

Carolina Conductor



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Preserving the Past Active in the Present Planning for the Future

Web Site: hubcityrrmuseum.org

Facebook: Carolina Railroad Heritage Association & Hub City RR Museum

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Woodmen of the World Building
721 East Poinsett Street
Greer, SC 29651-6404

Third Friday of the Month at 7:00 p.m.

Hub City Railroad Museum and SOU Rwy Caboose #X3115:

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Spartanburg, SC 29301-2330

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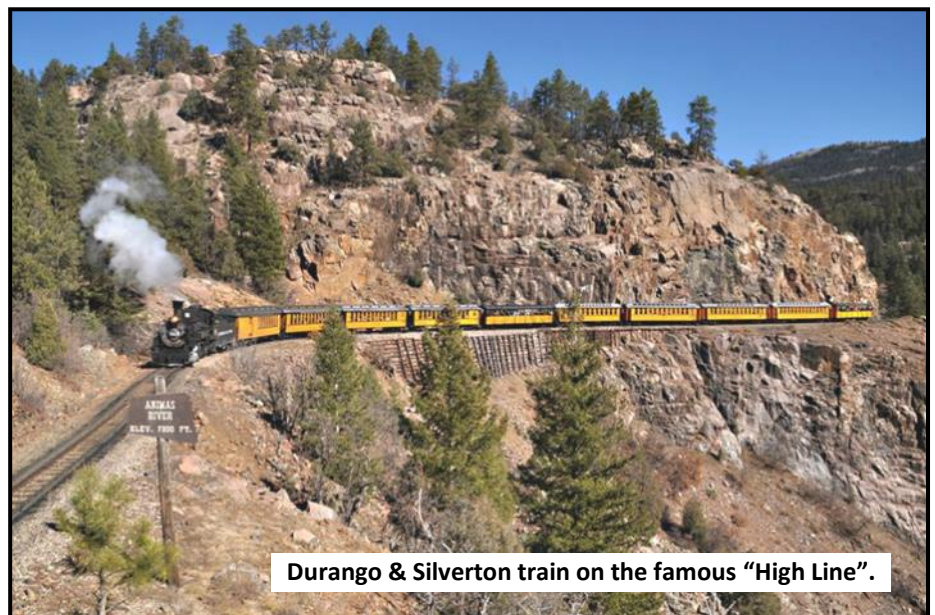
Durango & Silverton

It may not seem that a narrow gauge railroad may have a connection to the up-state of South Carolina in modern times, but read on to find out how it is directly connected. First, a little history. Editor

The Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad, often abbreviated as the D&SNG, is a 3 foot narrow-gauge heritage railroad that operates on 45.2 miles of track between Durango and Silverton, in the U.S. state of Colorado. The railway is a federally-designated National Historic Landmark and was also designated

by the American Society of Civil Engineers as a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark in 1968.

The route was originally opened in 1882 by the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad to transport silver and gold ore mined from the San Juan Mountains. The line was an extension of the D&RG 3 foot narrow-gauge line from Antonito, Colorado to Durango. The last train to operate into Durango from the east was on December 6, 1968. The



Durango & Silverton train on the famous "High Line".

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Museum Happenings



↑ The hobby shop shelves are in need of donations as the caboose nears completion! The model railroad has been restored and mounted ↑ on the wall. The glass front display case was kindly donated by the Jim Pitts family. Stop by and see the progress. →



← Train Day 2021 was a success, as seen by the crowds and the happy faces! ↓



Wanted—Articles for the Carolina Conductor

Submit an article of 200 words or more with some photos and captions and see them in print. Every one of us has some unique railroad experience that would make interesting reading for our membership. Your editor always needs more contributions of local railway history and news.

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states of New Mexico and Colorado purchased 64 miles of track between Antonito and Chama, New Mexico in 1970, which is operated today as the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad (C&TSRR). Trackage between Chama and Durango was removed by 1971.

