

Trains

THE MAGAZINE OF RAILROADING

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OF THE RAILS? PAGE 3

RIO GRANDE

Requiem or rebirth for
an independent? page 20

Rio Grande revisited

In and out of the mountains in 1965, it's uphill for D&RGW

DAVID P. MORGAN

artwork / GEORGE A. GLOFF

I BEFORE the decline and fall of naiveté, and in a season when strong men were unembarrassed to admit of being possessed by vocations much in the manner that Paul was on the road to Damascus, a cavalry combat veteran wrote to his sweetheart about a Utopian vision: "I had a dream last evening while sitting in the gloaming at the car window. I mean a wide-awake dream. Shall I tell it to you? I thought how fine it would be to have a little railroad a few hundred miles in length, all under one's control with one's friends. . . ." He deemed his ideal railroad "usefulness on a large scale," worked by profit-sharing employees to whom the idea of a strike would never occur, and he promised to roam it with his bride in a private car built for two.

Insofar as any dream can be realized, this one was and it exists today as the 2132-mile Denver & Rio Grande Western. If *Zephyr*-fast freight, continuous dividends, dome seats for passengers, and an ability to convert more than 20 cents out of each revenue dollar into pre-Federal tax net can be equated with ideal railroading, then D&RGW has arrived. Three generations of managers were required to create this Utopia, however, and some fancy footwork will be needed in our time to preserve it.

The fact that Rio Grande has survived at all as a solvent and separate entity may be attributed to successive and often painful metamorphoses. Gen. William Jackson Palmer, the idealistic letter writer, made the first two basic mistakes himself in 1870 before a mile of track had been laid. He selected the wrong gauge, 36 inches, and mapped his line south from Denver to the wrong destination: Mexico. The narrow gauge, elected after a firsthand inspection of Wales's Festiniog line, was cheap to build but ultimately expensive to operate and the road automatically was isolated from carload interchange. So far as direction went, Palmer set out to connect rather than compete with the transcontinentals, but that aim became academic when Santa Fe beat him to Raton Pass by 30 minutes, thereby barring the gateway to the Southwest.

So off to the mining camps steamed the 4-4-0's and 2-8-0's, probing the most tortuous canyons and highest passes in search of silver and gold, charging all that the traffic would bear, and—in the absence of competition more effective than stagecoach and oxen team—grossing revenues sufficient to expand the system to 1643.7 route-miles and into Salt Lake City and Ogden, Utah, by 1883.

Even when the early errors of construction were corrected by standard-gauging the main line and relocating

it over Tennessee Pass instead of Marshall, Rio Grande had long since lost its grasp on Utopia. Its circuitous, harshly profiled path through the Rockies confined it to being a local road rather than a true transcon link (as late as the 1920's overhead business received from and delivered to connections would amount to less than 5 per cent of its tonnage), and overexpansion made it easy prey for outside raiders and finally the victim of civil war. Briefly, Jay Gould brought into the narrow gauge and Palmer stalked out—in 1883. But the General held onto Rio Grande Western, the Utah end of the road, and did not make his peace with the other and original half until 1901.

As the new century dawned another man dreamed of an ideal railroad, but instead of a few hundred miles his would stretch almost 14,000—from the Atlantic at Baltimore to the Pacific at San Francisco. George Gould, eldest son of Jay, dreamed of a true transcontinental in which Rio Grande (which he controlled through Missouri Pacific) would serve not only as a link across the mountains of Colorado and Utah but also as a bankroll to pay for rails beyond to the Sierra and down the Feather River Canyon into northern California.

"No railway combination in the United States is so loaded with possibilities. . . . Here is material for dreams," exclaimed Frank Spearman in 1904 about Gould's maneuvers. Who then—Spearman the writer or Gould the expansionist—could have foreseen fate in the form of the panic of 1907 or Western Pacific's twice-budgeted construction costs or the opening of the Panama Canal or World War I? In retrospect it is clear that the ambitions of absentee ownership were dispatching Rio Grande straight down the drain. The money spent on WP would eventually unglue D&RGW's treasury, postpone internal betterments (notably a direct route from Denver west to save those 175 extra miles cost by the swing south through Pueblo), and render the system a jointly owned stepchild of Mopac and the very line D&RGW's credit had been ruined to build, Western Pacific. Surely the only way in which to reconcile history in hindsight is to observe that minus Gould's dream, D&RGW in 1965 would be without a valuable interchange in Salt Lake City and thus left with only Espee in Ogden as a gateway to and from the Bay Area.

Now bring to bear a third and final formative influence upon Rio Grande: the dreamer who wired a friend in 1902



I HAVE DECIDED TO BUILD A STEAM RAILROAD FROM DENVER TO SALT LAKE CITY, and soon thereafter muttered, "By God, the road will be built, if I have to go out and drive spikes myself." Rio Grande resisted its savior with all its might. When David H. Moffat was D&RG's president after Palmer he urged a frontal assault on the Rocky Mountain wall west of Denver. Ignored, yet unable to contain his ambition, Moffat built his own railroad — not to Salt Lake as he planned, or beneath James Peak as he also planned, but at least deep into the consciousness of Gould and Harriman and, most important, of Denver. Moffat himself died in 1911, out of health and money if not spirit. But in death he won out. For Denver and Colorado got caught up in



