

C&TS Dispatch

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WINTER 2004

Visit
the Friends
on the Web at
www.cumbrestoltec.org

The 2004 Volunteer Work Sessions

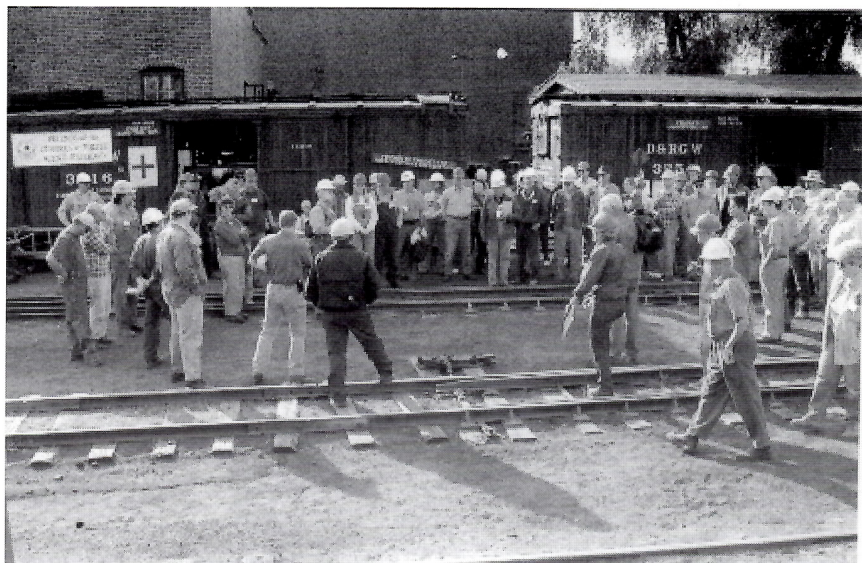
Project Information

Members of the Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad will be able to participate in many activities during the 2004 volunteer work sessions. If you would like to receive an informational and registration packet with information about the summer projects listed in this issue of the C&TS Dispatch, please return to the Friends' office the yellow flyer included in the membership renewal letter that you received in early December. You may also send your request for the registration materials to the Friends' office by e-mail to brianshoup@cumbrestoltec.org; by mail to 6005 Osuna Rd. NE, Albuquerque, NM 87109; by phone, 505-880-1311; or by fax, 505-856-7543.

Sign-up instructions will not be available until early March. They will be mailed to those who have requested them and will also be posted for downloading on the Friends' Web site—www.cumbrestoltec.org.

Special Session May 17–21

One of the most ambitious work sessions ever will take place May 17–21, 2004. The second of the sessions scheduled for that month will be devoted to one project—removal of overgrown vegetation in the yards and along the right-of-way. This project is needed both for fire prevention and to restore the cleaner appearance of the railroad in the historic era and will kick off an ongoing weed abatement program at the railroad. The Friends are coordinating this undertaking with



Volunteers in the Chama yard for the safety meeting at the beginning of session C, June 16, 2003. (Photo by Tom Cardin.)

the Railroad Commission and the Rio Grande Railway Preservation Corporation (RGRPC), as well as with the US Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and other federal, state, and county agencies. To cover the whole line and to accomplish significant results we need a large group of volunteers—to operate saws, to chip and shred, to load and remove. If you're planning to come to one work session this year, make it this one!

Five Other Sessions

The other projects that have been planned by our Projects and Interpretation Committees will be conducted during five work sessions at five historic sites and along the right-of-

way. The dates for the work weeks are: May 10–14, June 14–18, June 21–25, August 2–6, and August 9–13.

Planning for the 2004 projects began at the 2003 work sessions. Ideas were solicited from the volunteers and RGRPC staff and added to the Project Committee's long list. The newly organized Interpretation Committee [see related story page 8] added its recommendations for projects. Then, at meetings in September and November, the Projects Committee made the final selections.

