

Last train from Leadville

THE DATE is Saturday, April 10, 1937. The Depression still hangs heavy over the nation. As the first rays of sunlight begin to burn off the early-morning fog, the last of all Colorado & Southern narrow-gauge passenger trains waits at 2-miles-high Leadville.

Panting softly in the frosty air near the depot is Mogul No. 9, complete with bear-trap stack and butterfly pilot plow. The crew and a few well-wishers stand around, gazing at her flanks. The three-foot-gauge trackage on which she stands had been part of the legendary Denver, South Park & Pacific. The Pacific was never reached, of course, and in 1889 the road was reorganized as the Denver, Leadville & Gunnison. In 1898, it became the C&S, which a decade later, in turn, came under control of the Burlington.

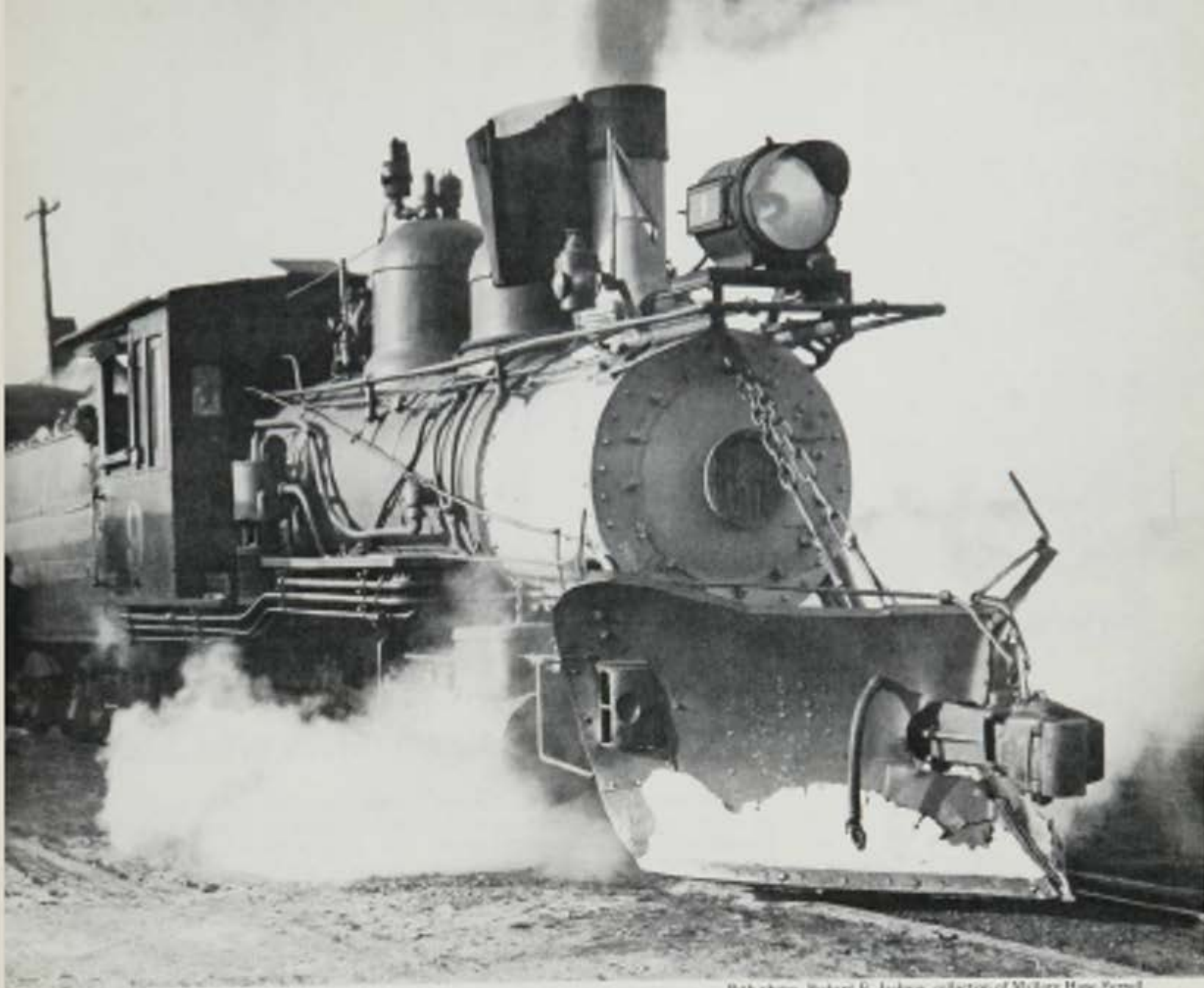
Like the whole country, this line of the C&S has fallen on hard times, and all but the 14½-mile portion from a Rio Grande connection here in Leadville up to Climax at the summit of Fremont Pass will be abandoned (and in six years the intact portion will be standard-gauged). Passenger service has been gone from the Clear Creek lines out of Denver for a decade, and today's train from Leadville will be the last varnish on the once-proud South Park.

From No. 9's cab, Engineer Patrick "Curley" Colligan talks with Conductor Tom St. John; on the platform, several passengers and local by-



standers take a long, last look at the small engine and her train of two Pullman-green cars. Cooke had delivered this 2-6-0 in 1884, the year the **US&P** completed the "high line" into the mining town of Leadville by way of Boreas and Fremont Passes. The community had experienced a silver boom, but it turned to bust with the Silver Panic of 1893. The slump continued, and mining never again recovered on any scale. All that is left is the faded glory and memories of H. A. W. Tabor, Baby Doe, and the Matchless Mine.

St. John calls, "All aboard-r-r-ed," and the short consist starts out, heading upgrade. It will go over Fremont and Boreas and Kenosha Passes, through Climax and Breckenridge and Como. For the last time.—MALLORY HOPE FERRELL.



Both photos, Richard E. Jackson, collector of McHenry Hope Yerrel

