



# Coast Mail

News from the San Luis Obispo  
Railroad Museum

Issue Number 66 – Winter 2018 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](mailto:media@slorrm.com).*



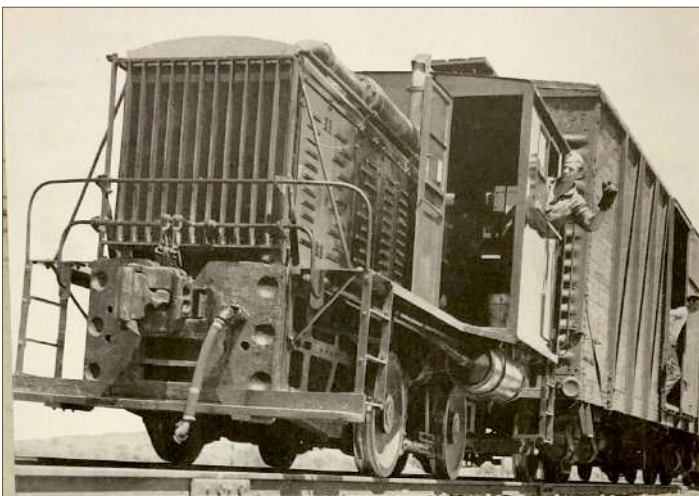
*Small locomotive, big achievement: Former U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps switcher settles on Museum rails.*

## Military switcher comes home!

Remember the little Plymouth locomotive that served during World War II at Camp Roberts, shown on the first page of the Fall *Coast Mail*? We had hoped to run an article like this then, but Curator Brad LaRose was still negotiating with the previous owner and arranging the many transportation details for little No. 2038.

Now it's on the Museum's display track, about as close to its original Central Coast home as one could expect. After a highway trip from a ranch in the Chico area, it was eased into place on September 21. See page 4 for more information on this exciting addition to our collection.

*No. 2038 goes about its business at Camp Roberts, in this view from a U.S. Army publication.*



*United States Army Quartermaster Corps No. 2050, a twin of No. 2038, was used at Camp San Luis Obispo. This is about as small as you can get and still be a standard-gauge locomotive.*

## Recent History

### BNSF Special Train

On August 28 Union Pacific Railroad tracks hosted a BNSF Railway special train consisting of 16 BNSF business cars and two private cars. The train was on its way from Oakland to Los Angeles; it stopped briefly in San Luis Obispo for an operating-crew change. The string of cars stretched from the north end of the Amtrak depot platform to the Museum's Freighthouse platform.

Apparently BNSF was touring industry executives from the United States and other countries around the West, and possibly decided the Coast Route was more scenic than the San Joaquin Valley... or less in demand for freight trains.



**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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**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 info@slorrm.com.

**Museum Store**



To raise funds, the Museum offers several items for sale, at the Freight-house and through the website: T-shirts, baseball caps, belt buckles, mugs, enameled pins, embroidered patches, engineer hats, and videos.

Also, visit the Museum Store for gently used books, models, and actual railroad documents that are surplus to the Museum's collection.

**Our holiday bargains make great gifts.**

*Coast Mail* is published quarterly by the San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum.

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**Online extras** page

Petticoat pipes, and sprockets..... 5  
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**An unlikely story**

But true. In October Museum member Karl Hovanitz donated the headlight, which includes number boards, from Southern Pacific steam locomotive No. 4402, a GS-1 type built by Baldwin in 1930. Steam fans may recognize the GS-series as including the famous, colorful, streamlined "Daylight" engines that pulled trains of the same name. No. 4402 never received streamline casing, skirting, or red and orange paint. But it did get a "clamshell" exhaust stack to divert its blast in tunnels (image below). And on December 25, 1931, its boiler exploded while in the Sacramento Valley (results shown at right). In 1956, rebuilt and serving in the San Francisco peninsula commute pool, No. 4402 was called to substitute for the *Coast Daylight's* ailing diesels. It pulled the southbound train to San Luis Obispo and Los Angeles, the last steam locomotive to do so!

