



Museum open every Saturday 10:00 to 4:00; other times for groups by arrangement. Contact media@slormm.com.

Recognition for Major Supporters



Last in the Train – But First On the List Caboose Progress

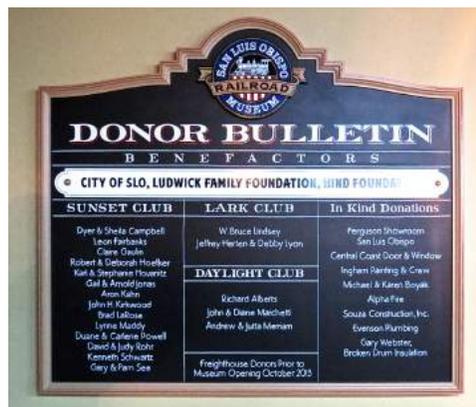
Volunteers have given high priority to restoring former Southern Pacific bay window caboose #1886 –seats, flooring, painting, hardware, and fixtures—aiming for public tours by the Railroad Festival in October. Work has progressed with the support of several Museum and community members. Brad LaRose, Dennis Lynch, Dan Manion, and Bob Wilson in particular have spent many hours returning the heavily used and somewhat abused interior to near original condition.

Caboose accommodated freight conductors and brakemen, who worked with waybills and switch lists, monitored brake-line air pressure, kept an eye on the whole train, and protected the rear of the train. The body of a bay window caboose was narrower than a typical car, with the bay’s slanted end windows allowing a clear view of the train on even gradual curves. SP used bay window cabooses from the late 1940s through the end of the “caboose era” in the 1980s. *Three photos by Glen Matteson*



Central Coast Railroad Festival October 7 - 9

Special exhibits & displays – public library programs – wine-rail excursion – swap meet – music – food – book and model bargains – “back-lot” tour – bike ride along the former Pacific Coast Railway route from the city to the sea – kids play area – special presentations – *passing trains*. Most events are scheduled for Saturday October 8. Check www.slormm.com for details.



A new board mounted in the exhibit hall identifies those who made major contributions to upgrading the Freighthouse so it could accept visitors.



Tank Car Arrives at the Museum

Several years of searching, negotiating, and planning paid off July 29 when this former Southern Pacific tank car arrived at the Museum. Thanks to Curator Brad LaRose’s diligence, it was donated by Union Pacific Railroad. It had been used as a water car in a remote part of Northern California. It’s type CS-25A, originally used to transport several commodities including customers’ petroleum products or the railroad’s own locomotive fuel supplies. The only intact one of its kind, it was built in 1903. In the photo above, a crane places it on the display track. It will be repainted to its original black and moved north beyond the Freighthouse. In coming years it will be joined by a sugar-beet gondola, a wood-sided boxcar, and a cupola caboose.

For more photos of tank car moving, see page 13 (online). And come to the Freighthouse on September 13 at 6:00 p.m. to hear Brad’s presentation on this once widely used type of car and our adventures in bringing this particular one to San Luis Obispo.



Preserving California's Central Coast Railroad History

The San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum is a non-profit educational institution. Founded to preserve and present California Central Coast railroad history by collecting, restoring, displaying, and operating relevant railroad artifacts, photographs, models, and documents, its goal is to facilitate a better understanding of railroads' impact on our area's social, cultural, and economic history.

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Contact

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 San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

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.

Become a member

Membership provides opportunities for anyone interested in current railroad activity, 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 can join for \$60 annually, and a sustaining member pays \$100 per year. 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 on MEMBERSHIP and using PayPal.

Membership benefits include *free* admission to the Museum and access to Members Only features of the website, including current *whole* issues of *Coast Mail* (as at right).

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. 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.

Membership news

Since the last *Coast Mail* there were: four new family memberships and seven family renewals; six new individual members (including Mike Wulkan as a sustaining member) and six renewals. Several memberships were dropped because dues had not been received. Don't forget to renew to maintain benefits.

TIMETABLE

Meetings of the Museum Board of Directors are held on the second Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m., at 1940 Santa Barbara Avenue, San Luis Obispo.

- September 13** - Public presentation meeting - Tank Car Saga
- October 11** - Board action meeting
- November 8** - Board action meeting

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

Also in this Issue

- Remembering Arnold Jonas 3
- Bylaws changes 3
- Push car joy riding 4
- Mystery photos answers 4
- Details of train crew manuals ... 5
- History of the Museum Part 1 ... 6
- Bridge to the future 6
- Problems for Pacific Coast Rwy7
- Just the facts on an oil disaster ..7
- History of the Museum Part 2 ... 8
- New mystery photo 8
- A missing tunnel 9
- When *La Cuesta* came to SLO ... 9
- Tool donation – are we right? 9
- Focus on artifacts: a vase? 10
- Hardhat sombrero invented 10
- Learning every day 11
- Tunnel at the end of the movie.. 12
- Hard times on the PCRY 12
- Tank car moving photos 13
- Correcting politely 14

The Biggest of the Smallest

See some of Bernd Schumacher's huge collection of Z scale trains, at the Museum on September 17.
Photo by zimwizdotcom via flickriver.



An easy way to support the Museum: smile.

If you shop through Amazon, setting up purchases through www.Smile.Amazon.com and making the Museum your chosen charity will provide a contribution at no additional cost to you. Your selection is confidential and you can change it at any time.

Museum Store

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

Click on **Company Store**.

How did you get interested in trains?

Arnold Jonas

Space had been saved in this edition for an interview with former Museum board member Arnold Jonas. Arnold died unexpectedly in April, so the interview never occurred. But some of those who knew him pieced together a little background.

Arnold's childhood and most of his career were in the eastern San Francisco Bay Area, where tracks of the Southern Pacific (two routes), the Santa Fe, the Western Pacific, and the Sacramento Northern all headed east into the San Joaquin and Sacramento valleys. Arnold was a fan in particular of the SP and the SN, one of the nation's longest electric interurban railways, which operated both freight and passenger service. An exciting episode in Arnold's early years was the 1944 explosion of munitions stored at Port Chicago on Suisun Bay, which could be heard for miles and which destroyed much railroad property. The incident resulted in a "strike" by servicemen over unsafe conditions, multiple court-martial trials, and eventual desegregation of the US Navy.

Arnold was a garden railway enthusiast (models about 1/30th full size, usually operated outdoors), and had started a setup after coming to San Luis Obispo in 1989 to be director of the city department that included planning and building. He was particularly proud of fitting a live steam locomotive with radio controls, and joked that he hoped the signals wouldn't interfere with model aircraft at a nearby park. He had a home business making tunnel portals and other items for garden railways. Co-workers saved small boxes for him to use for shipping.

