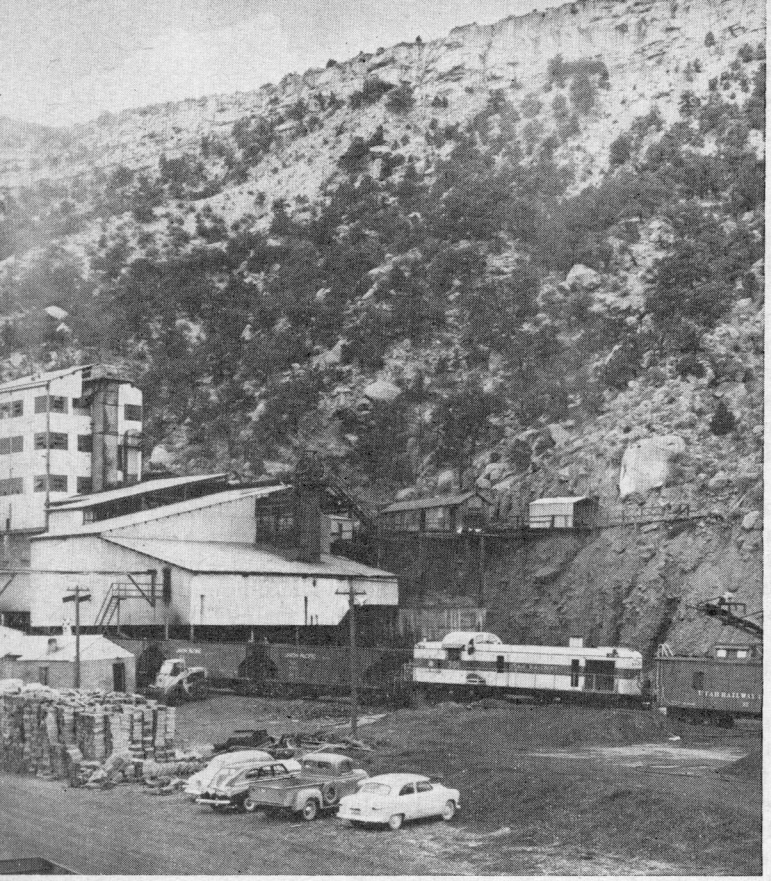
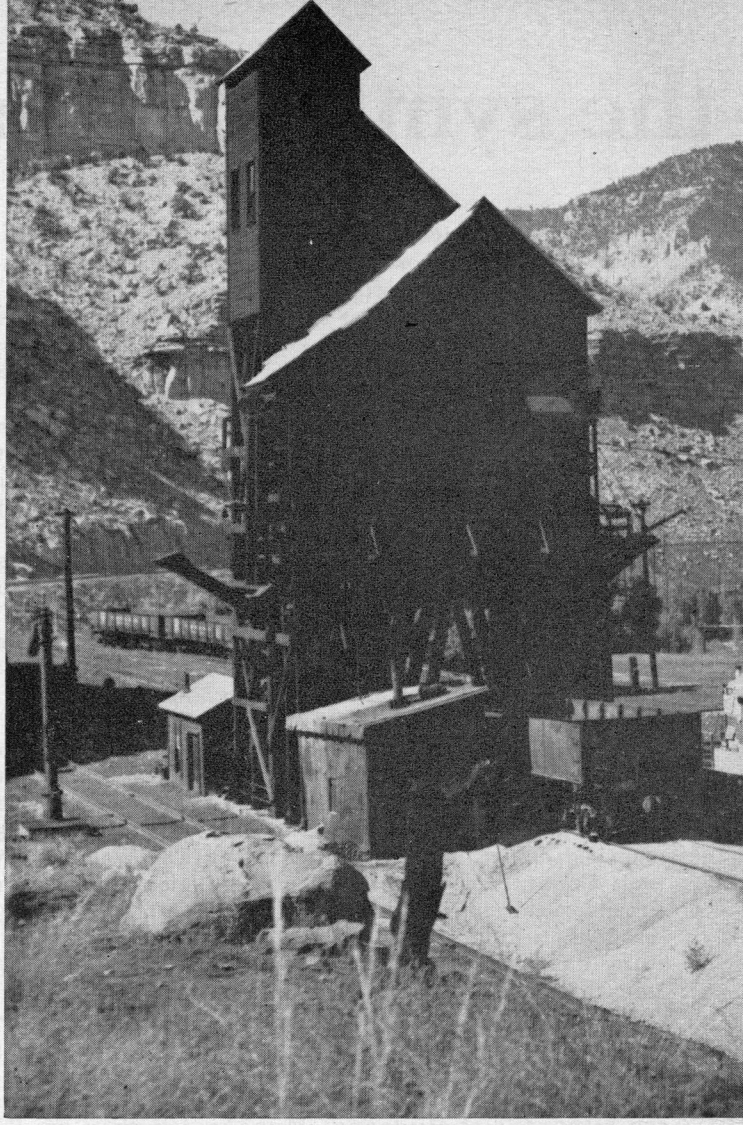




IT'S A JOB to reach the mine at Wattis, which — at an elevation of 7600 feet — lies at the end of a 2½-mile branch laid on an ugly 4 per cent gradient.

BY DONALD SIMS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY THE AUTHOR

BLACK DIAMONDS

They call the Utah Railway the Coal Route

IF there is one thing the Utah Railway isn't, it's level. Built to move coal from the rich veins in Carbon County on the eastern slopes of the Wasatch Range, this line crosses a series of rugged mountains along a 100-mile route that ends in the industrial city of Provo. It's been over 40 years since the first drag moved westward out of Martin, the road's operating headquarters, and there has never been any traffic but coal to keep it going. There is no other industry on the line; the railroad's fortunes fluctuate with the demand for Utah coal.

