



Coast Mail

News from the San Luis Obispo
Railroad Museum

Issue Number 71 – Spring 2020

San Luis Obispo, California

slorrm.com

The Museum is open every Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm. It opens other times for groups by arrangement. Contact media@slorrm.com.

Recent history: boxcars forever

It's been years since so-called merchandise or "boxcar" trains regularly came through San Luis Obispo. And this isn't one (below). Union Pacific stored a long string of leasing company boxcars on the siding in January.



Clearing the yard

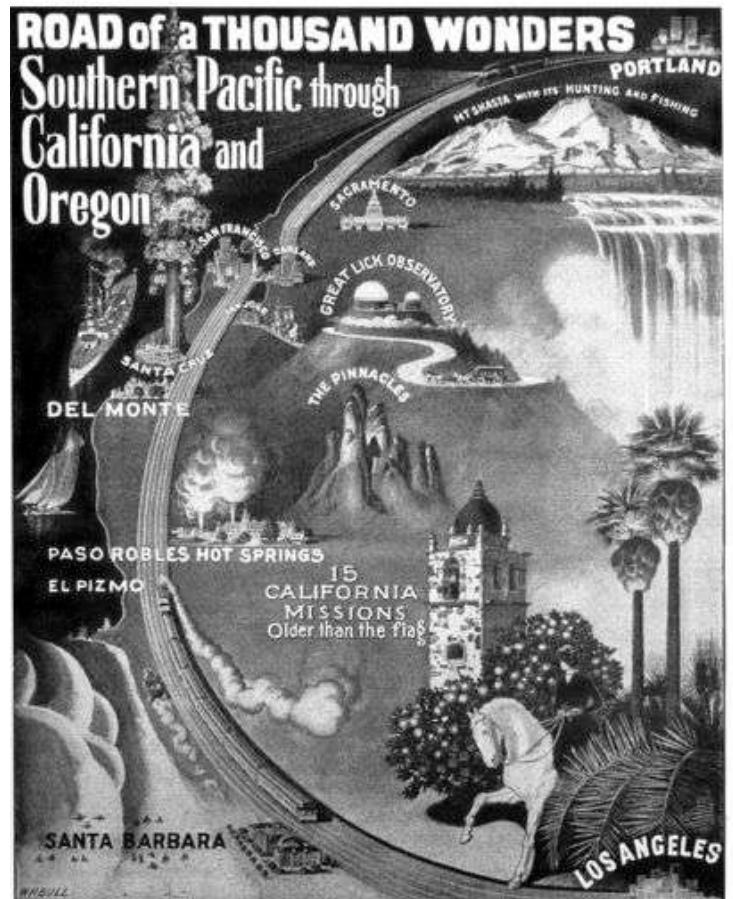
Railroad yardmasters are charged with getting cars in and out. Sitting cars don't earn money. The Museum has been working to clear surplus items, including salvaged rail and the remains of a boxcar, from its Emily Street Yard. Here, a crane lifts rails that have been sold. Funds received will support restoration efforts.

Sorry San Luis, you lose

There's no mention of San Luis Obispo in this 1907 Southern Pacific Railroad advertisement (right) designed by William Howell Bull, which highlights El Pizmo (the early spelling) and Paso Robles Hot Springs. The Great Lick Observatory, completed in 1887 on a mountain east of San Jose, rates an illustration along the swooping route from Los Angeles to Portland. Bull was SP's in-house artist at the railroad's San Francisco headquarters.

Issue No. 71 – Train No. 71

Southern Pacific train No. 71, the *Coast Mail*, was an all-stops carrier of mail and express between Los Angeles and San Francisco. Below, we see it approaching Santa Margarita headed north (timetable west-bound) on March 9, 1950.



SLORRM Archives No. P2320.3

SLORRM Archives No. 8710.1

Our Mission

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

Contact

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Board of Directors

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Membership Coordinator
 John Marchetti
Fundraising Chair Feride Schroeder
Secretary, Archivist, Newsletter
EditorGlen Matteson
 (newsletter@slorrm.com)

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.

