



Coast Mail

News from the San Luis Obispo
Railroad Museum

Issue Number 61 – Fall 2017

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.

Railroad Festival

October 13 – 15: New exhibits, speakers, music, food, tours, swap meet, art, model railroad, passing trains...

www.crrf.com for details



Back To School

Starting September 2 the Museum will offer a series of weekly presentations on railway civil engineering, a much abbreviated version of a course to be offered next spring at Cal Poly. It will cover the history of railroad alignments and infrastructure, current approaches, relationships with various parties, and career possibilities, and will be free with Museum admission (details at slorrm.com).

Another Wine-rail Excursion Sold Out

The October 20 *Coast Starlight* trip to Paso Robles with evening return has sold out. Contact media@slorrm.com for availability of future trips.

Moving, Breathing, Lifting

On Train Day in May, area resident Richard Foge donated the plaque and small metal emblems shown below. His father Arthur, born in 1900 and a survivor of the big San Francisco earthquake, was hired by the Southern Pacific at age 17 and soon moved to San Luis Obispo. According to Richard, his father first worked as a brakeman. But one trip in a steam locomotive cab through the Cuesta Grade tunnels convinced him to change jobs. He became a station baggageman and, as shown by the plaque, worked 47 injury-free years. He retired in 1965.



Richard worked in a part of the transportation field that was growing at the time. He was a draftsman for Caltrans during much of the Highway 101 construction.



Focus on Artifacts

What happened to that Louisville Slugger?!



Nothing. It's not a baseball bat that's been whittled down. It's a 26-inch-long brake club. They must have been called clubs to distinguish them from brake *levers*, which were either part of the permanent brake mechanism under the car or a hand-gripped lever connected mechanically with the rigging. In the days before automatic air brakes, and even with them, freight car brakes could be applied (and released) by turning a large wheel. In the old days, the brake wheel was parallel with the ground and mounted on a shaft that extended up the end of the car past the roof. Brakemen operated them while standing on walkways on top of the cars. (We're focused on boxcars here; passenger cars, flat cars, hoppers, and tank cars had different arrangements.)

The next step in brake-wheel evolution was to mount them high on, and parallel with, the end of the car. There they could be reached from the roof by bending over, or from ladder rungs attached to the outside of the car's end wall. These days trainmen are discouraged from climbing on cars, and brake wheels generally must be mounted within reach of the ground.

However a brake wheel is positioned, sometimes added leverage helps the situation. Clubs provided that leverage, by being inserted through openings in the face of the wheel.

Louisville Slugger uses an oval emblem. This club was made by the O. P. Link Handle Company of Salem, Indiana, using "Split Young 2nd Gro[wth] Indiana Hickory," according to the worn text inside the diamond-shaped emblem. This club and another were donated in June 2016 by John Gard, who said they were used on the Southern Pacific Railroad. This one has "S P CO" and "LINK" impressed on the handle in blue.

Also, brakemen did and do carry them in case of confrontation by hostile trespassers, following advice once given to your reporter: "Dress neatly. Speak Politely. And carry a big stick."

Preparing For the Worst

In late 2016 and early 2017, the California Preservation Program provided training for Central Coast libraries and museums to avoid, prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters. Fire, flood, and earthquake were covered, as were the less dramatic but more common problems such as leaking roofs and plumbing. Key people from public and nonprofit organizations will be better equipped to help themselves and each other during an emergency. Farm Supply Company and P.G.&E. donated emergency supplies to keep on hand.

**Our Mission:
Preserving California's Central
Coast Railroad History**

The San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum is a non-profit educational institution. Founded to preserve and present California Central Coast railroad history by collecting, restoring, displaying, and operating relevant railroad artifacts, photographs, models, and documents, its goal is to facilitate a better understanding of railroads' impact on our area's social, cultural, and economic history.

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 San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE

The Museum's *Bylaws*, *Collections Policy*, *Strategic Plan*, and *Ethics Policy* are available via the website noted above.

Museum Store

To raise funds, the Museum offers several items for sale. T-shirts, baseball caps, belt buckles, mugs, enameled pins, embroidered patches, engineer hats, and videos are available through the Museum website www.slorrm.com. Click on **Company Store**.

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Become a member

Membership provides opportunities for anyone interested in today's railroads, railroad history, train travel, or model railroading to learn and experience more, and to share with others.

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 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*.

Renew your membership

All annual memberships expire **December 31**. You can renew online through the Museum's website (via Paypal) or checks may be mailed to the Museum. If renewing online you can provide updated contact information by phone message or email (contact listed at left).

TIMETABLE

These are the scheduled meetings of the Museum Board of Directors, held on the second Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m., at 1940 Santa Barbara Avenue, San Luis Obispo.

- September 12 – Board action meeting
- October 10 – Board action meeting
- November 14 – Board action meeting

For dates, times and locations of committee meetings, contact the Museum through the phone number or email at left.

A member passes

Life member Agatha Reardon passed away August 5. An aerospace worker, in retirement she volunteered with several community groups, including as a strong supporter during the Museum's early years. Her chocolate locomotives will be fondly remembered.

In the next Coast Mail

- The Camp San Luis branch
- Other branches and timetable fun
- Our biggest artifact

Also in this Issue

- Have I got a RR for you 3
- Mystery rails revealed 4
- Online:**
- [The Beet Belt Route](#) 5
- [The order of the day](#) 6
- [Port of Lompoc Railway?](#) 7
- [Tracks, but not railroads](#) 8
- [Hair care](#) 9
- [A cable car to the steers](#)..... 10

Movies ahead!



On October 28 at 4 pm the Museum will show the not really scary film "Midnight Limited," with a brief introduction to Pullman cars and railroad police. And in March, Ladies Afternoon will feature a short history of women in railroading followed by a collection of vintage films with lady heroes. Movies are free with Museum admission.

