



C&TS Dispatch

Vol. 19 No. 3

FALL 2006

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HISTORIC PRESERVATION — 2006

The June Volunteer Work Sessions

ANTONITO PROJECTS

No time was lost by the Friends in utilizing the new Car Repair Facility (CRF) at Antonito. The last issue reported on completion of the CRF. In this issue we report on the first two projects undertaken in the new building. The first project was a comprehensive survey of cook car 053 in preparation for its restoration. The cook car was the first car moved into the Antonito CRF. The second project reported here was rebuilding of drop bottom gondola 859. It was the first car to actually have restoration work done in the CRF.

Cook Car Survey

Project Objective: Survey physical condition of cook car 053 to identify requirements for restoration and to provide information required to plan restoration projects

Session C

Team Leader: Jim O'Keefe

Cook car 053 is a former RPO, converted to a cook car for use with rotary plow OY. The car was used in RPO/baggage service on the "Chili Line" until service was suspended on that line. It then served on the "San Juan Extension" until entering maintenance-of-way service as a cook car approximately 55 years ago. Restoration of this car is a major objective as part of the Friends' mission of interpretation. While both are important, to a greater extent than

restoration of a freight car, accurate restoration of the cook car will provide insight into the daily lives of railroad workers.

Restoration of cook car 053 will be a major project. Success will depend on identifying the work to be done, planning a work sequence to allow an orderly restoration process and obtaining the necessary materials. To accomplish these tasks, a detailed survey of the car was done. A report by Laura Evans in June 2004 fully addressed the interior restoration details of the car. This Session C, 2006 survey concentrated on the exterior and structure of the car with the objec-

tive of maintaining it as a cook car rather than return it to its original RPO configuration. The survey covered all aspects of the underbody structure, siding, and roof of the car. In addition, the brake system and trucks were inspected. A comprehensive report with numerous photographs was prepared to aid in planning the restoration.

Side sills were found to be significantly deteriorated and their restoration will be a major portion of the total project. The center sills are in generally good condition. Exterior siding had been replaced in 1998, but it was not installed in the original manner. An accurate restoration will probably

See Preservation, page 4



Cook car 053, "A" end and right side, in Antonito CRF.

C&TS Dispatch

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The C&TS Dispatch is published four times each year by the Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, Inc., 6005 Osuna Road NE, Albuquerque, NM 87109. The Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, Inc., is a New Mexico nonprofit corporation.

The Friends is the official museum arm 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. As the museum arm, 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 2006

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

From the INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



The 2006 Work Sessions Were Most Successful and the Railroad Is Doing Well

All seven work sessions planned for 2006 have been completed. 484 volunteers participated in them. This is the highest number of participants we have ever had on-site working to restore, preserve, and interpret the railroad. By comparison, we had 470 volunteer participants in 2005, 274 in 2004, and 190 in 2003. Several of you stay for multiple work sessions and some for the entire season.

Forty-seven projects to benefit the railroad have been completed or worked on. All were important. Some of the major ones were:

- completion of the wonderful car repair facility at Antonito where we can now work year round protected from the extremes of weather in a well lighted, well equipped shop;
- painting three sides of the Osier dining hall exterior;
- repair of the Osier Section House;
- construction of the information kiosk in the Cumbres parking lot;
- restoration of telegraph poles and wires from station to stockyards and construction of a telegraphy display counter in Chama Depot; and
- continuation of restoration of several cars, the Jordan spreader, and rebuild of car 05635 into a caboose.

Chronicles were maintained on all the above and many other projects. Dedicated, knowledgeable docents have been on every train to interpret what the visitors are seeing. Special thanks go to the cook car crew who keep us so well provided for with nourishing and tasty lunches.

Some wit at one of the sessions said "working on these projects on the railroad is so much fun it's like a summer camp for adults!" At the same time we're doing serious museum quality work, saving history for posterity and helping drive the local economy in a big way. The economic impact on the communities we serve is very significant. Approximately 500 volunteers pumped an estimated \$1,077,000 into the local economies this year. Additionally, we spend thousands on construction supplies and food to feed the "Friends" workers. Antonito got a special boost with the completion of the \$250,000 Car Repair Facility mentioned above.