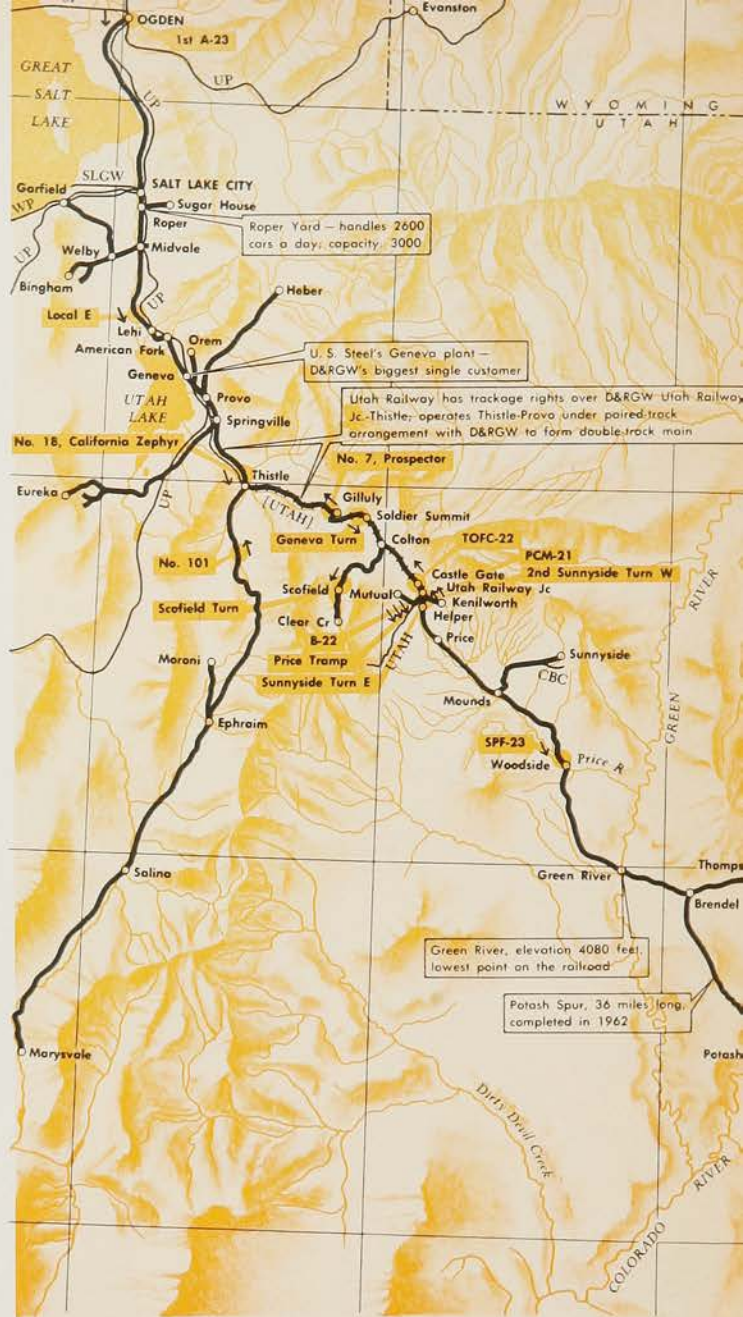
Richard Steinheimer.

TRAIN No. 1, the Royal Gorge, threads its namesake canyon alongside the Arkansas River near Hanging Bridge.

the dream, too, and public funds were secured for Moffat Tunnel, the completion of which in 1928 at once relieved Moffat's Denver & Salt Lake from its economically prohibitive Rollins Pass crossing of the Continental Divide and made of the long moribund D&SL a genuine threat to D&RGW.

Never mind that what followed cost Rio Grande its solvency. Simply concede that construction of the Dotsero Cutoff and purchase of D&SL, thereby placing Denver on a transcon main, was inexorable. "By God, the road will be built," Moffat had said, and on June 16, 1934, it was.

WITNESS now the birth of Rio Grande as we know it. What was the substance of its reformation? Looking back



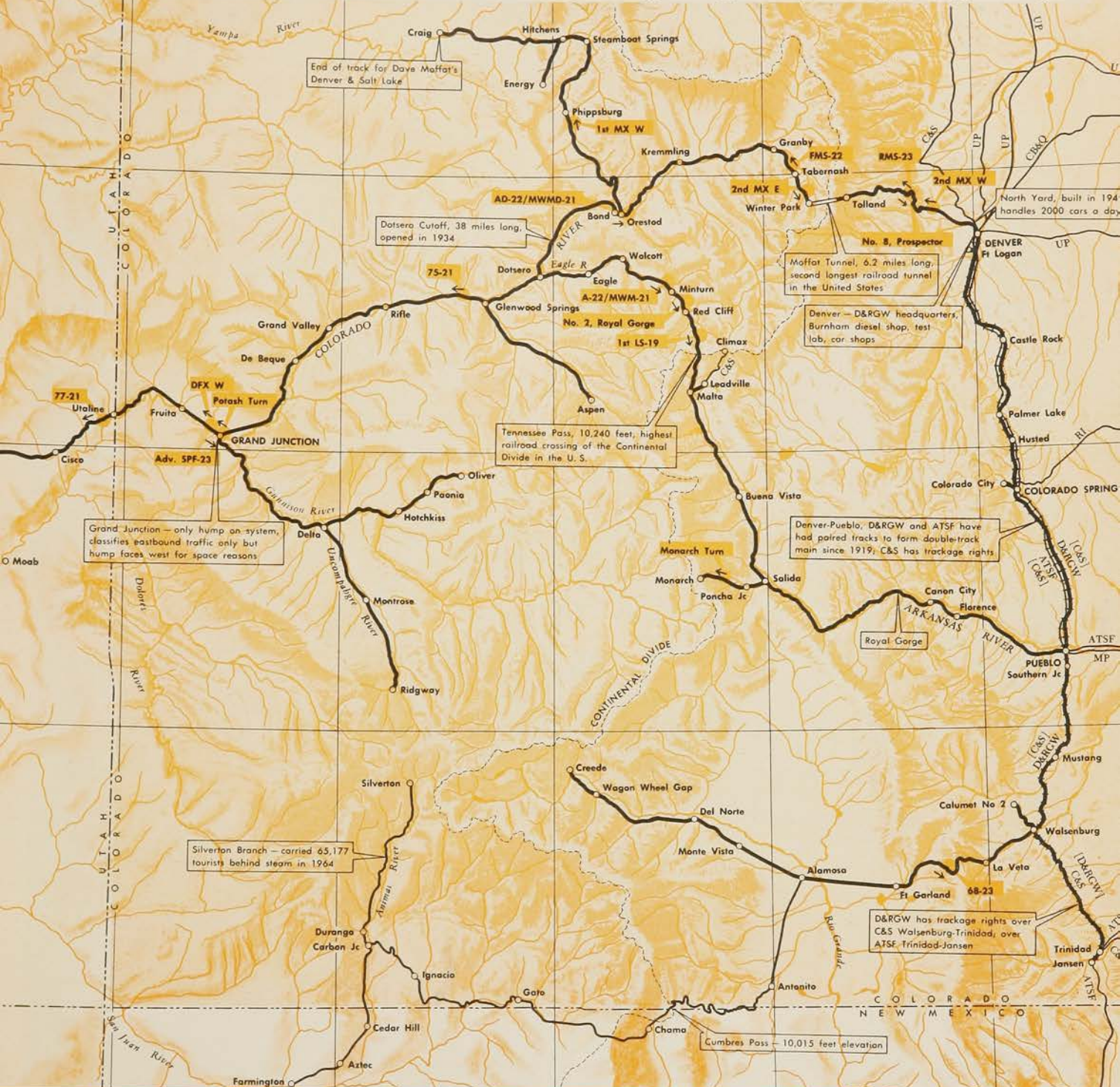
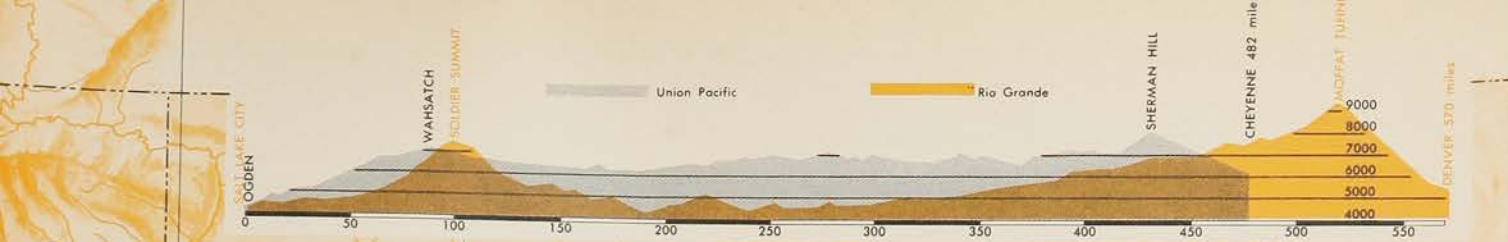
Rio Grande at 7 a.m., Sept. 23, 1964

