



Recent History: Water by the Carload

In the last weeks of August, with fire spreading across the Santa Lucia Mountains east of its Cuesta Grade track, Union Pacific stationed two water cars on the helper spur at San Luis Obispo. Previously SPMW 6503 (closest to the camera) and SPMW 5486 had been stored at Guadalupe. Such cars, possibly these, used to be kept at Cuesta siding, a short passing track just north (SP timetable west) of the summit tunnel, now a spur track. The fire stayed east of Highway 101, and so this time did not pose a threat to the tracks on the opposite side of the broad canyon. However, the fire did reach the southeastern edge of Santa Margarita. So far as we know, these cars were tested but not used this summer.

Such cars probably were last used in the area in the spring of 1987, when a hot particle in locomotive exhaust lodged in timber tunnel lining and started a fire. That fire, while confined to the tunnel, caused substantial damage, and closed the Coast Route for 13 days. The line remained closed to through freight trains until new owner Denver and Rio Grande Western (still operated with the SP name) reinstated it in 1990.

“Fire trains” consisting of tank cars with pumping and nozzle equipment were common on SP’s Sierra crossing in the steam era. Exhaust embers igniting wooden snow sheds, and wildland fires due to many causes, were a regular summer threat. Water cars could also be used to supply remote concrete-mixing activity, dust control, and other work.

In the steam-locomotive era, water in the arid West was a frequent problem. Often there was not enough at locations where steam locomotive tenders needed to be refilled, or the water had such high concentration of minerals that it could not be used. Sometimes these waterless or bad-water places were also communities dominated by railroad workers, or miners, and their families. The Southern Pacific and the Santa Fe both hauled water in tank cars to a few such locales, for their own use and for the communities.

With the continuing drought in California, there has been talk of unit trains of tank cars bringing water from regions with adequate supplies. So far cost and logistical details have made this a last resort.

Readers having personal experience with, or more information on, the subjects of this piece are encouraged to send material to the newsletter editor.

Report and photo by Glen Matteson

See a related article on page 4 and more of recent history on page 9.

Rail Festival

Over 600 people came to the Museum October 2 - 4, and many more attended festival events at area libraries and several other locations. Presentations on historic and current railroad topics were held at the Freighthouse (below).



A first this year was a reading of railroad-themed poetry, organized by local historian James Papp, and held at the Jack House (below). Works ranged from famous, 1830s to contemporary, local writers.



More Rail Festival news on page 3

We want to introduce a new feature covering recent railroad history on the Central Coast. It should be history that’s not more than a few months old, reflecting our publication schedule. If you see something new or out of the ordinary, let us know, especially if it has a strong local connection and national publications or websites might overlook it. Photos are welcome.



Mission Statement

The San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum is a regional, non-profit educational institution founded to preserve and present the railroad history of California and specifically the Central Coast. Collecting, restoring, and displaying relevant railroad artifacts, photographs, and documents is its goal. This effort is supplemented by creating models, displays, and graphics, as well as operating historic railroad equipment to facilitate a better understanding of how railroads have affected our area's social, cultural, and economic history.

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DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE

Any member may access or receive a copy of the Museum's *By-laws, Collections Policy, or Strategic Plan* by going to the website noted above or by sending a #10, self-addressed, stamped envelope to the address above.

Renew your membership

The Museum exists thanks to continued member support. **All annual memberships expire December 31.** If you have not already renewed, please provide your payment and any changes to your contact information. You can renew online through the Museum's website (via Paypal) or checks may be mailed to the Museum (address below left). If renewing online you can provide updated contact information by phone message or email (contact listed below left). The Museum never shares your contact information.

Become a member

Membership provides opportunities for anyone interested in today's railroads, railroad history, train travel, or model railroading to learn and experience more, and to share with others.

Individual members pay \$36 per year; a family \$60 annually, and a sustaining member \$100. Application forms can be downloaded from the Museum's website and mailed with payment, or you can join online (mailing and web addresses below left) by clicking [Membership](#) and using PayPal.

