My Life On Mountain Railroads

Gould, William

Published by Utah State University Press


Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/12452.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/12452

For content related to this chapter
https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=book&id=356922
Line at Fairfield. The motive power on the mining company’s railroad consisted of slow moving, but very efficient and busy, little cogwheel, or shay, engines. Cogwheels were locomotives which used shafts and reduction gears to drive the wheels. This configuration permitted greater power to be delivered to the wheels at a sacrifice of speed. The shay was a type of cogwheel where the cylinders were in vertical alignment and the geared shafts ran along the length of the right side of the locomotives and tenders.

The big OSL railroad would set out empty cars and passengers and whatever else was to be transported to the mining town, at Fairfield. Westbound OSL trains would pick up these cars, now laden with precious ore, to be delivered to the smelters around the mountain.

Fairfield, being a junction of the two railroads was a small town in itself. There were a dozen or more homes, a grocery store, a post office, a schoolhouse, and last but not least, a large frame building that from the sign over the doorway proclaimed itself a saloon.

It was shortly after a regular pay day. Dad had received his monthly check of sixty dollars—that being the magnificent sum doled out to the section bosses in those good old days. Being in need of cash to meet monthly bills, mostly mail-order, he had to get the check converted into currency. There being no place at mile post 15 or at the community at the foothills to oblige him, he must therefore journey to Fairfield.

Mother was in the habit of accompanying him, but on this night she didn’t feel up to it. My younger brother Pat, being about six or seven at the time, and myself, being about eleven, went along to keep Dad company and to help him pump the old hand car up the grade.

We started out bravely, Pat and I, throwing our combined weight upon the pump handles to help make the car go. Our enthusiasm was dampened considerably upon reaching the grade. From there on, it was pump, push, and rest, pump, push, and rest. After numerous periods of this we finally arrived at Fairfield.

After detracking the hand car, Dad was all for getting to the business at hand, which was to get the check cashed. After which, he intended to stock up on a few groceries before that large frame building closed it’s doors for the night. As it turned out later, those doors could be closed right then for all the good they were to do us.

Dad proceeded to the saloon with Pat and myself trailing along. That is usually the one place a railroad man selects to cash his paycheck—Rule G, the rule prohibiting employees from using alcoholic beverages, notwithstanding. I do not wish to intimate that my Dad was a drinking man, far from it. But temptations do arise.

Dad met a man at the saloon named Murphy. Murphy was the section boss at mile post 21—Fairfield. This man Murphy, being section boss at
Youth

Fairfield, and Dad being the same at Cedar Fort, found a lot to talk about, between the times they found nourishment gazing at the bartender's diamond stick pin through the bottom of a beer glass.

The talk grew too technical for Pat and I to follow closely, but we realized it dealt mostly with low joints, high centers, and curve elevations. Also how in times past, they had each put the roadmaster in his place. All the time the bartender was busy keeping the foam on the top of their glasses.

Pat and myself, although we were greatly interested, began to get sleepy. After a while it developed that these two kingsnipes had found something else in which they were on common ground. This was the fact that both, in their wild and distant pasts, had been soldiers in the armies of Her Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria of Great Britain.

This called for more of the same, and the friendship grew apace. Soon the large interior of the drink emporium was resounding with the shouted commands of the British army. One would think they had both been sergeants. Then came criticism: Lord Roberts was a very strict disciplinarian. He kept Dad standing at attention for a considerable length of time for some slight infraction of the rules. Kitchener was a butcher. Others, whom I have forgotten, came in for their share.

Finally the talk turned to the manual of arms as it was done in Her Majesty's armies. Dad was eager to demonstrate his ability in performing the manual of arms. So picking up a broom that stood in a corner and with Sergeant Murphy calling the commands, the show began.

It was soon evident that a broom could not take the place of a gun in these maneuvers, so Murphy must step across the tracks to his home to get a shotgun, which he used to shoot jackrabbit, and substitute it for the broom. Spying Pat and myself dozing behind the stove, he invited us to go along to his home. We were all for staying to see the fun, but we were urged to go by Sergeant Gould.

Upon arriving at Murphy's home we were served a bit to eat, and Murphy left with the shotgun—much to the annoyance of Mrs. Murphy. As time drifted on we fell asleep, only to be awakened in the middle of the night for the homeward trip.

After long deliberations and great effort they finally got the hand car back on the track. Then after numerous manifestations of undying friendship and many exclamations favoring long life to the Queen, the two ex-sergeants loudly bid each other Godspeed.

In the usual case, if a hand car was to drift down a long grade, there was no need to exercise the pump handles. They were just a nuisance and a source of danger to those riding the car, so the usual procedure was to knock out the key holding the small pinion in place on the axle and disengage it from the large cogwheel. This put the car in free wheeling.
Tonight no one thought of this, and we went down into the black night with the pump handles flapping up and down at a dangerous tempo. Dad stood upright on one side of the superstructure with Pat and me grasping the iron handhold on the other. Down into the dark night we went with ever increasing speed—the pump handles battering the night air savagely. The flanges whined as the car swung around the curves, and the wheels sang a song of ever increasing speed as they smashed over the rail joints. It was soon evident that Dad had no intention of checking the speed of this wildly pitching vehicle.