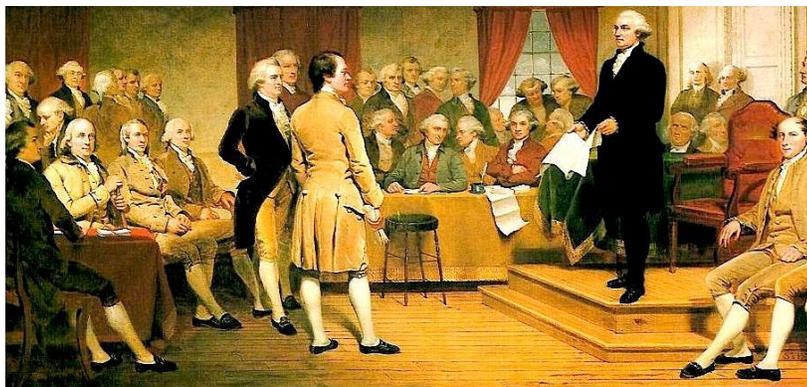
Arnold was on the Museum board for several years, was secretary, and served as membership chair before that job had a title. He played an important role when the Freighthouse was saved from demolition and upgraded as the Museum's home, providing insight into city review processes while taking care to avoid any conflict of interest with his job. The city's Railroad District Plan was also prepared during that time.



Arnold's license plate holder read "Big Train Backshop," "big" referring to garden railroad models being much larger than the tabletop ones.

Photo courtesy Dave Smith.

It's not quite like starting a new country, but...



... it is important for governing the Museum.

New Bylaws

As a nonprofit, public benefit corporation under California law, the Museum is governed in part by Bylaws that spell out responsibilities and the required steps to make basic decisions on how the organization operates. In that sense, bylaws are like the Constitution. Core parts of the Bylaws dated from 1991. After researching current state law and considering best practices recommended by a local group that helps nonprofits be sustainable in the long term, the Museum Board of Directors voted unanimously on July 12 to:

- Allow future Board members to be chosen by vote of sitting Board members, without a confirmation vote of the general membership. (This will save the expense of mailing ballots each year. The elections have been formalities with no practical effect on Board membership.)
- Set term limits for Board members –five years before a member must take at least one year off.
- Explicitly allow for supporting staff positions and task-focused committees separate from Board members, who have largely been hands-on workers as well. (There are no plans to have any paid positions, and Board members cannot be paid.)
- Not require new Board members to have been Museum general members for a year. Instead, the initial term of a new Board member will be for one year rather than two.
- Formally recognize changing from a fiscal year (for budgeting and tax-status reporting) that ran from October through September to a January-through-December fiscal year.
- Provide for Board members to have written agreements with the corporation spelling out expectations, responsibilities, and avoidance of conflicts of interest.
- Explicitly recognize the Board's authority to set, through other documents, overall policy for things like general membership categories, collections, and use of Museum premises.
- Clarify when Board business may be conducted by electronic means such as email or telepresence (which largely did not exist in 1991).
- Have a regular meeting each calendar quarter. (Previously, only two meetings per year were required, but Board business meetings have generally been and will be held every month.)
- Modify when Board members can be removed for causes such as failure to attend meetings.
- Require a two-thirds vote of all Board members for any future change to the Bylaws, but not a vote of the general members for any change. With the original Bylaws, changing the number of directors required approval by at least 75 percent of all general members, or the majority of general members present at a meeting attended by at least five percent of all general members. Other Bylaws changes could have been approved by a two-thirds vote of Board members at a meeting.

From the Archives by Glen Matteson

Kids these days...

With many volunteers coming and going, and with several facilities and mobile items on display, the Museum's volunteer staff takes very seriously the need to keep things locked and stationary outside of public and working hours. Apparently there were some lapses in that regard locally along the railroad. Recently found in the material to be archived was a July 11, 1955, communication from Southern Pacific's Roadmaster V. E. Pearson to "All Concerned."

"There has been an epidemic of Motor Car, Push car and ... speeders being placed on the rails by kids because they have been found unlocked. Recent trip over this District the Speeder at San Ardo was found outside the tool house and not locked. We had a case where although push car was locked at Serrano, the Lock was broken and the push car was ridden from Serrano to Hathaway and taken off the rail ... at the West switch.

"I am not going to be embarrassed by such practices and when found discipline will be assessed."

Serrano was a long siding and section crew base on the western slope of the Santa Lucia range, just before the line makes a nearly 180-degree turn for the approach to the summit of Cuesta Grade. Hathaway was a short siding along California Blvd. between the Mill Street overcrossing and the Foothill Blvd. grade crossing (near the street spelled Hathway on city maps). Discipline was typically assessed in demerits, and one didn't want to get too many of those.

This communication and many other records of track maintenance details were among items donated by the Choate family. Gordon Choate, Section Foreman, was responsible for the condition of track, switches, and supporting equipment in the upper Salinas Valley. Among his regular crew were Angel Hernandez, Luis Z. Gomez, Julio O. Martinez, and Baltasar Viscarra; also listed on his time records were Archie L. Smith, Hugh M. Grogan, John D. Lightle, Raymond H. Reasons, and Charlie Bolden.

More From the Archives on page 5 (online).



No demerits for regular (and businesslike) volunteer Tom Cooper, here working on one of the Museum's narrow-gauge push cars in 2015.

Three photos by Glen Matteson.

Mystery Photos Answers

Did you recognize the mystery items in the last *Coast Mail*? Taking the easier one first, it's the plaque on the wall of a passenger shelter, where bus riders often wait, next to the San Luis Obispo Amtrak station. In case you cannot read the smaller text, it notes completion in 1987 of the shelters and expanded parking for train passengers. The overall project "was a cooperative effort between the City of San Luis Obispo, Amtrak, CalTrans, and Southern Pacific."



The other item (below) is more obscure. It's four steel tie plates welded together, to serve as a cover along the San Luis Obispo station platform for a vault containing a valve for the "water column" that used to be nearby. In addition to fuel, water, and sand facilities at the roundhouse, in the steam era San Luis Obispo had a water column at the north end of the track segment where passenger trains usually stopped and another at the south end. The plates shown are at the south end.

The water columns were an arrangement of a fixed vertical pipe and a movable horizontal pipe that could be swung over the tender of a steam locomotive to fill the water tank. The columns were supplied by underground pipes leading from elevated water tanks, such as the one preserved northeast of the current San Luis Obispo depot. Curator Brad LaRose has been trying to obtain one of the last intact columns to install in a parking lot planter near the feature in this photo.

Tie plates are slabs of steel with holes for spikes, which help anchor and spread the weight of the rails on wood ties. Watch future *Coast Mail* issues for more than you ever wanted to know about tie plates.



More From the Archives

by Glen Matteson

Details

Somewhere there's a publication containing the statement "Engineers have to be able to remember a lot of details." It's probably a sign of the times that your archivist can remember the statement but not the source. The publication likely was from a railroad, and it must have been meant for people holding on to the image of a hogger leaning on his armrest with a big stub of a cigar clenched in his teeth, ready to roll governed only by what his locomotive was capable of, signal indications, and his ego.