Scale in miles
10 0 10 20 30 40 50 60

- D&RGW standard gauge
- D&RGW narrow gauge
- Other railroads
- Trackage rights — tenant road is shown in brackets
- 2nd MX E Circle shows position of train(s); arrow indicates direction; box gives train designation. See below for locomotive assignment, tonnage, and number of cars.

TRAINS Magazine — George A. Gloff

MAIN LINES: EASTWARD	1st A-23 (called to depart 7:30 a.m.) 5912, 5901, 5308 81 loads, 49 empties — 7782 tons	No. 18, California Zephyr 5544, 5543, 5532, 5531 13 cars
	Local E 5724, 5604, 5664 21 loads, 61 empties — 3352 tons	Geneva Turn 5564, 5582, 5561 83 empties — 2158 tons
MAIN LINES: WESTWARD	No. 7, Prospector 5481, 5482, 5583, 5571 7 cars	PCM-21 5741, 5742, 5722, 5743, 5744 58 loads, 15 empties — 3874 tons
	TOFC-22 3026, 3025, 3030, 3031 34 loads, 7 empties — 2479 tons	2nd Sunnyside Turn W 5621, 5732, 5652, 5714 56 loads, 1 empty — 6517 tons
BRANCHES	No. 101 5313 21 loads, 9 empties — 1798 tons	Scofield Turn 5312 15 empties — 449 tons



B-22 5644, 5643, 5682, 5692, 5562 80 loads, 4 empties — 3830 tons	Sunnyside Turn E (called to depart 8 a.m.) 5714, 5633, 5632, 5732 4 loads, 39 empties — 1681 tons	Adv. SPF-23 3554, 5553, 5572, 5612 46 loads, 6 empties — 3541 tons	A-22/MWMD-21 3020, 5703, 3018, 3017 34 loads, 7 empties — 2446 tons	1st LS-19 5761, 5762, 5723, 5763, 5764 78 loads, 15 empties — 5639 tons
Price Tramp (called to depart 7:30 a.m.) 5301, 5304 13 empties — 324 tons	SPF-23 3001, 3002, 3019, 3003 26 loads, 11 empties — 2275 tons	AD-22/MWMD-21 3013, 3011, 3012, 3009 24 loads, 11 empties — 1917 tons	No. 2, Royal Gorge 5581, 6012 3 cars	2nd MX E 5721, 5663, 5602, 5672, 5671 64 loads, 2 empties — 6220 tons
77-21 3007, 3032, 3033, 3034 72 loads, 14 empties — 4841 tons	Potash Turn (called to depart 7 a.m.) 5641 16 loads, 1 empty — 1727 tons	FMS-22 3015, 3010, 3008, 3016 42 loads, 3 empties — 1776 tons	RMS-23 3037, 3035, 3038 19 loads, 11 empties — 1844 tons	No. 8, Prospector 5534, 5533, 5552, 5614 8 cars
DFX W 5551, 5713, 5711, 5691 61 loads, 3 empties — 5627 tons	75-21 3014, 3027, 3028, 3036 61 loads, 7 empties — 3645 tons	2nd MX W 5774, 5773, 5772, 5771 3 loads, 41 empties — 1220 tons		
Monarch Turn 5934 13 empties — 349 tons	1st MX W 5684, 5683, 5682, 5681 1 load, 61 empties — 1772 tons	68-23 5591, 5592, 5584, 5613, 5634 42 loads, 15 empties — 3070 tons		

today, Al Perlman (who resigned D&RGW's executive vice-presidency in 1954 to rebuild NYC for Robert R. Young) cites four basics of comeback: abandonment of the narrow gauge because of its 200 per cent operating ratio; divorce from Mopac-WP control so as to insure free interchange with all other connections, notably SP at Ogden; physical modernization, mainly through dieselization to reduce helpers; and equalization with competition of Union Pacific.

Federal Judge J. Foster Symes, into whose court Rio Grande came seeking relief from its outlandish debt of 177 million dollars on November 1, 1935, first cleared the air. D&RGW had appeared in his chambers before, in the control of — the man on the bench noted — “a group of financial institutions in New York City, the officers of which have never willingly ventured west of the Hudson. . . .” Yes, he'd grant relief under Section 77 of the Bankruptcy Act — but control would go to a couple of local boys. Wilson McCarthy, Utah judge, and Henry Swan, Denver banker, were railroad neophytes compared with the names suggested from the ranks of co-owners MP and WP, not to mention D&RGW itself. But they were homegrown and amenable to the court's advice that they overhaul the bankrupt, keep it free of outside influence, and operate it in the interests of the mountain habitat it served.

