



# Coast Mail

News from the San Luis Obispo  
Railroad Museum

Issue Number 82 – Winter 2022 San Luis Obispo, California slorrm.com

Open Saturdays from 10:00 to 4:00. Other times for groups by arrangement. 1940 Santa Barbara Avenue.

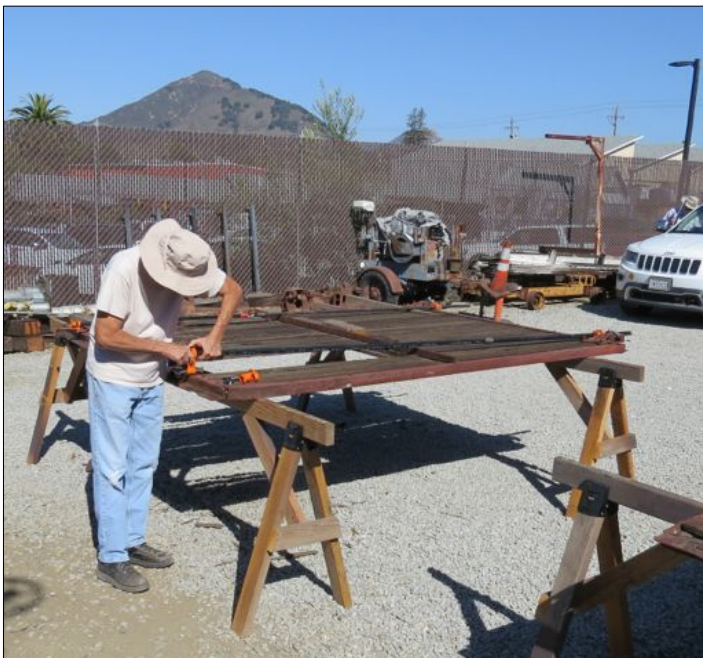


Festival photos by Gary See

Our festival returned October 7 through 9, with a swap meet, presentations, tours, and special exhibits. About 500 people visited the Museum, not counting those who went to the public library and home model layout tours. Above, the “children of all ages” scene.

## Restoration progress

This fall Mike Adams (below), Brad LaRose, and Ted VanKlaveren made progress on the former Southern Pacific wood-sheathed boxcar, straightening the doors' metal frames and replacing boards.



## Central Coast Railroad Festival



*The Pacific Coast Railway HO exhibit is always popular, with its easily recognized features of Avila and Port San Luis. (More photos on page 8.)*



*In August workers had cordoned off the depot's south-end addition to remove materials containing lead (above). Platform couch was temporary. (More photos on page 6.)*

## Depot improvements

The San Luis Obispo Amtrak depot, owned and partly occupied by Union Pacific Railroad, has received new paint, windows, trim, and some floor and ceiling replacements (above). Completed in 1943, some of the stucco, window sash and frames, and other features had deteriorated from nearly 80 years of use and weather. Replacement materials match the original, to maintain the attractive building's historic value.

Gingerich Construction of Southern California was the main contractor. The project reflects the combined efforts of the City of San Luis Obispo, the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments, and Amtrak (source of funds), and of course the cooperation of Union Pacific. Museum volunteers helped with matching historic colors. The bus shelter next to the depot and the former REA building were also upgraded.

**Our Mission**

Promote California Central Coast railroad heritage through community participation, education, and historic preservation.

**Contact**

Telephone (message) 805 548-1894  
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 Greg Jackson                      Brad LaRose  
 Brent MacGregor    Andrew Merriam  
 Dave Rohr                      Ted Van Klaveren

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Gary See  
*Secretary, Archivist/Librarian, Newsletter Editor* ..... Glen Matteson  
 (newsletter@slorrm.com)

*The museum is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, educational organization, staffed entirely by volunteers.*

**Documents Available**

Anyone may access the Museum's *Bylaws, Collections Policy, Development & Operations Plan, Code of Conduct*, and other documents at slorrm.com. Or request a paper copy via the contact information above.

**Museum Store**

To raise funds, the Museum offers several items for sale on-site and online: T-shirts, hats, belt buckles, mugs, enameled pins, embroidered patches, and engineer hats.

At [www.slorrm.com](http://www.slorrm.com) click on Company Store.

*Coast Mail* is published quarterly by the San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum.  
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**Timetable**

**Board of Directors meetings** are scheduled for December 13, January 10, and February 14, at 6:00 p.m. They are held at the Museum. Online participation can be arranged. Contact [info@slorrm.com](mailto:info@slorrm.com) for help with on-line participation.

