

NGPF 's First Project

This is the story of one of the first projects undertaken by the NGPF shortly after its founding. It all started even earlier in 1996, when the Colorado Railroad Museum (CRRM) learned of the planned removal and scrapping of a standard gauge turntable in Illinois. The CRRM was in the process of constructing a very rare commodity in the late 20th century, a steam-era roundhouse and shop to maintain its fleet of standard and narrow gauge motive power and rolling stock. And while the roundhouse facility was well underway, less planning and time was available to take advantage of the turntable opportunity the CRRM learned of in August of that year. They had to act fast before the turntable was scrapped or sold to another interested party.

The history of that turntable is of interest. And as it turns out, it had a narrow gauge connection. Built by the American Bridge Company in Chicago IL in 1900, the turntable served the Fulton County Narrow Gauge Railroad branch at Parkville, Illinois. At 75 feet, this turntable was of unusual length for a narrow gauge line. For example similar turntables on the D&RGW of the same era were generally 50 feet. A few, such as Durango, were 65 feet. (See accompanying article).

The CB&Q obtained the Fulton County Railroad in 1906, a year after it was rebuilt in standard gauge. The turntable continued to serve the line until its abandonment in 1934. Major traffic on the branch derived from coal mining with its heyday from 1903 to 1922. By 1934, traffic had dried up to the point that continued operation made little sense. Somehow, the turntable survived scrapping of the line and the scrap metal drives of WW II. In September 1996, CRRM was able to obtain the turntable and move it to Golden. But there, the story threatened to end for the CRRM was tapped out on its ability to raise funds.

THE COLORADO RAILROAD MUSEUM TURNTABLE



While they were able to buy the turntable and have it moved to Golden, CRRM did not have the substantial resources required to install it.

The new turntable was proposed to connect no less than 18 tracks, bringing great flexibility to the repair and restoration facility. It would also be installed as a "dual gauge" turntable serving both standard and narrow gauge equipment. Dual gauge track generally features 3 rails with one laid close to another to form the narrow gauge portion. Occasionally, it is necessary for that third rail to be close to the opposite rail requiring specialized trackage called a "draw" to allow the change of sides. For turntables, 3-rail track would not work, as it would un-balance the turntable when a narrow gauge engine was turned. So dual gauge turntables utilize 4 rails with the narrow gauge nestled between the standard gauge tracks. A special "draw" track is needed to correctly position the narrow gauge equipment, especially from 3-rail track. Who said mixed gauge was simple? Of course, all of this makes for a complex and more expensive installation. As with many such turntables, this one is so well balanced, two men can operate it manually. NGPF ED, Charlie Getz, has had the privilege of proving this fact true. It normally operates on compressed air.

Among others, the CRRM contacted the NGPF to see if we could help with the installation costs. Though the turntable itself was not a "significant narrow gauge artifact", it was essential to the ability of the CRRM to maintain and display its stable of significant artifacts. More importantly, raising the funds for something utilitarian as a turntable was more challenging than for a locomotive restoration or even a new roundhouse.

We recognized both the challenge and the need for this turntable. Without it, the CRRM would be crippled in its efforts to maximize use of the restoration facility. With it, substantial space and time could be saved and the story of a steam era facility could be better told. The NGPF (then the NGTF) therefore made a significant contribution to the project, as did the Boettcher Foundation and a number of private and public supporters of the CRRM. (see plaque, page 4.) In 2001, the turntable was installed where it continues to serve the Cornelius Hauck Restoration Roundhouse. We proudly take our place on the plaque attached to the turntable of those donors who made this project possible. It was one of our first projects but a satisfying one serving the CRRM to this day.

