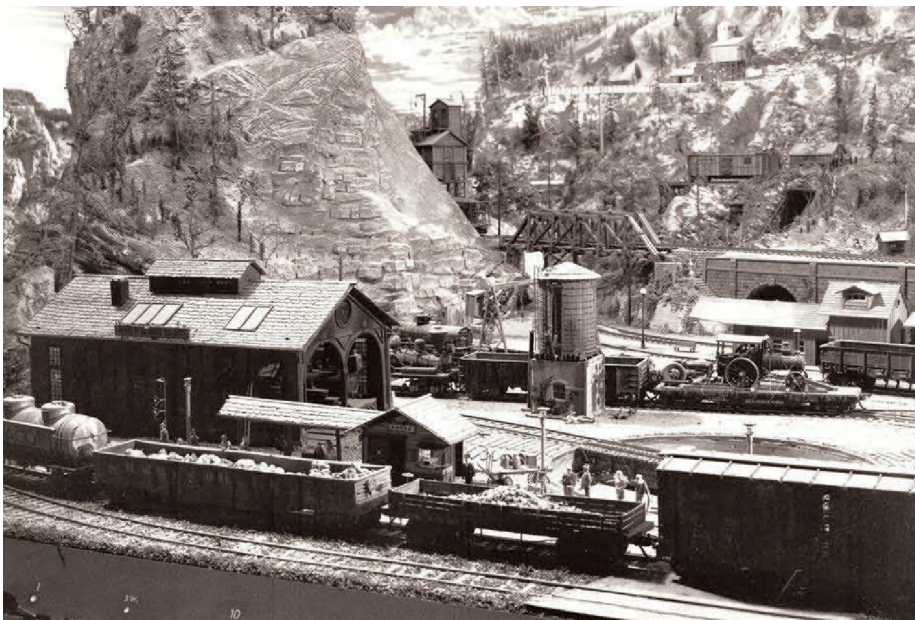




PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

My visit to the legendary Gorre & Daphetid

A look back on a visit to one of the world's most famous model railroads and its creator, John Allen, who would have turned 100 this year/**Robert Hogan**



I noted with interest a letter in the *SAFETY VALVE* column of the October RMC by Hans Renker of Koblenz, Germany, calling to our attention the fact that John Allen would have turned 100 this year and lamenting the fact that “John Allen and his Gorre & Daphetid gradually seem to be sliding away into oblivion.”

One of the many great things about growing up in the San Francisco Bay

Floor to ceiling scenery and plenty of bridges were hallmarks of John Allen's legendary Gorre & Daphetid Railroad. The Squaw Creek High Bridge (*top*) is in place, but the mountain scenery is still under construction in this photograph. John's two-stall enginehouse at Gorre (*left*), was scratchbuilt for his first G&D layout and reused as the layout expanded. It's construction was featured in three installments beginning in the October, 1948, issue of *The Model Craftsman* (soon to become RMC).

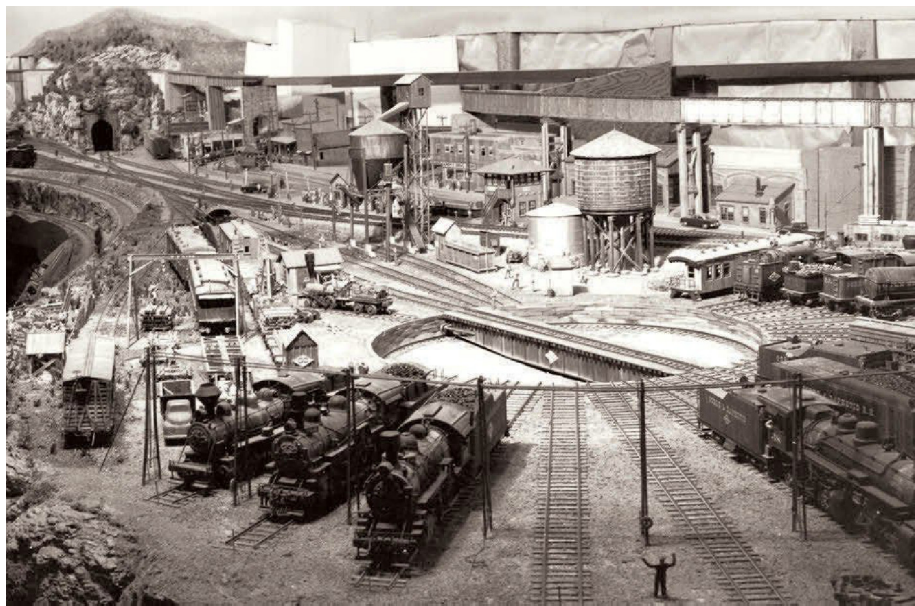
My visit to the legendary Gorre & Daphetid

Area in the early 1960's was the ability to attend NMRA Coast Division meets. John Allen made it a point to attend many of those meets and was always willing to talk with us "kids" about model railroading. He always had time to help us newbies and answer our many questions.

On one occasion John invited three of us down to his house in Monterey to see the G&D. We quickly accepted and drove down together one evening the following week. It was winter and not an easy drive from the East Bay, even then. I can't confirm the year, but I believe it was 1964 based on photos in the Kalmbach book on the G&D. John allowed us to bring our own motive power along and we got to both operate and shoot photos as we desired.