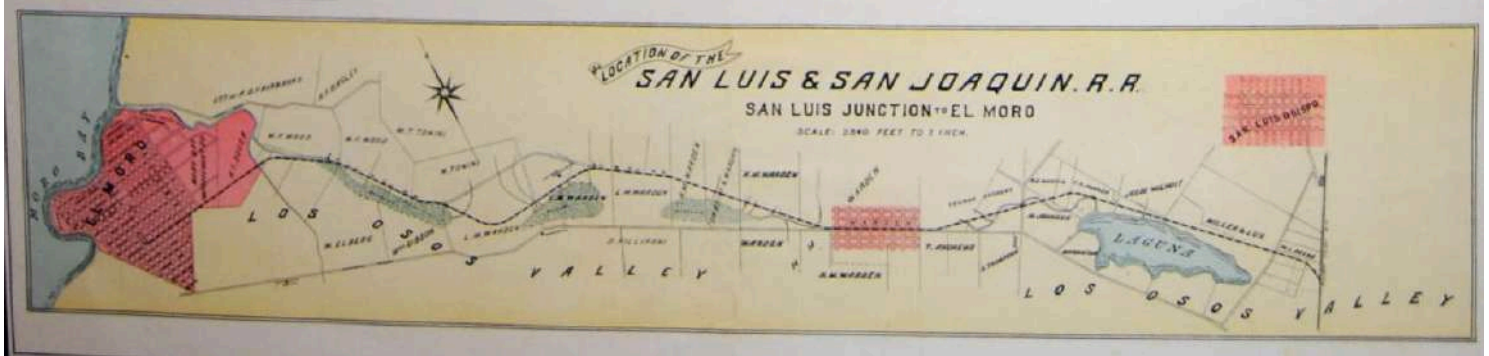


Just a Thought

"Ours [railroad enthusiasts'] is a bond shared by all ages, genders, colors and beliefs; people who might have nothing more in common than a love of trains can share in an example of democracy most pure and free as a result of that interest.

"In this day and age, such ideas are almost insane."

From Growing Up with Trains II, by Richard Steinheimer and Ted Benson (Interurban Press, 1983)



From the Archives by Glen Matteson

This 1890s map shows the San Luis and San Joaquin RR from San Luis Obispo to El Moro (Los Osos) as if it was already there.

The Railroad That Never Was, Despite Claims to the Contrary

The Spring 2016 *Coast Mail* presented Myron Angel's 1891 proposal for a railroad to connect Port San Luis with Fresno, Visalia, and Bakersfield, more or less directly east via the ambitious, couldn't-fail San Luis and San Joaquin Railroad. Not since the Central Pacific meeting the Union Pacific in 1869 had there been such an opportunity for men (sorry, ladies) of vision, according to Mr. Angel.

From the 1850s to about 1900, building railroads of all kinds was closely tied to land development of all kinds. This was especially true of interurban railways connecting city centers with newly conceived suburbs and satellite communities. A convenient rail connection could increase the value of raw land many times over. Even the promise of one could make you rich if you were in the right place at the right time. Subdividers and promoters sometimes got a little ahead of things. One example: the original "developers" of San Luis Obispo's Terrace Hill (called "The Terraced Hill" on their flyer) assured potential buyers that streets circling the hill and connecting strings of lots all the way to the top were to be paved ... any day now.

Mr. Angel's Prospectus for the San Luis and San Joaquin Railroad generally described a route going from Port San Luis along the Pacific Coast Railway alignment toward San Luis Obispo, then northerly up the coast and turning easterly from the vicinity of Cayucos. Even though none of that line was ever built, and so far as we can tell no right-of-way was ever obtained, promoters of the new town of El Moro (so spelled, known today as Los Osos) produced a map implying that the line had been built through the Los Osos Valley. The map shows the line going smack-dab through the middle of another new town in the valley called Warden (after the landowner), to the center of El Moro, where there was a rail yard complete with turntable and roundhouse. The yard was shown bounded by Eighth, Pismo, Ninth, and Ramona streets.

So, if part of Mr. Angel's dream had come true, along with that of El Moro's promoters, and some farsighted preservationists had perhaps teamed with local agencies or entrepreneurs, residents of Los Osos could now board the train for a quick ride to Laguna Lake Park, the Madonna Road shopping centers, or Avila Beach. How cool would that be?

These three map images were prepared from records in the Huntington Library digital archives.

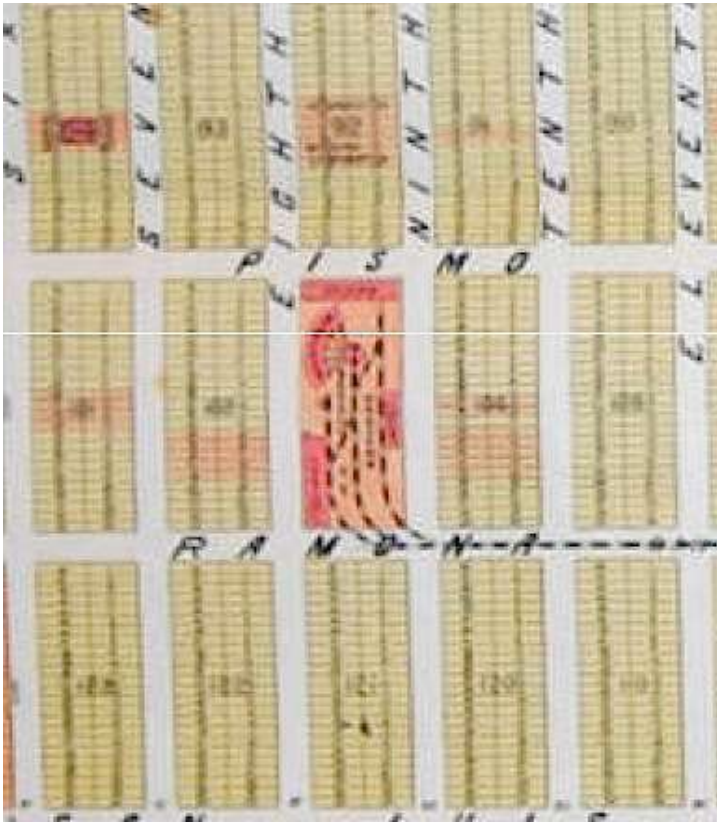
A detail from the map proudly proclaims the town of El Moro is "the present terminus," implying both its existence and its potential for extension.

One more map on next page.



Railroad That Never Was (continued)

This map shows, in the heart of El Moro (Los Osos), a three-track rail yard and a roundhouse with five stalls. Those 25-foot-wide lots must be going fast. Get yours before they're gone.



There's more From the Archives on page 5 and following. The whole current *Coast Mail* is available online to Museum members. Everyone can read past issues online at www.slormm.com, under "About," then "Newsletter."



