



Coast Mail

News from the San Luis Obispo
Railroad Museum

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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.



SPRR publication image

Rail shipments of biblical proportions were needed to re-create ancient Egypt on the Central Coast.

Southern Pacific helped deliver the Ten Commandments

In November 1923 audiences were wowed by producer Cecil B. DeMille's silent movie *The Ten Commandments*. The wow factor was created by a cast of thousands and massive sets intended to convey the grandeur of ancient Egypt, in the broad sand dunes of Guadalupe, California.

According to the Southern Pacific employee newsletter from December of that year, "Twenty-five hundred people and three thousand animals, with food and equipment, were transported two hundred miles absolutely on schedule with no friction of any sort. John Hanson, agent at Guadalupe, found his business nearly twenty-five times greater [than usual, for the month of filming]." Operators E. S. Hawkins and Roy Burnham, clerk D. J. Hallmeyer, and warehouseman J. F. Calabro gave up their time off to be available 24 hours a day, including Sundays, to handle the traffic.

According to the article, expenses ran from two to four thousand dollars* per hour, so delays were costly. The set used 550,000 (presumably, board-) feet of lumber, while wranglers managed "scores [or] hundreds of horses ... sheep and cattle." Western Union telegraph service, co-located with the railroad, "grew from a scattered handful of messages to upwards of nearly a thousand every fortnight [two weeks]."

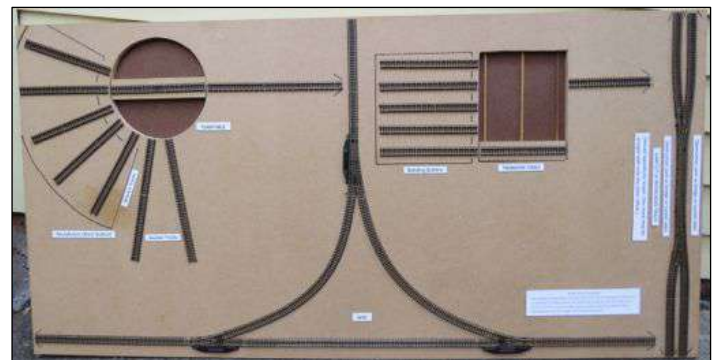
*Four thousand 1923 dollars would be worth about \$67,000 in 2022. Coincidentally, the same page of the SP newsletter reported that company employees had submitted 105 papers out of 2,021 received nationwide in a Railway Fuel Conservation contest with cash prizes.

Central Coast RR Festival

Join us Friday, Saturday, and Sunday October 7 - 9, for our major annual event. The latest schedule can be found at www.ccrf.com. Plans include pre-ordered barbecue dinners, a silent auction, swap meet, new model displays, new exhibits, and display of a Santa Maria Valley Railroad hi-rail truck. Also new this year: our links to Cal Poly.



Above, for those who appreciate sewing and trains, a quilt to be offered via silent auction. Below, for those unsure of the difference between a turntable and a transfer table, a teaching aid, which also shows a wye and a gantlet track.



Our Mission

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

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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.

At www.slorrm.com click on Company Store.

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Timetable

Board of Directors meetings are scheduled for September 13, October 11, and November 8, 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.

Parlor Car Chats Online

Jamie Foster hosts:
slorrm.com/parlor-car-chats.html



Museum member's excellent adventure

In May Museum member Tom Cooper rode a private car attached to Amtrak's *Coast Starlight* to Seattle, shown above at San Luis Obispo. Among sights along the way, Tom photographed the vehicle below, used by railroad construction and maintenance contractor Herzog to move workers and tools along spread-out job sites.
 Two photos by Tom Cooper



More Coast Mail online

Nonstop *Daylight*, Museum's jib crane, East Coast transplant, lost lizard, photo of taking a photo.

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.

Good depot news

See the next *Coast Mail* for progress on refurbishing the San Luis Obispo depot.

