



Coast Mail

News from the San Luis Obispo
Railroad Museum

Issue Number 72 – Summer 2020 San Luis Obispo, California slorrm.com

The Museum is normally open every Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm (check website for pandemic status), and other times for groups by arrangement (contact media@slorrm.com).

Issue No. 72 – Train No. 72

Southern Pacific train No. 72, the *Coast Mail*, was an all-stops carrier of mail and express between San Francisco and Los Angeles. Below, we see it heading south (timetable eastbound) near Casmalia in 1956.

Donald Duke photo SLORRM Archives No. P2320.2



TurboTrain ... found it!

Thanks to Manetta Bennet's donation of many *Pacific News* magazines, we have a photo of United Aircraft's TurboTrain visiting San Luis Obispo (*Coast Mail*, Spring 2016). On August 23, 1971, the three-car speedster was scheduled for a 15-minute stop, with tours of the equipment. But the roughly 1,500 people who came were too many to accommodate; the tour was cancelled. This photo by Charles Williams ran in the *PN* of October 1971.

Grant for hands-on model trains

A grant from Bank of the Sierra will help provide an electric train setup that young visitors can operate under supervision. This will be in addition to the existing train play tables for very young visitors.

The new hands-on train table will use Lionel equipment and look similar to this.



Photo by Charles Kinzer

Not a president, but a big crowd

The Winter 2019 *Coast Mail* covered the Museum's exhibit on visits to San Luis Obispo by U. S. presidents William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt. The scene below is former vice president Richard Nixon's visit during his campaign for California Governor in 1962. He lost to incumbent Pat Brown. In what he called his "last press conference" he blamed unfavorable press coverage.

In 1968 Nixon was elected president. He had a hard

time keeping his operatives out of other people's locked offices (in the Watergate building) and, facing certain impeachment, he resigned in 1974.

But here was an enthusiastic crowd in Paso Robles welcoming him as he stood on the platform of a Southern Pacific business car festooned with loudspeakers.

Image from an uncredited photo in the November 1971 *Trains* magazine



Our Mission

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

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DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE

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

Museum Store

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

Click on **Company Store**.

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Timetable

Thank you for understanding during the Covid-19 precautions, which required museum closure and cancellation of events. Check our website for the latest information on open days, events, and meetings. Gatherings may require limited numbers, physical distancing, and masks.

Board of Directors Meetings are scheduled for June 9, July 14, and August 11, at 6:00 p.m. They may be held online or at the Freighthouse.

Upcoming Events

August 7 – Art After Dark
October 2-3 – Central Coast Railroad Festival, including CoastRail
Parlor Car Chats on our website:

May 30 – 150th Golden Spike Anniversary
June 6 – Rail Route Guide S.L.O. to Paso Robles
<https://slorrm.com/parlor-car-chats.html>

Become a member

Membership provides opportunities for anyone interested in today's railroads, railroad history, train travel, or model railroading. Benefits include free admission to the Museum and access to Members Only features of the website.

Individual members pay \$36 per year, a family \$60, and a sustaining member \$100. Junior memberships (ages 12-18) for the model railroaders are available. Application forms can be downloaded from the Museum's website and mailed with payment, or you can join online by clicking Membership and using PayPal (mailing and web addresses at left).



Intern focuses on history

Eduardo Ortega, a Nipomo High School student interested in the history of railroads and agriculture, was organizing our collection of Pacific Coast Railway correspondence, until Covid-19 interrupted. Hopefully he'll find more information to be shared in future editions of the *Coast Mail*.



Gary See photo

Mystery photo answer

Did you recognize the object on page 2 of the *Spring Coast Mail*? On a rail interest website, explanations included: an accumulation of metal fragments flung in a nearly molten state from a freight car's cast-iron brake shoe, which stuck to the car frame; similar material from a rail-grinding operation; slag from thermite rail welding. So, still a mystery?

It also looks like the miniature mountains that *saikei* enthusiasts use in their landscapes, (below, uncredited photo from the Internet).



Editor's two misses

On a frigid January pre-dawn in 2015 Union Pacific had a rail grinder operating at San Luis Obispo. It was back almost exactly five years later. Your editor missed both opportunities to get photos of this dramatic process. A long set of equipment with roaring engines, sparks, and lots of lights uses abrasive wheels to re-profile worn rail heads. Do you have a local photo you could share?

“All they will call you will be ‘deportees.’”

So sang Woody Guthrie in 1948, following an airplane crash in western Fresno County. The plane was taking 28 migrant farm workers to Mexico. They, and four American flight crew and guards, died. How many of the workers were documented under the *bracero* program, and how many were not, is lost to history. Guthrie’s lyrics lament the low status of the workers and the waste of dumping food to rot while some went hungry, to keep farm prices up. (Johnny Cash and others have also sung the song.)