Mystery Photo Answer

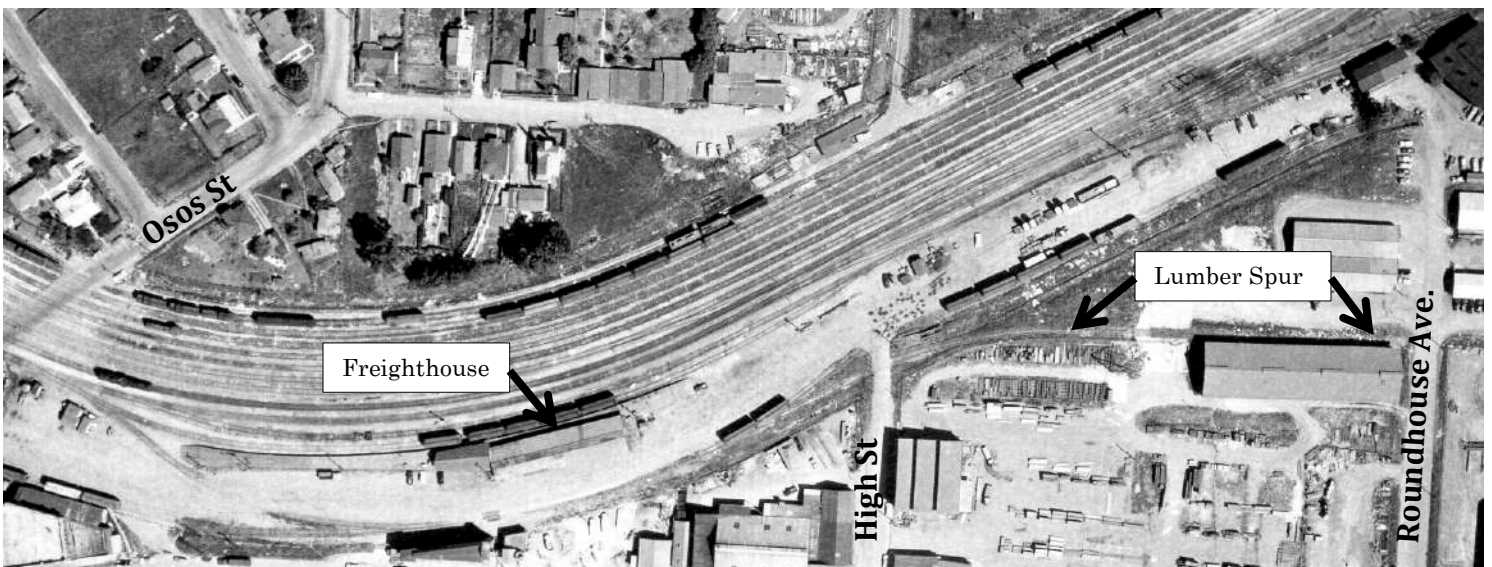
The photo of rails in the *Summer Coast Mail* shows part of a spur track in San Luis Obispo that went from the Freighthouse, past High Street, and along part of Emily Street as far as Roundhouse Avenue (but not to the roundhouse itself). The rails exist under part of the Museum's storage and work yard, unimproved Emily Street right-of-way that the city allows the Museum to use. The still visible rails are immediately south of the yard's south gate (but not for long, due to pending construction). The spur, part of a previous network of tracks, served a large lumber business (photo below).

In recent years boxcars and cabooses moved over the rails but not directly on them, when the Museum transported both narrow-gauge and standard-gauge vintage rolling stock by truck into and out of its Emily Street Yard.

During a visit by Museum volunteers a few years ago, late Southern Pacific engineer Art Laidlaw admitted that many years ago a car he was switching got away and rolled past the end of this track.

The 1955 aerial view below shows the "lumber spur" branching from an industrial lead that itself branches from the "house track" next to the Freighthouse, with more spurs reaching the warehouse now known as Railroad Square (lower left corner) and the team track.

Image from the City of San Luis Obispo Engineering Division Collection.



More From the Archives

by Glen Matteson

Southern Limit



While the Salinas area can be considered the northern limit of the Museum’s focus [*Coast Mail #60*, Summer 2017], the Ventura area is a reasonable southern edge. The turn of the 19th Century to the 20th was the height of railroad fever, and our neighbors to the south were no exception. The Ventura County Railway was first envisioned as the Bakersfield and Ventura Railroad Company, linking its namesake cities via Santa Paula and Piru. Like Port Harford (Port San Luis), Port Hueneme on the Ventura coast was seen by its promoters as a likely rival to San Francisco, being far better situated than the complexes now at San Pedro, Los Angeles, and Long Beach.

As with the Santa Maria Valley Railroad and its Southern Pacific connection, the Ventura County Railway handled a lot of sugar beets. In fact, for a time it was controlled by the American Crystal Sugar Company, which had a large plant in Oxnard. Several railroads throughout the country, with roughly circular routes or with routes through the heart of a region known for a certain commodity, incorporated “belt” in their names. The St. Louis Southwestern, part of the Southern Pacific empire, was known as the Cotton Belt. Separate railroads in Utah and Nevada were called Copper Belt. Fans of the arguably edible purplish root vegetables (nothing like sugar beets) will be pleased to learn that the Ventura County Railway styled itself as the Beet Belt Route. It operated 10 to 17 miles of track, depending on the era, and like so many carriers that went through financial reorganizations and changes of ownership sometimes ended its name in railroad and sometimes in railway.

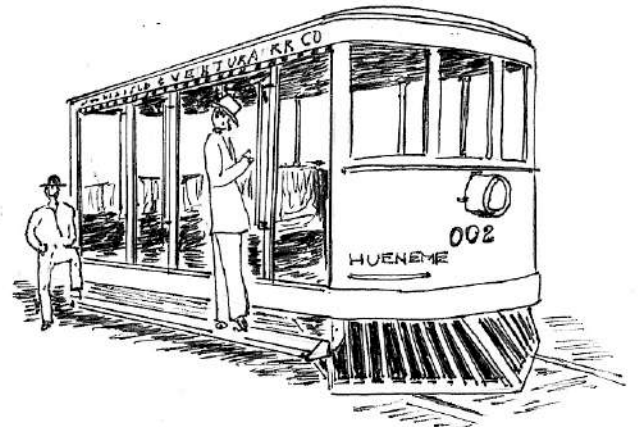
Ventura County Railway No. 001 was an inspection car that could seat about 10 people, powered by a two-cylinder Fairbanks-Morse engine (probably the same company that built the floor scale in the Museum’s Freighthouse). The vastly more grand but also gasoline-motored No. 002 was a four-wheel passenger vehicle seating about 30. With its long running boards, “cowcatcher,” and ample headlight, it carried folks from downtown Ventura to Port Hueneme. Illustration by Glen Matteson based on a photograph from the Pacific Railroad Society collection.

