

This is how Leadville's main street, Harrison Ave., looks today. Most of the older buildings date from the 1880s. The large building on the right, behind the Diamond Shamrock sign, is the famous Tabor Opera House.



Leadville, Colorado: A mining district you can model

The Cloud City today

An interesting area to visit, with lots of modeling ideas

**BY ERIC LUNDBERG
PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR**

THE HISTORY of modern Leadville, Colo., is a far cry from the excitement of a century ago. The years of boom and bust and boom again gave way to a decline that has lasted for more than 50 years. But decline doesn't mean surrender. The community of Leadville has taken to heart the advice H. A. W. Tabor gave to his beloved Baby Doe: "Hang on to the Matchless. It will make millions."

Sadly, Baby Doe never saw any such wealth. She died in 1935 in the Matchless Mine's workhouse, where she had lived since her husband's death in 1899. Her dreams had died with Horace, yet pride and determination enabled her to survive nearly 40 years in rags in a mine house that once had provided her with riches.

Leadville has displayed a similar combination of pride and determination. For some residents the belief that mining might somehow come back and "make millions" has provided the sod to survive in a town that just keeps getting punched out.



CHRONOLOGY

1860, summer — Abe Lee and a few prospectors find gold by panning in California Gulch. Approximately 5,000 gold seekers arrive within a few months, and the area becomes Oro City. Some claims earn as much as \$1,000 a day.

1861 — California Gulch peaks, only to decline rapidly.

1864 — More than \$4 million in gold has been taken from California Gulch.

1868 — Oro City is nearly deserted. The Printer Boy Mine is discovered (gold), and a stamp mill is erected. In six years it yields \$250,000 in bullion.

1874-78 — Hydraulic placer mining begins. Miners are greatly troubled by a heavy and apparently worthless black sand in their sluice boxes.

1877 — Enough silver ore now to establish the St. Louis Smelting Co. near site of Leadville.

The first building in what becomes Leadville is erected by Charles Mater. H. A. W. Tabor arrives from Fairplay and opens a general store.

1878 — Leadville, with a population of 1,000, is officially named and forms a government. Hundreds of newcomers arrive daily, opening thousands of mines. Some immigrants become millionaires overnight, like the German who runs a \$30 investment in the Little Chief to \$60,000. Many others lose their investments.

1879 — Half-acres that had been selling for \$2 now sell for \$10,000, and the population exceeds 5,000. The boom has truly begun.

Among those living in and working a gold mine in California are three men most famous for their careers as highwaymen: Jesse James and Charlie and Bob Ford.

1880 — Estimates of the population range as high as 30,000. Thirty-four smelters are working ore from 240 producing mines. Leadville now produces \$1 million a month, yet five banks fail.

"Royal Gorge War" between the Santa Fe and the Rio Grande ends with the latter free to build into the interior of Colorado and its mining camps.

Lawlessness that has prevailed in Leadville since 1879 is under control.

January 14 — \$118,500 in silver ore is taken in 18 hours from the Robert E. Lee Mine, some assaying as high as \$18,000 per ton silver. Other key mines are the Chrysolite, Morning Star, Little Chief, and Little Pittsburgh Consolidation of Mines.

June — Production stops as miners strike for higher wages.

July 22 — D&RG reaches town, so it's now only 14 hours from Denver.

1884 — Denver, South Park & Pacific RR reaches Leadville, cutting travel time to Denver to less than 13 hours.

1885 — The *Aspen Times* reports in January that the value of the gold, silver, and lead extracted from the Mining District totals \$9.2 million to date. Costs of extracting and smelting ore remain extremely high.

1887 — Colorado Midland RR reaches Leadville on August 31, 15 days ahead of schedule.

1890 — Tennessee Pass Tunnel on the D&RG opens.

Almost 100 miles of trackage over 3 railroads now reach Mining District.

1893 — Economic panic and collapse of price of silver. The boom has ended, though brief revivals will still occur.

Colorado Midland's Busk-Ivanhoe Tunnel, begun in 1890, is completed.

1894 — Gold returns, with the Little Jonny Mine leading producers. Silver also regains importance.

1900 — A turning point for the Cloud City: Tabor has died and other principals from the Silver Boom are leaving.

"Composite era" opens as a more balanced variety of minerals (zinc, lead, gold, silver, copper, manganese, bismuth, iron, nickel, molybdenum) will be mined. Meanwhile, the costs of pumping water from mines, using coal, and smelting are falling.

1900-20 — Beginning and consolidation of molybdenum industry.

1907 — Another economic panic halts Leadville recovery. By 1910 it has resumed.

1916 — Wartime economic downturn continues to drive people out. Population has fallen by 60 percent in 20 years (12,000 to 4,500).

1920s — Tough years as prices of precious metals remain low.

1921 — Colorado Midland, which has not operated a train into Leadville in three years, removes its rails.

1931 — Only 26 working mines.

1932 — Mining District produces just \$143,142 worth of ores. Population is down to 3,400.

1933 — Silver sells for 23.5 cents an ounce, lowest price ever recorded.

1938 — C&S terminal trackage at Leadville reduced and Leadville Mineral Belt removed. Line from Como to Climax is pulled up, thereby isolating Leadville from Denver via the former DSP&P. Removal through abandonment continues into 1942.

1939 — Anticipation of war causes metal prices to jump and number of jobs to increase.

1941-45 — During World War II federal government forbids mining of precious metals; remaining trackage in Mining District is removed.

1942 — Establishment of Camp Hale, west of Tennessee Pass, announced in March. Multimillion-dollar project houses 15,000 troops training in mountain-related warfare. Population rises, and economy improves.

1950s — Ore production back in millions of dollars.

1959 — Leadville named All America City by *Look* magazine.

1960s — Arkansas Valley Smelter is closed. C&S standard gauge 2-8-0 no. 641 retired, last operating steam locomotive in Leadville.

1970s and '80s — Fluctuations in the prices of precious metals keep miners' hopes alive, and talk of reopening mines and building smelters is constant.

Leadville searches for new ways to survive, ways compatible with its heritage. Economic diversification is imperative. Tourism and skiing assist, but more is needed to guide the Cloud City into the 21st century. □

LEADVILLE IN THE 1980s

Since 50,000 persons lived, today only 5,000 remain. One of the last remnants — the giant AMAX Climax mine 12 miles away at Climax — employer of many in Leadville — is probably forever. The branch roads remain of the last of the three roads that gave access to the community of the outside world. However, they no longer grind up the hill from the grade crossings. Modern schools and homes, both new and old, are empty.

Things began happening in the market nearly a decade ago, talk of "four or five smelters" being considered in Leadville made headlines in Denver papers. Silver is now worth \$36 an ounce, and talk of smelters is renewed.

Yet that "hang on baby" attitude of the Cloud City strong.

There are many positive aspects of life in Leadville. For example, a new tourist road opened last year using the old Park right-of-way to Climax and is a good business. The National Mining Hall of Fame has decided to locate its headquarters and museum in Leadville. Don't forget that the town sits near the Continental Divide amid spectacular scenery and close to excellent hunting, fishing and good skiing. There are comfortable motels, good restaurants, outstanding historical sites to view.

In the past, Leadville's roots, still exists. Hard-rock mining is nowhere near the way of life, although the majority are not of the glitter of silver and gold but of spartan zinc and lead.

