

Coast Mail News from the San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum

Issue Number 87 - Spring 2024

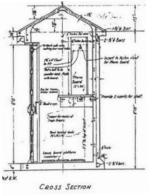
San Luis Obispo, California

slorrm.com

The crane operator and Museum ground crew are preparing to lift a section of rail about 39 feet long and weighing nearly 1,200 pounds. The operator will swing the rail toward the photographer and out of view to the left, and set it on a flatbed truck. The rail will move over the photographer's location; he will move away from the path beforehand.

Below, we took advantage of the crane's availability to move the second of our concrete trackside telephone booths.





Above, a section view of a standard Southern Pacific concrete phone booth of the type moved. It weighs 3,000 pounds. Note the roof overhang.

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

Surplus rail & more moved from Emily Street Yard

On January 10 equipment and restoration lead Brad La-Rose, Louie's Crane Service, workers from Santa Maria Valley Railroad, and a crew of volunteers moved many items out of Emily Street Yard. That day, over 15 tons of rails were removed. Nearly all will be used to replace rails corroded by sea breezes at the Santa Maria Valley Railroad. (SMVRR president Rob Himoto appears in front of the gray storage unit in the photo at left.)

Other items moved include 35 wood crossties weighing in total over a ton, and a 3,000-pound telephone booth (photo at bottom left).

The City of San Luis Obispo, which has allowed the Museum to use the unimproved northern end of Emily Street right-of-way for 19 years, has required all items to be removed by April 1.

A high priority for 2024 is securing suitable storage and display spaces near the Museum's solar panels and in nearby parking lot planters. Be patient, because several items will not be fully restored and looking their best. On the other hand, visitors will be able to watch restoration activities more easily and continuously than when the items were in Emily Street Yard.



Mystery photo

Here's an intricate piece of artwork. What would such a thing be doing in a railroad museum? Find out on page 4. Brad LaRose photo

Our Mission

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

Contact

Telephone (message) 805 548-1894 email: info@slorrm.com Website: www.slorrm.com Mail: 1940 Santa Barbara Avenue San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Board of Directors

Peter Brazil	Mike Burrell
Stephen Cake	Jim Chernoff
Alan Estes	Ken Green
Greg Jackson	Brad LaRose
Ted Van Klaveren	

Crew List

President	Peter Brazil	
Vice President	Mike Burrell	
Museum Manager	Diane Marchetti	
Curator, Restoratio	on Brad LaRose	
Treasurer	Dave Rohr	
Exhibits	Gary See	
Operations Manage	er Mike Burrell	
Events	vacant	
Model RR Superintendent		
	Andrew Merriam	
Membership	Gary See	
Fundraising	vacant	
Digital Media Coor	dinator Gary See	
Website Maintaine		
Secretary, Archivist		
letter Editor		

(newsletter@slorrm.com)

The museum is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, 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.

Coast Mail is published quarterly by the San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum. © 2024. All rights reserved.

Timetable

Board of Directors meetings are scheduled for March 12, April 9 and May 14, at 6:00 p.m. They are held at the Museum. Online participation can be arranged. Contact info@slorrm.com for help with online participation.

Become a member

Membership provides opportunities for anyone interested in today's railroads, railroad history, train travel, railroad artifact restoration, 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).

Application forms can be downloaded from the Museum's website and mailed with payment, or you can join online by clicking <u>Membership</u> and using PayPal. (Mailing and web addresses are in left-hand column.) Membership benefits include free admission to the Museum.

Parlor Car Chats Online

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

More Coast Mail Online

- Central Coast twin? (page 5)
- Annual Report (page 6)

Book bargains example

In the 1940s and '50s author S. Kip Farrington, Jr., wrote a series of books on the transition era, coving such aspects as the change from advanced steam locomotives to diesels and the introduction of Centralized Traffic Control (examples at right). The Museum offers a set of five books for only \$10. See our eBay page or visit our on-site store for this and similar deals.

In this publication product or corporate names may be registered trademarks. They are used only for identification or explanation without intent to infringe.

Museum supporters

The Museum would not exist and could not improve without the support of many. All forms of support, from membership dues to grants and donations of time, materials, and funds are greatly appreciated. In this edition we recognize the following for their generous support.

Carl Adams donated a collection of toy train and model railroad items.