Those still holding onto that notion should peruse documents such as the rules examinations that engineers must pass, and the employee timetables, special instructions, and general orders they're supposed to know. Don't forget the bulletins that come out daily or the train orders that can change by the hour. The archives contain an extensive and growing collection of these items. Someday, given enough volunteer hours, the Museum will have an inventory allowing material to be searched by title, topic, date, and source.

To make sure crews know and follow the rules, railroad supervisors have been known to hide in the bushes with radar speed detectors, to turn off the power on a signal—a dark signal being the most restrictive—and to place "torpedoes" or fusees on the tracks to add a little unexpected excitement. (These on-the-spot warning devices make a pair of booms or a glowing light, respectively, to alert an approaching train to trouble or an obstruction ahead.) But what if the impersonal hardware or documents themselves play gotcha?

Here's an instruction in "Amtrak General Road Foreman Notice 19," dated 1992, on resetting the computer for a certain kind of passenger locomotive's head-end power system, which provides electricity for train lighting, heating, and air conditioning. (It was part of a wide range of items donated by Tom DeLaRosa, an engineer for Southern Pacific and for Amtrak.)

"The computer will normally display READY... whether or not the unit is supplying head end power. If after resetting a fault the computer displays WAIT for more than one minute the following procedure is to be used to recycle the computer:

"1. Place the engine control switch (ref #18 on page 25 of the Dash 8 manual) to the START position.

"2. Turn off the battery charge and computer circuit breaker located behind the shield (ref #16 on page 25 of the Dash 8 manual). Leave the breaker in the OFF position for at least five seconds.

"3. Turn the breaker on. The computer screen should read DISPLAY IS READY for 15 seconds, then WAIT for 15 seconds, then display READY."

So remember, "ready" might just be teasing; you still have to wait for it to be *really* ready.

Prepare to be baffled by even more detail. Here's practice question #65 from Southern Pacific's *Study Guide for Rules Recertification Program 2*, June 28, 1983, also donated by Mr. DeLaRosa:

"Engine consists mixed with both taper and flat control dynamic braking systems pose a challenge to an engineer, especially when approaching turnouts or crossovers where dynamic braking amperage may have to be reduced 1000 feet in advance thereof. With regard to the above, which of the following statements are true? (AB Rule 58.B)

- "1. If a locomotive equipped with the taper system is leading a locomotive(s) equipped with the flat system of braking, the braking lever must be advanced to obtain an increase in braking on trailing locomotive(s) with flat control system, even though the lead locomotive may be in maximum braking in the lower braking lever position.
- "2. If a locomotive equipped with the taper system of braking is leading a locomotive(s) equipped with the flat system, the trailing flat locomotive(s) may already have reached maximum dynamic braking, depending on train speed and/or braking lever position on the lead locomotive while it is still in a low braking lever position.
- "3. If a locomotive equipped with the flat system is leading a locomotive(s) equipped with the taper system of braking, the braking lever must be advanced to obtain an increase in braking on trailing locomotive(s) with taper control systems, even though the lead locomotive may be in maximum braking in the lower braking lever position.
- "4. If a locomotive equipped with the flat system of braking is leading a locomotive(s) equipped with the taper system, the trailing taper locomotive(s) may have already reached maximum dynamic braking, depending on train speed and/or braking lever position on the lead locomotive while it is still in a low braking lever position."

There is so much here that is counterintuitive. The answer will be in the next issue of *Coast Mail*. (Heaven help the poor engineer whose four-unit consist is taper-flat-taper-flat.)

Many details have become obsolete. Getting on and off moving equipment is generally not allowed these days. But a 1984 Southern Pacific "Safe Work Practices" booklet advises how to do so. There's an illustration on the next page of this newsletter. Looking at it, one wonders if what appears to be the worker's hardhat was retouched later ("Photoshopped" to the current generation), along with what appears to be a black arrow on the ground. And, does the top of the hardhat align with what appears to be part of a placard or reporting mark? In a world of few certainties, your archivist can assure you that it is not himself doing the hokey-pokey with a lampshade on his head.

Continues on page 6.

From the Archives – “Details” continued

The image below, from a 1984 Southern Pacific “Safe Work Practices” booklet, shows how to get off a moving freight car –something generally against the rules today. While at first the sequence of steps seems backward, the key is trusting that they work, to make your body turn away from the moving equipment rather than toward those murderous wheels.

Image from SLORRM collection.

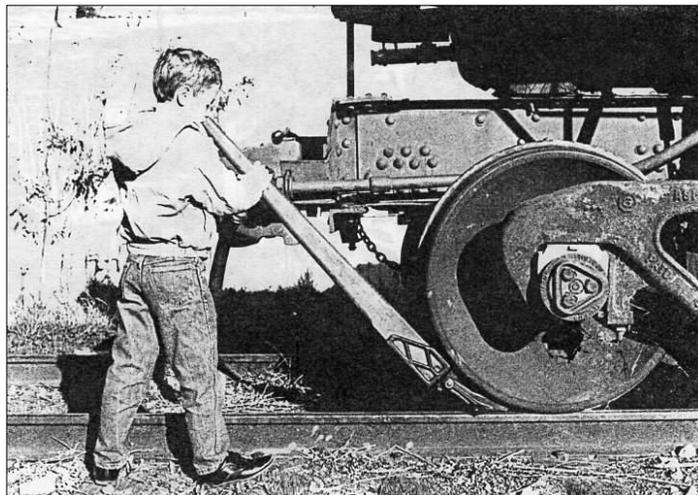
- J. When equipment is moving, first place trailing foot in direction of movement on the ground. Then release hand hold with your leading hand. (See Fig. 8)



Fig. 8

- K. After trailing foot has made solid contact with ground, step down with forward foot, releasing hand hold with your rear hand, letting momentum carry you away from moving equipment.

More From the Archives on page 7.



The History of a Historical Museum Part 1: Archimedes Vindicated

Once upon a time a colleague of your archivist talked about working at the steel mill in Fontana, California. He described moving railroad cars with a small tractor or a forklift (pulling, not lifting). He may also have asserted that he could move one by putting his shoulder against it and pushing. Even considering the mechanical efficiency of steel-wheel-on-rail movement, that’s a bit farfetched. But here’s Brandon LaRose, age nine, son of Museum founding member Brad LaRose, demonstrating use of a one-man car-mover. This photo was first published in *The Wig Wag* (the original name of the Museum’s newsletter), January 1995 edition.

On level track, a car with good axle bearings, no flat wheels, and not overloaded, could be positioned by one adult using such a lever, if it needed to be lined up with a loading or unloading feature such as a warehouse door or grain drop-through. According to the caption, this artifact had been donated by Keith Tarwater of Paso Robles, and the car is a Southern Pacific water car at Santa Margarita [see *Coast Mail* #54, Winter 2015].

You can help build a bridge to the future.