As with many other relatively short rail lines actually built, the Bakersfield and Ventura was also seen by certain “men of great vision” as part of a much larger scheme. The Tidewater Southern, building from Stockton to Modesto in the 19-teens, was to eventually include a line from Malibu to Oxnard, with the Bakersfield and Ventura becoming part of a link between the San Joaquin Valley and the Los Angeles basin completely separate from the Southern Pacific’s route via the Tehachapis and Soledad Canyon. In a further mirror-image coincidence, the Ocean Shore Railroad, starting as a modest in-town line, built south from San Francisco intending to reach Santa Cruz, forming a coastal route to the Salinas Valley as competition to the Southern Pacific. Shoreline cliffs, unstable ground, and lack of traffic doomed that venture and probably contributed to not much happening in the southland version.

Today the VCRR is part of the Genesee & Wyoming family of short lines that operate in many parts of North America, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Europe. It serves several industries and distribution facilities in the Oxnard area, as well as Port Hueneme and its associated U.S. Navy facilities.

* * *

The historical information for this piece comes mostly from an unsigned article in *The Western Railroader* Issue No. 167, edited and published in 1955 by Francis A. Guido of San Mateo under the sponsorship of the Northern California Railroad Club. At that time, “Subscription: Ten issues for a dollar.” A larger version is still produced, now by the Pacific Coast Chapter of the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society.



You can help build a bridge to the future.

When the Southern Pacific’s builders worked south through the Salinas Valley in the 1880s they could not have imagined today’s mile-long Union Pacific freight trains, shiny aluminum-sided Amtrak passenger trains, or rail welded into quarter-mile sections. But they did know that the usually dry riverbed sometimes could flow from bank to bank. Speaking of banks, preserving rail history from all eras always benefits from your support.

Photo by Jersey Mike’s Rail Adventures, from the last car in the southbound Starlight, crossing the through-truss bridge and long trestle near Camp Roberts (visible on the bluff in the background).



Even More From the Archives by Glen Matteson

What will it be today?

From their beginning through the present, nearly all train movements outside yards have been controlled by some sort of orders. On single-track lines orders are critical to arranging “meets” at sidings. Even on multi-track lines, trains going the same direction at different speeds need to be run around each other. At first, orders (track authority) were represented by staffs, rods that a train crew had to carry with them to enter a designated section of track, handed from workers at stations to engineers. The next evolution was configuring the staffs so they worked like keys, operating signals or cabinets from which another staff could be removed to authorize a movement back through the released block (section of track). By the time the Coast Route was built, orders were transmitted by dispatchers to operators via telegraph. The operators wrote –later typed– the instructions onto sheets of paper (usually with carbon copies) that were handed to train crews. Operators also reported to dispatchers when trains arrived and departed their stations. *Stations* were named locations along the railroad, not necessarily depots where freight or passengers were handled. By the 1970s some orders were transmitted by Teletype.

Today, most orders are transmitted by radio. The engineer copies them by hand onto forms, and verifies them with the dispatcher and the conductor. In areas with Centralized Traffic Control, where signals and track switches can be operated remotely, trains proceed on signal indication without written orders. (South San Luis Obispo to South Santa Margarita is CTC.) An exception within CTC areas is when signals cannot convey all the necessary information, so orders again play a role.

A typical train order authorizing movement would include an order number and a date and time, would be addressed to “conductor & engineer” of “Train XX,” and would say something like “After arrival of Train YY at South San Luis Obispo proceed to Grover; take siding at last named location.” But not all orders were this kind. Often they were addressed to all trains operating over a certain part of the line and informed crews of conditions that would affect operations. Here are some examples from the Museum’s collection, donated in 2016 by Tim Friend.

TRAIN ORDER No. 1655 JUN 19 19 77
 To C & E
 TRAINS VIA HENRY

At SAN LUIS OBISPO STATION X Opr. M.

SWITCH 1955 CHUALAR OUT OF SERVICE AND SWITCH LOCKED AND SPIKED

BEET TRACK SAN ARDO OUT OF SERVICE AND SWITCHES SPIKED ACCOUNT EQUIPMENT STORED

The first (lower left, much faded) says “siding Surf out of service account sand.” Sand blown across the tracks to the extent they were buried and not safely usable was a problem along the Southern Pacific Sunset Route, particularly between Indio and Yuma. But on the coast? The station of Surf (now the Amtrak stop for Lompoc/Vandenberg) is literally on the beach, and with that refreshing onshore breeze sand could cover the tracks.

The second order says a specific track switch at Chualar (in the Salinas Valley near Gonzales) could not be used. And, a siding or spur at San Ardo (also in the Salinas Valley) normally used to load sugar beet cars, is not available because equipment (probably track maintenance machines) is stored on it. Hand-thrown switches usually are operated by unlocking a padlock and moving a lever. Spiking the movable rails in place was a means to assure that anyone operating the switch knew when it was acceptable to do so. When trains carrying people like the president of the United States, or Soviet Premier Khrushchev, were coming through, switches were spiked to protect against accidental or deliberate mishaps. Pulling spikes requires a specific tool and enough effort to attract attention.

The third example advises that “ribbon rail” –continuous welded rail often in quarter-mile lengths– had been placed next to the track along the “toe path,” where crews might need to descend from, climb aboard, or walk along their trains. Heck of a way to stub your toe on a moonless night. “Cuesta” refers to a siding north of the Cuesta Grade summit tunnel (now a spur visible to the right of Highway 101 after it crosses the tracks). “Serrano” is the siding overlooking Poly Canyon, before the track curves back north overlooking Reservoir Canyon and Highway 101. The ribbon rail had been set there so it could be installed in place of worn rails.

TRAIN ORDER No. 1666 JUN 22 19 77
 To C & E
 WESTWARD TRAINS
 At SAN LUIS OBISPO STATION X Opr. M.

RIBBON RAIL DISTRIBUTED IN TOE PATH
 BETWEEN MP 241.57 AND MP 241.47 BETWEEN
 CUESTA AND SERRANO
 BETWEEN MP 231.13 AND MP 230.93 BETWEEN
 HENRY AND SANTA MARGARITA
 AND BETWEEN MP 220.02 AND MP 219.82 BETWEEN
 PASO ROBLES AND TEMPLETON

TRAIN ORDER No. 1959 MAR 10 19 77
 To C & E
 WESTWARD TRAINS
 At SANTA BARBARA STATION X Opr. M.