INSIDE

- 2 - Colorado Narrow Gauge Turntables
- Meet The Board
- 3 From the Executive Director
- 4 Who We Are; What We Do



Mission

The Narrow Gauge Preservation Foundation will preserve, exhibit and interpret significant prototype and model Narrow Gauge artifacts, as well as educate the public on the importance of Narrow Gauge railroading

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

BOB BROWN

is editor and publisher of the Narrow Gauge and Shortline Gazette, the premier magazine devoted to Narrow Gauge. Since 1975, the Gazette has documented the history of narrow gauge in articles, plans, photos and has acted as a focus for the Narrow Gauge community. Bob Brown, a Master Model Railroader as recognized by the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA), has been building narrow gauge models for over sixty five years and has a massed a collection of pioneer narrow gauge models reflecting his own interest in the history of Narrow Gauge. Bob also serves on the Museum Committee of the NMRA. Bob is the chairman of the Board.

SAM FURUKAWA

is a recognized photographer of Narrow Gauge, author and modeler. Retired from a long career at Microsoft Corporation, Sam is now a professor at Keio University in Tokyo, Japan. He is an author of three books on Colorado's preserved narrow gauge railroads. He has extensively photographed the operations of the surviving narrow gauge lines of Colorado and New Mexico and some of his videos have recently been released to the public by the NGPF.

FRED HAMILTON

was a long time employee for Kalmbach Publishing serving on the sales staff of both Trains and Model Railroader Magazines. Fred is also an avid On3 modeler and remains close to the model railroad industry. In the past, he has served as President and Executive Director of the industry's trade association and currently serves as the Treasurer of the NGPF.

BOB HAYDEN

is the author of numerous articles and books on narrow gauge topics and also was a long time employee at Kalmbach Publishing working on Model Railroader, Trains, Classic Toy Trains, Garden Railways and Fine Scale Modeler Magazines. Bob has also built narrow gauge models for over fifty years and currently works in the publication field. Bob serves as Secretary of the NGPF.

FRED HILL

is the owner of two hobby shops in Southern California, the original Whistle Stop in Pasadena and Allied Hobbies in West Los Angeles. He has long been active in railroad preservation for both narrow and standard gauges and is involved with two model companies, The Coach Yard and Thin Film Decals. He has served with distinction for many years as an officer and board member on several hobby trade associations.

JIMMY BOOTH

comes from a distinguished career as a principal at P-B-L, or Peter Built Locomotives, a major supplier and importer of Sn3 locomotives and equipment. Jimmy also created Hi-Tech models, creating exquisite parts and details for model railroaders.

CHARLES GETZ

serves as Executive Director for the NGPF. Since 1975, he has written a column for the Narrow Gauge and Shortline Gazette and has been active in the NMRA, currently serving as its President.



COLORADO NARROW GAUGE TURNTABLES

Turning railroad equipment may not seem a likely subject for a newsletter article but in fact, it is one of those necessary but utilitarian procedures in railroading. All railroads in the steam era relied on these utilitarian devices to turn steam engines as well as rotary snowplows, cabooses, observation cars or any equipment needing to be repositioned. With locomotives weighing hundreds of tons, turning them was no simple proposition. There are three methods commonly used to turn single-ended equipment, turntables, wyes and balloon tracks.

Balloon tracks are the common way model railroaders turn their trains but far less common on the prototype. Such utilized a lot of space although as in modern-day Durango, the balloon track can circle a stub end yard, saving space. This is similar to the model railroad practice. Most prototype yards were not stub-ended and the space required for a balloon track was rarely justified. Where whole passenger trains needed turning, a balloon track was highly efficient. But such cases were rare and a balloon track offered little advantage in turning a locomotive or Rotary snowplow.

Wyes were by far the most commonly used method to turn equipment. Relatively inexpensive to install, and space efficient, the wye could be tucked almost anywhere and depending on the length of the tail tracks, could accommodate a variety of equipment. Wyes were often placed along the main line to turn helper engines or in yards for the same purpose. The disadvantage of the wye was its inability to direct engines to engine house stalls or turn equipment less than 90 degrees. A wye was designed to turn equipment end to end and was efficient in doing so.