The package with which they left court possessed 771 miles of narrow gauge, a string of unbroken deficits since 1930, a 77.04 per cent operating ratio, all the deferred maintenance anyone could comprehend, and a failure to respond to the serum of the Dotsero Cutoff.

What McCarthy and Swan managed between 1935 and 1947, when Rio Grande was released from the court's custody as a free and healthy independent, is one of the most oft-told tales of modern American railroading. One might say that they force fed the patient with technology. C.T.C. . . . train radio . . . lab analysis of fuels and lubricants . . . off-track M/W equipment . . . piggyback . . . even a brand-new 115-pound rail design — anything, everything that could do the job better and/or cheaper. The new team was as scornful of sentiment as the road's fresh italic, lightning-lettered herald. Perhaps its immediate, whole-hearted acceptance of EMD's original 5400 h.p. FT diesel freighter symbolized its attitude as much as the adoption of any other single new tool. Alone of all D&RGW steam, an L-131 class 2-8-8-2 could match an FT on tonnage ratings but hardly on elapsed time over the road in view of the articulated's water, coal, and ash pit delays as well as her lack of dynamic braking. The others in the stable weren't close. The timecard showed 1450 adjusted tons for an FT on the west slope of Tennessee Pass; 1100 for a 4-6-6-4; 780 for a three-cylinder 4-8-2.

War both hurried and hindered the comeback of Rio Grande. Swollen revenues lowered the operating ratio and paid for improvements to the property. War also proved that technology could triumph over terrain; too much tonnage and too many troop trains were shoved into Moffat Tunnel and over Tennessee Pass and Soldier Summit to dispute the point. But war gave the narrow gauge a new lease on life and obscured a true assessment of the road's ability to hold its own against UP.

Judge Symes was still riding the bench April 11, 1947, when Rio Grande emerged from bankruptcy, and Wilson McCarthy switched hats from trustee to president. Year after year Symes had played “Horatio at the bridge” (to quote the apt phrase of Robert G. Athearn, author of *Rebel of the Rockies*, the road's official if not ultimate history), holding off the regiments of lawyers whose clients would have throttled rehabilitation, settled more generously with creditors, and/or restored former absentee control. When he finally released the railroad, Rio Grande was indeed light of debt, one with Denver & Salt Lake, muscled with

58 million dollars' worth of capital improvements, and free of outside control.

And since 1947? Rio Grande has been, in the words of Chairman John Evans, “free to pursue its own destiny.”* That pursuit makes for one of the more intriguing stories in Western railroading today, for while Rio Grande's post-war conduct has been exemplary in the view of both customers and stockholders alike, the road now finds itself rolling into an era in which it may be difficult indeed to hold to General Palmer's dream of “a little railroad a few hundred miles in length . . . an ideal railroad.”

Today the pressure for preserving Palmer's dream falls upon Gale Benton Aydelott. At 49 he's still young as railroad presidents go, also tall, friendly, articulate, sure of himself and his property. The son of a Burlington official, “Gus” Aydelott joined D&RGW's payroll as a sectionhand following graduation from the University of Illinois in 1936. He knows what it means to freeze in Tabernash (unofficial low: -66 degrees) and bake in Green River (official high: 112 degrees), and he is a fair hand at holding tonnage with a 26-L automatic brake. By instinct and experience an operating man, he now faces non-mechanical complexities of the character which once tried the souls of Palmer and Moffat — namely, mergers.

The plant which Gus Aydelott has presided over since the death of Judge McCarthy in 1956 is small (approximately the route-mileage of the pre-N&W Nickel Plate), modern, mountainous (compare its profile with that of parallel UP — page 23), and is bracketed by competition. When the new boss took over, Rio Grande was completing the rehabilitation program begun in 1935 by the trustees, and its economic shift from local carrier to transcon link was complete:

¶As of January 1, 1963, Rio Grande was operating 649.1 route-miles by signal indication without train orders (C.T.C.) — enough to protect all heavy-density single track. C.T.C. will be installed next between Salt Lake City and Ogden (which might be termed a heavy-duty branch since crews all operate to the SP interchange on a turnaround basis out of Roper Yard); and within two years between Salida and Pueblo (where improvements are tied in with a 20-mile line relocation occasioned by a new Government dam for floodwater control). The traffic is too light over D&RGW's ancestral main from Denver to Pueblo, between which C&S and Santa Fe join in a paired-track contract, to justify C.T.C., at least in Rio Grande's eyes.

