



Coast Mail

News from the San Luis Obispo
Railroad Museum

Issue Number 89 – Fall 2024 San Luis Obispo, California www.slorm.com

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

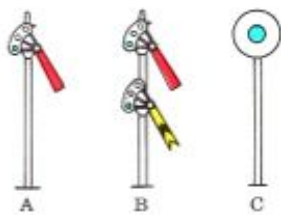
New exhibit at the Freighthouse



According to Rule 301, "...absence of light ... where a colored light should be in a block signal, must be regarded as the most restrictive indication..." That would be Stop. But at this dark signal we want you to proceed along the Walk of History that's long been recognized in the city's **Railroad Historic District Plan**. This newly installed searchlight type signal with its classic relay-cabinet base has been carefully positioned to avoid any confusion for Union Pacific and Amtrak operations on the far side of the Museum's display track.

The Rule 301 quote above and the diagrams below are from Southern Pacific Transportation Company "Rules and Regulations of the Transportation Department," effective October 31, 1976.

RULE 281.



Indication: PROCEED
Name and Aspect: BLOCK SIGNAL GREEN

RULE 290.



Indication: STOP
Name and Aspect: HOME SIGNAL RED

Have you had to renew your driver's license lately? Conductors and locomotive engineers were required to take periodic rules examinations. One not only had to get the general idea right, but the rule number and the exact wording. There were (and are) absolute and permissive signals, diverging routes, protective signals, exceptions for signals on certain grades, signals with timers...

Central Coast Railroad Festival

Join us October 4 – 6 for new exhibits, presentations, food, and entertainment. See our website for days, times, and locations of events at the Freighthouse and elsewhere: ccrrf.com/schedule.html

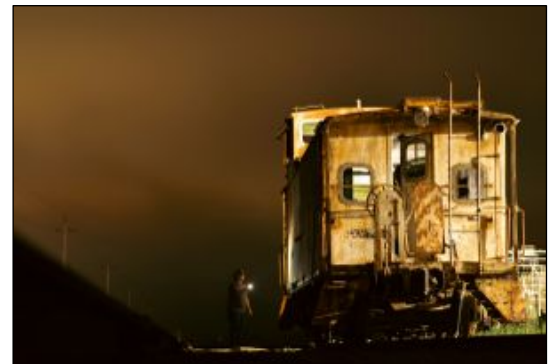


CCRRF photo contest

Again this year there will be recognition and prizes for winning entrants. The subject must involve railroads on the Central Coast (San Luis Obispo County and northern Santa Barbara County).

Entrants may submit up to three of their own photos, **by September 15 at 5:00 pm**. Submission is by one email for each photo to Photo@slorm.com. This year there will be a separate category for photos of model railroads, which may be located anywhere but must have a Central Coast subject. Prize amounts and all rules are at: slorm.com/2024-Photo-Contest.html.

Below, Nathan Campbell's first-place entry in the 2023 CCRRF photo contest.



1870

Pacific Coast Rwy predecessors form

1880

SP reaches northern SLO County

1890

SP completes line SF to SLO

1900

SP Coast Route open to Los Angeles

1910

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

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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. We also have an eBay site for a wider range of items.

Timetable

Board of Directors meetings are scheduled for Sept. 10, Oct. 8, and Nov. 12, 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.

Become a member

Membership provides opportunities for anyone interested in today's railroads, railroad history, train travel, artifact restoration, or model railroading. Membership benefits include free Museum admission and a 10% Museum Store discount.

Annual dues: Individual \$36; Family \$60; Sustaining \$100. Life member single payment: under 62 \$1,000, 62 and over \$600. Junior memberships (ages 12-18) for model railroaders are available; contact 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: click [Membership](#) and use PayPal.

Just passing through

In June Amtrak's *Coast Starlight* trailed six unoccupied, single-level cars and two locomotive bodies without engines that had been converted to control cars (below). Christian Schultz recorded the move north of San Luis Obispo.



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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 expertise, materials, and funds are greatly appreciated. In this edition we recognize the following for their support.

Overlooked for our Summer edition: **Specialty Construction, Inc.**, of San Luis Obispo, which provided equipment used to prepare exhibit sites.