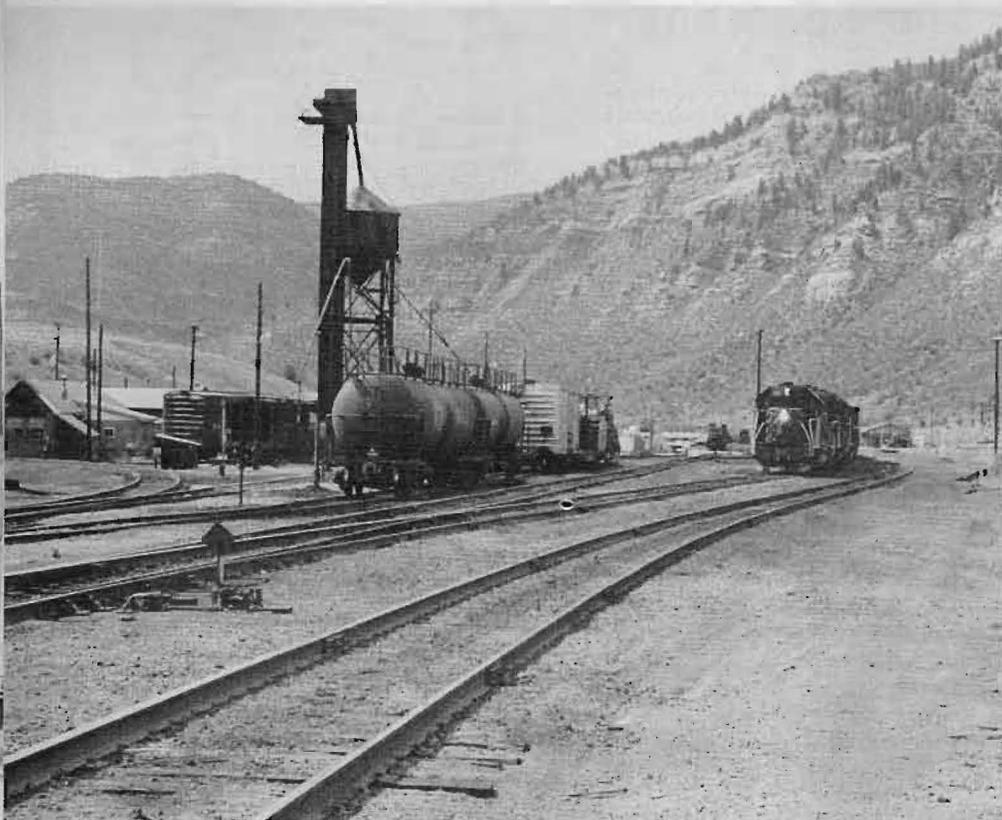
There are no longer loaded in Leadville, but are trucked to a team track at Climax. In that nearby community gondolas wait to transport them for milling and smelting elsewhere.

The track of the Denver & Rio Grande still reaches the old C&S/D&RG station. Now, however, it's the GP9s of the Colorado & Southern that pull the road crossings.

Tourists — the angler and the curious in the spring and summer, the hunter in the fall, and the skier in the winter — now form the economic basis of Lake County's seat.

And those people that visit, those that

Here are two typical houses in the section of Leadville which were originally miners' homes. They are small and simple, but include enough gingerbread to give them a touch of class. Left: Many of today's residents have reminders of the silver boom. This street on the east edge of the town is lined with the foot of huge piles of tailings from the mines that once dotted the area.



Here at Malta the Rio Grande's main line passes close to Leadville. The freight is eastbound.

tarry for a while, soon become aware of the deep historical significance of this village and what it meant to the young state of Colorado. They also become aware of the persons who, because of success in the hard rocks here, rose to lead that young state.

Perhaps a few visitors can experience what it was like to live here a century ago. They can almost hear the shriek of the mine whistles, the roar of the smelters,

the slow chuff of steam as it challenges 4 percent grades, the frenzy of Harrison Ave. and State St. — even though these heartbeat sounds of Leadville are long ago and far away. And almost, almost you can hear a faint echo from just over the hill to the south, "Boys, I've got all California in this pan!"

C&S ROUNDHOUSE

The Colorado & Southern roundhouse

This roundhouse was built for the Colorado & Southern, then used by the Burlington Northern, and now by the Leadville, Colorado & Southern, a tourist line.

at Leadville, built in 1884 shortly after the narrow gauge rails reached the two-mile-high city, has lived a long and useful life.

Initially, according to sketchy records, the structure was built as an eight-stall facility. Later photographs and information reveal it to have just six. Exactly when this reduction took place is not clear.

As originally constructed, the roundhouse was 60 x 126 feet. It was serviced by a 50-foot iron turntable.

The abandonment of the C&S line from Climax to Denver in 1938 signaled a change in the life of the roundhouse. The 14-mile Leadville-Climax branch remained in narrow gauge until late 1943, when it was widened to standard gauge. About that time all the trackage was removed from the Leadville Mining District.

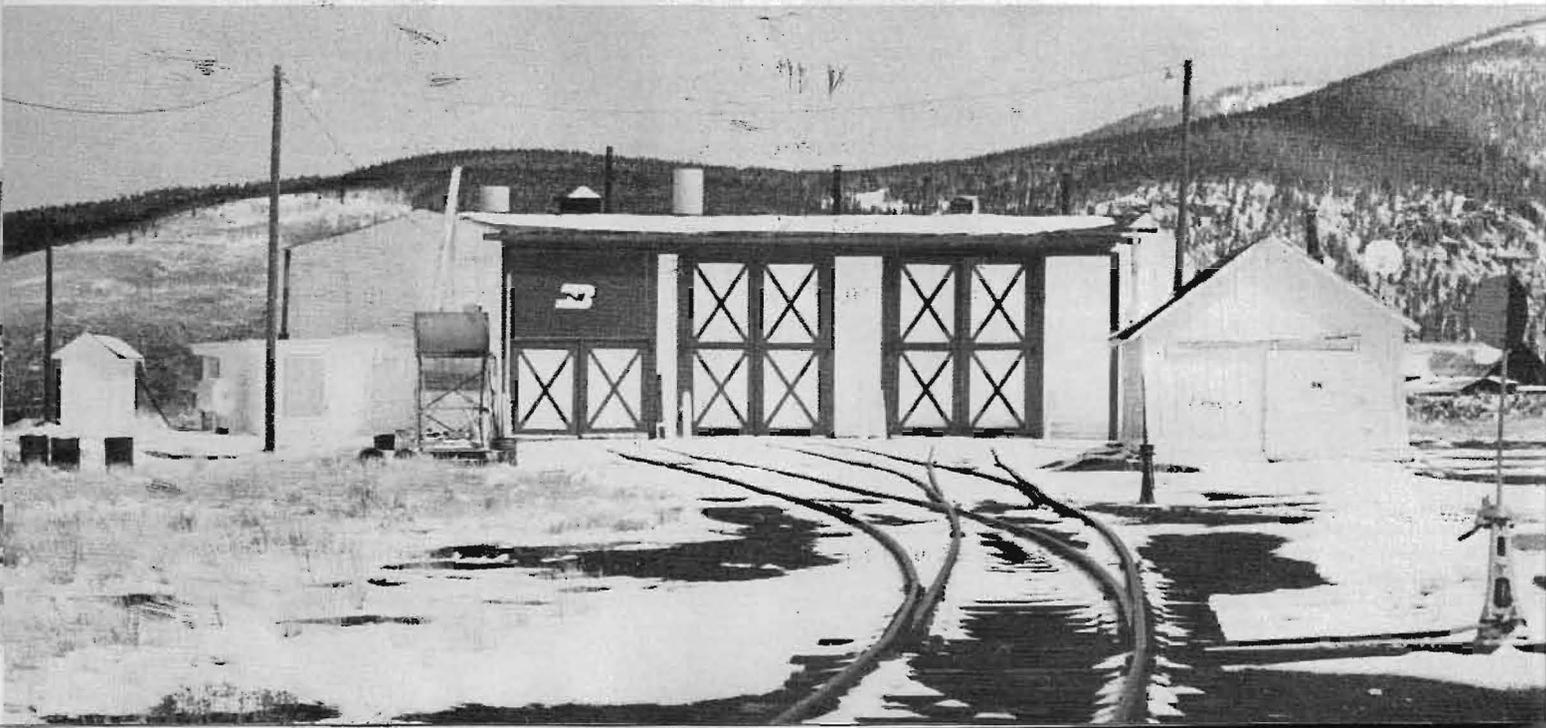
The arrival of the larger standard gauge locomotives required a change in the enginehouse facilities. The turntable was removed, being too short for the larger locomotives, and an addition was built on the front of the roundhouse. The stalls were widened to handle the larger power, which reduced their number to the three seen today.