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Brad LaRose photos

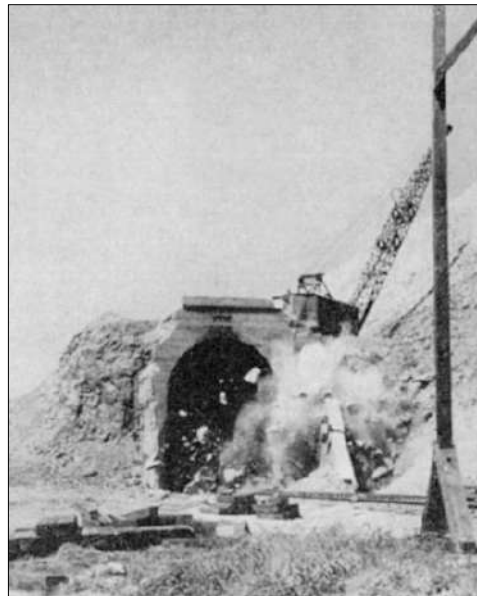


Restoration progress

Restoration & Equipment leader Brad LaRose and his work crew, which varies by date, continue to make progress on the Museum’s 1920s, outside-braced boxcar. It’s to be the home of the *Southern Pacific Railroad Theater – Featuring the People of the S.P.* In August, Brad, Dan Manion, and Dave Rohr worked with Dennis from Louie’s Crane Service to remove the car’s large, heavy rolling doors (above). Removing the doors made them accessible for repair. Oceano-based Louie donated his services, especially helpful for this ambitious project.

Museum volunteer Bob Wilson built four ten-foot-long sawhorses to hold the doors at a convenient working height. A generous donation from the San Luis Obispo Elks Club will help pay for specialty metal work needed to make the doors secure. If all goes well, the boxcar may be moved from the Museum’s Emily Street Yard to the display track in time for the Central Coast Railroad Festival.

If you have ridden an Amtrak Surfliner between San Luis Obispo and Goleta or points south, you probably didn’t experience the tunnel at Sudden... because it’s no longer there. Built about 1899, it was removed in 1956, increasing clearances and avoiding geologic stability problems. Both photos Southern Pacific



Suddenly, one summer

From the August 1923 SP *Bulletin* we learn that conductor S. P. Sutton, brakemen B. J. Lockliter and B. J. Culp, and fireman J. C. Gillum helped the engineer of a disabled locomotive at Sudden, avoiding the need to send a relief locomotive and crew. Otherwise, their train would not have arrived at their terminal within the hours-of-service law.

Before 1907 there was no limit on the length of time a train crew could work. The first limit was 16 hours, after which a minimum rest interval was required. The duration limit changed to 14 hours in 1969 and to 12 hours in 1976.

Sudden was the name of a siding on the coast about 65 rail miles south of San Luis Obispo. A nearby tunnel 811 feet long was daylighted (opened to the sky) in 1956 (at left).



Brad LaRose photo

We have new people

Our new people are very patient. They will listen to reminiscences about train trips long ago and to all our visitors' questions. But they may be short on answers. They are mannequins.

Museum board member Ted VanKlaveren and his son Mark arranged to acquire and transport 11 mannequins that had been displayed at a wax museum in Monterey. Howard Amborn donated use of his truck and its fuel, while John Daniels of Daniels Woodland in Paso Robles lent his enclosed trailer. Gary see also helped with the move.

If you haven't already, come by and introduce yourself to our less mobile railroad workers and their friends and family.



This often reproduced photo by R. P. Middlebrook shows PCRY No. 109 in 1928, near the Museum's present home. PCRY had several nearly identical 2-8-0, or Consolidation type, locomotives. Ironically, despite the Los Olivos fire, No. 109 retained a wooden cab while most PCRY locomotive cabs were replaced with steel. No. 109 was scrapped in 1935.

MASTER MECHANIC'S AFFIDAVIT

Schedule, for Loss on P.C. Ry. Locomotive Car No. 109 Class 10-24¹/₂ E.121
 Belonging to Pacific Coast Railway Company.
 State whether the car is owned or leased by R. R., or a Foreign Car Loco. owned by P.R.C.

Original Cost of the Car, \$ 8,350.00 F.O.B. cars at Philadelphia Pa.
 Date of Building of same January 1906
 Date of Re-Building April 1914

Itemized Cost Repairing Loco. Lettered Pacific Coast No. 109

UPPER WORKS as follows:

Material, Wood,	\$ 145.00	
" Iron and brass,	\$ 507.50	
Labor,	\$ 705.00	
Painting	\$ 107.50	\$ 1465.00
TRUCKS AND GEAR:		
Wheels,	\$	
Axles,	\$	
Springs,	\$	
Wood from Work,	\$ 30.00	
Labor Repairing,	\$ 50.00	\$ 80.00
Total Cost of Repairing,		\$ 1545.00
Less for Improved Condition of <u>Car, locomotive</u>		\$ 45.00
Net Loss,		\$ 1500.00

(If not repaired, fill blanks below.)