**Recent History**

In mid-August Union Pacific's ballast regulator and tamper took a break on the stub track opposite the San Luis Obispo depot (below). Both pieces of track maintenance equipment are self-propelled. The regulator plows and sweeps the rocks that hold crossties in place, while the tamper consolidates them using vibration as grippers hold the rails in proper profile and alignment.



**Parlor Car Chats Online**

Jamie Foster hosts:  
[slorrm.com/parlor-car-chats.html](http://slorrm.com/parlor-car-chats.html)



**More Coast Mail Online**

*Coast Daylight* scorched in Paso; iron shelter at Surf; visitors from far away.

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**Become a member**

Membership provides opportunities for anyone interested in today's railroads, railroad history, train travel, or model railroading.

Individual members pay \$36 per year, a family \$60, and a sustaining member \$100. Junior memberships (ages 12-18) for the model railroaders are available (see our Model Railroad Superintendent for details).

Application forms can be downloaded from the Museum's website and mailed with payment, or you can join online by clicking [Membership](#) and using PayPal. (Mailing and web addresses are in left-hand column.)

Membership benefits include free admission to the Museum.



**Holiday schedule changes**

The Museum will be closed Christmas eve (Saturday, December 24) and New Year's Eve (Saturday, Dec. 31).



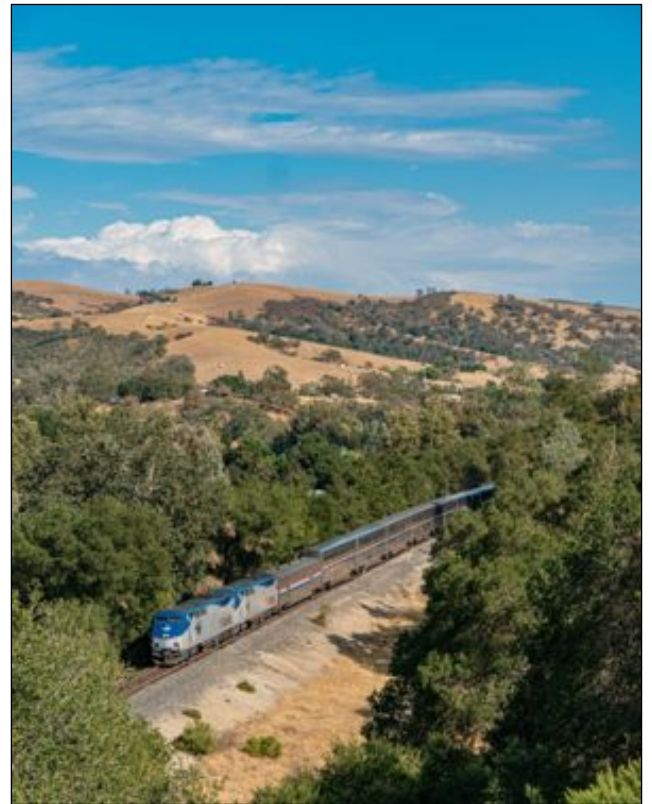
**Santa on the Surfliner**

Santa is schedule to arrive on Saturday, December 3 at about 12:30. You may walk with him from the Amtrak depot to the Museum, and visit in vintage Pullman car *La Cuesta*.

## Festival photo contest winners

Semi-retired Museum website maintainer Jamie Foster took the lead in organizing this year's Central Coast Railroad Festival photo contest. Thanks to all who submitted entries and to those who took on the difficult task of judging. Here are the top three, captioned in order starting with first place.

*Below, Eric Peterson caught Amtrak's Coast Starlight near Gaviota in March 2022. Right, Ansyn Meacham found dramatic sky and scenic hills at Atascadero in September this year. Lower right, Elizabeth Haug recorded a Surfliner from San Luis Obispo's pedestrian bridge in July 2016. See more entries at slorrm.com. (And send us your photos any time.)*



## Not a winner, but still a hero

Your editor entered the image above in **Trains** magazine photo contest, which this year had the theme "soldiering on." A view of former U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps No. 2038, which helped build and supply Camp Roberts during World War 2, with two young fans holding HO-scale military vehicles, seemed a natural. But it did not make the cut.