Unless you are a late-evening habitué it's doubtful you would ever see one of the 85-car Utah Railway coal trains cross the mountains via Denver & Rio Grande Western trackage. Normal procedure calls for locals to pull the mines late in the day and their consists to be consolidated into a road drag that leaves Martin about 10:30 each evening on which the mines work. On a moonlit night you can't miss the Coal Route trains as they conquer busy Soldier Summit in company with Rio Grande traffic because the Alco diesels are white—and paradoxically are kept that way despite the attendant grime that goes with carrying bituminous coal. Nor is it the only paradox connected with this unusual line. For instance, during the war years when things should have been booming, the Utah line was leasing its 2-10-2's and Mallets to the Rio Grande because local residents flocked to war plants on the Coast instead of working in the mines. Also, the company that constructed the railroad originally to haul coal for its manufacturing plants has turned to other fuels, yet retains ownership of the line.

A tenant on Soldier Summit

Although it operates over approximately 100 miles from the mines to the terminal in Provo, the company actually owns only about 45 miles of this route. Rights on D&RGW double track over Soldier Summit connect

COMING ROUND THE MOUNTAIN is No. 301 with a train of empties for the U. S. Fuel Company's mine at Hiawatha, Utah's biggest single customer.

←WHITE DIESELS have spelled the doom of the tall black coaling tower at Martin. The units received their unorthodox colors for the sake of cleanliness.

AND WHITE DIESELS

two separate stretches of line, one on the east side of the Wasatch where the mines are, the other leading from Thistle into narrow Spanish Fork Canyon in the western foothills to Provo.

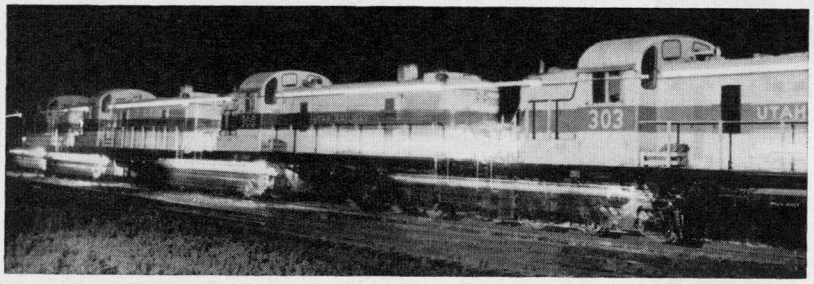
Martin, situated on a small plateau where the Price River Canyon widens into the mesa country of eastern Utah, is the road's headquarters. Here a 350-car yard is laid out on a grade, overlooked by a schoolish-appearing brick building that houses the superintendent's and dispatcher's offices.

The good parent

L. R. Taylor is bossman of the operating end of this railroad. A veteran of 22 years with the neighboring Rio Grande, he came to the Utah Railway in 1944 and has been keeping tab on things for the United States Smelting, Refining & Mining Company ever since. Many years have elapsed since that outfit burned Carbon County coal in its furnaces; the captive mines it owned were closed or sold as other fuels entered the picture. The parent, though, hasn't treated the child like a poor relation. A few years back when the road's steamers reached the point where replacement was necessary the mining company ordered six road-switchers for the railroad rather than shop around for secondhand locomotives. It's not an inconsiderable expenditure when you ponder the small amount of time each day the high-priced diesels are actually used.

Five days a week men enter the mining shaft of the United States Fuel Company at Hiawatha, a mining camp high in the mountains. Fifty to sixty cars of coal usually fill the adjacent yard by the time a Utah Railway diesel shows up with a string of empties for the next day's production, and these cars represent roughly two thirds of the road's daily trains over the hill. Two other mines served by the line supply the balance of traffic. Since these mines are on a five-day week it's natural that the railroad follow suit. First train on the Utah Rail-

because — well, what else could you call it?



A brace of helper units glides past at night.

Inside Utah's Alcos

Road numbers: Nos. 300-305 built in 1952; No. 306 in 1955.
Builder: Alco Products, Schenectady, N. Y.
Type: C-C or six-motor 0-6-6-0.
Engine: One V-12 turbosupercharged 1600-horsepower Alco diesel.
Weight: 360,000 pounds.
Supplies: Lubricating oil — 200 gallons; fuel oil — 1300 gallons; engine cooling water — 250 gallons; sand — 28 cubic feet.
Brakes: Brake schedule 24-RL pneumatic type for road switching service with straight and automatic air brakes on all wheels, plus a Westinghouse 3-CEB auxiliary air compressor unit driven by Hercules diesel engine.
Modifications: 1300 gallons of fuel oil in one tank account no steam generator; 24-RL braking schedule; roller bearings; multiple-unit control; extra seat for left side of cab; sun visors; sealed beam headlights; dynamic braking.
Dimensions: Height — 14 feet 8¼ inches; width — 10 feet 1⅞ inches.
Performance: 74:18 gear ratio with maximum speed of 65 miles per hour producing a continuous tractive effort of 78,750 pounds.

way starts out on Monday morning and the weekly operations close early Saturday morning when the previous day's mine production reaches Provo. This close relationship to the miners' working habits also extends to a two-week mine shutdown in the summer and on the first two days of Utah's deer hunt each fall, making the Utah Railway probably the only railroad that regularly stops operations because of a hunting season.