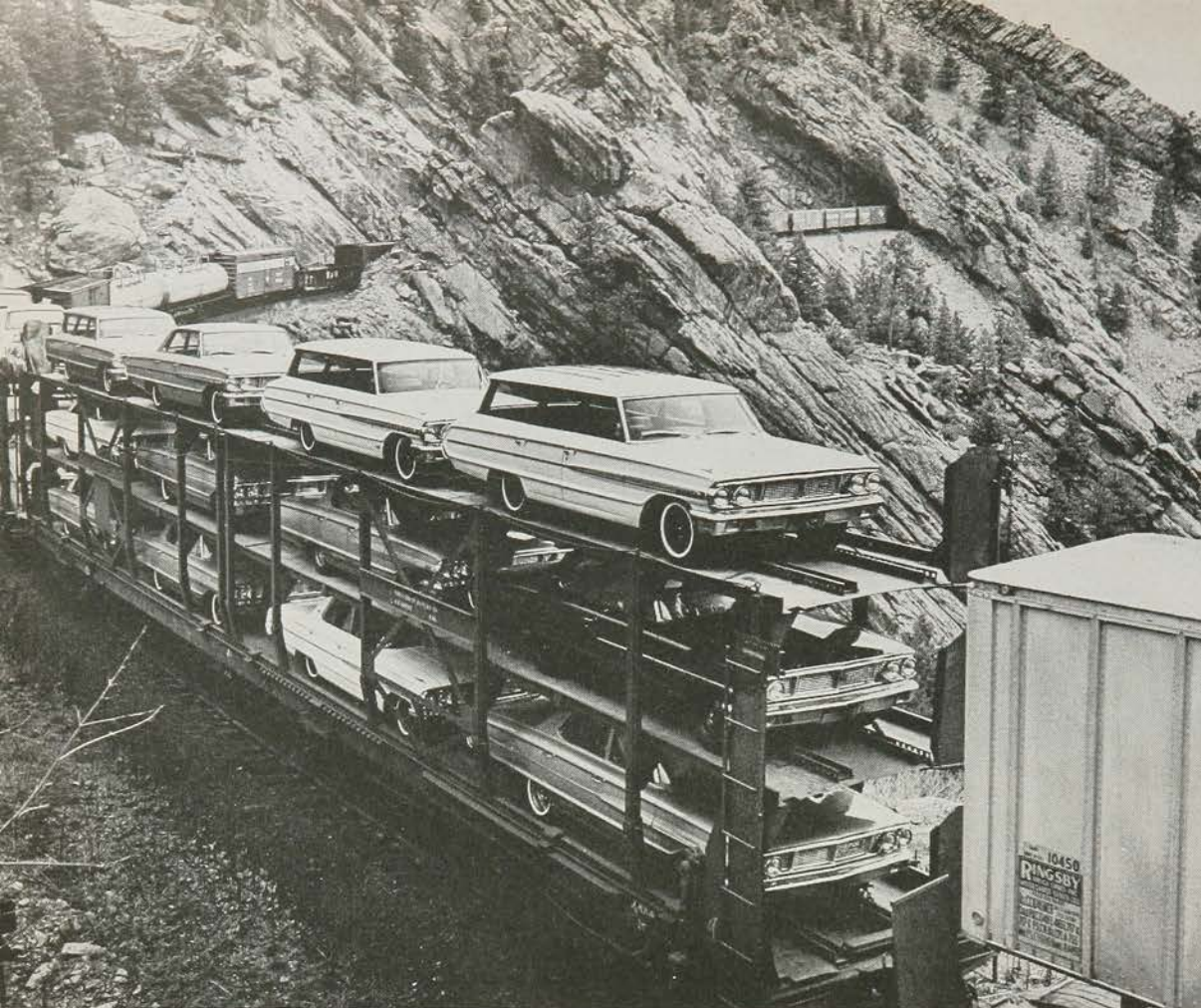
¶“The Grande” began dieselizing its yards in 1941, received its first 5400 h.p. FT the following year, and ushered out standard-gauge steam at the end of 1956. Attentive to the informed enthusiasm of his test lab, Aydelott broke precedent in 1961 by importing three 4000 h.p. C-C diesel-hydraulics from Germany, but the newcomers had some trouble inhaling at 9000 feet-plus and were sold off to Espee last year with no regrets. Since the bold experiment Electro-Motive is threatening to monopolize a diesel roster it has dominated since 1000 h.p. yard unit No. 100 went to work January 22, 1941. Locomotive replacement (using FT's as trade-ins) got under way in 1962-1964 with delivery of 28 2250 h.p. GP30's and 10 2500 h.p. GP35's. This year 12 more GP35's will join the fleet and 10 SW1200's will begin supplanting a yard-unit fleet previously divided up among Alco, Baldwin, FM, and GE. Rio Grande doesn't believe in re-engining older power; the road finds it cheaper to junk the unit and buy new.

¶*Exposition Flyer, San Juan, Scenic Limited, Shavano* — Rio Grande has as many famous if not classic passenger trains in its scrapbook of the past as the next railroad and not a few in its present, notably the daily and

*The quote is from 1941, when the issue of D&RGW's ultimate freedom was still very much in doubt.



CH. OFF



WATCH the Fords go by as a westbound symbol freight ascends the Rockies to fulfill David Moffat's dream of placing Denver on a transcon line.

domed (not to mention standard-gauge) *California Zephyr*, whose Chicago-San Francisco passage D&RGW shares with CB&Q and WP; and the summer-only open-platform, steam-powered *Silverton* on the narrow-gauge branch out of Durango, Colo., which the road gave up trying to abandon and began exploiting. The CZ pays its out-of-pocket expenses, is sold out in summer, and makes friends — some of whom are carload shippers. The *Silverton*, often running in two sections, carried 65,177 tourists and fans through the Canyon of the Rio de Las Animas last summer, and odds are that it will do even better in 1965. Make reservations early. This leaves: Nos. 7 and 8, the Denver-Salt Lake City *Prospector* — plush but with too many empty seats and berths, revenues spiked by mail and piggyback; Nos. 1 and 2, the Denver-Salida (since a cutback this year from Grand Junction by P.U.C. dispensation) *Royal Gorge* — two Alcos, three cars (including ex-*Chessie* dome), lots of scenery, no profit; Nos. 9 and 10, the Denver-Craig (Colo.) Moffat Road *Yampa Valley* — one Alco, two cars, lots of scenery, no profit but impossible to kill; and Nos. 3 and 4, what's left of Mopac's *Colorado Eagle* from St. Louis (handled by D&RGW north of Pueblo) — nicknamed the *Sparrow* since its sleepers, lounge, and diner were unceremoniously dropped by the parent road last year. Add excursions for any pretext (e.g., Air Force Academy football games, skiing at Winter Park, boat races down the Colorado River, rodeo at Kremmling, state fair at Pueblo) in 80-seat ex-NP coaches and you have a passenger business which, with mail and other allied revenues, grosses something over 4 million dollars a year, loses a bit over 5 million under the I.C.C.

formula, and causes management no panic if no particular fiscal pleasure.

¶There are two fundamentals about the complexion of D&RGW's freight receipts and ton-miles: Bridge or overhead traffic (i.e., cars received from and delivered to connections) accounts for more than a third of system tonnage and, because of its high-rated nature, approximately half of freight revenues; and bituminous coal is far and away the most important single commodity on the railroad, accounting for a third of system tonnage and, say, 13 per cent of freight revenues. D&RGW won and keeps the bridge business by solicitation (the road maintains 30 off-line sales offices) and over-the-road performance. Being a small middle link in a transcon chain, Rio Grande has a relatively small voice in ratemaking, a situation not much to its liking but beyond its control. Rio Grande, however, is trying to control two other situations not to its liking, known to the courts and the I.C.C. as The Ogden Gateway and Central Pacific cases.* As for coal, it