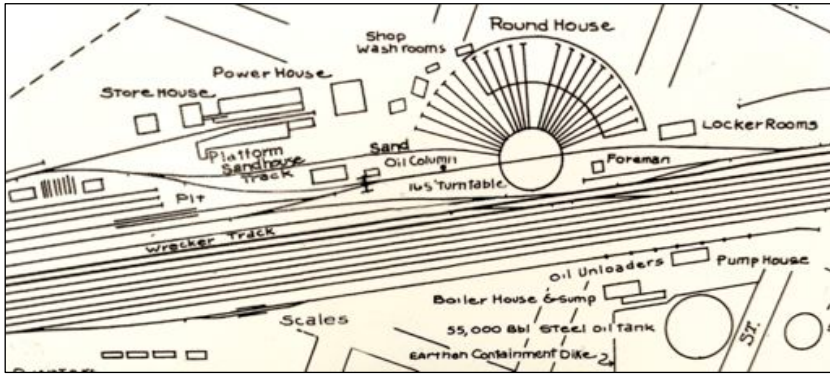
Impressive tool collection and a moon shot, on page 5.

Admission, membership dues are increasing

Our admission prices and member dues are increasing to help cover operating costs such as electricity, water, telecommunications, and insurance. The increases are needed despite measures to improve efficiency. Starting October 1, adult admission will be \$6; ages 4 – 15 will be \$4. Children age 3 and under remain free, as do museum members. Starting January 1, 2025, annual membership dues will be \$40 for individuals and \$65 for families.

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Modeling SP's Engine Facilities at SLO

by Andrew Merriam, Model Railroad Superintendent

One of the most interesting workplaces in San Luis Obispo in the 1950s contained the roundhouse and service facilities of the Southern Pacific Railroad: huge steam engines, rumbling diesels, big machinery, movement, noise, hot steam and oil smells, hazards, oversize tools, stacks of strange metal parts and supplies. At the time, many school kids had a parent working there. In a town of about 14,200 population and maybe 3,000 employed adults, about 600 had jobs related to the railroad. They included division management, train crews, station personnel, freight handlers, ticket agents, watch inspectors, and even medical staff and police.

Among these were 44 employed in maintaining the locomotive fleet and making repairs to the rolling stock, making sure that freight and passengers were moved up Cuesta pass to San Francisco and south along the coast to Los Angeles.

Busy volunteers and contractors



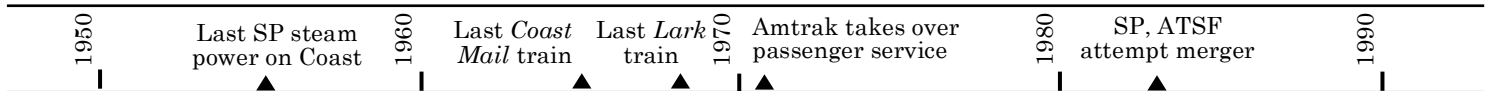
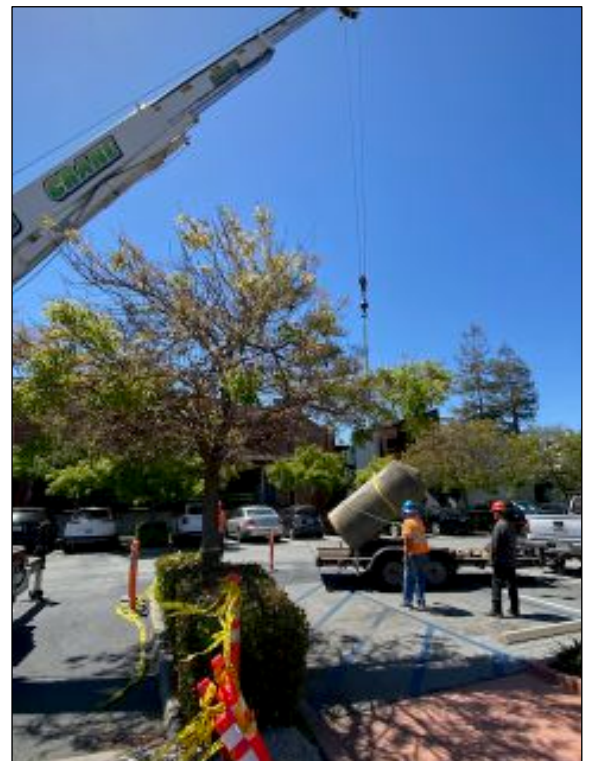
During spring and summer Museum volunteers and contractors prepared, relocated, and installed several large items from Emily Street Yard. Above left, Dennis with Louie's Crane Service (note his helper seated in the cab); above center, Ken Bennett (blue shirt) and Mike Burrell paint a signal mast; right, the concrete phone booth is craned into position. Left and right photos by Mike Burrell, center photo by Brad LaRose.

The average person didn't have access to this area. It is the happy task of the Central Coast Model Railroad (CCMR) to bring this scene to life for those viewing the area today in 1/87th proportion (referred to as HO scale).