“The ground fell away on both sides, but we kept going!” That was probably the reaction of a passenger crossing a tall bridge in the early days of railroading, akin to the first people to ride in aircraft. While the Romans built some impressive aqueducts, it was the railroads that built the first very high, very long bridges.

Did a certain person introduce you to the satisfaction of designing or building something useful that stands the test of time? Did a writer or teacher bring alive a particular part of history? A gift to the Museum in memory of that person is a great way to pay it forward. A young visitor may be inspired in ways we can only guess.

Amtrak’s southbound Coast Starlight crosses Stenner Creek trestle, standing here over 100 years, in Fall 2015. Photo by Glen Matteson.



Still more From the Archives

by Glen Matteson

Miscellaneous problems**Problem #1 – Promiscuous caterpillar**

From Pacific Coast Railway superintendent to Mr. J. F. Knapp in Santa Maria, on June 17, 1930:

“I am informed by our Roadmaster that your caterpillar operating at Nipomo, in turning or maneuvering promiscuously across our tracks is doing considerable damage to the tracks. He recommends that when it is necessary for the caterpillar to cross the rails if they will do it at right angles instead of diagonally, etc., it will not do so much damage. Will you kindly look into this and correct it.”

Problem #2 – Forgotten friend

From Chas Maha, Proprietor, Golden Gate Farm, Arroyo Grande, to Mr. W. T. Massengeil, PCRY superintendent at San Luis Obispo, on November 8, 1930:

“My Dear Friend Referring to our talk together when i call on you long time ago in regards to the ditching I did down here i was just wondering if you did not forget me on that small donation which you promist me that i will here from the Co later i hope when you see the work i don you still bleave in giving me a small lift as you did, at that time hoping to here from it soon as i am in need for taxes right now.

“Thanking you in advance for what ever you can do for me in this line.”

Problem #3 – Weed control by cow

From W. T. Massengeil, PCRY superintendent at San Luis Obispo, to Foreman Mr. Henry Bunce, December 20, 1930:

“On December 17th, while coming from Santa Maria, on motor #4000, there was noticed a cow staked out on our right of way at about the edge of the Santa Maria city limits. The chain holding the cow was short enough so that she could not walk close to a train, but as there is always a chance of something unusual happening which would enable the cow to get on the track, please have the owner discontinue the practice.”

Problem #4 – Top knocked off; trainman next?

From the office of the PCRY superintendent to Mr. R. M. Smith, Secretary, Farmers’ Telephone Lines, Avila Road, on April 13, 1932:

“Yesterday the conductor of train going to Port San Luis reported that telephone wire crossing track at the old Foster Place, east end of the Porter Grade, 3½ miles west of San Luis Obispo, was hanging so low as to knock off top of stovepipe over caboose. Immediately upon receipt of this information we reported the matter to the telephone company. This morning we were advised by them that the line is owned by the Farmers’ Telephone Lines and that you were notified to take up the slack wire.

“In case of a trainman walking on top of a box car low wires might result in knocking him off the car, with serious personal injuries. In the future we will thank you to see that wires are not lower than 22 feet from top of rails, as provided in California Railroad Commission’s General Order #64.”

There’s a little irony in the last item, in that other correspondence reveals several instances of parties in and near Santa Maria complaining to the PCRY that the railroad’s overhead trolley wire was sagging and presenting a hazard, and of the California Railroad Commission directing the PCRY to resolve issues of platforms, roofs, or building walls being too close to their tracks. The clearance issues sometimes set of a flurry of letters concerning when a building was constructed (before the rules?) or whether an original building had burned and been replaced. Some PCRY letters had an approach of Gee, we don’t know when that building got there, all our records burned a few years ago.

Just the facts

Oil transportation has been in the news a lot lately. It’s been a large part of local railroad history for over a century, beginning with the narrow-gauge Pacific Coast Railway. [See Andrew Merriam’s article “Oil Cans on the Central Coast” in *Coast Mail* issue #52.] The Museum, of course, has no position on proposed oil-related activities, taking care to factually present only what has happened.

Your archivist, having made some “rolling docent” presentations, has been asked if there were local accidents involving rail shipment of oil. The answer has been, “Nothing major that I know of, and the Museum would surely have records of such a thing.” The 1926 Tank Farm fire near what is now the San Luis Obispo airport, triggered by a lightning strike, was destructive and dramatic –reports were that the column of smoke, like a volcanic eruption, could be seen from Bakersfield– but no railroad was involved. The oil came in and went out by pipeline. (An article on the 1926 disaster can be found at https://localwiki.org/slo/Tank_Farm_Fire_of_1926.)

Continues on page 8.

Just the facts *continued*

However, the standard answer overlooked a major accident from the perspective of the time it happened, recently discovered in material to be archived. Oil and a railroad were involved. But as nearly always with grade-crossing incidents, the railroad was not at fault. And in this case the train was not transporting the oil.

Both the Santa Maria Times and the San Luis Obispo Telegram reported the event in their August 11, 1938 editions. From the Telegram:

“Investigation was being conducted Thursday into a truck-train-automobile wreck at Los Alamos Wednesday afternoon in which a truck and trailer crashed into a locomotive of the Pacific Coast narrow gauge railroad, causing an estimated \$25,000 damage. A Packard sedan, which had been stopped to allow the train to pass a crossing one-fourth mile north of Los Alamos, was destroyed in the explosion and fire which resulted.”

According to the article, the engineer and fireman escaped with burned hands. The truck driver, hauling 5000 gallons of oil and having realized that he didn't have adequate brakes as he approached on a slight down grade, jumped from the truck cab about 300 feet from the crossing, allowing the truck to veer past the stopped sedan and strike the locomotive's tender.

“A fire started immediately, followed by an explosion which along with the fire badly wrecked the engine, destroyed the truck and trailer and automobile [along with] ... two freight cars and two carloads of mustard.”

Despite efforts of the Los Alamos fire department and others, the fire burned through the power lines serving the area, so power was out for the towns of Ballard, Los Olivos, Solvang, Buellton, and Santa Ynez. Highway 101 was blocked so “traffic was routed over the old Orcutt highway.”

“Frank Harrington of San Luis Obispo, who saw the fire shortly after the accident, said the smoke and flames could be seen for miles.”

The Times article provides a few more details:

- The oil truck had come from Gato Ridge;
- The truck driver was L. Modling of Long Beach;
- The driver said he had tried to steer the truck into a roadside ditch before jumping;
- The engineer and fireman were brothers, Front and Stuart Hampton of San Luis Obispo;
- The engine crew's burns resulted from grabbing a hot steam pipe in their efforts to escape from the overturned locomotive's cab;
- The prime ignition was from the truck's ruptured fuel tank, not the truck's load or the locomotive's fuel (but the truck's load of oil apparently kept things exciting for quite a while);
- The mustard was in the form of “600 sacks of re-cleaned mustard [presumably seed] valued at more than \$2500.”