The 20-ton switcher is 81 years old and about as close as a machine can be to a soldier. Also known now as Danny the Diesel Locomotive, the Plymouth (no relation to the automobile brand) may be considered in the reserve, educating those of all ages about local and national history and railroad safety.

No. 2038 is stationed near the south end of the Museum's display track.

## Pacific Coast Railway's Avila

When you visit be sure to see this 1/10<sup>th</sup>-size model of Pacific Coast Railway's first locomotive, an unusual 2-4-2 type with its tank straddling the boiler. All parts were 3-D printed and assembled by Jack Erhart.





# Far from the Central Coast

Our new feature is back, this time looking at a depot with Colonial Yellow siding (as it appears in low light), dark brown trim, and white window sash –Southern Pacific standards.

But this building is in Norway.

That prompts some questions. Did the Norwegians copy SP, did SP copy the Norwegians (maybe because a designer or builder came from there), or is it coincidence? Can a reader solve this mystery?

As for many European railways, the Norwegian system is dominated by passenger service, with a national entity providing the infrastructure and operating companies supplying rolling stock and crews. Nearly all main lines are electrified. And they run some serious log and iron-ore trains.

The image above is a screen capture from a YouTube video by RailCowGirl [Coast Mail, Fall 2021].

# We won't go there

For decades the Southern Pacific maintained a company medical system that from 1899 until 1968 included a hospital in San Francisco. (The 1906 earthquake and fire destroyed the first one.) The railroad contracted with doctors in small towns and rural areas to provide care for injured employees. The Coast Mail of Summer 2014 reported on the SP doctor who invented what are now known as MedicAlert bracelets.

The Southern Pacific Bulletin employee newsletters of the 1920s had a regular column titled Your Doctor. Typically each monthly edition had one or two questions posed anonymously by readers, with a response from a likewise unnamed headquarters physician.

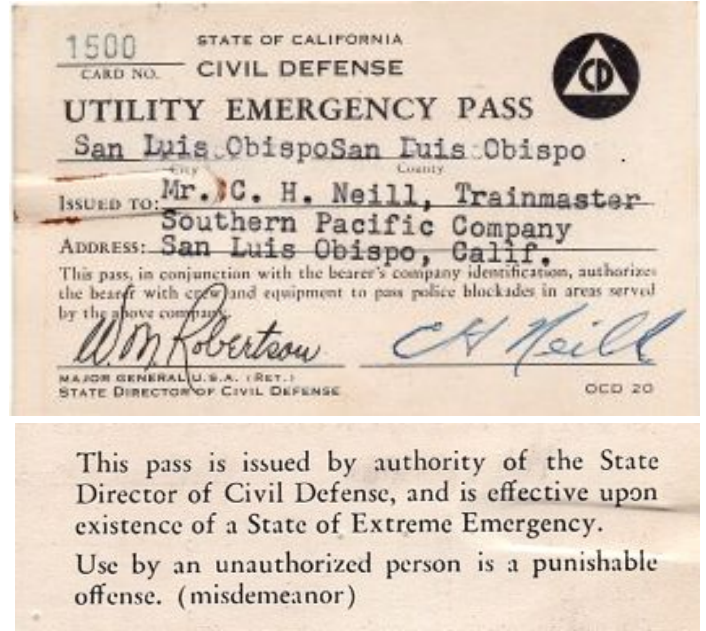
The good doctors outdid themselves in the April and May 1928 editions, devoting to the subject of constipation two articles, each occupying at least a full 8.5 x 11-inch page with nearly microscopic font (mercifully reduced further to illegibility at right). The first installment covered description, diagnosis, and causes, while the second offered treatments. In all, it appears that about 2,700 words were devoted to the topic.

Considerable technical detail could have justified extended time to read, possibly while using what the articles refer to only as a water closet.

# Another kind of pass

Railroads issued passes that allowed their employees to ride without buying tickets. Often they were honored by other railroads, sometimes with restrictions such as being limited to available coach seats.

Below is a different type of pass, which allowed the bearer, with crew and equipment, to pass police blockades during a "State of Extreme Emergency." It was issued July 6, 1956. It is from the extensive collection recently donated by Linda Neill, daughter-in-law of the bearer. Top image is the front, bottom is the back.