**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 and access to Members Only features of the website, including full current issues of *Coast Mail*.



*SP No. 4402 was scrapped in 1959, but the Museum has its headlight.*

**TIMETABLE**

Board of Directors meetings are held at 6:00 p.m., at 1940 Santa Barbara Avenue, San Luis Obispo, on the second Tuesday of each month: December 11; January 8; February 12. For committee meetings, use the number or email in left-hand column.

**Correction** The Fall *Coast Mail* incorrectly identified the source of information on blended diesel fuel (page 4). The correct source is *SP Trainline*, the Southern Pacific Historical & Technical Society journal, as noted. *SP Bulletin* was a publication by the railroad for its employees.



*Part of the model railroad benchwork, built by Museum member and skilled carpenter Mike Fairbrother.*

## Meet the Modelers ... at Avila

The Museum's model railroad display is the work of the Central Coast Model Railroaders (CCMR). It's hard to appreciate the breadth and depth of the group's expertise until you've closely examined all the scenes and even peeked behind them. This edition we introduce our two Mikes, who had major roles in creating the exhibit.

*These four photos are by Andrew Merriam, who created the overall design for the model railroad.*



*Modelers have installed plywood for the basic horizontal surface and a curved panel for the backdrop.*

Starting with the building that houses the Museum, Michael Boyack was a major supporter of its upgrading to accommodate public use. Mike B. is a general building contractor who has worked in the San Luis Obispo area for many years, specializing in fine home construction.

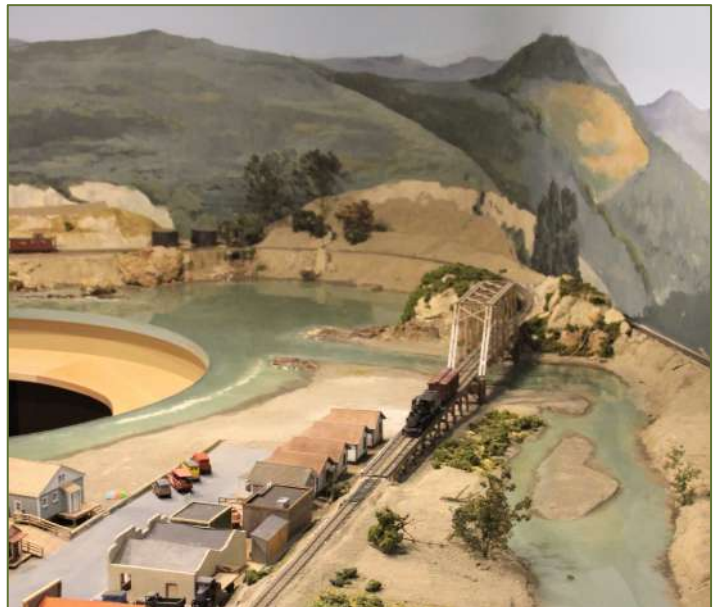
On to the floor and working up, Michael Fairbrother is also a general building contractor, specializing in cabinet making and finish carpentry. Mike F. built the two-level "benchwork" that supports the tracks, buildings, and scenery. Mike F. has also helped restore the Museum's 1926 café-lounge car windows.

Moving to the scenic backdrops, Mike B. tackled the tricky task of mounting the large, often curved, panels that truly set the stage for historically accurate scenes.