First train out of Martin on a Monday morning is a string of empties for Hiawatha, about 21 miles due south of the yard and upgrade all the way. No. 301, the 1600-horsepower Alco at the head of 45 hoppers, has a 1000-ton rating to Wattis Junction, 17 miles up the line. Beyond this point the grade eases a little; the tonnage figure goes up accordingly. The diesel is barely under way before it disappears into a curved tunnel on single track that cuts through a hill at the east end of the yard. When it emerges on the other side Martin is completely hidden from view. A long curve, then a steel trestle looms up as the Rio Grande's Spring Canyon Branch slides by underneath. The road-switcher settles down to a steady uphill grind as the train snakes through a region of mesas and plateaus in this arid high country of the Mormon state.

It's lonely and impressive up here where an occasional summer thunderstorm sends its blasts echoing down the sheer-walled canyons to compete with the creaking sounds of mine tipples and the metallic thuds of steel wheels hitting rail joints. Jacobs, Wild Cat, Gordon Creek pass in review, their existence pinpointed by wooden signboards which stamp them as railroad sidings. Other than the mining camps, which are reached from the county seat at Price via circuitous roads, there are no other towns on this end of the rail line.

Cutting through hills, crossing canyons on steel girders, clinging to the sides of vertical cliffs, the growling diesel climbs higher in a setting that many a dome car would love to advertise on its itinerary. At Wattis Junction a branch takes off to climb a hill to one of the mines. The mine run slows to enter a side track where a few of the empties are dropped; the train continues on to Hiawatha.

A long cut obscures the mining camp of Hiawatha till the last minute. Emerging from the cut, the empties cross a high fill, surge forward at the yard limit sign as the air takes hold, and come to a stop opposite the mine tipple. There's coal dust everywhere, filling the air and settling inches deep on wooden ties. As the empties are pushed past mine buildings to a small yard above, a loaded hopper leaves the tipple, ridden by a man who will stop it below. It's the usual procedure to spot empties above the mine where they can be gravity-fed for loading, then sent on down to another track ready for the Utah Railway. This holds true for most mines in the Carbon County field and is accomplished by muscle power and handbrakes.

It's relatively early in the day, and there aren't many loads waiting on the outbound track. Not enough at any rate to warrant a train out of Martin tonight, so the diesel skips them, ties onto the caboose, and heads downgrade for Wattis Junction and the Lion Coal Company mine. Ordinarily there are two crews called on duty at Martin each day for the mine runs. One goes to Hiawatha, the other to Wattis; and upon return to the main yard one of these is sent to pull the short Spring Canyon Branch that takes off just south of the tunnel. About twice a week the Hiawatha run goes on up the line about 3 miles to end of track at Mohrland to pull cars loaded by small "wagon mines" that truck their coal to the railroad.

For 4 per cent the ratio is 74:18

The 74:18 gear ratio of the road's six diesels is really put to task by the 2½-mile run from Wattis Junction up to the mine at Wattis. There is no room to run around the cars at the top of the canyon where the Lion mine is, so it's necessary to push the train ahead on a 4 per cent grade that twists and turns to gain altitude. A few tracks that dead-end around a curve hold the loads here at an altitude of 7600 feet, which tops Soldier Summit. A train leaving here drops 1700 feet to Martin, then jumps up 1500 feet to the summit on the D&RGW, and finally heads down again to Provo, a descent of another 2000 feet, all within a 90-mile stretch. On the way down from Wattis the loads are placed ahead of the engine, and handbrakes are set on the lead cars to prevent a break in two when the air is released.

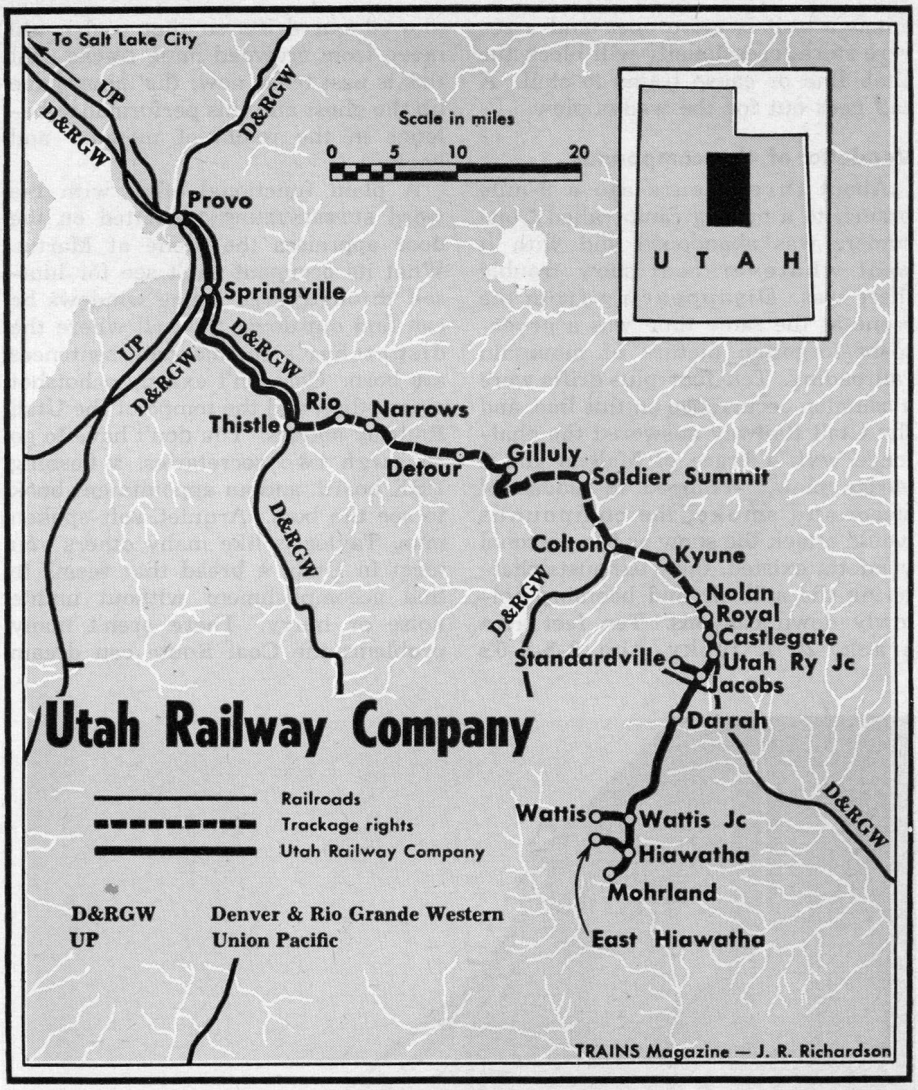
From the junction it's air brake territory all the way back to Martin. If necessary, one unit can bring 85 loads down from Hiawatha. The Utah Coal Route road-switchers have an auxiliary air pump housed in the short end of each unit where ordinarily a steam boiler would be found, enabling them to keep 90 pounds of air in the train line down the 2 per cent grade. When a single unit does handle such a long train, a 10-minute stop is required at Wild Cat for inspection and wheel cooling on cars with retainers turned up. Two road-switchers can skip this stop and go into the yard.

