



Coast Mail

News from the San Luis Obispo
Railroad Museum

Issue Number 83 – Spring 2023

San Luis Obispo, California

slorrm.com

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



Dave Rohr photos

In November, after months of effort, La Cuesta's ceiling, windows, and walls were looking very good. With that messy work done, old carpet was removed (above) and new carpet and rehabilitated furnishings were installed (below).

Restoration progress

We've made great progress remodeling 1926 Pullman café-lounge-observation car *La Cuesta*, thanks to the generous support and schedule flexibility of the Ludwick Foundation, the diligence of lead volunteer Dave Rohr and other Museum members, and several hired craftspeople. Come see for yourself.



Recent history: Honda bridge trouble

Runoff from torrential January rains undermined footings for the Union Pacific bridge at Honda, between Surf and Goleta, interrupting freight and passenger traffic for several weeks. Apparently a combination of stream flow, saturated ground, and runoff from the trestle approaches eroded the ground around pilings below the footings (photo below).

The trestle tower remained upright. In this image, the point of view and the camera lens make the tower appear to be skewed. Several trains of riprap boulders and smaller rocks were used to reconfigure the slope and to fill around the base of the tower.

Does anyone know if the pilings date from the construction of the original bridge about 1900, or from the likely upgrade during the 1920s?



We can thank erosion for sandy beaches, but sometime the price is steep. The creek at Arroyo Honda caused a big problem for Union Pacific Railroad in January. Crews got right to work with repairs.
Jeff Stein photo

Our Mission

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

Contact

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Board of Directors

Mike Burrell	Peter Brazil
Stephen Cake	Alan Estes
Ken Green	Greg Jackson
Brent MacGregor	Andrew Merriam
Dave Rohr	Ted Van Klaveren

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

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

Documents Available

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

Museum Store

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

On the website click on About, then Gift Shop.

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Timetable

Board of Directors meetings are scheduled for March 14, April 11, and May 9. at 6:00 p.m. They are held at the Museum. Online participation can be arranged. Contact info@slorrm.com for help with on-line participation.

Board membership changes

At the end of 2022 Charlie Davies retired from the Board, while Norma Dengler and Brad LaRose stepped down due to term limits. Mike Burrell, Alan Estes, and Ken Green were newly elected.

Docent of the Year

Ken Green (below, left) is our 2022 Docent of the Year. Ken has been a consistent and flexible guide for visitors to the model railroad.



Brent MacGregor photo

Parlor Car Chats Online

Jamie Foster hosts 30 episodes with 11 presenters, which cover train trips, equipment restoration, technical information, and more: slorrm.com/parlor-car-chats.html



More Coast Mail Online

Even more decades of details; far from the Central Coast; Museum history; Annual Report.

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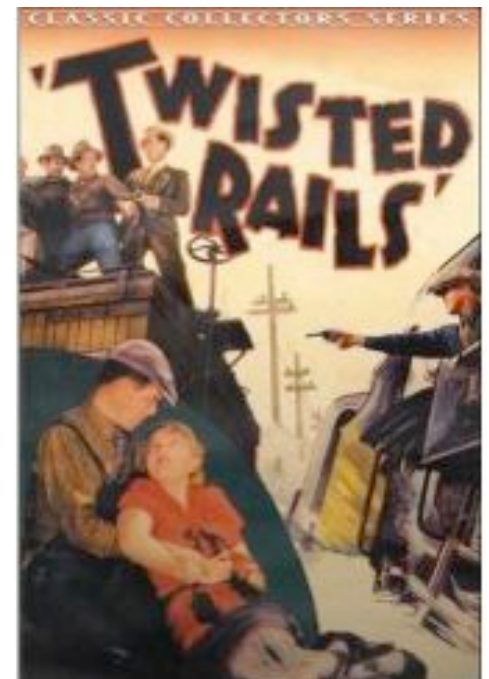
Become a member

Membership provides opportunities for anyone interested in today's railroads, railroad history, train travel, or model railroading. Individual members pay \$36 per year, a family \$60, and a sustaining member \$100. Junior memberships (ages 12-18) for the model railroaders are available; see our Model Railroad Superintendent for details. Membership benefits include free Museum admission.