*Below, an unwieldy scenic backdrop panel is installed by unwieldy panel expert Mike Boyack (back to camera), Southern Pacific freight car expert Logan Bertolette (at far end of panel), and John Marchetti, who handcrafted much of the Port San Luis trackwork and pier.*



*Below, the nearly completed Avila scene.*





*Museum member and moving helper Howard Amborn watches as temporary panel track on Dwight Peterson Trucking's skillfully aligned drop-end trailer contacts the Museum's display track rails.*

## Number 2038 joins the collection

Many large industries and military installations had, and have, enough on-site rail-car activity to justify operating their own switching locomotives. This was the case at Camp San Luis Obispo and at Camp Roberts leading up to and during World War II.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Quartermaster Corps purchased this locomotive in April 1941, when Europe was embroiled in war but nine months before the attack on Pearl Harbor compelled the United States to join. It was manufactured in Ohio by the Plymouth Locomotive Company (a division of the Fate-Root-Heath Company), which was known for its durable products, including about 7,500 industrial locomotives built during its existence.

No. 2038 weighs about 20 tons, compared to about 80 tons for a loaded 1940s boxcar and 200 tons for a mainline steam locomotive of that era. At 20 feet, it's about half the length of a 1940s boxcar. It was originally powered by a six-cylinder gasoline engine, with a mechanical chain drive, while larger, so-called diesel locomotives then and since use electrical systems to actually turn the wheels.



*Brad LaRose enters "the fireman's side" walkway door. The cab was designed for one-person operation; no fireman.*

*No. 2038 rests on Museum rails, waiting for the ramp track to be pulled away and someone to bring its diesel engine to life.*

While at Camp Roberts, No. 2038 moved railroad cars of supplies within the camp in support of its mission to feed, equip, and train the 436,000 soldiers who passed through. Camp Roberts still has active tracks connected to the Union Pacific main line [*Coast Mail* Fall 2018], but no locomotive of its own.

As the Army demobilized after the war, much equipment became surplus. In the spring of 1947 No. 2038 was transferred for sale by the War Assets Administration. Near the end of 1948 it was obtained by a construction company in Sacramento. In 1952 it was purchased by the El Dorado Lime and Mineral Company, located in the Sierra foothills east of Sacramento, which had its own short track with a connection to the Southern Pacific Railroad. From there, the locomotive retired to a caboose-themed bed-and-breakfast business near Chico, California.



*Engineer's side of the cab, looking toward the Museum's former Southern Pacific caboose.*

The Museum needs to make restoration decisions. Should the locomotive be painted its original gloss black and lettered QMC 2038, or be given a new color and identity such as SLRM 1? What appurtenances should be removed, retained, or added?

Whatever is decided, the little Plymouth will be very useful for moving cars on display, drawing old and new visitors to special Museum events, and starring in programs to involve children and teach about safety.





### Little gems from the library

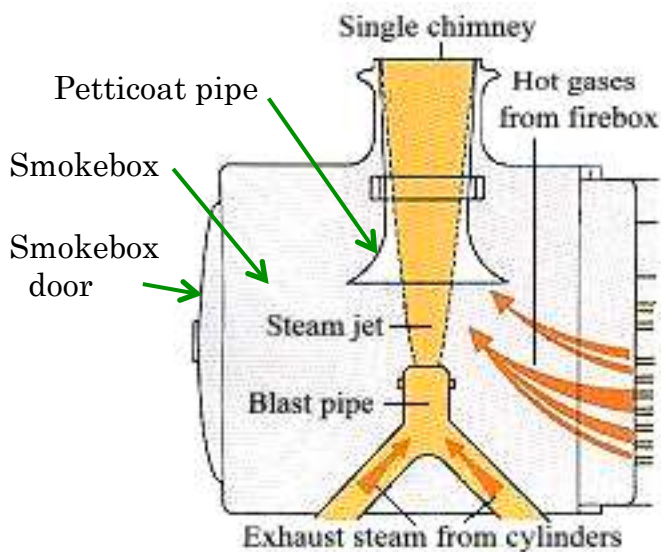
Volunteers recently shifted nearly all the Museum’s books, so each topic area has a little more room on the shelves. Part of the task was reviewing for relevance some books that had been taking up shelf space while waiting to be cataloged. Do we really need another old book on how to operate steam locomotives? Yes, when it contains the question and answer shown below.