Present Cash Value of New _____ Car like No. _____ Lettered _____
 Body, Length _____ capacity _____ \$ _____
 Trucks, with _____ wheels _____ Transoms, \$ _____

SLORRM Archives No 1570.1

This 1914 affidavit recording damage and repair to Pacific Coast Railway locomotive No. 109 was attested to by Master Mechanic D. W. Lord, as witnessed by Notary Public Frances A. Gragg (or possibly Cragg) according to signatures farther down the document than shown above. The form, intended more for railcars involved in collisions and derailments, must have been in use nationwide. The back has a spreadsheet format, with cells to record for 26 railcars information such as type, size, materials, damage, and scrap value.

Bummer of a day in Los Olivos

Before substantial work was done on a steam locomotive, the fire was "dropped" and the whole works were allowed to cool. Dropping the fire typically involved positioning the locomotive with the firebox grate over a pit, yanking a lever, and letting the embers and ash fall in. Readers may recall a previous *Coast Mail* article that mentioned clinkers in the firebox of an oil-fueled locomotive, chunks that would seem to be limited to locomotives using coal.

Although the United States didn't formally enter World War I until April 1917, by late 1914 military build-up and support of nations that would become allies were underway. The Central Coast and its Pacific Coast Railway played a part by supporting the oil and agricultural industries. Hectic times may explain why on December 21, 1914, a worker at the Los Olivos roundhouse dropped the fire of locomotive No. 109 into a pit, realizing too late that there was still burning oil in the firebox.

The fire reached the parked locomotive, causing a net loss estimated to be \$1,500, on a locomotive that had cost \$8,350 eight years earlier. The repair work went a bit beyond bringing things back to pre-fire condition, resulting in a \$45 improvement.

We know these locomotive details thanks to the document donated last Fall by David Tateosian of Martinez, California.



Far from the Central Coast

It's time for a new feature. We'll look at railroad items from around the world that bring to mind scenes close to home.

Does the image above remind you of farms in the Edna Valley, or near Oceano as Union Pacific's Coast Line approaches the Nipomo Mesa? Could those be young bell pepper plants (mm) or broccoli (eh), with produce cartons in the distance?

Instead, they're concrete ties (called "sleepers" in much of the world where English is used), with bright green steel clips to hold rails. They're most likely laid out awaiting installation on the Etihad project, in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). UAE is a small, seaside country between Saudi Arabia and Oman, with big railway ambitions.

The photo above shows products of Vossloh, a company headquartered in Germany that supplies railway infrastructure worldwide. It comes from the *Railway Gazette International* website.

Recent history

Did three empty intermodal freight trains stop in San Luis Obispo on May 12, one with red cars, one with blue and brown, and one with yellow (photo at right)? What you see in front is the Museum's freshly primed former Southern Pacific flatcar, for our trailer-on-flat-car exhibit. The strings of cars on the more distant main track and siding came down Cuesta Grade as two parts. They were combined for a single move southward.

This arrangement was likely due to "Precision Scheduled Railroading" (PSR), where railroads run fewer, longer trains to reduce use of locomotives and crews. PSR has its critics, as service levels decline and traffic slows due to trains being too long for sidings. Initially PSR promised more predictable train crew work schedules and car delivery times.

Decades of details

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

H. Davis, Engineer, A. P. Constantine, Fireman, Santa Margarita, for responding promptly to short call in an emergency case. Helper on a first class train failed and in order to save delay to the train to be helped, necessary to start engine at once. Their action is commendable for getting started with engine immediately, thereby reducing delay to passenger train to the minimum.

Above, from June 1921: "Short call" meant the crew had been called to work before their typical rest period had ended. Starting a steam locomotive (getting up steam pressure) was more challenging than starting a diesel-electric locomotive.

Below, from January 1921: For couplers between cars to remain clasped, a thick steel pin in the knuckle (misspelled once in the article) must be in place. (Middle also misspelled; hard day in the office.) The drawbar is the part of a coupler that extends into a box attached to the car frame.

Bottom: August 1921. (Damage to original.)

W. Bullard, Santa Margarita.—For close attention to duty. While on siding waiting for train to pull by, noticed part of knuckle pin drop out of coupler on car near middle of train; notified conductor who stopped train and inspection revealed that very little of remaining portion of pin held knuckle in drawbar. His close attention no doubt averted a break-in-two.