At www.slorrm.com click on Company Store.

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TIMETABLE

Board of Directors meetings will be held March 10, April 8, and May 12, at 6:00 p.m., at 1940 Santa Barbara Avenue, San Luis Obispo.

Upcoming Events

Modeler presentations: at noon on March 28 (weathering techniques), April 25, and May 23.

Coastrail, a new event featuring fellowship, photos, and stories, will be on Friday, May 1, from 4 to 9 p.m.

S.L.O. Train Day returns on Saturday, May 2, with tours, presentations, swap meet, and food vendors.



Gary See photo

Docent of the Year

In January Charlie Davies was named Docent of the Year, in recognition of his consistent presence each Saturday (and his providing pastry for his fellow docents). Charlie also brings technical expertise in electronics and telegraphy.



Student Interns

S.L.O. High School students Ari Covarrubias and Etienne Brennan (red top) are helping organize documents in the Museum's archives. Indexing our many *SP Bulletins*, the railroad employees' magazine, will lead to some interesting material for future issues of *Coast Mail*.

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).

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.)

Membership benefits include free admission to the Museum and access to Members Only features of the website, including full current issues of *Coast Mail*.

Condolences to the family of Santa Maria Valley RR director Betty Himoto, who passed away in January, age 95. Born in Burbank, and removed to a camp in the 1940s, she advocated for rail transportation and investment.

Our **2019 Annual Report** is on pages 5 and 6, available online.

Another mystery photo

This item was displayed during the October 2019 Central Coast Railroad Festival swap meet. Yes, it has a close connection with railroad operations. It's about one foot tall. What is it? The answer will be in the next *Coast Mail*.



Gary See photo

Always in demand

Even after robots take over all the routine jobs and many of the non-routine ones, we'll need skilled workers to fix the robots, and the machines that make them. For at least a decade after World War II, especially in California, mechanics were in high demand for the expanding motor vehicle, civilian aircraft, and construction industries. Railroad operations were declining from wartime peaks, but the diesel-locomotive revolution and deferred maintenance of much equipment were underway.

Below is a recruitment effort from the back panel of Southern Pacific's March 3, 1946, public timetable.

SKILLED MECHANICS WANTED!

Southern Pacific, the West's biggest railroad, has plenty of good jobs open at many places along the line for skilled machinists, carmen, pipefitters, signalmen, plumbers, boilermakers, and sheet metal workers. Good pay, good working conditions, plenty of big extras, like insurance and pass privileges, hospital and medical care, fine retirement pension plan. See S. P. today—a good outfit to be with. Plenty of work.

S. P. Employment Offices:
San Francisco—35 California Street
Los Angeles—515 Pacific Electric Bldg.
Oakland—337 Thirteenth Street

Or call or write your nearest S. P. Agent.

*The friendly
Southern Pacific*

SLORRM Archives 2180 series



Swanton Pacific steam locomotive No. 1914.

Same initials, different railroad

The *Winter Coast Mail* noted the 2018 end of railroad-themed calendar publishing by Orchard Supply Hardware (OSH), and mentioned the role of Al Smith. Al, an executive of OSH, studied agriculture at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo (Cal Poly) in the 1940s and worked in Southern Pacific Railroad's S.L.O yard soon after World War II. In 1993 he donated Swanton Pacific Ranch to Cal Poly. The 3,200-acre ranch is now owned by the non-governmental Cal Poly Corporation and managed by Cal Poly's College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences. Located in Santa Cruz County, it encompasses redwood forests, coastal grasslands, field crops, organic apple orchards, and learning facilities.

Al also acquired and relocated to the ranch the one-third size locomotives built for the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco. They, along with a diesel switcher, passenger cars, and work equipment, are maintained and operated by volunteers, who in 2019 were also dealing with roadbed and track that had been damaged by winter storms.

For more information, come to Swanton Pacific RR Director Charlie Crabb's presentation during Coastrail in May (page 2) or visit sprr.calpoly.edu/home

SP crane car, built by Cal Poly faculty and students.

Inset, Al Smith.

