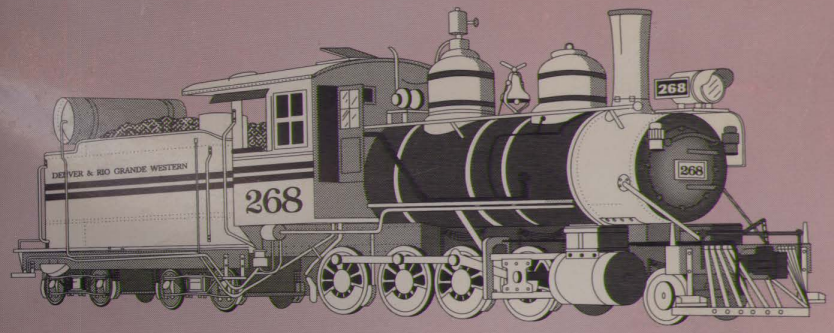
The Gunnison Train



By Jerry B. Day

Gunnison County Pioneer
and Historical Society

The Gunnison Train

by Jerry B. Day

Published by

The Gunnison County Pioneer and Historical Society

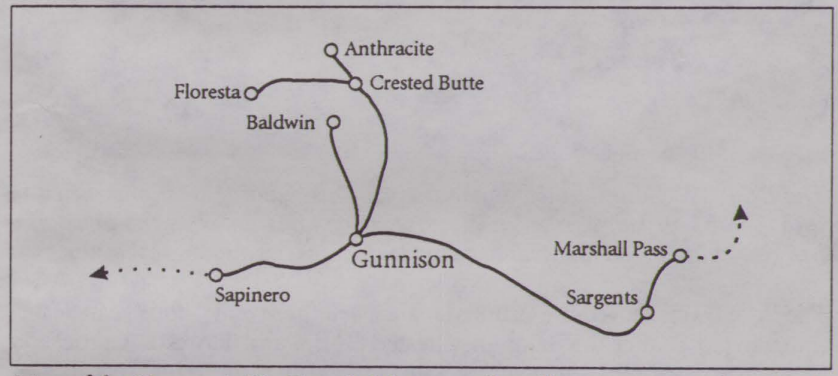
Dedication

To Frank Wright, Clarence Russell,
Fred Vernon, Tony Matkovich,
Ben Snyder, and all of the Gunnison
County railroad men.

Table of Contents

Introduction

TRAVELERS passing through the Gunnison valley today have difficulty imagining the area as a railroad center. The only remnant of the valley's railroad past is the train on display at the Gunnison Pioneer Museum. From 1881 to 1955, Gunnison was a railroad transportation hub—trains entered and departed the town from four directions. Long trains of coal cars came down the valley into Gunnison from Crested Butte, Floresta, Anthracite, and Baldwin. Passenger and freight trains departed for Montrose and points west through the awesome depths of the Black Canon and east to Salida over the heights of Marshall Pass. The rail yards of Gunnison were filled with freight cars of many types from two of Colorado's historic narrow gauge railroads: the *Denver & Rio Grande Western* and the *Colorado & Southern.*



Map of the Denver & Rio Grande Western railroad's narrow gauge lines in the Gunnison Valley. The main line west ran to Montrose through the Black Canon; the line east ran to Salida over 10,858 foot Marshall Pass.

The first train entered Gunnison at 2:40 P.M. on August 6, 1881 with Denver & Rio Grande locomotive 71. In need of a good coal supply for its locomotives and more traffic to support the new line, the Rio Grande immediately preceded to lay tracks to the coal fields of Crested Butte, arriving there on November 21, 1881. Construction of the main line to Utah through the Black Canon continued through the winter of 1882. The line to Montrose was completed on September 8, 1882.

Gunnison's second railroad, the Denver, South Park and Pacific (later to become the Colorado and Southern) arrived in Gunnison on September 1, 1882. Also needing a coal supply for its locomotives and coal traffic for revenue, the South Park constructed a branch line up Ohio Creek to Baldwin in 1883. A second branch was built from Castleton to the Kubler mine. This branch was transferred to the Denver & Rio Grande in 1911 after the Colorado & Southern abandoned its line through Alpine Tunnel to Gunnison.

The D&RGW Gunnison depot about 1950. This building was constructed in 1930. Closed for railroad service in 1954, it remains today as the office of a trucking company. (Photographer unknown, from the author's collection)

The little trains served the Gunnison area well for seventy–four years. They transported coal from Baldwin, Crested Butte, and Floresta. Cattle and sheep from Sapinero, Iola, Jack's Cabin, and Parlin went to markets all over the nation on the tiny cars. They also hauled lumber from Kebler Pass, brought merchandise to the valley, and transported thousands of passengers over the passes and through the canons.

The D&RGW abandoned and removed its narrow gauge lines from the Gunnison valley in the summer of 1955. The last scrap train with locomotive 489 departed Gunnison on July 24, 1955. Steam whistles are gone forever from the Black Canon, from the slopes of Marshall Pass, and from the valley of Tomichi Creek and the Gunnison river.

Rio Grande railroad water tank in the Gunnison railroad yard about 1950. This was Gunnison's second water tank. Built in 1924, at a cost of $3,524.55, it was dismantled in 1955. (Photographer unknown, from the author's collection)

Trains, that once ran in the valley, may be seen today operating on the *Durango & Silverton Railroad* at Durango, the *Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad* at Chama, New Mexico, and at the *Colorado Railroad Museum* in Golden. The train at the Pioneer Museum is the only physical reminder of those glorious days when the whistle and bell of the steam engine could be heard in Gunnison. This book was written so that the reader might share a bit of the history of this train that was once so much a part of this area.

Locomotive 268

She was the last of her type to see active service. In her one hundred and ten years of existence, she starred in a Hollywood movie (she had a stand–in), was the center of attention at the Chicago Railroad Fair, gave Santa Claus a ride, and was displayed in Denver alongside a nuclear missile. She is Denver and Rio Grande Western railroad locomotive number 268. With repairs she could still pull a train through the Black Canon, over Marshall Pass, or to Crested Butte. She is the star of the Gunnison Pioneer Museum.

Locomotive 268 doubleheading with number 458 on the Marshall Pass passenger train about 1912. (William Endner photograph)

Locomotive 268 was built by Baldwin Locomotive Company in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in March 1882 (Baldwin Locomotive construction number 6002). 268 was one of 150 similar locomotives built by the Baldwin Locomotive Company and the Grant Locomotive Company. 268 was one of a group of 45, numbers 250 to 295, built by Baldwin in 1881 and 1882. The Denver and Rio Grande railway classified engine 268 as a Class 60N Consolidation type. It weighed 59,330 pounds and had a 2–8–0 wheel arrangement (two leading wheels and eight driving wheels). In 1923, the D&RGW changed their locomotive classifications from one based on weight to one

based on tractive effort (pulling power). 268 was reclassified as a Class C–16 (meaning it had a pulling power of 16,540 pounds). 268 could pull 290 tons from Gunnison to Crested Butte and 210 tons from Gunnison to Castleton (it could pull more to Crested Butte because the grade was less).