The estimated \$25,000 total loss from the accident would be equivalent to at least \$400,000 in 2016. Both articles remarked on the unlikely result that no one was seriously injured or killed.

The History of a Historical Museum
Part 2: Wig Less, Wag More

Here's the top part of page 1 of Issue No.1 of *The Wig Wag*, the Museum's first newsletter, from July 1993. The organization was originally named the Avila Valley Railway Museum, and efforts were focused on preserving material from the narrow-gauge Pacific Coast Railway, whose line ran from San Luis Obispo through the Avila Valley to Port Harford (now Port San Luis).

The minutes for the meeting of June 21, just below the cut-off, reported “Russel Kiessig discussed the type of streetcars to be used over the museum tracks in the Avila Valley.” You haven't heard or seen more about those tracks because they never came to be. But the Museum has a real, operating wig-wag signal.

The WIG WAG
NEWS FROM THE
Avila Valley Railway Museum, Inc.
P.O. Box 937, Avila Beach, CA 93424 (805) 756-2285

ISSUE NO. 1 JULY 1993

<p>NOTICE: NEXT MEETING- July 19, 1993 This next meeting will begin at 5:30 P.M. with a Board Meeting (all members and guests are welcome to attend). At approx. 7:00 P.M. a rail video of an exciting and informative subject will be viewed. Don't miss it or the meeting. Location of the meeting is: <u>The Gardens of Avila restaurant at Sycamore Springs, 1213 Avila Beach Dr., in Avila Valley.</u> This is not a dinner meeting.</p>	<p>FROM THE DESK OF THE CHAIRMAN Well folks, this is a crucial time around the old museum. We (me and several other A.V.R.M. members along with Alan Centrall of the SLO Regional Transit Agency) are busy preparing the application for the federal ISTEA Funds. This is a big job but it will pay off if it is accepted and funds are allocated. The competition is tough for this money however, certain parts of it are earmarked for historical rail projects,</p>
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A New Mystery Photo

What and where are these colorful locomotives?

**Answer to Mystery Photo Question**

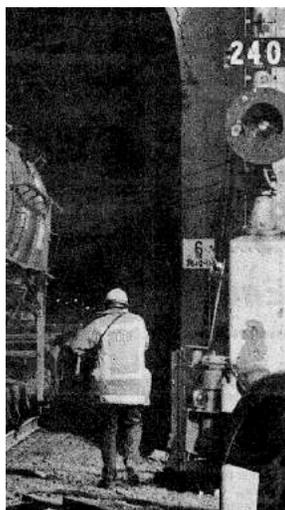
Instant gratification: The S.L.O. yard, with water tank and palms in the background, about 1991. CSX is an amalgam of many older lines that served mostly the Southeast. A previous component, the “Chessie System,” was itself a combination of the oldest U.S. common-carrier railroad, the Baltimore & Ohio, and the Chesapeake & Ohio, whose 1950s advertising touted “sleeping like a kitten” on their trains. See, in the “C,” the profile of the kitty with its paw outside the covers? Locomotives from one railroad often roam other lines on run-through trains, or to borrow or repay power. But this was an odd one for San Luis Obispo.

Photo by Glen Matteson

More on Tunnels

The Summer 2016 *Coast Mail* reported on some 1979 excitement involving a fire in the vents of Cuesta Grade's summit tunnel. The article included a brief explanation of Southern Pacific's tunnel numbering system, and referred to tunnel #5½ in the Salinas Valley. As with nearly everything, there's more to the story.

The following is a 2002 post in the online forum *Train-orders.com*, from someone calling himself "spnudge."



"Tunnel 5½ was [the] curved tunnel under Metz hill. The track used to go around the point, much like Bradley curve does today. You can still see the right-of-way. Well, there was a derailment many years ago where a train went into the Salinas River because of high speed. When 65 Market [Street –SP headquarters] asked where, they were given the milepost. The[y] said that was impossible because there was a tunnel there. The local officers said there was no such thing anywhere near there and [headquarters] said there was. Well, it seems money had been put aside to build the tunnel years before BUT [it] was used for something else. Two days later work was started on Tunnel 5½. It was a 65-mph tunnel where you had to plug your ears or hold your mouth open to equalize the pressure or your ears would pop. If you didn't close the windows, the vacuum would lift the floorboards and everything was covered in dirt in the cab.

"The same project was engineered for Bradley curve but nothing was ever done."

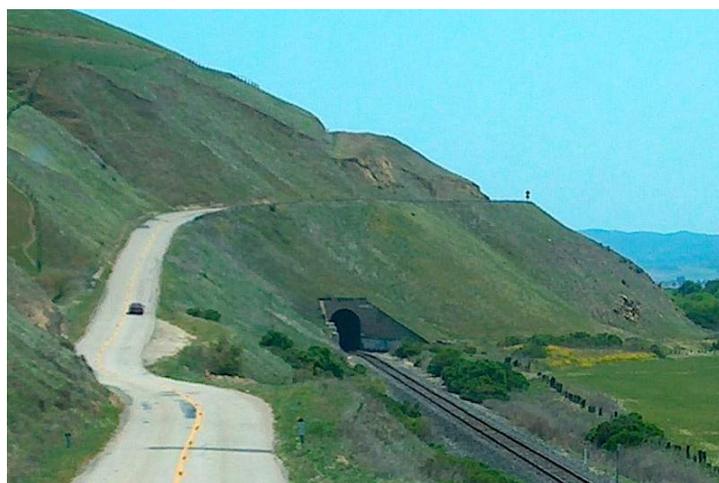
Tools Come In All Sizes

Jan Wedl recently donated several items that had belonged to her husband. Right after high school, Mr. Wedl started work as a surveyor for the Pacific Electric Railway, Southern Pacific's subsidiary interurban system in Southern California. He eventually supervised track maintenance throughout much of SP's western lines.

The leather case embossed "S.P. Company" is about 20 inches long and holds a straightedge. The little pocket holds a feeler gauge that may have been used alone or with the four-pronged measuring device at right. We're guessing they were used to check gaps and alignment, probably the allowed spacing and dip where rail sections meet end-to-end. Let us know if you know more.



Photos by Glen Matteson



Here's the northern approach to Tunnel 5½ near Greenfield in the spring of 2012, when the fields were green. A gradual left-hand curve starts just before the portal and continues into the bore. Unlike the tunnels on Cuesta Grade, trains roll through here at speed –impressive from the upper level of an Amtrak bi-level lounge car.

Several details make this account credible. Having ½ as part of a feature's number meant that feature was inserted between two previously numbered features. And there's the appealing situation of the officials at headquarters *knowing* there was a tunnel under the hill at the railroad location of Metz that the people running trains over the line had somehow overlooked.

