



Coast Mail

News from the San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum



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Important SLO City Council Meeting March 3rd

On November 5 a delegation from the Museum (Brad LaRose, Dave Rohr, Agatha Reardon, and Arnold Jonas) attended a meeting of the San Luis Obispo City Human Relations Commission to lobby for another Community Development Block Grant for the freight house. After a lengthy discussion the Commission voted to recommend to the City Council that the Museum receive \$100,000 proposed for sidewalk and handicapped ramp installations.

The commission concluded that substantial amounts have been invested in the freight house project in recent years, with many dollars still to be utilized; that the freight house is a significant community resource

that is close to being ready for use: unless the project is completed, previous City investment will languish and the building will be in danger of damage and vandalism. The Commission specified that the money is to be used for the exterior handicapped ramp and platform railing to facilitate building access. The matter will come before the City Council at their **March 3, 2009** meeting for final action. It is important that all museum members show support for approval through e-mails, letters and other communication to city staff and the City Council.

Attendance at the meeting by a significant numbers of supporters will also be critical. This may be one of the

few opportunities in the foreseeable future for the project to obtain additional funding to put it within reach of completion. If you plan to go to the Council meeting, go to www.slcity.org and click on *agendas* to be sure that the date hasn't changed.

In a related matter, City staff has given the green light for the Museum to perform volunteer work on the freight house. Alpha Fire Sprinkler, owned by SLORRM Board Member Frank Rheinisch, will be installing fire sprinkler and security systems in the building as a donation. The Museum will pick up the cost of permit fees. Work is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2009.

Reported by Arnold Jonas

Museum is Making Tracks

Great progress has been made on the construction of the display track in front of the 1894 Southern Pacific Railroad Freight House. Track has passed the platform and has reached the sidewalk north of the Freight House. On December 6, 2008, work began at 9:00 a.m., with a crew of volunteers consisting of: **Arnold Jonas, John Turrill, Aron Kahn, Brad LaRose, Karl Hovanitz, Ted Van Claveren and Bill Rust.**

The crew spiked down half of a length of rail, then moved 2 more pieces of rail into place and spiked them down. Work goes much quicker with a crew the size of this one. There was a job for each volunteer. This was the second time the electric spike hammer was used to drive the spikes into the ties. This has greatly reduced the labor and has increased the speed. Brad LaRose has fabricated a sleeve-like attachment for the jack hammer so that it can be used to drive the spikes. With help from *Phil Reader, Chief Mechanical Officer of the Pacific Coast Railroad*, a recent alteration to the sleeve was made which increases the speed of spiking.



Brad "John Henry" LaRose drives spikes while Ted "Gandy Dancer" Van Klavern levels the rail on the display track in front of the Museum building.

The museum is discussing the possibility of completing this track construction before the **Southern Pacific Railroad Historical and Technical Society** has their *2009 Conference* in the City of San Luis Obispo.

This will only be possible if more members to show up for the track work days. These are held on the first Saturday of each month from 9:00 a.m.

until 1:00 p.m. Now that we have the electric spike driver, none of the jobs require hard work. A push car is used on the track to move rail.

Please come out and help YOUR MUSEUM. While we work, we talk about trains. What can be better than that. Hope to see you on the next Track Work Day.

Reported by Brad LaRose



Mission Statement

The San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum, founded as a non-profit, public benefit educational museum, will preserve the railroad history of California and the Central Coast by collecting, restoring, displaying and operating historic railroad equipment.

SAN LUIS OBISPO RAILROAD MUSEUM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Brad LaRose *President*
 Karl Hovanitz *Vice President*
 Aron Kahn *Secretary*
 David Rohr *Treasurer*
 Bill Pyper *Newsletter Editor*
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 e-mail: info@slorm.com
 web site: www.slorm.com
 Mail to: P.O. Box 13260
 San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

TIMETABLE

The following is a list of future meetings of the San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum. Business meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month at the Quality Suites Hotel, 1631 Monterey Street, San Luis Obispo. They begin at 6:00 p.m.

The Program Meeting locations and times will be announced in advance. All meetings are open to the public.