After being transported to the Denver & Rio Grande Railway Burnham shops in Denver by standard gauge flat car, 268 was unloaded and placed in service on the rapidly expanding Rio Grande narrow gauge lines in the southwestern part of Colorado. It was probably first used in freight service over Marshall Pass and through the Black Canon; no record of 268's first ten years of service has been found. The first mention of 268 appeared in the *Salida Mail* newspaper on August 12, 1891:

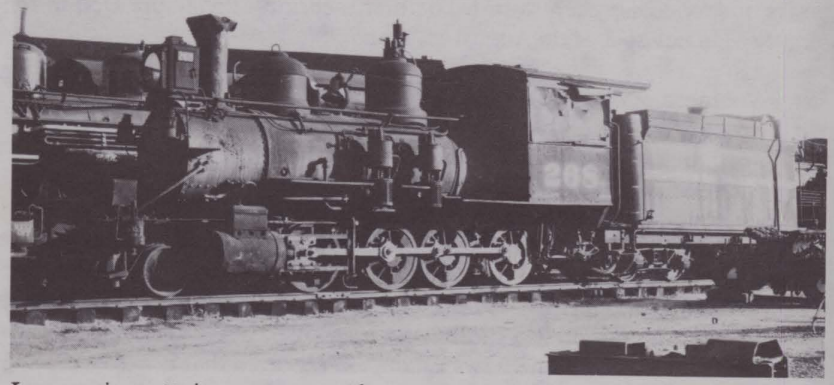
> Wednesday evening about 6:00 o'clock as an extra east was coming up the hill with 268, engineer Hyatt on the head end, a section gang on a push car, coming down the hill between Chester and Tank Seven between Marshall Pass and Sargents collided with the train, injuring two or three men, one it is believed fatally. They are now lying at the Salida hospital.

On November 8, 1912, the *Gunnison News Champion* reported that Ed Dundin was fireman on locomotive 268 being used at Gunnison. A month later, December 13, 1912, the *News Champion* reported that it was equipped with a wedge plow and was bucking snow on the branch line between Crested Butte and the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company's coal mine at Floresta.

The Rio Grande Southern was a narrow gauge railroad that ran from Ridgway to Durango, Colorado. Rio Grande Southern often purchased or leased locomotives from the Denver & Rio Grande Western railroad and was for a time operated as a part of the D&RGW. In March of 1925, Rio Grande Southern records show eight locomotives leased from the D&RGW, including: 202, 224, 241, 268, 269, 274, 276 and 305. All were the same type as 268 except 305 which was larger.

Later in 1925, the RGS leased larger 2–8–2 locomotives from the D&RGW and the 268 was returned to the Rio Grande along with the other smaller engines. On October 27, 1927, the 268 was being used with a steam powered ditcher on the Ouray branch. A crewmen was injured when his hand was caught in the dumping mechanism of a dump car. 268 always seemed to be where the action was.

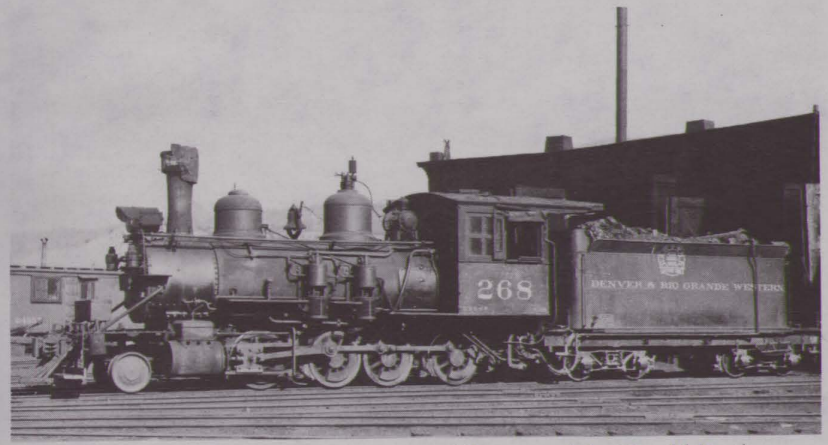
Many changes were made to 268 over the years. In 1903, automatic couplers were added replacing the dangerous link–and–pin couplers. It also lost the long wooden pilot (non-railroaders call it a cowcatcher) in the conversion to new couplers. Around 1914, the original oil headlight was replaced with an electric light to comply with a new Colorado law. When new, 268 had one air pump on the right side (engineer's side). In the late teens or early twenties, a second air pump was to give the engine greater breaking capability and both pumps were placed on the left side.



Locomotive 268 in storage at Alamosa, August 1930. Note the boarded–up windows and the box headlight. (Otto Perry photograph from the Denver Public Library, Western History Department)

The 1920s brought prosperity and increased traffic to the Denver and Rio Grande Western. New locomotives and cars were purchased for both the standard gauge and narrow gauge lines. Larger and more powerful narrow gauge locomotives were received in 1923 and 1925 and ten standard gauge locomotives were rebuilt to narrow gauge in 1928 and 1930. Many smaller locomotives were scrapped. Locomotive 268 was placed in storage in Alamosa sometime in the late twenties. 268 remained at Alamosa until 1936 when she was refurbished and sent to Durango to serve as yard switcher. D&RGW records show 268 running alone over Cumbres Pass on October 9, 1936. 268 served at Durango until 1939 or 1940 when she was sent to Gunnison to work on the Baldwin branch along with locomotives 223 and 278. These three locomotives were the only ones allowed on the Baldwin branch due to a weight restriction on a Gunnison river bridge.

By 1940, locomotives 223, 268, 271, and 278 were the only ones of their type remaining on the D&RGW. Number 223 was placed on display at the Salt Lake City depot in December of 1941. 271 was sold to the Montezuma Lumber Company in December of 1941 and was scrapped in 1947. The 268 and 278 continued in service on the Baldwin branch throughout the 1940s. The little locomotives began to attract the attention of tourists and railfans and in the summer of 1949, 268 was selected to run at the Chicago Railroad Fair. Over $20,000 was used in overhauling 268 and Business Car B3. The locomotive and car were painted in a splendid gold, silver, and black scheme. For the fair, 268 was named "Montezuma" and the B3 was named "General Palmer" (for General William Jackson Palmer, founder of the D&RGW). 268 and B3 ran on a circle of track to the delight of fair visitors. At the close of the fair, 268 was placed in storage at Alamosa; many thought it had run its last miles. However, locomotive 278 was in need of service and in December of 1950, 268 was hauled dead from Alamosa to Salida in preparation for return to service on the Baldwin branch. Before her return to the unglamorous job of hauling coal, 268 served as power for an unorthodox Santa Claus sleigh. On December 22, 1950, 268 and caboose 0578 transported the jolly old man from the Salida rail yards to Main Street for the local children. 268 still in its gold, silver, and black paint from the rail fair and caboose 0578 decorated with deer antlers and a Christmas tree atop the cupola made a festive and colorful appearance. They received almost as much attention as Santa.



Locomotive 268 at Durango, July 7, 1937. (Photograph by Gerald Best)

All of the media coverage accorded to the little locomotive attracted the attention of motion picture producers looking for scenic locations and authentic equipment for their western epics. In the spring of 1951, 268 was brought to Durango to star in "Denver & Rio Grande," a western drama loosely based on the history of the D&RGW. She retained her gaudy yellow, black, and silver paint in the film. The motion picture crew used the Silverton branch as a stand-in for the Royal Gorge where the original battle between the Rio Grande and Santa Fe railroads occurred. To add drama to the story, two old locomotives, destined for scrap, were loaded with explosives and crashed head-on into each other. One, the 345, was temporarily renumbered to 268 and acted as a stand-in for 268 in the story. The movie company considered purchasing either number 268 or 278 and some cars for movie work; nothing came of the idea. After the filming was complete, 268 was returned to Gunnison, arriving there October 5, 1951.