You can be very proud of what your organization accomplishes. I issue you a personal invitation to make plans now to join us for a work session next year and enjoy the camaraderie and satisfaction of knowing you've done something important to keep this historic treasure alive and working. I personally am planning to bring my eighteen-year-old nephew out from Ohio to work with him during a work session next year!

In other news, we received a \$25,000 completion grant from the Boettcher Foundation of Colorado for completion of the Car Repair Facility in Antonito, and have applied to them for an additional grant to restore the cook car and the railway post office car. We thank them for their continued interest in and support of the Friends.

The railroad has hosted 25,000 riders so far this year and looks like it will carry substantially more than the pro-

jected 32,000. Ridership is up 19%! The Federal Railway Administration gave the C&TSRR a good report after spending three days looking over the railroad.

Our fall meeting, October 27th and 28th, will be in Canon City, and our banquet will be on the Royal Gorge Route Dinner Train! Details will be coming to you soon. Mark your calendars; this will be an exciting ride and meeting.

Lastly, we publicly thank the Railroad Commission, the railroad employees and the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Management Corp., as well as the merchants and citizens of the local communities we serve, for a very successful season of work sessions and the outstanding cooperation we received on all sides.

— *Warren Smalley*
Interim Executive Director

MORE FROM YOUR LIBRARY

By Spencer Wilson

We have completed our first work session on the Dorman photographic collection here in the Library at the Albuquerque office. This was for three days, July 5, 6, and 7. Wes Pfanner of Albuquerque was joined by Patricia and Montie Bowen of Clay Center, Kansas. Wes is now coming to work the Dorman collection on a regular basis, three times a week. Patricia and Montie labored straight through for three days. They had to leave to journey to an Elderhostel program in northern New Mexico, which, incidentally, is a week of lectures and studies of railroads in New Mexico—including a ride on the C&TSRR! Yours truly and Vernon Glover made up the rest of the work crew.

The work now consists of transferring the photographs into archival sleeves, then identifying as best we can the details in each image. Each image is assigned a volume number and a photo number. This information is written on a form which becomes a part of the permanent record. Then Vernon Glover scans each photograph into the computer. This, in time, will mean that a researcher can view the images or make arrangements to purchase them for his or her own use (with appropriate signed agreement as to the copyright). The original photos are then returned to the safe, secure, permanent storage facility.

We are very encouraged by this development of work sessions in Albuquerque. We are keeping a record of hours spent by each volunteer. This record is primarily for grant matching. We are also going forward with grant applications for equipment, computer, work station, etc. These work sessions in the Friends Albuquerque office mean that such

sessions can be organized year round. Indeed, we already are planning for ongoing sessions. Keep us in mind, folks.

— *Spencer Wilson is Friends Librarian and Archivist and a member of the Board of Directors*

Dispatch Deadlines

To establish a dependable schedule for mailing the C&TS Dispatch, the following deadlines will be observed for material to be received at the Friend's office.

Spring Issue: Mail on March 25
All material must be received by February 15.

Summer Issue: Mail on August 8
Work sessions A and B reports and photographs must be received by June 22.
All other material must be received by June 29.

Fall Issue: Mail on September 25
Work sessions C and D reports and photographs must be received by August 8.
All other material must be received by August 15.

Winter Issue: Mail on December 18
Work sessions E and F reports and photographs must be received by November 1.
All other material must be received by November 8.

require replacement of the majority of the siding. The roof appears to be in good condition; however, it is known to leak so that some roof work will be required.

The car's original passenger trucks have been replaced with freight trucks. A decision will need to be made on trucks to be used in the restored car — with two different style passenger trucks being historically accurate. The brake system was not functionally tested. Inspection shows that it probably would not meet requirements for operation today so work on the brake system will be required to put the car back into service on the line.