See Work Sessions, page 5

C&TS Dispatch

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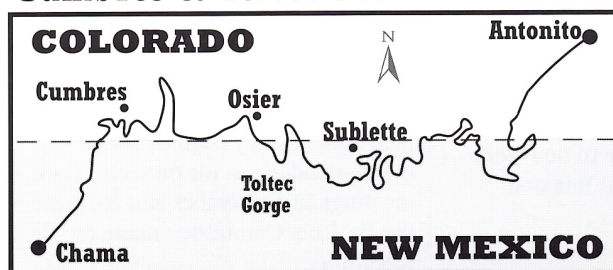
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The Friends is the official museum support group for the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, a 64-mile-long operating railroad and museum of railroad history and technology between Antonito, Colorado, and Chama, New Mexico. The railroad is owned by Colorado and New Mexico and is operated by the Rio Grande Railway Preservation Corporation. As the museum support group, the Friends is dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of the railroad. The Friends is an Affiliate Member of ARM (Association of Railway Museums) and a Member of TRAIN (Tourist Railway Association).

Family membership in the Friends is \$25.00 per year; outside the USA membership is \$35.00. All contributions are fully tax deductible and will be gratefully accepted. Please write us in Albuquerque or call us at (505) 880-1311 for information about the Friends. The Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad is both a National and a State Registered Historic Site.

Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad



Denver & Rio Grande Railway—1880 to 1886

Denver & Rio Grande Railroad—1886 to 1921

Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad—1921 to 1970

Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad—1970 to 2004

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



I wrote "The Fire Keepers of Cumbres Pass" in

2002 before I accepted the position of president of the Friends. It was to be a prologue for a yet to be completed book on the C&TS Railroad and its people. I've since come to believe that the ranks of the fire keepers include not only the men and women of the railroad but

also the citizens of the area's communities, the Friends' members from around the world, and all others who give of their time and money to sustain it. I deemed it appropriate for the President's Column this winter as we look forward to spring with a renewed sense of optimism.

The Fire Keepers of Cumbres Pass

You don't have to squint your eyes to see it as it was. It's the angle that's important. Just stand on the west side of the grade crossing with the highway to your back. The old section house lies before you with its sign informing you that this is Cumbres, Colorado. No permanent residents. Also known as Cumbres Pass, elevation 10,015 feet. A notch in the high country where in 1880 construction crews of the Denver and Rio Grande Railway crested the San Juan Mountains.

Even after the construction of state highway 17 over the pass, even after it was later paved, and even after 120 years passing since the tracks were laid, there is still the presence of frontier. It mingles with the faint scent of spruce. There are mountain passes for hiking and others for driving. But by chance of geology and the pursuit of precious metal, it was on Cumbres Pass that rail was laid. Narrow gauge, only three feet in width. The gauge of choice back then for builders in a hurry. Better suited than standard gauge for the tight bends along rushing mountain streams and the narrow shelves cut into high cliffs. Cheaper. The gauge of choice for the undercapitalized.

Look west down the track 50 yards and you can see where it falls sharply away to begin its unrelenting drop into the yawning Wolf Creek valley down to Chama. A grade so steep, that a train safely descends it only at the hands of but a few masters. Their craft, these masters? Mountain railroading. *Steam* mountain railroading. They and their consorts are the stewards of the heritage. They are the keepers of the fire.

From late May to the end of October, they run steam trains full of vacationers over a spectacular 64-mile remnant of

what was once a vast network of narrow gauge lines throughout the Rocky Mountains of Colorado and northern New Mexico. In winter, they retreat to lick their wounds. Some practice lost crafts in an old roundhouse down in Chama. There, as the snowstorms hit heavy up on Cumbres, 70-year-old steam locomotives are rebuilt with tools at least 50 years out of production. Over on the eastern slope of the pass in the high desert town of Antonito, passenger coaches are refurbished in the car shop for another season. And several yards away in the depot and also three hours south in Albuquerque, using newer tools made from chips of silicon, grant proposals are drafted and money is raised.

The duty that this stewardship demands of the fire keepers is told in Greek mythology. Like Sisyphus, they must struggle over and over as if rolling a great stone up a hill only to find it again at the bottom. Such is their burden. But come spring, when the snows of winter begin to melt, they shall harness the fire and ride it high on the mountain. Such is their glory.