Now the Leadville, Colorado & Southern RR, a tourist operation, keeps its SD9s in the roundhouse. As in the days of standard gauge steam, a wye located to the north of the roundhouse is used to turn equipment.

EXPLORING THE MINING DISTRICT

Resurgence of mining activity as well as the unseen dangers inherent in any mining district should be a warning to persons browsing around an area such as Leadville.

Most mines are still under claim, though they may be idle. Claim owners are very protective and often become belligerent about "lookie-loos" wandering around their property. They have good reason to be wary, as a number of structures have been vandalized over





This is the roadbed of the Rio Grande's standard gauge line to the Ibox mining area east of Leadville. The grade was in excess of 4 percent as it climbed up to the mine complex at 11,000. Until it was torn up during World War II, this was the highest standard gauge track in America.



This is what California Gulch looks like today. Here the first intensive mining took place in the Leadville area. Remains of mines, mills, and lots of decaying cribbing that held back the tailings can be seen throughout the area. The highway shown was built on the old Rio Grande right-of-way.

the years and equipment likely thought worthless taken away.

I encountered a very concerned owner at the Fanny Rawlings Mine high above Leadville shortly after I had observed persons in an out-of-state car carting away a few "souvenirs." If you prowl around mine areas, remember you're probably on private property and may be held liable for what you might do, even for what somebody else did.

The best advice is to be respectful and,

if possible, request permission to be on the property in advance. That respect should extend to the very real dangers novices can encounter in a mining district such as Leadville or Cripple Creek.

Many of the shafts are clearly marked by what is left of an old headframe or fenced area. Others are not. But regardless of the marking around a shaft, there is a caving problem near the lip or collar of the shaft — it could give way very unexpectedly, resulting in a fall of as much

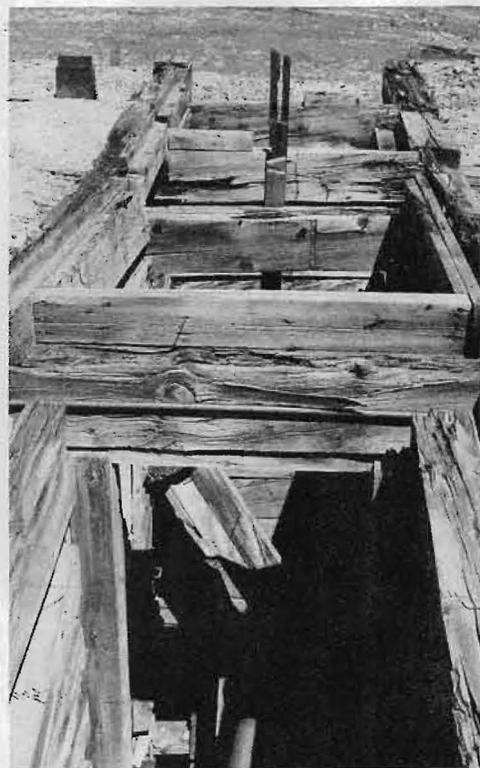
as a half-mile! Even if the drop isn't that great, few people survive a fall into a mine shaft. If you are alone your chances of being found are remote.

The best advice is to travel with a companion and stay away from the shaft openings and out of tunnels. When in doubt, stand back. Take nothing but photographs and leave nothing but your footprints. That's kind of the wilderness code anyway, and it's especially fitting in a mining district.



Above: The surface workings of the Robert Emmett Mine, surrounded by waste from mines and mills in the vicinity of Stray Horse Gulch. Here in 1896 a battle between guards and striking miners left one man dead.

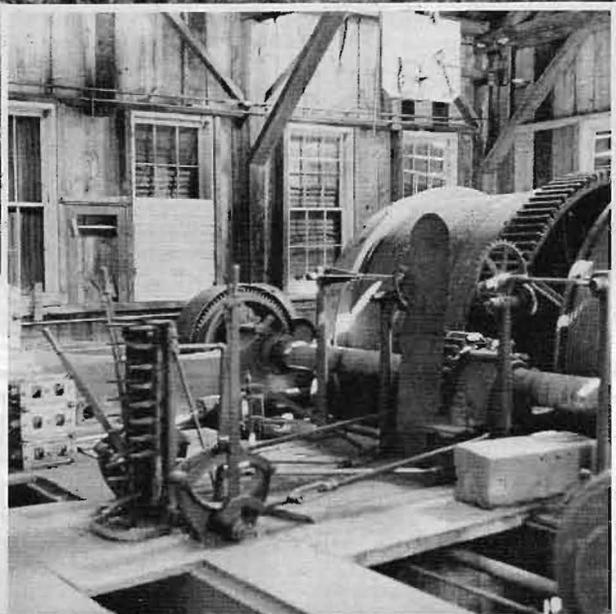
Right: Warning: A structure like this looks interesting and begs to be explored, but don't try it! Those gaping square holes are doors to disaster; they are the unguarded top of a mine shaft high above Leadville. Rotting timbers like these can give way at any moment with your weight on them, and the result can be a fall of hundreds of feet. Even the area surrounding a shaft, known as the collar, can give way. Play it safe when exploring a mining area. Take a friend along with you, and stay away from old structures like this one.





Above: Storm clouds gather over Mosquito Pass in this view of the Fanny Rawlings Mine. The hopper or tibble building at the right may have been used to load ore into horse-drawn drays for transport to smelters in Ibex.

Right: An inside look at the hoist machinery at the Ibex complex. This is similar to what was used in the Fanny Rawlings Mine. Note the double-cable drums, added as a safety measure or to accommodate more activity.





We're looking southeast at the Fanny Rawlings Mine. The shaft house is at the left, the hoist house at the right. The remains of a waste-material trestle can be seen in the lower right corner.

FANNY RAWLINGS MINE

The Fanny Rawlings Mine is a fairly typical structure in the Leadville Mining District. The mine, just northwest of the famed Ixex complex, was primarily a gold producer.

This mine was active as early as 1889, and though there were a few gold mines in the Leadville area (one of the most notable being the Little Jonny at Ixex),

it does exist in a relatively rare company because of the mineral vein it tapped. The gold enabled some mines to continue in operation following the Panic of 1893, a demonetization that eventually led to the closing of most of the silver mines in the district.