SIDING SURF OUT OF SERVICE ACCOUNT SAND

A railroad that wasn't, then was, then wasn't, then was (probably), then wasn't again, and shouldn't even count as a railroad anyway

This blueprint date-stamped October 1, 1915, but likely drawn much earlier shows "rail track" curving gracefully from the shore onto a long pier that angles into the Pacific Ocean. This must be the Pacific Coast Railway at Port San Luis, the key commercial link between the area's inland enterprises and the rest of the world until Southern Pacific Railroad completed its Coast Route in 1901.

But no. It's labeled "Pacific Coast Steamship Co." (the owner of the PCRY) but also "Lompoc Wharf."

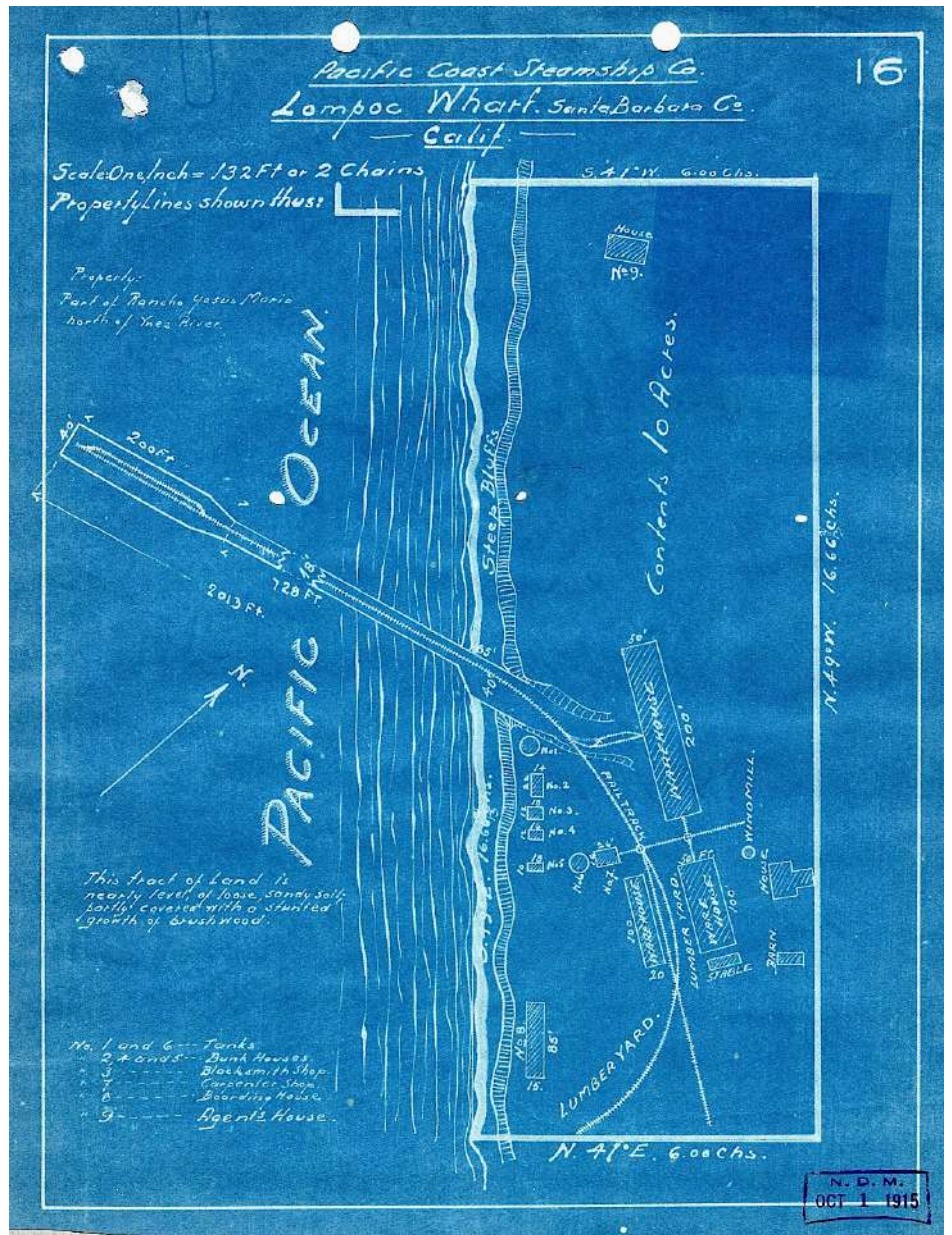
Lompoc had a wharf? Sort of. Lompoc, in the "Valley of the Flowers" of northern Santa Barbara County, has an interesting history. It was founded (the same time the PCRY was) by a group of farmers and artisans who wanted an alcohol-free community. In the mid-1870s the town of 200 families had a post office, a doctor, a newspaper, and stagecoach service three times a week. But "a wharf was needed so that butter and cheese and other farm products could be shipped to San Francisco," according to the City of Lompoc's *Lompoc Valley History* web page. (The same need drove construction of the wharf at Port San Luis.) Without a wharf, wagons had to haul goods to and from a pier at Gaviota "22 very rough miles away."

A wharf was built "adjacent to the mouth of Los Alamos Arroyo," according to *A Memorial and Biographical History of the Counties of Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo and Ventura...* (Yda Addis Storke, 1891).

The community used money borrowed from a fund set up to establish an agricultural college in Lompoc, with the intent that wharf profits would repay the loan. However, storms washed away the wharf (twice, according to one source) leaving the college fund high and dry. It's not definitely known if the tracks were replaced when the wharf was destroyed and replaced, but it appears they were.

Segue: "For the next few years, no rain fell ... Animals died by the thousands and many people became discouraged and left" (*Lompoc Valley History*), despite early promoters' claims that rainfall and springs were always abundant.

The layout of the "rail tracks," especially the small circles where lines intersect that must have been mini-turntables, imply a very narrow-gauge installation, probably just for push-cars that could be loaded with cans of cream or a few planks and muscled back and forth.



Parcel dimensions are in "chains," an 1800s surveyor's equivalent of 66 feet, while the section of wharf omitted so the end could be shown on one sheet is tagged at 728 feet. The western parcel boundary must be mean high tide.