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

Museum supporter leaves us

Jim McEntire, member of a five-generation railroad family, passed away in mid-February. Jim, who had several roles, worked for Southern Pacific, Union Pacific, and Amtrak, and shared much information.



Movie afternoon: Twisted Rails

Join us for a matinee on April 1 (no kidding) at 3:00 when we'll show on the Big Screen (kidding, sort of) a 1934 tale of railroad skullduggery. See if you can keep up. Which guy in a similar hat did what?

Free with Museum admission.

Decades of details

We continue featuring Central Coast items from the old *Southern Pacific Bulletin* employee newsletters.

N. E. Hirsch, car inspector, Guadalupe, for responding to an emergency call immediately advice given him relative tank car loaded with cocoanut oil in leaky condition. He made necessary repairs to body of tank car which prevented heavy loss of oil and consequent claim. His activity in handling matter promptly reduced delay to train; also permitted movement of an important shipment according to schedule.

Above, from September 1921: Because cocoanut palms don't grow on the Central Coast, the origin and destination of the load remain a mystery.

Below right, from the same edition, locomotive engineers with outstanding records of efficient fuel use were to be rewarded with a company-paid trip to the off-line city of Chicago. Given the wide range of locomotives, train weights, and scheduled speeds, and operating conditions such as weather, it must have been a challenge to judge this contest fairly. The March 1922 edition, reporting on the first Gold Badge winners for fuel saving, had separate categories for through and local freights and through and local passenger trains.

"Quadrant" refers to a steam locomotive throttle, a lever that could be moved through an arc of about 90 degrees, one-fourth of a circle. Notches in the supporting metal arc kept the lever in a certain spot; a grip handle could engage or disengage the notches. The photo below shows the quadrant on display at the Museum. The teeth on the arc are too small to be seen clearly in this view.



Below, from October 1921: These men were recognized for July. No mention of a contest.

Coast

A. C. Baker	San Luis Obispo
F. C. Marshall	San Jose
J. A. Burke	San Luis Obispo
F. E. Reynolds	San Francisco
G. McKenzie	San Francisco

E. H. Hoddinott	San Luis Obispo	Coast
R. E. Fitzpatrick	San Francisco	
N. J. Nichols	San Luis Obispo	
R. P. A. Summers	San Francisco	
L. L. Page	San Francisco	

The details below are from the March 1922 edition. Chualar was a siding in the Salinas Valley about 11 miles south of Salinas. The arch bar referred to was probably a component of the truck (wheel assembly) of a type known, logically, as arch-bar. You can see examples on the narrow-gauge boxcars displayed on the Museum's narrow-gauge track. Because of their relative weakness and heavier cars, arch-bar trucks were banned from interchange between railroads in 1938. However, hard times led to postponements until 1941. And they continued to be used into the 1950s for cars limited to the owning railroad's tracks, such as maintenance-of-way cars.

W. E. Adams, Conductor, Chualar, for prompt action taken in stopping a freight train when he noticed dust flying under car. After train stopped inspection revealed two column bolts on a ballast car had failed, resulting in arch bar dropping; had train not been stopped promptly serious damage would have resulted.



Above is an archbar truck probably dating from the 1920s. Below is a contemporary truck. Archbar sideframes were made by bolting separate pieces together. Modern trucks use cast sideframes (both images from spookshow.net). Besides sturdier axles, wheels, and bolsters (the cross-piece that the car frame bears on) modern trucks use roller bearings instead of "friction bearings" for the axle ends. They are much less prone to overheating and greatly reduce rolling resistance.



THE "Roll of Honor" now posted on each of the divisions shows a number of new contenders for the trip to Chicago next May.

A few days ago George McCormick, General Superintendent of Motive Power, was discussing fuel economy with an engine crew while out on the line. The engineer remarked that he was "Working her in the Chicago notch."

From the way the engineers and firemen are competing for the distinction of being listed on the "Roll of Honor" it is evident that the "Chicago notch" will be a popular position on the quadrant.