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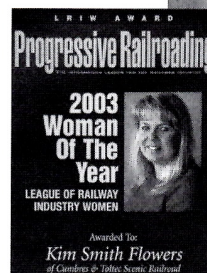
NEWS FROM THE RAILROAD

Compiled from "Friends of the C&TS News," a feature of the Friends' Web site—www.cumbrestoltec.org. Please refer to the Web site for more coverage of the events summarized here, as well as other news. The webmaster of the Friends' site is Director Curt Bianchi.

"On September 19, RGRPC General Manager Kim Smith Flowers was one of three women in New Mexico to receive a Trailblazer Award from the New Mexico Commission on the Status of Women. The award is conferred annually for achievements in nontraditional careers. In a ceremony in the Fine Arts Pavilion at the State Fairgrounds, Lt. Governor Diane Denish and Commission Chair Mary Ann Armijo presented the awards to Ms. Flowers and two other recipients —NM Department of Transportation Secretary Rhonda Faught and Judge Rhoda Hunt of the McKinley County Magistrate Court...

...Days after receiving the Trailblazer Award from the New Mexico Commission on the Status of Women, RGRPC General Manager Kim Smith Flowers was named the recipient of the '2003 Woman of the Year' award in Chicago by the League of Railway Industry Women. The award is sponsored by the League and the trade magazine *Progressive Railroading*. In remarks by the publisher of *Progressive Railroading*, Stephen W. Bolte, to the 150 attendees at the League luncheon, [he noted that]

Kim's accomplishments in leadership with Federal and State agencies, handling the general public ridership issues, and running a 120+ year-old steam powered railroad made her an outstanding choice for the award. On the platform of the Chama depot, after returning home from



*Kim Flowers,
General Manager
of the RGRPC*

Chicago, Kim posed for cameras while holding the award. 'This is for all the RGRPC employees,' she insisted to an impromptu gathering of passengers, employees, docents, Chama citizens, and several directors of the Friends and the RGRPC.

...On December 6 the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad Commission voted unanimously to approve renewing the management agreement with the Rio Grande Railway Preservation Corporation (RGRPC), a nonprofit affiliate of the Friends. Under the terms of the 2004 agreement, the RGRPC will receive a 5% management fee (down from 9% in 2003) in addition to reimbursements for its expenses.

...The Commission also approved the RGRPC board's recommendation that the 2004 train schedule be doubled from that of this past season based on the expected availability of three operational locomotives next spring. The railroad will operate eight trains weekly, six days a week, with Fridays being the 'down' day. Saturday and Sunday will see trains departing from Antonito and Chama to Osier and return. Monday and Wednesday will have a train running from Antonito to Chama. Tuesday and Thursday, the train will run from Chama to Antonito.

RGRPC officials told the Commission that this schedule could potentially be augmented depending on volumes and conditions. Charter trains are anticipated as well. Regular adult fares will be held to \$60 for trains out of Chama. In a move intended to boost ridership on trains departing Antonito, the regular adult fares will be priced at \$55. The Commission again approved a \$2 fire mitigation surcharge to all fares."

JOHN NORWOOD ON PHONE BOOTHS

by Bob Bergstrom

A significant contribution to knowledge about the C&TS phone booths was made in January 2003 by John B. Norwood, Jr., well-known author, longtime D&RGW employee, and respected authority on the D&RGW narrow gauge lines. There is space in this article to include only some of the information that Mr. Norwood provided in his 25-page manuscript, but the following excerpts, in his own words, give a good sense of its useful and interesting content and great merit. Throughout the following article, some phrases appear in parentheses and some in brackets. Words and phrases in parentheses are Mr. Norwood's, and those in brackets are by Bob Bergstrom.