This document and many others were part of a batch spanning 1913 to 1956, gathered as the Pacific Coast Steamship Company and its successors proceeded through liquidation. Over the years, the company sold its assets and in some places (notably Point Sal) was challenged in court by parties asserting that they were successors to the original ranchos, and the steamship company did not have fee title, so the company had nothing to sell.

Image from SLORRM collection.

The article "Lompoc's Sometimes Wharves" by Natalie Arnold in *Lompoc: The First 100 Years* includes a picture captioned "A favorite pastime for valley teenagers was coasting on the gravity-pulled railcars of abandoned wharves ... in 1900."

Reported by Glen Matteson, with research help by Roy Register and John Roskoski.

Just because there were tracks doesn't mean there was a railroad.

Besides the Lompoc Wharf, the Central Coast had several other rail installations that weren't railroads:

Fruit orchards used sectional track like a toy-train setup –light rails spiked to ties that could be moved around and reconnected as picking moved through the orchard. Push cars carried the freshly picked fruit to packing sheds. The car on display at the Museum is 24-inch gauge (photo at right). It was used by the Grieb family in the Arroyo Grande area, probably during the 1920s.



Mineral mines. Cinnabar, an ore of mercury, was mined at various spots in San Luis Obispo County. The push car displayed at the Museum is from the Deer Trail Mine near Nipomo, operated by the Sesena family, probably at least during World War I, 1915-16 (photo at right). Rails were 18 inches apart.



The diatomaceous earth mine near Lompoc, operated under several different names over the years, used a three-foot-gauge electric line extending about three miles, about 125 feet below the surface. New excavations and a conveyor have replaced the rail system.

Avila pier had push cars on three-foot-gauge tracks, separate from the Pacific Coast Railway on Port Harford pier [*Coast Mail* Spring 2016, page 10]. Their main cargo was fish and the line ran several hundred feet. (Mid 1870s to early 1900s.)

San Simeon pier had push cars used to move items from ships to warehouses in connection with building and "stocking" of Hearst Castle. (About 1920 to mid-1940s.)

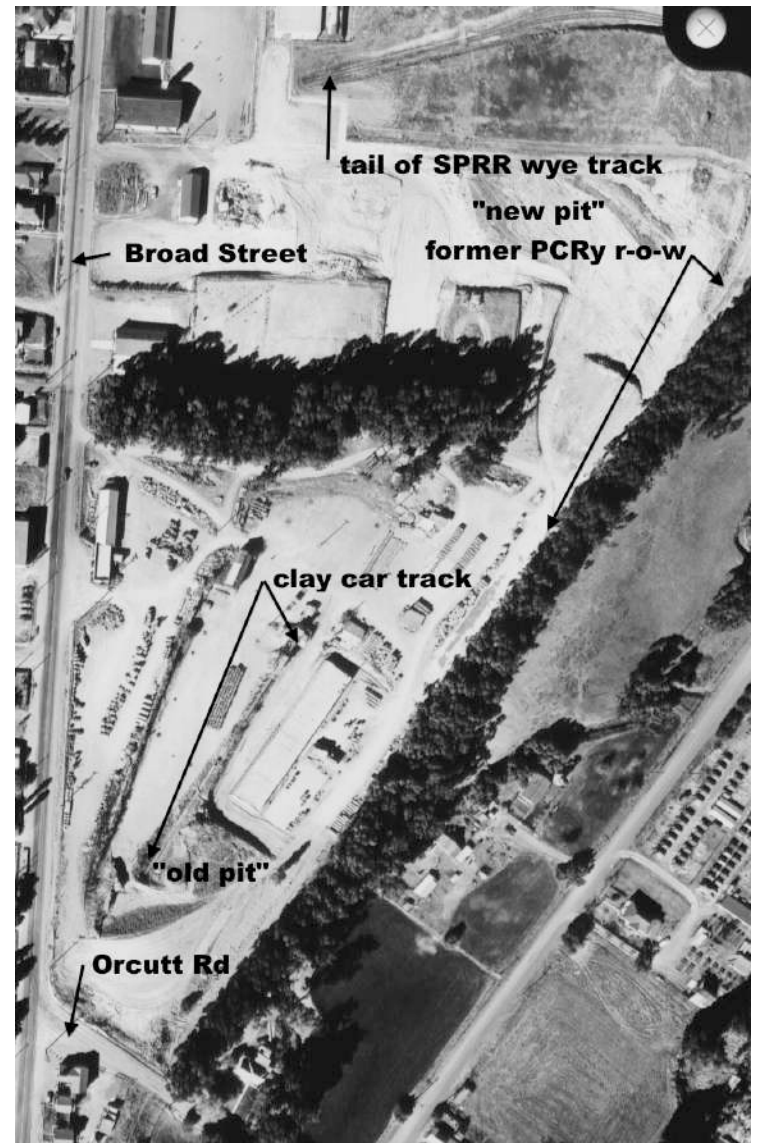
Bishop Peak quarry northwest of San Luis Obispo had a one-half-mile extension of the Pacific Coast Railway, which at 18% slope (gaining about 400 feet elevation) was far too steep for conventional locomotives. It was worked with a steam-powered winch and cable. There was a passing track at the middle, where cars moving uphill and downhill could move by each other. Such steep, cable-operated installations are more properly called tramways, especially if they use specially designed cars. (Probably 1897 to 1908.)

Indian Canyon coal mine in southern Monterey County used narrow-gauge cars and battery locomotives within the mine, and a steep incline with cable to get mine cars to where the Stone Canyon Railroad/Coalfields Railway conventional cars were loaded for movement to the Southern Pacific in the Salinas Valley [*Coast Mail* Winter 2014-15, page 7]. (About 1908 to 1930.)

