

Denver & Rio Grande Western Railway

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This On30 narrow gauge layout (American 'O' Scale (1:48) running on 16.5 mm narrow gauge track) portrays the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railway's Three Foot Gauge service in Colorado from Denver to Durango (450.2 miles) then on to Silverton (another 45 miles leading to connection with the Silverton Northern). The layout's operations also incorporate those on the DRGW 50 mile branch line from Durango to Farmington in New Mexico (but run here as a Colorado & Southern line for variety) and on the Rio Grande Southern 162 mile line between Durango and Ridgway. Also included are engines of the Silverton Northern (12 miles Silverton to Animas Forks) and the Denver, South Park & Pacific (208 miles Denver to Gunnison) plus stock from the Silverton Northern, Great Northern and Union Pacific railroads.

The layout thus represents many of the railroads and a considerable proportion of the Three Foot Gauge track mileage once existing at the high altitudes (up to 10,000 feet plus) found in the Rocky Mountains in the States of Colorado and New Mexico.

The layout is centred on Durango and its American Smelting & Reduction Company ore smelter around the year 1905 at the peak of freight and ore transportation for the precious metals (mainly silver) mining industry located in central Colorado.

The layout has 2.1 scale miles of track and is electrically divided into sections. There are currently 50 turnouts (points) and a scale 48 foot diameter turntable. Two turnouts are for future bridge/trestle access to similar narrow gauge layouts. A circuit of the layout is 22 feet long, and 5 circuits make a scale mile (110 feet). An electric Dual Cab Control system enables any two engines to be run independently. Since the November 2014 Show the original 2 ampere Dual Cab system has been replaced by a 5 ampere one. The extra power will enable larger/articulated engines to be run on the layout as well as allowing double-heading and/or banking of trains to be performed.

The layout shown features metallic ores brought down from the Silverton area for smelting at Durango, coal for the smelter brought from the Durango City Coal Mine, lumber hauled from the Posta forests for the Durango Sawmills, livestock movements (sheep from Silverton, beef cattle and horses from Farmington) and the general traffic arising from Denver, Farmington and the Rio Grande Southern line.

The layout buildings around Durango (Smelter, Station, Freight Depot, Engine House and Coaling Tower) have been modelled on the Denver & Rio Grande originals (some of which have been demolished, altered or rebuilt over the years since 1905).

The rolling stock is mostly of the period but with livery variations. Some D&RGW cars (and Engine 138) have the later 'Bumblebee' (Grande Gold) livery still in use today on the Durango & Silverton (a successor line to the D&RGW). Most of the other engines are in Vanderbilt (black) livery and some have graphite-grey smoke boxes and chimneys. All engines are equipped with working headlights. Combines, Passenger and Baggage cars and most of the Cabooses have working internal lights.

The layout's all-steam (and mainly coal-fired) Engine Register now totals 20; it comprises two Porter 0-4-0 Switchers, a Porter 0-4-2 wood-fired Switcher, twelve 2-6-0 Rogers Moguls with tenders, three 4-4-0 Baldwin Americans with tenders (one engine is wood-fired), plus the Colorado Mining Corporation's special engines – a 28 Ton Climax and a 14 Ton wood-fired Shay both of which are geared articulated tank engines specifically designed for haulage along temporary lightweight tracks such as those typically found being used in mining, quarrying and forestry locations.

Today, just for a change, the D&RGW side is taking a backseat so that we can concentrate instead on aspects of the Colorado & Southern coupled with the coal and lumber activities of the Colorado Mining Corporation and the operations of the Rio Grande Southern including the latter's speciality – the 'Gallopings Geese' (motor cars with articulated trailers adapted to run on narrow gauge railroad tracks). This is being done in collaboration with the Colorado & Southern and Rio Grande Southern engines, 'Geese' and rolling stock belonging to Gosport Group Member Bryan Spencer. Do watch out for these welcome visitors taking their turn on the layout.

Bryan is building his own On30 narrow gauge layout inspired by the Colorado & Southern and which includes logging and coal mining activities. On completion his layout will appear at Gosport Group Shows together with two bridges to link his On30 layout to this one. The two bridge links will enable whole trains to be turned end to end round a giant loop (as at the real Durango today) without needing any movements in reverse thus saving a lot of time and enabling more trains to be set up and run for the enjoyment of our Visitors to the Show.

This conveniently brings us round to opportunities today to help run the layout by joining in and doing some of the engine driving yourself. If you are interested in driving today – just ask! Please note that children (at the discretion of the Engineer Staff) may drive an engine or 'Goose' provided that they are accompanied by an adult or adults who can supervise them throughout their driving session. If you are new to model railways the American Model Railroad Group hopes that driving here today will encourage you to take up railway modelling as a hobby - one from which you can derive much enjoyment as well as acquiring new friends and the skills for undertaking the construction and operation of a layout of your own. If model railroading appeals to you then you are most welcome to come along and join us!

Bryan and I would like to thank you for not only coming to the American Model Railroad Group Show today but also for the interest you have shown in our joint On30 (1:48) scale American Narrow Gauge display. We are in the Group's Narrow Gauge Section and our motto is 'Narrow of Gauge but not of Mind' so do please feel free to give advice and ask questions – your views will be appreciated.

John Feltham (Member of: American Model Railroad Group - Gosport, the Slim Gauge Circle and the British Region's Solent Sub-Division of the National Model Railroad Association (USA) 'Sharing Know-how')