The June Leaders Were:

A. K. Bullard, S. F.	E. H. Hoddinott, S. L. O.
C. P. Anderson, S. L. O.	B. J. Hunter, S. L. Obis.
J. A. Burke, S. L. Obis.	N. J. Nichols, S. L. Obis.
F. E. Reynolds, S. F.	R. P. A. Summers, S. F.
J. H. Taylor, S. F.	F. Bacher, S. F.



Slip slidin' away

Not *too* slippery, but enough to extend the life of wheels and rails.

Railways' great advantage compared to road transport is the very low rolling resistance of steel wheels on steel rails. On tangent (straight) track, there is almost no friction. But on curves wheel flanges contact the side of the outer rail's head, as the track guides the train. Flange contact often produces a high-pitched squeal. And with conventional rigid trucks (assemblies of wheels, axles, and side-frames), on sharp curves the wheel treads sometimes slide for short intervals on the top of the outer rail.

Both types of contact slowly wear the ideal rail and wheel profiles. The added friction, while a small effect compared with grades, requires more pulling power and energy use. So railways employ trackside lubricators that in response to passing wheels automatically eject a small amount of grease at the flange-rail contact. Lubrication in the wrong place interferes with traction and braking. The photo above shows the device at San Luis Obispo. The cabinet supplying grease and power (by solar panels) is out of view to the left.

Light rail transit vehicles, especially those that run on sharp curves in city streets, often employ on-board lubrication devices that continuously apply lubricant.

Deregulation works . . . sort of

If you are reading a paper copy of this newsletter the button at right appears close to its full three-inch diameter. If you had asked an economist or historian what this was about, she or he probably would have explained about travelers, shippers, and communities at first depending on financially fragile railroads, then the robber baron era, and later the federal regulations that nearly turned railroads into public utilities, required to provide service whether they earned an adequate return on investment or not.

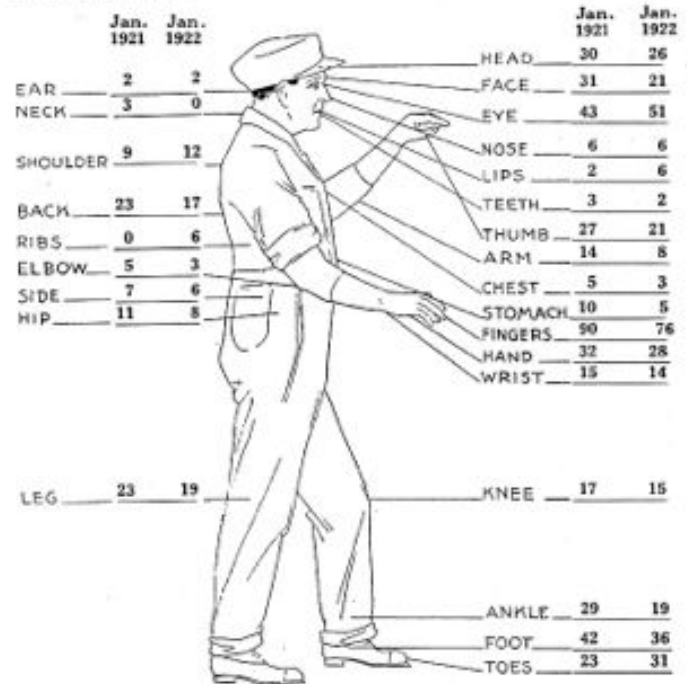
These buttons were provided soon after charges for produce shipments were deregulated but before passage of the 1980 Staggers Act that eliminated the Interstate Commerce Commission, established the Surface Transportation Board, and allowed railroads to negotiate shipping contracts. Unfortunately for SP, more profitable operations in the short term did not avoid continued loss of produce shipments to trucks.

More decades of details

Also from the April 1922 *Southern Pacific Bulletin*, this illustration applied system-wide. But it deserves to be shared.

Protect This Man!