Rebuild of Drop Bottom Gondola 859

Project Objective: Complete the rebuild of drop bottom gondola 859 for return to service

Session D

Team Leader: Bill Pratt

Significant work was accomplished on drop bottom gondola 859. The second side sill, all side and end stakes, and all side boards and straps were installed. End boards were cut and both bottom boards were installed. All center decking pieces, all grab irons and steps except for the B end left side were installed. The B end right side chain roller bar was installed and the other three roller bars were hung in place.



Bob Osborn uses a sawsall to cut a bolt off even with the nut.

Work on this car was made additionally difficult because it had been damaged in a rollover, so much of the metal needed work. No acetylene torch was available in the Antonito CRF. This necessitated carrying all bent steps, grab irons, and side straps to the engine shop for straightening.

Project Status: Ongoing



Warren Ringer and Bill McCartin clamping a side board to a side stake before drilling holes for the bolts.

Replace Lava Water Tank Ladder and Survey Lava Pump House Roof

Project Objective: Rebuild Lava tank ladder and survey Lava pump house roof for future restoration

Session C

Team Leader: Jim Herron

On Monday of Session C we drove to the tank and took measurements for the ladder which resulted in a detailed set of drawings. The next two days we spent building and painting the ladder in Chama at the wood shop. The ladder was originally built in three 10-foot sections. It was spliced together with lap boards. We followed the same design and built three new 10-foot sections and prepared the lap boards. We finished the building and painting by Wednesday afternoon. On Thursday morning we loaded the sections on the Friends trailer and headed for Lava tank.

A mud sill was installed for the ladder to rest on. All of the tall extension ladders owned by the Friends had been previously taken to Osier for painting of the Osier dining hall. In place of ladders we took scaffolding; however, this scaffolding was not tall enough to attach the top staves in order to fasten the ladder at the top. We planned to raise the ladder using a block and tackle attached to a strut at the base of the tank. A guy wire or rope would be attached on each side of the ladder for stability as it was raised. As it turned out there were extremely strong winds and it was decided not to attempt to put the ladder in place. The ladder is presently stored on saw horses east of the tank. Raising it will be rescheduled for a later session.

The rest of the project was to survey the Lava pump house where we took measurements and photographs. Team Leader Jim Herron will work with Project Chairman Bob Tully to determine the actual measurements and material needed to re-roof the pump house. We



Jim Herron, Mike McGinley and Doug Christensen construct new ladder for Lava tank. (Tom Cardin)

also had been asked to survey the four freight cars sitting on the loop track. The completed survey forms were turned in to Art Randall.

Repair/Replace Telltales at Mud & Rock Tunnels

Project Objective: Repair or construct and install new tunnel telltales before each end of Rock Tunnel and Mud Tunnel

Session D

Team Leader: Ed Krech

The telltale crew started the week by hiking into Rock Tunnel from Osier. When we arrived at the site we found the existing telltales in surprisingly good condition. The last time they were checked in detail was in 1998 – eight years ago. They appeared to be in about the same condition as they were in 1998. The repairs that were made at that time show no signs of rust. It is our judgment that the telltales are probably good for at least another couple of years before needing further repair or replacement.

We did find that the actual pipe size, rather than being two inch diameter that had been reported, was actually one and a half inch diameter. Therefore, on Tuesday morning we raced to Antonito and were lucky to intercept the shipment of pipe coming from Reliance Steel. It was sent back for credit on the unusable two inch pipe.

The remainder of Tuesday we got a speeder lift into Mud Tunnel. We thoroughly checked the entire site around Mud Tunnel including more than 100 feet down the slope on all sides and found no traces of any telltales having ever existed at Mud Tunnel. In addition, we have both 1909 and 1926 maps showing no telltales. We have a mystery to solve. We need to determine why there were never any telltales at Mud Tunnel.