January 13, 2009 *Business Meeting*
 February 10 *Business Meeting*
 March 10 *Business Meeting*
 April 14 *Business Meeting*
**May 9th *Pacific Coast
 Railroad Roundup***

BY-LAWS AVAILABLE

Every member in good standing is entitled to have a copy of the By-laws. In the interest of economy, we have not automatically distributed them to all members. To get a copy, send a #10, self addressed, stamped, envelope to SLORRM, Post Office Box 13260, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406.

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Railroad Square Restoration Underway

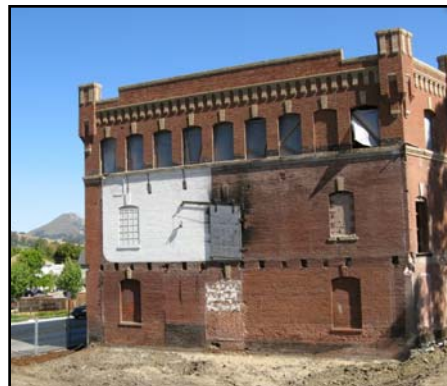
Refurbished building to be known as "Depot Square"

Restoration of the former Railroad Square building has begun. Several years ago, a fire gutted the building. Fortunately, the exterior walls and floors were saved. Building owners have decided to move forward and restore the building, along with the development of other property around the building.

They have changed the building project name to *Depot Square*. The owners are very interested in preserving the historic character of the building while still making it a viable business enterprise.

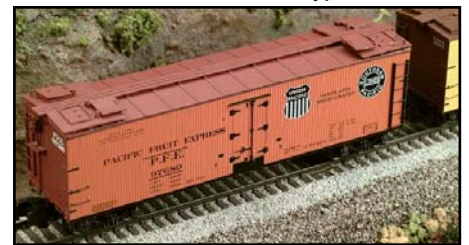


Brad LaRose, SLORRM president, has been working with *Depot Square* architect **George Garcia**, to locate a suitable railroad freight car to display on the rebuilt spur track. Of the many types of railroad cars which would be appropriate for this location, an ice refrigerator car, formerly owned by the **Pacific Fruit Express Company**, would be most appropriate. Brad is currently looking all over California, trying to find an available candidate. Since PFE, a company equally owned by both *Southern Pacific* and *Union Pacific Railroads*, has been out of business for many years, finding a "reefer" in good condition, is difficult.



This building is located directly across the Amtrak parking lot from the *San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum*, the historic 1894 Southern Pacific Railroad freight house. The *Depot Square* construction was originally a grocery warehouse. Until the current restoration work, a disconnected spur track was next to the building's loading platform. The spur track has been removed for the restoration work, and will be rebuilt in its original location as work on the building progresses.

Picture below is a model of type desired.



Western Pacific RR version of PFE reefer.



When an appropriate refrigerator car is located, purchased, restored and placed onto display, it will be an excellent addition to the *Railroad Historic District*, and a great display for Museum guests to observe and learn from. The Museum sincerely appreciates that the owners of the *Depot Square* building are preserving and restoring the history of our city and the railroads that operated here.

Renewals Bonnie Adams, Howard Amborn, Dennis Cementina, Pierre Rademaker, Tom Peterson, Jack Cashin, Karl Hovanitz, Jacqueline Johnson, Joe Burns, Steve Mott, Glen Matteson, Richard Dickey, Charles Dockstader, Thomas Ennis, Willie Chambers, Doug Gerard and Kent Kenney have all renewed their membership since the last Coast Mail was published.

Wendy and Charlie Knight, Dwight and Joyce Peterson, Frank and Diane Rheinisch, Paul Deiss, Harry and Mary Harlow, Beverly Hardy and Jon Paul and Jenny Curzan have renewed their family memberships.

Henry Rible and James Holmes have renewed as Sustaining Members.

Life Members Loren and Bernice Nicholson have become a Life Members of the San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum.

If you're not a member, please join. Your support is needed. Single members pay \$36 per year. A family can join for \$60 annually, and a sustaining member pays \$100 per year. Mail to SLORRM, P. O. Box 13260, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406 or e-mail to info@slorrm.com for an application. See below for information about Life Memberships.

Become a Life Member

Membership in SLORRM provides an outlet for any person interested in railroad history, train travel, railroad oriented entertainment and the value of railroading to the community.

Membership is especially designed for those who love trains and wish to educate others, young and old, and who share the dream of building the San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum in the 1894 SP Freight House, at the San Luis Obispo railroad station.