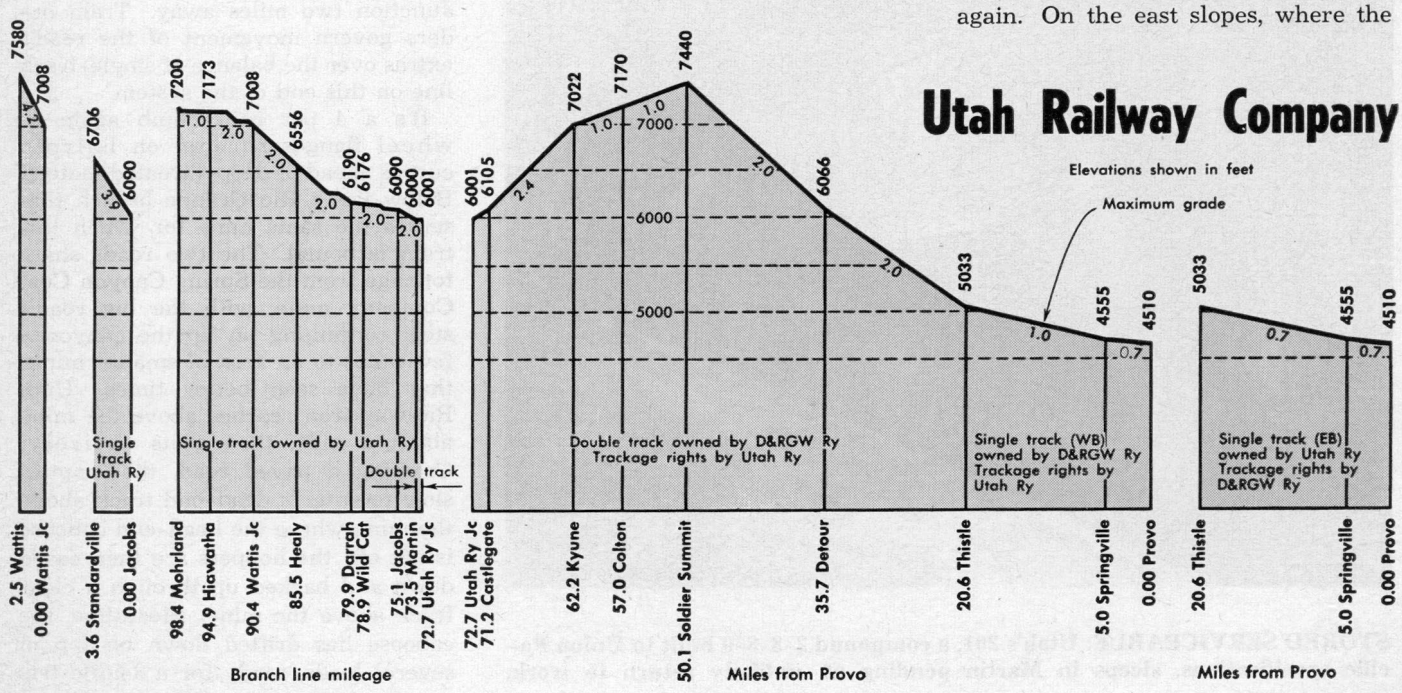
Yesterday: Mallets and a McKeen

"Stored serviceable" is the tag affixed to a silent Mallet resting amongst a string of coal cars at Martin. Time and dirt have all but obscured the numbers 46887 and the name BALDWIN cast on a builder's plate; 201 in Union Pacific lettering is painted beneath a cab window, and if this 2-8-8-0 compound resembles that road it's no accident. Utah Railway had its 2-10-2's and Mallets built to UP design, receiving the last of the steamers in the early '20's, an era which also wrote finis to its fling at the first-class trade. A silver-sided McKeen motor car, now resting on concrete instead of steel rail, serves as a memento of that day. Bought secondhand from the now defunct Castle Springs Railway, the car carried many a miner to work before coming to rest behind the enginehouse where it is now used for storage.