At top left is a map of the engine service area including the turntable. On it, locomotives could be reversed, to face in the proper direction of travel designated for the train. The cab-forward locomotives were too long to fit on the turntable and had to be turned on a "Y" track a quarter mile to the east [*Coast Mail* Summer 2022]. The area was first developed in the 1890s. Longer and heavier locomotives required the service area to be changed and extended several times. The map shows part of the area about 1953, and was drawn by railroad author John Signor based on Southern Pacific documents.

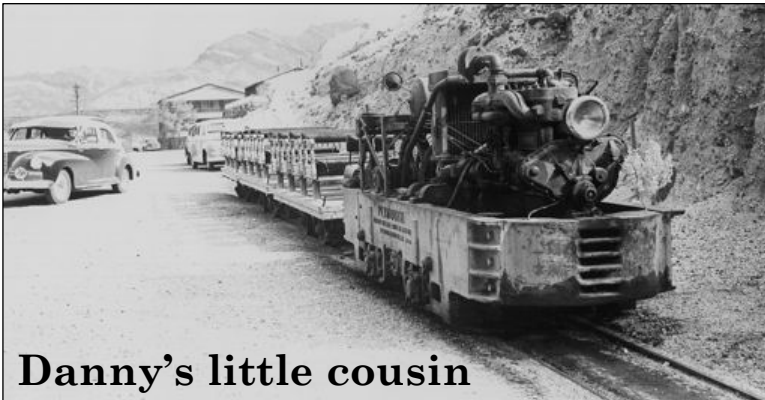
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Below, the oil column as photographed by Alden Armstrong about 1953.





For the Museum’s weed control efforts, target number one is puncture vine (*T. terrestris*), bane of pets, walkers, and cyclists. It’s followed closely by tumbleweed (*S. tragus*), yellow star thistle (*C. solstitialis*), burr clover (*M. polymorpha*), and foxtails (*Setaria sp.*). In May, some passersby agreed that this lupine (*L. arboreus*?) in our display track, having no sharp bits, should be allowed to remain until it was about to shed seeds.



Danny’s little cousin

The company that built the Museum’s Plymouth switcher, former Quartermaster Corps No. 2038 (also known as Danny the Diesel Locomotive), specialized in small locomotives for industrial and mining operations. Above we see Danny’s little cousin, apparently doing tourist duty, on the “B G Railroad” at Ryan, California in 1948. The “Baby Gauge” was a two-foot gauge operation hauling borax from a nearby mine to the town of Ryan in Death Valley. From there, the Death Valley Railroad hauled it to a connection with the Tonopah & Tidewater RR. The 6-ton, gasoline-powered locomotive was built in 1919. It had a 50 hp, four-cylinder engine, friction-wheel transmission, and chain drive

The photo above is from the collection of Fred Hust, and was probably taken by him. It came to the Museum as a donation with many other photos, some of which were relevant to the Museum’s mission. Photos that didn’t fit our mission were forwarded to other nonprofit rail heritage organizations.

Modeling SP’s SLO Engine Facilities

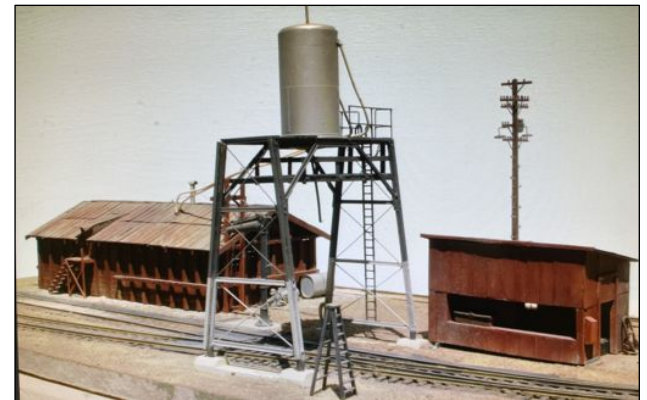
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The device dispensing fuel oil shown on page 3 was supplied by huge tanks on high ground on the opposite side of the tracks.

Locomotives carried sand to improve traction on slippery rails. Sand was originally dried and stored in a wood structure, the sand house, and handed up in buckets. In 1943 that process was replaced by a tough, flexible pipe that allowed sand to be air-driven up into a tank, from which it flowed down a tube to the locomotives. The *Winter Coast Mail* will include more on the sand house and its model representation, as well as the roundhouse itself.