Life Memberships: receive a special laminated membership card, embroidered patch, enameled pin, the Coast Mail newsletter, and have voting rights for one person for life. *Use current age to calculate amount due.*

0-17 years \$1200 or 5 payments of \$280
 18-39 \$900 or 5 payments of \$220
 40-61 \$600 or 5 payments of \$160
 62 and older \$300 or 5 payments of \$100

Santa Claus Train



The Santa Maria Valley Railroad ran four Santa Claus Train specials on Saturday, December 6, 2008. Children of all ages boarded the 1926 Pullman Cafe Observation Car La Condesa at the Betteravia Industrial Park, home of the Santa Maria Valley Railroad for a four-mile trip to the Guadalupe Interchange where Santa Claus came in from the North Pole. Santa visited with all of the excursion guests on the ride back and gave out candy canes. Excursion guests were treated to hot cocoa, lemonade, and cookies.

Volunteers assisted with all phases of operations. Thank you to Dale Blakey, Ernie Blakey, Harry Harlow, Mary Harlow, Cathy Larsen, Dini O'Roark, Kevin O'Roark, Ginny Orcutt-Clenard, Mike Orcutt-Clenard, Walt Figaro, Nathan Paul, Dave Rohr, Gary See, and Gary Van Aken. Paul Deis did a terrific job of arranging to bring Santa Claus from the North Pole. From the SMVRR Jim McIntire served as engineer and Rafael Sanchez as conductor along with Leah Figaro and Rob Himoto.



Mark Nygaard and his family attended our last Bitter Creek Western Railroad fundraiser. Mark bought 10 raffle tickets and is the proud winner of a limited edition print by Museum member and renowned railroad artist, Rod Aszman. Rod donated a print depicting a meet between an SP Daylight train and an SP Black Widow freight train on the Coast Line. Mark's local railroading claim-to-fame is that he is on the Huell Howser TV show episode featuring the Cuesta Grade. More of Rod's artwork can be seen on his website: www.rodaszman.com.

Company Store



SLORRM has a variety of items for sale to raise money for the Museum. All the goods listed below are available for purchase at any time. To order, send a check to SLORRM, P.O. Box 13260, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406. Local orders will be delivered. Outside of SLO County please include \$8.50 for shipping and handling.

T-Shirts \$17⁰⁰ Adult sizes S, M, L, XL, XXL, Childrens' S, M, L.

Baseball Hats \$20⁰⁰ Adjustable

Embroidered Patch \$5⁰⁰

Enameled Pin \$5⁰⁰

12 oz. Coffee Mugs \$10⁰⁰

Engineers Hat w/button ... \$8⁰⁰

Belt Buckle \$25⁰⁰

VIDEOS and DVDs \$20⁰⁰

Charles Smiley Presents:
 Southern Pacific Scrapbook,
 SP Vintage West,
 SP When the Empire was Intact,
 Electric Rails of Utah.

CMC Track, Phase II

The California Men's Colony state prison, located two miles north of San Luis Obispo, on State Highway 1, was built on part of the existing California National Guard Camp San Luis Obispo. A track leaving the Southern Pacific Railroad coast line at Goldtree, near Stenner Creek Trestle, entered the camp to transport supplies and troops to and from the camp. This track left the main line, entered a "cut" area, curved several times and after about two miles, ended at warehouses in the center of the camp. Approximately one mile of the track eventually became part of CMC. The National Guard has removed all of the track on the camp and some of the track on CMC property.

On October 24, 2008, **Brad LaRose** met with personnel at the CMC prison. Brad delivered to the **Community Work Crew** several track tools (claw bars and joint bar bolt wrenches). The crew will use these tools to disassemble the track for its removal to the Emily Street storage yard and display track areas in San Luis Obispo.

More Bernice Jackson Photos Used

Several years ago I posted some pictures from the Museum's Bernice Jackson photo collection on the **Train Orders** website. The photographs are from a railfan trip in June 1951, from Chico to Stirling City, CA. Bob Colby of the *Stirling City Historical Society* in Butte County, asked if they could use some of the pictures for a slide show about the Butte County Railroad Line that they were going to publish. The Board agreed and I scanned the photos and sent them to Bob. Last week I received as copy of the DVD. It contains many old pictures from Butte County's logging days as well as many fan trip pictures. Below are some excerpts from the jacket.