We were surely going home in a hurry!

Dad, who hadn't uttered a word since bidding Murphy that boisterous adieu, now suddenly groaned and slumped to the floor of the car to lay prone with eyes gazing up into the starless night. How he missed coming in contact with those murderous pump handles is a mystery. He lay there staring up into the blackened sky as the car rocketed down the grade. We were sure making miles per hour, plenty of them!

Thoughts of meeting an opposing train never entered my mind, and I'm sure it concerned Dad very little. I shudder to think what would have resulted if a roaming cow should have stepped on the track ahead of us. Our worries would have been all in the past.

When it seemed that the momentum would take us clear off the right of way, my foot accidentally came in contact with the brake pedal protruding up along the side of the car. I recognized it for what it was, having seen it in operation many times previously. So with my full weight of seventy pounds or more bearing down on it I was able to slow our speed slightly. But what kid wants to slow down a fast ride? Wouldn't this be something to tell the kids at school the next day? Wouldn't they be envious, though?

With all these thoughts surging through my mind is it any wonder that the section house, our home, loomed up out of the black night all too soon? With all my weight on the brake pedal the speed gradually lessened. The song of the flanges, the clicking of the wheels over the rail joints, muted. The slashing pump handles were stilled.

Dad still lay prone on the car floor after everything else was silent. His groans and sighs were the only evidence that he still lived. Our efforts to arouse him only produced more sighs and groans. These manifestations of distress finally brought Mother to the door. She recognized conditions at a glance. She closed the door and soon reappeared dressed more suitably for the task at hand—that of getting Dad off the car and into the house. This took some doing. It seemed that for some reason Dad was unable to stand on his feet.

After we had finally gotten him into the house, our next job was to get the hand car off the track and into the toolshed before some speeding
westbound extra came along and demolished it. This was no easy task for two small boys, but with Mother’s help, we finally got the car tucked away for the night.

When we re-entered the house we could hear Dad crying and bawling. Crying in his cups! It at last dawned on me that my Dad was drunk—dead and sick. In his efforts to lay the blame for his condition on someone else he cried out, “Liz, Liz, will you ever send me to Fairfield again?”

Mother was trying to silence him and get him to bed. All the time Dad kept muttering sorrowfully, “Liz, will you ever send me to Fairfield again?” Mother’s assurance that she would not hardly seemed to placate Dad, but at last he finally drifted off to sleep.

You can bet that mother never did send Dad to Fairfield alone again. She went with him! For days after that if we knew Dad was in a good frame of mind, we plagued him by crying out, “Liz, will you ever send me to Fairfield again?”
Central Utah showing Rio Grande Western Railway trackage in the early twentieth century. From "Prospectors' Map of Utah," Utah State Historical Society.
The first recollection that I have deals with the little town of Sandy, about twelve miles south of Salt Lake City. It was there that I first started my meager education. It was also there that I first fell in love. The object of my childish affection happened to be my school teacher. I have long since forgotten her name. But I well remember my anguish at the end of that first term of school when I realized that it would be a long time before I would be able to see her again. But I guess I was of a very fickle nature, as I seem to have survived very well.

It was also at Sandy that I first developed a wanderlust. This was brought on by my natural curiosity. From where we lived I could look down across the slanting landscape and note the progress of the trains that smoked up the valley as they wended their way into a wondrous unknown. Sandy at that time had not developed into the small city that it is today. There were hardly any dwellings between our house and the faraway tracks of the Rio Grande Western Railway.

On that day I was only about six years old. I had decided to look into certain things that had long bothered me. I wished to satisfy my curiosity and see for myself where those distant trains came from and just where they were going. How I ever made it down across State Street, over the numerous fences, and through the many fields and pastures to the railroad right of way is something to think about.

Trackside Childhood
When I arrived at that place I must have been lost. I started walking along the tracks. I must have had divine guidance, because my feet brought me to the town of Bingham Junction, now called Midvale. There again my feet propelled me in the right direction, and I followed the rails that curved to the right toward State Street. It was starting to get dark now, and I knew I was hopelessly lost. I was tired, and I was crying, but my weary feet kept dragging me onward.

Little did I know that the larger part of the population of Sandy was out looking for a small lost boy. Then, when things began to look darkest, and I had just gone over the crossing at State Street, a horse and buggy stopped and a voice called to me. I knew that voice! A lady was hurriedly climbing down from the buggy. I recognized her instantly! It was my mother!

What guiding power finally brought us to that spot at the same time I will never know. Another few moments and I would have been trudging along on my weary way, and Mother would have missed me.

My Dad worked as a section hand for the Oregon Short Line Railroad. One day a boy, much older than I, told me that my dad had been killed by
a train. I ran home crying to Mother. I remember how she hurriedly dressed in her best frock and we proceeded to where the gang was working. Dad was unhurt but very angry. That boy avoided me in the future.