H. L. Coffin, Brakeman, San Luis Obispo, for close attention to duty. While making inspection of train discovered cracked wheel under a freight car. Car cut out with a minimum delay; being careful in this instance resulted in avoiding a possible accident.



I did not know that

Or if I did, I had forgotten. Your editor was surprised to be reminded by the December 1927 *Southern Pacific Bulletin* that the *Daylight* passenger train of that era did not stop for passengers between Los Angeles and San Francisco –not at Glendale, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, or San Jose. It did stop for fuel and water at San Luis Obispo and Watsonville.

The streamlined, colorful *Daylight* introduced in 1937 (bottom image) did stop at those places. But it had a similar end-to-end running time thanks to the GS-series steam locomotives that led it. Diesels did not take over until the early 1950s.

"DAYLIGHT" IS LONGEST NON-STOP PASSENGER TRAIN

The longest non-stop distance covered by any train in regular passenger service in the world is claimed by the "Daylight," Southern Pacific's famous train for sight-seers between San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Two notable British non-stop trains operate from London to Newcastle, 268 miles, and from London to Carnforth, 236 miles. Another train is daily operated between London, England, and Glasgow, Scotland, without stop, the distance being about 400 miles.

The "Daylight," a Southern Pacific train especially equipped for tourist travel along the scenic coast line of California, running daily in each direction between San Francisco and Los Angeles, exceeds the performance of any of these trains, making the run of 471 miles without stopping for passengers.

The running time, twelve hours, is two hours shorter than that of any other train between the two cities. While the "Daylight" makes two stops for fuel and water, its performance is on the same basis as other famous non-stop trains on runs where the distance makes it impossible to carry sufficient fuel and water for the complete journey.



The Museum's jib crane

The *Summer Coast Mail* revealed the mystery jib crane located between the San Luis Obispo depot and the former Southern Pacific water tank. The Museum's collection includes a jib crane salvaged from the Pacific Coast Railway shops that were located next to what is now the intersection of Madonna Road, Higuera Street, and South Street. Above we see the boom, with the traveling pulley noted by an arrow. If you like to work with old metal, have we got a job for you! Restoration of other items has higher priority for our hard-working volunteers. But we hope someday to display this crane in its proper position, near the Freighthouse.



Catching up with our rolling docent host

A few years ago Bill Hatrick (at left above), owner of vintage rail cars sometimes attached to Amtrak's midday *Pacific Surfliner*, allowed a Museum docent to ride along between San Luis Obispo and Goleta or Santa Barbara. Riders on the "Central Coast Flyer" were introduced to the Museum and various aspects of Central Coast railroading and history. Amtrak's new private-car policy resulted in Mr. Hatrick having to move his operation east. There he developed a relationship with the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad. That tourist line worked for six years to restore the last steam locomotive built by Baldwin Locomotive Works, a large articulated (two-part) locomotive originally owned by the Chesapeake & Ohio.

Summer tours resumed

Near the end of July a summer day-camp group from Buellton visited the Museum. The 32 students ages 6 – 12 and five adults were able to see all the indoor and outdoor exhibits on a week-day, thanks to hosts Charlie Burns, Greg Jackson, Brad LaRose, Diane Marchetti, Glen Matteson, Tom Mitchell, Dave Rohr, and Ted Van Klaveren.

This was the first youth summer tour since operations were suspended due to the pandemic.

One of the most exciting parts of the tour: discovering a baby lizard trapped in the former Southern Pacific spittoon. How it got in there remains a mystery. It was released unharmed into the fine habitat that surrounds the Freight House, where hopefully it will grow big and strong from eating ants.



Buellton summer day campers wait to board La Cuesta. Some were disappointed that a train ride was not included. Museum hosts suggested a trip on Amtrak’s Surfliner, possibly from Surf to Santa Barbara and back.

The little lizard on the rail at left is not the one rescued from the spittoon, which was even smaller. The one pictured is sunning itself below the Plymouth locomotive sand tube. The spittoon is displayed in the freight agent’s office. Bottom left, Brad talks about the mine car while a visitor stretches to see the top.



A photo you probably haven’t seen

The inset photo below has appeared in several publications. It’s in the Museum’s “Coast Line Connections” exhibit. You probably haven’t seen the main photo, of a photographer and three Southern Pacific officials. The train was posed on horseshoe curve and Chorro siding, in promoting 1950s piggyback service (trailer on flat car). The museum has several photos connected with this event, thanks to a recent donation by Linda Neill, daughter-in-law of local Southern Pacific trainmaster C. H. Neill.