I clearly remember descending the staircase into the basement area and as the stairs made a left hand 90 degree turn, I was hit with vertigo (first time in my life) because of the transition from "real life" into his HO scale "G&D world." Thank goodness he had a strong handrail to hold onto.

The G&D had been only something I saw in *Model Railroader* articles and the then current Varney ads series by John on *MR's* back cover. Of course everything was black and white in those days. The biggest surprise was the effect John created in color. It was much different than the B&W published pho-



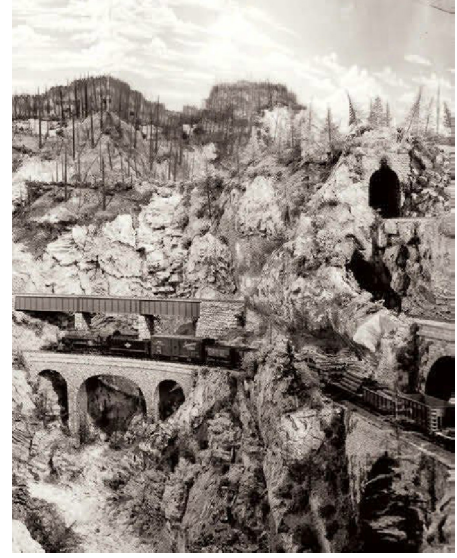
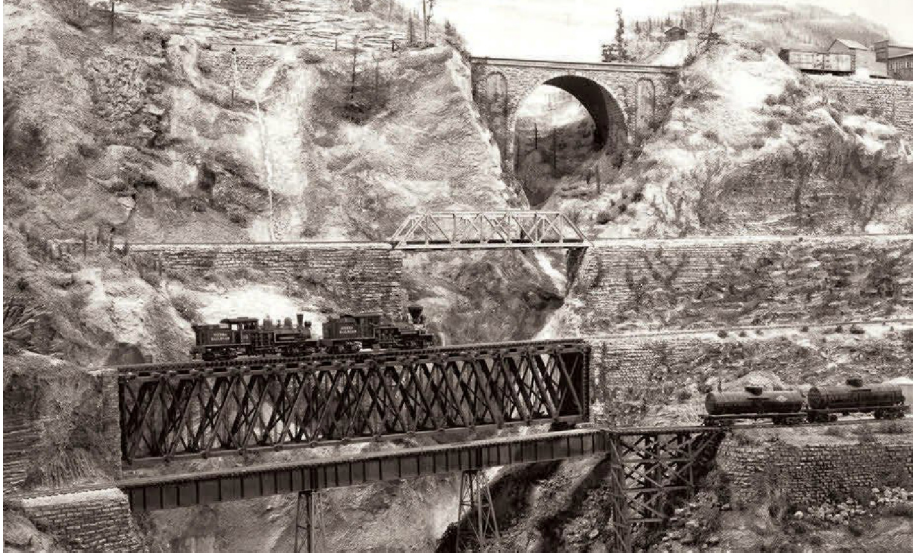
The busy Great Divide engine terminal included an outdoor servicing area. The backdrop is still under construction in this view (*above*). One of the most famous spots on the G&D was Giant Canyon (*below*) where the rugged mountain scenery extended down to the floor. The author photographed two of his own Shays crossing the wooden truss bridge at French Gulch (*page 63 left*) and G&D No. 34 leading a freight over Devil's Gulch (*page 63 right*).

tos I'd seen. Wow! That was all you could say. Then you started looking at how he created those scenes using forced perspective, mirrors and all of his other cutting edge techniques (the same for the motive power and rolling stock).

All of those locomotives were hand painted and brush weathered.

I decided that my attempts at matching his weathering looked pretty good on the G&D. That gave me a bunch of confidence to continue with my weath-






ering, as that was something very few modelers were doing in those days. The same goes for building and weathering rolling stock. However, as much as I liked his swayback cars, I never had the courage to try one. Seeing his narrow gauge, however, started a life long interest and passion in me for narrow

gauge railroads the world over.

I was shooting with a borrowed 4 × 5 Speed Graphic in those days and took the accompanying images. Most interesting is the state of the layout still very much under construction at that time. I made no attempt to hide any of the unfinished areas in my photos and

they clearly show. I also used John's available room light, although I stopped down to *f*/22 and used a tripod. I was inexperienced back then, but the 4×5 and a good light meter made up for a lot. What I do remember is that John was kind enough not to offer advice on how to take the photos. 

G&D influences

If you wonder what John's impact was on my own modeling, the accompanying photos provide some evidence. These were taken on my previous layout, the Rio Grande Southern Auburn Extension, which I built while living in Auburn, California. The railroad was set in 1950. Constructed in a dedicated building, the Sn3 layout featured scenery that rose eight feet above the floor. Some of that "tall" scenery—including this view of bridge 46E (*right*)—was the first thing you saw upon entering the building. Like the G&D, weathered equipment and structures—as illustrated by this scene (*below*) of No. 455 switching at Lizard Head Pass—were also a hallmark of the railroad and many of the cars and structures were scratchbuilt.

After a move to the East Coast, I backed off of the tall scenery on my current standard gauge S scale Sierra Northern Rail-



road. Still, some of that G&D influence has come through. It was the cover story in the

June, 2013, RMC and you can see it there.—
ROBERT HOGAN