Below is Southern Pacific car No. 2700, with heavy screens added outside the windows. According to notes on the back of the photo print, it is a “deportation car,” at San Francisco in March 1952. During the economic depression of the 1930s, the administration of U. S. President Herbert Hoover worked with local governments and several companies, including Southern Pacific Railroad, to send about 1.8 million people of Mexican heritage to Mexico. According to former California State Senator Joseph Dunn, about 60 percent of those sent to Mexico were U. S. citizens.

Such cars may also have been used during removal of about 140,000 Japanese-American citizens during World War II.



SLORRM Archives No. P2573.4

There’s more to this than oilcans.



A long-spout oilcan
American Historical Photo Archive image



Lubrication cups atop bearings used wicks, drips, or pressure to deliver oil or grease.
Orange County Register photo



Clark Hallman image

A worker uses an Alemite gun connected to a locomotive’s compressed-air supply to inject special grease into a connecting-rod bearing.



Below is Southern Pacific Lubrication Instruction car, No. 2928, at Roseville (east of Sacramento) in July 1952. In the steam locomotive era, lubrication involved more than pouring oil into an opening. The images above and at left show some of the types of lubrication used.

With several kinds of locomotives and lubricants in use, workers needed to know what to do with each one. Union Pacific’s recently rebuilt Big Boy has an automatic oiling system, with tubes running from reservoirs to several moving parts. But all systems worked only as well as they were supplied and maintained, thus lubrication instruction.

SLORRM Archives No. P2575.2



This signal should turn heads.

The signal itself has an owl-like ability to rotate its “Stop” sign, so it is barely visible edge-on but plainly visible while facing approaching drivers at railroad grade crossings, when activated by an approaching train. The Museum recently acquired one in trade for excess Magnetic Signalman wig-wag type signals like the operating one displayed at the north end of the Freighthouse.



The photo at left shows the same type of signal on a Southern Pacific industrial branch at San Jose, California, in 2002, shortly before it was damaged and replaced by a simpler type. The photo is by Stan Praisewater, and was made available via Trainweb.org.

The first model of this rotating-sign type was produced in 1927 by the Griswold Safety Signal Company of Minnesota. Southern Pacific Railroad was a major customer. The Museum’s example was used on the Coast Route.

Boxcar up, up, and away...

In May the Museum’s Pacific Coast Railway boxcar No. 20 was carefully craned onto a truck trailer for its trip to Fremont, California (photos at right). The Museum had declared this car surplus to its collection, which includes the two restored narrow-gauge cars displayed west of the Freighthouse.

This wood car was built in 1883 by Carter Brothers Car Company of Newark, California, as part of Pacific Coast Railway’s first order. The car went to the Society for Preservation of Carter Railroad Resources museum. Carter Brothers also built early San Francisco cable cars and cars for a predecessor of the Bay Area’s Key System.

Museum volunteers Howard Amborn, Brad LaRose, Gary See, and Ted VanKlaveren helped prepare the car for moving. Damon Meeks of Superior Crane and Transport (Atascadero) did the heavy lifting. The two photos below right are by Gary See.

Remembering a member

The daughters of early and enthusiastic Museum member John F. Turrill (right), who passed away in March, age 96, have made donations in support of the Museum.

John served in the Army Air Force in WWII and later pursued a career in aviation. He was a transplanted fan of the New Haven and other eastern roads. He volunteered with several local organizations.



The boxcar move reduced items in the Museum’s Emily Street yard, which is owned by the City of San Luis Obispo, making more space available for work on the Southern Pacific wood-sheathed boxcar, caboose, and other items.



Commute-a-go-go! Blimp to boost trains!

The same donation of Gordon Bennet's *Pacific News* magazine collection (page 1) brought us these gems:

For decades, Southern Pacific operated a commute (everywhere else called "commuter") service between San Jose and San Francisco. By the mid-1960s ridership was declining due to new freeways and increased car ownership. (Remember when it was unusual for a household to have more than one vehicle?) In 1965, a Mr. Paul Schumann wrote to SP suggesting coffee bars on morning runs and club cars on the evening runs, with cocktail waitresses in "proper attire" and dancing girls. (No mention of attire?) The railroad responded that operating bar cars would be a nuisance, presumably because every short commute train would need one, or some riders would feel cheated by their absence. Apparently, SP was also concerned that other roads' bar cars on the East Coast prompted complaints, mainly from wives, due to husbands missing their stops or getting off "smashed." This summary is from a short piece in the September 1965 edition of *Pacific News*.

The June 1966 edition reported that Stan Freberg, at an April hearing on discontinuance of SP's overnight *Lark* sleeper train, offered (somewhat facetiously) to have 300 leaflets advertising the train dropped from a blimp on San Francisco. If 300 seems a paltry number, Mr. Freberg noted that if one hit columnist Herb Caen, half a million people would hear about it.

