



Coast Mail

News from the San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum



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www.slorm.com

La Condesa Moving to Santa Maria

LaCondesa, the 1926 Pullman open platform passenger car donated to SLORRM in June, 2006, has been stored in Fullerton, California for the last 16 years. When the Museum took possession of the car, it had to start paying \$200 per month rent to the City of Fullerton to keep it on the spur near the Amtrak Station.

The Board of Directors has struck a deal with the *Santa Maria Valley Railroad* to park *LaCondesa* on a spur in their railyard in Santa Maria. At that location Museum members will be able to work on its rehabilitation without having to travel the more than 200 miles to the Los Angeles area. There is a possibility that once *The Countess* has been rehabilitated, she can be used as part of a dinner train in the Santa Maria Valley.



LaCondesa sitting on a spur at Commerce Diesel in City of Commerce in southern California. It was moved there from Fullerton by BNSF and is waiting for UP to move it to where Amtrak can pick it up for the trip to Guadalupe, and then Santa Maria. **Photo by Chris Walker**

Easier said than done

Making the deal with the Santa Maria Valley Railroad was the easy part. Actually moving *LaCondesa* is another story.

The spur on which she sat could only be served by the BNSF. (That's what they call the Santa Fe these days) The Union Pacific is the only freight railroad that serves the central coast. Union Pacific would haul her, but probably by a very circuitous route.

There was the possibility that the car could travel to Guadalupe by way of Barstow, or be left on sidings or spurs or in railyards anywhere in-between for indeterminate lengths of time. The Board decided that this was

unacceptable, fearing for the safety and security of the car.

Finally it was determined that Amtrak would do a one-time move of the car to Guadalupe where it could be picked up by the SMVRR. In order for that to happen to BNSF had to pull

See LaCondesa on page 4

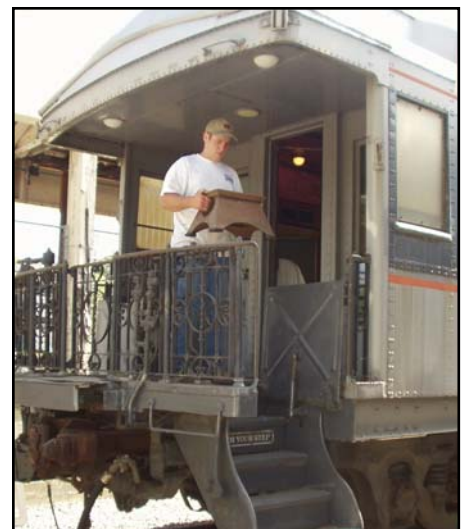


Museum members Karl Hovanitz (on platform) and Dave Rohr (tall guy) and Amtrak Inspector Pat Egan get the *La Condesa* ready for her trip north.

Rotary Club Donates Cash

The Rotary Club of San Luis Obispo has donated \$5,000 to the San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum to be used for the restoration of *LaCondesa*. This makes the second time that the Rotarians have made a donation to SLORRM. We thank them for their generosity and continued support of the Museum.

reported by Arnold Jonas



Jarret LaRose removes a passenger step from *LaCondesa* on June 30, 2007. Jarret and his father, Brad LaRose traveled to Fullerton and brought back all the small "stealable" items from inside *LaCondesa*.



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

- Brad LaRose *President*
- Karl Hovanitz *Vice President*
- Aron Kahn *Secretary*
- David Rohr *Treasurer*
- Bill Pyper *Newsletter Editor*
- Arnold Jonas, John Marchetti, Duane Powell, Frank Rheinisch

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 San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

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.

October 28 — Fall Rail Festival at BitterCreek Western Railroad

- November 13 *Business Meeting*
- December 11 *Business Meeting*
- January 8, 2008 *Business Meeting*
- February 12 *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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PCRY Switch Lock Found

by Steve Mott

A brass switch lock, considered to be a rare artifact from the historic narrow gauge *Pacific Coast Railway* was located at yard sale in San Luis Obispo recently.



Front of Lock

After examining the lock, President Brad LaRose exclaimed, "I believe the lock to be genuine and the only PCRY switch lock known to exist." Vice President Karl Hovanitz concurred.

The Museum received the donation of a Pacific Coast Railway switch lock key from Robert Brown of San Luis Obispo. Mr. Brown's father was in charge of the PCRY Bridge and Building crew (gang) in San Luis Obispo, as was Robert's grandfather before him. This key belonged to one of those men. This key may open the only existing PCRY lock.

The cast brass lock is a heart shaped, riveted construction with a dust cover over the key opening. It uses a tubular brass key with a dog-leg left bit arrangement.