62. Q. In case a petticoat pipe becomes deranged, what can be done?

A. In case it cannot be put back in proper position, it should be removed altogether. (Trips have been successfully completed in this manner.)

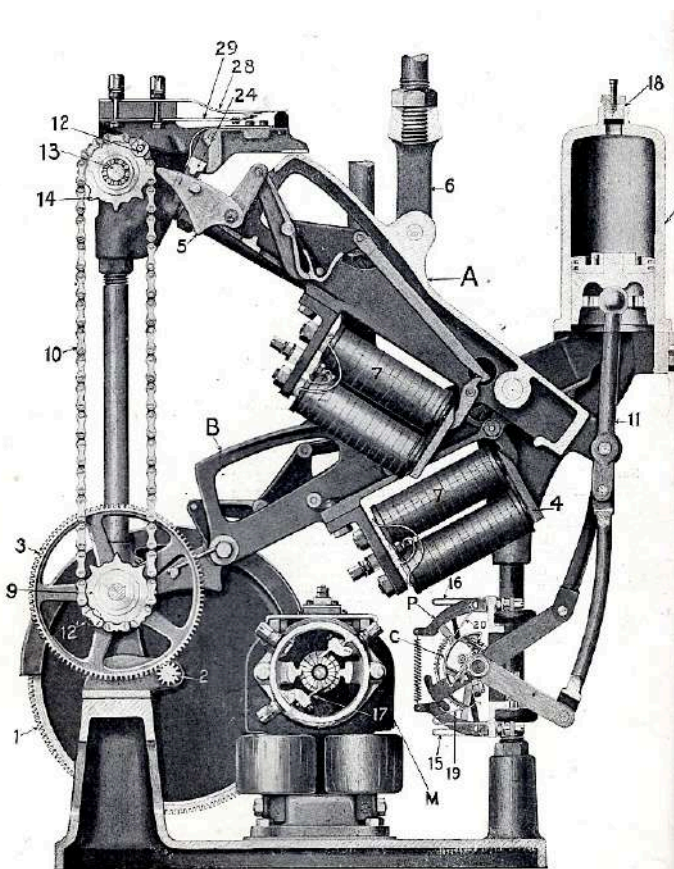
That’s an interesting choice of word. Not misaligned. Not disconnected. Deranged. This is from the “Oil Fired Locomotives” chapter of The Traveling Engineers’ Association Examination Questions and Answers For Firemen For Promotion and New Men For Employment, revised August 1914. As you might have guessed from the “petticoat” part, such pipes have flared bottoms. But where are they and what do they do?

They’re located ahead of the boiler, in the enclosed space of the smokebox, where exhaust from the steam cylinders helps to draw hot, smoky air from the firebox (located back near the cab) out the smokestack. It’s hard to imagine stopping a train, opening the smokebox door, and removing it if that doesn’t work, all while keeping up a fire in the firebox and pressure in the boiler. “It’s your turn.” “No, I think it’s your turn.”



This section view, looking from the side, shows a petticoat pipe, in an illustration modified from one originally provided by the International Brotherhood of Live Steamers. For a look inside a real smokebox, see page 5 (online).

Then there’s the Catalogue of Interlocking and Signaling Devices – 1902: Section 12, The Union Electric Semaphore and the Union Disc Signal, from the Union Switch & Signal Company, revised December 1907, with the illustration below.



SECTIONAL VIEW OF THE UNION ELECTRIC SEMAPHORE STYLE B. MECHANISM

This mechanism operated the blades on trackside semaphore-type signals, like the one that now serves as a sign for the Museum (right). The mechanism was located in the large iron cabinet at the base, along with sets of electromagnetic relays as big as lunch boxes. The relays were part of a system that detected the presence of a train in a section of track and set the signal to display the proper aspect.

These days signal wiring involves integrated circuits with no moving parts, and indication is by clusters of colored light-emitting diodes (LEDs). And on most main lines, signals are backed up by computers in the locomotives and satellite global positioning systems (GPS).



