

# GRANDE GOLD

A LEVIN DIVISION PUBLICATION

## FROM THE YARD MASTER

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### FUTURE ISSUES

- THE CREEDE BRANCH - FURTHER TRACK PLANS PROTOTYPE AND MODEL.
- MORE ON SOUTH FORK INTRODUCING - MONTE VISTA.
- THE UNION RAILROAD OF OREGON - A PROTOTYPE FOR A SHELF LAYOUT.

The previous issue of *Grande Gold* was intended to be the final issue hence it's title. Time has moved on, and while the health issues that caused the decision to close down *Grande Gold* still remain, I have come across more information which from a modeler's perspective, is worth recording and sharing with others who might have a similar interest.

In this and any subsequent issues that may be published I hope to record my efforts in creating a little short line within an existing layout and then adding a double deck to that layout.

The idea of the additions came about because like us all at some time, I had become a little tired of what I had created and needed some fresh action.

The change came from Audrey who declared that chasing the "Big stuff" in the States was all too similar. What about the

small railroads and short lines?

The previous issues of *Grande Gold* recorded the details of nearly all the DRGW tracks that we were able to observe. This series will be more broad based and contain features that were included in a book titled *Railroads Worth Modeling*.

Some of these railroads are worthwhile to model as a stand alone project or incorporate some of their features into a larger layout or an add-on project.



Nature's Grande Gold.

### RIMROCK COUNTY RAILROAD

This little railroad is a figment of my imagination. I wanted to create a credible short line after having seen so many on our travels. This was achieved by turning a simple branch line on my layout serving a coal mine, into something like the DRGW San Luis Valley line and privatizing it. More about this in another issue.



Above; Rimrock County Railroad depot. Locomotives, an SW8, SW1200 and a CF7 await their next job.

## The Creede Branch

### An ideal prototype to model

The San Luis Valley is a huge intermountain basin in Colorado, so large that the DRGW narrow gauge once ran in a straight line for 50 miles north of Alamosa. Most railfans are in a rush to reach Antonito to railfan the C.& T. S. narrow gauge railroad, or head west to South Fork and over Wolf Creek Pass to Durango, and the Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad.

Stay in Alamosa and check out the ex DRGW ex S.P. and now the U. P. Creede branch. Trains have not ventured to Creede since 1985 but the tracks are still in place. Earlier this year the U.P. cut back the rail service to Monte Vista as the last industry, in South Fork, a lumber mill operated by the Stone Container Corp. closed down.

The majority of the tonnage out of the valley originated from Antonito where there are large silos for loading perlite and a small local loadout for scoria or flower rock.

Alamosa yard was once laid out in dual trackage and this is still evident with the narrow gauge rail still in place in a number of level crossings within the yard limits. The brick depot is still used by the train crews. Along the south side of the yard are a selection of industries including a power plant, a moving company, a flour mill and an oil distributor. Sadly some of the industries no longer exist. The roundhouse was all but abandoned in 1985 and has since been

demolished. Hidden from the highway is the East Yard at Alamosa where the locals for Antonito and South Fork are assembled. At the west end of the Alamosa yard the Antonito branch turns south and the Creede branch heads west. It is the later that interested me.

To reach South Fork the ex DRGW rails traverse 47 miles of fertile flat land of the San Luis Valley. A Y is located at Derrick another further mile on towards Creede. As well as all this, there is an interesting little short line, The San Luis Central, which interchanges with the Creede branch at Sugar Junction.

The sidings at Parma, Agro and Zinzer serve industries associated with agriculture. At Zinzer there is also a scrap yard. Pleasant Spur once served a lumber mill. Monte Vista is the largest centre served by this branch. Potato, grain and seed warehouses and several grain silos are served by railroad sidings. The sidings at Del Norte have seen better days, indeed the railroad depot now houses the offices of the local authority.

At South Fork was located a sawmill and wood chip mill operated by the Stone Container Corp. which is well known for its Apache Railway operating between Holbrook and Snowflake in Arizona. There is a siding serving the mill lumber load out facility. On the loop opposite the historic DRGW water tower is located a wood chip loader. The chips are blown through a pipe from the wood chip pile within the mill yard under Hy 160 to the

loader on the railroad siding. The track then continues on for a short distance to a Y laid out in a field alongside a housing estate. At the time of our visit new railroad crossing alarms were being installed to protect the end of the line which extended just over the road from the Y.

The line extends on to Creede but is out of service and that part of this interesting line is another aspect of this area – mining.

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## The Creede Branch

### The Model

The present form of the Levin Division of the DRGW is over 10 years old and is becoming a bit stale and worn. On this layout a simple branch serving a coal mine was converted to a general purpose branch serving industries which somehow got to resemble the Creede branch in the San Luis Valley. This was further varied by painting and lettering a number of locomotives for a short line – The Rimrock County Railroad. Why Rimrock, That is another story.