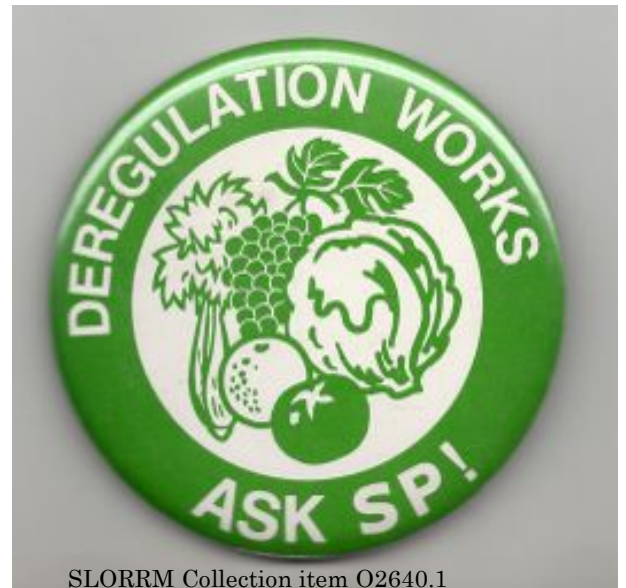
THE accompanying diagram shows the number of all injuries to employes occurring to various parts of the body during the months of January 1921 and 1922, a total of 441 in 1922, compared with 502 in 1921, a decrease of 61 or 12.1 percent.



Casualties to employes reported to the Interstate Commerce Commission on locomotive mile and man-hour basis show as follows:

Train and Train Service Casualties per 1,000,000 Loco. Miles	
January, 1921	12.12
January, 1922	11.83
Decrease	.29 or 2.4%
Non-train Casualties per 1,000,000 Man-Hours	
January, 1921	14.48
January, 1922	13.58
Decrease	.90 or 6.2%

It will be noted that the year 1922 has started off with a reduction, and it is hoped further reductions will be shown as the year progresses.



SLORRM Collection item O2640.1



Far from the Central Coast

We continue our feature, this time watching a freight train passing through hills covered with eucalyptus trees. Could this be the Coast Route descending from the Nipomo Mesa?

That's not likely, unless a serious fan of the Erie arranged for several of their transition era locomotives to lead the way. (Your editor is sure that distinctive paint scheme was one of the most attractive ever applied to an Electro Motive Diesel product.)

If we wait for the locomotives to pass, we'll be even more confused as we see three-axle trucks and cabs at both ends of the third locomotive, which is about as long as an "E" unit.

Maybe if we turn the page upside down. We're in Australia, where one of the railways acquired EMD-licensed products and ran them longer than most in North America. Other parts of Australia look much like the upper Salinas Valley –but with more sheep. The image above is a screen capture from a YouTube video by Rod Williams [*Coast Mail*, Fall 2021].

Some Museum history

In 2004 the Museum's logo, by local graphic designer Pierre Rademaker, was recognized worldwide as one of the "best examples of American corporate identity design completed over the [previous] three years." We have the certificate to prove it.

More ominously, in 2003 the Wisconsin South-eastern Division of the Midwest Region of the National Model Railroad Association (WISE) sent the Museum a cease-and-desist letter for using the name Trainfest for an activity planned at the Bitter Creek Western miniature railroad in Arroyo Grande. WISE claimed infringement of a federally registered service mark.

Oh no, what could we do? Mailers had already gone out. We changed the name on the website to Fall Train Festival, and no brouhaha ensued. Our regular fall event is now called the Central Coast Railroad Festival. It spans the Museum and several other venues.

But here's a twist. Why does our Mission Statement include "*California Central Coast?*" Because there's at least one other Central Coast, in Australia, which will appear if you search online for Central Coast Weather.

Even more decades of details

The whole Coast Division part of the April 1922 *Southern Pacific Bulletin* "Distinguished Service Order" column is worth reproducing, even if some of the items are a little outside the Central Coast. Tangair is on the coast near Vandenberg SFB. Ellwood is near Goleta. Pomar, Spanish for fruit orchard, was between San Jose and Gilroy, when Santa Clara Valley was known for apricots.