## Not just blowing smoke



SLORRM Archives P2571.5

The date, place, and photographer for the view above are not known, but there's no question which locomotive this is: Southern Pacific "Daylight" type No. 4449, the only preserved example of its kind. This is the locomotive that pulled the American Freedom Train in 1976 and which, based in Portland, still hauls occasional excursion specials. In its original black, red, and orange, with silvery-white lettering, it pulled the *Coast Daylight* between Los Angeles and San Francisco, with a midway stop in San Luis Obispo.



No. 4449's blast tubes and petticoat pipe (page 4), have been removed in this likely 1940s shop setting to avoid blocking replacement of boiler flues or tubes, which appears to be in progress. They probably let things cool down a bit first.

At left is a more common view, from the 1990s. The dual headlights were a unique feature of these attractive locomotives.

## How about a drink to break the ice?

Here are two General Motors F-series diesel locomotives, almost certainly on the eastbound (according to timetable) Amtrak *Coast Starlight* at San Luis Obispo. It must have been within a few years of 1971, when Amtrak, a quasi-federal corporation, took over nearly all remaining intercity passenger service.

The plume of white steam is from a boiler in the lead unit, likely a somewhat longer FP-type. If these are diesels, why is there steam? Because Amtrak inherited passenger cars built mostly in the late 1940s and 1950s, the decades when compatibility with earlier steam-heated passenger equipment was desirable. The next generation of Amtrak equipment would use electrical power for heating and cooling, via cables rather than pipes and hoses connecting the cars.



SLORRM Archives P5000.1

A close look reveals that the second locomotive still has its Southern Pacific appearance. (Color images of both schemes are shown below.) The lead loco had been owned by SP. The giveaway: those metal bars like huge staples sticking up from the top. They were installed so icicles hanging from the tunnels and snowsheds on Donner Pass would not break the glass of dome cars.

That big hose connected to the loco is filling water tanks, used for both engine cooling and making steam.



## From the Archives – Part 1

### Why do we need to know *this*?

During the late 1800s and early 1900s those wanting to travel or ship more than a few score miles generally depended on a railroad to do so. This situation was subject to abuses, so Congress established the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) to reign in what were seen as price-fixing excesses. As with many good ideas, some would say the ICC got a little carried away. Virtually every shipping rate was subject to ICC approval, with tariffs classified into thousands of categories of commodities and distances. And all these tariffs, which had to be published, were subject to challenge by shippers and railroads.

Among the material to be considered for archiving was a bundle of ICC rulings from the 1930s, a stressful economic era. These reports all bore the “received” stamp of the Pacific Coast Railway (PCRY), the narrow-gauge system that connected Port San Luis with San Luis Obispo and northern Santa Barbara County. This might have been a rich source of information on PCRY traffic in its declining years.

Alas, it appears that *every* ICC ruling was reported to *every* railroad in the country. Surely the Pacific Coast Railway was little affected by moving watermelons in the Midwest during two seasons, gasoline *within* Alabama (how is that interstate commerce?), or the Santa Fe’s eastbound fig paste. Not shown is case No. 27350, involving cotton goods moving from Fernwood, Mississippi, to Norwich, Connecticut.

The item closest to home (at bottom) involved cattle moving within California, over the Southern Pacific, to points mentioned in previous Coast Mail stories (Spreckels and Tres Pinos in Summer 2017, among other editions).

These days the federal Surface Transportation Board considers shipper complaints about service quality and cost, but railroads are generally free to set and change prices without public review.

*The Interstate Commerce Commission issued thousands of rulings on railroad freight charges between its establishment in 1887 and its dissolution in 1995. Even with an online search, your archivist has found none directly affecting the Pacific Coast Railway. Andrew Merriam donated these odd examples, among others.*

23409

## INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

No. 28328

C. C. WINKLER COMPANY v. ALTON RAILROAD COMPANY ET AL.

Submitted October 22, 1940. Decided December 18, 1940

1. Rates on watermelons, in carloads, during the 1938 and 1939 shipping seasons, from the Charleston and Arbyrd, Mo., producing districts to destinations in central territory found unreasonable to extent indicated. Applicable rates via St. Louis, Mo., determined in certain instances. Waiver of collection of undercharges authorized, and reparation awarded.