Report and photo above by Glen Matteson



Just the facts, with a disclaimer

Docents have usually said that *so far as we know* the Museum's lounge car *La Cuesta* never traveled on the Coast Route. They relate that the Pullman Company built it for the Santa Fe in 1926, and that it was later used by a private charter company in the Amtrak era. The Santa Fe did not operate on the Central Coast, except for detours following the Tehachapi Earthquake ["Another Celebration," *Coast Mail* Winter 2015] and the charter company operated between the San Francisco Bay Area, the Sierras, and Southern California points via the San Joaquin Valley. But during Train Day in May, a visiting retired Southern Pacific mechanical department worker said, "I remember this car. I worked on it here in San Luis Obispo." Railroad employees often dealt with on-the-road problems regardless of equipment ownership. So *La Cuesta*, traveling under its former name *La Condosa*, must have come through on a charter trip. A Google search found the image above (here cropped from the original), showing Terrace Hill in the background, labeled "December 1984 – Don Ross Collection." If this were a children's-book story, the old car would have liked the way she was treated then and arranged to spend her retirement here.

Focus on Artifacts



A Vase?

No, it's a cuspidor, for those favoring Latin word origins.* For the rest of us, it's a spittoon. (Your reporter confirmed that it has two Ts.) Steel-toe boots won't protect you from the collateral damage of the habit that this device supported, a habit once common among railroad workers (and baseball players).

This one is in the Museum's collection and is displayed in the Freighthouse in a replica agent's office. Why all this attention for an enameled bowl?

Ed King, a now retired railroader from the eastern U.S., wrote a bimonthly column for *Trains* magazine. The piece in November 1996 was pretty darn funny. Mr. King explained how common spittoons were in freight houses, shops, and offices. And that locomotives didn't need them because they had windows. He also raised a serious topic. That piece was titled "Not all of railroading was pretty."

The railroad working environment could be coarse and messy for reasons unrelated to coal, oil, grease, uneven ballast, or errant tobacco juice. When a museum consultant visited the Freighthouse last year, one of her questions prompted your reporter to explain that the Museum presents local railroad history "warts and all." It's not our job to edit history to make everything look nice.

There were segregation, discrimination, and glass ceilings that workers could see through but not be promoted above. Basic safety requirements often had to be imposed from outside the industry. Railroads reflected the larger culture and economy. When those changed, the railroads changed too. Here and there an enlightened railroader, from section boss to company president, led the way. The Museum acknowledges the past and the progress.

Don't let anyone tell you the item shown above is a chamber pot.

-Glen Matteson

* According to the Oxford Dictionaries online: "Origin - Mid 18th century; from Portuguese, 'spitter', from *cuspir* 'to spit', from Latin *conspuere*." Anyone want to conjugate?

The Things We Do For the Museum

Founding member and Curator Brad LaRose once gave a presentation to a group in which he wore in turn several hats, to emphasize that our organization's success depends on each individual taking on multiple roles: building track, painting train cars, researching documents, finding support, hosting events, and so on.

So when Editor Glen was invited to be a rolling docent on the *Central Coast Flyer* vintage train cars on their SLO – Santa Barbara segment in August, he decided to use Brad's hat idea. But the trip was for Santa Barbara area riders, and the theme was "La Fiesta." That clearly called for a sombrero. Glen, notoriously thrifty and expecting any one hat to do at least double duty, decided not to buy or rent a sombrero but instead to modify his hardhat so it could also serve as one.

A disk cut from a sheet of scrap cardboard and dingle balls bought at a local sewing-crafts store completed the transformation. Sewing help was provided by Robyn and Maryann Matteson.



An advantage of travel by train: try getting through airport security wearing a hardhat/sombrero and bandoliers holding date nails. You don't have to look ridiculous to work on the Museum's many projects, but sometimes it helps.

Photo by Robyn Matteson.

What are date nails?

Nails with the last digits of a year stamped in their wide heads were driven into wood crossties to keep track of their age and deterioration. Different railroads used different styles of nails in different ways at different times. They aren't used anymore. All the ones shown above and left are from the Santa Fe in the Buena Park area of Southern California, span 1909 to 1968, and are 2.5 inches long. The head (inset) is shown about actual size, if you are seeing this page in actual size.

For more information on date nails see the web page below.

<http://pages.uindy.edu/~oaks/DateNailInfo.htm#Howdatenailswereused>



You Learn Something Every Day...

...if you're in the right place at the right time. And one right time and place was the Freighthouse on June 16, when Marilyn Darnell and Joseph Carotenuti (photo at right) spoke to a gathering of Lifelong Learners of the Central Coast. Their presentation focused on the major roles played by Chauncey Hatch Phillips and Robert Edgar Jack in the early development of San Luis Obispo, which of course touched on bringing the Southern Pacific Railroad to town. It was truly a cause for celebration.

Marilyn has compiled a book, Anything but Dull (Graphic Communications Institute at Cal Poly, 2015), containing many of Mr. Jack's personal letters, which shed light on his life and times.

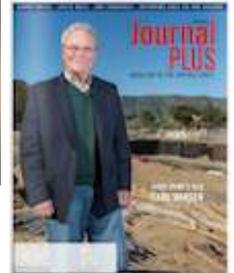
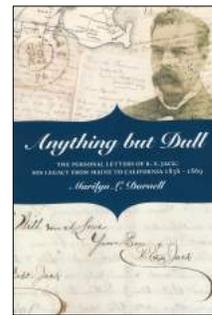
Joseph writes a history column for the Journal Plus, a local magazine (<http://www.slojournal.com>).

About 30 guests were able to view Museum exhibits and ask questions before and after the program. As one visitor was leaving he summoned a Museum volunteer to the tool cart exhibit and noted that the information on the placard wasn't quite right. The sign says there was no mechanical reason for the spokes of the iron wheels to be curved instead of straight (photo lower right). This visitor was a mechanical engineer. He pointed out that the spokes are curved to accommodate differential shrinkage of the spokes and rim as the wheel casting cools. Otherwise, the spokes tend to crack as they pull away from the rim when the molten iron solidifies. (Forged wheels don't have that problem.) No one knows everything, not even everything about one small aspect of industrial technology. Visitors are encouraged to share their knowledge.

Curved spokes were typical on older brake wheels (photo immediately right), a subject that will come up again in a future issue of *Coast Mail*.



www.lifelearnerscc.org



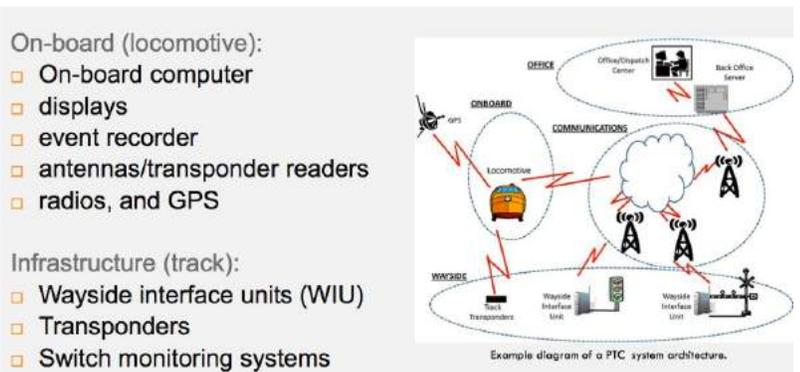
Brake wheel photo by liveauctioneers.com; others by Glen Matteson.