268 in the Gunnison engine terminal, preparing to leave for the Baldwin branch, October 16, 1941. (Otto Perry photograph from the Denver Public Library, Western History Department)

Traffic on the lines out of Gunnison in the early fifties was at an all time low. There wasn't much for the little locomotive to do. 268 and her sister, the 278, were used for occasional runs to Sapinero and a few stock trains on the Baldwin branch. The Baldwin branch coal traffic had ceased with the abandonment of the line from Salida to Alamosa.

The winter of 1952 was a difficult one for little 268. In January, she derailed and almost rolled over at Iola while powering a flanger train to Sapinero.

On March 11, pushing a wedge plow, trailing Flanger OJ and two cabooses, 268 spent nine hours bucking snow on a one–way run to Sapinero.

In July of 1952, the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company abandoned their large coal mine at Crested Butte. Shortly after that, the D&RGW applied to abandon all of its narrow gauge lines in the Salida to Gunnison area. In November of 1952, the Rio Grande donated engine 278 to the city of Montrose. This left 268 as the last of her type in service. 268 was given a reprieve in the summer of 1953 as coal slack, left at Crested Butte after the mines closed, was shipped to Salida for transfer to the standard gauge.

After much legal maneuvering and several hearings, approval to abandon the narrow gauges lines was granted in September 1953. After the 268 was used on the last stock shipments out of Gunnison in the fall of 1953, she sat unused in the Gunnison roundhouse until the fall of 1954. On September 28, 1954, 268 made her last run for the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad, hauling idle cars from Sapinero to Gunnison (for descriptions of this final run, see "268 Makes Final Run," on page 12 and "The Final Run of Engine 268" on page 13).

On May 3, 1955, Brinkerhoff Brothers (the scrapping contractor) steamed up 268 for use on the scrap trains dismantling the Baldwin, Sapinero, and Crested Butte branches. The Baldwin branch was scrapped first, followed by the Sapinero branch, and finally the Crested Butte branch. 268 made her last run on June 30, 1955, hauling the scrap train from Jack's Cabin to Gunnison. She was replaced by locomotive 489 the next day. On July 16, 1955, 268 was placed on a truck and used as a float in the "Cattlemen's Days" parade. After the parade, she was placed in a park alongside U.S. Highway 50. In the summer of 1959, 268 was moved to the Civic Center Plaza in Denver for the "Rush to the Rockies" centennial celebration. She was displayed along with an intercontinental ballistic missile and a pioneer village replica. She was returned to Gunnison at the end of the celebration.

Of the 150 locomotives of 268's type built in 1881 and 1882, only three remain. Locomotive 223, built by the Grant Locomotive Works in 1881 is displayed at the Salt Lake City depot. Locomotive 278, built by the Baldwin Locomotive Works in 1882, is now displayed by the National Park Service at Cimarron west of Gunnison And, of course, the 268 is proudly displayed at the Gunnison Pioneer Museum.

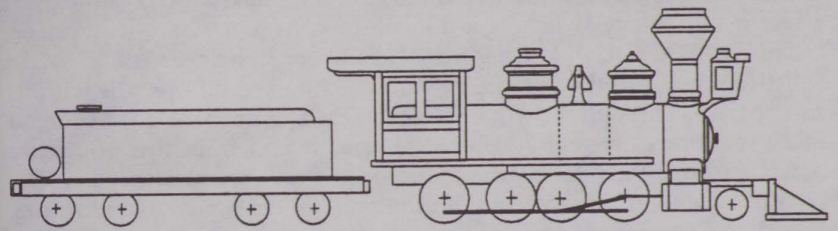
It has been nearly forty years since little 268 breathed with live steam, forty years since her bell rang and her whistle announced her coming and going

to the residents of Gunnison. She has been quiet these many years, but she still lives in still pictures and motion pictures. Who knows the future? Perhaps, someday, she will again awaken and relive those wonderful days when the skies over Gunnison were streaked with her smoke.

268 in front of the Gunnison roundhouse, 1943. The 268 and 278 were the only locomotives permitted on the Baldwin branch at this time. (Lad G. Arend photograph from the Dennis O'Berry collection)

Locomotive 268 Specifications

Gauge	36 inches
Length (overall)	49 feet, 6-⅛ inches
Wheel base	41 feet, 11 inches
Height (top of stack)	11 feet, 5 inches
Cylinders	15 x 20 inches
Boiler Pressure	160 pounds
Diameter Driving Wheels	36 inches
Diameter Pilot Wheels	24 inches
Diameter Tender Truck Wheels	26 inches
Engine Weight (engine only)	69,110 pounds
Total Weight (includes tender)	122,110 pounds
Tractive effort (pulling power)	16,540 pounds
Water capacity	2500 gallons
Coal capacity	6 tons



Redrawn from a Denver & Rio Grande Railway Folio drawing of a class 60 locomotive.

268 Makes Final Run

TUESDAY, September 28 for the final time, little engine 268 put on the final show of its 72–year career. To bring in the cars at Iola and Sapinero, D&RGW shop men had worked in September at Gunnison rebuilding this last of the 60 Class of engines which for half a century were familiar over much of southwestern Colorado. At the height of the narrow gauge, the D&RG had operated a fleet of nearly a hundred such engines, commonly seen on main branches through the 1920s.

At 6:00 A.M. 268 steamed west to Sapinero, making a "caboose hop" with an outfit box car serving as caboose. A bulldozer had cleared the line of a rock slide just east of Sapinero, and section men had prepared the line, so the run was easily made. At Sapinero, weeds and rust, combined with moisture from a recent rain, made switching a difficult task. At 9:52 A.M. with cameras clicking and the teacher and her school as audience, engineer Frank Wright whistled off and to the surprise of many, 268 walked off upgrade with its 22–car train. Through the winding canyon the engine made good time. At Iola five stock cars were added to the consist and from this point two brakemen rode the pilot pouring sand on the rails ahead as needed. The crew had piled cartons and cans of extra sand on the engine that morning, expecting to have need of it for such occasions. Following arrival at Gunnison at noon, the engine spent balance of the day switching the yard, preparing a long train of idle cars to haul to Salida. The final switching of Gunnison yard by the little engine drew quite a crowd of curious.

From the Narrow Gauge News, November 1954. Published by the Narrow Gauge Motel; Alamosa, Colorado (predecessor of the Colorado Railroad Museum).

The Final Run of Engine 268

This article was written by Frank Wright, a D&RGW fireman and engineer for over half a century. The article originally appeared in the D&RGW's "Greenlight" employee publication in the 1950s. Shortly before his death, Mr. Wright presented a copy of his manuscript to this author. This run was not the last run of engine 268 (that came in July of 1955); it was Mr. Wright's last run on the 268.

The 27th day of September, 1954, I was called at Grand Junction to deadhead to Gunnison, Colorado for service as engineer the next day: September 28th. I was told that Oscar Doyle was to be my fireman, and that this was to be a cleanup trip to Sapinero.

I realized that this was the last trip that I would ever make on the 268 and also the last one that I would ever make on the narrow gauge, so it was with a touch of sadness that Oscar Doyle and I made our way to Gunnison, where we both had begun our railroad career, many years ago for me, and quite a few for Oscar. Little did we realize in those years that we would make the last trip west out of Gunnison and live to see the day when there would be no rails all the way from Salida to Montrose.

