



Newsletter of the Goleta Depot Railroad Museum

Volume 7, Number 4 — Winter, 1987

Sunday Added to New Museum Schedule

Effective Dec. 1, the museum will change over to a new schedule of being open Wednesday through Sunday. Hours will remain 1 to 4 p.m., with docent-guided tours of the building and grounds offered on Saturdays at 3 p.m. The model railroad exhibit will be open Saturdays only, also from 1 to 4 p.m.

The addition of Sundays to our weekly schedule has been made possible by the recruitment of two new agents, Eugene Boswell and John Marshall Starr, from our docents corps. Other Sundays will be staffed by three agents of long standing: Bev Casselman, Ernest Thomsen, and Gary Coombs.

Membership Renewal Time is Here

It's time once again for all Institute members, including Depot Friends, to renew their memberships for another year. The only exceptions are Life Members and new members who joined after Oct. 1 of this year. If you are in doubt about this, consult the expiration date on your membership card, or contact the Institute office (☎ 964-3549).

You will save us both time and expense by returning the enclosed envelope with your check as soon as possible. Thank you.

Christmas Party Marks Holiday Season

Our holidays party will be held on Thurs., Dec. 10, from 4 p.m. 'til 7. All members and their guests are cordially invited to attend this informal gathering. Please bring a snack or hors d'oeuvre to share.

Each year, we also ask new members and those who haven't participated in the past to bring an ornament, with your name and the year recorded on it, to add to the depot tree. Our goal is to have as many members and friends represented on the tree as possible, so if you can't attend the party, please consider mailing or bringing in an ornament.

The depot tree has special historical meaning. It

renews the custom of railroad station agents and their families to place the traditional tree in the window bay, where its lights of hope and wonder could be seen and enjoyed by the travelers and crews on passing trains. After the party, the tree and the lovely Victorian scene it creates may be viewed by car from Los Carneros Road every evening through New Years.

Those at the party will also be able to help put the final touches on our holiday display.

A Toy Train for Christmas

A highlight of the holiday season at the museum will be the return of our popular seasonal exhibit, "A Toy Train for Christmas." Centered around the depot tree in the upstairs window bay, the exhibit will be open Dec. 12-31, during regular museum hours.

Diorama for HO Exhibit in Preparation

Hilda Volkman has been painting diligently over the past several weeks on the scenic backdrop for the model railroad exhibit. She has been getting some valuable advice from Ray Strong, the local artist whose handsome diorama work at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History has been enjoyed by three generations of area residents and visitors.

Presently, Hilda is working on the seascape portion of the backdrop, which includes the Santa Barbara Channel and offshore islands. Her husband Al has been helping by preparing the masonite panels for her brushwork and by transporting them between their home, where the painting is done, and the museum. Hilda is the subject of this issue's "Portrait of a Museum Volunteer" (page 3).

Much progress has been made recently on the physical appearance of the model railroad exhibit. One of the biggest changes has resulted from the laying of soils and groundcovers over most of the layout.

Bill Cormack is preparing a model of the old Hotel Neal, located next to the Santa Barbara passenger station, while Stu Wallace is about done with the

DISPATCH QUIZ

With this issue, we launch another new feature of the Depot Dispatch for the enjoyment and edification of our readers. Each issue, the "Dispatch Quiz" will contain a series of questions, about Goleta Depot, our museum, or railroading in general. Those sending in the most correct answers will be eligible to win a gift membership in their name for a friend or loved one.

Here are this issue's questions:

1. What is the car number of the museum's SP caboose?
a) 4045 b) 3062 c) 4023 d) 3061
2. How many drive wheels are there on the type of locomotive known as a "Ten-wheeler"?
3. What is the full name of the Amtrak train that goes through our area, running between Los Angeles and Seattle?

The Rules: ✉ Write your answers on a plain piece of paper and mail them to: Dispatch Quiz, Goleta Depot Railroad Museum, 300 N. Los Cameros Rd., Goleta, CA 93117. To be eligible, entries must be received by Dec. 15, 1987. In case of multiple correct entries, a random drawing will determine the winner.

landscaping and grounds preparation around the station. Installation of the Santa Barbara roundhouse and turntable has been finished by Bill Everett, who is now working on a model of the famous Moreton Bay Fig tree. Ray Baird is doing the final assembly of his Arroyo Hondo Bridge, which will be the centerpiece of the oceanfront scene.

Bill Ewing is hard at work upgrading the layout wiring and switches. The newest member of the model railroad crew is Dara Emery, who has been assisting in a variety of ways.

Another HO modeler, Malcolm Alexander, who is also one of the museum's stalwart Work-Day volunteers, has been on a trip back home to Merrie Olde England since Depot Day. At last report, he plans to be back for our Christmas Party, unless he decides to extend his stay through the holiday season.

San Diego Train

The inaugural run of Amtrak's new San Diego train has twice been postponed, first to gain necessary final approvals from the Santa Barbara City Council and the second time to install the electrical system needed to start the engine each morning.

The new first-run date has been tentatively set for Jan. 17, 18, or 19 (Sat., Sun., or Mon., respectively). Those who have made reservations will be kept up to date on developments by telephone. If you would like to be added to the list, please contact the museum office (964-3540, weekdays). The roundtrip fare is \$48.50, but we will not collect any more deposits until a date has been firmly set. Those who have already paid a deposit will receive a refund if they can't make the date Amtrak eventually selects.