Turntables were the most flexible way to turn equipment but also the most expensive. They were in fact engineered "structures" designed to balance and support massive engines, directing them into stalls or turning them completely. As such, they required a high degree of precision in construction and maintenance. A good turntable was so well balanced; even when fully loaded, a few people could manipulate it. Early turntables were in fact manually operated. Often referred to as "Armstrong" (for obvious reasons) turntables, crew members would guide their engine on the table, and after insuring proper balance, would push on a large protruding beam until the engine was turned. Bearings in the ring/support mechanism eased the task. Later, compressed air from the locomotive or a stationary source was utilized. Modern era turntables often relied on electricity delivered through a split ring-rail and overhead arch.

Turntables were most often used in conjunction with a roundhouse or engine house. Indeed, the "roundhouse" was round because of the turntable and its radiating tracks. Turntables also offered the advantage of handling multiple gauges better than wyes or balloon tracks. Each device required a "draw" or transitional rail moving the narrow gauge line from one side to the other within the standard gauge track to keep in alignment. A turntable utilized a simple "draw" to move the narrow gauge third rail to a four rail centered track matching the four rails on the turntable. That way, the engines could be balanced and easier lined up with either a standard gauge or narrow gauge stall.

Turntables were fussy to operate and expensive to maintain. Hence, they were not as common as might be expected and for similar reasons, not as common on model railroads. But most modelers have a soft spot for the turntable, justifying at least one on most layouts.

Continued on page 3



Continued from page 2

Turntables in Colorado served both the narrow and standard gauge lines of their parent railroads. The D&RGW did rely on balloon tracks to turn entire trains for efficiency purposes but such were rare. Wyes were commonly used but also took space and thus were located far from other facilities. In Chama, for example, the wye is located at the southern end of the yards near the stockyards. A turntable, as mentioned, not only turned equipment, but also allowed easy access to roundhouses and other facilities and generally was placed centered to those facilities.

A 1923 D&RGW summary lists no less than forty turntables system wide but three times that many wyes. The turntables included eleven narrow gauge and three three-rail versions. The narrow gauge turntables were almost uniformly 50 feet long with 65-foot long four-rail versions at Alamosa, Salida and Leadville. Durango added a 65 foot version when the larger K-27 engines were added to the roster. By contrast, the RGS Ridgway turntable remained at 50 feet and was unable to turn its K-27's. Only two stalls could accept K-27's when the approach tracks were lined up properly.

Interestingly, there were more turntables than engine houses in 1923 as only twenty-two engine or roundhouses are listed. Of the forty turntables, five are listed that year as "not used".

Plans and articles for building turntables are uncommon. One of the best can be found in the August and September 1963 issues of *Model Railroader* magazine. The late Jim Finnell described how he built and extended his three-rail SS Ltd turntable in the November 1972 issue of *Railroad Modeler*.

Modeling a turntable can be intimidating but fortunately, kits and pre-built turntables have been available since the beginning of the hobby. Lionel offered a tinplate standard gauge sectional roundhouse and turntable back in the 1930's. Ideal offered a crude simple card and wood turntable kit in the 1940's. In more modern times, Walther's offers indexed and preassembled HO or N scale turntables in different lengths. Other turntable manufacturers have included Cliff Line, Bowser, SS Ltd, Diamond Scale, Peco (HO/N), Atlas, Bachmann and Kato (N).

There have also been specific kits for narrow gauge turntables. Model Masterpieces produced a 50-foot turntable based on the D&RGW prototype as well as a 65-foot Durango version in HO. Daziel Products offered an On3 50 foot version as well. Cliff Line produced a Gallows type narrow gauge turntable in HO, similar to those used both by the SPNG as well as the D&RG. All of these products are out of production so you will have to search secondary sources.

The transition to Diesels and their ability to operate in either direction lessened the need for turntables and few remain in service today. The turntable served narrow gauge as long as it served standard gauge and does so today in Durango and Golden.

