



The narrow gauge Rio Grande Southern Railroad was completed in 1891 and enjoyed two years of robust traffic before the Silver Panic of 1893 closed most of the mines and since had struggled to survive. As an alternative to expensive steam locomotives, the RGS developed the first "Galloping Goose," which is the popular name given to a series of seven internal combustion-powered "motor" railcars. The motors were not only less expensive to operate than steam, but were also significantly lighter, thus reducing impact on the rails and roadbeds. RGS built its first motor in 1913, as a track maintenance crew vehicle; it was wrecked in 1925, but inspired the idea of using motorcars for scheduled service. The Great Depression prompted the Goose program. The first Goose was built in 1931 from the body of a Buick "Master Six" four-door sedan; part of the rear of the car was replaced by a truck stake-bed for carrying freight and mail; this was later enclosed and partially fitted with seating. A second Goose was built in the same year from another Buick, but later versions used Pierce-Arrow bodies except for #6, which was constructed partly out of parts taken from the scrapped #1. Ultimately, seven railcars were built between 1931 and 1936, all in the railroad's shops at Ridgway, Colorado, where the RGS met the D&RG Ouray Branch. In 1950, the railroad lost its mail contract in favor of highway mail carriers, and #3, #4, #5, and #7 were converted for tourist operations. The "Galloping Goose" name was officially recognized by the railroad, large windows were cut in the sides of the freight compartments, and seating was added. A figure of a running goose and the words "Galloping Goose" were added to the car-body doors. The tourist service lasted only two years, and the last work of the Geese was to salvage the RGS rails.

Of the seven "geese", only #1 does not survive, though a replica was built in 2000 for the Ridgway Railroad Museum. The other six are located at the Colorado Railroad Museum (3 cars), Knott's Berry Farm, Telluride, Colorado, and the city of Dolores, Colorado, shown here. The #5 Galloping Goose at Dolores was restored in 1998 and is now operated from time to time on the Cumbres & Toltec and Durango & Silverton tourist railroads. Dolores was on the RGS line and a loading warehouse and station are preserved, the latter now a visitor center and home to the #5.