268 north of Gunnison, returning from Crested Butte with several cars of ore. July 3, 1952. (Photograph by Robert W. Richardson, Colorado Railroad Museum)

I had previously made the last trip east out of Montrose with Engineer W.P. Price on engine 456, also the last trip out of Ouray, Colorado, with engineer C.L. Braswell on the 318, so in a way it was not a new experience for me but a rather sad one at that. An amusing incident occurred on the trip out of Ouray. All of you railroaders have heard about tonnage–hungry conductors that take everything in town except the depot. Well, on this trip, we took the depot. You see a few years before the depot at Ouray had burned down and they had an outfit car spurred out for a depot, and we took it along too.

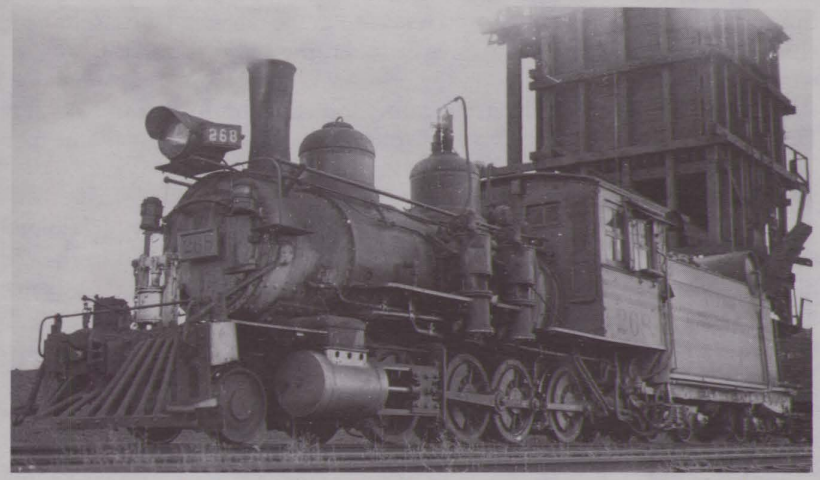
To get along with my story, we arrived at Gunnison and were called for 6:00 A.M. on September 28. Our train crew consisted of Conductor Ted McDowell, rear brakeman William (Shorty) Dean and head brakeman Art Waldero. Also along with us was Division Mechanical Foreman Ekstrom, Roundhouse Foreman Bob Lutkiewitz and Roadmaster Chappel, also a lot of photographers.

Standing on the cinder pit at Gunnison was the 268, the last of fifty of these little consolidated engines bought in the 1880 s by the Rio Grande and still in service and ready to go. Truly a Cinderella engine, she had seen service at the Chicago World's Fair and was also a movie star and this trip she well deserved, a fitting climax to her career.

I climbed in the cab, got the oil can and a piece of waste and, in railroad parlance "oiled her around" while Oscar did his part of the job. Our preliminary work finished, we backed onto the caboose and headed west across the twin bridges of the famous Gunnison River, which we will follow closely most of the way to Sapinero. We cross it again at the "three mile" bridge and it leaves us for a while as we cut across the meadows to the old siding at Hierro, then we are on the river bank again through Hierro Canyon, stealing a glance at the river every once in a while as we pass some of our favorite fishing holes, and watching as the river wages it continuous battle against the confining granite walls. Then Iola, a stock loading and ore shipping point where that bunch of cow pokes of the Powderhorn Pool could load more livestock in less time than any place I have ever loaded cattle. They usually rode the last steer up the chutes, sliding off at the car door and yelling for another car.

On past Kezar, long since torn up, past the fishing cabins at Trout Haven, Mile Post 303, and on to Elk Creek, where we fill the tank with water as we do not know just how much we will need and this will be our last chance until we arrive here going back.

Bob Ekstrom is riding with us and is having the time of his life. He keeps saying "I wouldn't have missed this trip for anything," and it is beautiful, as the leaves have started to turn and the hills are a riot of colors.



Number 268 at the Gunnison coal tipple, June 1955. 268 was powering the trains scrapping the Baldwin and Crested Butte branches. (photograph by Richard Kindig, from Dennis O'Berry)

The next siding is Cebolla, site of the famous resort founded by that southern gentleman, J.J. Carpenter, and we used to unload fishermen here by the carload from all over the United States, some of whom would stay for a week or month. This is Mile Post 307. At 308, the west end of the curve, we pass the spot where Engineer Oscar Nelson and Fireman Joe Luce were killed in a terrible wreck about 1906, I believe. On down the canyon a ways and across the Red Creek bridge, where Lou Lathrop lost a fireman in the early days; then Mile Post 311, where that grand old Engineer, Jap Littser, and Jarvis Edwards turned the 167 over and Jap lost a leg and worked no more on his beloved engine; around the blind curve at Mile Post 313, where Owen Cady and D.W. Richardson hit a rock and turned the 424 over in the river—Richardson lost his life, Cady never worked again and the 424 was totally demolished.

Those seven miles between Cebolla and Sapinero have claimed five lives that I can remember, but the 268 is drifting along nicely and my hopes are that nothing will occur to blight the memories of this trip as we glide across the Soap Creek bridge and arrive at Sapinero and rail's end. Sapinero, the east

end of the mighty Black Canyon, named after a famous Ute Indian Chief, and a shipping point where millions of sheep have been loaded and unloaded off the narrow gauge cars, sheep that have wintered on the Utah desert, dropped their lambs on the lambing grounds around Sapinero, grew big and fat in the high country and reloaded in the fall when the lambs were shipped to market and the old ewes were returned to the desert.

We all knew the shippers: Henry Revoir, Emmet Elizondo, Jim and William Fitzpatrick, F.D. Carpenter, Charles Lapham, August Nicholas—all fine men and all gone to their last camp except Emmet Elizondo.

Sapinero was also the turning point for the Lake City Branch, which joined the main line about one and one–half miles west of town, and in the old days, Pete Ready and engine 34 were familiar sights around the depot, also Ed Lampert and Phil Pickett and Hugh Gallagher put in lots of time here. Sapinero is also the scene of an incident that I have not mentioned many times. Way back in 1916, I was firing for Charley Stewart out of Cimarron on engine 421 and we used to doublehead trains from Cimarron to Gunnison and return to Cimarron light; well, Charley was a drinking man and Cimarron was dry, but there was a saloon at Sapinero run by an old codger named John Chapman, and on this trip Charley decided we needed a drink on our return trip from Gunnison, so we stopped and went over to see John. Charley bought one and I returned the favor, but that was enough for me so I strolled around the room looking at the pictures while Charley and John visited and had another drink. I heard the 421 exhaust a couple of times so I looked out to see what was coming off and I guess she had become tired of waiting for us, for she was heading down the track for Cimarron going a little faster all the time. I tore out after her and caught up about 300 yards down the track. I was lots faster on my feet in those days and I have never left an engine alone since unless I knew it was securely tied down, and needless to say we did not mention the matter to anyone.

But I am drifting away from my story about the 268, so to get back; We cut the caboose off between the switches on the wye, turned the 268 on the wye, and backed onto the caboose again and we are now headed east. We back the caboose down the main line, pick up the empty box cars off of the passing track and old house track, 26 in all, then while I oil around again and Oscar fixes up his fire and cleans his ash pans, Bob Ekstrom and his helpers re–fill the sandbox out of an extra supply we have along as the track is overgrown with weeds and grass and the 268 has a hard time holding the rail. A few words with the conductor, who tells me that we have a little over tonnage

Locomotive 268 with wedge snowplow 09271, flanger OJ, cabooses 0524 and 0588 on a snow plow run from Gunnison to Sapinero, March 11, 1952. (Photograph by Robert W. Richardson, Colorado Railroad Museum)

for the 268, but I think she will take them so we whistle off and I open the throttle and sanders, wave at the photographers and we take off.