FOURTH SECTION APPLICATION No. 16275

GASOLINE FROM MONTGOMERY TO OPELIKA, ALA.

Submitted July 25, 1936. Decided November 25, 1936

Applicant authorized, on conditions, to establish and maintain an interstate rate of 13 cents per 100 pounds on gasoline, including blended gasoline and kerosene, in tank-car loads, from Montgomery, Ala., to Opelika, Ala., and to maintain higher rates from and to intermediate points.

22567

## INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

No. 27903

CRESCENT MACARONI & CRACKER COMPANY v. ATCHISON, TOPEKA & SANTA FE RAILWAY COMPANY ET AL.

Submitted November 12, 1938. Decided February 10, 1939

Rates charged on dried fig pulp, or fig paste, in carloads, from certain origins in California to Davenport, Iowa, and Zion, Ill., found applicable and not shown to have been or to be unreasonable. Complaint dismissed.

21514

## INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

No. 27227

JAMES M. BROWN COMPANY v. SOUTHERN PACIFIC COMPANY ET AL.

Submitted September 12, 1936. Decided November 24, 1936

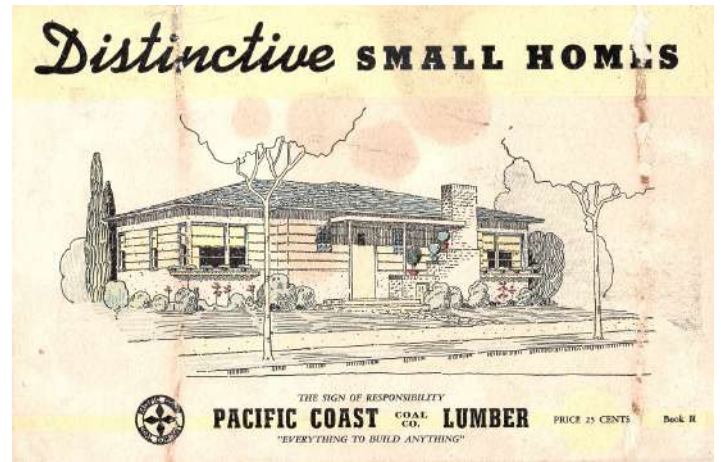
Rates on cattle, in carloads, from Ghent and Fletcher, Calif., to Spreckels, Calif., moving over interstate routes, found unreasonable in the past. Reparation awarded. Future rates prescribed in *Livestock—Western District Rates*, 176 I. C. C. 1, 190 I. C. C. 611. Claims on like shipments from Paola, Calif., to Napa Junction and Tres Pinos, Calif., found barred by the statute.

## From the Archives – Part 2: House Plans

We're getting a bit far afield here, but the Pacific Coast Coal and Lumber Company was under the same corporate umbrella as the Pacific Coast Railway and the Pacific Coast Steamship Company. The lumber business had a big rail-served yard at what is now the intersection of Higuera and South streets in San Luis Obispo, across from the railroad's main depot and shops. People using their lumber meant more business for all involved.

Here we have the cover of a little 1938 plan catalog (cost, 25 cents), and an inside page from the 1939 edition (35 cents), which contained a daring cubist design. There's a prize for anyone who can make the connection between the more traditional gable-roof design and the floor plan.

Looking through the two dozen designs, one sees many houses that look familiar to San Luis Obispo residents.