Velocipede Back in SLO

After two years of being displayed by The Santa Maria Valley Railroad Historical Society at its Town Center Mall location, the Velocipede is back in San Luis Obispo.

The 1895 Sheffield Velocipede, beautifully restored for the Museum by the late Phil Gould, will soon be displayed at the San Luis Obispo County Historical Museum on Monterey Street near Mission Plaza.

The markings on the hasp are PCRY on one side and the maker's name on the other. The lock was manufactured in 1903 by the E. T. Fraim Company in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

The tarnish was so stubborn that Brasso barely touched it. A pint bath of white vinegar with a pinch of table salt caused the tarnish to nearly leap off the lock and leave it presentable.



Back of lock with PCRY stamped on hasp.

Coincidentally, an unmarked brass key was found in an antique shop in Old Towne Arroyo Grande a few weeks later by this writer who also had found the lock. It is of the tubular dogleg left arrangement, and to everyone's surprise, it opened the lock.



Since it is unmarked, it cannot be claimed as a PCRY key. The reason being, that of the thousands of key cutting combinations available, it is possible that the key came from another unknown railroad. The thumb ring is worn so thin by bouncing around with other keys on a key ring, plus regular use, that any markings are long gone.

All photos by the author.



Jarret LaRose, longtime Museum member, unloads the bright yellow velocipede from his truck at the Emily Street storage yard.

New Members

Michael Reneaux has become a member of SLORRM since the last issue of Coast Mail was published.

Renewals . . .

Michael Burrell, Karl Hovanitz, Ralph George, Gary See, Peter and Jeanatte Arnold, Bill Barbour, William Bruckart, Willie Chambers, Ray Craig, Elaine Dutra, Craig and Cheryl McCollum, Andy and Sue McMeans, Christopher Palermo, Roland Pautz, Robert and Kim Ryan, Paul Scheckler, Bob and Dodie Williams, Larry Tarpley, Stan Wilson, Bob and Willie Zilkey, William Burnette and family, Paul Deis, Mike Palmer, Steve McCarty, Bill Bordeaux and Family, Charles Kinzer, Jim McEntire, and John Miramon have renewed their membership since the last Coast Mail was published.

Life Members

Gerry Johnson, Jim Thornburg, and Paul and Robertine Freshwater have become Life Members since the last issue of Coast Mail was published.

If you're not a member,

please join. Your support is needed. Single members pay \$36 per year. A family can join for \$60, a sustaining member pays \$100 per year. Mail to SLORRM, P. O. Box 13260, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406. See below for information about Life Memberships.

Become a Life 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 especially 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.

Life Memberships: receive a special laminated membership card, 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

Company Store

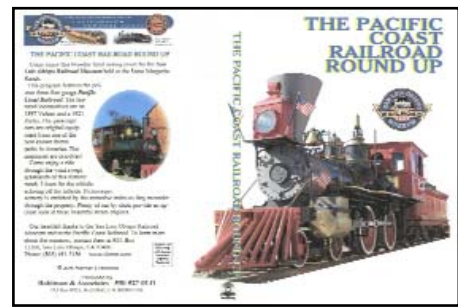
SLORRM has a variety of items for sale to raise money for the Museum. All the goods shown below are available for purchase at any time.

To order, send a check to SLORRM, P. O. Box 13260, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406. Local orders will be delivered. Outside of SLO County please include \$5.00 for shipping and handling.



Roundup Video Available: \$20⁰⁰

Robinson & Associates of Red Bluff, California has produced a DVD from video taken by them at the *Pacific Coast Railroad Roundup* in 2005. The hour-long video presents a great view of the two-day event.



Videos and DVD's \$20⁰⁰

Southern Pacific Scrapbook. Final look at SP in California and Arizona.

SP Vintage West features many scenes from Bernice Jackson films. Shows SP from 1950 to 1978.

SP When the empire was intact. 1965-1975. A Look at a Great Era.

Electric Rails of Utah, featuring more of Bernice Jackson's film.

All the above were donated to the Museum by **Charles Smiley Presents.**



12 oz. Coffee Mugs \$10



T-Shirts \$17⁰⁰

Gray Haynes Beefy-T with SLORRM logo printed on front and the Historic Railroad District logo on back. Available in adult sizes; S, M, L, XL, XXL. Children's S, M, L.



Family Life Memberships: receive special laminated membership cards for all family members, the Coast Mail newsletter, two enameled pins, two embroidered patches, 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.