Recent History – New Technology

In November 2015 a Union Pacific Railroad survey crew traveled by hi-rail truck, and a crewman stood at each switch and signal (photo at left), using a global positioning system (GPS) device to locate features for extending positive train control (PTC) northward from San Luis Obispo. PTC is the federally mandated electronic system meant to enhance safety on rail lines.

Photo by Glen Matteson. Illustration by Federal Railroad Administration.



Hard Times for the Pacific Coast Rwy.

Arlo Elliott, a recent Cal Poly graduate, interned at the Museum near the end of the academic year. A particular interest of his is the relationship between wider trends and the events in local areas. He went through several bundles of Pacific Coast Railway correspondence that had not been previously reviewed. Rather than select individual items to report on, Arlo has distilled information from several memos into the following.

The Great Depression of the 1930s affected all areas of American commerce, transportation, and infrastructure. The Pacific Coast Railway was no exception. In 1932, Superintendent W.T. Massengeil ordered a ten-percent pay cut across the board. He also informed his agents that they would no longer be reimbursed for gas for their meetings. H.M. Watkins, PCRy's general auditor, encouraged the company to apply to the Federal Emergency Relief administration, giving instructions to all agents on writing to the Agricultural Adjustment Administration for aid on handling the steep loss of business due to the Depression. Resources were so scarce that when L.C. Keely, one of the top agents of the PCRy, requested his monthly two-dollar allotment of stamps, Mr. Massengeil refused. The solutions offered by the U. S. Department of Agriculture often amounted to little more than accounting changes, such as the 1930 elimination of broccoli as a separate commodity from cauliflower. While the PCRy was eager to get any help it could, a railroad that was so small and only linked to a small part of a much larger economy was not a high priority.

At the same time, the PCRy was hounded by difficulty in getting goods out of San Luis Obispo County. The diligent Agricultural Commissioner of Santa Barbara County frequently issued halts to potentially tainted goods coming into his jurisdiction. In 1931 an epidemic of foot-and-mouth disease, a hazard to both humans and animals, caused a halt to livestock shipments further south than San Luis Obispo. A 1932 outbreak of the alfalfa weevil blockaded any alfalfa further north than Santa Barbara from heading south, rendering the supplies in the PCRy's territory largely worthless. By the end of 1932 livestock could be shipped to Oregon once again, but the route to Oregon was much longer and costlier than the route to Santa Barbara, and reduced the immediate market at hand.

A 1933 drought killed much of the Central Coast grain and bean crops, with most farmers refusing to plant due to the lack of rain. In that year, Mr. Massengeil sent out orders to use remaining funds to buy poison to exterminate the weevils and other pests that had been eating what precious little was left of the stored grain, hay, and beans. By the end of July, a promising bean crop had been harvested, but the damage had already been done. By the end of the decade the railroad would be shuttered. Its parent, the Pacific Coast Steamship Company, soon too would be on the way out, its headquarters moved to an office in New Jersey for tax purposes. It may have been the Depression that killed the Pacific Coast Railway, or it may have been a perfect storm of drought, agricultural ailments, and competition from other carriers, but most likely it was all three, ending the once vital narrow-gauge line.

In the next issue: an unwitting victim of nepotism – editor.



HO model scene and photo by Glen Matteson.

A Final Word on Tunnels (for now)

The August 2016 issue of *Trains* magazine has an article on Alfred Hitchcock's 1958 film "North by Northwest," which features a pursuit supposedly aboard New York Central's *20th Century Limited*. Cary Grant and Eva Marie Saint go through some tribulations before (spoiler alert) having a happy ending. Much of the movie was filmed in the East and used actual NYC equipment, but not always the *Century*. Onboard action was shot in a California studio's plywood mockups. According to the article, one scene included repainted Southern Pacific equipment.

The final scene is a train rapidly going into a tunnel, the main characters presumably vacationing on the west coast. Could it be the Coast Route's Tunnel 5½ (page 9)? This question has bugged your editor, a fan of the film, for some time. The answer is "no." While the train includes SP "Black Widow" diesels and Daylight-painted cars, comparing the tunnel portal and lack of wing walls shows the movie tunnel is not No. 5½. It's probably one of several in Santa Susana Pass, at the end of the San Fernando Valley, an area that was often used by movie studios –mostly for the rural setting and dramatic rock formations.

The image below is a screen capture from a short YouTube segment of the movie right before the credits start rolling, with exposure, contrast, and sharpness digitally enhanced. One of our readers must be able to say which tunnel it is. Looking at the blurred lettering, could the image have been reversed because Hitchcock preferred that?

All rights to the film "North by Northwest" are held by Warner Bros. Entertainment, Inc.



Moving the former Southern Pacific Tank Car, July 27 – 29, 2016



Above: Getting ready to lift at Andesite, ten miles due north of Mount Shasta's peak (out of view to left). Aerial drone photo by Ryan Wilkerson, others by Glen Matteson.

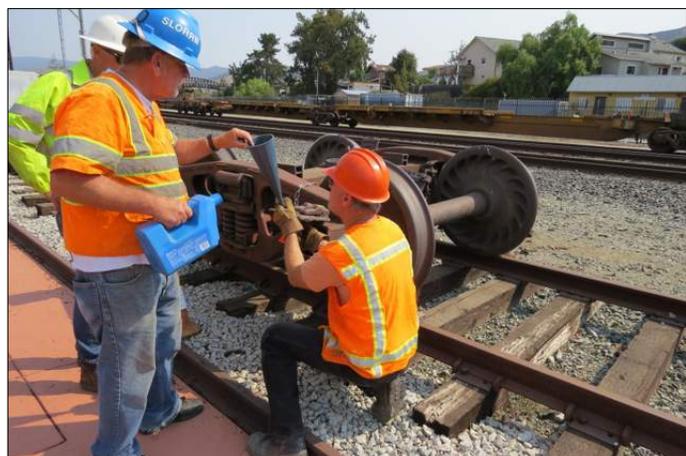
Two frames below: Bragg Crane service lifted the car body off the transport truck, clearing vehicles, trees, and light poles, and set it neatly on the wheel assemblies, which are centered to the car frame with surprisingly small pins.



Above & below: Pullman car La Cuesta had to be shifted away from the platform to make room for loading. The tank car body came on one truck, the wheel assemblies on another. They were cleaned, lubricated, and positioned before the car body was lifted. Ted VanKlaveren, Duane Powell, Brad LaRose, and Howard Amborn worked to prepare for and carry out the move.