Recent history: Gondolas forever

You know you're a railfan when in San Luis Obispo the sound of a non-Amtrak locomotive horn makes you jump up and look out the window with extra anticipation. Could it be a freight train?

No, just a long string of empty cars looking for a place to stay during April (photo at right). Stored boxcars had disappeared (Spring 2020 *Coast Mail*.) Even Amtrak trains had stopped running.

New banners

This winter, the City of San Luis Obispo provided new banners for the light poles in the parking areas around the Museum. One design features the "Iron Road Pioneers," portrayed on a nearby public art sculpture. Other designs reflect cultural resources and

community pride.

The graphics were composed by (iii) Design, which has an office in the Railroad Square building. City crews installed the banners, which replaced worn-out fabric having different designs from several years ago. *Photo below right by Ryan Heath*



Suggested Go-go dancers never appeared on SP commute trains (left, Go-Retro! Image).

Was Hangar One, built 1933, visible from SP trains? (below, NASA collection image)



Strange noises from the baggage car?

When railroads had widespread and frequent passenger service, baggage was a main component. Like everything else, the baggage service had extensive rules. Thanks to a donation of family documents by Frank Rowan, the Museum now has a copy of the *Rules and Regulations* of Southern Pacific's Baggage Department, 1908 edition. Here are some excerpts. In this context, the term "transportation" refers to a document, such as a ticket, authorizing a passenger to travel by a certain train and type of accommodation between specific points. A little quiz:

Rule #15: What if a 30-pound baby sleigh holds a one-pound snow globe or tobacco pouch?

Rule #16: What is the charge for bringing along a tricycle from Denver to San Luis Obispo?

Rule # 163: How much mischief could be caused by a monkey releasing a dog from its collar and chain while passing through Santa Margarita on a Tuesday? Extra credit: Two passengers, each with one smart monkey, board at Guadalupe. Do they have the baggage man tied up when they reach Goleta?

Rule #167: Should a passenger take offense upon finding that his or her checked baggage has been marked "B.S." or "B.O."?

20. The transportation of bodies of persons who have died of smallpox, Asiatic cholera, bubonic plague, yellow fever or typhus fever, is absolutely forbidden. *Transportation of Corpses - those not allowed*

21. Every dead body must be accompanied by a person in charge, who must present a Transit Permit showing physician's or coroner's certificate, health officer's permit for removal, undertaker's certificate, name of deceased, date and hour of death, age, place of death, cause of death, whether communicable or non-communicable, the point to which the body is to be shipped, the names of those authorized by *Certificate*

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167. Abbreviations for description of bad orders:

- B. B. - - - - Bottom broken.
- B. S. - - - - " split.
- B. O. - - - - " out.
- B. L. - - - - " loose.
- B. O. S. - - - - Bent out of shape.
- C. O. - - - - Catches off.

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15. Baby carriages, go-carts, and baby-sleighs, when containing only necessary articles, such as pillows, robes or blankets, may be checked subject to the same charge as for fifty pounds of excess baggage, minimum charge twenty-five (25) cents. For such articles weighing over 50 pounds, charge for actual weight. This charge is separate from and has no connection with, the charge for excess baggage proper. *Baby Cots*

16. Bicycles and tricycles may be checked subject to the same charge as for fifty (50) pounds of excess baggage, except that they may be checked free in states where the law requires they be checked as part of the baggage allowance: (Bicycles and tricycles in Colorado, bicycles in Arizona, California and Washington). In such states, however, bicycles or tricycles checked from a point in one state to a point in another state must be collected upon. For *Bicycles*

163. On presentation of proper transportation of passenger taking the same train, dogs and monkeys with collars and chains, or in crates, birds in cages, and other harmless pets, all properly marked with owner's name and address, will be carried in baggage cars on this line, free of charge and at owner's risk only. *Dogs Pets*

Not more than two dogs, one monkey and one cage of birds, will be carried for any one passenger.

Owners of above animals must be distinctly informed by train baggagemen to be at the car door ready to receive same at each transfer or terminal point en route and at destination, otherwise the animal will be turned over to the agent or station baggageman, to be held at the risk and expense of owner, for which the per diem charge for dogs and monkeys will be fifty cents, and for parrots and birds twenty-five cents.

Train baggagemen will, under no circumstances, ask remuneration for caring for such property, but they may accept such sums as may voluntarily be tendered them by the owners, and will make proper entry on train report

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This baggage car appears to be all steel (except the roof?), meaning it's 10 to 20 years newer than the 1908 rulebook. Our silly quiz aside, being a baggage man or express messenger was serious business.

image from passcarphotos.rypn.org