The line from Durango to Silverton has run continuously since 1881, although it is now a tourist and heritage line hauling passengers, and is one of the few places in the U.S. which has seen continuous use of steam locomotives. In March 1981, the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad (D&RGW) sold the line and the D&SNG was formed. Today, the D&SNG, along with the C&TSRR, are the only two remaining parts of the former D&RGW narrow-gauge network. The railroad has a total of nine narrow-gauge steam locomotives (eight of which are operational) and soon-to-be eleven narrow-gauge diesel locomotives, six of which were acquired within the last three years, on its current roster.

Some rolling-stock dates to the 1880s. Trains operate from Durango to the Cascade Wye in the winter months and Durango to Silverton during the summer months. Durango depot was built in January 1882 and has been preserved in its original form.



William Jackson Palmer

William Jackson Palmer (1836–1908) was a former Union General (serving in the American Civil War) who came to Colorado after managing the construction of the Kansas Pacific Railroad into Denver in 1870. Prior to the war, he had risen within the ranks of the Pennsylvania Railroad, serving as secretary to the president. After arriving in Denver,

he formulated a plan to build a 3 foot narrow-gauge railroad southward from Denver to El Paso, Texas (see Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad). In 1871, the Denver & Rio Grande Railway began to lay rails south from Denver. Palmer and his associates had agreed that the choice of 3 foot narrow-gauge would be well suited to the mountainous country, and relatively less expensive construction costs would enhance

the viability of the new railroad. The original north-south plans of the D&RG eventually expanded to include extensions throughout the booming mining country of central and southwestern Colorado.

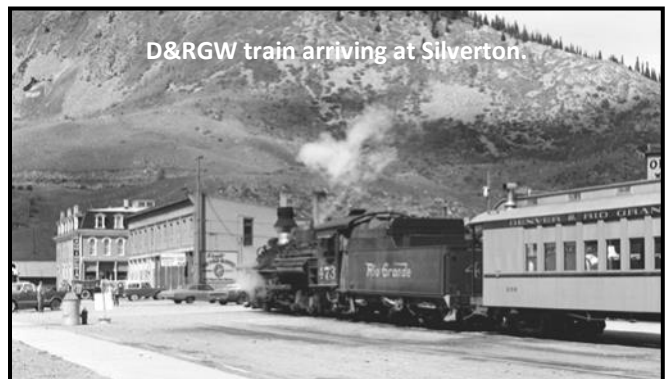
In July 1881, the Denver & Rio Grande reached Durango and started building the final 45-mile stretch up the Animas River to Silverton. The first 18 miles to Rockwood were completed by late November. The remainder of the route entered the narrow Animas Canyon, which has steep granite walls. The labor crew, made up of mostly Chinese and Irish immigrants, blasted the canyon cliffs off and left a narrow, level shelf to lay the tracks on. Grading was completed by late spring 1882.

The D&RG reached Silverton on July 10, 1882. Trains hauling passengers and freight began immediately. The D&RG soon re-emerged as the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad (1886) and ultimately began operating as the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad (D&RGW) on July 31, 1921, after re-organization of the Colorado lines and Rio Grande Western of Utah. Eventually, the railroad became widely known as the "Rio Grande".

The Silverton branch, as it became known, struggled under D&RG ownership following the Panic of 1893 and the end of free coinage of silver. Typical of many portions of the surviving narrow-gauge branches into the middle of the twentieth century, the line faced sagging revenue due to ever-declining mining ventures, highway trucking competition, and insignificant passenger revenue. Annual snowslides and several major floods on the branch would only continue to challenge the railroad's ability to survive.

The Silverton

After World War II, domestic tourism began to



D&RGW train arriving at Silverton.

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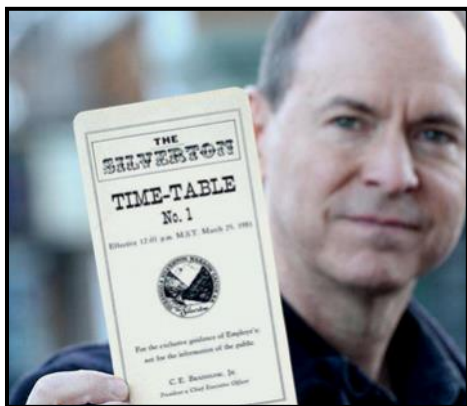
grow across the country and the Silverton branch of the railroad would benefit. Bolstered by national exposure via Hollywood movies being filmed along the line in the late 1940s, the railroad created *The Silverton*, a summer-only train service, on June 24, 1947. A short time later, the railroad adorned a locomotive and four coaches with a colorful yellow paint scheme and launched modest public promotion. With this effort, "The Painted Train" officially started a new era of tourism that continues to this day. Freight traffic, however, continued to decline, and during the 1950s *The Silverton* operated as a mixed train.