**Your Doctor**

**EMPLOYEES are invited to write the General Hospital Department at San Francisco for medical advice. Some of the questions will be answered impersonally in this column each month, or letters will be written personally to the employee.**

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**HABITUAL CONSTIPATION**

Constipation is a chronic state of the bowels characterized by infrequent or incomplete evacuation. It is not a disease, but a symptom of some other condition. It may be caused by a variety of factors, such as a diet low in fiber, lack of exercise, or a change in routine. It is often associated with a feeling of fullness, bloating, and discomfort in the rectum. The condition may be acute or chronic, and it can be treated with a variety of methods, including diet changes, exercise, and medication.

**War of Diets**

After a long search for answers through the stomach and small intestine, we have found the answer. It is not a disease, but a symptom of some other condition. It is often associated with a feeling of fullness, bloating, and discomfort in the rectum. The condition may be acute or chronic, and it can be treated with a variety of methods, including diet changes, exercise, and medication.

**Your Doctor**

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**Diarrhea**

Diarrhea is a condition characterized by frequent, watery stools. It is often caused by a variety of factors, such as a diet low in fiber, lack of exercise, or a change in routine. It is often associated with a feeling of fullness, bloating, and discomfort in the rectum. The condition may be acute or chronic, and it can be treated with a variety of methods, including diet changes, exercise, and medication.

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## A terrible day at Paso Robles

The Fall *Coast Mail* told about the Pacific Coast Railway having a parked steam locomotive scorched by fire, a result of coal embers dropped below it. Southern Pacific's *Coast Daylight* had a worse day, three days before Thanksgiving, in 1957.

Northbound (timetable westbound) train No. 99 rolled through Paso Robles at 62 mph, below the allowed 65 mph. Moments before the train reached the 12<sup>th</sup> Street grade crossing, a truck with a semi-trailer and a trailer drove onto the crossing. The crossing was protected by a highway warning sign in advance and a wig-wag signal near the tracks, of the type displayed at the Museum. The wig-wag swung and clanged. The engineer blew the horn in the required – o – pattern and rang the locomotive bell as he neared the crossing. According to the Interstate Commerce Commission report, before reaching the tracks the driver had a clear view of the approaching train at least 400 feet and as much as 800 feet away.

The train was pulled by three dual-engine diesel units and had 12 passenger cars. The semi-trailer contained 2,800 gallons of stove oil, and the trailer held 3,575 gallons of diesel fuel. The semi-trailer was destroyed, throwing burning oil onto and into the locomotives and onto several of the passenger cars. The engineer and fireman in the cab, and three railroad maintenance workers positioned nearby, were injured. The truck driver and the train passengers were not hurt. These photos show some of the damage.

Not wanting to stop the train in a pool of burning oil, the engineer applied the brakes but kept the train moving so that it stopped nearly a mile from the point of impact. Parts of the semi-trailer landed up to 173 feet away from the crossing.

Grade crossings without gates to block all approaches (including wrong-way drivers) continue to be hazards. The railroads and all levels of government continue to budget for and improve crossings, or eliminate them by providing grade separations.

*Four photos from SLORRM Archives PS8115.1*



*Above, scorched Daylight passenger cars in Paso Robles following the November 1957 grade-crossing collision. Below and lower left, the diesel locomotive units damaged by fire. Bottom, the overturned highway trailer and, in the distance, smoke rising from what must be part of the semi-trailer. The truck driver had ignored warning devices and the on-coming train.*



## Depot improvements

(continued from page 1)

*Below, craft workers have fabricated and installed a new frame for the bus shelter's transparent wind screen.*



*Above, we see attention to detail for replacement wood trim, not yet painted, carefully lap-jointed and (not visible in this view) mitered at the outer corner.*



*Above, a bucket truck allows a worker to safely prepare the depot's second story. Below, a crew from Ellison's Painting of Merced puts finishing touches on the former Railway Express Agency building, which needed stucco repair. Including the bus shelter and REA building allowed economies of scale.*