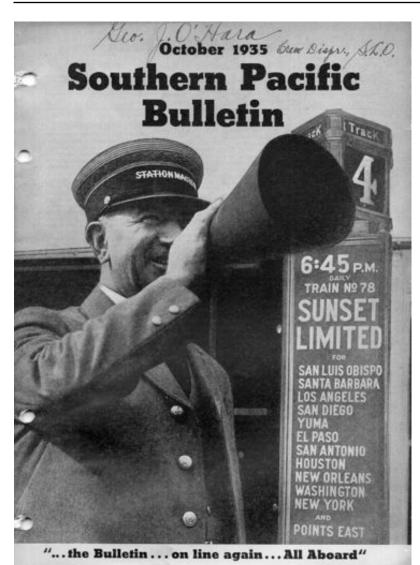
Danny the Diesel Locomotive Comes Home

The third in our series of Danny the Diesel Locomotive books is now available on the Museum's website (slorrm.com/Danny-Comes-Home.html). Written for fans ages about three to six years, it continues the story of the little Plymouth switch engine that started at Camp Roberts in the 1940s and follows a varied career through Northern California before coming back to the Central Coast.

Danny la Locomotora Diesel Llega a Casa

El texto está en inglés y español, por lo que puede resultar atractivo incluso para lectores mayores que estén aprendiendo uno u otro.





What's wrong with this picture?

Nothing, really. Amtrak's *Sunset Limited* now connects Los Angeles with New Orleans three days a week. From 1993 to 2005 it went all the way to Florida, ending when a hurricane damaged the line. That was Amtrak's longest route and the only train ever to connect the East Coast with the West Coast. For many years, Southern Pacific's streamlined *Sunset Limited* was a daily Los Angeles-New Orleans service.

But why is San Luis Obispo listed? Soon after Southern Pacific's Coast Route was put in service, the *Sunset Limited* served San Francisco and New Orleans once weekly, with S.P. subsidiary Texas & New Orleans moving the train between El Paso and New Orleans. The eastern cities listed required connections via other railroads.

From this 1935 Bulletin: "Guy O. Hanson, station master at Third Street Station in San Francisco ... nominated by *Railway Age* as the 'nation's best train caller' ... announces his trains so that his words are clearly understood." Nice megaphone.

What about the words at the bottom of this cover, "on line again," in 1935? That was not a time traveling stationmaster, back from the Internet Age. Publication of the S.P. employee newsletter had been suspended during the Depression.

And at right, what are diesels specially painted for the *Golden State* (L. A. – Chicago via Tucumcari, New Mexico) doing on Cuesta Grade? Find the answer in the next *Coast Mail*.

BofLE at SLO in 1951

Anyone reading the Southern Pacific Bulletin of November 1951 would know those initials stood for the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. Harold Jaeger's article described the barbecue in Cuesta Canyon Park, where several long-serving engineers were recognized (Coast Mail Winter 2023). L. A. Everly, John L. Farley (who had retired in 1943), and A. Webster received 40-year badges. Fred Champlain got one for 50 years, meaning he started the year the Coast Route saw its first through trains, though we don't know where he worked at that time. (By the way, the original text had the labor group's initials just as you see them above, no spaces and no periods.)

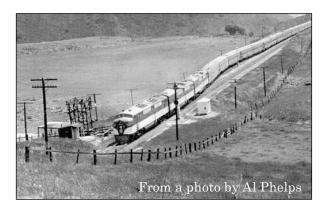
George W. Burbank, visiting from Cleveland, recalled working out of San Luis Obispo during 1910 – 1924 and 1933 – 1934.

In then-current news, former freight-house worker Michael Pentz, Jr., was serving in the Navy, on a destroyer at Japan. His father Mike was working as a conductor out of San Luis Obispo.

Roadmaster V. E. Pearson reported that new rails had been installed in Tunnel Number 6. "The job went smoothly, but sealing and packing of rail joints to prevent wear took more time than originally planned." Moisture and sand working down between the rail joints "has always been a problem," he said.

Tunnel 6 at 3,610 feet long contains the summit of Cuesta Grade. The most recent professional reference to "packing of rail joints" that your editor could find was in a 1948 publication by the American Railway Engineering Association, which said it was desirable in locations with much sand, presumably either from natural conditions or sand applied for locomotive traction. The practice was discontinued apparently because it trapped moisture, leading to excessive corrosion. (More about rail joints on page 4.)

A different part of the same newsletter said freight house clerk Roy Fairbanks was the new father of a baby girl.





Mystery photo answer

Jack Erhart stands next to his completed one-tenth-scale model of Pacific Coast Railway locomotive *John Harford*. The first-page mystery photo was of the steam dome. In the image above the steam dome is aligned with the farther edge of the wall mirror frame. Jack's masterful hand-craftsmanship is clearly evident in the detail photo. It's even better seen in person.

The steam dome received steam from the boiler and fed it to the pistons by way of a regulator. The smaller, closer dome was for sand that could be distributed to the rails to increase traction.

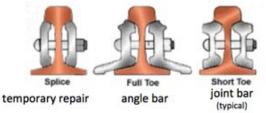
The first, 1820s proof-of-concept locomotives were simple and utilitarian. But over the next roughly 60 years many were embellished by their builders and operators. In some cases even mechanical components were given forms that recalled plants and

animals. Historians of design suggest that as machines became more widespread and powerful, they made many people slightly uncomfortable by their departure from long-accustomed natural forms. The results included wrought-iron vines trailing around structural supports and nearly floral gilding on steam locomotives.