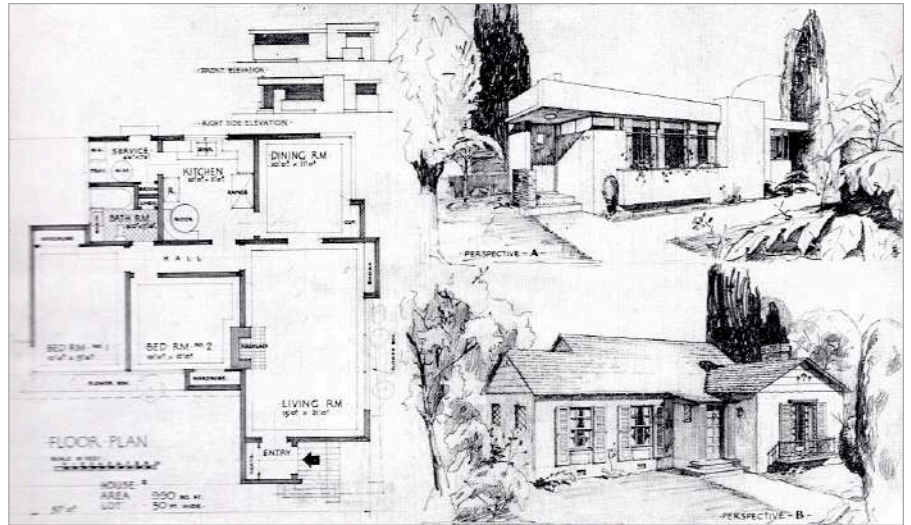


Drawings by Guy Lynn Rosebrook, Architect

## From the Archives – Part 3 Nearly every town had one.

Railroading used to be much more a retail business, with a station agent in nearly every city and town on a rail line. In a small town, the agent often sent and received telegraph messages, copied and delivered train orders, sold passengers tickets, and handled the paperwork and money for shipping and receiving freight.

There was a lot to learn. The Southern Pacific Company *Student Agent's Training Manual* of about 1943, donated by Ken Reiter, provides some insight. It contains 353 pages of advice and examples, and refers to many rules, circulars, and forms.



*From the "Introduction"* The station agent ... is the official and responsible representative of the company... The business of the company ... is conducted largely thru [sic] the station agent.

*From "Weights"* Trans-Continental Freight Bureau has general jurisdiction over weighing matters at points west of El Paso, except Deming, New Mexico. Weighing matters at Deming, El Paso and east thereof are under the jurisdiction of the Western Weighing and Inspections Bureau..."

*With several railroads involved in moving a freight car from one side of the country to the other, the subject of returning "foreign" cars, for which there was a daily charge, was important.* Rule 2. Foreign cars at home [in this case, on SP rails] on a direct connection must be forwarded to the home road loaded or empty.

If empty at junction with the home road and loading at that point is not available, they must, subject to Rule 6, be delivered to it at that junction, unless an exception to the requirement be agreed to by roads involved. When holding road has no physical connection with the home road and is obliged to use an intermediate road or roads, to place the car on home rails under the provisions of this paragraph and the car has record rights to such intermediate road or roads, it may be so delivered.

If empty at other than junction points with the home road, cars under this rule may be:

- (a) Loaded via any route so that the home road will participate in the freight rate, or
- (b) Moved locally in the direction of the home road, or
- (c) Moved locally in an opposite direction from the home road, or delivered to a short line or switching road, if to be loaded for delivery on or movement via the home road, or
- (d) Delivered empty to home road at any junction point, subject to Rule 6, or
- (e) Delivered empty to road from which originally received under load at the junction where received if such road is also a direct connection to the home road, or
- (f) Returned empty to the delivery road when handled in switching service.

*From "Passenger Traffic Section"*  
**Patrons – Do Not Discriminate**

In order to attract and hold patrons you should make certain that there is no class distinction. It is just as important to take care of the smallest customer as though you were handling an outstanding account. Discrimination should not enter into the picture.

*Hopefully everyone was treated well at the counter. Tickets for points east of El Paso were informally coded for racially segregated "Jim Crow" accommodations.*