While the D&RG rails reached Ixex to the southeast, rising 100 to 200 feet higher in elevation, they did not serve the Fanny Rawlings directly. This was

the probable cause of some construction that set this mine apart from others in the fabled district.

The company built an ore hopper at the edge of the mountainside and added a tramway that brought the ore to a transfer point some 200 feet below and adjacent to the D&RG tracks in Lincoln and South Evans Gulches.

There were two basic types of aerial tramways. On one the ore buckets rode on a stationary cable and could lock on to a secondary, moving cable. On the other, probably the one used at the Fanny Rawlings, the buckets were attached somewhat permanently to a single moving cable. They could, however, be removed for repair. What made the tramway at this mine unique was that it used the weight of an ore-filled bucket to pull empties back to the ore hopper on the mountain.

An average crew at the mine might consist of one or two hoist operators; a fireman/boilerman/mechanic, who could have been one of the hoist operators; one to four ore sorters, depending on the amount of ore coming to the surface and how much sorting was performed below ground; and one to three laborers. The below-ground shift may have numbered as many as a dozen men. And of course there was a shift boss or foreman. Finally, there would have been one or two operators for the tram.

This ore-holding hopper is typical of those found around Leadville. Located at a mine two miles northeast of the Fanny Rawlings, it featured an

18" gauge mine tramway running on top. The piles behind the hopper which appear to be providing support for the tramway are actually waste.





These three views of a modern mine complex show the simplicity of the headframe and the hoist house behind. The purpose of the sturdy steel frame to the left of the headframe is unclear. The mountain in the distance was stripped of trees years ago which were used for cribbing and mine supports.

MODERN MINES

Not all mines in the Leadville area are relics of the past. Some that continued producing into the mid-20th century found it prudent to modernize the facilities. Several examples are in evidence such as this unnamed mine east of Leadville at the foot of Mosquito Pass.

One common practice was to replace 10" x 10" wooden supports with steel beams. A second involved rebuilding the boiler or hoist house as a simple, metal-sheathed structure.

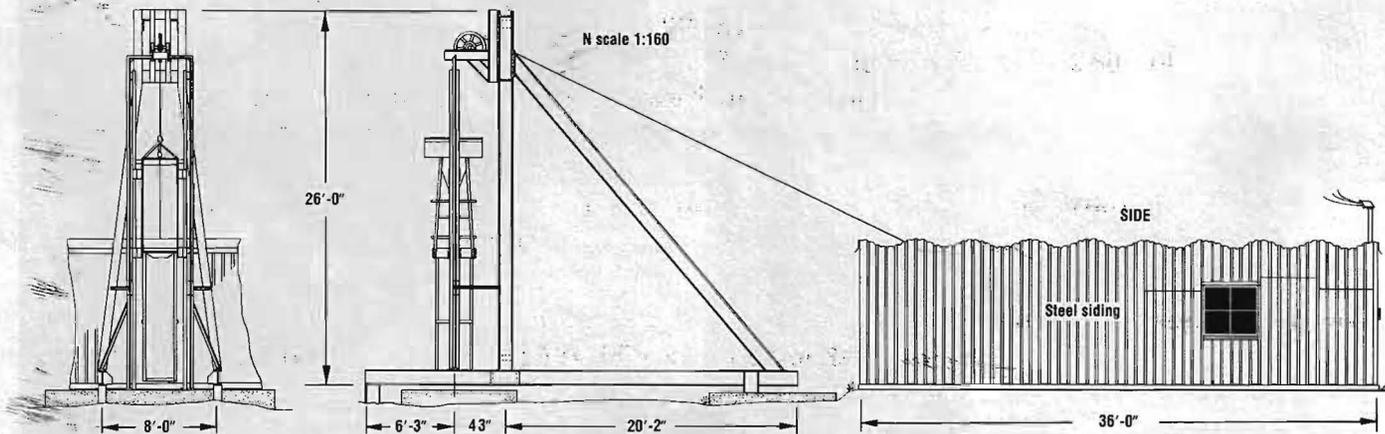
Despite these changes, the mines' basic operation has scarcely changed in 100 years. The cable still runs from the hoist house to the top of the modified "A" headframe, and a modern counterpart to yesterday's shaft cars stands ready to be lowered.

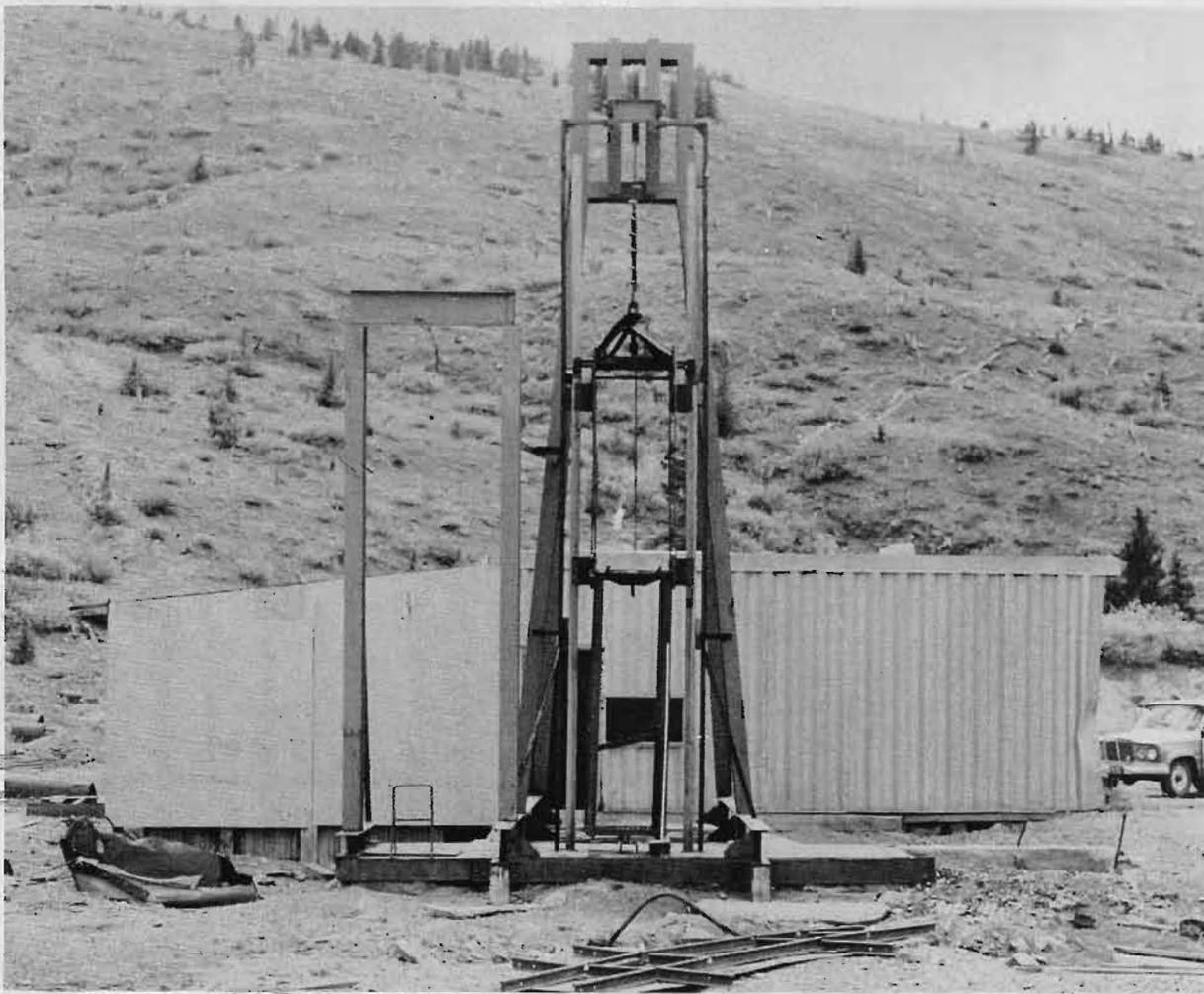
A mine possessing minimal surface workings would be a great addition to a modern layout. Often it's worked by a weekend miner, whose battered pickup is parked outside while he and his partner work above and below the ground extracting a variety of minerals.

