

# Rocky Mountain Express

Where preserving railroading in the Rocky Mountain States begins and will never end...

April 2015

Rocky Mountain Railroad Heritage Society

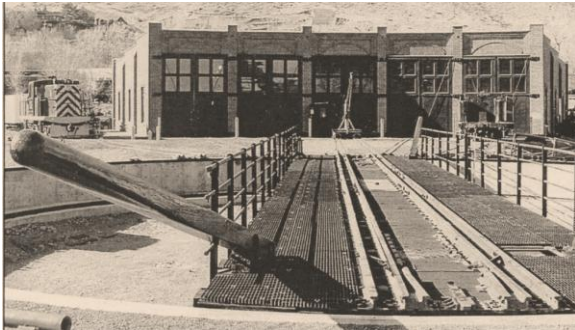
Volume 2015, Issue 4

## A LOOK AT THREE DIFFERENT TURNTABLES IN COLORADO

In the United States, the roundhouse first appeared during the 1840s. The idea of a railway turntable device quickly followed. Steam locomotives in the US operated most efficiently in the forward direction, so railroads needed a way to turn them and other rolling stock such as observation cars back in the direction from which they came. Turntables, constructed next to or near a roundhouse, resemble a rotating railroad bridge. They were a common but very important device found in most terminals, large and small, during the steam era. Whether operated with brute force or mechanically, they offered a relatively simple way to turn equipment or move rail cars from one set of tracks to another, were more practical to build, took up much less ground than a turnaround wye, and allowed a large number of engine maintenance sidings to be accessed in a small area.

All early designs were known as "Armstrong" turntables due to the fact that they required a worker to manually push the device in one direction or the other. In later years the structures became more sophisticated, with a small operators shack constructed on one end from which a worker could operate the device. A large, circular five to ten foot deep pit was dug out over which a standard steel span was placed (not unlike a bridge beam span). Around the edges of the pit a rail was placed and the support span usually had wheels attached to it at either end in which to track along it. At the center of the pit the span was placed on some type of central anchor hinge.

With the advent of the diesel locomotive the device fell out of favor since they could be operated in either direction without needing to be turned. Today, turntables are rarely used by freight railroads. However, they have not completely disappeared as several have found a second life turning the many restored steam locomotives still in service on railroad museums and tourist railroads.



*Left: Colorado RR Museum turntable looking toward Cornelius Hauck Roundhouse undated Robert Jensen photo  
Right: Turntable viewed from outside of roundhouse Jon Buscemi 2002 photo*

The Colorado Railroad Museum turntable came from the end of a CB&Q RR branch line at St. Francis, Kansas in 1999. It is 74 feet long and was built in 1900 by the American Bridge Company of Chicago's Lassig Works. A sophisticated center bearing and counterbalance system allows two individuals to easily rotate a car or locomotive.



*Left: Durango & Silverton Railroad turntable photo ca 1997. The 1881 roundhouse burned in February 1989 and was rebuilt as a roundhouse and railroad museum.  
1997 photo on 2005 Sandia Software - GhostDepot.com website*

Perhaps the most famous piece of equipment on the D&SNG railroad is the operating turntable and its accompanying roundhouse. This marvelous machine is used to spin the locomotives around so they can go the other direction on the tracks.

In 1924 the original 50-foot turntable bridge was changed to a 65 foot model. The new unit had riveted plate girder beams built by the Chicago Bridge and Iron Company and a concrete pit. It was brought over from Alamosa and could carry larger K-series locomotives. The turntable was powered by attaching a hose to the air supply of a locomotive. The air ran a motor on the turntable bridge.

*Right: Remains of turntable at Alpine Tunnel west portal, Reletta Clumsky, 2006*

The Alpine Tunnel east portal has collapsed and the west portal has been covered by landslides. On the west side visitors can drive up to the restored depot on CR 839 to the Alpine Tunnel (caution, narrow dirt road, accessible by 4WD or ATV). It is typically open from July to September.

Volunteers work on restoration of the complex at least once a year and have restored the railroad's 1883 Alpine Tunnel telegraph office and reconstructed the station platform, 120 feet (37 m) of rail track, a turntable, and an outhouse. Only ruins remain of the section house and engine house; other buildings and railroad infrastructure have disappeared.

The Alpine Tunnel Historic District was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in April 1996.



Rocky Mountain Railroad Heritage Society  
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**PRESIDENT'S LETTER TO THE MEMBERSHIP:**

With much appreciation, Jim Jordan



Turntable still in use at Phillipsburg, Kansas  
Mike Walker photo

The Kyle Railroad, now owned by Genesee & Wyoming, Inc., uses the tracks of the former Rock Island Lines. The train originally ran from Chicago to Limon, CO, where it was split. One branch went on to Denver and the other to Colorado Springs, pulled by the legendary AB6 units.