I soon find out that is a grand little engine and I start working the reverse lever up, shortening the cutoff and widening on the throttle and by the time we cross the Soap Creek bridge we are doing our stuff, two holes on the reverse lever, a full throttle, a feather on her dome—Oscar is a good fireman I know—plenty of water, nothing to worry about, just a lookout for rocks and roll along. Many times I have traveled over these rails, both on the end of a scoop shovel and with my hand on the throttle, but this will be the last, and memories of bygone days and men keep crowding in—Pittser, Poter, Hazelhurst, Rusk, "Posey" Kroll, Cowan, Lathrop, Freeman, "Humpy" Campbell, Nordstrom the "terrible Swede," Dutch Henry Kroll—I haven't space to name them all, but all of them have run this same little engine over this same route in bygone days.

The trip back to Gunnison was uneventful, the 268 handled the train nicely all the way and I can't help thinking what a wonderful piece of machinery she is and how she is still useful after all the years of service behind her, think of all the engines she has outlasted—the 300's, the 400's, the old 450 to 464 (Mudhens to us), the sport model 470's, the 480's, the sleek Ping Pong 700's, the mighty 3600 mallets and 3400 compounds, the 1100's, and 1200's, and a

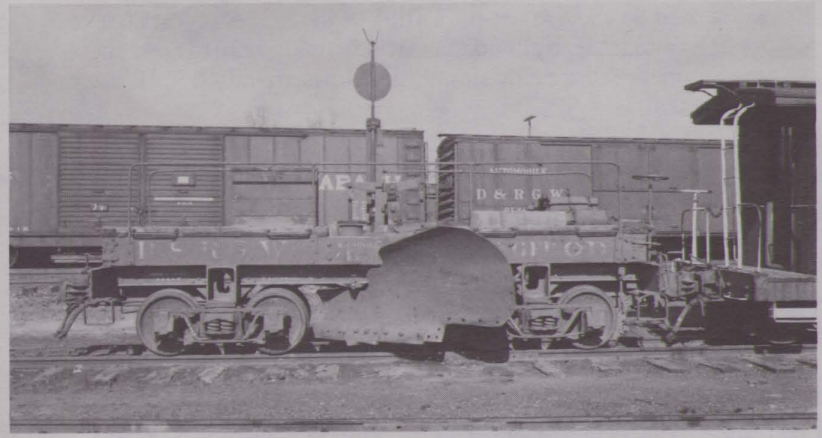
lot more all gone to the scrap pile and here is the little 268 still doing her stuff.

We gather up some loose ends in Gunnison and make up a train for the east and finally Shorty Dean throws the switch to the roundhouse, gives us the thumbs–up sign and we roll back to the cinder pit, shut off the throttle, open the cylinder cocks, put the reverse lever on center and shut off the lubricator, get down on the ground and step back always for a last look at a grand little engine.

So when you gaze at the 268, do so with admiration and respect, for to the few of us "narrow gauge" men that are left, she recalls a lot of memories and a way of life in those golden years that are gone forever more.

Flanger OD

First car in the Gunnison train is a strange looking device known as a "snow flanger." The flanger is a small car used to remove snow and ice from between the rails and push it off the track. A large plow or blade is located on each side of the flanger. These blades were raised and lowered by air from the engine pulling the flanger. At a railroad switch or highway crossing, the engineer released the air and the blade raised to clear the obstruction. On the outside snow was taken off even with the rails, but on the inside the plow cut a depth of nearly two inches below the rails. The flanger frame was filled with scrap metal to provide the small car with extra weight against the heavy snow. Flangers were usually used in special "flanger trains" pulled by single locomotive followed by a caboose. If the snow and ice conditions were particularly bad, a second locomotive was placed behind the flanger. These "flanger trains" were operated ahead of freight and passenger trains. Every freight and mixed train on the Crested Butte and Baldwin branches included a flanger during the winter months.



Flanger OD at Montrose, Colorado, April 16, 1952. Note the red and white paint. (Photograph by Robert W. Richardson, Colorado Railroad Museum)

The following article from the March 7, 1891 issue of the Gunnison Tribune provides a vivid description of a ride aboard a flanger train.

A Trip With the Flanger

One day last week a reporter for the Tribune boarded engine number 251 which was making a trip to Crested Butte with the Denver and Rio Grande flanger. An engine, flanger, and caboose are run ahead of each train that goes to Crested Butte in order to keep the ice and hardened snow away from the rails, thus making it possible for one engine to pull a large train of cars.

We left Gunnison at 9:30 o'clock in the morning and arrived at our destination about 11:00 o'clock. Just after getting outside the city, the engineer opened his air brake valve, called the three–way cock, and the great plows began to lower. Soon they were plowing through the hardened snow. The flanger is a small car which weights probably from four to six tons. One large plow or shoe runs on each rail. On the outside the snow is taken off even with the rail, but on the inside the plow cuts a depth of nearly two inches. The plows are operated by air from the engine. When the air is used on the flanger, the setting of the brakes on cars has to be done altogether by hand. As a switch or wagon road is reached, the engineer releases his air and the plows are raised until these are passed.

The old iron horse groans under the heavy load of pulling this car, but with a large amount of steam, a good speed is attained. When the engines glides along at the rate of 15 or 20 miles an hour such a cloud of snow arises from those huge plows that it is impossible to see the caboose which is attached immediately behind. On each side of the car the snow is thrown a distance of nearly 20 feet.

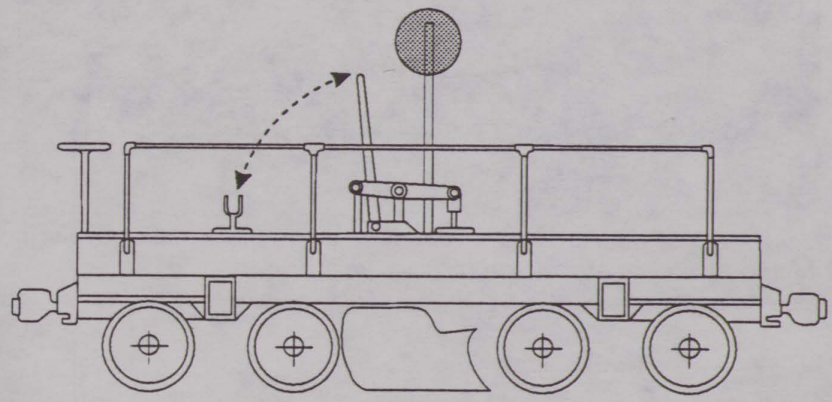
Flanger OD was the second of eleven flangers constructed by the Denver & Rio Grande Railway in its Denver shops. Built in November 1885 at a cost of $804.66, it was originally numbered Flanger 02 (it was renumbered to OD in 1907). It was constructed with a wood frame, but was rebuilt with the present steel frame in August 1941. OD was painted freight car red with white lettering until 1952, when it was repainted gray with black lettering.

The D&RGW stationed flangers at strategic points around the narrow gauge system. Flangers OI and OL were based at Salida; Flanger OG at Sargents; Flanger OC at Alamosa; Flanger OF at Chama, New Mexico; and Flanger OH at Durango. Three flangers (OE, OJ, and OK) were based at Gunnison for use on the Crested Butte, Baldwin, Pitkin and Lake City branches also the main line from Salida through the Black Canon. A flanger (usually OT in the 1940s and 50s) was kept on standby at Crested Butte as this branch experienced considerable snow fall and heavy coal shipments until the end of World War II.