It takes just three fingers of the hand to count the steam engines still left on the Utah Coal Route. Two 2-10-2's are at Provo: one is still fairly active, switching the yard there when all diesel power is on the system's east end; the other is gathering dust in company with a few UP steamers in a darkened roundhouse. The road has another diesel on order, and when it arrives two steamers are slated for the torch. Last winter two steam engines saw limited service during the period when coal demand picked up. But it was almost impossible to operate them over the hill with the Rio Grande's having cut all water facilities, and they were restricted to mine runs and emergencies.

Winter in the Wasatch Range very seldom bothers the railroad. Not that there isn't plenty of snow, but it doesn't drift much in the narrow mountain canyons the Rio Grande follows and there is plenty of traffic to keep rails clean. Once in a while too many red balls on the D&RGW put a Utah Railway coal drag in the hole too long; journal boxes get stiff, and it's kind of tough to get going again. On the east slopes, where the





mines are, it is more open and a severe storm occasionally will block the Utah line or cause trains to stall. A call goes out for the wedge plow.

Vendetta of the compounds

About three years ago a 9-mile branch to a mining camp called Consumers was abandoned and with it went whatever real snow trouble there was. Disappearing from the scene at the same time was a never-to-be-forgotten picture of mountain railroading. Ten-foot-plus drifts were a common occurrence on this line, and the Utah Railway answered the challenge with a brace of Mallets and a wedge plow. Wrapped in clouds of steam and smoke, the compounds would attack the snow as if a personal vendetta existed, their exhausts shattering the still air and booming hollowly down canyons. Ten feet at a crack, 20 if lucky, the 2-8-8-0's plowed out drifts so that coal could move from crowded mine tracks. But this is past tense now; the mines gave up the ghost and this performance belongs in the realm of memory and book.

A plain functional office with the word SUPERINTENDENT painted on the door appraises the scene at Martin. What its occupant can't see for himself through large frame windows he can find out down the hall where the dispatcher's commanding sentences are born. Coal isn't exactly a hotshot commodity, and the tempo of the Utah Railway obliges. You don't have to go through two secretaries, a flashing PBX board, and an appointment book to see the boss. A quiet, soft-spoken man, Taylor is like many others you meet in Utah, a breed that seems to find accomplishment without undue noise or hurry. There aren't many problems the Coal Route can dream up that haven't already been solved in the 33 years of railroading written in the log of its superintendent.

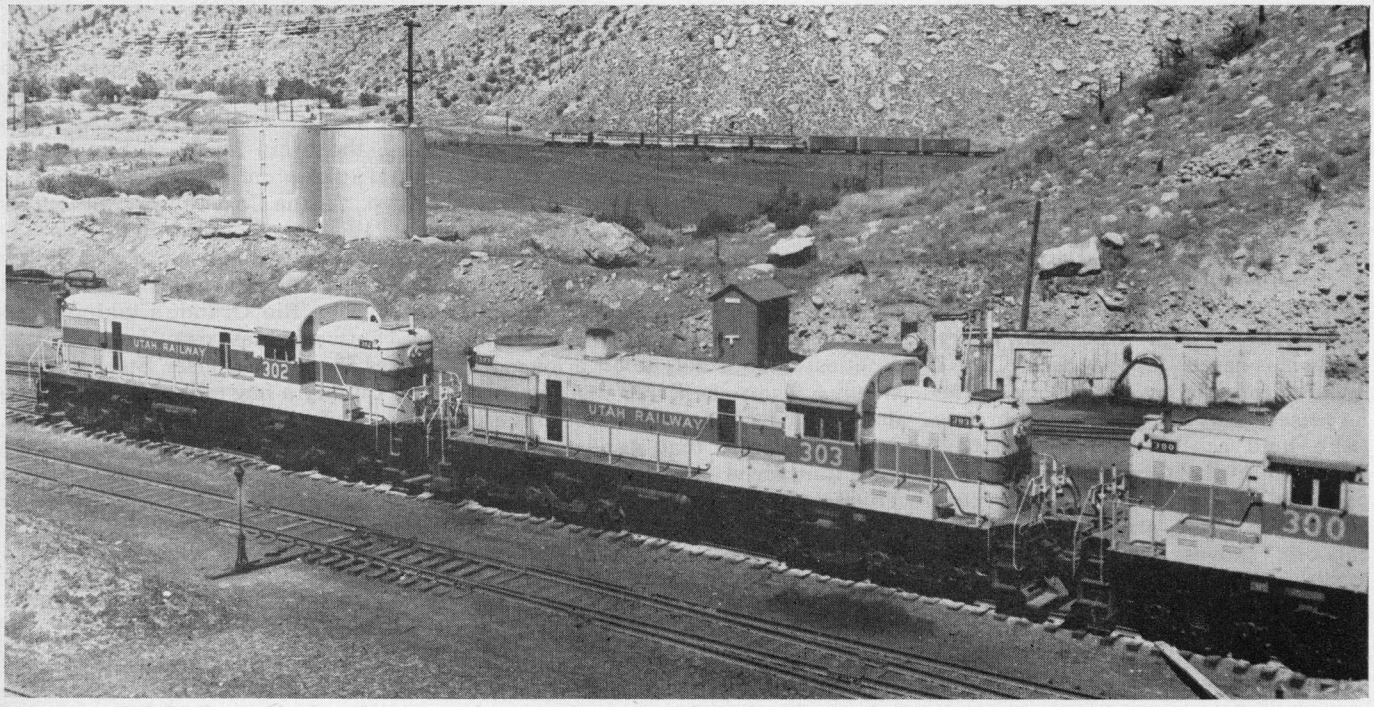
STORED SERVICEABLE: Utah's 201, a compound 2-8-8-0 built to Union Pacific specifications, sleeps in Martin pending an unlikely return to work.