Membership benefits include free admission to the Museum and access to Members Only features of the website, including current issues of *Coast Mail*.



The Museum's stocking is hung by the firebox with care...

...in hopes that your tax-deductible contribution will help pay the fare... for efforts such as our new Boy Scout railroading merit badge program, restoring our 1926 Pullman *La Cuesta* to its former glory, and installing a shade and enhanced lighting for the Freighthouse platform.

TIMETABLE

These are the regular meetings of the Museum Board of Directors, held on the second Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m., at 1940 Santa Barbara Ave., San Luis Obispo. Public sessions are open to all.

- December 8
- January 10 (2:00 p.m. agenda, election of officers; member mixer 3:00-5:00)*
- February 8
- March 8

For dates, times and locations of committee meetings, contact the Museum through the number or email at left.

You didn't miss an issue

The previous two issues of *Coast Mail* and this one have come out on our quarterly schedule (March, June, September, and December). Although the last issue, Number 53, was titled "Summer," this one, Number 54, is "Winter." There was no "Fall" issue.

Jumbo Issue – More Online

Read online about goats, petticoats, and a homecoming on pages 5 – 8, and a bell, a whistle, and more on pages 9 and 10. Museum members have access to the whole current issue through slorrm.com; anyone can view past issues there.

Scheduled Arrivals

Watch for these in the Spring *Coast Mail*: becoming visible; oddities; walking the neighborhood; and a life-saving operation.

Membership news

- New Members**
- Cindy Barcelona, Roger D. Gibb, Phillip Keys, T.E. Totten, Thomas Veronese, Robert C. Wilson
- Individual Renewals**
- Logan Bertollete, William Bordeaux, Joe Camporeale, Ralph George, Robert S. Gordon, James Holmes, John Falkenstein, Rex B. Miller, Jeff Tolan, Alex Woronovich
- Family Renewals**
- Edward & Donna McCauley, Craig & Cheryl McCollum
- New Life Member**
- David & Aurelle Boyer

Book Bargains

The Gift Shop has gently used, big, all-color books, some with foldouts, that would make great gifts for young railfans. They're all bargain priced for the holidays.

Holiday Train

The Museum's planned vintage railcar trips for December 12 have been **cancelled**. *But Santa is still scheduled to arrive in SLO by train at 1:00 that day, and to be available in our car La Cuesta.*

Company Store

To raise funds, the Museum offers several items for sale. Belt buckles, T-shirts, baseball caps, mugs, engineer hats, enameled pins, embroidered patches, and videos are available through www.slorrm.com.

Click on **Company Store**.

Central Coast Rail Festival *continued*



Amtrak, Operation Lifesaver, the Santa Maria Valley Railroad, the Swanton Pacific Railroad, Cal Poly Archives, and others were represented on the Freight-house platform (above). The 1/3 size Swanton Pacific has a unique history involving the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exhibition and Cal Poly (sprr.calpoly.edu). Another first this year was a bicycle tour paralleling the former Pacific Coast Railway from San Luis Obispo to Avila (top right).



Members receive special recognition

In November the Museum's board granted Distinguished Service Awards to Pierre Rademaker and Rob Himoto. Pierre has been a sustaining member and provider of professional graphic design services, including the Museum logo, for many years. Rob has provided financial and logistical support, both key to having *La Cuesta* at the Museum and undergoing restoration.

Board election underway

Six Board of Directors positions are up for election, with voting occurring as this edition is released. The nomination process and ballots were provided to general members in November. Officers are to be elected by the board at its meeting of January 10, 2016.