Joint details

Every joint between lengths of rail is a concern. It's subject to stresses different from the continuous rail and requires maintenance. The first image below shows crosssections of connectors, which are bolted to each end of the rails and span the joint.



The photo below shows a shelf-type joint bar, with both of the two pieces wrapping partway under the rail, installed in the Museum's display track. The bottom photo shows the end of such a bar.



Museum volunteers struggled to salvage the shelf-type bars and to fit them onto the rails while building the display track, requiring more precise alignment than typical joint bars. But they provide more support and spiking options where rail ends do not occur above the wood tie. Such bars are no longer used because spiking near tie edges caused splitting, and skewing ties could cause narrowing of the gauge.

Some locomotives still display parts of birds.



What's wrong in this picture?

This is part of Amtrak's long-term parking lot north of the Freighthouse on December 26, 2023. Nearly every space was taken, so if you were looking for one you might have had to walk from the south end of the Freighthouse. This is a good problem to have if you want California's passenger rail system to thrive. Work continues on several fronts to increase the frequency and reliability of passenger service along the Central Coast.



Far from the Central Coast

The Winter 2023 *Coast Mail* featured a Central European location that looked a lot like the upper Salinas Valley. The scene above also resemblances that valley. Sixty mph is a reasonable speed limit there. However, it may not be obvious at the resolution of this image, another YouTube screen capture, but those are concrete ties, which are not used in our part of Union Pacific's system. And the sign's number is for kilometers per hour, about 37 mph. Merond22 provided the virtual trip, which starts with flangesquealing curves and mountain grades before reaching flat land.

We're approaching Javornik, in the Czech Republic. At the time of this view that country had a dense network of rural rail lines served by single, self-propelled rail cars often called rail busses.

Ramping up access

In December Cal Poly graduating senior Noah Callahan made a ramp to access our former Southern Pacific boxcar from the Freighthouse platform. Below, we see the underside while it is folded against an indoor wall pending creation of a new opening in the platform railing. Its hinged ends rest against the floor. When extended it is three feet wide and 7 feet 5 inches long.

The boxcar floor is about 32 inches away from and 18 inches higher than the platform. Restoration lead Brad LaRose is researching options for universal visitor access. Meanwhile, this ramp will help workers prepare the boxcar interior.





Individual learners visited

Above and below: On January 24 parents and students from the Heartland Charter School visited the Museum. The Santa Maria-based school supports individualized home learning with state-accredited resources.



Volunteers provided over 3,700 hours in general support work, plus about 200 for *La Cuesta*, and 3,344 for the model railroad. In addition, many untallied hours were invested in equipment restoration and removing items from Emily Street Yard. The year ended with about 240 memberships, slightly more than 2022. Major accomplishments were:

Facilities & operations

• Removing over 100 tons of artifacts and materials from Emily Street Yard, including the former SP boxcar, narrow-gauge boxcars, the cupola caboose, storage containers, trackside phone booth, surplus rail, scrap metal, and thousands of smaller items. Some items were made available to other non-profit organizations, some were sold to obtain funds to support Museum operations, and some were relocated to temporary or permanent display locations in or near the Freighthouse.

Exhibits

- Placing the former Southern Pacific boxcar on the display track
- Placing the restored Fairmont track car in the Freighthouse and the restored Northwestern Co. track car outdoors near the main Freighthouse entry

Model railroad

- Completing all standard-gauge operating main-line track
- Completing the East San Luis Obispo industrial area
- Installing new shelves in the work room and a display case for non-layout equipment

Events

• Return of wine-rail excursions

Museum governance

- Recruiting and retaining directors
- Envisioning directions for the coming decade
- Updating the Development & Operations Plan

In a world increasingly dominated by screen time and targeted content, sometimes it's good to be outdoors using your imagination. This track car for light maintenance provides such an opportunity.





Although this link-and-pin coupler was moved from storage to a display location in the early days of 2024, it reflects the Museum's focus for 2023. Regular volunteer Howard Amborn used his tractor for several items in Emily Street Yard.

Financial Summary

Beginning Cash Balance Income		124,476 59.613
	* • • • • •	φ 05.015
Memberships	6,236	
Admissions	\$12,812	
Events	\$ 9,232	
Museum Store Sales (net)	\$ 3,458	
Miscellaneous Income	\$ 4,142	
Model Railroad	\$ 2,751	
Grants and donations		
Purpose Restricted	\$19,067	
Purpose Not restricted	\$1,915	
Expenses		\$79,663
Operating	\$64,520	
Capital	\$15,143	



Museum-arranged wine-rail excursions on regular Amtrak Surfliner trains, with a volunteer docent aboard, introduce a wide range of residents and visitors to our region's scenery and railroad heritage.