Why Alco suggested white paint

A weathered brick enginehouse below the super's office houses the diesels for servicing. The Utah Railway never owned a roundhouse here, only a wye, the legs of which still surround the shed. Steam engines were always serviced on the through tracks in the building, and with the advent of diesel power this fitted perfectly into the scheme of things. The only item it lacks is a drop pit, and that is being taken care of. Diesels now have to go to UP shops at Provo if wheels need attention, but that, too, will soon be taken care of at Martin when present construction is completed. Included in the servicing is a frequent scrub bath that keeps the road-switchers shining so well that the I.C.C. inspector terms them the cleanest engines he has ever come across. Actually, the road didn't originate the combination of white body, broad red band, and yellow lettering that graces Nos. 300-305. Alco thought up the color scheme, and the railroad went along with the idea that a light diesel would be kept cleaner. Lots of soap and elbow grease have proved the theory.

No train Monday, so it's Tuesday before the four units that make up the helper get their grooming while the mine run to Spring Canyon is leaving the yard limits. It's early evening as a few empties and a caboose take a switch ahead of No. 302. Where the branch takes off just beyond the tunnel there's a block signal, one of the few on Utah Railway trackage since all of the colorlight masts are located between this point and Utah Railway Junction two miles away. Train orders govern movement of the road's extras over the balance of single-track line on this end of the system.

It's a 4 per cent climb again as wheel flanges scream on hairpin curves ahead of deep-throated motors. Below lies a Rio Grande branch that serves the same mine for which this train is bound. The two roads share tonnage from the Spring Canyon Coal Company mine, with the big road's steel continuing on up the canyon a few miles to an area of smaller mines that have seen better times. Utah Railway iron reaches above the mine about a mile, then quits entirely. Crossing a paved road, the empties slow to enter a dead-end track above the mine where the head-end caboose is cut off; the hoppers are then eased down and backed up through a clear track above the mine. Meantime, the caboose has drifted down on top of several loads, ready for a 3-mile trip



FIVE UNITS of Rio Grande power grumble upstairs to Soldier Summit in the background as three of Utah's six-motor Alcos idle in the yard at Martin.

to Martin. The diesel ties on, and this time the 302 is in its customary position at the head of the train.

An emerald eye gleams against the now-dark sky as the main line looms up where Spring Canyon ends. The diesel's twin sealed beams catch a switchstand in their glare, then bore into a tunnel to emerge at one end of Martin's yard lead. The loaded hoppers slowly sway as they are herded through switch frogs and finally shoved down a track to meet other cars piled high with black diamonds. A sharp hiss of air penetrates the night's stillness as air hoses part; the road-switcher drifts downgrade to a large coaling station just past the engine shed. Begrimed from the age of steam this dull black structure is barely visible in the darkness; only telltale markers on the diesel getting sand give away its location.

A hostler guides another Alco product down to couple onto the 302, and the road crew climbs aboard to take charge. Meanwhile, the four-unit helper has disappeared down a dark track and tied onto 30 loads and a caboose. An air horn blowing for a crossing near the enginehouse announces the road engine is ready. With bells clanging, the two units couple onto a 50-car cut; air pumps kick off with a rhythmic staccato, while far down the line a bobbing lantern indicates a wheel inspection. It's necessary to make up the road train on two tracks because 71 cars will fill the longest one at Martin, and with helpers used for the climb to Soldier Summit it's also convenient.

When everything's checked and ready to go, the head end drifts downgrade past the coaling tower, veers to the right along the foot of a cliff, and stops in front of a block signal. This is Utah Railway Junction, and at the moment a red eye greets the Coal Route crew as a D&RGW freight rumbles past headed for Helper two miles away. The yellow and red markers of the caboose disappear around a curve, and the block clears to green. Back up the hill the helper's engineer can follow the Rio Grande's headlight as it snakes through an S curve, then straightens to enter the well-lighted division point at Helper. Then he too loses sight as his charge meets the head end and a train is born. All of the diesels now stand committed to conquering the Wasatch.

Four questioning blasts of an air horn echo off the rock-faced walls of Price River Canyon. The answer conveyed in lantern talk comes quickly. A motorist on U. S. 50 comes to an abrupt halt as flashing red lights wink on in the darkness, and two white locomotives cross his path trailing what seems like an endless parade of coal cars. Finally a caboose with the lettering UTAH RAILWAY clears the highway and the impatient driver moves on. The train moves on too, but under a different authority. Now the thin sheets of tissue on the conductor's clip board read DENVER & RIO GRANDE WESTERN, and orders come from Salt Lake City not Martin.