From the archives: Gone but not forgotten *by Glen Matteson*

As noted before in this column, several businesses that followed the Pacific Coast Railway, both through ownership changes and by occupying the same locations, kept records from the railway. Among them are many pieces of correspondence and newspaper clippings, some clearly related to the railway and some not. In the 1930s, attentive PCRY staff saved several articles from area newspapers, including some covering the passing of local pioneers and prominent community members. Several of the people named have no obvious connection to the PCRY and may simply have been friends of the railway staff. Or they may have been investors or customers, but no clue remains within the articles or the hand-written notes occasionally added in the margins.

One item has a hint of there being more to the story: a small, faded clipping from the *Santa Maria Times* of August 11, 1933, titled "Edmund Ontiveros Expires in South." To quote in part, "An attack of heart disease is attributed as the cause of the sudden death in a hospital in Los Angeles last night of Edmund Ontiveros, 48, born in Santa Maria and a resident here until moving south seven years ago." It goes on to identify his survivors, including his widow, a daughter, four brothers, and a sister, living in places ranging from Gonzales to Santa Ynez to Los Angeles.

It's the penciled note in the margin made over 80 years ago that brings a smile: "Isn't this the man that got the best of us on delay of beans at SM without taking up WHR." The full intent was surely: Isn't this the man who got the best of us on delay of beans at Santa Maria without taking *it* up *with* WHR?

"Going to beans" was a longstanding railroad man's way of saying getting a meal. Maybe a crewman lodged a complaint about not getting to dinner on time and was somehow compensated for his suffering without appealing to the superintendent or the president. But there's a much more likely explanation. Dried beans grown in the area were a major PCRY traffic source. Many carloads resulted from, initially, taking sacks of them to Port San Luis for transloading to ships, and later to San Luis Obispo for transloading to the Southern Pacific. Mr. Ontiveros must have experienced a loss due to a delayed shipment and had been given a consideration on rates, without having to go all the way up the chain of command to WHR. The note is addressed to "WTM," and initialed at the end with something illegible. But there was a simple handwritten reply, "Yes." And below that a neatly stamped "W.T.M. AUG 12 1933." Clearly, the whole episode still rankled Mr. Illegible and Mr. WTM.

For more From the Archives see page 5.

Very Unusual, Possibly Unique

Over the summer the Museum received national attention for its restoration of Pacific Coast Railway boxcar Number 706 with the unusual and possibly unique interior adaptation for use as restrooms. The path to publicity began earlier in the year with the staff of the Association of Tourist Railroads and Railway Museums asking if the Museum had any restoration projects underway that would be of interest to readers of their magazine, which was making a transition from print to Internet publication. For us, it was more a matter of “Do you really want to know about all the projects we’re working on?”

Your newsletter editor sent ATRRM some material on the boxcar, noting its relation to the overall project of turning the Freighthouse into the Museum’s main facility. ATRRM asked for more information on the building, both PCRy boxcars, and the former Sana Fe café-lounge car now known as *La Cuesta*. Much of the text and one of the photos that were provided appeared in the Summer 2015 edition of the ATRRM magazine, the next to last that will be offered in paper form. The ATRRM website (www.atrrm.org) has a section for updates on projects throughout the country, and is sure to report progress on our various efforts in coming years.



Recording Recent History

Where is the next generation of railroad photographers, the fans-turning-pros to carry on the traditions of Steinheimer and Solomon? One may be hiking a hillside near San Luis Obispo, waiting by a bridge in the Salinas Valley, or cautiously holding his camera out the Dutch door of a vintage car rolling along the Gaviota Coast.

It takes luck and preparation to capture a scene like the one above of a Union Pacific (former Southern Pacific) water car being tested in tunnel-spraying mode at San Luis Obispo in late August. Alex Gillman has both. Alex, a college student, provided this image and one of a searchlight signal at Santa Margarita for the *Coast Mail* #53 “Looking Ahead” article. (More of Alex’s work can be seen on the Alex Gillman Photography Facebook page.) Someday there may be a book on the Coast Line in the 21st century, with many of his photos.

