

GRANDE GOLD

A LEVIN DIVISION PUBLICATION

FROM THE YARD MASTER

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

From the Yard Master 1

Westbound California Zephyr in 1964. 1

Southern San Luis Valley Railway 2

San Luis Central Railroad 2

Tracks layouts on the San Luis Central 3

. 4

4

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST.

SMALL RAILROADS OF THE SAN LUIS VALLEY IN COLORADO.

For modellers of the DRGW the question of- ten arises, what is the correct shade of the yellow or orange ap- plied to the hood units.

I suppose the obvious answer is that depends on the thickness of the layers of grime and ex- haust soot that the loco has been subjected to.

It seems that the ex Con- rail GP40s received a sort of red/orange tone

of paint when repainted.

Even years later seeing some of these locos at Minturn and Denver their colour appeared “different”. Light can play subtle tricks on the way we see things. Take a careful look at some of your own prints or preferably slides and of- ten a difference in col- our is noticeable be- tween the front or side of a particular loco and likely as not it is the



Nature’s Grand Gold

way the source of light falls on those vertical surfaces. Then of course there is al- ways those patch up jobs where damage has been re- paired. Snow plows are a speciality. In the end I guess the true shade of colour is in the eye of the beholder.

The west bound California Zephyr speeds alongside the Colorado River. The Grande Gold and Silver of the four matched F3 diesels contrast vividly with the western Colorado countryside.



COLORADO SAN LUIS VALLEY

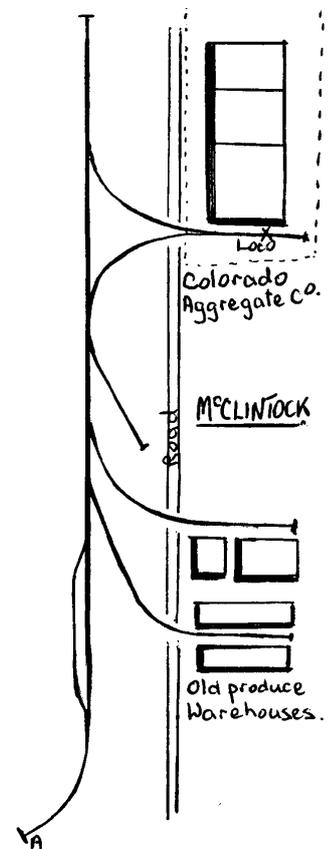
Colorado is full of surprises. In the San Luis Valley there two little short lines which interchange with the DRGW. The very busy San Luis Central at Sugar Junction and the Southern San Luis Valley Railway at Blanca. The latter is the remnant of a short line which extended some 30 miles south to Jaroso. The line's last steam loco was a DRGW 2-8-0 now cosmetically restored and can be seen at the Colorado Railroad Museum at Golden. The history of this line has been well chronicled. Its loco is a diesel mechanical chain driven centre cab built on an old ex DRGW standard gauge idler car. The lines principal revenue is flower rock quarried from an off line mine. Flower rock looks very much like N. Z. red scoria. The potato and vegetable warehouses appear to be abandoned and some of the track has been lifted since first observed in 1985.



Flower rock packing plant and diesel mechanical loco.



Line side produce warehouses.