On Wednesday Ed Krech joined Bob Ross's MOW crew. The other team members worked around the Chama yard. On Thursday the team assembled again and completely scraped and repainted the protective cover over passenger coach 0252 slated for future restoration. The team also corrected the incorrect numbers on the sign posts in the Chama yard to correspond with the sign numbers in the Chama yard walking tour brochure.

OSIER PROJECTS:

Complete Stock Pens Restoration, Paint Station and Section House, Repair Section House Roof Leak

Project Objectives: Complete restoration of Osier stock pens started in 2005, paint the section house and station, and repair the roof leak in the section house

Sessions C and D

Team Leader: Ted Norcross

All that remained from the 2005 stock pen restoration project was to build one gate and rebuild the loading chute. The stock pens at Osier only had one loading chute. Just in case there is ever a need to actually use the chute it was constructed so it can slide up to a cattle

car for loading and then slide back from the car after loading is completed.

Both the section house and station were scraped and painted. Some interior finish work was done on the inside of the station to get it ready for staining and/or painting, depending on how the facility is to be used in the future. In 2005, a telegraph pole was set outside and it is planned to run lines from the station to the top of the pole. This will complement a telegraph operator's desk inside the station.

The section house has been occupied by dining hall workers who reported a leak in the roof. Clyde Putman and Cletus Wander repaired the leak. However, a few months will have to pass and some moisture fall to ensure the repair was successful.

Paint Osier Dining Hall Exterior

Project Objective: Paint the exterior of the Osier Dining Hall

Sessions C and D

Team Leader: Scott Hardy

The objective was to paint as much of the building as possible. It was obvious from the very beginning of the session that it was too optimistic to believe that the dining hall could be painted in one



Team painting the front (east side) of the Osier Dining Hall. (Ted Smith)

work session. The size of the structure made this crystal clear.

Work began by removing as much of the old paint as possible by scraping and/or power washing. Caulking was applied where needed. A primer coat was applied before the final two coats of yellow were applied. Trim is brown. By the end of session D the building had been completed except for the top portion of the front (east side) and the north side that need to be prepped, primed, and painted. The west side trim also needs to be completed.

Construct Information Kiosk in Cumbres Parking Lot

Project Objective: Construct three-panel, angled-log kiosk in the Cumbres parking lot
Sessions C and D
Team Leaders Session C: Bob Hawkins & Wayne Huddleston
Team Leader Session D: Kent Wallis

Bob Hawkins and Wayne Huddleston surveyed the site and laid out the location for the kiosk on Sunday. On Monday the team met at the wood shop and spent the day prefabricating all the forms necessary for the concrete base. On Tuesday the forms and other materials were loaded on a trailer with a small backhoe and transported to Cumbres. At Cumbres the day was spent digging the foundation and setting the forms. By the end of the day the forms were set for pouring the concrete.

The concrete arrived at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday and was poured into the forms for the base. This took about an hour. The balance of the day was spent arranging the cultured stone for the sides of the foundation and measuring and cutting the 2 ½ inch flagstone that was used as cap stones. The forms were removed from the concrete and the cultured stone side and flagstone cap stones were applied on Thursday and Friday.

The wooden structure that will support the informational display panels was fabricated and installed during Session D.



Bob Reib and Bill Gartner fit roof supports for final bolts. (Tom Cardin)



Kiosk structure nears completion during Session D. (Tom Cardin)



Daryl Locker and Frank Smucker install a tie on the scale. (Tom Cardin)

Complete Track Scale Tie Replacement

Project Objective: Complete track scale tie replacement started in 2005
Session C
Team Leader: Frank Smucker

The first step on Monday morning after the safety meeting was to remove the plywood that had covered the scale over the winter for safety reasons. The ties that had been notched last year and left in the scale well were removed. A front loader came down and picked up these ties along with the 18 new ties. They were taken back to the wood shop to be measured and the 18 new ties were notched. Then we began trimming the ends of all the ties so that they had a one-inch taper on each end. It is thought the reason the ties were originally tapered was that, if something lodged between the scale tie and the cement wall of the scale well, when a car would move onto and jiggled the scale, whatever was caught would fall on through to the bottom of the scale well. Tuesday we finished the tapering and cutting.

