

RGS Goose No. 2



At the museum, Goose No. 2 stops at No Agua tank. The water tank has been replaced with the new Headington Tank. (Robert W. Richardson photo)

The Rio Grande Southern Railroad officially called them "Motors," but they were commonly known as Galloping Geese. Bob Richardson (co-founder of the Colorado Railroad Museum) acquired RGS #2 from the railroad during its scrapping in the early 1950s, and displayed it at his Narrow Gauge Motel in Alamosa, Colorado. When the museum was moved to its location in Golden, Colorado, in 1958, No. 2 was the first piece of the collection to be unloaded. While Motor No. 2 was the first member of the "gaggle" to be acquired, RGS Geese numbers 6 and 7 were later obtained by the museum in 1985.

Motor No. 2 was completed at the RGS shop at Ridgway, Colorado, on August 12, 1931. It was constructed from a Buick Master Six four-door sedan. It also used a Buick six-cylinder engine with a three-speed transmission spliced to a homemade frame. It carried a sixteen-foot mail and express box. Originally painted dark green, it was later changed to black, and finally to aluminum. No. 2 was an immediate success.

In February 1934, Mike Burke, owner of the San Christobal Railroad Co., which operated the former D&RGW Lake City branch, contracted with

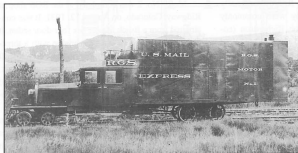
McFarland-Eggers in Denver to build a Goose for use on his line, utilizing his 1928 model 81 Pierce Arrow. It had only minimal success on the line and was taken to the RGS shop in Ridgway for modifications in late 1934. It operated sparingly through the fall of 1935. With the demise of the line in 1937, it was sold to the RGS which dismantled it. The two-door body was installed on Goose 2, replacing the original four-door Master Six sedan body.

The freight body of No.2 had to be shortened by one foot to allow the Pierce Arrow body to fit. A close look will reveal the San Cristobal RR lettering on the box sides atop No.2's cab.

The Geese helped prolong the life of the Rio Grande Southern. The railroad was able to cancel all steam powered passenger and mail trains, replacing them with the Geese in the 1930s. The operations resulted in a tremendous cost savings. After construction of the "big" Geese, (Nos. 3,4,5 and 7), No. 2 was relegated to back-up service.

Many mechanical changes and updates were made to No.2 after its arrival at the Colorado Railroad Museum in Golden. In the early 1970s, Ulrich Locomotive Works of Strasburg, Colorado, fabricated a new power truck. No. 2 operated occasionally until 1998 when the venerable Buick six-cylinder motor lost its lower end. With the help of

volunteers, the motor was rebuilt and returned to service. The front truck was rebuilt using four new Fairmont motor car wheels mounted on new axles, along with machined brass bearings. All the work allowed No. 2 to operate again, and in 2000, the Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad invited the museum to operate No.2 during their Railfest. Benches were installed in the freight body to increase passenger capacity. The Goose never had air brakes, so in order to operate on the D&S, their shop installed an air brake system using an air cylinder from a flanger and a compressor from a school bus. It ran between Durango and Rockwood during Railfest 2000. It was invited back for Railfest 2001, and operated from Durango all the way to Silverton. This was the first time Goose 2 had ever ventured into Silverton. By 2005, the wheel flanges on the power truck were severely worn. This sidelined No. 2 while new drive wheels were cast and machined and the early AA Ford truck rear ends were replaced by newer AA full floating types. New axles were machined and the brake system was upgraded by installing two air brake actuator pots from a semi-trailer. No. 2 is still receiving minor cosmetic restoration, but it is again running and carrying happy passengers around the museum's loop.



This is the earliest photograph of Goose No. 2 on the RGS prior to any modifications and rebuilding. (Colorado Railroad Museum collection)



Goose No. 2 was in disrepair while sitting in the yard at Ridgway. (Colorado Railroad Museum collection) (below) No. 2 crossing the Animas River south of Silverton in 2001 on the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad. (George Lawrence photo)

Colorado Railroad Museum

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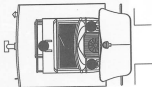
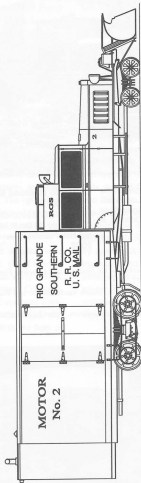
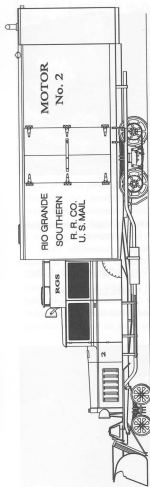
References

Galloping Geese on the Rio Grande Southern - Tin Feathers and Gasoline Fumes, Colorado Rail Annual No. 9, Stan Rhine, Colorado Railroad Museum, 1971.

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John Buvinger photographed No. 2 when it was on display at the museum in Alamosa in the 1950s. Notice the small wheels on the rear truck.