Those simple workings contrast vividly

with the structures built 90 years ago. So too does the electric hoist motor used in place of a steam-driven one. While some of the larger mines of the late 19th century did make their own electricity using a steam generator, this one probably buys it from the Rural Electrification Administration.

Now that we've examined the history of Leadville and the operations of its mines past and present, we're ready to start modeling the area. Next month we'll deal with that and look specifically at modeling the Ixex Tipple and the Matchless Mine. ♀



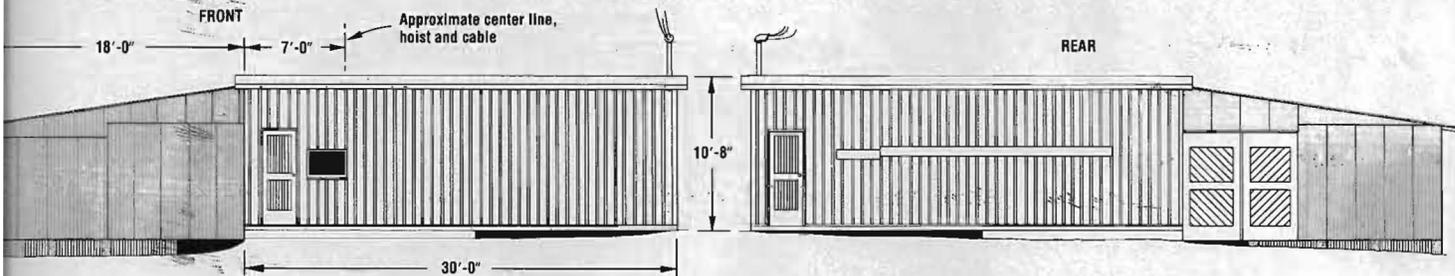


Not all of the mining done around Leadville belongs to the past. The American Smelting and Refining Company's Black Cloud Shaft is built to modern mine standards and extracts lead, tin, and zinc ores, along with some gold and silver.



Drawn for MODEL RAILROADER MAGAZINE by
HAROLD W. RUSSELL

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The great ghost train chase

Or, how we spent an enjoyable week exploring Colorado mining towns and abandoned rights-of-way

BY ERIC LUNDBERG

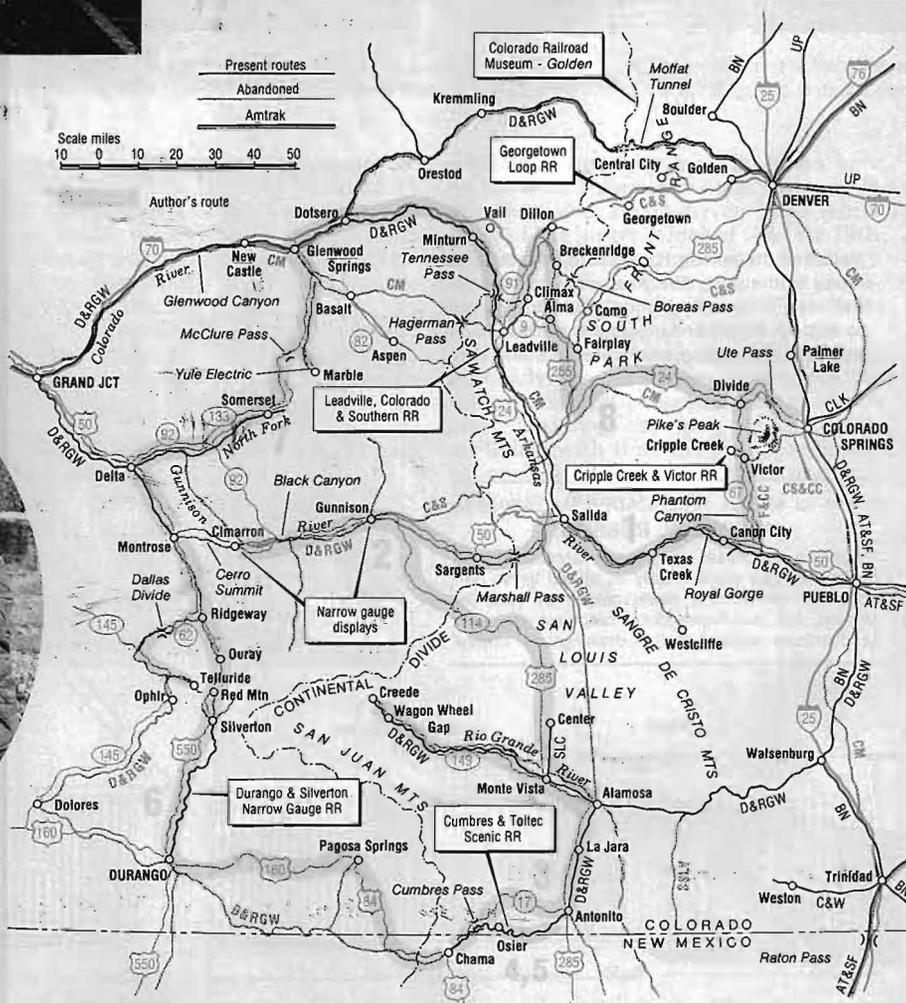
THE SEED for the Great Ghost Train Chase of 1983 was planted in Tulsa, Okla., in 1980. MODEL RAILROADER Senior Editor Jim Hediger pointed out to me that while he had visited Colorado, he'd never had the chance to see its rail trails past and present.

I told Jim that if he ever found himself in Colorado with time on his hands, I'd be happy to show him around. The seed bore fruit three years later, thanks to MR Editor Russ Larson, who thought he'd like the same opportunity. A couple of itineraries were constructed, and on an evening in early October my wife and I picked up the two "flatlanders" at Denver's airport. What followed was a week of viewing old grades, seeing old and new mines, riding narrow gauge like you owned it, going up and down fearful mountain passes, and rarely seeing our motel before dark.

The Great Ghost Train Chase was meant to capture the feeling of the days of narrow gauge steam in the Colorado Rockies. This photo by Russ Larson of the Cumbres & Toltec crew at the Chama sanding tower recalls a bygone era.



The Great Ghost Train Chasers, left to right, Russ Larson, Eric Lundberg, and Jim Hediger (who took the photo), posed at a mining car monument in Leadville.



DAY 1

Colorado Springs was our starting point, and our direction was west to the Cripple Creek area and ultimately Salida. There are two ways to reach Cripple Creek: trace the Colorado Springs & Cripple Creek line through its several tunnels, or go up Ute Pass on and beside the old Colorado Midland line. Bleak weather and problems with the first choice led us to follow the paved route. In good weather the CS&CC route is accessible by the family car; early this year, however, the collapse of two tunnels led to its being closed temporarily. The route we took follows U. S. 24 to Divide, then turns south.