No lugging, says Rio Grande

The hard part of this run comes in the first 10 miles of Rio Grande's Salt Lake Division. From the junction to Kyune, Nos. 300-305 are restricted to 1050 tons per unit on the 2.4 per cent grade, while beyond to Soldier Summit 2300 tons can be handled per unit. The six-axled Alcos have a much higher rating than any of the Rio Grande's EMD-built diesels since they are geared for tonnage not speed. With only 80 loads tonight instead of the usual 85, the wheel report shows a shade under 6000 tons, and the six units don't have to strain too much. Actually, the Utah line would like to take 90 loads over the hill with the Alcos that can lug down to 5½ miles an hour, but the Rio Grande says no — that's just a little too slow on our railroad. Eighty-five cars are it.

Following the course of the Price River through winding canyons, the train passes coal mines where a few weak lights shine on timbered forms that feed the Rio Grande. Then it's Castlegate as the railroad, highway and river squeeze through a small opening beneath sheer rock formations. Perpetually strung out on curves or ducking into tunnels, the 80 cars slowly climb the dry slopes of the Wasatch, offering little opportunity for the conductor to view his charge in a single glance. A green order board in front of a well-kept station swims by in the blackness. KYUNE reads the station sign, and now the grade eases abruptly and the symphony of wheel clicks picks up in pace. In the lead diesel an arrow points to the figure 30, pauses momentarily,

then moves on to 36, 16 miles an hour higher than it can go on Utah Railway rail.

Colton lies ahead now, and a Rio Grande coal branch slips into focus with the main line. Here at last is some semblance of tangency, and a string of clear blocks is visible from the darkened cab. Up here the country's more open and sometimes breezy. On a windy night the helper has to button up or there's likely to be a mouthful of coal dust with every sandwich eaten for supper. The 7 miles to the top don't take long at the increased pace, and before long brakes take hold as Soldier Summit is reached. A short wait, then 50 cars pull past the station, the helper cuts off and, running around behind the caboose, shoves the train together. While brakemen are turning up retainers for the downhill grind ahead the helper's fireman heads for an open train-order office and right of way back to Martin.

Air pumps vs. gravity

With 80 cars strung over both sides of the 7400-foot summit, slack alternately runs out, then bunches in as twin diesels start for Provo. This side of the mountain calls for as much skill with air as the other did with throttle. Not less than 50 minutes must be used by coal trains of the Rio Grande and the Utah Railway on the 14 miles of twisting downgrade to Detour, and it isn't hard to use that much time. The only things standing between the natural action of gravity on 6000 tons of train are the air pumps and a deft hand, and the slower the pace the less chance of something happening.

Detour is in the past tense for this run now, and a few more miles and Thistle comes into view. At this point Rio Grande cuts in helpers on its eastbound freights, but Coal Route trains in the same direction can handle 80 empties without aid, albeit a lot more slowly. There is a red ball on the drag's tail now, so into a side track it goes in a niche that stands between yard limit signs and bears the moniker Thistle. Soon the yellow-and-black EMD of the D&RGW sweeps past bound for Salt Lake City's Roper Yard and a connection with Western Pacific iron.

Pulling onto mainline rails once again, the coal drag enters a territory of joint track operation. Back in 1913, one year after being incorporated, Utah Railway started a single-track line out of Provo and built up through Spanish Fork Canyon to Thistle. This line generally paralleled Rio Grande routing, so the roads got together to operate the two mains jointly as double track. Rio Grande dispatchers in Salt Lake City pull the strings according to their rulebook, and insofar as Utah Railway trains are concerned it's just another part of the big road.

Seven miles below Thistle the canyon comes to an abrupt end and rails enter the green, checkered fields of Utah Valley. The two tracks separate here, then join again at Springville, continuing on another 6 miles to Provo. As the Coal Route train enters the valley a yellow headlight preceding a string of black hoppers struggles upward on the now distant eastbound main. The Rio Grande's taking them to captive mines owned by United States Steel and Kaiser Steel in Carbon County a few miles beyond where Utah Railway originates its tonnage. That road handles a lot more loads than the Utah Railway, most of them bound for Geneva Steel near Provo or Kaiser's mill in Southern California. For general consumption the two railroads' haul of coal is about equal.

Partnership with Union Pacific

Provo stands silent in the early morning darkness as the Utah Railway diesels leave D&RGW iron and pull their charges through the 400-car terminal shared with the Union Pacific. Empty hoppers fill the tracks on either side; half of them bear UP lettering — a fact which stems from that line's 50 per cent partnership with the Utah road in 1600 cars. Most of Utah Railway-hauled coal finds its way into a tri-state area of Washington-Oregon-Idaho via UP rails, accounting for that road's mutual interest in Carbon County's chief product.

A little over 5 hours have elapsed since leaving Martin, somewhat more time than the average westbound running time of 4½ hours. Eastbound with empties over the hill requires about the same time for the two road crews whose home terminal is Provo. This morning the two road-switchers are scheduled for an empty east, and the other crew is already called for 6 a.m., giving a big-boilered 2-10-2 another crack at switching chores.

Utah bets its Alcos on coal

Three or four trains west each week just about take care of summer traffic on the Utah Railway. In winter it takes five or six to move the mines' output, more if the weather is severe. If there are over 85 loads at one time the extras just have to wait their turn on the next drag. To the Utah Railway this coal isn't exactly a "red ball commodity," but it is important. Since there is no other traffic to be more important, the Coal Route can exist only to the extent that its three mines can find continuing markets for their product. The competition with other fuels is keen, but seven diesels and a new drop pit are being wagered by the railroad on the outcome.

THE BUGGY brings up the rear of empties moving up to the mine at Hiawatha. Extra air pump allows one unit to bring 85 loads back down this grade.