Flanger OD was assigned to Montrose for use on the branch to Ouray and on the line from Montrose to Gunnison through the Black Canon. OD was moved from Montrose to Durango in 1952, just before the Ouray branch was converted to standard gauge. It was last used in 1965 on the Silverton branch.

Flanger OD Specifications

Gauge	36 inches
Length	19 feet
Length (including couplers)	22 feet, 1-⅜ inches
Width (including blades)	9 feet, 8 inches
Height (including target)	11 feet, 6 inches
Weight	30,400 pounds



A generalized drawing of all narrow gauge flangers. Redrawn from D&RGW Folio Drawing W–214.

Eight of the eleven flangers have been preserved and are on display (or in use) as follows:

Flanger OC	Colorado Railroad Museum
Flanger OD	Pioneer Museum
Flanger OF	Durango & Silverton Railroad
Flanger OG	La Jara, Colorado (in the city park)
Flanger OJ	Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad
Flanger OK	Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad
Flanger OL	Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad
Flanger OT	Georgetown Loop Railroad, Silver Plume, Colorado.

Note: Flanger OE was scrapped in 1952. Flangers OH and OI were scrapped in 1955.

Flanger OD was purchased from Mr. Jim Coleman of Durango for $200 and moved to the Pioneer Museum in 1971.

Flanger OD at the Pioneer Museum, July 1991. OD was damaged during shipment from Durango in 1971. (photograph by Jerry B. Day)

Drop Bottom Gondola 710

SECOND car in the Gunnison train was used to haul coal, sand, ore and other bulk commodities. In railroad terminology it is known as a "drop bottom gondola." Gondola 710 was part of a series of 200 built for the Denver and Rio Grande Railway in 1903 by the American Car and Foundry Company as part of an order for 1700 narrow gauge cars that included box cars, stock cars, flat bottom coal cars, and the drop bottom gondolas.

The cars were built in two series: 700 to 799 and 800 to 899. The 700 to 799 series cost $84,956.06 ($849.57 each). The 800 to 899 series was more expensive: $91,859.91 total ($918.60 each). The 800 to 899 cars included racks for carrying coke from Crested Butte to the CF&I steel mill at Pueblo.

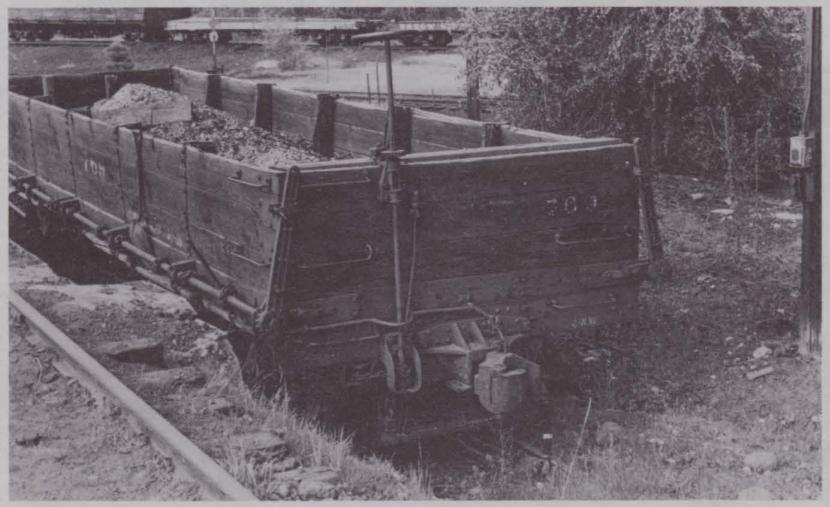
Gondola 710 at the Pioneer Museum, July 1991. Lettering is in the 1940s and 50s style. (photograph by Jerry B. Day)

The gondolas were shipped from the builder in Saint Louis on standard gauge flat cars to the D&RG shops at Pueblo. They were delivered during September, October, and November of 1903. The cars were built without brake rigging. These were manufactured and applied by the railroad in Pueblo. The cars were then moved to Salida through the Royal Gorge (the

Rio Grande had three–rail trackage from Pueblo to Salida until 1911 permitting narrow gauge cars to deliver coal, iron ore, and limestone to the CF&I steel mills at Pueblo).

The original gondola cars were quite different from their appearance today. Their door design was defective; it permitted materials to leak from the cars. The cars were completely rebuilt in 1918 with the door mechanism they have today. They were rebuilt again in 1926. Some wooden parts were replaced with steel to strengthen the cars and to enable them to carry greater loads.

The 700 and 800 series gondolas were used over the entire D&RGW narrow gauge system carrying a variety of loads. A significant number were employed hauling coal from the mines at Baldwin on Ohio Creek. Much of this coal was moved down the San Luis Valley to Alamosa for domestic use and by the Alamosa electric power plant.

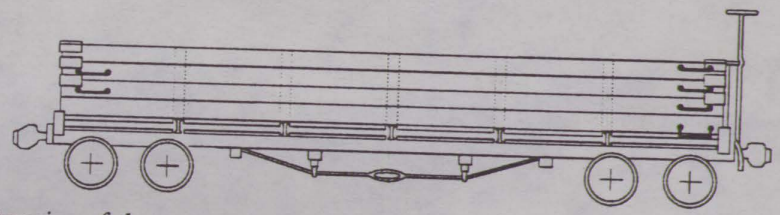


Ex-D&RGW drop bottom gondola number 769 in service on the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad at Chama, New Mexico, March 1972. Drop bottom gondolas were often used to haul cinders removed from the locomotives. They were spotted on a depressed track (as shown here) so that the cinders could be shoveled from the locomotive into the car. (photograph by Jerry B. Day)

The cars were not used to any great extent on the Crested Butte branch. Most of the coal from Crested Butte was shipped in flat bottom coal cars that did not have doors in the bottom for unloading. Coal carried in these cars was used by the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company's steel mill in Pueblo and was transferred to standard gauge cars at Salida. The flat bottom cars were turned upside down in a device known as the "barrel."

Gondola 710 Specifications

Gauge	36 inches
Ends	Wood
Sides	Wood
Underframe	Steel & Wood
Doors	Wood
Length (over end sills)	32 feet, 0 inches
Length (over couplers)	34 feet, 7 inches
Width (over dumping mechanism)	9 feet, 4 inches
Length (inside)	31 feet, 0 inches
Width (inside)	7 feet, 9 inches
Height	6 feet, 6-3/16 inches
Weight (empty)	24,500 pounds
Capacity	50,000 pounds
Cubical Capacity (level)	800 cubic feet
Cubical Capacity (heaped)	964 cubic feet



Drawing of the 700–899 series gondola cars. Redrawn from D&RGW Folio Drawing F–173.

Gondola 710 was purchased from Mr. Jim Coleman of Durango in 1971 for $200.00 and moved to the Pioneer Museum. In its 52 years of service in the Gunnison area, the 710 carried thousands of tons of coal over Marshall Pass and through the Black Canon. We can only guess how often this historic car rolled down from Crested Butte and Baldwin loaded with the hard and soft coal that once sustained the economy of the area.

Box Car 3633

THIRD car in the Gunnison train is a familiar box car. Box cars were used to transport materials that had to be protected from the weather. These cars brought furniture, food stuffs, hardware, mining machinery, and other commodities to Gunnison and hauled lumber, ore, and other minerals from the valley to markets east or west. The cars included, in addition to the normal doors in the sides, a small door in one end for loading ore, sand, silica, and other minerals. These materials were often loaded frozen and wet. When the materials dried, they expanded and caused severe damage to the wooden car bodies.