Below: The tank car will rest comfortably next to the Freighthouse platform while it's worked on, then move north on the display track. La Cuesta is back in place and ready for boarding.



“I don’t mean to be rude, but...”

What should a Museum docent do when a visiting parent tells his young child that the Pullman café-lounge *La Cuesta* is a dining car? It wasn’t. It could provide limited food service, but it wasn’t a dining car as the railroads used that term. Of more concern, what of the mother who called *La Cuesta* “the caboose?” Not even close. Should allowances be made because with its rear observation platform *La Cuesta* was typically the last car of a passenger train, and there is a caboose close by on the display track, and a caboose was nearly always the last car on a freight train? Few people these days who have young children know about railroads, especially as they operated 50 or more years ago. But docents often pride themselves on knowing such things in, well, excruciating detail.

The Museum has two policies that apply in these cases: (1) provide accurate information, and (2) don’t make parents look bad in front of their kids. The best way to follow both policies is probably to word a correction very carefully. “I can see how you might be confused, but actually...”

Then there are the publications that include glaring mistakes. Your editor must resist the urge to mark them up or at least leave sticky notes with corrections. During the 1940s and ‘50s, S. Kip Farrington, Jr. was a prolific author of railroad books for general readers, when that description was possible. He knew many railroad executives and had access to their companies. His text was all praise, and nearly all his photos were

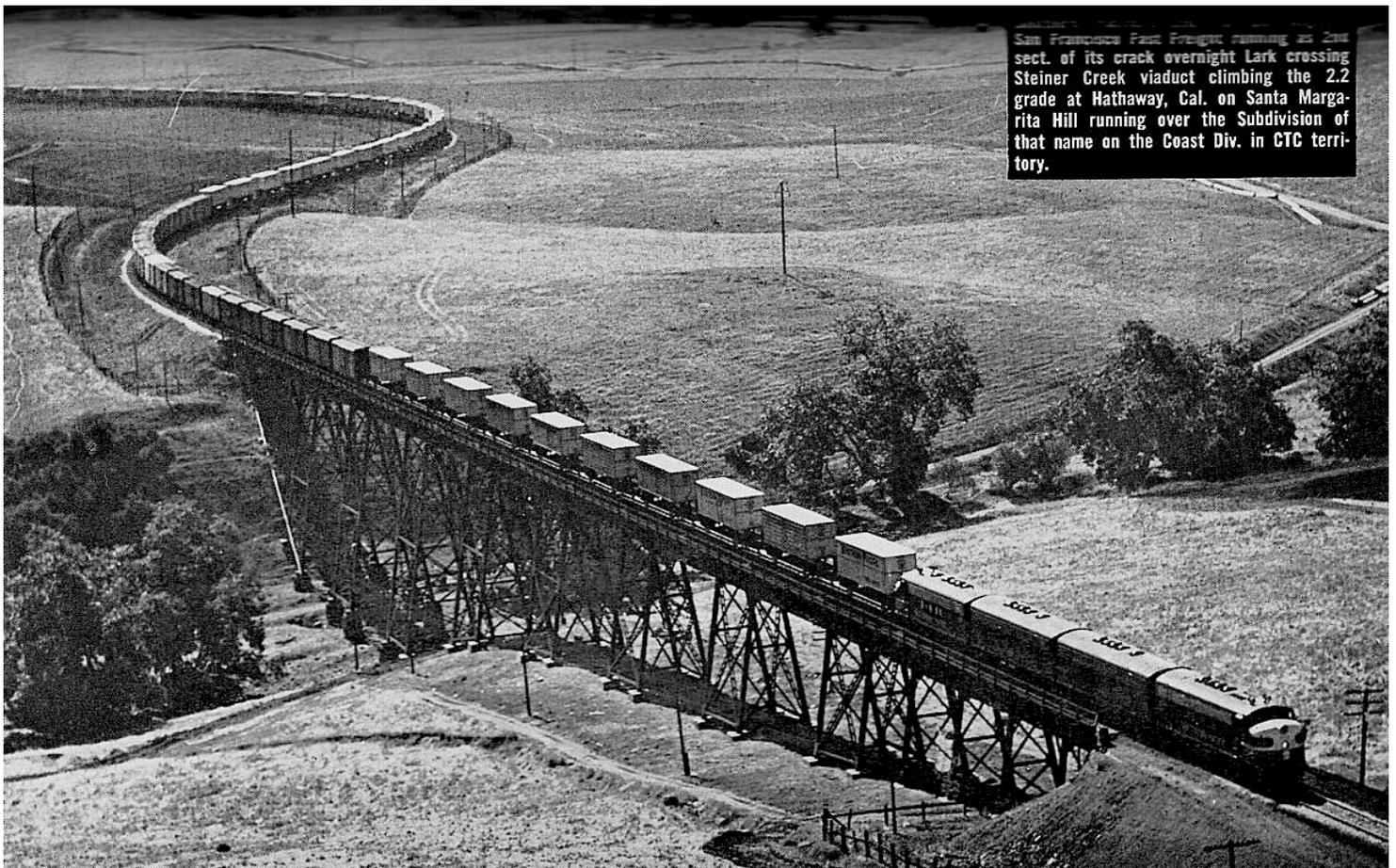
provided by the railroads’ public affairs departments.

The photo below is from Farrington’s *Railroads of the Hour*, the last of the genre that he produced (copyright 1958). The full caption was “Southern Pacific’s 2nd 75, Los Angeles – San Francisco Fast Freight running as the 2nd sect[ion] of its crack overnight Lark crossing Steiner Creek viaduct climbing the 2.2 [percent] grade at Hathaway, Cal. on Santa Margarita Hill running over the subdivision of that name on the Coast Div[ision] in CTC [centralized traffic control] territory.” He wanted the captions to pack in the information.

A few problems: It’s Stenner, not Steiner. That looks like something spelling auto-correct would do today. And the railroad location (a siding at the time) of Hathaway is over two miles away, where the street named Hathaway (so spelled) intersects California Blvd. and the track is nearly level. And the grade along the curves at each end of the bridge, and over the bridge itself, is less than 2.2%. That last is kind of picky, because the *ruling grade* over *Cuesta*—the one that determines pulling and braking requirements—is 2.2%.

So, as with the Internet, you can’t take as fact everything you see, even in a book by a railroad writer. To be fair, no one can know everything about everything [page 11]. And that word “crack.” No cause for snickering. It was widely used in that era to mean outstanding.

Finally, either there was a very bright moon, the *Lark* was off schedule, or this freight was not running as the second section of that overnight, sleeping-car train. But it is a great photo of a great railroad at a great time and place.



San Francisco Fast Freight running as 2nd sect. of its crack overnight Lark crossing Steiner Creek viaduct climbing the 2.2 grade at Hathaway, Cal. on Santa Margarita Hill running over the Subdivision of that name on the Coast Div. in CTC territory.