All of the ties were brought back to the scale house by the railroad's front end loader. The first task was to drill and bolt the six ties that are attached to the scale frame. Then the rest of the ties were put in place. Two steel plates, referred to as "rust plates," were placed under each tie. It is believed that if anything rusted, they wanted the steel plates to rust. It also gives a minimal amount of movement so the tie and scale can shift slightly with temperature changes.

The first thing Thursday morning was to "roll" one section of rail onto the ties. We had measured to the center of where the ties should be placed and snapped a blue chalk line to get accurate measurements. As energy and stamina permitted, we continued to spike the rails to the ties. The next step is to calibrate the scale.



Daryl Locker and Bob Anderson watch as Frank Smucker spikes down a rail on the scale track. (Tom Cardin)

Construct Four Replica Junction Boxes

Project Objective: Construct four replica junction boxes w/o holes Session C
Team Leader: Phil McDonald

Four replica junction boxes without the hole in the front door were constructed during Session C. The original Chama junction box had a hole in the front door which it is believed was made by a woodpecker. Therefore, the replicas do not have a hole in the front door. The junction boxes are sometimes referred to as "bird houses" and during Session C some people thought that was exactly what we were building. These junction boxes will be cosmetic in nature with no actual wires inside the boxes. At some point in the future these four boxes will be installed near section houses or depots at Antonito, Sublette, Osier and Cumbres. Before the replicas can be installed, poles will have to be set. A date for the installation of these poles has not been determined at this time.

During the August sessions of 2005, Chris Trunk built a replica and after a replacement power pole was installed at the north end of the Chama Depot, the replica was placed at the top by the local power company.

The door latches seem to be custom made and someone will have to fabricate them at a later date. Les Clark took steel straps and bent them into mounting brackets. Except for the door latches, the junction boxes are finished.



A family affair – Team Leader Phil McDonald, his dad Mr. Lloyd McDonald, and Phil's brother Larry McDonald with one of the junction boxes. (Tom Cardin)

Caboose 0503

Project Objective: Continue restoration of caboose 0503 Sessions C and D
Team Leader: Mike Thode

The first thing the team did was to make sure the caboose did not get out of level from last year. Areas of the roof that needed new wood under them were repaired. All of the windows on the lower section were installed and installation of windows in the cupola was begun. Flashing was installed fore and aft on the cupola. Builders felt was placed under the metal flashing to help mitigate water creeping around the corners of the cupola where it enters the main body of the caboose.



Mike Thode and team survey work to be done on caboose 0503. (Tom Cardin)

The team started putting siding on the front of the caboose and also finished putting boards on the platform as well as some fill boards.

Jordan Spreader OU Restoration

Project Objective: Continue restoration of the cylinders to working condition Session C
Team Leader: Terry Rider

Work accomplished during Session C was mostly steel work. Almost all of the decking plate was bolted and welded down. The two spreading cylinders were shimmed and remounted; broken bolts were replaced; and all bolts were tightened. Piston seals on the two spreading cylinders were replaced. Those two cylinders are complete. Work on the two lifting cylinders is near completion. Many loose nuts and bolts were tightened, although many more remain to be tightened or replaced. A lot of welding was completed during the

week. The welder is in the process of fabricating a new arm because of all the broken angle iron and "C" channel that was in the original arm. The decking and nailing boards were given a coat of gray primer in preparation for next year and to protect the wood over the winter.

It appears realistic to have the Jordan spreader operational by the end of two more work sessions in 2007.

Drop Bottom Gondola 724 Restoration

Project Objective: Rebuild drop bottom gondola 724 to operating condition
Session C

Acting Team Leader: Don Storm

The team started on Monday on drop bottom gondola 724. They removed all of the wood except for the two center beams. Then they found a considerable amount of rot in the center beams. At the very least, the beams will have to have some new pieces spliced into the top of them.