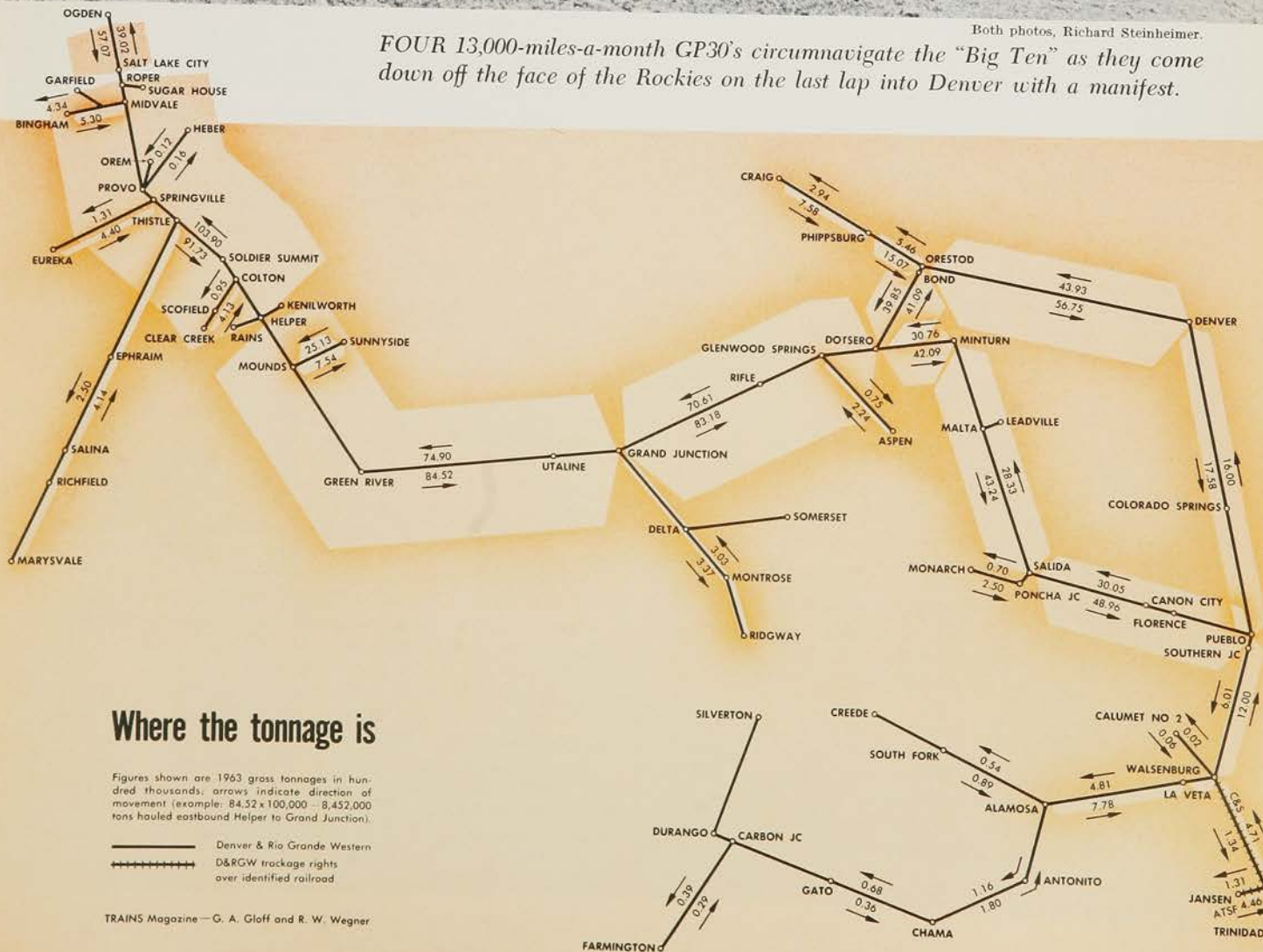
*The Ogden Gateway Case dates back to 1906 when Harriman's Union Pacific shut the Northwest rate door on Gould's D&RGW at the gateway of Ogden, Utah. Freight moving to and from the area — to Idaho, for example, from, say, Kansas — is charged a lower "through" rate if routed UP all the way than if interchanged to that road by D&RGW at Ogden. Judge McCarthy went to the I.C.C. over the alleged discrimination in 1949 (or "had the impudence to," to quote an amused, impressed *Fortune* article) and stood his ground in a legal battle that wound up in the U. S. Supreme Court in 1956. Rio Grande's victory, more moral than real, allows D&RGW to share on a joint rate basis on a few select commodities — including, for example, granite and marble monuments such as tombstones moving west from Vermont and Georgia.

The Central Pacific Case dates back to 1923, when Southern Pacific was allowed to absorb its end of the original transcontinental — Central Pacific — on condition that SP solicit freight out of northern California and Oregon for routing beyond Ogden over Union Pacific (instead of via El Paso), thereby preserving the Overland Route. A shipper, of course, can specify another connection at Ogden. In 1957 Rio Grande challenged the lawfulness of the agreement and thereafter won an examiner's approval of the road's open-gateway case. However, the CP issue remains inside the I.C.C.



Both photos, Richard Steinheimer.

FOUR 13,000-miles-a-month GP30's circumnavigate the "Big Ten" as they come down off the face of the Rockies on the last lap into Denver with a manifest.



has been part and parcel of Rio Grande since before the road existed (founder Palmer at age 19 was in England under orders from PRR's John Edgar Thomson to study the "best method of burning raw coal in locomotives"). Coal is the reason over half of the road's standard-gauge freight cars are hoppers or gondolas. And coal is what feeds the furnaces at U. S. Steel's Geneva plant at Provo, Utah, a World War II installation that now easily ranks as the road's No. 1 customer; as well as at the traditional (since Palmer founded it) Colorado Fuel & Iron complex in Pueblo. Add to that an expanding electric utility market. Someday Colorado-Utah coal mined on D&RGW rails may move overseas. Certainly unit and/or integral train economics are stimulating in view of on-line fuel reserves.