There was a time at Sandy when I saw a man die with his head in my dad’s lap. This man was the section boss. He had only been on the job a few days. His wife and small daughter were staying at our house until they could get located. As was my habit, I drifted down to the tool shanty about the time the section gang tied up in order to walk home with Dad. They had got in and had run the push car into the shed. My dad was sitting on the end of the car. The dying man was laying on his back with his head in Dad’s lap. He was screaming and cursing. I had never heard a man curse so in my young life. He was a foreigner of some kind. He would scream, “I’m die! I’m die!” And then he would curse. I thought that it was an awful way for a man to go to meet his God. He shortly died right there on the section car. I understood it was a heart problem.

There came a time when the section gang at Sandy was abolished. Dad was sent to Salt Lake to work on a gang there. Every morning he would get up and walk to Murray where he would catch the street car to ride into Salt Lake. Murray was as far south as the street cars ran at that time.

We moved to Ironton about 1895. Ironton is not on the map anymore. It was about a mile and a half straight down the grade from Silver City Junction. This was about the same distance from what is now Tintic Junction on the present day Union Pacific Railroad (UP). Dad left Salt Lake first. As soon as it could be arranged Mother and the family followed.

All there was at Ironton was a wye track configuration for turning railroad engines in the opposite direction, the section house where we lived, and a corral and loading chute for loading cattle and wild horses. There were lots of wild horses in the surrounding country at that time. After passing the switch at the west leg of the wye the rails continued for about five miles further down to what was known as McIntyre’s Ranch. I was never at the ranch, but from all accounts it must have been quite an outfit.

A freight train used to come out from Salt Lake every morning. The crew would leave their caboose standing in front of our section house while they distributed their train around the different mining camps. This seemed to be the procedure during times when activity was slack at the mines. When business was good, the crew would tie up at Ironton, and the mine-run job would distribute the freight and make up the returning train.

A platform surrounded our section house just high enough to step off and onto the caboose platforms. One day when the crew was up working the mines, my younger brother Richard (who several years later acquired
the nickname of Pat) climbed over and sat down on the forward platform of the caboose. He had a little hatchet in his hand and was hammering away at anything that struck his fancy. He started pounding on the “dog,” as it is called, that fits into the teeth of the brake staff ratchet. This holds the hand brake set when it is applied. Apparently Pat’s hammering knocked the dog loose.

I saw the caboose start to move slowly down the track. Pat was sitting there on the platform quite unconcerned. I screamed for Mother, and she came running out, reached over and lifted Pat off the platform. I wanted to get a piece of wood and put in front of the wheels, but Mother told me to stay away. We stood there and watched that caboose gather speed as it went rattling down through the open country. About one-half or three-quarters of a mile further down the grade the track curved sharply to the left and ended up against a low foothill.

It seems that the track ending as it did against the mountain comprised sort of a derail to catch anything that may have gotten loose in the mining camps above. It had been installed before those camps had started to boom. There had been no time when it had been used so the switch had been neglected and left lined for the mainline, but that morning as Dad and the crew started for work, he sent one of his men down to line the switch for the derail.

I believe that sometimes we Goulds have some sort of second sight. It seems the crew had seen the caboose get loose from where they were working up around Mammoth or Silver City. It wasn’t long before they came on down to the section house. On the way they picked up Dad and his section gang. They also had a ten gallon keg of beer.

When they arrived they all went into a conference. They wanted to know what had caused the caboose to get away. Mother told them how it happened, that Pat had climbed on with his little hatchet and had knocked the brake loose. The train crew didn’t want to believe that a little kid the size of Pat with a toy hatchet could hit the dog hard enough to release the brakes. The conductor, a big fierce-looking fellow with a long mustache, glared at me and wanted to know if it wasn’t me that turned the caboose loose. We had a hard time trying to convince him that Pat was the guilty one. These many years later I think that the brake wasn’t set very tight when Pat hit the dog. Since going railroading myself I can easily see what happened.

The brakeman that set that hand brake claimed he set it up really tight. Maybe he did. But did he also take time to drain the auxiliary reservoir? If he didn’t, failure to do so caused the brake to loosen. He may have set the hand brake tight, but after a while the air leaking out of the
train line set the brake a little tighter and tighter still, until it loosened the
dog from the ratchet. Then the air finally leaked out of the brake cylinder.
That loosened and moved the dog away from the ratchet so that any little
tap let the brake loose. After a little while all the tension in brake and rigging
let go. About the time that Pat hit the dog, the brakes were nearly released
anyway and the caboose was ready to move.

Air brakes were new about that time, and the crews were not up on
all the tricks as they are now. Nowadays you wouldn’t see an informed
brakeman leaving a car on a grade with the hand brake set without draining
the auxiliary reservoir.

That ten gallon keg of beer was brought onto the platform, and
everyone proceeded to get real friendly. When the keg was about empty
they decided it was about time to go to work, so they all proceeded down
to the derailed caboose. After two or three hours that caboose was finally
pulled back on the rails.