Above, spray comes from a perforated pipe curving over the end of the car, not from missing rivets during a pressure test of the tank itself. These cars allow a directed nozzle as from a fire truck, or they can be pushed into a tunnel or other structure, with spacer cars ahead of a locomotive, to douse a fire without exposing crew members to the heat and smoke.

A very practical donation

Members Tom Cooper custom fabricated, and Ted Van Klaveren installed, a sturdy ramp, with railings and non-slip surface, spanning a gap between the Freighthouse and the adjacent 1200-series Pacific Coast Railway boxcar that’s used for storage. The ramp accommodates the car’s and building’s rolling doors. Everyone who carries items through much appreciates it.

Board membership update

Aron Kahn has stepped down from the Board of Directors. Aron served several years as secretary, initially set up and maintained the Museum’s website, and was instrumental in preparing plans for the Freighthouse renovation, in particular the exhibit area and displays. Fellow members hope his design and computer talents will be available again.



A bucket you don’t see every day

Curator Brad LaRose, also a yard-sale sleuth, bought this fire bucket and recently donated it to the Museum. It’s a type that once was common around Southern Pacific buildings and along trestles. It’s red to make it easy to see and associate with fire, and it’s pointed at the bottom so it’s less likely to be taken away for another purpose. Who would want a bucket that always tips over and spills its contents? These standard buckets were paired with standard metal hoops that held them, next to large water barrels. In the photo above it’s held by visiting educator and museum consultant Toni Wynn.

Photo by Glen Matteson

More from the archives: The sheep and the goats *by Glen Matteson*



In an April 2015 “Train Tales” oral history recording, former Southern Pacific engineer Ray Craig told about departing San Luis Obispo and approaching Serrano siding high above Poly Canyon one dark night, and seeing “millions of eyes looking back” from the headlight’s reflection.

He stopped his freight train and climbed down to investigate. It took him and the fireman a while to herd all the sheep back into the Cal Poly pen that they had exited via an open gate. Upon arrival in Santa Margarita, Mr. Craig called the dispatcher, who must have been curious about the lack of progress shown by lights on his Centralized Traffic Control panel, to explain the delay. The dispatcher was asked to contact the sheep man at Cal Poly, a friend of Mr. Craig’s, so he would know what had happened. (And this part is hard to believe, but Mr. Craig said his nickname among fellow railroaders was “Sheep-herder,” but not due to this incident. For an accounting of several railroader nicknames including Mr. Craig’s, we’ll have to wait for release of the video program.)

An opposite situation involving livestock came to light recently in material being sorted for the archives. On July 5, 1929, R. Lee Ste. Fleure, General Superintendent and Marshall of the Santa Barbara Humane District, wrote to Pacific Coast Railway Superintendent W. T. Massengeil to report a more serious incident:

“We received a confidential report that some time last April, a number of goats, which complainant thought belonged to a Mr. Edwin Fields, of Los Alamos, became impounded in the cattle corral of your railway lines at Zaca Station, and that one died of starvation and the others were found in a very weak condition, when liberated by a passing rancher.”

“The report did not know how the goats had gotten into the corral, or what the full details were and we wondered whether you had any report from any of your employees as to such a happening, and whether such a thing did actually occur.”

“We would be grateful if you would investigate...”

The next day Mr. Massengeil directed a typed note to Mr. Bunce, PCRY Foreman in Santa Maria, summarizing Mr. Ste. Fleure’s letter and asking “Will you please see what you can find out from Baldwin or others in regard to this, and advise.”

On July 9, Mr. Bunce sent Mr. Baldwin a handwritten note “in regard to goats being closed at Zaca stock corral...” On July 10 Mr. Baldwin in Los Alamos wrote to Mr. Bunce:

“In regard to your letter about gate at Zaca they are generally closed. The only thing I know about goats is I found a piece of one when I went to burn out the stock pen. I don’t see how they could fasten themselves in.”