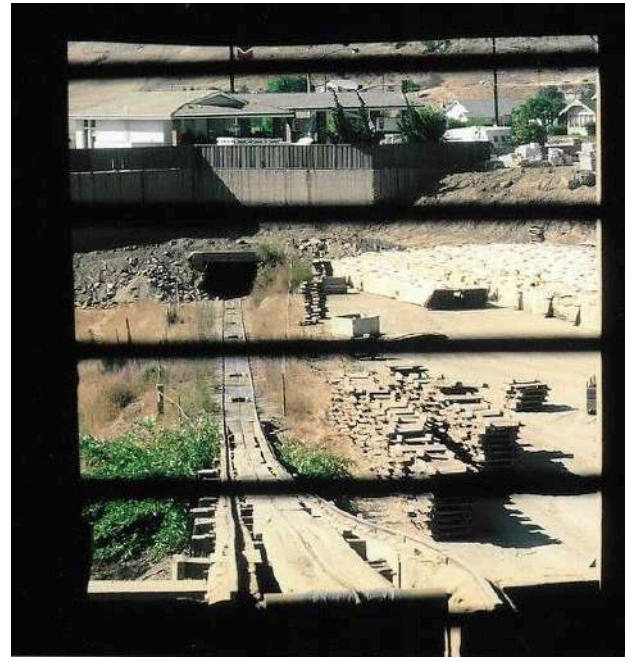
San Luis Brick Company, between Broad Street and the Southern Pacific RR, north of Orcutt Road, probably had the shortest "non-railroad railroad" among these. A car was pulled along about 400 feet of sloping track by a steam-powered winch and cable, carrying clay dug from a pit onsite to the manufacturing area (image at right). The plant was built in 1907 and went through several owners, company names, and periods of activity and idleness, until closing permanently about 1976. The clay car was used into the 1970s. One time it got free from the winch and crashed into the pit; it was rebuilt. Making the clay into bricks sometimes involved molasses, an odd smell for a railroad town.

Report and two photos by Glen Matteson, who thanks Tommy Weddle for his memories of working at the brickyard and as a mason in the area. The 1956 aerial image is from the City of S.L.O. Engineering Division collection. In it, the white circle at upper right is an artifact of the camera.

More brickyard photos next page.



These photos were taken in the 1970s by brickyard worker Ron Steward. The one at right is looking toward the gas station at the corner of Orcutt Road and Broad Street. The dark shadow under a tractor-path bridge at the open pit looks like an entrance to an underground mine; it wasn't. The view below is from the bunker looking toward the crusher. A car is almost going into the building. Rollers between the rails helped the cable transition over the ground.

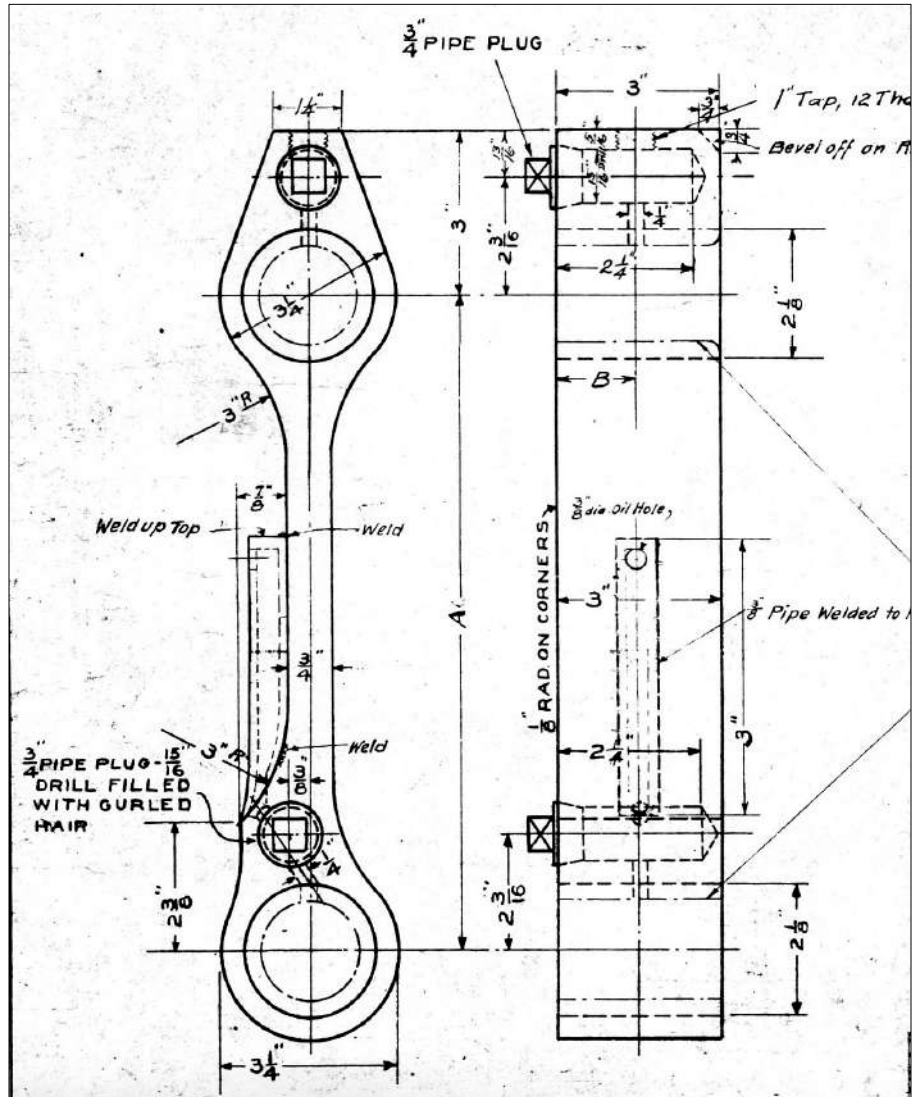


You did what to your hair?

Taking detail to a whole new level, the image at right is part of a drawing labeled "Southern Pacific Lines Common Standard Reverse Link Radius Rod Lifter." The last five words are the name of the object, and no, it's not something a car guy made up as a joke. It's part of the mechanism that the engineer of a steam locomotive uses to change direction and to vary the "cut-off," the timing of admitting steam to the cylinders, with the duration of steam expansion being a factor in starting a train vs. rolling along at speed [*Coast Mail Spring 2017*, page 11]. This plan was prepared in 1918, and came to light while cataloging large rolled drawings [same *Coast Mail*, page 14].

Note that at the lower end, a hole is to be "filled with gurlled hair." Not curled, not girdled, but gurlled. A Google search led mostly to urban slang or a sound made in Jabberwocky-like situations. But gurlled hair must have some connection with densely curled hair used in upholstery, possibly from animals such as pigs. Also, some plants and some wood grains must have a gurlled form, probably involving tight curls.

When fibrous material appears on purpose among railroad metal pieces, it's usually to hold and release lubricating oil. Until the production of roller bearings, axle ends rode between curved brass plates in a housing packed with "waste," cotton fibers too short for, and left over from, making cotton thread. The waste soaked up the oil and allowed in to be wicked away by the metal surfaces, rather than just sitting in a pool or leaking out. Same here?