In addition to the turntable, two stalls of the old Rock Island Roundhouse are still in use on the property.

Interim Newsletter Volunteer Staff  
Editor: Sigi Walker  
Photographer: Mike Walker  
Website images as noted

Note: All submissions may be edited for content, grammar, and space allocation, and become the property of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Heritage Society unless other arrangements have been made. Digital text submissions in .doc or .docx; photos in jpg, please. Submit articles and photos to mikensigi@comcast.net.

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**Mark your Calendar!**  
RMRHS Symposium: May 2  
Cheyenne Depot Days: May 16 & 17  
Midland Days at Divide: May 16

Contributors to this edition:  
Jim Jordan  
Mike and Sigi Walker

Thanks to all who "reviewed and commented!".

**2015 Rocky Mountain Railroad Heritage Society Symposium**  
**Date: May 2, 2015**  
**Time: 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.**  
**Place: Malley Senior Recreation Center, 3380 S Lincoln St, Englewood, CO 80113**  
**Preliminary Agenda:**

- 8:00 a.m. Doors open, registration, coffee and doughnuts
- 8:30 a.m. Welcome by RMRHS President Jim Jordan followed by  
Welcome by Englewood Mayor Randy Penn
- 9:00 a.m. Doug Cohn: Las Animas Valley Railroad
- 9:30 a.m. Jennifer Orrigo Charles Keynote Address: CPI Endangered List
- 10:15 a.m. Bret Johnson: Preservation of Calhan and Dumont Depots
- 11:15 a.m. Tom Van Wormer: The Circus Moves by Rail
- 12:15 p.m. Lunch and Rich Luckin's "Grand Central: An American Treasure" video
- 1:00 p.m. Dave Tompkins: Como Depot Restoration
- 1:45 p.m. Bennett Boeschstein: Grand Junction Restoration Projects
- 2:30 p.m. Dan Davidson & Kathleen Tomlin: Craig and Las Animas Depots
- 3:15 p.m. (Kelly ?) or Lindsey Taylor or James Bowers: \$12,000,000 Cheyenne Depot Restoration
- 4:00 p.m. Penny McPherson: Kit Carson Pumphouse Restoration
- 4:30 p.m. Chris Rand: Model Railroads and Project Sustainability
- 5:00 p.m. Close of Symposium

Please ✕  
or provide the information requested on a plain sheet of paper and mail with payment.

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## Historical Societies Working to Preserve Railroad Structures

This final column profiles three Colorado museums working to preserve Colorado railway & mining history. RMRHS applauds their efforts! Prior columns profiled other historical groups and museums.

### Colorado Model Railroad Museum at the Greeley Freight Station

Located by the mainline of the Union Pacific Railroad in Greeley, the Colorado Model Railroad Museum is a one-of-a-kind facility. Over 1,100 railroad-related artifacts including a full-sized Colorado and Southern wooden Caboose are displayed both inside and out.

The CMRM is the leading year-round tourist attraction in Weld County. The highlight of the museum is its huge, 5,500 sq. ft. HO gauge operating model railroad, dubbed "the finest model railroad I've ever seen" by Model Railroader magazine. It was all constructed by volunteers. Visitors can stroll through three dimensional scenery of rugged mountains, thousands of fir, aspen, and deciduous trees, rivers, and hundreds of buildings, all while the railroad is in operation. Cameras are encouraged and volunteer guides are available to answer railroad-related questions. Take a visual tour via the CMRM website, then plan to visit this world-class model railroad museum when you are in the area.

### Pikes Peak Historical Street Railway Foundation Museum

The Colorado Springs & Manitou Street Railway Company, the city's first streetcar service, was initiated in 1887 and used horse-drawn trolley cars. At its peak, a total of 10 horsecars were in operation.

After a series of owners and replacement of the horsecars with electric power, Winfield Scott Stratton acquired the operation in 1901 and renamed it the Colorado Springs & Interurban Railway Company. At its peak, the system numbered 44 electric cars and covered 41 miles. Ridership reached its peak in 1911. But by 1914 the company was in financial trouble; automobile usage had increased and by 1931 buses were replacing streetcars. Streetcar service ended on April 30, 1932, and many of the tracks were removed by the Work Progress Administration in the mid 1930s.

The foundation was incorporated in 1982 and operates the museum, which has numerous photos and artifacts on display. The PPHSRF acquired two 1901 streetcars which originally ran on city streets for restoration. Former Fort Collins Birney car, the last Birney in the US to run in revenue service, is also under restoration at the museum.

Volunteers are available to provide tours and a trolley ride on the 1947 former Philadelphia PCC streetcar.

