

Danny the Diesel Locomotive Hauls Rocks



The adventures of a 1940s switching locomotive as told by the San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum.

The San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum is a nonprofit, educational organization dedicated to preserving and presenting California Central Coast railroad history.



Story and illustrations by Glen Matteson

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It is formatted for 8.5 x 11 inches landscape orientation.

Day by day, Danny had fewer cars to switch at Camp Roberts. People all around seemed happier. Trains full of soldiers or loaded with tanks no longer came each day. But more cars then ever went by on the highway.



One day, the man with the quiet voice who had once fixed Danny put a tag on Danny's handrail, patted his air tank gently, and walked away. Weeds started to grow around Danny's tracks. Men in strange clothes came to look at Danny and listen to his motor.



Early one morning, a big crane lifted Danny onto a highway truck. It felt very odd not to have his wheels on rails. He worried when men wrapped chains around his axles, holding him tight to the truck. Soon the truck drove away, taking Danny who knows where!



Many hours later the truck stopped, went through a big gate, and stopped again among many pieces of construction equipment. Danny was unloaded from the truck, again with the help of a crane.



At the construction company Danny pattered around with some freight cars. But this job did not have the bustle and *duty* he had felt at Camp Roberts. Summer nights were warm, and winter nights were often foggy. Many days went by with no work to do.



One day Danny knew he was about to leave this place, too. Where would he be taken next? Would he go back to the clear night skies near San Miguel, to his friend the man with the quiet voice?



Danny took another highway trip, this time along a winding road among gold-grass hills with boulders and dark trees. Finally he stopped where rail cars were loaded with rocks and gravel. At this place familiar looking freight trains visited, sometimes taking away cars loaded with rocks or gravel that Danny had arranged for them.



Some of the passing engines rumbled and growled like Danny! And like Danny they did not puff big billows of smoke and steam. They ignored Danny. But one of the friendly old steamers said to him, “Your kind are the future, my boy, the future. I’m about to retire. But you still have many miles.”



In fact, Danny worked less and less each year. Tall grass started to grow around his tracks again. Danny hoped he was about to go to another job.



Danny got his wish. He went back onto a truck and down into the wide valley. This time he was parked among several cabooses.



Sometimes, among the cabooses and the grazing cattle and the birds flying high overhead, Danny had visitors. But he hardly ever moved. He could hear long trains rumbling by, but they never stopped to talk or share cars. They left no trails of smoke or steam in the cold winter air.



Danny grew lonely. He wanted to be *useful*.

Just when he thought he might never move again, a different man came to look at every part of Danny. He also looked carefully at the ground between Danny and the highway.



This man seemed to mean business. But he left without saying anything to Danny. Danny waited anxiously for something to happen. After several weeks, the same man came back. And following him over the recently cleared ground was a big truck... with rails on its bed!



The original Danny was a standard gauge, 20-ton locomotive with a gasoline engine and a chain drive. It was built in 1941 by the Fate-Root-Heath Company under its Plymouth brand name for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, a branch of the military responsible for building facilities such as bases and air fields in the states and overseas. The Quartermaster Corps assigned it number 2038. It was used to move carloads of material during the development of Camp Roberts near San Miguel, as well as supplies used by the 436,000 soldiers who trained there during World War II (1941 – 1945). No. 2050, a twin locomotive, was used at Camp San Luis Obispo.

After the war the locomotive was declared surplus. It was acquired by a Sacramento-area construction company in 1948. The Eldorado Limestone Company bought it in 1952 for use at a quarry 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 on a ranch at Maxwell, near Chico, California.

Thanks to generous supporters and much work by volunteers, Number 2038 was acquired by the San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum, transported, and put on display in 2018.



No. 2038, labeled for the construction company that acquired it after World War II, being loaded on a highway truck.



No. 2038 as delivered to the San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum display track in 2018. Curator Brad LaRose, who visited Danny among the cabooses, is in the plaid shirt. Museum volunteer Howard Amborn wears the white hardhat.

Books in the *Danny the Diesel Locomotive* series

Published

Danny the Diesel Locomotive

In a cross-country adventure, Danny is moved from the factory where he was made to his first job. It's at an army base near the boundary of San Luis Obispo and Monterey counties, where he finds an important role that at first may be hard to appreciate.

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Danny's military career ends, but he gets a new job at a quarry. Then he's moved to a ranch to be put on display. Almost no one comes to see him, until one day a museum worker visits the ranch.

Planned

Danny the Diesel Locomotive Comes Home

Danny gets his wish to be useful again. He starts a new career at the San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum, teaching children about railroad equipment, operations, and safety.

Danny the Diesel Locomotive Makes Friends

Danny gets to know Carl Caboose, Penny Pullman, Gary Gondola, Ted Tank Car, Brad Boxcar, and Fernando Flat Car. He is surprised to learn about their adventures before they came to the museum. It takes them a while to sort out who goes where on one section of track.