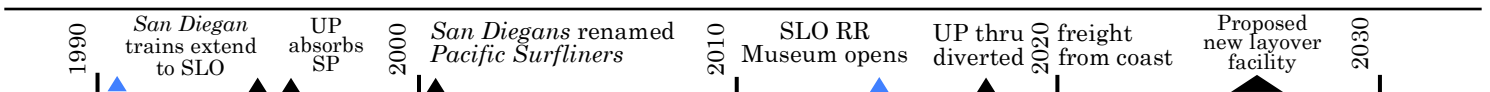


Above, a GS-4 type locomotive moves from the sand tower toward the turntable in this 1954 view by Rod Crossley. Below, Andrew Merriam’s photo shows a model of the facility as built from repurposed rails due to wartime steel shortages.

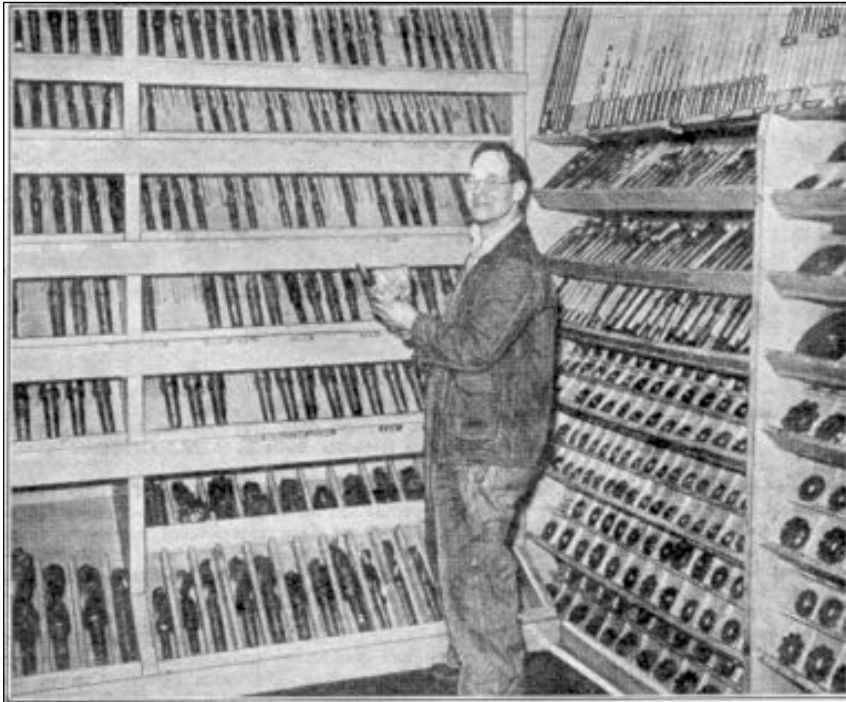


A simple timeline

The timeline at the bottom of pages 1 through 4 shows some of the major events that have shaped railroad heritage on the Central Coast. The blue marker at 1991 represents founding of the organization that became the San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum. Join us as we see what comes next.



Not on the Central Coast



*“A drill bit as big as your wrist? Right here.” Thanks to the November 1941 edition of **Railroads Magazine** we have this view of some of the roughly 2,000 tools neatly stored in Southern Pacific’s tool room in Ogden, Utah. According to the original caption, machinist Sam Whetton (pictured) could find exactly what he needed thanks to the regular attendant Mr. Peterson.*

Next time you’re at the Museum have a look at our more modest collection of tools from the San Luis Obispo roundhouse and other sources (below). We have a pipe wrench that’s taller and heavier than many of our young visitors. With tools on this scale, simply moving them around was a safety concern. And no thank you to the apprentice who over-tightened that connection and set up the next worker for frustration.



So far from the Central Coast



Above, a full moon appears through a tower of Stenner Canyon trestle in Fall 2015. Imagine the bridge’s mid-1890s builders hearing of plans to build a moon railway.

In March **Railway Gazette International** reported that the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency commissioned Northrup-Grumman to develop conceptual plans for a rail system to move resources, supplies, and people on the moon. The work will explore how to build, operate, and maintain the railway using robots.

The rail transportation effort is part of a broader scheme to eventually establish lunar infrastructure usable by government and commercial entities.

Terrestrial railways help reach space. Below, rocket booster segments on Norfolk Southern Railway being moved from Utah to Florida in 2020.



Phil Maton photo



Classy visitor to San Luis Obispo

In June Matthew Robinson caught former Santa Fe No. 33 at SLO on the end of the Coast Starlight. The 1923-built private car, now named Redwood Empire, sports Northern Pacific two-tone green, while lettered for Southern Pacific subsidiary Northwestern Pacific –no relation to the Northern Pacific. Beautiful but confusing.