



# Coast Mail

News from the San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum



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## Freighthouse Exterior Complete

### Museum initiates interior design and improvements

In the first week of March the City of San Luis Obispo achieved its goal of finishing the exterior of the Freighthouse. The handrails and access stairs and ramps are complete. Railroad Historic District emblems have been mounted on the gates. The view from the front porch is grand. With the exception of some minor repairs and clean up by the City, the building is now the Museum's to complete!

While readers have been privy to bits and pieces of our work effort via the Coast Mail over the past several years, a comprehensive statement of where the museum is seems in order.

- The exterior has been repaired and repainted.
- New foundations and earthquake stabilization have been provided.
- A new steel roof was installed.
- ADA access ramps, stairways and guardrails were constructed.
- Water, sewer, electrical and communication service are connected to the building.

To the interior, previous preparatory efforts by the museum include:

- New wood trusses to support the fire and electrical systems installed and meet current codes.
- Black insulation (to be invisible) was installed under the steel roof.
- Termite damage to historic walls was repaired and new framing was provided for the ceilings in the archive, storage and entry areas.
- The utility room was framed.
- A fire suppression system donated and installed by Alpha Fire Corp.

While we have had many surprises in completing the construction to this point, one unexpected one was the discovery of the footing system under the brick stem walls which support the loading platform and the wood structure of the Freighthouse itself. While excavating to install a water line for the fire riser on the west side of the building, the contractor hit what we thought was a concrete footing. When



attempting to chip out an opening for the line, the material barely responded to the jack hammer. On inspection, the resistant material turned out to be a large block of granite just below the brick area. Further review determined that granite blocks quarried from Bishop's Peak and brought to San Luis Obispo by the Pacific Railway were in common use as the footings in the late 19th century and the Freighthouse was no exception.

A nice touch was the use of some sixty railroad spike heads, cut off and welded to the top of the new railing at each post as an anti-skate boarding device. We call it discouraging vandalism with a railroad theme.

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Railroad Historic District signs decorate the gates on the Museum platform.

### April 14th

### Disney's Love of Trains Night



Michael Campbell, President of the Carolwood Pacific Society will do a multimedia presentation at Santa Margarita Ranch, titled *Disney's Love of Trains*. He will be speaking about the development of the Disney Railroad and Walt's love of trains.

There will be steam train rides in the Disney coaches starting at 4:00 p.m. Also beginning at 4:00 p.m., *Troubador Don Lampson* will perform railroad songs. The Campbell presentation will

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### The next Bitter Creek

fundraiser will be held on Sunday, April 1, 2012. Go to [www.slorm.com](http://www.slorm.com) to check the availability of tickets.



### 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

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## 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.

**April 1 . . . . Bitter Creek Festival**  
 April 10 . . . . . *Business Meeting*  
**April 14. Disney's Love of Trains**  
 May 8 . . . . . *Business Meeting*  
 June 12 . . . . . *Business Meeting*  
 July 10 . . . . . *Business Meeting*  
 August 14 . . . . . *Business Meeting*

### 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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## Become a 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 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 Freighthouse, at the San Luis Obispo railroad station.

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 93406-3260. Go to <http://www.slorrm.com> to download an application form.

**Life Members** receive an 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

**Family Life Members** receive two enameled pins, two embroidered patches, the Coast Mail newsletter, and voting rights for life for two people residing at the same address. *Use the age of youngest family member to calculate amount due.*

0-17 years of age . . . . . \$1800 or 5 payments of \$420  
 18-39 . . . . . \$1350 or 5 payments of \$330  
 40-61 . . . . . \$900 or 5 payments of \$240  
 62 and older . . . . . \$450 or 5 payments of \$150

If making payments the life membership card will be sent upon receipt of final payment. Until such time as the life membership is paid in full, the member will receive a yearly membership card. All payments made toward a life membership are non-refundable and failure to make a scheduled payment by the due date will result in forfeiture of all funds paid toward the life membership. Payment plans include yearly member dues.

## Company Store

The San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum has a variety of items for sale for your enjoyment and to raise money for the Museum. T-shirts in both adult and children sizes, baseball hats, belt buckles, coffee mugs, enamel pins, embroidered patches and engineer hats are all available by going to the Museum website, [www.slorrm.com](http://www.slorrm.com) and click on **Company Store**.

## New Members

The San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum welcomes Logan Bertolette and William Cooper as new members.

**Renewals** Warren Bebout, Manetta Bennett, Jack Cashin, Dennis Cementina, Tom Cooper, Thomas Ennis, Martin Gombert, Shirley Herbert, James Holmes, Dwight Hudson, Curt Johnson, Glen Matteson, John Miramon, Steve Mott, Beverly Murray, Henry Myers, Scott Overgaard, Mike Palmer, Paul Pedroni, Tom Peterson, Curtis Reinhardt, Patrick Sullivan and John Turrill have all renewed their membership in San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum.