Hats \$8⁰⁰
Adult or Child's



Belt Buckle \$25⁰⁰



Blue and Tan Baseball Hat \$20
one size fits all



2" dia. Embroidered Patch \$5



1" dia. Enameled Pin \$5

LaCondesa *continued*

the car out of the spur and move it to an interchange with the UP who would then transport it to the Amtrak yard in Los Angeles. That's where it sits at press time.

On July 28, 2007, Dave Rohr, Rudy Morganfruth, Ron Milot and Karl Hovanitz met Pat Egan, an Amtrak car inspector in Fullerton. Pat inspected the car and gave his okay for a one-time trip to Santa Maria.

Lots of work ahead . . .

Once La Condesa is in Santa Maria there will be lots of work to do before she can be put into service carrying private parties behind an Amtrak train.

Beside the obvious need of a good cleaning and a complete repainting of the outside, there is a lot of mechanical work to do. Both of the trucks will have to be taken completely apart and checked for wear and stress cracks. New electrical cables matching current Amtrak specifications will have to be installed. The extensive repairs and updates needed will take a lot of time and money.

What's in a name?

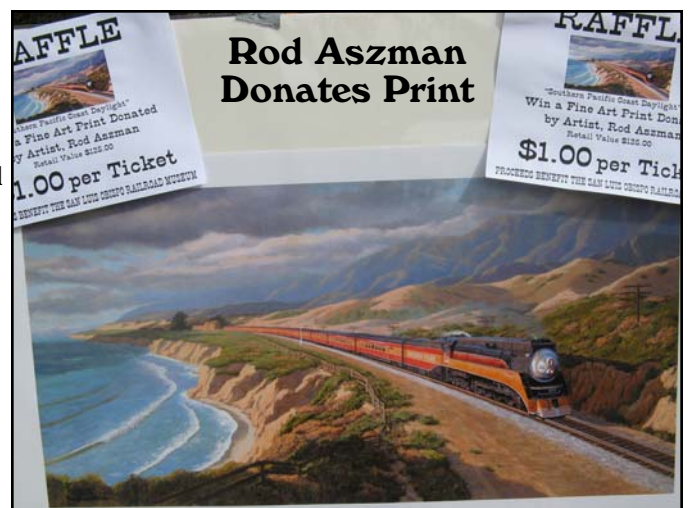
The Board of Directors is considering changing the name of the car to something more representative of the Central Coast and San Luis Obispo. Some of the names suggested are; *Stenner Creek, Coast, Morro Rock, Santa Lucia and El Cuesta*. If you have any suggestions please send them to SLORRM, Post Office Box 13260, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406 or e-mail to info@slorrm.com.



Museum members who come to the **Emily Street Yard** for work parties can kick back and relax during breaks on the new deck built under the only shade tree on the property. The deck was built by **Eagle Scout Cameron Metzger** as his community service project required to become an Eagle Scout. Cameron was sponsored by SLORRM Board Member **Frank Rheinisch**. *photo by Aron Kahn*

And the Winner is

Rod Aszman, active Museum member and talented Railroad Artist donated one of his works, titled *"The Coast Daylight between Surf and Gaviota, California"* to be raffled off at the last BitterCreek fundraiser. The limited edition print was won by Bob Mowry of Santa Barbara.



How Standard Gauge got to be the Standard

In the United States, the standard railroad gauge (distance between the rails) is 4 feet, 8½ inches. That is an exceedingly odd number, so why was it used? Because that's the way they built them in England, and the first railroads in the United States were built by British expatriates.

Why did the British build them like that? Because the first rail lines were built by the same people who built the pre-railroad tramways, and that's the spacing they used. Why did "they" use that gauge? Because the people who built the tramways employed the same jigs and tools that were used for

building wagons, which incorporated that wheel spacing.

Okay, why did the wagons have that particular odd wheel spacing? Well, if they tried using any other width, the wagon wheels would break on some of the old, long distance roads because that was the width of the ruts.

Who built those old rutted roads? Imperial Rome built the first long distance roads in Europe and England for their conquering legions. These roads have been modernized and are still in use today.

And the ruts in the roads? Roman war chariots formed the initial ruts,

everyone else had to match for fear of destroying their wagon wheels. Since the chariots were made for Imperial Rome, they all had the same wheel spacing. So the result is, the American standard railroad gauge of 4 feet, 8½ inches comes from the original width of Imperial Roman war chariots.

Bureaucracies live forever. So the next time you are handed a specification and wonder what horse's ass came up with it, you may be exactly right, because the Imperial Roman army chariots were made just wide enough to accommodate the back ends of two war horses.