Burning out the pen probably refers to the railroad’s ongoing battle with weeds (though goats have a reputation for eating anything). Mr. Bunce’s action was prompt. The day he received Mr. Baldwin’s note he wrote from his base in Santa Maria to the local headquarters in San Luis Obispo:

“In regards to Goates becoming closed at our corral at Zaca, first I heard of them was from Engineer Vincent being close for about 4 or 5 days that they seemed to be in need of food and water so they stoped and shoo them out through shoot, think they were 6 of them one being dead. How they got in or who drove them in I do not know.”

So, it appears that the Good Samaritan was a locomotive engineer, not a rancher. But sadly it was too late for goat #6. Mr. Massengeil reported to Mr. Ste. Fleure on July 11:

“...I find that the engineer of our train which passes through Zaca each day noticed some goats closed in the stock corral at that place, and when after several days they appeared to be suffering for food and water he stopped his train and turned them out... We have no information as to whom the goats belonged to, or by whom they were shut in the corral, but it seems possible they were wandering on the highway and someone shut them in the corral to abate a traffic nuisance, thinking the owner would find them. We have no employee stationed at Zaca.”

That’s fairly efficient: one week turnaround involving letters between at least four people ranging from Santa Barbara to San Luis Obispo, to Santa Maria, to Los Alamos, back to Santa Maria and San Luis Obispo, and back to Santa Barbara. But references to fire and a piece of a goat raise troubling questions as to whether this is the whole story.

Your archivist is compelled to report one further batch of details. According to its letterhead, the Santa Barbara Humane District encompassed the counties of Santa Barbara, Ventura, San Luis Obispo, Kern, Fresno, Monterey, Tulare, Madera, and Kings. It operated “under authority of the State of California” and was a member of the American Humane Association, the State Humane Association of California, the National Probation Association, the Peace Officers Association of California, and the California Anti-Rodeo Cruelty Association. It was “An agency for the enforcement of all laws relating to or affecting children or animals.” In addition to the aforementioned Mr. Ste. Fleure, officers included: the Honorable W. C. Grammil, President and Chairman of the Board; Robert E. Lee, State Humane Officer; and Mrs. Marion Ste. Fleure, Complaint Department. No chuckles, please.

Even more from the archives *by Glen Matteson*

Aspersions were cast



The material being sorted for the archives includes hundreds of Pacific Coast Railway letters on subjects such as impaired clearance between tracks and track-side buildings, drainage ditches and weeds, requests to install business signs on the right-of-way, and reducing maintenance crews as soon as possible after major repair and cleanup efforts.

But occasionally matters of a more “sensitive and personal nature” are addressed, as in a handwritten but unsigned letter from somewhere in Santa Maria, dated July 20, 1928, to the PCRY’s Superintendent W. J. Massengeil:

*“Dear Sur. Just to tel you that if you can not transfer J. Macisa to some other Section as Hes Wafe can not live where there is families as she has to meny Man Coming in & out in Her House it is not place for a Woman of Her kind to Be among families
“Your Truly”*

A clumsy composition, but not hard to get the gist. It took Mr. Massengeil (and his secretary) only 3 days to send a neatly typed letter to Mr. H. Bunce, Foreman:

“I am attaching an unsigned letter in regard to Sectionman J. Macisa.

“Please look into the matter and take such action as seems necessary, advising me your findings.”

For track maintenance purposes, railroads were divided into numbered sections, usually of about 10 to 20 miles, with a section foreman and crew of laborers responsible for each. On July 25, Mr. Bunce responded:

“In regards to Macisa’s wife I don’t see any thing wrong. She has got two borders one works lumber yard and one on Section Seven. both of these men are cousins.

“As far as I understand [it] is a family quarrel amongst Canchota’s women and Mrs Macisa.

“Canchota has two grown up girls and will not admit men for a mile at his house and would like to have the whole yard for him self. Never the less I shall look deeper into this matter if a case of Jelouisly.”

