

Danny the Diesel Locomotive



The adventures of a 1940s switching locomotive as told by the San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum.

The San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum is a nonprofit, educational organization which promotes California Central Coast railroad heritage through community participation, education, and historic preservation.

1940 Santa Barbara Avenue
San Luis Obispo, California 93401

805 548-1894
www.slorm.com



Story and illustrations by Glen Matteson

Copyright 2020 by San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum. All rights reserved.



Danny woke up in a big building with other engines like him nearby. He rumbled and jiggled and felt like *moving*. But there seemed to be no place to go.



Then some of the other engines moved away, and Danny got to roll along too. He moved outdoors and onto a track where someone directed him to go back and forth, back and forth by himself. “It’s nice to be outside,” he thought, “but this is *boring*.”



Later a huge, black engine billowing steam and smoke and pulling many cars hissed to a stop next to Danny. There was much clanging and banging. Soon Danny was part of a long train. As if someone had heard his wishes, he felt he was off on a big adventure. But he did not know where he was going. And he did not get to decide how fast or slow.



The train Danny was in rumbled through green fields and towns with shady trees. It stopped and started. Cars were switched in and out. Engines were changed. Danny became worried. Where would his trip end? Would he be left like those faded brown cars next to tall gray buildings?



Soon the fields were brown, and then gray. Mountains topped in white loomed ahead. “We’ll never make it over those mountains,” he thought.



But they did! The train went slowly, up steep slopes and around tight curves. Then they went down steep slopes and around more curves, through deep canyons and over tall bridges. Even though it was exciting at first, Danny grew tired and fell asleep.



When Danny woke, the train he had been part of was rolling away into the night. He was by himself, except for some flat cars with jeeps on them. “Welcome to Camp Roberts,” a man with a quiet voice said. “I hope you like following orders.” The man checked Danny’s fuel and water, and then left.



Camp Roberts was hot during the day but cool at night, with many stars in the clear sky. Long and colorful trains went past Danny's tracks. He did follow orders, pulling and pushing. Some cars were heavy. Some were light. Each had to be in the right spot, at the right time. Danny felt proud of his work. But...



... he wanted to pull the long and colorful trains. He admired the tall-wheeled engines dressed in red, orange, and black. He sometimes wished he were one of the proud pullers with *two* sets of driving wheels, their serious faces gazing far down the main line.



One day Danny felt brave enough to talk to one of the serious engines. “I wish I could do your job,” he said. The serious engine glanced sideways at Danny, and in his serious deep voice said, “You’d never get a train like this up past Santa Margarita and down into San Luis Obispo. Stay in your little loop and leave the big jobs to guys like us.” And with that the big locomotive chuffed away.



The next day Danny did not feel well. He could not seem to get started. He sat quietly as a train pulled by a big engine with ten driving wheels stopped next to him. The next thing he knew, this big engine was trying to do *Danny's* job, pulling and pushing one or two cars at a time.



The big engine came onto the track that Danny now thought of as *his*. The big engine tried to get the cars to the right spot at the right time. But he seemed clumsy. And when his five pairs of driving wheels went through the switches and the curves, he kept muttering, “Owe! Ouch. Owe. Too tight!”



“You can have this job,” the big engine said as it clanged away that afternoon. “And sorry if I messed up your rails.” Indeed, Danny saw that some of his track’s smooth curves looked kinked.



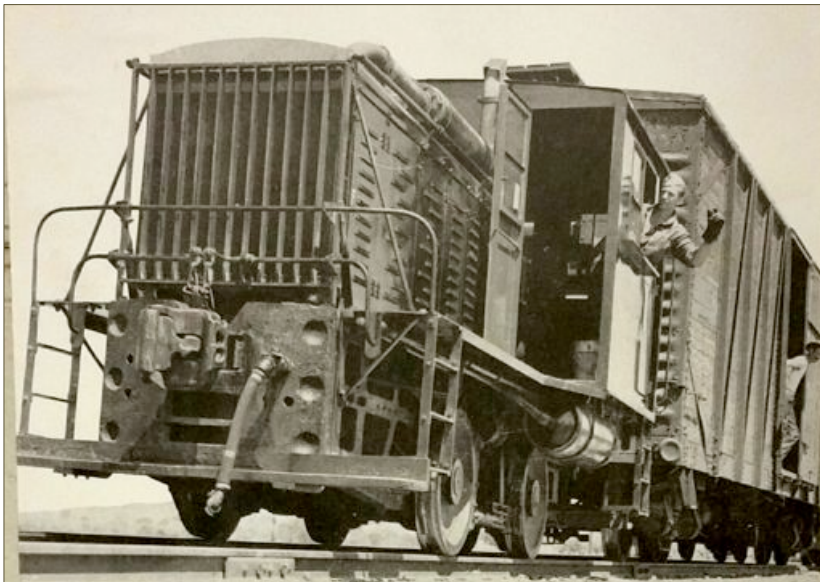
Early the next morning the man with the quiet voice replaced a part inside Danny. Now Danny felt eager to work. But he could tell that the man who had helped him was tired. He had worked all night doing different things. Another man with more stripes on his shirt told him to get some rest, and added, “If there was a commendation for doing a good job without complaining, you’d get it.” Danny was confused by the word “commendation.” But it sounded like a good thing.

To be continued.

The original Daniel was a standard gauge, 20-ton locomotive with a gasoline engine and a chain drive. It was built in 1941 by the Fate-Root-Heath Company under its Plymouth brand name for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, a branch of the military responsible for building facilities such as bases and air fields in the states and overseas. The Quartermaster Corps assigned it number 2038. It was used to move carloads of material during the development of Camp Roberts near San Miguel, as well as supplies used by the 436,000 soldiers who trained there during World War II (1941 – 1945). No. 2050, a twin locomotive, was used at Camp San Luis Obispo.

After the war the locomotive was declared surplus. It was acquired by a Sacramento-area construction company in 1948. The El Dorado Limestone & Mineral Company bought it in 1952 for use at a quarry in the Sierra foothills east of Sacramento, which had its own short track with a connection to the Southern Pacific Railroad. From there, the locomotive retired to a caboose-themed bed-and-breakfast business on a ranch at Maxwell, near Chico, California.

Thanks to generous supporters and much work by volunteers, Number 2038 was acquired by the San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum, transported, and put on display in 2018.



U. S. Army Quartermaster Corps No.2038 in the 1940s, from an Army publication.



No 2038 as delivered to the San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum display track in 2018.

Books in the *Danny the Diesel Locomotive* series

Published

Danny the Diesel Locomotive

In a cross-country adventure, Danny is moved from the factory where he was made to his first job. It's at an army base near the boundary of San Luis Obispo and Monterey counties, where he finds an important role that at first may be hard to appreciate.

Planned

Danny the Diesel Locomotive Hauls Rocks

Danny's military career ends, but he gets a new job at a quarry. Then he's moved to a ranch to be put on display. Almost no one comes to see him, until one day a museum worker visits the ranch.

Danny the Diesel Locomotive Comes Home

Danny gets his wish to be useful again. He starts a new career at the San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum, teaching children about railroad equipment, operations, and safety.

Danny the Diesel Locomotive Makes Friends

Danny gets to know Clara the Caboose, Brad the Beet Gondola, Ted the Tank Car, and Penny the Pullman. He is surprised to learn about their adventures before they came to the museum.