The Diamond Match Company came to Northern California in the early 1900s to harvest the timber. It built the Butte County Railroad (BCRR) to haul lumber from its new sawmill in Stirling City down the ridge to a match factory and lumber finishing plant at Barber (south Chico). In 1903 the line was sold to Southern Pacific Railroad, but was operated by Diamond until 1916 when it officially became the Stirling City Branch of Southern Pacific. In 1964-74 a stud mill operated on the old mill site in Stirling City. These studs were the last lumber hauled down the ridge on the BCRR.

Of the approximately one-half mile of track that was donated to SLORRM, 850' was removed in Phase I of this project. This was the center portion of the track in the main CMC complex and its removal allowed the expansion of an employee parking lot.

Phase II includes track not removed on each end. This track is located in the eastern "cut" area and on the western main entrance from Highway 1 area. Total track length is about 1,350 feet. All rail, track hardware, ties and rock ballast is to be donated to the museum. The museum still has 4 piles of ballast to remove from Phase I.

Due to state budget cuts, the inmate crew has been reduced from 14 to 7 men. The crew has other duties that have priority and will remove the track as they have time. On Wednesday, October 28, 2008, Brad made a brief visit to the main entrance track area and noted that the inmate work crew had already cut weeds off of the track. Hopefully, the track will all be ready for Museum pick-up prior to the Winter rains.



Caboose Moved (again)

On Wednesday, December 3, 2008, SLORRM directors Arnold Jones, Karl Hovanitz and Brad LaRose met at the caboose, located on a spur track at the end of Industrial Way, in San Luis Obispo. The museum was notified by the Zoo Med Company, owner of the spur track, of their intentions to remove the track from their property and place a chain link fence across the roadbed. The caboose needed to be moved to the front part of the spur that is will be left in place.

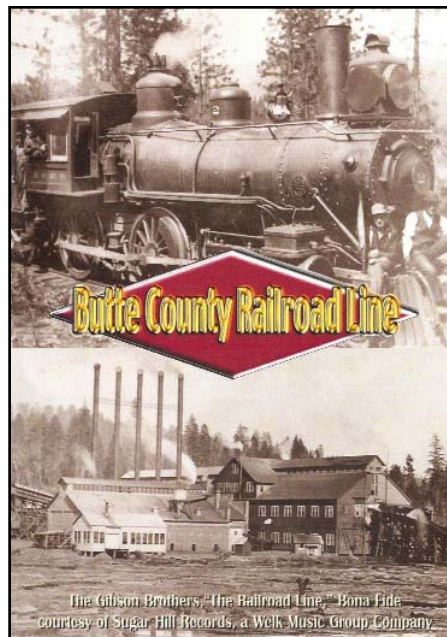
As in the past when caboose #1886 needed to be moved, Karl drove his Chevy Suburban 4x4 to track side and tied onto the caboose with a long tow strap. Arnold and Brad released the hand brakes as Karl applied power. Having been built with roller bearings and being in good operating shape, the Lompoc Flyer (so named from its days working the Lompoc Branch off the SP Coast Line) moved up the grade of the spur very easily.

Arnold rode the caboose the entire trip, which probably totaled 200'. Brad was track side giving signals to Karl. The caboose was stopped on the spur behind the Graduate Restaurant, approximately 100' from the switch to the Union Pacific main line. Brad and Arnold set the hand brakes and Brad applied chocks to the wheels.

Arnold's exciting ride of 200' at about 4 miles per hour, lasting maybe a minute, is now completed and the caboose is positioned for its next adventure. Discussions have been held to determine if the caboose will be moved to the museum display track near the Freight house, or possibly moved to the Santa Maria Valley Railroad for operation on charter trains. Restoration needs to take place, repainting inside and out.

The Zoo Med Company has offered the museum the track that has been removed from the spur. Plans have not been finalized as to how or when it will be moved. The photograph, above shows the caboose in its new location.

Photo and report by Brad LaRose



In 1976 an effort was made to make the rail line a tourist attraction. This failed and the rails were removed in 1979. All that remains of the old BCRR are fond memories.

Copies of the DVD can be purchased for \$10 plus shipping from the Stirling City Historical Society, P. O. Box 6, Stirling City, CA 95978 or www.stirlingcity.info.

Reported by Bill Pyper