There is a bold pencil check mark at the end of this last, implying the matter was resolved and the records could be filed away. But now your archivist, though never a fan of soap operas, is curious about Canchota and his women and girls. And, why was looking deeper conditioned on it being a matter of jealousy? Why did that matter to Mr. Bunce? We can’t tune in tomorrow to find out.

Get the reference, reveal your age

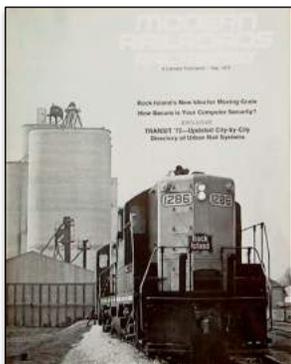
There’s limited space for the Museum’s library and archives, so as items come out of storage they’re screened for relevance to the Museum’s mission, which focuses on Central Coast railroading. Nearly everything that doesn’t fit is passed on to the Gift Shop, where books and magazines are made available for those with wider interests, or to other railroad interest groups focused on different parts of the country.

At the bottom of one box were about a dozen copies of a four-page item that at first looked like the front and back covers of a magazine, with the inner part removed. The title was *Modern Railroads – Rail Transit*, and the gray-scale cover featured a close-up of a Rock Island road-switcher with a huge grain elevator in the background. The cover also noted what must have been one of the feature articles, “How Secure is Your Computer Security?” With a family member involved in Cal Poly’s cyber security program, your archivist opened the cover expectantly, thinking this May 1972 article reprint would at least provide a chuckle to someone not born until several years after the publication date. (“What, someone might walk off with your punch cards?”)

But the only article’s big, bold title for its two-page spread was “Women at the Throttle.” Women in railroading is an interesting aspect of history. And the thought was that this article might bridge between the first, and major, involvement of women in many railroad roles during World War II, and more recent developments, and could help in developing an exhibit some day. But no need to keep all those copies.

Then the little subtitle came into focus. “Santa Maria Valley Railroad Dispels ‘Petticoat Junction’ Image With Volume and Top Efficiency in California.” Hint: there is no Petticoat Junction on the Central Coast and probably never was. But the Museum has relatively little material on the SMVR, so this report by Robert Roberts for Cahners Publishing Company was a rare gem. (A few copies were set aside for Museum member and supporter Rob Himoto, who helps run SMVR today, and for the Friends of the Santa Maria Valley Railroad.)

Continues page 7



Get the reference, continued

The article begins with a summary of the remarkable accomplishments of G. Allan Hancock in “ranching, banking, oceanography, aeronautics, education, music and railroading.” It goes on to describe the railroad’s traffic base: inbound sugar beets for the Betteravia refinery, and outbound sugar, molasses, and beet pulp, plus frozen foods from the fertile Santa Maria Valley. At the time, the road operated six General Electric 70-ton diesel locomotives, which are about as small as you can get and still be a locomotive. And by coincidence on the same day, a couple copies of the operator’s manual for that type of locomotive turned up in a different box. (One headed to the Gift Shop, and if you act quickly it may still be there. The manual is as diminutive as the locomotive.)

But let’s not forget the women. When Captain Hancock died in 1965, Mrs. Marian M. Hancock, who had been the railroad’s secretary-treasurer, became president. When the article was published, the railroad was managed by Sue J. Sword, in fact the chief executive officer even though her title was vice-president. In those days SMVR was handling over 20,000 carloads a year, and had a fully equipped machine shop with eight workers that could do just about any work except wheel truing.

The article reports that rail ranged from 75 pounds per yard to a whopping 159 pounds per yard (mainline rail today is typically 132 – 136 pounds per yard). The hefty rails were limited to “girder rail used for 4½ blocks in downtown Santa Maria streets.” (Girder rail includes an integral flangeway, is more stable in relation to the pavement, and reduces disruption from needing to replace it as often.) To maintain the track, SMVR had an RMC McWilliams hydraulic tamper “and six machines from Fairmont, including ballast regulator... tie remover, spike puller, track liner, and track car.” Go, ladies. But not everything was big-time railroading. “To inspect track, the superintendent drives his automobile sans flanged wheels onto the track.”