The team spent the rest of the week building the doors, putting on the two side beams, and building the support posts for the side boards. This concluded the work for Session C. It should be noted that extra time was required to build the doors because they had to be built in place. This is because all of the original hinges were individually made.



Bryant Gish and Jeff Smith working high iron on the Jordan spreader.
(Tom Cardin)



Bob Tully and Don Storm plan attack on drop bottom gon. (Tom Cardin)

They were all hand forged and every one of them is different.

Freight Car Painting

Project Objective: Paint selected cars
Session C

Team Leader: Don Stewart

The car painting team scraped and painted flanger OL. This took longer than anticipated because of all the angles and difficult places to reach in order to scrape and then paint.

Idle flat car 6738 and stock car 5674 were scraped and painted.

Unfortunately, graffiti has come to Chama. The team painted over graffiti on rotary snow plow OM and on long reefer 166.



Don Stewart and crew prime idle flat car 6738. (Tom Cardin)

Wood Preservation

Project Objective: Wood preservative application to stock pens, cars, bridges, etc.

Session D

Team Leader: George Berkstresser

Idle flat cars 6200, 6314, and 6746 were sprayed with preservative during Session D.

Most of the new wood at the Chama stock pens was sprayed. All rotted boards were removed and replaced with new boards. Then all of the walkway at the loading gates at the stock pens was oiled.

The spray used was a 50/50 mixture of paint thinner and burned linseed oil.

Milepost and Whistle Board Upkeep

Project Objective: Paint all signage and replace as needed

Session C

Team Leader: Jim Gross

Session D

Team Leader: Bob Ross

The following work was accomplished during Session C:

- Mileposts – installed one new post and worked on eight existing posts.



George Berkstresser and Don Deuell spraying steps at the Chama stock pens. (Tom Cardin)

- Whistle boards – installed two new boards and worked on twelve existing boards.
- Yard limit sign – worked on one sign.
- State line signs – worked on two signs.
- Station sign – worked on one sign.
- Toll road signs – worked on two signs.
- Scale house sign – installed new sign.

In addition, the Session C team hiked to seven signs that did not need work.

The following work was accomplished during Session D:

- Whistle boards – sixteen painted.
- Mileposts – twelve painted.
- Flanger signs – three painted (including historic sign at Osier).
- Station signs – two painted.
- 40 car sign – one painted.
- Station one mile sign – one painted.
- Turned milepost 315 to the correct orientation.

It is worth mentioning that the Session D team set a record both for distance, at almost nine miles hiked, and number of paint jobs done, which included 17 mile posts, whistle boards, and flanger signs done in a single day.

Coal Tipple Maintenance

Project Objective: Maintain coal tipple while major restoration work is planned

Session C

Team Leader: Parker Fowler

The first activity was draining the sumps. This had a slower than desired start because the older pump that had been used last year was inoperable. Fortunately, Project Chairman Bob Tully had purchased a new cast iron pump that was the one to be used. It has a nice 1½ inch diameter discharge line and did the job with ease. It probably sucked out water at the rate of about one inch per minute.

An electrical problem was discovered while attempting to start the electric motor when it sounded like it was trying to run on 110 volts instead of the



Paul Davenport and Bob Ross paint a mile marker. (Tom Cardin)



New scale house sign. (Tom Cardin)

needed 220 volts. Some rewiring had been done in the coal tipple in 2005. John Engs and Marshall Smith were asked to check it out. They found a blown fuse. A new fuse was inserted during Session D and there is still an electrical problem that will have to be diagnosed and fixed before the electric motor can be started.

Evaluate All Historic Cars in the Railroad Collection

Project Objective: Survey historic rolling stock in preparation for establishing a long-term car restoration and preservation project plan as required by the Friends Strategic Plan Objective

Session C

Team Leader: Bob Ross

Session D

Team Leader: Art Randall

All of the historic cars are being surveyed to accomplish two major objectives. First, the Friends are taking an inventory of the cars we consider the historic fleet for the purposes of the new Triad agreement that makes the Friends custodian of the historic fleet.