**Please support the corporate sponsors
who support the NGPF**

- * San Juan Car Co.
- * Benchmark Publications
- * Micro-Engineering
- * Hickman, Palermo, et al, LLP

Special Donation Request

Please consider an extra tax deductible donation to help restore
RGS20 and D&RGW 168

UPCOMING ISSUES

- Rebuilding #169 and now #168
- The T-12 Class Locomotives on the Rio Grande
- EBT Hoppers – A Long Way From Home
- Preserving Southern Pacific Narrow Gauge steam

From The Executive Director

Hard to believe but this issue starts our second year of membership and what a success it has been. Thanks to our charter members and our newcomers. You are all welcome and we deeply appreciate your membership. And if renewal is at hand, please do so to continue our good work. Fittingly, our latest project is an ongoing matching grant to the Colorado Railroad Museum, the subject of this newsletter, to help complete the overhaul of RGS #20, a 4-6-0, to operating status. \$80,000 was needed and we pledged \$40,000 to be matched 1:1, as reported in the May 2015 issue of *Trains* magazine.

Next on track is possible help to the Cumbres and Toltec as they work to restore D&RGW T-12 #168 to full service. All of these actions are possible in part due to your support so feel proud that you have made a difference. See you next time.

Charlie Getz



P.O. Box 1073
San Carlos, CA 94070

NARROW GAUGE PRESERVATION FOUNDATION

TO CONTACT US, PLEASE CALL, WRITE OR E-MAIL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHARLIE GETZ

PHONE: 650-591-8916

P. O. Box 1073, San Carlos, CA 94070

lrpchair@Yahoo.com

WHO WE ARE - WHAT WE DO AND HOW YOU CAN HELP

The Narrow Gauge Preservation Foundation (NGPF) was first established as the Narrow Gauge Trust in 2000. It was the dream of one of our board members to help preserve Narrow Gauge in both its prototype and model form. In 2002, the Narrow Gauge Trust Fund was incorporated as the Narrow Gauge Preservation Foundation, and acquired non-profit status both within the State of California and as recognized by the Federal government. As a non-profit public benefit corporation, our mission is to establish interactive exhibits where the public can learn of the significant history of Narrow Gauge railroading as well as to support preservation activities and projects wherever possible.

The foundation is administered by a board of directors, which does not receive compensation. The NGPF is proud that less than five percent of its funds are spent on administrative costs. Thus, ninety five percent of the funds raised go toward preservation efforts.

Our primary function is the creation of interactive exhibits where the public can be told the story of Narrow Gauge, such as the one at Chama. As with the Chama exhibit, each exhibit will include interactive video presentations and models as well as dioramas, photographs and other graphics to explain the significance of the Narrow Gauge railroading experience. As a secondary function, the NGPF assists Narrow Gauge preservation efforts across North America. These efforts to date have exceeded over one million dollars and in some cases have made the difference between preservation and loss of significant artifacts.

The foundation is also unique in supporting the efforts of Narrow Gauge Preservation projects throughout the United States rather than concentrating on one area or one particular project. To date, the organization has supported projects on the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad, Ardenwood Park in California, Friends of Denver and Rio Grande Engine #169, the Southern Pacific

Narrow Gauge Railroad Foundation, The Colorado Railroad Museum, the Southeast Narrow Gauge and Shortline Museum in North Carolina and the Durango Railroad Historical Society, among others. In addition, we have preserved the collections of prominent narrow gauge modelers, extensive libraries of books as well as important art pieces depicting narrow gauge scenes.

One of the unique aspects of the NGPF is the use of matching grants to encourage the receiving parties to reach out to the public for support. Many of our grants require that the receiving agency establish within a set time frame, an equal number of individual new donations from members of the public, which not only shows support for the particular project, but also provides new sources of funding for the organization. As a result of this policy, organizations receiving our grants have reported increased donations. Donations to the Foundation are tax-deductible, acknowledged and appreciated. By donating, you support a variety of worthwhile projects and thereby enhance preservation of Narrow Gauge.