### Western Museum of Mining and Industry - Colorado Springs

Incorporated in 1970 as a private non-profit to preserve and interpret the rich mining history of Colorado and the American West, the name was changed in 1972 to the Western Museum of Mining & Industry to better define the museum focus. Over 4,000 artifacts are on display at the 27-acre indoor/outdoor exhibit site; a ten-stamp ore mill, a multi-purpose center with exhibits, a theater, and a 5,000-volume research library. The WMMI is located on the northern end of the city.

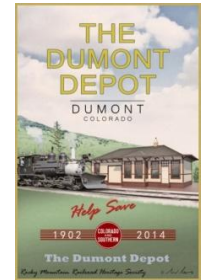
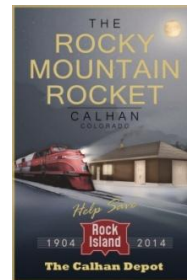
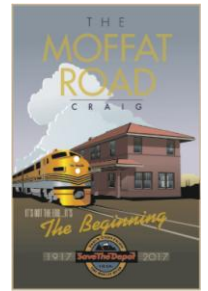
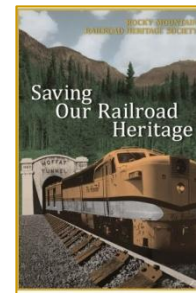
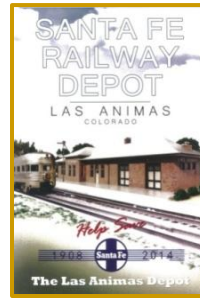
The 10-stamp mill was carefully reproduced in 1978 by the museum's staff using 19th century construction methods. Many of the machines on display are from the Yellow Jacket Mill that was located in Montezuma, Colorado. The mine reclamation exhibit details the process of restoring mined lands back to productive use after mining has occurred. Today, mine reclamation is an essential part of the mining process, from wildlife habitat to water quality.

The museum's volunteer docents gladly assist visitors to the museum and during periodic special exhibits, such as the current "Molybdenum and the History of the Climax Mine."

To find out more about the above groups, go to:  
[www.coloradorailroadmuseum.org](http://www.coloradorailroadmuseum.org), [www.wmmi.org](http://www.wmmi.org)  
 or [www.coloradospringstrolleys.com](http://www.coloradospringstrolleys.com)

Your support would be most appreciated.

## Historic Railroad Structures RMRHS is working to preserve



**Brighton Great Western Rwy scale and freight house:** The land on which this building sits will soon have a new owner. The RMRHS may be given the building, along with some rail and switch stands.

**Calhan Depot:** The Historic Structure Assessment draft is nearly complete and should be submitted to the State Historical Fund for review by the end of the month. The town of Calhan plans to apply for a grant from the State Historical Fund to replace the roof.

**Castle Rock Santa Fe Depot:** The building has been boarded up to protect it from further deterioration. It may be moved in the future.

**Como Depot:** Don't forget to mark your calendar for August 22, 2015, the grand opening and dedication of the depot to be held in conjunction with the 20th annual Boreas Pass Railroad Days.

**Craig Depot:** Union Pacific RR correspondence indicates they will hold off on demolition of the depot for another 12 to 18 months.

**Dumont Depot:** The Purchase Agreement for the depot building (not land) has been signed. The RMRHS now needs to raise \$10,000, after which the building will be donated to the Mill Creek Valley Historical Society and moved.

**Hugo Union Pacific Roundhouse:** The restoration of doors and windows is in progress. Future interior plans include a large dining hall, kitchen, visitor's center, and museum. Bay eight will be restored to resemble the original engine facility.

**Kit Carson (CO) Pumphouse:** Building donated to Kit Carson Historical Society but land is owned by the UPRR. Grant request from the state for an evaluation in progress. Need funding to move the building.

**Las Animas Depot:** Clean-up of the property by volunteers has been ongoing. Bent County and Las Animas have made numerous offers to purchase the building and the land.

**Loveland Great Western Rwy Depot:** OmniTrax has put the contract on hold although Granby and Dave Naples have signed it.

**Midland Depot at Divide:** Grant applications are in progress to fund the next phase of the restoration. The building has been raised and leveled, and a permanent foundation is in place. The annual Midland Days symposium is scheduled for May 16, 2015.

**Trinchere Freight House (now a museum):** No update to report.

**Crested Butte D&RG RR Depot and Stationhouse/High Country Citizens' Alliance Awarded 2015 Grant by Colorado State Historical Fund**



The Crested Butte Denver & Rio Grande Railroad Depot, built in 1881 in the Victorian style, was originally the eastern edge of town. Since 1954 when the narrow gauge line was abandoned, it has served many purposes, from storage facility to performing arts center. But with over a century of use, the depot was in need of repair.