The freight train bound for Salt Lake left Ironton about six hours late.
There was no report made of it, and nobody was censured. That’s what a
keg of beer will do—sometimes. Can you imagine getting away with
anything like that nowadays?

We were not at Ironton very long. It seems there was a derailment at
Mammoth Junction—the engine of the mine-run crew turned over at the
stub switch on the mainline. For this the section boss at that place was fired.
Dad was sent to Eureka to take his place. In a few days we followed him.

We lived in a little frame house in Dutchtown. Across the canyon on
the mountain side lived a family by the name of Faser. There was a girl in
the family named Pauline—Pauline Eva Faser. Although I never remember
meeting her in those locations, about ten or twelve years later she became
my wife.

Dad’s section included Eureka, Mammoth, Silver City, and all the
connecting trackage. I have heard Dad say that his first official act on taking
charge was to fire one of the hands and order him to get clear off the right
of way. It seems that this action concerned the wreck at the stub switch
which derailed and turned over the 518 at Mammoth Junction. Dad had
heard this man remark that he could have prevented that happening if he
had chose to do so. He had noticed a lip on that stub switch at quitting
time that night, but being in a hurry to get home he had not called it to
the attention of the foreman. Dad told him no man who so neglected his
duties could work for him ten minutes.

We were at Eureka when the Spanish-American War broke out. There
was considerable excitement and much patriotism around town. Every
Youth

young buck wanted to go to war. Everything was subject to the war. I remember the newsboys screaming about it. Across the front page of the newspaper was the caption, “War Begins at Eight P.M.” Bulletins posted in store windows screamed the same tidings: “War Begins at Eight P.M.” Of course I was just as patriotic as anyone in town. I had an air gun and was busy shooting imaginary Spaniards.

I remember there was much weeping and lamenting among the young women. I recall my mother and her women friends speaking in hushed tones of a certain girl who had tried to commit suicide by throwing herself in front of the train that carried her sweetheart away to war. Apparently the attempt was not successful.

The Rio Grande was in the habit of running excursion trains out of Salt Lake to Eureka, Mammoth, and Silver City almost every Sunday during the summer months. They usually had a couple of Rome engines double heading six or seven coaches. Romes were little ten-wheelers (4-6-0 wheel configuration) built in Rome, New York. Eureka is built in a canyon between two mountain ridges. The Rio Grande comes in high up on the mountain slope on one side. The Oregon Short Line, now the Union Pacific, comes in from the other direction and follows a course along the bottom of the canyon.

Residences used to be scattered all over the sides of the mountain. The business district was located in the lower levels of the canyon. About halfway up the mountainside near the Rio Grande tracks was the Mormon chapel. It was directly across the canyon and about the same level as the Rio Grande depot. A long flight of stairs led high up the mountain to the Mormon church house.

On the other side, just before passing the Rio Grande depot, a spur track took off from the mainline and circled around the depot. The switch controlling this spur was of the new-fangled split-rail type. All switches on the OSL at the time were still of the stub-rail type. The Rio Grande was just beginning to install this new split switch—the “deadly split,” it was called for a long time.

One Sunday morning one of those excursion trains was coming into town. On the other side of the canyon Sunday School was just being dismissed. As I came out of Sunday School I looked across the canyon. Two little Romes on the head end of that passenger train were gliding majestically down toward the depot. A train anywhere always held my attention.

As I watched those two engines start to fade behind the depot I noticed something wrong three coaches back in the train. The third or fourth coach
seemed to slither out of line with the rest of the train. It seemed to be inclined to turn at right angles to the track. Then with a scraping, dust-clouded crash, that coach turned over on its side and slid a little ways to a stop.

I didn’t wait to find out what it was all about. I scrambled down that long, steep stairway and raced home as fast as I could go. My dad was lying down taking a Sunday nap. I woke him up and told him what I had seen. He hurriedly dressed, and we both took off up the mountainside to the Rio Grande depot. That coach was lying on its side. Half of the people of Eureka were there. They were helping the injured passengers get out of the coach.

It was later determined that the split rail (or point) on that switch was partly open. The two engines and the first two coaches followed the mainline. The front truck on that third car also took the main track toward the depot. But the rear truck on the same coach split the partly open point and decided in favor of the side track. You can imagine the mess that resulted from this difference of opinion.

Those split-rail switches were considered to be dangerous when they were first coming into favor. In this case it was the opinion that some train or engine had run through this switch in the reverse direction and failed to report it. This is still a common occurrence. They don’t censure a crew very much now if they run through a switch, but it’s almost a dischargeable offense to leave without reporting it.

Several years later I was firing the Eureka switch engine. The crew and I were in the depot shooting the breeze. I told the gang about this wreck I had witnessed from the steps of the church that Sunday morning. When I finished the tale that station agent swung around in his swivel chair and looked at me. He asked me who I was. I told him. He confirmed my story. He was the agent on duty that Sunday morning.

This wreck didn’t discourage the Rio Grande. The next Sunday morning another excursion train came into Eureka, this time with better luck.