The Midland grade is used for the road and goes into Victor; a cutoff allows motorists to go to Cripple Creek. At Divide we stopped at an old Midland station that sells refreshments. Then we continued to Cripple Creek, where a 2-foot tourist line with steam engines is the main attraction.

After we'd ridden the train and looked over the area, the "native guide" (me) pointed the old Chrysler down the winding road through Phantom Canyon. This is the abandoned grade of the Florence & Cripple Creek RR.

Now I didn't let on that I'd never been on this route before. If I had, the trip would have ended right there. From then on Jim wanted to wear his seat belt to bed!

The Phantom Canyon road took us out of the mountains just east of Cañon City on U. S. 50. From there we followed the Arkansas River and the Denver & Rio Grande's Royal Gorge route into Salida. Along the way we saw some of the "fortlets" that were built during the Royal Gorge War of 1878-80, when the Rio Grande fought with the Santa Fe for land rights through this rugged area. Another interesting sight was the trackage leading from the canyon at Texas Creek towards the silver camp at Westcliffe.



Russ Larson

The once booming mining town of Victor, Colo., now has many vacant buildings. Remove the street-light and spruce up the buildings, and this photo could have been taken in 1923 instead of 1983.

DAY 2

On Monday we headed out of Salida and followed the D&RG route over Marshall Pass and down into Gunnison. Marshall Pass is driveable in good weather by any vehicle and is well worth the effort because of its scenic beauty and historical significance. We railfans were rewarded in several ways. We saw the turntable pit at the pass, the old helper town of Sergeants on the western foot of the pass, and an excellent narrow gauge display in Gunnison. Also of great interest was a D&RG ore-loading facility that's still in place there. [Photos and drawings follow on pages 102 and 103. — Ed.]

You can return to Salida via U. S. 50 and view the old switchback grade of the D&RG's Monarch Branch. However, we decided to keep going and went all the way to Cimarron on Monday. That's where the D&RG left Black Canyon and built over Cerro Summit into Montrose. Here again we saw narrow gauge country exhibits, including a 2-8-0, boxcar, and caboose perched on a short trestle, and a display of early cattle-shipping facilities complete with pens and a couple of stockcars.

Heading southeast for the "barn" at Alamosa, it was again well past dark by the time we tied up.



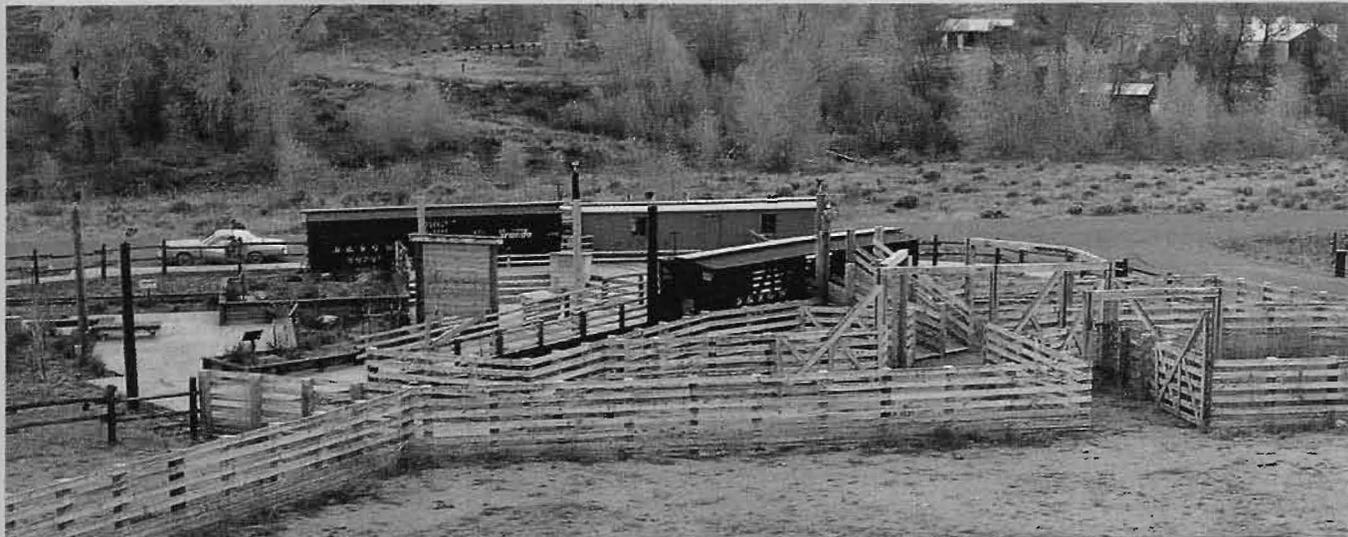
Jim Hediger

Today's traveler to Colorado finds a lot of narrow gauge equipment on display. Here at Cimarron is an exhibit by the National Park Service featuring a D&RGW 2-8-0, boxcar, and caboose.

If you want to model an early livestock-shipping facility, pay a visit to this exhibit at Cimarron featuring stock pens, loading ramps, and stockcars.

The National Park Service display includes informative plaques that explain how both cattle and sheep were shipped from facilities like these.

Jim Hediger



DAY 3

Tuesday was a day for ghosts and lively railroads. While it may not last much longer, the Rio Grande branch from Alamosa to Creede is still intact, and we followed it to the bitter end. A bonus that morning was the opportunity for the three of us to measure and photograph the fine little station at Wagon Wheel Gap. [Drawings of the station, based on these field measurements, were published in the March 1988 issue of MR. — Ed.] Heading back from Creede we were able to engage in a little train chasing when we spotted the San Luis Central's peewee diesel hauling a few cars north out of Monte Vista. I told Jim and Russ it was planned.

Breaking tradition and resisting the urge to follow the abandoned San Luis Southern's right-of-way south and east of Alamosa, we turned south and headed for Chama and one of Bill Peters' "Rider Freights." To get there we followed the D&RG's former dual gauge branch to Antonito. Interesting stations are located there and just up the line at La Jara.

You may be wondering what a "Rider Freight" is. Bill Peters, the owner of Peter-Built-Locomotive Works, which is best known for their Sn3 locomotives and cars, occasionally sponsors special runs on the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic RR after the line shuts down for the season. As the name implies, the 60 or so people who sign up ride in freight cars — mostly specially equipped fan-trip gondolas. Those who don't get out for the photo run-bys are supposed to crouch down so the train looks like an authentic Rio Grande freight train from the 1930s.

DAYS 4 & 5

The Rider Freights don't come along often anymore, and we had arranged our schedule around the opportunity to spend two days on and around a narrow gauge freight, double-headed at first, between Chama and Sublette, N. Mex. After double-heading with two K-36 narrow gauge Mikes up to Cumbres Summit, one locomotive was cut off and the train proceeded to Sublette to be turned.

Most of us spent the night there. Russ and I opted for sleeping bags in a boxcar. Jim decided to take the van into town and stay in a motel. That turned out to be a wise choice, as the temperature dropped to 15 degrees. Russ earned the nickname "chainsaw" that night, while Jim was known as "featherbed."