In 2015, the Town of Crested Butte was awarded \$182,165 (Grant No. 15-02-030) from the State Historical Fund to rehabilitate the foundation and add an ADA access ramp to the building. It serves as office space for nonprofit organizations and is rented for community events and meetings.

The D&RG first arrived in Crested Butte in November 1881, carrying out 13 boxcars full of coal. The narrow gauge ran north to the coal mining town of Floresta from 1893 until 1918 when the Floresta Mine closed. The railway bed ran between Ohio and Kebler Passes, following Kebler Pass Road. Heavy snowfall and avalanche danger made the line difficult to keep open in the winter. When the Big Mine closed in 1952, the D&RG made the decision to pull up the last of its track to Crested Butte by 1954.

Colorado Fuel & Iron Company had 154 coke ovens in Crested Butte which cooked out unstable constituents from bituminous coal. They burned constantly, polluting the air, except on Mondays when the ovens were cleaned. This was laundry day in Crested Butte. The coke ovens went out of production in 1918; technologies had changed and coke no longer proved to be a valuable commodity. A historical marker sign at the location and some coke oven bricks are present at the site.



The Colorado Midland RR safe from the Hartsell, CO, depot is the newest addition to the Buena Vista DL&G depot.  
Vic Kuklin photo

**Train Treks with Mike and Sigi Walker: C & S Broomfield Depot Museum**

After being closed for seven months, the 1909 former Colorado & Southern Railway (C&S) "combination depot" re-opened on Saturday, January 17, 2015. A \$94,578 grant from the Colorado State Historical Fund and funding from Broomfield's capital improvement fund provided the necessary funds to enable the Broomfield Depot Museum to renovate its 105-year old building. First, the building's foundation was secured, then exterior wood doors, windows, siding and trim were restored, and cracks and crevasses repaired. The depot has been repainted its original color - a dark tan with green and red accents.



Above: The station agent's bay is visible at left, the main depot entrance is in the center, and the agent's quarters entrance is a separate door at the far right.

One side of the depot was used for ticketing, a waiting room, and the station agent's office; the other side was the living quarters of the agent's family. Combination depots were typically located in an area with a small population - in 1909, Broomfield had a population of 160!

The depot also served the C&S subsidiary Denver & Interurban Railroad (D&I), which was an electric commuter line between Denver and Boulder, dubbed the "Kite Route" because of the shape of its route.

The exhibits inside the museum have gotten a makeover as well. The artifacts will focus on faithfully recreating the various uses of the public and private sides of the building. Museum administrator Jacqui Ainlay-Conley is in contact with family members who lived in the depot and has recorded some of their memories, adding immeasurably to the record of railroad life at the time.

Left: When the Colorado Midland RR shut down in 1918, the Brownlee family purchased the safe from the Hartsell, CO, CMRR depot and used it in their mercantile store in Hartsell for many years. Their daughter closed the store and retired to Buena Vista, taking the safe with her. She recently moved to Denver and could not keep it. The Buena Vista Heritage Society purchased it, preventing it from going to a collector in California.

The son of one station agent recalls that meals were cooked on a hot plate. The depot was terribly cold in the winter, since the building had little insulation. A pot-bellied stove provided heat, but it was allowed to go out during the night.

A bonus for the museum staff is the renovation of the basement. The addition of museum-quality shelving and storage space for historic documents and artifacts as well as space for sorting and cataloguing items will make a world of difference.

Today the depot interprets and tells the history of transportation in Broomfield but in earlier times the depot served not only as a transportation hub but as a gathering place to socialize and learn the latest news.



Above: Jacqui Ainlay-Conley hands out a replica ticket in the station agent's office.

As part of the celebration marking the completion of this phase of restoration, the museum has invited distinguished historian Dr. H. Roger Grant, a specialist in US history and the Populist-Progressive era and a leading authority on transportation history and American railroads, to speak in Broomfield on Thursday, June 25, 2015. He will present two talks: "The Living in Depot: A Community's Front Door" at 1:00 p.m. and "Interurbans: The Electric Way" at 7:00 p.m.

Both talks will be at the Broomfield Auditorium located at 3 Community Park Road. Cost for the afternoon talk is \$7.00; the evening talk is \$10.00. All proceeds will go to the Broomfield Depot Museum Friends' preservation fund, which currently is fundraising matching funds for a new depot roof. Tickets are available at [brownpapertickets.com](http://brownpapertickets.com) or by calling the Broomfield Auditorium box office: 720-887-2371.

Dr. Grant is the author of numerous books, two of which relate directly to the Broomfield Depot: *Living in the Depot: The Two-Story Railroad Station* (1993) and his current book project, a social history of electric interurbans. It includes material on the Denver & Interurban (Kite Route). Dr. Grant is the Kathryn and Calhoun Lemon Professor in the History Department of Clemson University and is the current president of The Lexington Group in Transportation History. ♦