In those days the railroad would, on the slightest pretext, run excursion trains at reduced rates. There were no automobiles, and so this was the only way people had of seeing something different from their daily scene.

During the summer months the Rio Grande would advertise moonlight excursions. Late in the afternoon a train of coaches would drift into Silver City. Just before dusk that train would leave partly loaded. It would go to Mammoth and pick up passengers. Then at Eureka they would board more excursionists. I never knew where those trains were headed until I started firing on the Rio Grande. I asked an old-time engineer about it. He told me those trains would go to Castella, a hot spring resort in lower Spanish Fork canyon, or to Geneva, the present site of the Geneva Steel
plant. Both of these locations were resorts at that time. The people would
dance until midnight, and then the trains would return them to their
destinations. “There just ain’t no fun no more!”

I remember one other thing from those days at Eureka. Someone had
given me one of those dollar Ingersoll watches. I was very proud of my watch as I carried it to school. But if my dad and his gang happened to be working close by he would usually contrive to meet me on my way to school: “Let me take your watch, Siree, I got a job that has to be finished before that passenger train is due. Come on now, Siree, you can have it back again before tonight.” And so I would go on to school brokenhearted and without my watch.

The railroads serving the mines in the Tintic area were a prominent feature of community life. They were the connecting link to the outside world in that they carried people to and from those little mining towns. They carried ore produced in the mines to the smelters to be processed. They moved all other freight and commerce necessary to sustain life.

I have the feeling that my life must have been dedicated to the railroads from the very beginning—even before my actual appearance on the scene. As far back as I can remember railroading has been a dominant part of my world. The sound of a locomotive working, the chime of its whistle, the blast of exhausted steam erupting from its stack, the black clouds of smoke rolling back over the train, or the clang of the bell always would unfailingly attract my attention—so much so that I had little or no time for other interests. From those days of early childhood in and around Tintic the course of my life seemed to have been set.

The territory of the Oregon Short Line Railroad included Eureka, Silver City, Mammoth, and all connecting and yard trackage. The railroad company decided a more central location for the section gang would be at Silver City Junction, so they hurriedly rehabilitated an old run-down log house at that point, and we moved into it, my father being the section boss. This whitewashed old log house was the only habitation for two to three miles in any direction.

Silver City Junction was where the branch line to Silver City came down to connect with the mainline by way of an old stub switch. There was also a wye at that point and off to the side an abandoned pump house that had been used to pump water up into Mammoth. Other sources of water had been found and so the pump house had been boarded up. The reservoir was still there and was used occasionally as a swimming hole for kids who came down from the mining camps.

I was in the second or third grade at school, but owing to the distance to the nearest schoolhouse I had to forego my chances for a higher education
while we were there. There was no law at that time compelling a child to attend school, and there were no busses to haul him there. I spent my time mostly roaming through the cedars that surrounded our house or sitting on that knee-high porch gazing up into Mammoth and Silver City.

A mine-run crew worked the mines and connected with the freight crew that tied up at Ironton, a mile and a half below Silver City Junction. It was a panorama of action that was interesting to me, because at almost all times I could see an engine working somewhere on the scene.

Many times I sat on the porch of that log section house and watched that little diamond-stacked eight-wheeler hammer its way up those grades with the two or three coaches that made up the morning passenger train out of Salt Lake. Invariably it would be a combine and one coach, but there were special occasions when there would be a second coach making a three-car train.

That extra coach demanded more power, so the 518 would meet them at Ironton. The 518 was a low-wheeled mogul, a diamond-stacker. A mogul was a class of locomotive with a 2–6–0 wheel configuration. The 518 had an old style smoke or exhaust stack which in profile had a diamond shape. The train backed up from Ironton into Mammoth, then headed down to the mainline, only to reverse direction and back up into Eureka. From there it headed down to Silver City Junction from which point it backed up again into Silver City.

What a sight it was to the eyes of a small boy to see those two wonderful engines blasting up the grade with huge volumes of black smoke belching from their diamond stacks! It was truly something that will never be seen again.

Here is a rustic plan of the track configuration:

![Track Configuration Diagram]

There was another railway in my sight as I sat on that porch. It was owned by the Mammoth mines and mills. It circled the mountains
between Upper and Lower Mammoth. Its motive power consisted of a single shay engine.

The Rio Grande Western also entered the area. Their trains came in from the other direction. Those Rio Grande engines sounded a mournful whistle down into our valley as they screamed through the deep cuts and roared across the high fills clinging to the mountainside.

The night passenger train of the Rio Grande Western came around the mountain at a time when I had usually been hustled off to bed. How mournful those whistles sounded to the accompaniment of a pack of coyotes howling and yelping, as it seemed, right under my window. Two coyotes on a moonlit night can make more noise than a dozen dogs! I would pull the covers up over my head and shiver. I little knew then that in another dozen years I would be the fireman on that little Rio Grande Western passenger train.

In the limited horizon that screened my boyish mind there were only two real railroads in the world: the Oregon Short Line (OSL) and the Rio Grande Western. The only difference between them in my limited perspective was in the engines. The former had diamond-stacked engines, while those of the latter had straight stacks.