Distinguished Service Order *Is Your Name Here?*

COAST DIVISION

Charles Ishii, section foreman, Tangair, for valuable assistance rendered when line telegraph poles blown down by a storm. On his own initiative he took men from his gang and tools, secured barbed wire from a fence and spliced the wires, restoring circuits.

J. J. Brucker, fireman, San Miguel, for action taken by him at a time steam pipe to air pump became disconnected on engine on line. It was necessary for him to handle a hot steam pipe in order to make connection, making engine available to go through on run, eliminating a bad delay.

C. X. Cherrie, R. O. Kimball, conductors, Gaviota, for noting smoke coming out of a box car on a train with which he had a meet; he called the attention of the opposite conductor to condition and latter after making inspection found a small fire on the floor of the car. The fire had been built on the floor of the car by a hobo.

H. R. Dufty, conductor, Pomar, for making prompt report to train dispatcher at a time when he had difficulty in getting out of a siding. The information given to the dispatcher enabled him to change meeting points of two first class trains in time to avoid delay.

Ed. Whalen, F. W. Ramage, engine foremen, San Francisco, for finding broken rails in track and making prompt report thereof so that rails could be replaced before accident occurred.

J. M. Anderson, yardman, San Luis Obispo, for action taken by him after discovering a fire in a box car; arranging for the necessary assistance, etc., thereby reducing amount of damage to the minimum.

J. M. Garner, section foreman, King City, for close attention to duty; he called the attention of the train crew of a passing train to fact that brake beam was dragging; train was stopped and brake beam taken off before damage of any kind resulted. His prompt handling of this after making the discovery no doubt averted a derailment.

W. Haliwell, signal maintainer; L. Wieland, section foreman, Ellwood, for assistance rendered by them in restoring telegraph lines which had been blown down by a high wind.

Ishii - Japanese name implying "lives in a rocky place."

Annual Report

In 2022 the Museum made good progress recovering from the pandemic.

Volunteers provided over 3,037 hours in general support work, plus 844 for *La Cuesta*, and nearly 2,000 for the model railroad (41% as docent time, 23% as maintenance, and 35 % in new construction). In addition, many untallied hours were invested in equipment restoration. The Museum has no paid staff, but sometimes contracts for specialized work.

The year ended with about 240 memberships, slightly more than the previous year.

Major accomplishments were:

Restoration

- Sealing the boxcar roof and painting its sides and ends

Exhibits

- Displaying a 1/8th scale model of a Pacific Coast Railway locomotive and a 1/10th scale model of another PCRY loco
- Painting and providing appropriate seats for the Amtrak ride exhibit
- Displaying railroad-themed mannequins

La Cuesta

- Completing a faux-wood wainscot treatment in the dining area and lounge
- Installing new carpet
- Providing new chairs and tables in the dining area

Model railroad

- Completing backdrop painting for the whole layout
- Completing basic scenery for the Horseshoe Curve area
- Preparing a mock-up of the San Luis Obispo roundhouse
- Finishing structures for the Paso Robles downtown scene

Events

- Return of the Central Coast Railroad Festival, Boy Scouts activities, Santa on the *Surfliner*, and the Museum as a venue for private events

Facilities & operations

- Installing a new security-camera system
- Removing surplus material from Emily Street Yard
- Advocating improved operation of the Safe Parking Program by the city and its social services contractor

Museum governance

- Recruiting three new members for the Board of Directors

In the historic district

While the credit goes almost entirely to others, the Museum did have a role in upgrades to the appearance and function of the San Luis Obispo Amtrak depot. Many years of deferred maintenance and repairs were completed at this gateway to the city.



Gary See photos



Financial Summary

Beginning Cash Balance	\$194,866
Income	\$ 60,226
Memberships	\$10,890
Admissions	\$12,864
Events	\$ 2,395
Museum Store Sales	\$ 7,338
Miscellaneous Income	\$ 545
Model Railroad	\$ 4,944
Grants and donations	\$21,250
Restricted	\$ 5,935
Unrestricted	\$15,315
Expenses	\$130,616
Operating	\$35,402
Capital	\$95,214
Year-end Cash Balance	\$124,476