Telephones and Telephones

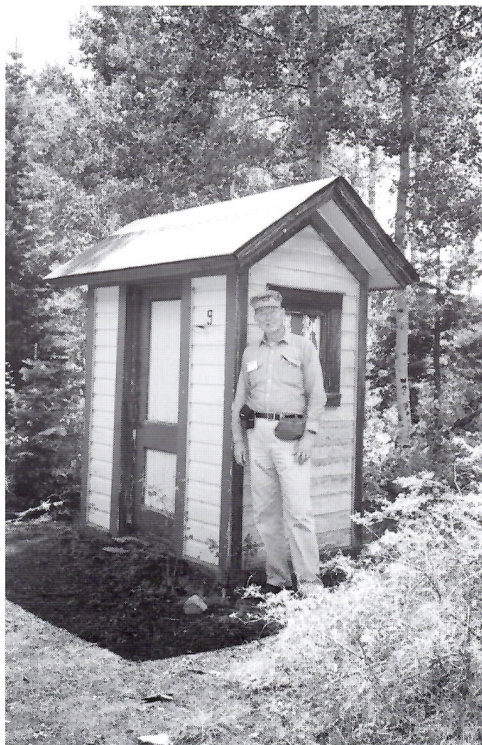
The 1923 D&RGW roster indicates the installation of numerous telephones. The telephone did not come to the Narrow Gauge until at least 1942. I returned to the Narrow Gauge as a dispatcher at Alamosa that year and was working in the dispatcher's office in Alamosa when final installation and testing were completed and we began using the phones for dispatching trains. True telephones were installed as sort of a cheap imitation of a phone system and only at open [*i.e.*, *active*] offices. At wayside points [*including the booths*], the existing telegraphophone instruments were converted to telephones.

To convert the old telegraphophones to telephones required replacing the diaphragm with a telephone diaphragm and doing the same in the earphone. Additionally, you had to run a second wire to the old wall-type phone, and now you have a telephone at any place in a timetable where a bold T or P shows.

Two dry cells were enough to power the phones, three were better. If no dry cells were available, it was no problem to use one of the lantern batteries issued to train- and switchmen, yard

car checkers, or anyone using the lanterns that had a bail (or handle) to hang the lantern from the user's arm. The lantern batteries didn't last as long as dry cells, but they were OK, and terminals permitted screw or clip attachment to the phones. Power life depended on usage. The old dry cells had some recovery, but the D batteries in lanterns did not.

IF you had a good uncorroded wire, new diaphragms at each end, and strong batteries (if, if, if), then you did not have to shout into a telegraphophone to



Bob Bergstrom at the Cresco phone booth, August 2001. (Photo by Estelle Bergstrom.)

communicate. On the Narrow Gauge we did not have these niceties, plus hundreds of feet of the line might be frozen into snow or ice, or lying in water.

Operational Context for the Booths

When the Depression came, we were getting the K-Class power. Business to move decreased about 50 percent, and so did train movements. Section gangs

got motorized track cars, and every other section was cut off and miles between section foreman's houses increased. As each bunch of section quarters was cut out and torn down, the phone booths were built.

Any 'phone installed on the Narrow Gauge was to augment the telegraphic system, so persons not trained for Morse could have a means of communicating the day-by-day ordinary exchange of information, or at points of known potential danger or delay.

Labor agreements gave telegraphers sole rights to telegraphic communications and established that train and section crews could only receive/transmit information that concerned their immediate situation in case of emergencies. For train crews, this could be to report a derailment, hotbox delay, engine failure, or other possibilities that delayed their trains or others they were aware of because of train order provisions.

Train crews could throw off flyers [*messages written on sheets of paper*] to section gangs about phoning to the dispatcher for information about track, weather, equipment, and personnel information that was of a nature requiring urgent attention; morning line-ups of train operations to the work site; and to minimize any delays to trains by reason of track work. Section foremen could discuss mutual working plans (meeting places, tools, material, etc.), and both train crews and section gangs could report threatening and unexpected weather conditions or other problems that could result in unsafe operations. In other words, wayside (booth) provision of telegraphophone (later telephone) service was an adjunct to, but not an absolute requirement for, train and general operations.

Inside the Booths

Carry a stick with you as you approach the booth. Check for snakes, scorpions, yellow jackets (they nest underground). Chase any snakes or