The 3000–3749 series box cars were built in 1903 by the American Car and Foundry Company in Saint Louis as part of the same order for 1700 narrow gauge cars as the drop bottom gondolas. The 750 cars cost the railroad $240,095.65. They were also shipped from the builder on standard gauge flat cars to the Rio Grande shops at Pueblo during September, October, and November of 1903. These cars were also built without brakes. The brakes were applied by the railroad in Pueblo. The cars were moved to Salida through the Royal Gorge and placed in service on the narrow gauge lines.

Box car 3633 at the Pioneer Museum, July 1991. (photograph by Jerry B. Day)

Beginning in 1922 and continuing through 1924, the D&RGW rebuilt the series 3000 box cars at the railroad's car shop in Alamosa. The cars were completely dismantled and all wooden parts replaced with new wood. Metal sheeting was added to the roof and new door latches added. When this rebuilding process was completed, the cars were better than when new. Rio Grande rebuilt the cars rather than purchase new ones because the tax laws in effect at the time gave benefits for rebuilding existing equipment.

Box car 3633 Specifications

Gauge	36 inches
Ends	Wood
Sides	Wood
Underframe	Wood
Length (over end sills)	30 feet, 0 inches
Length (inside)	29 feet, 5 inches
Height (to top of brake wheel)	12 feet, 0 inches
Weight (empty)	22,700 pounds
Capacity	50,000 pounds

The 3000 series box cars served the Rio Grande railroad long and well. When the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad (a former part of the D&RGW narrow gauge line from Alamosa to Durango) rebuilt several of the box cars to carry passengers in 1970 and 71,the wood was found to be in a remarkable state of preservation. The wood was so strong it broke modern steel drill bits. Things were built to last in those days!

Box car 3633 was purchased from Mr. Jim Coleman of Durango for $200 and moved to the Pioneer Museum in 1971. The original price for this car in 1903 was $320.12. It retained its value well for over 68 years.

Stock Car 5763

FOURTH car in the Gunnison train is a stock car. Stock cars were used to transport cattle, sheep and other livestock. The Gunnison valley has always been known for raising cattle and sheep. Today livestock is moved to market by truck, but in the days of the narrow gauge, livestock went by rail.

Stock car 5763 at the Pioneer Museum, July 1991 (photograph by Jerry B. Day)

The cattle and sheep were loaded at many points in the valley: along the Crested Butte branch, the Baldwin branch up Ohio Creek, at points east and west of Gunnison on the main line from Salida to Montrose. Records for the year 1928 show 78 cars of cattle loaded at Jack's Cabin, 21 cars of sheep at Kebler Pass, 31 cars of cattle and 293 cars of sheep at Sapinero, 122 cars of cattle and 10 cars of sheep at Gunnison. The fall stock loading season was the busiest time for the railroad. Extra crews were hired and trains ran day and night. Trains were limited to three engines over Marshall Pass. Stock trains were allowed to have four engines per train because of the necessity of getting the live animals to watering points as quickly as possible. The last four-engine train over Marshall Pass in 1953 was a cattle special from the Powderhorn pool near Sapinero.

Denver and Rio Grande Western series 5500–5849 series stock cars were built in 1903 by the American Car and Foundry Company in Saint Louis as part

of the order for 1700 narrow gauge cars that included the box cars, gondolas, and 350 stock cars. The cars cost the Denver & Rio Grande $117,977.22 (total).

The stock cars were shipped from the builder on standard gauge flat cars to the Rio Grande shops in Pueblo during September, October, and November of 1903. The stock cars, as were all the other narrow gauge cars ordered in 1903, were built without brake rigging. The rigging was manufactured and applied by the railroad in Pueblo. The Rio Grande asked the builder to deliver the stock cars before the box cars and gondolas as the railroad was in the midst of the fall stock shipping season.

In 1929, the D&RGW railroad rebuilt the 5500–5849 series stock cars at the railroad's car shop in Alamosa. Worn metal and wooden parts were replaced and the cars reconditioned for many more years of service. The shops could rebuild three of the cars per day. Cars were rebuilt in the winter months when stock hauling was at a minimum.

When originally built, the cars were painted freight car red with white lettering. In the 1920s, they were repainted black with white lettering. The D&RGW used two types of stock cars on their narrow gauge lines. Cars used for cattle had one level or deck and those used for sheep had two floors or decks. This arrangement permitted the railroad to carry twice as many sheep as a single deck car. Stock car 5763 is a double-deck sheep car that served the Rio Grande railroad over fifty years.

Stock Car 5763 Specifications

Gauge	36 inches
Ends	Wood
Sides	Wood
Underframe	Wood
Length (over end sills)	30 feet, 0 inches
Length (inside)	29 feet, 4 inches
Width (over end sills)	8 feet, 5 inches
Width (inside)	7 feet, 3 inches
Weight (empty)	22,700 pounds
Capacity	50,000 pounds

Stock car 5763 was purchased from a scrap dealer in Alamosa and moved to the Pioneer Museum in 1990. Cost of purchasing and transporting the old car was $3000.00—this contrasts with the original purchase price in 1903 of $337.07.

Caboose 0589

LAST car in the Gunnison train is Caboose 0589. A caboose was a rolling office and home away from home for railroad crews. Trainmen kept an eye on their train from the vantage point provided by the cupola (the raised portion with the windows). Here they could spot any trouble and stop the train if necessary. Normally passengers were not permitted to ride on a caboose, but exceptions were made for stock and sheep ranchers accompanying their herds and flocks to market. Passengers were also permitted to ride in the caboose from Crested Butte to the Floresta and the Smith Hill coal mines as no passenger trains ran on these two branches.

Caboose 0589 on a flanger and snow spreader train with engines 360 and 361 between Cimarron and Montrose, February 22, 1940. (Otto Perry photograph from the Denver Public Library, Western History Department)

Caboose 0589 was one of six (numbers 0584 to 0589) built in 1900 by the Rio Grande at their Burnham car shop in Denver. As originally built, 0589 had only one window in the side of the cupola; it was rebuilt to its present appearance with two windows in the cupola in the 1940s. It was used primarily in the Gunnison area on the Crested Butte and Baldwin branches, on the line to Montrose through the Black Canon and over Marshall Pass to Salida.

0589 was used on the last trains on the "Valley Line" between Alamosa and Salida, making a round trip on February 14 and 15, 1951. After the 1955 abandonment of the Marshall Pass line to Gunnison, caboose 0589 was moved on a standard gauge flat car from Salida to Alamosa where it was used until the 1968 abandonment of the D&RGW's remaining narrow gauge trackage.

Caboose 0589 on a freight train stopped for water at Castleton on the Baldwin branch, June 28, 1940. (Otto Perry photograph from the Denver Public Library, Western History Department)

All six of the cabooses in the 0584–0589 series have been preserved as follows:

0584	Royal Gorge, Colorado (donated by the D&RGW to Canon City in 1971)
0585	Fairplay, Colorado (on display near the court house)
0586	Georgetown Loop Railroad
0587	Purchased by Elliott Donnelly of Chicago in 1966 (current status unknown)
0588	Lake City, Colorado (donated by the D&RGW to Lake City in 1953)
0589	Pioneer Museum, Gunnison, Colorado

Caboose 0589 Specifications

Gauge	36 inches
Ends	Wood
Sides	Wood
Underframe	Wood
Body Length	26 feet, 2-½ inches
Length (over end sills)	30 feet, 0 inches
Width (over sides)	7 feet, 5-⅝ inches
Platform Width	3 feet, 9-½ inches
Height (top of cupola)	13 feet, 3-¼ inches
Weight	26,000 pounds

Caboose 0589 was a gift to the Pioneer Museum from the Denver and Rio Grande Western railroad. It was trucked from Alamosa to Gunnison and unloaded at the Museum on May 21, 1973.