¶A railroad — D&RGW or any other — is never finished in an engineering sense. True, Rio Grande can hardly alter the altitudes it attains (7440 feet at Soldier Summit, 9239 at the center of the Moffat Tunnel, and 10,240 atop Tennessee Pass) and its minimum mainline height clearance of 20 feet 5 inches is ample, so the road concentrates its energies on reducing speed-curbing curvature and laying more 136-pound rail. Equipment naturally receives most, and usually the lion's share, of any given year's "additions and betterments" budget (there is, after all, no equivalent for an equipment trust to cover a line relocation); but as funds permit, the eternal rebuilding process goes on. In 1963, for example, the big job was done between Cottonwood and Agate, Utah, 3.63 miles; bulldozers eliminated 197 degrees of curvature and reduced over-all length 1960 feet. And strange as it may seem in our time, Rio Grande isn't through expanding its route-mileage. Vast mineral reserves are accessible to its property, and each one spells a potential tonnage uneconomic for trucks and invulnerable, of course, to barges. Consider Potash Spur. The name is deceiving, for this 36-mile heavy-duty line, completed in 1962, is almost as long as the Dotsero Cutoff and in places is much more scenic. It departs from the main line at Brendel, Utah, and runs south to the Colorado River, gouging through an 8000-foot, 123-foot-deep cut and into a 7059-foot, 23-foot-tall tunnel (on a 1.2 per cent grade) on the last lap. The goal is Texas Gulf Sulphur's 2788-foot mine shaft into the largest known potash field in the U. S. This fertilizer ingredient's market is as sure and expanding as the world population and its need for food. Initial mine production was estimated at 550,000 tons a year. Unfortunately, a construction accident in building the mine itself set back the target date for revenue rail potash movements from late 1962 to early 1965. The "spur," incidentally, cost 7½ to 8 million dollars, of which D&RGW paid outright only \$500,000 (all for rail and ties). Texas Gulf Sulphur will get a \$10 refund per car shipped until the balance of the line's cost is retired.

¶To more people than Rio Grande cares to contemplate, its name spells not fast freight or even CZ but 264 miles of 3-foot gauge. This last waning legacy of General Palmer's era is steam powered, indescribably scenic, rugged (24-degree curves, 4 per cent grades, a maximum elevation of 10,015 feet at Cumbres Pass), and — except for those Silverton tourists — hopelessly unprofitable. A week, 10 days, even two weeks elapse between trains on the Alamosa-Durango line, yet major M/W expenditures are needed. Summing up: romance is expensive, too expensive, and the outlook for the narrow gauge exclusive of the Silverton Branch is bleak.

FIGURES, facts, faces cannot reveal a railroad, much less a Rio Grande. One can absorb only so much from history, I.C.C. reports, and Wall Street opinion. The men inside the converted department store that serves as D&RGW headquarters at 1531 Stout Street in Denver can bring the property into near focus, but the true image

is west of the city, out in the Rockies and the Wasatch. "Rio Grande?" exclaimed a Canadian once. "That's the railroad where you reach for the throttle and the brake at the same time."

So climb aboard in the darkness before dawn on September 29, 1964, at North Yard, Denver, and ride west on RMS (Rock Island Merchandise Special). Between the four GP30's on the point and the silver-gold caboose of the symbol hotshot are 42 cars. They came into Denver from the east on the Burlington at 2:30 a.m. and on the Rock Island (which is a tenant at North Yard) at 2:35. North Yard received the Q interchange at 3:55. And by 4:30 the train has been tied together, inspected, given an air test, and is rolling. RMS is just 2710 tons on the conductor's wheel report, less than half the units' rating, but we're OS'd without helpers and on almost passenger-train time.

RMS is bound for the Continental Divide on a ruling grade of 2 per cent but the illusion is of the rails paralleling rather than approaching the frontal range of the Rockies until the train is almost 20 miles out of town. At Rocky Flats the D&RGW comes to grips with its opponent, describes a sort of elongated S-curve known as the "Big Ten" because of its 10-degree curvature, and bores upward. Speed on the "Big Ten" is the index of what a train will make on the balance of the climb to the summit; RMS's GP30's round it at a steady 23 mph.

Speed . . . that's the controlling word on Rio Grande today. A year ago the road would have moved westbound freight via the Moffat in two 5000-ton trains, each with helpers; today RMS will be one of five smaller, faster, helperless trains splitting up the same tonnage. (D&RGW's transportation ratio has not been materially affected by this strategy switch to streetcar headway since the practice has reduced the deadheading required to equalize crews and power in the tonnage days. Anyway, the road has little choice. Not only piggyback and auto-racks require speed but even lumber out of Oregon now demands expedited handling.) Into the Moffat Tunnel at 6:25 a.m.; Rio Grande has almost doubled the altitude in 50 miles of almost continuous 2 per cent and in less than 2 hours, penetrating 30 tunnels in the process before the big bore itself. Dave Moffat has been vindicated once again.

Over the apex at 9239 feet and then down the west slope of the mountains rolls RMS, descending on 1 per cent with the speedometer needle glued to whatever the timecard allows: 40, 55, or 60 mph. Now a sharp dispatcher and C.T.C. resolve the old bugaboo of single iron by stitching together meets, mostly running meets, 1-2-3, just-like-that. RMS, holding the main, meets No. 8, the *Prospector*, at Winter Park — a running meet. . . . In the hole at Tabernash is LSD-25 (Lumber Special via Denver, out of Oregon on September 25) with four F7's on the point and a three-unit helper (Tabernash to Winter Park). . . . In the hole at Flat another brace of four F7's with an RBX (Red Ball Extra). . . . RMS is into Bond at 8:38, changes crew, departs at 8:42, meeting MWMD (Midwest Merchandiser) and overtaking an RBX. . . . At Lacy RMS takes siding for SPF-29 (SP Forwarder via Pueblo) and holds the main at Grand Valley to meet SPD-29 (SP Forwarder via Denver). Both hotshots are operating with GP30 and/or GP35 teams. . . . Yet another SPF is in Grand Junction, and the eastbound *California Zephyr* is just arriving as RMS stops at 12:17 p.m. for fuel and a crew change. Dead time: 8 minutes.

The morning of outrageously beautiful vistas — the frontal wall of the Rockies, James Peak, then Beyers, Gore, Red, and Glenwood canyons along the Colorado River — is as old as time. The morning of exploiting a 175-mile short cut to Utah — credit that to Dave Moffat. The morning of 6- to 8-inch slag ballast, 115-pound rail, and C.T.C. is owed to Symes and McCarthy and Swan and



Evans and Perlman. But the morning of highballing, GP30's, and light tonnage belongs to Gus Aydelott as does the resulting hike in gross ton-miles per freight train-hour.

West of Grand Junction the relentless race continues as 9000 h.p. shoves the miles behind. It's down, down, down to Green River, Utah, which at 4080 feet is the lowest point on the system (Pennsy tops the Alleghenies at a shade more than 2200 feet above sea level), then the climb resumes. The ruling grade to Helper is 1 per cent; thereafter to Soldier Summit atop the Wasatch the pitch tightens to a maximum of 2.4 per cent. On the back of the assault out of Castle Gate on 8.28- and 9-degree curves the speed declines to 21, then 20½, finally 20 mph, the adhesion holding to between 19 and 20 per cent with no sand.