The passenger train of the Oregon Short Line came out of Salt Lake in the morning and tied up at Silver City about 10:30 a.m. Its movement
was plainly visible to me as I watched from that porch down in the valley. Due to the alignment of the road the passenger train would be backing up when it entered Silver City, its laying-over point. I could watch it as it stopped at the depot to unload the last of its passengers. Then it would slowly back up beyond the ash pit. The engine would then be cut off from the train to stand over the pit, where it would remain until about 2:50 P.M. At that time it would be moved back to a coupling with the train, after which it would move ahead to the depot.

Promptly at 3:10 P.M. two white puffs of steam would appear above the whistle. If there was no adverse wind, the sound of the two blasts would drift down into the valley. Then that old diamond-stacker would start throwing out black rings of smoke as it moved ahead with increasing speed. Pretty soon it would be lost to view as it sank behind a forest of cedars. Presently it would come charging out of those cedars where the rails ran in a straight line for about a mile pointing directly at where I sat on that porch.

I have often likened the appearance of the front end of that train to the frightening charge of some monstrous, indescribable wild animal. The diamond stack with smoke rolling back over the train, the cab spreading out like crouching shoulders, and the coaches outlined behind had all the appearance of a mad, destructive monster about to leap upon its unsuspecting prey. Then when it seemed as though I would have to jump aside, it would take the curve and assume the outline of a two-car passenger train. The flanges would scream as the train rocked around the sharp curve that ended up against the mainline where connection was made by the old stub switch. With the brake shoes screeching loudly the train would stop to clear the mainline. The switch would be properly lined and the train moved out on the mainline. The switch would then be realigned for the mainline and the train would start backing up on its way to Eureka and Mammoth. After a while it would come back, streaking down the hill on its way to Salt Lake.

I remember a time when that train in its wild descent from Silver City did not stop to have that old stub switch lined. The engineer that day was an extra man who was not familiar with the road. He hit that curve at a pretty fast clip. When he attempted to stop he was already too close to the switch. At the last moment he swung the Johnson bar over into the back of the quadrant and gave her steam, thus reversing the engine. The wheels began to spin backward, and the whistle howled out a long despairing wail. When the train came to a final stop the entire engine was over the stub switch and on the ground.

(After going into engine service myself, I often thought of this. I wondered how that engineer could reverse the engine, give her steam, and
hang onto that whistle, all at the same time. Suddenly I remembered: those Short Line engines had a long rod extending the full width against the front of the cab. In the center of this rod another rod connected to it passed through the cab to connect with the whistle. On each end of this cross-rod was a handle positioned so that the whistle could be blown by either the engineer or the fireman.)

After the train came to a stop the whistle let go with four long appealing blasts. This was repeated several times. Pretty soon the mine-run crew came flagging down out of Mammoth. Dad and his gang also put in an appearance.

In order for the mine-run crew to make a pull on the derailed engine they would have to get behind the coaches. In order to get behind the coaches they would have to go around the wye. But that was full of occupied outfit cars, because the bridge and builders gang was building a new water tank at Silver City Junction. So the outfit cars had to be made ready for movement. Then the 518 backed down and coupled onto the coaches. The 518 was a powerful (for the time) mogul. It didn’t take long to pull that little eight-wheeler back on the rails. After the section gang made the needed track repairs the passenger train was on its way again.

A big, burly good-natured man named Jim Love was engineer of the 518. Each day this engine and the mine-run crew met the local freight train at Ironton and distributed its consist to the different destinations while the freight crew tied up there for the day. They also made up the train for the local’s return to Salt Lake.

My dad had been ordered to build a short derailing spur on the branch that circled up behind Silver City to some new mines that were coming into production. This branch was called the Spy Branch. I do not know why that sinister appellation was applied, but I do remember a comical result of that name. The territory that comprised my dad’s section was growing, and Dad was given an assistant foreman. This assistant was of Swedish descent and a very fine appearing man. He was rather quiet, and when he spoke it was with a strong Swedish accent. The name of the branch seemed to intrigue him. When no one was engaging his attention his lips were continually moving as though he was talking to himself. Someone soon found out what he was saying. He was continually spelling S-P-Y—“Spy.”

On the day that Dad was to start work on that derailing spur the mine-run crew had orders to move the necessary tools and material to the work place. They spotted a flat car by the tool shed and the gang loaded it up. My brother Pat and I were standing by—wide-eyed and alert. I saw my
Dad talking to Jim Love. Pretty soon he motioned for us to come to him. We did so eagerly, and he picked us up and stood us on the deck of the 518. He climbed up behind us, and we were told to sit on the cab floor just ahead of the fireman’s seat box. We were more than glad to comply.

We were sitting there with our backs against the inside of the cab, with our legs straight out in front of us. Our feet did not touch the boiler head. We could not see out the side as our heads did not come up to the cab windows. But since it was a nice warm day, the front cab door was wedged open. We could look to the front along the running board and off the side through that open door. I could, by stretching my neck a little to the side, keep my eyes on the actions of the engineer as he handled the controls, although I could not then identify the Johnson bar from the brake valve or the throttle.