Caboose 0589 in storage at Alamosa, April 16, 1969. (photograph by Ernest W. Robart)

Sargents Depot

SARGENTS, at the foot of Marshall Pass (Monarch Pass on the highway), was once a vital point on the D&RGW narrow gauge railroad line from Salida to Gunnison. Sargents was a helper station (helpers were locomotives used to assist heavy trains up steep grades). The D&RGW stationed several helper locomotives at Sargents to move the heavy Crested Butte and Baldwin coal trains to the summit of Marshall Pass. Normally two of the larger locomotives (series 470, 480, or 490 2–8–2s) could pull the heavy coal trains from Gunnison to Sargents, but three were required on the steep west slope of Marshall Pass. Even three of the large locomotives required several round trips to move all the cars in an eighty or one hundred car train to the summit. Spur tracks were provided at Sargents and Marshall Pass to store the cars between trips. Only one locomotive was required to move the heavily loaded cars down the 4 percent grade into Salida.

The Sargents depot was a frame building 20 by 30 feet. Facilities at Sargents included in addition to the depot: an eating house for the train crews, a six–stall roundhouse, an engine turntable, a coal chute, water tank, and a sand house.

The Rio Grande railroad line through Sargents over Marshall Pass was scrapped in 1955. The depot sat empty and abandoned for over twenty years until it was donated to the Gunnison Pioneer Museum by the Bernard Irby family of Sargents. It was moved to Gunnison on April 12, 1976.

Mears Junction Water Tank

RAILROAD water tanks were once a major part of America's architecture. The water tank provided water needed by the steam locomotives. Water tanks were located strategically along the railroad line at points where the locomotive's tender required filling.

The Pioneer Museum's water tank once stood at Mears Junction (11.17 miles from Salida) where the D&RGW's line to Gunnison over Marshall Pass split from the line to Alamosa over Poncha Pass. Constructed in November 1940, it was the third water tank at Mears Junction (the first two having worn out). After the D&RGW's Marshall Pass line was scrapped in 1955, the tank remained until at Mears Junction until 1971 when it was dismantled and moved to the Pioneer Museum. Mr. William Endner of Gunnison paid for the move in memory of his parents.

Last D&RGW train over Marshall Pass stops for water at Mears Junction with engine 489, cabooses 0574 and 0585, May 2, 1955. (Photograph by Robert W. Richardson, Colorado Railroad Museum)

Historic Symbols

RAILROADS, as most commercial enterprises, use logos and heralds in their advertising and correspondence and on their buildings, locomotives and rolling stock.

The first Denver and Rio Grande herald featured the famous Curecanti Needle in the Black Canon west of Gunnison. It was developed in 1887 by Colonel Shadrach K. Hooper, passenger traffic manager of the D&RG. This herald was used in advertising and correspondence but was not applied to equipment or buildings; perhaps the design was too costly and too complicated for the painters!

By the mid–twenties, the Black Canon route had lost much of its importance. The main line to Utah had been rerouted to Tennessee Pass and converted to standard gauge. The route from Salida to Montrose was now a side route. In 1926, the original herald was simplified and modified to emphasize the standard gauge route through the Royal Gorge. This simplified design was used on locomotives, cars, and buildings as well as correspondence.

In 1936, with the inauguration of service through the Moffat Tunnel, the emblem was again modified to include both the Royal Gorge route and the new Moffat Tunnel line. This herald was painted red, white and blue on some standard gauge passenger engines (but not on narrow gauge engines).

In 1939, new management decided it needed a modern up–to–date corporate "look." A contest was held for D&RGW employees to design a new emblem. Miss Laura Bramkamp, of the purchasing department, produced the winning design—the familiar "flying Rio Grande." This design introduced in 1940, may be seen on Rio Grande railroad equipment today.

Rio Grande

Each new design was not always promptly applied and the older designs could often be seen many years after they had been officially replaced. The depot at Sargents (now at the Pioneer Museum) retained the 1936 herald at the time of the 1955 abandonment of the Marshall Pass line.

These symbols of a historic era remain a part of Colorado and of the Gunnison valley.

"Flying Rio Grande" herald on ex-D&RGW drop bottom gondola of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad at Chama, New Mexico, March 1972. (Photograph by Jerry B. Day)

Bibliography

A Century of Passenger Trains, "A Study of 100 Years of Passenger Service on the Denver & Rio Grande Railway," Jackson C. Thode. Rocky Mountain Railroad Club, 1972.

Baldwin Locomotive Magazine, Vol. VI, No. 3, January 1928; No. 4, April 1928.

Colorado's Mountain Railroads, vol. VII, Robert A. Lemassena, 1965.

Locomotives of the Rio Grande, "A Detailed Locomotive Roster of the Rio Grande System 1871–1980." Colorado Railroad Museum, 1980.

Narrow Gauge Pictorial, Vol. V "Cabooses of the D&RGW," Robert L. Grandt Publications, 1987.

Narrow Gauge Pictorial, Vol. VII "D&RGW Work Equipment OA–OZ," Jerry B. Day, Robert L. Grandt Publications, 1990.

Scenic Line of the World, Gordon Chappell and Cornelius W. Hauck, Colorado Railroad Museum, 1971.

Colorado State Historical Society
D&RGW Railroad Annual Reports: 1870–1960
D&RGW Railroad Official Rosters: 1906, 1907, 1917, 1923
D&RGW Scenic Line Magazine, various years
D&RGW Green Light, various years
Various Colorado newspapers, 1870–1960

Denver Public Library, Western Collection
Various Colorado newspapers, 1870–1960

Colorado Railroad Museum
Narrow Gauge News, 1949–1958
Iron Horse News, 1959–1992
D&RGW Marshall Pass, Cumbres Pass, and Gunnison Train Registers

Acknowledgments

Photographs in this volume are from the following collections: Robert W. Richardson of the Colorado Railroad Museum, Denver Public Library Otto Perry Collection, Dennis O'Berry, Ernest W. Robart, and Jerry B. Day.

This book could not have been produced without the assistance and encouragement of Regina Miller of Gunnison.

About the Author

Jerry B. Day is a native of Louisiana. At the age of four, he lived for a short time in Farmington, New Mexico—terminus of a D&RGW narrow gauge branch from Durango. He became interested in the narrow gauge railroads of Colorado at the age of twelve. He has made an extensive study of the railroads of the Gunnison area and plans to publish a history of the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad's Crested Butte Branch. His published work includes a history of D&RGW narrow gauge work and snow fighting equipment: *Narrow Gauge Pictorial Volume 7*, "D&RGW Work Equipment OA–OZ," Grandt Publications 1991.

His career included twenty–two years in the U.S. Air Force as a professional photographer and photojournalist. A graduate of Colorado State University, he is currently employed as a senior technical writer for Hewlett-Packard in Greeley, Colorado. Jerry and his wife, Anne, live in Louisville, Colorado.

Production Notes

This publication was created electronically using Microsoft *Word for Windows*© for word processing and Ventura *Publisher*© for page layout on a Hewlett-Packard 386 computer. Drawings were produced with a Hewlett–Packard *ScanJet*© IIp scanner using Adobe *Streamline* and Corel *Draw*© software. The Adobe Minon© typeface was used throughout the book.