By the 1960s, a modernized D&RGW did not see the Silverton Branch as worthy to maintain and a petition was filed with governmental agencies to abandon it. The Interstate Commerce Commission declined to grant the request due to the continued increase in tourist patronage. Following the ICC's ruling, the railroad reluctantly responded by investing in additional rolling stock, track maintenance and improvements to the Durango depot. The railroad purchased some of the property around the depot, cleaned-up the block extending north to Sixth Street and facilitated the opening of gift shops and other tourist-friendly businesses. As ridership continued to grow, the D&RGW operated a second train to Silverton on certain days.

The 1970s

Since 1971, the Silverton branch and nearby Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad (C&TSRR) were the only remnants of the Rio Grande's once extensive narrow-gauge system. During the late 1970s, the D&RGW was actively trying to sell the Silverton

branch and these larger classes of engines operated to Silverton for the first time ever following bridge and right-of-way improvements to the line. 1880s vintage coaches were exquisitely restored, and new coaches were added to



Charles Bradshaw new owner of the Silverton branch of the D&RGW Railroad.

the roster of rolling stock. For the first time in many years, double-headed trains (trains with two locomotives) and additional scheduled trains were employed to handle the continually growing passenger trade.

The Durango yard facilities also saw dramatic improvements. An extension was added to the old roundhouse, a new car shop was built on the site of the original "car barn", and the depot saw extensive repair and internal modifications. The workforce grew with the railroad, and Durango's tourist image expanded as new businesses and revamping of the old railroad town continued to take shape.

The original 1881 Durango roundhouse was completely destroyed by fire in the winter of 1989. All six operable locomotives had been inside at the time and were damaged, but not beyond repair. All locomotives were eventually restored to operating condition. A new roundhouse was constructed on the same site, opening in early 1990, and its facade made use of bricks salvaged from the original building.

In March 1997, Bradshaw sold the D&SNG to First American Railways, Inc., located in Hollywood, Florida. Then, in July 1998, the railroad was sold again to American Heritage Railways. At the time, American Heritage Railways was headquartered in Coral Gables, Florida. Since then, its headquarters were moved to Durango, Colorado. The D&SNG has two museums, one each in Durango and Silverton.



American Heritage Railways also owns the Great Smoky Mountains Railway and others.

Diesel Engines

Diesels were first introduced to the Durango Yard in the 1960s with Diesel locomotive #50. Today, #50 is now on display at the Colorado Railroad Museum in Golden, Colorado. The United States Transport

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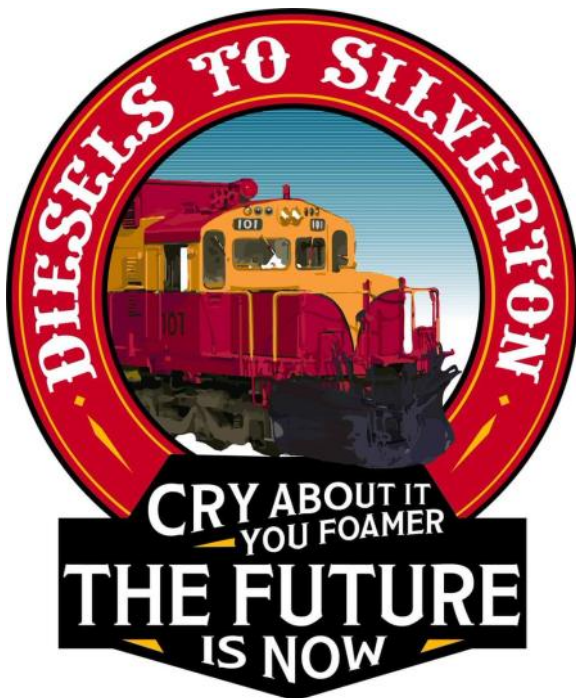


#50 is a 30-ton Davenport that was used to switch the Durango yards. It is now at the Colorado RR museum.

tation Corps. also had a six-axle narrow-gauge diesel locomotive (#3000) for trial use in Durango in the 1950s, which saw limited use.