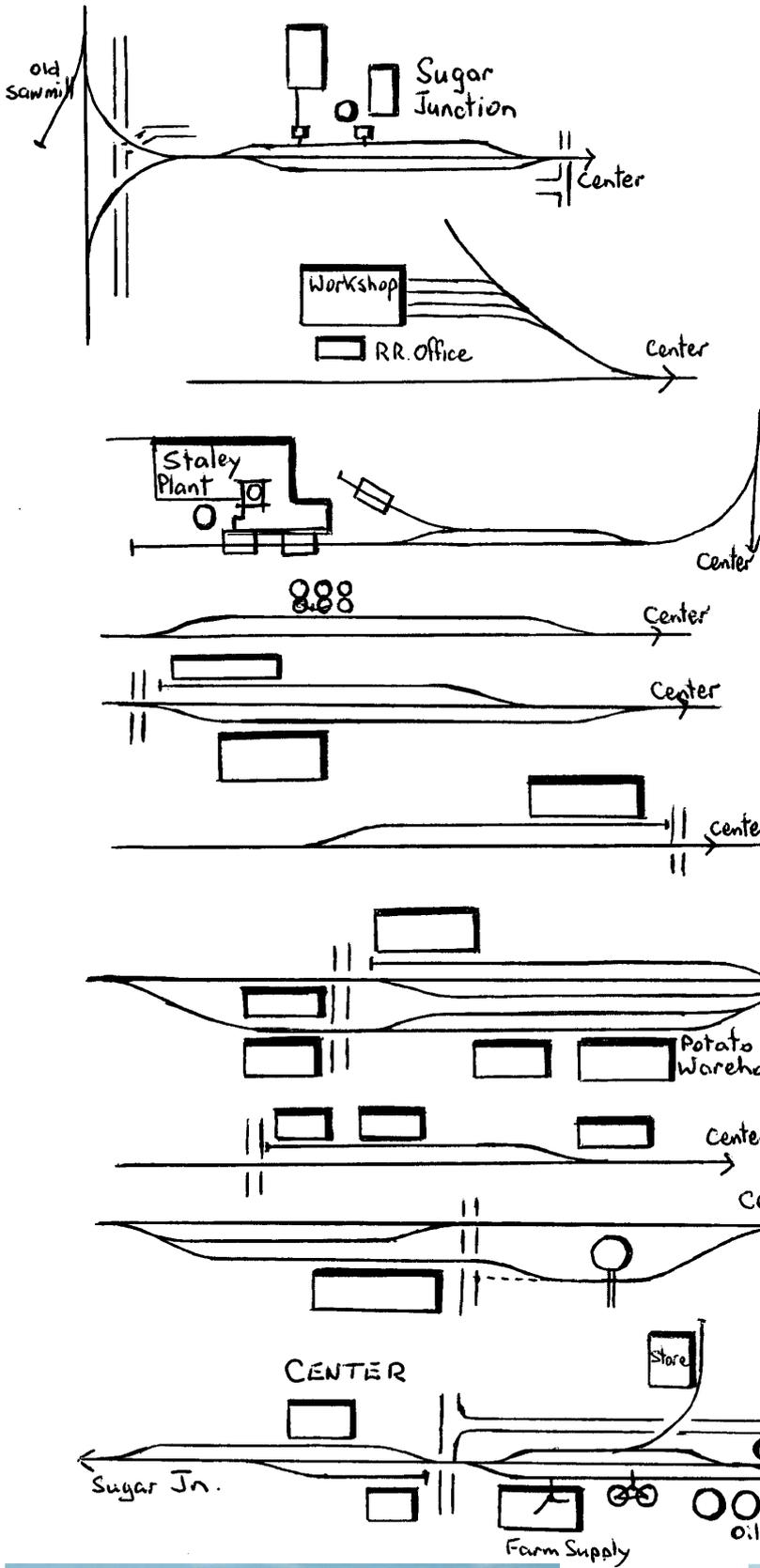
SAN LUIS CENTRAL

This 13 mile short line heads north from its junction with the DRGW in almost a straight line. It is about 1/3 of a mile to the west of the nearest parallel road so to examine the line it is necessary to traverse all the side roads to the point of a RR crossing. On our first visit nothing was operating. No 71 a green and yellow GE 70 tonner was on the main line beside the RR H.Q. which was a small mod-

building located beside a large pikestuff style 4 road repair shop. In the vicinity were numerous express reefers on and off the tracks being stripped down or rebuilt. Although only 6 depots are recorded in the timetable 10 locations were noted in 1988 where there were sidings. The tracks were clearly visible probably because of a dry season. A large number of produce warehouses, farm supply firms, grain silos and fuel storage tanks were serviced by what appeared to be complex

track arrangements but were in fact quite simple in their design. In the accompanying track diagrams the position and number of buildings are approximate. The RR serves a heavy concentration of these industries at Center. A visit in 1995 revealed that the sawmill has ceased operating and that there was another industry not seen or noted in 1988. Staley is a name associated with food and grain industries and their

plant located on this line would make an ideal prototype to model. In 1995 an SP GP40 was seen switching the interchange and SLC SW8 No 70 picked up the tank cars from the interchange and delivered them to a customer at Center. The tracks on the right of way this year were covered with weeds. This little RR with its concentration of industries and small motive power is a classic prototype upon which to base a model railroad.



1. No 70 switching at Sugar Junction.
2. No 71 Outside the railroad yard office.
3. Staley processing plant.
4. A typical on line grain loading facility.
5. A view looking north at the railroad yards at Center



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OUR HOBBY

Model railroading is very much a multi skilled and multi interest hobby.

There are so many facets that I will not attempt to list them. Some will model a modern locomotive because it appeals and then to proceed to paint it in the colour scheme of a railroad that has long been abandoned or disappeared into a merger with another railroad. Others might model "what might have been" like an SD30 which could have been a successful successor to the SD9 or negated the development of the SD35. Then there is the hobbyist who combines an interest in both the prototype and model form of railroading. It goes without saying that an understanding of how the prototype operates will greatly influence the approach one takes to model railroading.

One of the author's interests for over 50 years has been recording track plans. How tracks and yards are laid out will often give the enthusiast an insight how that railroad operates at that particular location.

In New Zealand the operation of the railways in the steam era was vastly different to that following the introduction of the diesel. Another change here was from the railways loading and unloading freight wagons at goods sheds at nearly every railway station or depot on the railway system. A further change came when freight forwarding firms were formed. Here the railway would provide the freight cars when required and then the loads to the specified

New Zealand had two further major changes in its railway system, the removal of restrictions on road transport and the sale of the system to private owners, of which Wisconsin Central R.R. is a major shareholder. Since then the structure of how our old N.Z.R. [New Zealand Railways] operated has changed dramatically. Train operations have changed; T.W.C. has been introduced, train speeds have increased and nearly all 4 wheel rolling stock scrapped. That type of wagon remaining is used in maintenance of way service or designated low speed schedules.

How does this affect my interest in the hobby? Well the majority of the railway sidings which I recorded on track plans years ago are now history and are an indicator of how the railways once operated. With the vast changes in train operations and management the little country stations and their local sidings and crossing loops have nearly all disappeared. If the locality suits present day operations the crossing loops have been retained or lengthened. N.Z. trains today are mainly timetable freights comprising mostly containers on flats and boxcars. Many unique freight cars have been designed to haul logs, paper products, bulk milk, wood chips and rubbish to name a few. TransRail which is the name under which our railway operates has made major alterations to the rail yards all over New Zealand to suit the changed operating conditions.

So what has this got to do with American railroads? Well my first notes on railroads in the U.S.A. were recorded in 1964. On subsequent

trips I continued recording track plans where ever possible and like here in New Zealand over the years have noted tracks being altered as the nature of their operations changed. One of my regrets is not photographically recording in greater number the buildings associated with these track locations.

It is the track layouts of the former DRGW which will form the basic information articles in future articles of GRANDE GOLD.

As I see it one of the greatest benefits in the hobby, prototype or model is the sharing of our resources with fellow modellers and enthusiasts.

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Good house keeping on the RIO GRANDE

FUTURE ISSUES: Cane Creek, Aspen and Craig Branches and some lines in Utah.

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