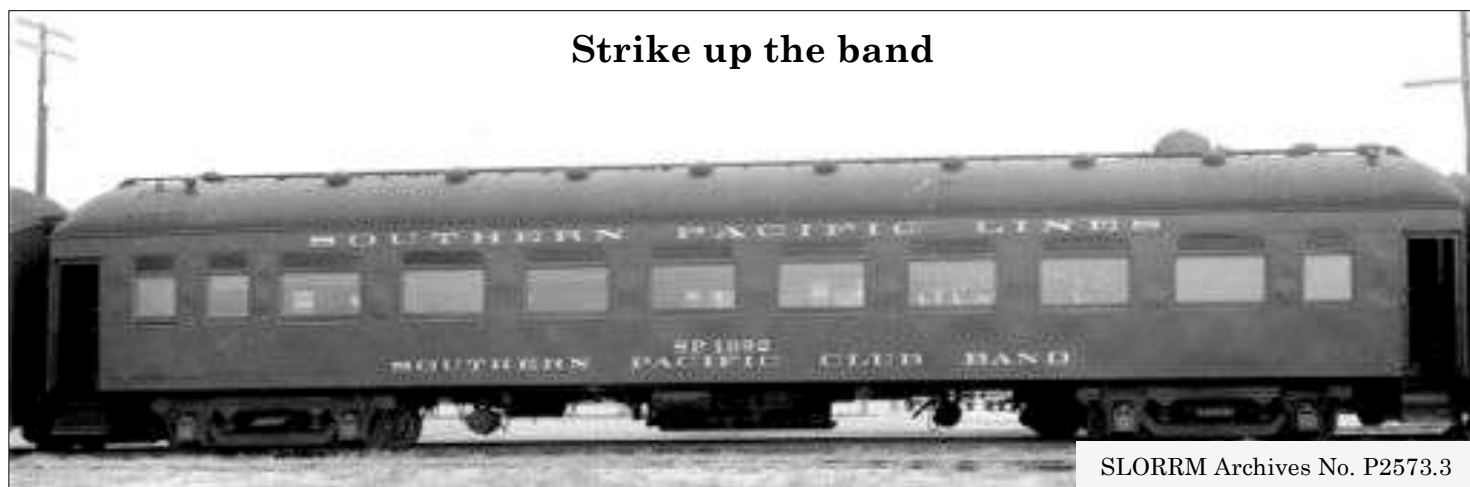
Three photos courtesy of Cal Poly





Above is Southern Pacific's dynamometer car, No. 137, probably at Dunsuir, California, in the 1950s. (SLORRM Archives No. P2575.1)

Below is Southern Pacific Club Band Car, No. 1092, at Santa Cruz, California, on July 28, 1940. SP had an employee band, based in Sacramento. Do you know if the band ever played on the Central Coast?



Strike up the band

SLORRM Archives No. P2573.3

Overnight Economy Train

Date and place for this billboard photo weren't noted. It must have been before the October 1949 cancellation of *The Coaster*, an overnight train since 1926. The fine print says "In Coaches" (as opposed to sleeping cars). No print states the departure point for the six-dollar fare; it must have been San Francisco. Dinner and breakfast look reasonable. (See the Winter 2019 *Coast Mail* for our lunch special.)

SP's March 3, 1946, timetable shows the northbound *Coaster* leaving L. A. at 6:30 p.m. and arriving in San Francisco at 9:00 a.m. The southbound train had a similar schedule. Oakland connections were available at San Jose, and for a time included separate train sections, as with the nightly, sleeper-equipped *Lark*.



SLORRM Archives No. P2660.1

2019 ANNUAL REPORT



Visitors

The Museum had 52 regular open days and three special days, during which about 4,100 people came.

The Museum continues to host a wide range of groups, including some that are not focused on railroad history.

Our general website and the railroad festival website each had about 100,000 visits during the year, peaking at about 1,000 per day during the festival. Online visitors were from several countries.