The second objective is to develop a long-term plan for the restoration of cars. The survey will provide an inventory of what we have in terms of good material in the form of journals, wheels, etc. Also, we are determining the missing parts of various cars.

From Sessions C and D we have a record, photographs, and reports on a total of 125 cars out of our fleet. Our fleet is somewhere around 150 to 160 cars depending on how and what is counted. At present, the survey does not include reports of cars that are under wrap, cars that are being worked on, and cars in Antonito. A little work remains, but 125 cars is an outstanding start. The information that was gathered during Sessions C and D will be added to the car data base that Curt Bianchi has established on the Friends' web site.



Parker Fowler and Bob Craine check the progress of the sump pump. (Tom Cardin)



Art Randall, Mark LaChey, and Tom Petrick survey MOW rail and tie car. (Tom Cardin)

In each issue the Editor asks for new authors and contributors to the Dispatch (see note on page 11). The following story was contributed by Russ Murphy. It should bring a smile to everyone who rides the gondola.

A STORY OF A HAT AND SOOT

by Russ Murphy

There is a piece of all-important apparel that cowboys and cowgirls set great store by. It is generally the first thing on in the morning and the last thing off at night. It shades your eyes in a glaring sun, wards off a bad sunburn for those of us who are a tad thin on top and keeps you a bit warmer when the chill of fall is in the air. It can even be used to haze the occasional recalcitrant steer. This cowboy's head would be a veritable collection of cuts, scrapes, and bruises were it not for my hat saving me time and time again as I constantly seem to be running my head into an assortment of stationary, immovable objects. Yep, I do love my hat.

One incident I now fondly recall while riding the Cumbres and Toltec, although I wasn't too pleased at the time, involved my hat. My dad, my brother and I have been riding the C&T since its inception. Being avid railfans, we usually are in the open car. It must have been around August sometime in the mid 90's. We had just enjoyed lunch in Osier on our Chama to Antonito trip and had taken our positions in the open car. The train had started for Antonito and just as we neared Toltec Gorge a sudden gust of wind whipped the hat from my head. I frantically grabbed for it and in spite of having stampede strings attached, over the side of the gondola she went. I never recalled seeing it land and thought the sudden gust had swept it into the canyon. Dad quickly noted our position relative to the mileposts and on to Antonito we went. I know I enjoyed the rest of the ride but I sure was disappointed in losing my hat.

Once we arrived in Antonito I headed straight into the office and reported my loss. The staff there was very helpful and said they'd have the crews look for it in the vicinity of where it had taken flight. Much to my pleasure and delight, the hat arrived safely back in Texas a few weeks later, none the worse for wear. I sure was pleased with the kindness of the staff in taking time out of their busy schedules to accommodate a grateful but much chagrined cowboy who had lost his hat.

Although it is a happy conclusion to the saga of the hat, the story didn't end right there. Perhaps the funniest portion of the incident occurred while I was reporting my loss in Antonito. Now remember earlier how I said a cowboy's hat really protects his head? While waiting to report my loss, a fellow waiting to buy tickets turns to me and says, "Excuse me, do you work here?"

I said "No, I just came in on the eastbound train."

The guy's eyes get wide, his jaw kind of drops open and he just stares for a few awkward moments. I'm beginning to wonder who and what this feller is all about when he says questioningly, "You don't work here, you're not a crew member?"

"Nope," I replied, "wouldn't mind working here a bit, in fact I might pay them to take me on, but no, I'm just a guy who loves steam locomotives."

He chimes in with another question "You mean to tell me you got that dirty just ridin' the train?"

I said, "Well, I haven't looked in the mirror since I got here but I reckon I did."