There are several access points on the the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic RR. Included, of course are both terminals, as well as Sublette, Osier, and most of the way from Chama to the Los Pinos tank east of Cumbres. Chama is still open to casual browsing as Durango once was. Both Chama and Antonito are worth spending some time in, and we found the ride was definitely worthwhile.

DAY 6

Friday we pressed on to Durango under a gray October sky, spotting along the way some of the long abandoned roadbed of the countless logging lines of southwestern Colorado. There's a web of old logging lines in this part of the state, and



Jim Hediger

The highlight of the Great Ghost Train Chase was a special fan trip on the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic RR. One of the engines double-heading the train up to Cumbres Summit was this K-36 class Mikado. Volunteers were allowed to temporarily apply the Rio Grande name and numbers to the engines.



Russ Larson

Above: The spectacular scenery on the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic RR includes these unusual pinnacle rock formations at Phantom Curve. **Below:** Homeward bound, our Rider Freight makes a photo run-by over Cascade Trestle, an impressive steel structure that is 409 feet long and 137 feet high.

Jim Hediger



you can gain access to some from U. S. 84 between Chama and Pagosa Springs.

There was a time in Durango when you could quietly wander about the yards. That time is long gone, and all the yards are fenced in. As a result, we headed north for Silverton, Red Mountain, and Ouray, made a side trip to Telluride, and spent the night in Montrose.

We saw quite a lot as we drove along U. S. 550. The drive includes two scenic mountain passes and later leads into Silverton. Three narrow gauge lines radiated north from there; when the weather cooperates, all three can be followed by a vehicle with good clearance. Silverton deserves at least a few hours, and if the Durango and Silverton RR is running, there's always plenty of excitement when it steams into town.

North out of Silverton on U. S. 550, we were on and off the narrow gauge roadbed all the way to Red Mountain. Here's another spot that offers at least a day's browsing among roadbeds, mine dumps, and the remains of the Cork-screw Turntable.

From Red Mountain to Ouray is the Million Dollar Highway, which may look hostile, but is really quite safe. From Ouray north we were able to view portions of the D&RG branch from Ridgeway, gone since the 1950s. At Ridgeway, which was the terminus of the defunct Rio Grande Southern, we turned southwest to follow that line over Dallas Divide and down to Telluride. There's a Galloping Goose (rail passenger car) on display in Telluride. We tied up about 8 p.m. in Montrose, which was once a key station on the D&RG's narrow gauge main line.

DAY 7

On Saturday we headed north, again following the D&RG's former narrow gauge main. Then we turned off the main highway and drove up the North Fork Valley out of Delta, our immediate goal being McClure Pass and Glenwood Springs. Along the way, however, we encountered the Somerset Branch coal mines. The D&RGW still has a branch up that creek, and at the time considerable coal tonnage was coming out.

From the North Fork Valley we crossed McClure Pass and on the other side turned upstream in the Crystal River Valley. We followed the grade of the Crystal River RR into Marble, which holds major remnants of its once-thriving marble works. (The stone for the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier came from there.) The Yule Electric brought the quarried marble down, and it was processed at Marble and shipped out over the Crystal River RR.

Little remains of the Yule today except for the grade. When the weather permits, hiking to the quarry is recommended.

A late lunch at Glenwood Springs brought us back in contact with the real railroad world—the D&RGW main line. Coming into Glenwood and going out west of it you can pick up signs of the Colorado Midland's right-of-way. Also, there is still considerable coal mining done south of town. A side trip up the Aspen Branch was ruled out because of time constraints.



Jim Hediger

The D&RGW station at Silverton, a mining town where four narrow gauge roads once operated.



Both photos by Russ Larson

Above: Here's one of the Rio Grande Southern's unique rail passenger cars, affectionately known as a "Galloping Goose," on display at Telluride. **Below:** In the fading twilight of Day 7, the Ghost Train Chasers took time to watch some real trains. Here's Rio Grande no. 5350, an SD40T-2, at the point of a freight working upgrade toward Tennessee Pass near Redcliff. That's the Eagle River in the foreground.

In the dry season and with four-wheel drive, you can branch off at Basalt, southeast of Glenwood Springs, and follow the Midland over Hagerman Pass and into Leadville. Again, however, we chose the paved way.

Glenwood Canyon is an extra benefit, although for several years heavy road construction has led to lengthy delays in the area. Even so, the scenery is breathtaking as the road and railroad follow the Colorado River.

East of the canyon the D&RG's Moffat and Royal Gorge lines part, and the road and railroad follow the Eagle River to the town of Minturn (four miles from Vail). With luck you can catch the D&RGW placing helpers in a train for the slow trip over Tennessee Pass. Most eastbound trains require helpers. The old railroad YMCA is open to the public, and it's smack in the middle of the yards.

In the fading twilight, we followed a D&RGW freight up Tennessee Pass, watched the helpers being removed, and then slipped into Leadville after dark. The stretch between Minturn and Tennessee Pass is an excellent place to watch trains.

We laid up at Leadville that night, just



roundhouse,
the turntable pit.
yards from the
now used by the
& Southern RR.

JAY 8

ing I took Jim and Russ
Leadville. The city really
st a couple of days, as does
District itself. There's a lot
rail and otherwise, to see.
weather much of the Mining
is accessible by car. Unfortu-
nately, that wasn't the case when we
were there. Several inches of snow kept
us out of the hills. There is still a fair
yard at Leadville, also used by the tour-
ist-hauling Leadville, Colorado & South-
ern. Nearby Malta is a good spot for
watching trains.

After the quick look at Leadville, we
headed north on Hwy. 91, a route that
follows the old C&S line to Climax on
the Continental Divide and then parallels
both that and the D&RG Blue River
Branch to Dillon. The roadbeds are easily
discernible. At Dillon we branched south
again to Breckenridge and over Hoosier
Pass into South Park. There we stopped
at Como, which has a great restaurant,
not to mention the roundhouse and an old
Denver, South Park & Pacific station.

A side trip to Fairplay and the Alma
Branch is possible from here as is a
short trip up the London and Horseshoe
Park Branches, where old mines can be
viewed. In good weather the family car
can make it over Boreas Pass, the South
Park's route out of its namesake and
into Breckenridge.

From Como it was downhill and back
to Colorado Springs, as we followed the
Colorado Midland most of the way. We
finished the week with dinner at a res-
taurant beside the Joint Line (D&RGW/
BN/AT&SF) in Colorado Springs. But
our luck ran out, and not a train ap-
peared until we left.

It was an exhausting yet most enjoy-
able week. We saw a lot of trains, made
Eastman Kodak stock look better, and
viewed the kind of scenery that only the
Colorado Rockies can offer.

Of course, there's much more of Colo-
rado railroading than we could see in a
week. The Trinidad area features old
coal mines and roadbeds. Then there are
Raton Pass, Pueblo and Denver for high
gear yard activities, and Palmer Lake
north of Colorado Springs, where south-
bound trains shed their helpers and 40
to 60 trains may be seen each day. And
don't forget the lonely abandoned rights-
of-way of the Rio Grande Southern and
the Uintah, the Moffat Tunnel where
helpers are often attached to eastbound
tonnage, and the heavy mainline action
east on the plains. Just a few miles
north of the border with Wyoming you
can see heavy mainline action between
Cheyenne and Laramie.

If you take your own ghost train
chase, please respect private property,
including the railroads', and the rules
and wishes of the property owners. Ask
first, and then take only pictures and
leave only footprints. Like the three of
us, you'll enjoy some of the best ghost
train watching anywhere! ☐



Ore bearing precious metals was once loaded into narrow gauge gondolas from this ramp built near Marshall Pass.