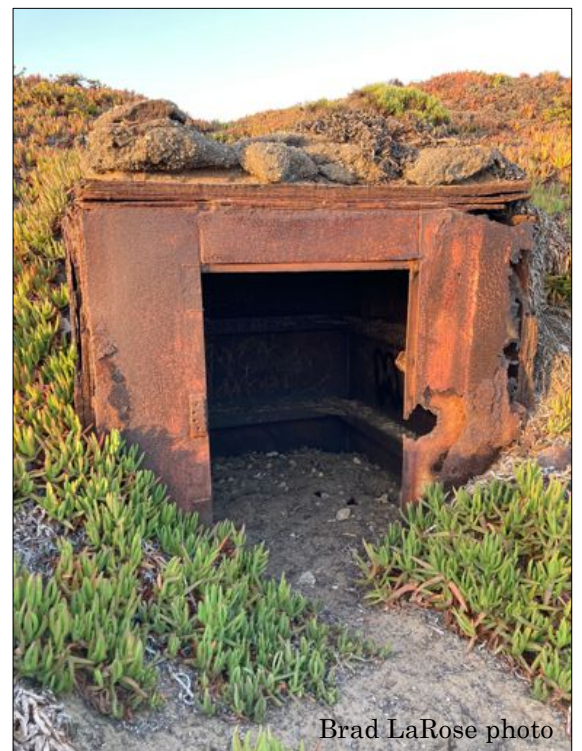


## Beyond repair

Don't the industrial archaeologists say that in 1,000 years the only artifacts left from today will be ceramic shards? What appears to be an iron shed (below) certainly supports that claim. It's located at Surf, a siding and former train-order office between Guadalupe and Goleta, now an Amtrak *Surfliner* stop.

It may have been a shelter for the operator when missiles were launched from Vandenberg Air Force Base in the 1950s – 60s [Coast Mail Fall 2019], or a bomb shelter from the 1940s. Ocean spray is not a friend of iron.

Do you know more of the shed's history?



Brad LaRose photo

## Visitors from far away

When working at the Museum we volunteers often encounter visitors who are disappointed to learn that we are closed on the day they come. Here is a sample from summer and fall.

Martin, tall, informally dressed, and carrying a skateboard, was from Germany (top left). He volunteers with a rail history group there and works for a government transportation agency dealing with the shift to climate-neutral energy sources. We had a long, interesting conversation about railways and much more.

A few days later I saw Crystal (top right), from Taiwan by way of Los Angeles, admiring our Pacific Coast Railway boxcars. Of course I gave her a tour. Later that morning, Mike from Lompoc and Andrew from Oregon (lower right) appreciated a short visit on their way to another attraction in our region. Next came Lloyd and Jean from Denver, who heard *a lot* about rails (lower left).

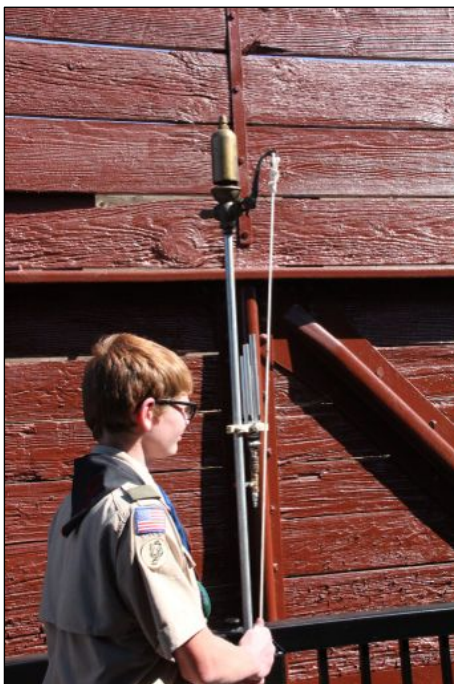
Other recent closed-day visitors were a couple with a young daughter from India via Nashville (looking for the place to buy train tickets), a mother and teenage son from Portugal, two young women from Columbia, a family originally from Brazil but living in Southern California, and a young man from mainland China via the Midwest and San Francisco.

- Editor



## Scouts at the Museum

On October 23 a Boy Scout troop earned railroading badges by learning about hand and whistle signals, and more. November 5 was Girl Scouts day at the Museum.



*Every meeting starts with a safety briefing (right). Tom Mitchell led this one, using Operation Lifesaver material. Left, whistle signals at one end of the platform were confirmed waaaay at the other end of the platform by hand signals (below).*



(More scouting photos on page 8.)

Scouting photos by Gary See

### Central Coast Railroad Festival



*There's almost always a line waiting to use the locomotive cab simulator (above). Weather was perfect (below.)*



*Traveling the Coast Route alternated with a history of Amtrak (above). Below, only the hatless people are real.*



### Scouts at the Museum



*Left, Amtrak station volunteer David Weisman explained online ticket booking.*

*Right, the northbound Starlight arrived right on time.*



*Left, those who will be very courteous while looking inside the train, raise your hands!*

*Thanks to Amtrak on-board staff, scouts could see the accommodations. But train travel was not part of this day's outing (right).*