Events, Presentations & Outreach

Special events at the Freighthouse occurred during SLO Train Day in May, the Central Coast Railroad Festival in October, several gatherings for groups throughout the year, our third Art After Dark show, and for seasonal holidays. The Boy Scout Merit Badge program continued, while Girl Scout visits were initiated. A fundraising dinner was held at Bitter Creek Western miniature railroad in Arroyo Grande.

Member volunteers represented the Museum at least 20 times at locations away from the Freighthouse, including 11 train excursions, visits to Cal Poly classes or events, and service club meetings. The Museum received wide exposure from a CNN program, online and on-air, featuring San Luis Obispo.

Acquisitions

The Museum acquired several parts that will be useful in restoring artifacts, and continued to receive donations of books, documents, models, and photos.

Restoration

Volunteers led by curator Brad LaRose made great progress preparing the former Southern Pacific tank car and starting to repaint it.

Similar preparation work was done on *La Cuesta*, leading to its repainting, starting early in 2020, in a scheme similar to Southern Pacific's *Lark* overnight Coast Route train.



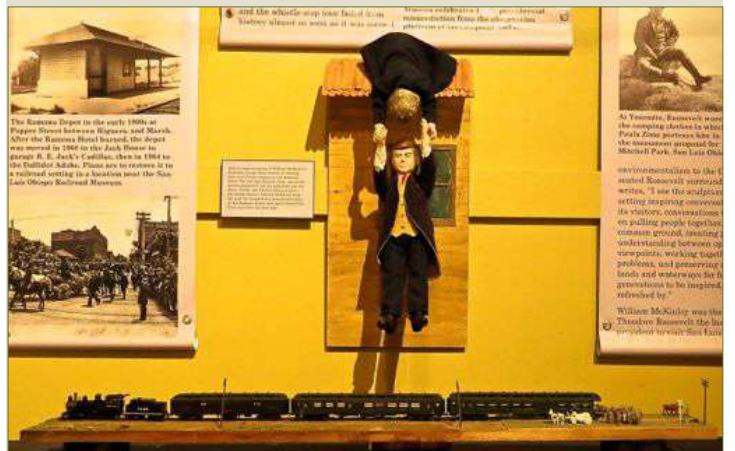
Exhibits & Facilities

An exhibit on presidential visits by train was hosted.

Indoor and outdoor light fixtures were upgraded.

The display track extension was completed as far as the Union Pacific easement.

The Freighthouse platform was re-coated with asphalt emulsion, so the added concrete section better matches the original, locally mined bitumen.



2020 ANNUAL REPORT Continued

Publications

Eleven issues of "From the Freighthouse" were distributed via email. Four issues of *Coast Mail* were published on a regular quarterly schedule, totaling 16 print and 24 digital pages.



Operations & Governance

About 40 active volunteers provided about 4,280 person-hours in activities such as docents, restoration, publications, fundraising, and outreach. An additional 1,200 hours were spent specifically on Pullman car *La Cuesta*, and about 2,800 hours for the model railroad.



Library & Archives

Additions and corrections were made to our People Tracker database, which has about 2,300 records of previous coastal region railroad workers.

Additional donated items were processed for addition to the collections, transfer to other nonprofit organizations, or sale to raise funds for the Museum.

Efforts to recruit local college and high school students as interns were expanded to districts throughout the county, and were successful.



Model Railroad

In 2019 the Central Coast Model Railroad:

- Added three new operating trains to the display
- Presented 10 modeling clinics
- Completed the 500-foot long main line
- Provided support for the Museum's Boy Scout Merit Badge program and for special events and tours.



Membership

The number of memberships remained at about 200, with several of those being families. The life membership category was reinstated.



Financial Status

Beginning Cash Balance		\$107,582
Income		\$100,161
Memberships	\$13,853	
Admissions	\$12,701	
Events & Excursions	\$23,825	
Museum Store Sales	\$ 7,801	
Grants and Donations	\$40,582	
Restricted	\$31,209	
Unrestricted	\$ 9,373	
Expenses		\$73,082
Operating	\$ 41,792	
Capital	\$ 31,290	
Year-end Cash Balance		\$134,661

Some Central Coast Model Railroad accounting is separate. The Museum has no paid staff.