D&RG ore-loading ramp

THIS Denver & Rio Grande RR ore-loading ramp located near Marshall Pass, Colo., is in remarkably good condition. Jim Hediger and I saw it on our trip to Colorado in 1983 and thought it would make an interesting "industry" for a model railroad. With our host Eric Lundberg, we stopped and photographed and measured it. Mine owners who didn't have their own rail sidings had to haul their ore to ramps like this one, first by wagon and later by truck. A few days later the three of us came across a similar ramp that was still being used on the D&RGW standard gauge line near Creede.

The end of the platform is hinged so it can be raised to provide train clearance when not in use. At first we thought the gap in the ramp's flooring was a notch for the truck wheels to rest in while dumping. When Harold Russell laid out the drawings, however, he discovered that the notch is necessary to provide clearance when raising the end platform. — Russ Larson



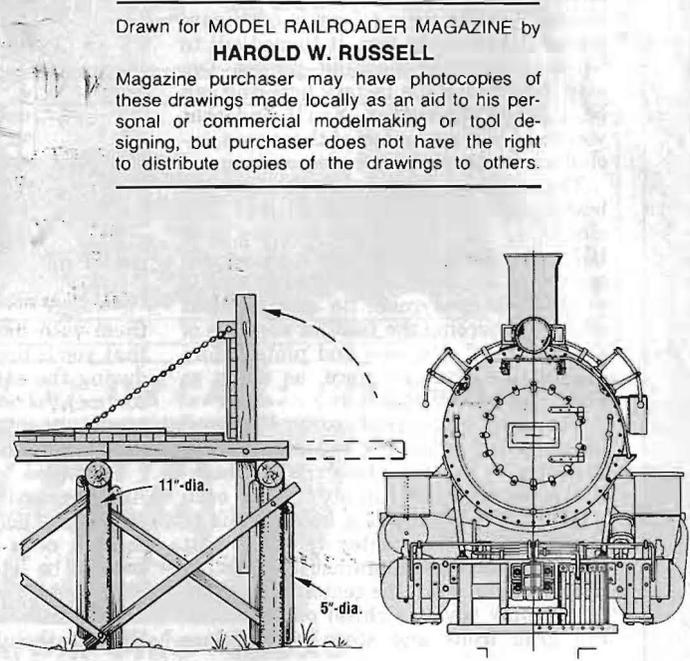
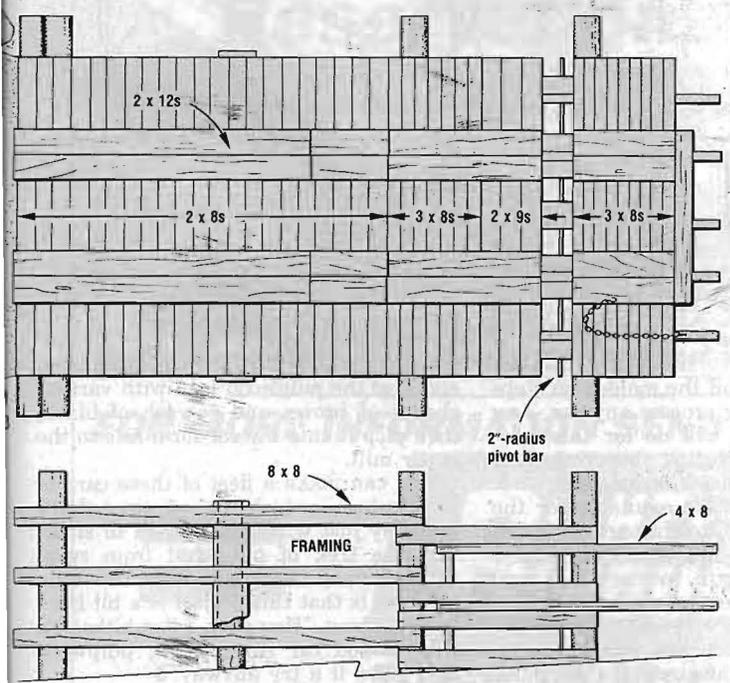
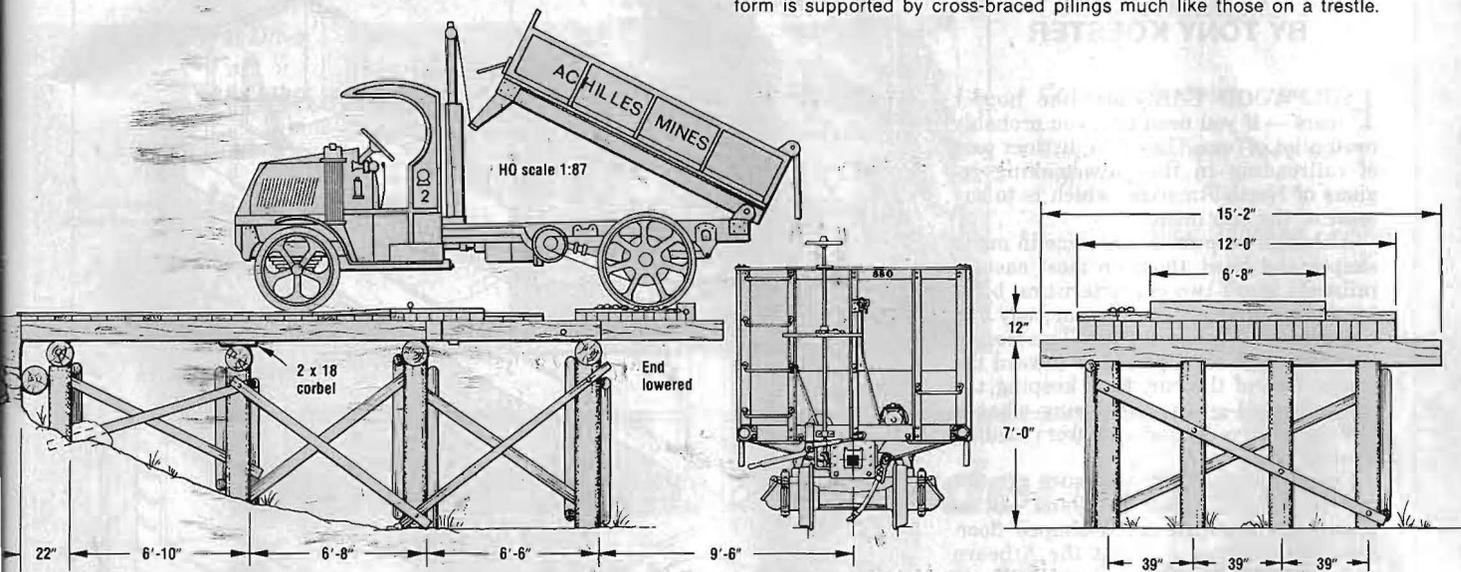
Russ Larson

Ore-loading ramps are still used today. Silver-bearing ore from a mine in Creede was being dumped into gondolas for shipment to a smelter in Texas when this photo was taken in October of 1983.



Black-and-white photos by Jim Hediger

Above left: The deck is supported by closely spaced 8 x 8 stringers. Notice the longitudinal planking for the truck wheels. Above: The ramp platform is supported by cross-braced pilings much like those on a trestle.



Drawn for MODEL RAILROADER MAGAZINE by HAROLD W. RUSSELL

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