Trains

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COVER PHOTOS: **FDDM&S interurban No. 72. By William D. Middleton. Utah Railway drag at Thistle, Utah. By Donald Sims.**

Season's Greetings

AS this is written Thanksgiving is two days distant and when you read it Christmas should be near, with New Year's just around the corner. In a winter season so laced with solemn, joyous occasions we of TRAINS would like to wish you and yours a wonderful Yuletide and a very happy and rewarding 1956. The carols and crowds and churches have a knack of reminding us of how much we, as editors, depend upon you . . . upon writers and photographers for their talent and sweat and upon the railroads and their suppliers for unstinting aid; upon the unsung many here at Kalmbach Publishing for going that extra mile to insure that layout, artwork, typography, composition and presswork are the best of which we're capable. Most of all, we remain very much in *your* debt. As readers — critical, generous, enthusiastic, faithful — you have no equals.

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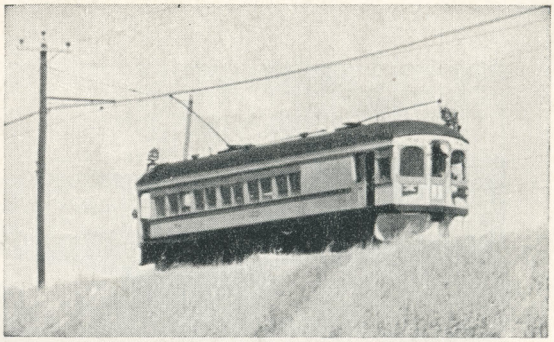

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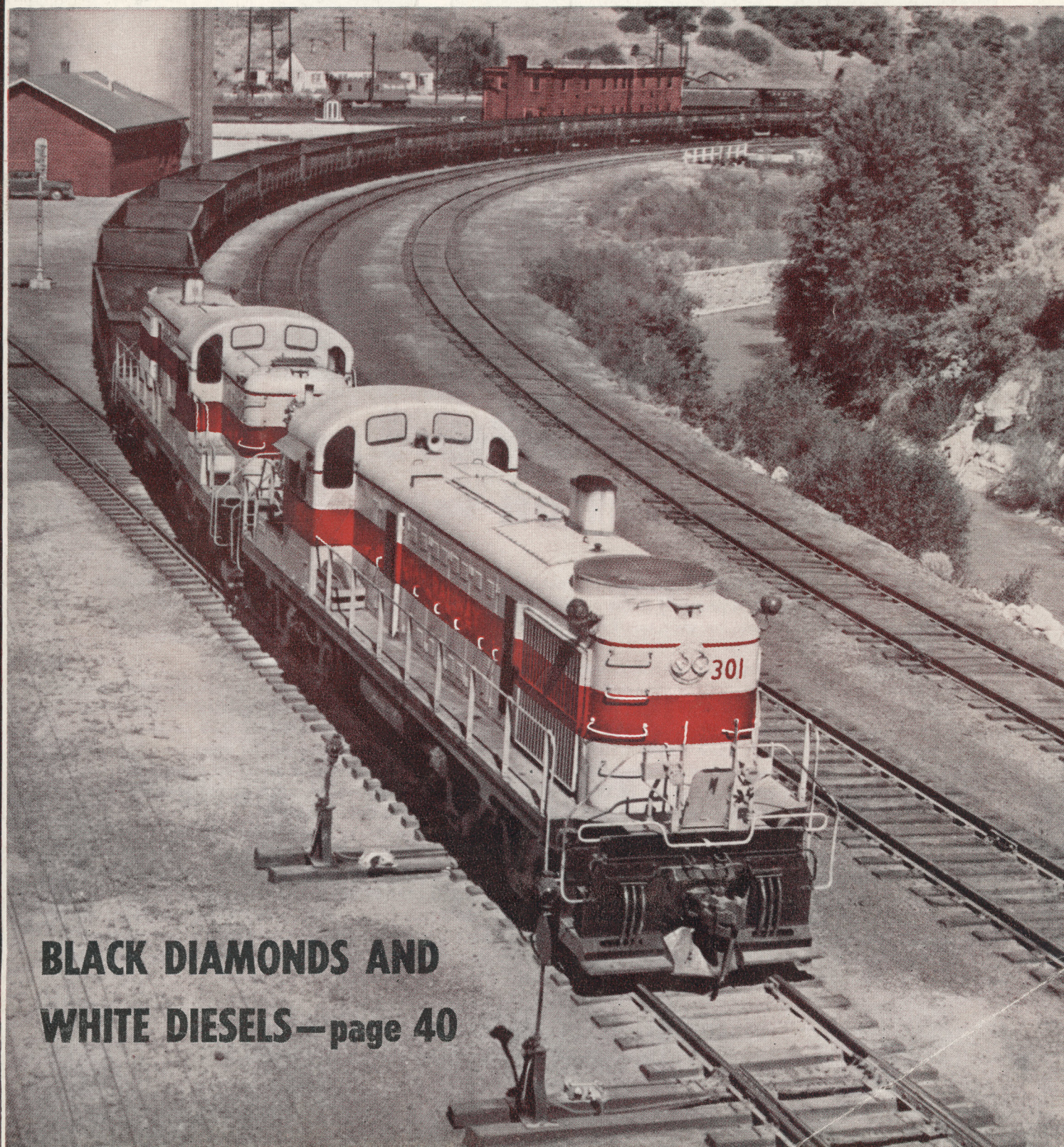

BLACK DIAMONDS AND WHITE DIESELS—page 40

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