Another celebration

In 1952 a powerful earthquake centered near the small community of Arvin in Kern County rocked the Tehachapi Pass area. The Southern Pacific Railroad’s San Joaquin Valley line used a twisting route through the Tehachapis to reach the town of Mojave, and from there via Soledad Canyon the Los Angeles Basin. The Santa Fe Railway also used the SP’s Tehachapi line for its trains between Bakersfield and Mojave (but its own tracks to the San Francisco Bay area, and to Barstow and points east). The earthquake collapsed tunnels and threw track out of alignment in several locations.

What does all that have to do with the happy couple, pictured above on the Freighthouse platform? The gentleman is Glen Sipe, and seated next to him is his wife Emma Lee Sipe. On September 12 she celebrated her birthday at the Museum, surrounded by family and friends of several generations. But back in 1952 Mr. Sipe had been a locomotive fireman for the SP in Fresno. With the Tehachapi line out of service for weeks while major reconstruction was done, both the SP and the Santa Fe detoured many trains over the Coast Route. It was a very busy time in San Luis Obispo and other Coast Route communities.

Mr. Sipe found himself living in a Pullman car near the San Luis Obispo depot, making runs between Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and Watsonville, and helper assignments over Cuesta Grade. From a brief conversation with a Museum volunteer, it sounded like Mrs. Sipe preferred to have him at home. He soon was, and he did not pursue a railroad career. Even before marrying, Mrs. Sipe had a railroad connection. Her father had been a boilermaker for the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific (the “Rock Island Line”) in the Midwest, and later the SP and the Santa Fe.

report and photo by Glen Matteson

Rare Mileage

Serious train-riding hobbyists refer to trips over lines that almost never have passenger travel as “rare mileage,” which is to be savored. In mid-September the private car *Tioga Pass* spent time on the Santa Maria Valley Railroad, carrying invited guests along the line. The car had come from Los Angeles, and returned on September 13 after an extremely rare stop by Amtrak’s southbound Coast Starlight, to add it to the rear of the train, at Guadalupe. That’s where the SMVR connects with the Union Pacific tracks that Amtrak uses.

(SMVR had allowed the Museum to store its 1926 café-lounge car now named *La Cuesta* on its tracks, and operated occasional special runs on its tracks, before the car was moved to the Museum’s display track.)



The photo above by SMVR’s manager Rob Himoto shows *Tioga Pass* leaving the Guadalupe yard, which has the most trackage and switching activity of any location between Ventura and San Jose. This business car with open observation platform was built by Canadian National Railway’s shops in Quebec in 1959 as Number 23 (no name). In 1992 CNR sold the car to an individual, and it was acquired from his estate in 1997. Many substantial electrical, mechanical, and decor improvements were made starting in 2002. The car is now among several available for charter and special trips through a consortium of private car owners operating as LARail.

reported by Glen Matteson

Help bring a mechanism home

Pictured at right is the scale platform and mechanism cabinet that remain in the Freighthouse. The mechanism itself is gone, but may still exist. If anyone knows where it is or where a matching Fairbanks-Morse mechanism may be available, let the Museum know. We’d like to reunite them.



Home after many years!

Shown above is the ticket cage of Southern Pacific’s first S.L.O depot, built 1894, used for other purposes after 1942, and torn down in 1971. The Museum greatly appreciates Randall R. Danniell for acquiring this cage many years ago with the intent that it eventually go to the Museum. Mr. Danniell facilitated transfer of ownership to the Museum in July 2015. Curator Brad LaRose transported it home from Iowa, after it had spent time in Colorado and New Jersey.