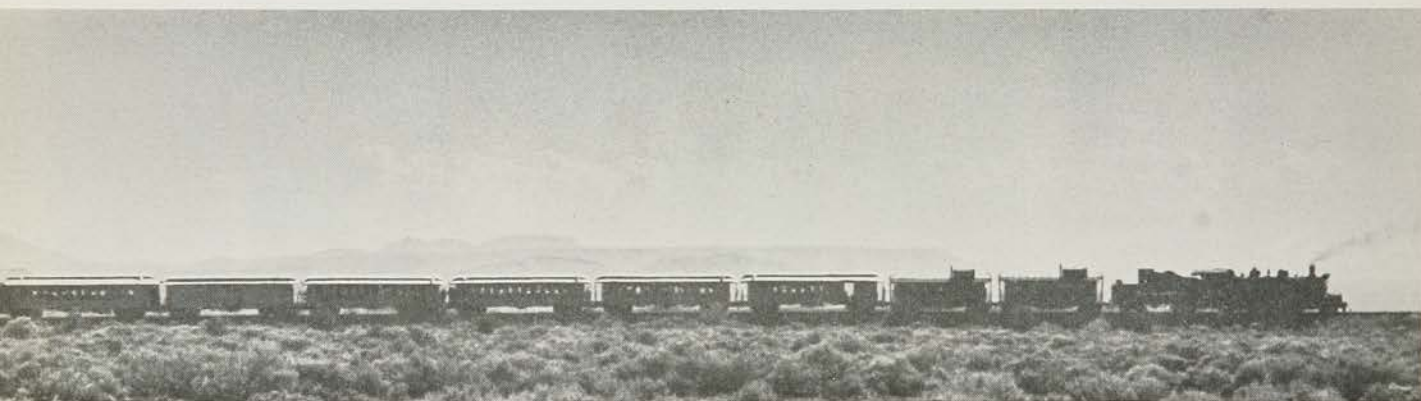
Then, descending on 2 per cent double track and after describing two enormous horseshoe curves above Gilluly, comes the sight of sights: an "A" train (for Advance) is climbing the mountain, its 114 cars urged upward by four GP30/35's up front and two F's and an SD9 cut in on the rear.

On to Roper Yard, Salt Lake City. Arrival time: 7:35 p.m. In spite of a succession of slow orders in Utah because of flawed rails turned up by a Sperry rail inspection car, RMS has approximated the fastest freight schedule

has been subject to outside scrutiny since Santa Fe approached its back door via WP, and both Burlington and Union Pacific have acquired D&RGW stock (9.2 per cent in UP's case) for "defensive" and "merely protective" reasons.

Obviously the merger pendulum is swinging, gaining speed, and will not be stopped. Just as obviously Rio Grande must expand too or lose its hard-won, cherished independence. Gus Aydelott presently intends to trade iron horses along these lines: If UP asks for merger with Rock Island, then Rio Grande will ask as a condition to I.C.C. approval that it be allowed to purchase those RI lines between Denver and the Missouri River (at Kansas City and Council Bluffs) which duplicate existing UP routes. And Aydelott will argue that he wants an access to the Missouri River for the same economic reasons that UP requires admittance via RI to such gateways as Chicago, the Twin Cities, and St. Louis. Nobody, least of all Aydelott, assumes that such a boost in D&RGW size to 3000 miles could be accomplished without some financial stress. Purchase price would be a rub. And once bought, the RI lines would need new diesels and cars as well as an M/W overhaul to bring the lines up to D&RGW standards. But then, Rio Grande possesses as much experience in these departments as the next guy.

Item. Certain Wall Street observers feel that Rio



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NARROW-GAUGE open-platform coaches, steam, and scenery combine to gross \$18 a train-mile on the Silverton.

published by Rio Grande between Denver and Salt Lake City as recently as 1961; yet its performance constitutes a base rather than an optimum. The hottest of the hotshots today makes the same run in 13 hours 10 minutes, and you don't get there any faster in a CZ dome seat.

So we ask you: Isn't it sufficient for Rio Grande to push tonnage through the mountains as fast as streamliners, hold its operating ratio in the 60's, maintain the property, mail regular dividend checks, and otherwise corporately and publicly behave itself today?

The dismaying answer is No.

To make money in our time D&RGW had to convert itself from a local road into a bridge line, which automatically made it dependent upon its connections. So far, so good in a *status quo* situation. But in 1965 every one of Rio Grande's connections is involved in a control or merger negotiation. First there were Santa Fe and SP jockeying for control of Western Pacific. Caught uncomfortably in the middle, D&RGW wished aloud for WP's independence but sided with SP, its biggest single interchange. Don't bite the hand that feeds. However, an I.C.C. examiner has recommended that Santa Fe get WP. Next enter Rock Island, which Union Pacific wants. If successful, UP would thus lop off a valuable connection between Denver and the Missouri River. Finally, Rio Grande itself

Grande has maximized its efficiency and now finds it increasingly difficult to keep in check its operating ratio (which stood at 69.5 per cent for the first 10 months of 1964 vs. 67.9 per cent for the same period of 1963) because of recent wage boosts and the demand for shorter, lighter freight trains. If so, acquisition of a line to the Missouri River could bring relief by spreading the overhead over more route-miles and virtually doubling the average haul on bridge traffic. Question: Should Rio Grande have acted as soon as UP made a bid for Rock Island — as did North Western — instead of waiting until a few days before 78.2 per cent of RI stockholders voted for UP control? UP now has momentum minus any agreement to share its prize other than to sell south-of-Kansas City trackage to Espee. In a similar case — Seaboard Coast Line — the I.C.C. turned down Southern's demand for certain duplicate Georgia and Florida mains when approving merger.

Thus today the immediate future in a railroad world dizzy with merger fever is obscured for Gen. William Jackson Palmer's line of "a few hundred miles in length," and the visibility may be reduced to that inside Moffat Tunnel. Perhaps, though, there's an analogy to be found in the story of the small boy who in the dome of the *California Zephyr* declared with delight at East Portal, "Look, mommy, it's tomorrow already!" **I**