Dwight Peterson has renewed as a Sustaining Member.

Howard and Sandy Amborn, Jon Paul and Jenny Curzan and Carl and Robin Dudley have renewed their Family Memberships in SLORRM.

## Life Members

Stanley Wilson has become a Life Member of SLORRM.

**Donations** Tom Cooper and Patrick Sullivan have made monetary donations to SLORRM.

## Renew your membership

The last line of your mailing address on the envelope states the current expiration date of your membership. Please check this date each time you receive a mailing from SLORRM. If the date is within a month or so of your receipt of the mailing, your remittance of the appropriate amount to renew your membership will be greatly appreciated. Any changes to your contact information should also be included. This will help assure that your membership is always current. Should your mailing address or e-mail address change, prompt submittal of updated information will help achieve this same goal. Thank you for your diligence and cooperation.

## Disney's Love of Trains

*Continued from Page 1*  
 begin at 6:00 p.m. and run until about 8:00 p.m. An additional hour of train rides will follow. Pomar Junction Winery and Ancient Peaks Winery will be offering complimentary wine tasting and sales of wine. Central Coast Brewing will sell beer and root beer by the glass or bottle. Hors d'oeuvres will be available. Admission is \$40 per person. Tickets can be ordered at [www.slorrm.com](http://www.slorrm.com). More information about the presentation can be had at [www.carolwood.com](http://www.carolwood.com).

# Boxcar 706

Last summer *Ted VanKlaveren* agreed to take on the daunting task of rehabilitating the #706 narrow gauge boxcar. This is needed so that it can be placed on track adjacent to the Freighthouse and used to house supplementary restrooms for the Museum to satisfy a City of San Luis Obispo occupancy requirement.

With the help of *Howard Amborn, Tom Cooper, Chris Hurd, Brad LaRose, John Marchetti, Glen Matteson, Tom Mitchell, Duane Powell, Gary See and Mark Van Klaveren*, Ted is turning a rotted out hulk into a fine specimen of narrow gauge rolling stock.

About 80% of the lower end wood had to be replaced due to termite damage and rot. The floor has been



*Ted VanKlaveren and Tom Cooper bend and cut new truss rods.*



*Howard Amborn, Brad LaRose and Gary See align new boards for Boxcar 706. Photo by Glen Matteson*

recovered with a layer of  $\frac{3}{8}$ " plywood under  $\frac{3}{4}$ " plywood. This was required because of previous repairs to the floor. All of the hardware has been

removed, sandblasted and repainted. Contact Ted at 805-461-1460, 805-904-2495 or e-mail, [Orangerail@aol.com](mailto:Orangerail@aol.com) if you would like to help.

## Museum interior design and improvements Continued from Page 1

All this building effort was made possible by the efforts of our volunteers and by donations from museum members and a generous grant from the *Hind Foundation*. While name dropping, I need to also recognize the efforts of *RK Builders, Thoma Electric and Evenson Plumbing*, as well as museum member *John Marchetti* for providing much of the day to day coordination of the construction effort.

A major accomplishment over the past 12 months has been the efforts of the building committee, (*Arnold Jonas, Aron Kahn, Brad LaRose, John Marchetti, Gary See and chaired by Andrew Merriam*) to design exhibits and define an interior layout for our museum. Meetings were typically held twice a month. *Dick Ross*, a museum exhibit designer, provided invaluable help pro-bono for refining display concepts and providing insight on how to implement the diverse series of artifacts and graphic material that the Museum has acquired into a comprehensive presentation for the public. *Aron Kahn*, architect, deserves special credit for consolidating this information into 26 sheets of construction documents. Consultants who also supported this effort include; *Ashley and Vance (structural engineers), Brummel, Myrick Associates (mechanical engineers) and Thoma Electric (electrical engineers)*. Without their creativity and donations of time and expertise we could not be where we are today.

The interior tenant improvement documents have been submitted to

the City of San Luis Obispo for plan check and are ready for permits. *RK Builders* has been selected by the Board of Directors to proceed with the next phase of construction which will get us into the building but not complete everything we want. This must await further fund raising efforts by the Museum.

So what may we expect from this effort? The plans for the museum's 5,000 square foot building call for a small multi use area, ADA accessible restrooms, archive, storage and an entry ticket/sales area at the north end for approximately 860 square feet. The main space comprising approximately 2700 square feet includes a general use area for mobile displays, and/or seating for approximately 32 people for meetings, lectures and movies. The remaining space in the main hall will be used for the display of artifacts, educational/interpretive displays, photographs and art work of the four main railroads that served San Luis Obispo County, including the Pacific Coast Railway, the Southern Pacific, Amtrak and the Union Pacific. The other 1500 square feet is for an HO scale model railroad illustrating the development of the Coast Line between Paso Robles and Guadalupe and a special HO<sub>N3</sub> display of operations at Avila Beach and the Port Harford Pier (A 13 foot long model).