You could see the doubt begin to build in his eyes. I could tell he dearly wanted to take the trip but if his wife caught a glimpse of me he just knew she would have none of that. I was really beginning to wonder what kind of spectacle I presented.

I went on to reassure him that if you wanted to get as dirty as I apparently was you had to put in a lot of extra effort and spend a great deal of time right behind the locomotive. I expounded on the marvels of the trip and assured him that neither he nor his wife would end up looking like me unless he too was an overachiever when it came to experiencing steam locomotion. He must have been satisfied with my enthusiastic description of the day's events as he went on to purchase his tickets.

I reported my loss and then headed to the restroom prior to catching the bus back to Chama. I had to chuckle as I glanced in the mirror and saw the perfect white silhouette where my sunglasses had rested over my eyes. The rest of my face and bare head was a beautiful grimy grey-black decorated here and there with the occasional cinder. My blue denim shirt was also a bit darker about the neck and shoulders. My undershirt where exposed was a beautiful smoke grey. It smelled good too, just like hot grease and coal smoke.

I donned my sunglasses and retreated outside to join my party, just a grinnin' like a mule eatin' briars. They all wanted to know what was so funny so I slowly removed my glasses and nearly doubled them over with laughter. In fact, when we compared notes we all looked remarkably similar. We all had a good laugh and considered our appearance the badge of a happy railfan. All special family events aside, it is hard for me to find a day much better than one spent behind one of the 480's on the C&T.

Should you ever see me in the open gondola or on the caboose, remind me to cinch down those stampede strings on my hat! Many thanks to all the employees and volunteers who make the Cumbres and Toltec the rare treasure that it is.



Russ Murphy, center; father, Larry Murphy, left; and brother Sean Murphy ready to depart Antonito on their August 23, 2006 trip. Hats are securely in place.

From the Editor

We are looking for new authors and contributors for the C&TS Dispatch. Do you have a story to tell about a narrow gauge adventure? Have you been engaged in historical research on narrow gauge railroads or the communities they served? Do you have information on current railroad preservation activities? Do you have photographs that you would like to share with other Friends members?

Articles, long or short, are always welcome. If you just have a concept, we can help put it together. Let me know if you have something you would like to share with your fellow members.

— David Lee, 1393 Old Pecos Trail, Santa Fe, NM 87505, leedavidg@msn.com

FRIENDS WISH LIST

The Friends is seeking the following items. Any members or acquaintances who may be interested in donating any of these items, please contact Ed Lowrance (970-731-9184 or eglval@earthlink.net) or Don Metzler (N7UKN@fastq.org). Please do not donate equipment without first contacting one of the above persons. Donation letters will be supplied for any donation valued in excess of \$250.

- Glass display case
- Small concession trailer
- Memorabilia, photos, library collections, and dining car china associated with the Denver & Rio Grande narrow gauge system, Colorado railroad history, and New Mexico railroad history.
- Table saw, 14" or larger
- Band saw, wood 14" or larger
- Jointer/planer, 8" width or greater
- Shaper, 3 phase preferred
- Drill press, 15" floor stand
- Drum sander, open end 15" or wider
- Tools—open end wrenches 1" and larger, crescent wrenches 18" and larger, angle grinders—4 1/2" electric, circular saw—cordless 18 volt, drill bits 3/4" and larger, annular bits for Milwaukee Magnet Base Drill 11/16" and larger.

Schedule of Friends' Events

Colorado Banquet

October 28, 2006

Board of Directors' Meeting

October 28, 2006

2007 Volunteer Work Sessions

May 14-18, Session A

May 21-25, Session B

June 18-22, Session C

June 25-29, Session D

August 6-10, Session E

August 13-17, Session F



Engine 488 pulls the Railfan Freight Extra across Cascade Trestle on August 21, 2006. The freight extra was a re-creation of a typical Rio Grande freight train and included freight cars restored by the Friends. The excursion included numerous photo opportunities. It was operated in coordination with the Narrow Gauge Convention in Durango. (David Lee)



Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, Inc.

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