Later I learned the Johnson bar was the lever in the cab that positioned valves which admitted steam to the cylinders. Its primary purpose was to reverse the engine, but it also served to control the consumption and economical use of steam. I discovered engineers and firemen were often at odds over the position of the Johnson bar. If it was positioned to unnecessarily demand steam, it could make the fireman work more than necessary. The engineer could punish the fireman to the point of fatigue or failure by working more steam than was necessary. This was called “rapping” the engine and the engineer given to this practice was called a “rapper.”

Subsequently I have spent a little over fifty years in engine service. I have fired and operated many types of engines and received many and various thrills in the process. But there is one event that I would give anything and everything to live over. I would like to sit on that cab floor again and feel the old 518 tremble under me as Jim Love noisily let the Johnson bar slam down into the front corner, to feel that engine take steam as he gently cracked the throttle. I well remember the first time I rode on his engine. It was an exhilarating, nerve tingling, and delightful experience. Oh, the spine tingling thrill as that old diamond stack slowly swooshed clouds of black smoke skyward. Ah, to see again the grin that lighted the face of Jim Love as he noted the effects of the engine’s movement on the faces of two small boys across the cab. Entrancing moments! Two small boys transferred into a state of ecstasy as the 518 rumbled slowly over the frogs and switches. (Frogs were forged or fabricated steel assemblies used in switches or turnouts. They permitted one rail to cross another in the same plane.) The feeling that crept into my small body was indescribable. At last I was experiencing the dream of my young life. I was riding in the cab of a smoking monster of the rails. It was truly out of this world!
We raced up through the cedars and rearranged the train at Silver City. Then up and around the mountain to where the work was to be done. The flat car containing the equipment was cut off and tied down. At that point Pat and I had to climb reluctantly down and out of that magic locomotive cab.

As the 518 vanished around a curve and down the grade, I knew positively what I would be when I grew up. I would be an engineer! A locomotive engineer like Jim Love—big, smiling, friendly, and good-natured!

I was to ride in the cab of the 518 a number of times with Jim Love, but the thrill of that first ride will linger till the end of my days. Many times I would draw crude outlines on my slate at school, or on anything else handy, of the 518, and always the figure leaning far out of the cab window would be Jim Love. If I happened to be in Eureka and homeward bound, and if the mine-run crew was going my way, I could always depend on a ride home.

I remember a time when I was on my way to Eureka to buy groceries. The mine-run crew came pounding up the grade. They had cars ahead and behind the engine, heavily loaded, and could not stop on that grade to pick up a little boy. A brakeman was riding on a load of slack coal, the last car in the train. As he saw me trudging slowly alongside the track, he motioned at me to run up to where he was. After a long run I was right behind that car. He jabbed his brake club into the slack coal, then holding onto the brake staff with one hand, he reached down with the other and lifted me onto that car with the other. His name was Jerry O'Neil.

I had an occasion to recall this incident to his mind some years later. I had been firing an engine on the Rio Grande for a short time. We had made a “help” to Soldier Summit and were returning “light” to Helper. The board was out at Kyune, and we stopped for orders. A man climbed on the engine. He had some pipe fitting tools. There was something about him that seemed familiar. After a little while I heard Gibson call him “Jerry.” I knew then where I had seen him before.

I said, “Are you Jerry O’Neil?”
He looked me over for a moment, then answered, “Yes.”
I pondered for a moment or two on how I could tell him who I was. Then I said, “Were you ever braking behind the 518 on the mine run at Tintic?”

He answered with a grin, “Yes, I worked that job—on the OSL. Why?”
I asked him if he remembered the family that lived in that log section house at Silver City Junction.
He answered, “Yes, very well.”

I then told him that I was the oldest of those two boys who occasionally rode in the cab of the 518 between Eureka and Silver City Junction. He seemed surprised that I had grown up. I asked him if he thought he could yank me off the ground and onto a car of coal now. That seemed to refresh his mind, and we laughed long over the incident.

Jerry was then working in the water service on the Rio Grande. He was a boomer. Not surprisingly, I never saw him again.

While at Silver City Junction my mother cooked for and boarded the members of the section gang. They were all single men and were quartered in a demounted box car about a hundred feet from our house. It was customary to feed the boarders first, then the family would eat afterwards. We kids were always hungry.

When the men returned at night they would walk up to the porch and place their dinner buckets there in a row. While they were eating we kids would sneak up to the porch and go through those dinner buckets. Sometimes we were real lucky. Maybe we would find a sandwich, a piece of cake, or maybe a whole egg! Believe me there was very little of an edible nature left in those dinner buckets when they were taken into the house.

As there were always five or six men in that gang, there was a lot of groceries coming into the house. We did most of our buying at the Mammoth Mercantile. It was close, and they had delivery service. At times we would run short, and Mother would send me to Eureka to get what was needed.