The Museum has eleven pieces of rolling stock, an extensive collection of artifacts, and numerous documents and memorabilia; primarily from the Southern Pacific Railroad.

The Museum's future construction program for the Freight House is to:

1. Complete interior basics such as the floors, ADA access, carpentry and restrooms so that the public may safely enter the building and view our progress.
  2. Utilize the historic Pacific Coast Railway boxcar #706 as a supplemental restroom facility to meet occupancy codes while retaining as much of the original interior and exterior as is consistent with codes as an exhibit.
- Our goal is to complete these two tasks in time for the Central Coast Railroad Festival, to be held October 4th through the 8th of this year.
3. As funds become available, we will finish the interior walls and ceiling, install improved electrical fixtures and provide building heating.
  4. Simultaneously, construct museum artifact and interpretive displays and build the model railroad.

We have reached a threshold of accomplishment and we eagerly look forward to showing the results to museum members and the public. This is a consumation of the acquisition program, the planning and the volunteer efforts and contributions of so many people interested in the railroad history of our area. We look forward to greeting you later this year at our new museum at the historic Freighthouse.

Photos and report  
by Andrew Merriam

# Southern Pacific Sheffield Handcar Acquired by Museum



San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum's Southern Pacific Sheffield Handcar displayed while on loan to the Pioneer Museum in Paso Robles, California

This Sheffield Car Co. handcar was purchased by the Southern Pacific Railroad. Based on research dating the specific fabrication and casting of metal components on this car, it is estimated it was built some time after 1910. Southern Pacific began using a "Safety Orange" paint of their own specification in the late 1930's. During a complete restoration of the car in 2010 by Brad LaRose, it was discovered the original Sheffield factory paint was a bright Canary yellow. Traces of the Safety Orange were also found on all parts of the car except the gears and crank.

Therefore, it appears that the Southern Pacific Railroad owned the car at least by the late 1930's. SP rebuilt the car as needed when parts wore out or were damaged. The lever tower side boards are not original, and three of the wheels are not original and were installed by the railroad.

This handcar was found at the Southern Pacific Railroad station in Arcadia, California in 1952 and acquired by a private owner. That station was moved to the Griffith Park Travel Town museum in Los Angeles, California that year.

Brad LaRose purchased the handcar in 2009 and completed its restoration in 2010. The restoration was done to match the Southern Pacific Railroad "Rebuilt" appearance, thus the Safety Orange paint was used.

Restoration involved saving all of the original wood and all of the railroad replaced wood (56% of the car) and replacing all the inappropriate wood parts that



Kirsten Hind, San Luis Obispo City Councilmember John Ashbaugh, Greg Hind and Brad LaRose take the handcar for its initial run on the Museum Display Track, October 8, 2011.

had been added by the private owner. The deck and frame wood is white oak, the lever support assembly is beechwood. All of the metal parts except for missing nuts and bolts that had to be replaced are original.

The slab of concrete on the floor in front of the handcar in the picture above is a locomotive stop-block. (terminology?) It was used to indicate where the engineer was to stop the

locomotive so that the opening in the tender was in alignment with the water column spout. It has an arrow pattern on the top that points toward the track. Its origin is unknown possibly somewhere in San Luis Obispo County.

This handcar, along with the Museum's Sheffield Velocipede will make an excellent display of historic railroad equipment.

*Photos and report by Brad LaRose*

## A Brief History of Sheffield Handcars

George Sheffield lived on a farm near the Michigan Central Railroad tracks. Every morning and evening, he walked the track to and from his place of employment in Three Rivers, Michigan. In 1877, Sheffield had the idea to build a small car which could propel him over the tracks and save his walking many miles. He first built a small three-wheeled vehicle which he called a Velocipede. Later he invented the 4-wheel hand car.

Sheffield and his hand car had no right to use the railroad tracks, so he made his journey each day in darkness. One night as he was headed home from work he discovered a broken rail. By using a lantern to flag down a train, he prevented a certain disaster and saved many lives.

Although the railroad company did not like Sheffield using the tracks, it recognized his heroic act and permitted him to run his hand car between his farm and Three Rivers.

Shortly after this incident, the railroad asked Sheffield to build a hand car for their use. In 1879, he formed the Sheffield Velocipede Car Company. It later became the Sheffield Car Co.



Pictured above is the San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum's Sheffield Velocipede, which was restored by the late Phil Gould.

In 1888, Fairbanks-Morse bought the Sheffield Car Company and eventually eliminated the Sheffield name.

Four-wheel handcars were made into the early 1950's. They were designed to be operated by 2-4 men, and could carry an additional 2 passengers on the car sides. However, as early as 1896, Sheffield was selling cars with small gas engines (Motor Cars). This new invention would be the main item purchased by the railroads and it eliminated most all hand car sales after the 1940's.