Money and tickets that passed through this cage were entwined with the experiences of those who lived through World War I, the Roaring Twenties, the Great Depression, and the start of World War II, and countless personal dramas unconnected to world events.

It would be very helpful in making an exhibit with the cage if anyone can share a photo of the depot interior showing it while it was installed.



A bell and a whistle

Thirty-four years ago, long before there was an S.L.O.R.R. Museum, Brad LaRose obtained the bell from the *Rattler*, an American (4-4-0) type locomotive built in 1868 for the Central Pacific. The CP, based in Sacramento, was the western partner in the first transcontinental rail line and a forerunner of the Southern Pacific. The bell was salvaged when the locomotive was scrapped in 1909. More recently, Brad discovered that the California State Railroad Museum had a Southern Pacific six-chime, step-top whistle made of locomotive bronze. As this goes to press, Brad had donated the bell to our Museum and was arranging for a trade with the state museum for the locomotive whistle, which would be an outstanding complement to the whistles in our collection.



Imagine a locomotive named Rattler puffing over the Sierras with this bell glinting in the sunlight. It's a rare and valuable artifact headed home to Sacramento in trade for an equally attractive locomotive whistle that better fits our Museum's focus.

photo by Marisol Romero



Visitors, especially younger ones, love the sounds of the steam locomotive bells at the Museum. Soon they may be able to hear the sounds of whistles too, though by audio rather than by steam blasts that could hurt the ears of everyone close by (whistles now at the Museum are shown).

photos above and right by Glen Matteson



Horsepower

In the 1880s Paso Robles, expected to become a major hot-springs resort, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo had horse-drawn street railways. In October, Union Bank in Paso Robles gave the Museum this large framed photo of a Paso Robles car. Such horse cars were used in many cities. Most were gone by 1910, but some were converted to electric streetcars. Being near a street railway was a major advantage and real estate selling point, especially with many streets unpaved. It was even better, as in San Luis Obispo, when the line took riders close to downtown stores and offices, major hotels, and of course the railroad depot.

More recent history

Smoothing the way



On October 14, on the team track south of the Freighthouse, Union Pacific workers adjust a machine that tamps rock ballast around the ties. A ballast regulator, which evenly spreads freshly dumped ballast, idles beyond. And Amtrak's midday Surfliner rolls by.

Models Galore

The October **Central Coast Railroad Festival** included tours of several model railroads and garden railroads in the area. There was something for every taste. Facebook users can take an abbreviated tour by watching a video prepared by member Jack Hutchinson, at [Model Trains Video](#) (image below is not a link).



Benchwork for the Museum's **Central Coast Model Railroad** is nearing completion, a major milestone. Benchwork is the foundation and support for the visible model railroad. For the past two years the Museum modelers' primary effort has been constructing the benchwork and installing track. The model railroad will depict the Southern Pacific Coast Line, in condensed form, from Paso Robles to Surf (a station overlooking the Pacific Ocean at Vandenberg Air Force Base) as it was about 1950. Today Amtrak and the Union Pacific Railroad use this route.

In October framing was begun for the last part that extends into the viewing area. This peninsula will include the 1954 Union Oil Refinery and the Oceano scene. Also coming is the helix to connect the upper and lower levels of track at San Luis Obispo. It will be built of laser-cut components courtesy of Bob Schrempp. Master carpenter Mike Fairbrother has lead the framing effort. Mike Boyack, John Marchetti, and Jim Trask have taken the lead on scenery, which is complete in the Surf area. The modeling group has 22 members with a range of essential skills including building structures and rolling stock, and wiring and computer controls.



Above, visitors at the Railroad Festival watch a freight train leaving the location of Surf (photo by Gary See).

Lower left, a Southern Pacific cab-forward locomotive's headlight gleams on the rails as it prepares to depart Surf on the Museum's model railroad (photo by Tom Grozan).

Below, benchwork for the Oceano area rises to support the double-deck layout (photo by Andrew Merriam).