Any machinists are welcome to add to our information on gurlled hair. SP had hundreds of Common Standard plans, for everything from station buildings to signals and to individual locomotive parts.

But Wait. There's (One) More!

Keeping the feed moving.

In case you thought all the operations involving tracks but not actual railroads were covered by the preceding article, there is one more. It's story was told in Hal Madson's 2001 book Railroads of the Santa Maria Valley.

The Betteravia Feedlot Railroad was a 42-inch-gauge installation that carried by-product dried pulp from Union Sugar Company's beet-processing plant to the neighboring cattle feedlot, starting in the early 1900s. The cars were initially pulled by mules. The operation eventually involved 7.5 miles of track, five of them within the feedlot.

According to Madson, following a shut-down of operations between 1927 and 1934, a new owner-operator replaced the mules with several small gasoline-powered locomotives which pulled little side-dump cars that had been salvaged from the Stone Canyon Coal Mine in southern Monterey County. [See "Central Coast Coal Hauler" in *Coast Mail* Winter 2014-15.]

Traffic volume probably peaked in the 1960s, with the industrial railway hauling about 600 tons of feed a day. By then, stronger locomotives and a pair of larger homemade cars with a built-in conveyor and a tape record-keeping system were used. The feedlot, which had as many as 25,000 head at a time, was closed in 1977. The sugar refinery closed in 1993. All have since been removed.

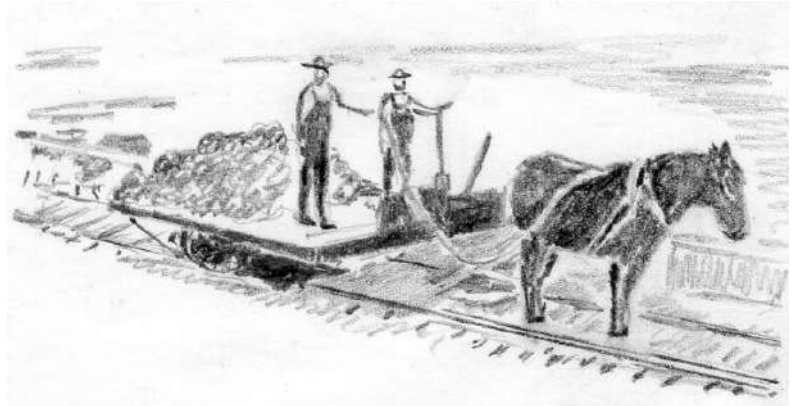
But just when you were about to conclude that this bit of local history couldn't get any more quirky:

The "BFR" had a passenger car. Of sorts. Mid-1960s owner Stanley Brown acquired San Francisco Cable Car #42 from a scrapyard. After raising its clearance and adding a gasoline motor to power it, he used it to tour cattle buyers around the feedlot. It must have been a fragrant trip.

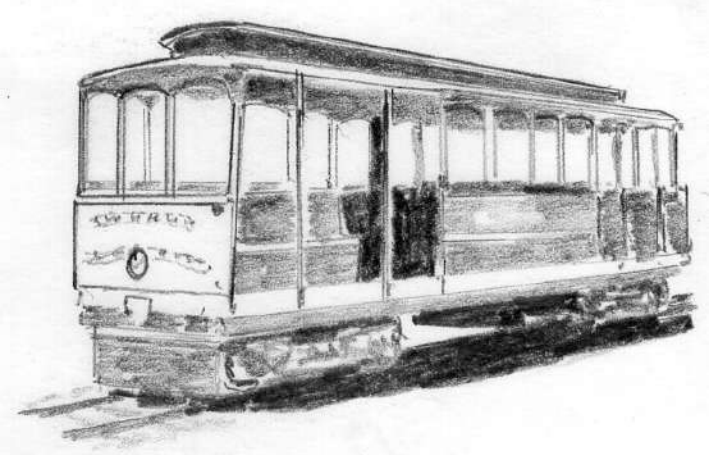
Forty-two inches is an odd gauge for a railway. (Nearly all North American narrow-gauge lines such as the Pacific Coast Railway were 36 inches; standard gauge is 56.5 inches.) But 42 inches was used by the cable cars and by the Los Angeles trolley cars (different from the standard-gauge Pacific Electric Railway). The system's home-built cars used L.A. trolley car frames!

Author Madson wrote that Mr. Brown's widow donated the former cable car to the City of San Francisco, and that at the time of his book it was being restored for operation on the Market Street line. How's that for things going full circle?

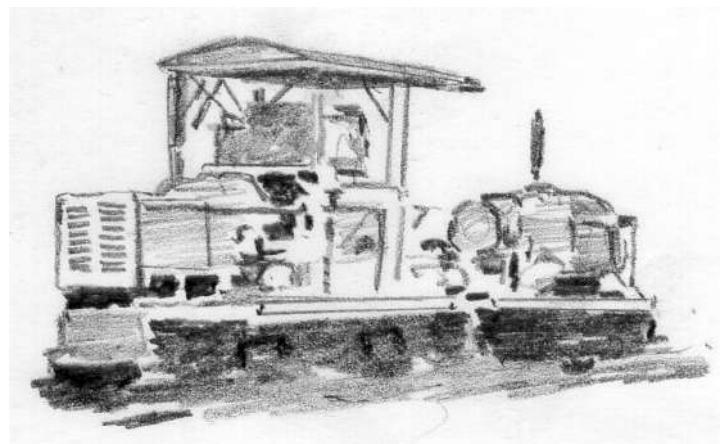
Sketches by Glen Matteson, based on photos credited to, from top to bottom: Santa Maria Valley Historical Society; Mrs. Stanley Brown; Peter Thorp.



The "BFR's" first locomotives were mules.



Passenger service was provided by a former San Francisco cable car. The 1909-built car kept its ornate "O'Farrell, Jones & Hyde Streets" lettering on the ends.



The feedlot rail system's pair of bar-coupled locomotives started out as Plymouth five-ton models. Eventually canopies replaced cabs and International Harvester engines were installed. Each had separate controls, so the operator had to jump from one to the other to start the engines and engage the clutches. One powered a conveyor for the feed and had a tape-type recording device that automatically kept track of the amount of material distributed by the feedlot's highly specialized "train."

In a future *Coast Mail*: "In a Class by Itself – The San Luis Obispo Street Railway."