GE multi-gauge locomotive originally built for operations in Alaska in the Durango yard.



Diesel engine #5 is a 45-ton center-cab engine built by General Electric in May 1960, originally as Algoma Steel #5, and was acquired by the D&SNG in 2002.

Diesel engine #9 was acquired by the D&SNG in



D&SNG #9 working at the roundhouse.

March 2006 and is a 92-ton center-cab diesel built by General Electric. #9 was later traded to the Georgetown Loop Railroad in March 2017 in exchange for its Porter 80-ton Diesel engine #1203. It is currently in service on the GLRY.

Diesel engine #1, nicknamed the "Hotshot", is a



D&SNG #1 nicknamed the "Hotshot".

45-ton center-cab diesel built by General Electric in 1957. It was acquired from the Arkansas Limestone Railroad. During the 2002 Missionary Ridge Fire, the D&SNG voluntarily shut-down steam service. To help continue service, Hotshot pulled coaches out along the highline from Rockwood, Colorado.

Diesel engine #7, nicknamed the "Big Al", is an 87-ton center-cab Diesel built by General Electric in

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1975 and was originally Algoma Steel #7, from Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. Big Al is named after the former owner of the D&SNG, Allen C. Harper.



D&SNG #7 nicknamed "Big Al".

Diesel engine #11 was built by U.S. Steel with GE parts. It was acquired in March 2006 and is a 98-ton center-cab diesel.



D&SNG #11 a U.S. Steel shop built loco from GE parts.

Diesel engine #101 and #107 are one of four former White Pass & Yukon Route type DL-535E diesels recently acquired in April 2020. It was built by the Montreal Locomotive Works in May 1969. It arrived at the D&SNG in late September 2020.

Diesel engine #1201 is one of two custom-built type MP2000NG diesels acquired from Motive Power and Equipment Solutions in 2018, in response to the 416 Fire near Durango. It was built between 2018 and 2020, rebuilt from an ex-Tri-Rail F40PHL-2 and



#101 and #107 are ex-Alaska Railroad MLW locomotives.

was originally announced to have the number 550, which is the number that was chosen in reference to the highway linking Durango and Silverton. It arrived at the D&SNG in early November 2020.



D&SNG #1201 being shipped to Colorado from Motive Power Equipment Solutions in Greenville.

Diesel engine #1202 is one of two custom-built type MP2000NG diesels acquired from Motive Power and Equipment Solutions, of Greenville SC, in 2018 in response to the 416 Fire near Durango. It was built between 2018 and 2020, rebuilt from an ex-Tri-Rail F40PHL-2, and was originally announced to have the number 416, which is the number that was chosen in recognition of the extraordinary effort that was undertaken by firefighters to fight the fire. It arrived at the D&SNG in late October 2020.

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D&SNG #1202 seen on standard gauge shop trucks in Greenville, SC at the Motive Power Equipment Solutions shops.



D&SNG #1203 received from the Georgetown Loop Railroad in trade for DSNG #9.

Diesel engine #1203 is an 80-ton Diesel built by H.K. Porter in January 1946, originally for U.S. Gypsum. It was acquired in March 2017 from the Georgetown Loop Railroad in trade for GE 92-ton center-cab diesel engine #9.

RB-1 (railbus) was built in the winter of 1987–1988. It was originally numbered 1001 and was named Tamarron. It could seat 32 people, had its own baggage compartment, had its own restroom, and had a 300-



D&SNG railbus #881

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horsepower six-cylinder Caterpillar Diesel engine. This unit was intended for use on the Animas River Railway; when that operation was shut-down, it was found being used as a switcher in the Durango yard. Years later, it was put into revenue service during the 2002 Missionary Ridge Fire.



↑ This is why it's called narrow gauge!

← The scenery is unsurpassed.



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