One time I was sent to Eureka to get enough meat to feed the gang and the family. It was a three-mile walk from Eureka to Silver City Junction. That package of meat very soon became quite heavy for a small boy. I was loitering along, changing the package from one arm to the other, laying it down while I would throw rocks at a squirrel or some other rodent. All that caused the paper wrapping to come loose and tear and wear out. As the paper became loose I would tear it off and throw it away.

I was nearly home when I heard a rattling behind me. It was the section gang coming home on the push car. They stopped and picked me up. By that time there wasn’t a shred of paper left on that package. The meat was hanging over my arm in ribbons. It was sure something for those men who were supposed to eat that meat to see. If the look that Dad gave me could have killed, I would have been dead right there.

Although Mother took pains to tell the gang that she had washed that meat thoroughly, not one bite of it went down their throats. Believe me, I sure got boxed around plenty for that little stunt. However, one good thing
came of it. After that, whenever I was sent to the store for groceries of any kind, I always had a small flour sack in which to carry them.

There was an old abandoned pump house across the wye. At one time it had been used to pump water up into Mammoth. Other means of securing water had been found, and so the pump house had been locked and boarded up tight. Through a crack in the boards covering a window I could just make out here and there the glitter from parts of machinery. I was anxious to get inside for a better look.

In prowling around I found a small hole had been knocked in the masonry to permit the entrance of a pipe. I also found that by moving the pipe to one side I could just squeeze my small frame through it. Inside everything was in apple pie order. There was a two-cylinder stationary engine with a long locomotive-type boiler to supply steam to operate it. The engine in turn drove the water pumps. There was a little dust here and there, but not much. Various parts of the machinery of the stationary engine looked bright and shiny. Cans and tools were arranged in good order.

In general the pump looked as though it could be started up on a few moments notice. I swung open the door of the boiler furnace and looked into the firebox. The grates were clean. Not the sign of a clinker anywhere. There were several scoop shovels lined up against a coal bunker that protruded into the building. There also was what must have been a work bench. A vise and several other appliances were attached to it.

It looked as though whoever had left it had expectations of returning soon. There were several drums of oil and oil cans with which to oil the machinery. I think that was the first occasion on which I saw the oil can that gave the fireman his long standing nickname—“Tallow Pot.” There were several of those cans.

What drew my attention was the long boiler. It had a fire door just like the one I had seen on the 518. I played with that fire door just as I had seen Jim Love’s fireman do on the locomotive. I jerked it open by the chain that was attached to it. I went through the motions of shoveling coal into the firebox. If the coal bunker had been closer I believe I would have filled that firebox with coal. (I think the man who actually fired that boiler wheeled the coal from the bunker in a wheelbarrow that was standing close by.)

I don’t know exactly how long I was there that first time, but I do recall I left hurriedly, because I accidentally knocked over a large drum of oil. Since it was too heavy for me to lift back to its original position, I just left it there. The lid came off, and oil slowly oozed out onto that spick and span floor. I simply got out of there as fast as I could.
I didn’t go back for a long time. Then, as no one came around to see what I had done, I went back in to play around again. There was oil all over the biggest part of the otherwise clean floor. It had a peculiar smell. I was never to sense that smell again until I went to work for the railroad. It was what they called “valve oil.” I have put lots of it into the old-style lubricators we had on the engines in those early days. We had another name for it on the railroad. We called it “master mechanic’s blood,” because it was so sparingly doled out in very small portions. I knew many engineers who, upon approaching a terminal, would drain any valve oil that was left in the lubricator into a private can of their own. I knew of engineers who had several caches of this oil scattered out in different places along the railroad right of way.

A few years ago an engineer on the Union Pacific and I were reminiscing about the Tintic area. I remarked that I had lived at Silver City Junction when I was a small boy. He knew where the place was because the UP now maintains a small community just a few steps from that original site.

He said to me, “If you lived there perhaps you can tell me something I have wanted to know for a long time. I have asked everyone that I thought might know, but no one has been able to give me an answer.”

“What is that?” I asked.

He went on, “A little way off the mainline, and close by to Silver City Junction, there is an old locomotive-type steam boiler almost hidden in the cedars. I have been curious about it for years, but couldn’t get any information on it.”

I then told him about the old abandoned pump house that used to stand there, and of how I used to play around inside it. I told him how the kids up around Mammoth ran me out of town one winter’s day when I had dragged my sled up there to sleigh ride on their hill. They chased me away, hollering, “Go on home, ‘Pump House’!”

My dad’s section of the railroad was all grade—not a level piece of track on it. It was uphill one way, and downhill the other. Those old hand-pumped section cars were no good in those locations. They were just too hard to pump. The gang used a push car most of the time. If they had a chance they would tie on behind the mine run or even the passenger job to hitch a ride.

They always had a long rope tied on one end of the car. They would slip the free end of this rope through the eye of the drawbar or any other place that would serve the purpose on the engine or freight car. Then they would all get on the push car, and someone would hold onto the end of the rope. When they reached their work site they would just let the rope...