With an interest in short lines and also a love of multiple loco lashups I wondered how both these railroading extremes could be combined. What started as some doodling on paper and various scenarios with a DRGW background several combinations emerged.

Prototype areas – The Creede branch of the DRGW in the

San Luis Valley, The Montrose lead on the North Fork Branch and the mainline from Grand Junction west along the Colorado River and out into the deserts of Utah.

To achieve these objects a double deck layout was a prerequisite. To demolish the current layout entirely was not an option that I wished to embark on. A track plan for the 20' x 13' room was devised which provided for an around the wall and a central peninsular continuous run. A similar area was planned on the top deck with a vertical separation of about 20" at a height about my chin level.

To connect both levels a helix was to be built above the bonnet of our old Falcon in the car space of the garage. The ultimate complete plan provided for a large yard based on Grand Junction with grades, scenery and industries that were located on the old Grande west of that city. The junction for the helix was to be at Grand Junction similar to how the North Fork branch joined the old DRGW main line. The top level would have the same foot print as the lower level and was to be based on the Creede branch from Alamosa to South Fork. A short line, The San Luis Central was to be built on the top level of the peninsular. Such a combination would provide an ideal level of operation with plenty of switching.

We are all familiar with EMD SD 90 convertible locos. So it

is to be with my layout. The plan was to erect the top level and the helix and connect with the present layout where a coal mine loadout was located. The peninsular was to be omitted until the lower level was rebuilt, if ever.

To date the helix and the top level is operational. Provision was made for three tethered throttles to supply power through a simple rotary switch control system. This has proved to be very effective. To replicate the original in model form takes a lot of skill and perseverance. My aim was to model an impression of the area. To do this it was necessary to modify the yard layouts so that I could still use my original layout on the lower level.



Above; Four GP40's haul an eastbound manifest up the western grade of La Veta Pass near Sierra in 1995.

### THE TOP DECK DESIGN

The upper deck varies in width from 10" to about 17". It is built in 8' sections on 2" x 1" framing, with 9 mm ply as decking and front support member. Pinex was glued and nailed to the deck for the track bed. The front panel over lays the support member and is cut from 3 mm fine line MDF. These sections rest on brackets made by Peter Thomson and

Some of the back ground scenery will be modeled in reverse to what it is in reality. Such is modelers license.

On the prototype 4 to 6 GP40's and GP30's and sometimes other models of 4 axle units power the freights over La Veta Pass to Alamosa and return. The locals to Antonito and South Fork usually require only one loco although two are known to have been used. After all this I have my wish, 4 to 6 geeps to power trains up the helix to the top level – big time! Then 1 or 2 geeps on the local to South Fork, really a short line operation with a DRGW heritage. What a bonus.

consist of 1/4" metal plates about 2" x 4" welded to square section steel. These were attached to the wall with 2" screw bolts. The sections were then screwed to the brackets and were packed where necessary to maintain a level profile. This was not well achieved due to my rough carpentry standards but railroad roadbeds are never entirely level any way.

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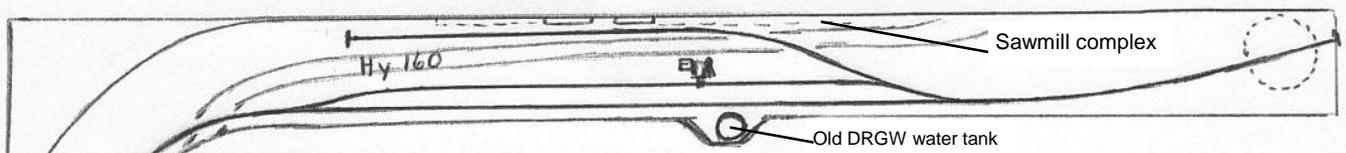
The helix was built using 18 mm MDF. This was cut into semi circular pieces 4" wide with a center line radius of 22". Between the ends of those pieces were fitted 24" straight pieces of MDF giving the helix the form of an oval. This allowed the climb between the two levels to be achieved in

two circuits on a grade of 3%. Safety barriers 1" high were fixed on each side of the helix to prevent any vertical style disasters from happening.

Trains of 14 cars and a caboose, 2 powered and 2 dummy Athearn geeps can manage the grade with ease.

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**TRACK PLANS PROTOTYPE AND MODEL – SOUTH FORK**



**SOUTH FORK;** The model, is built on a shelf 12" wide. The loop is 6' long and a further 4' to the end of the track. The dotted circle will be a disguised turntable as there is no room for a Y.

Right; The old DRGW water tank at South Fork.

Below left; The wood chip loader alongside the siding at South Fork.

Below right; The spur serving the lumber loading shed at the sawmill complex.



**SOUTH FORK;** The prototype.

Stone Container Corp.  
Mill complex

Woodchip pile  
Sawdust burner