Depot Day Report

Another momentous Depot Day has been recorded in the museum annals. Attendance was good in spite of the cold and overcast day. Riders on the trains and inspection speeder numbered 497 and another 167 people enjoyed the tri-tip barbecue prepared by members of the Native Sons of the Golden West and served by Institute for American Research board members.

Many thanks to these and the scores of other hard-working volunteers and donors of supplies and auction items, who made possible this special day of education, fundraising, and fun for the museum and its guests.

Depot Stars in National Magazine Ad

Be sure to watch for the depot in a Toyota Corolla advertisement soon to appear in several national magazines. The full-page ad depicts a night or pre-dawn scene, with a silver 1988 Corolla stationwagon and a young couple in the foreground, backlit by a yellow-orange glow streaming through the distinctive bay windows of Goleta Depot's freight office. The front "Goleta" signboard is faintly visible and other features of the historical landmark can be seen.

This is the depot's third use in major corporate advertising. AT&T and Chrysler Corp. have also employed Goleta Depot as the setting for a photographic session.

The depot is also becoming quite popular locally, as a symbol of the Goleta community. It has appeared in newspaper and magazine ads for Raytheon Co., Santa Barbara Bank and Trust, and La Tolteca, and in a full-color calendar of popular Santa Barbara-area scenes. The depot appears at the top of the Goleta Valley Chamber of Commerce newsletter and on the letterhead of Goleta Beautiful, Inc., the organization that began and led the drive to save the historical building.

Grant Furthers Museum Development

In Vol. 6, No. 2 of the *Depot Dispatch* (Summer 1986), report was made of a \$1,000 grant to the museum from the Institute of Museum Services, administered by the American Association of Museums. The grant's purpose was to support an evaluation of our programs and practices by a visiting museum professional.

Our assessment was conducted in June by Dr. Allan

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PORTRAIT OF A MUSEUM VOLUNTEER

Hilda Volkman came to this area in 1961, when her husband, Al, was transferred to the Local General Motors plant from the company's Aeroproducts Division in Vandalia, Ohio.

In Ohio, Hilda had established her credentials as a commercial artist. She painted murals, for restaurants, bowling alleys, and other businesses, and landscapes on consignment for individuals.

She continued her consignment work locally, during the 1960s and '70s, preparing landscapes, seascapes, and portraits of horses. During this time, she also applied her artistic skills as a volunteer, designing floats for Fiesta parades for nine years.

Since Al's retirement in 1972, Hilda has devoted much of her free time to a number of local nonprofit organizations, volunteering for the Humane Society, Church of Religious Science, the Museum of Natural History, the Goleta Valley Historical Society, and others. Among her donated services to these groups have been examples of her art in a variety of forms. As a historical society director in the early 1980s, Hilda was instrumental in securing a portion of the society's annual June barbecue revenues for the Goleta Depot Project.

Hilda and Al have three grown children, a son, Joe, and daughters, Kay and Loy. The Volkman's are charter Depot Friends, but Hilda has been especially active in 1987.

Hilda serves as a museum agent one day each week and has prepared sketches of three different depot scenes, which have been reproduced for children to color. She has spent many hours painting the diorama for the museum's model railroad exhibit, an ambitious undertaking which has earned her the title, "The Michelangelo of Goleta Depot."



Hilda Volkman

D. Griesemer, Director of the San Bernardino County Museum. His advisory report included many valuable recommendations for improvements, as well as identifying those areas in which the museum already excels. We are now beginning to implement changes in response to Dr. Griesemer's thoughtful and comprehensive evaluation.

Stamps Celebrate Early Days of Rail

Members may be interested to know that the U.S. Postal Service has issued a set of new first-class stamps featuring five steam locomotives from the early 1800s. All five stamps may be purchased in booklets of 20 stamps for \$4.40 from any post office. Postal rates are expected to go up early next year, so these stamps will probably be available for a limited time only.

Welcome New Members

Warm greetings to our newest members: Al and Dolores Hartnett, Kathryn Marrs, Mr. and Mrs. Q.L. Richard, Mary H. Sonne, Mrs. George Stevens, and Alice J. Wilks.

We hope your association with the Institute and the museum will be an enjoyable one, and that you will take part in some of our many activities.

Handcar Pumpers Return ... Triumphant

Our first competitive bid in the U.S. National Handcar Races was a not-to-be-forgotten experience. The team arrived in Sacramento about 11 p.m. on Thurs., Sept. 17. The ride from Santa Barbara on the Coast Starlight had been pleasant, the scenery beautiful.

After a good night's rest, we took our practice run on Friday morning. Unfortunately, the time we had arranged conflicted with other preparations for Saturday's time trials, so we weren't able to work with the handcar as much as we would have liked.

Much of Friday was devoted to developing strategies for improving our chances in the competition. Which team members would take which places on the car? How would we position the pump-bar for the all-important start? Would we look okay in our official handcar race T-shirts? These and other crucial questions were pondered and debated throughout the day.

Saturday came and our team assembled at the race area. The races are strictly a time-trials competition, with only one team and one handcar active at a time. An electronic timing system is used to measure elapsed times to the nearest one-thousandth of a second.

The excitement mounted as we watched the other teams take their turns, until the race officials finally called for the "Goleta Depot Railroad Museum" team to prepare.

After each team completes its turn, the handcar is given over to the next team, which must pump it back to the start. As we passed the stands, our team name was announced and a big cheer went up from the crowd. We were one of only five teams from outside Northern California (another team hailed from Southern California and three were from other western states).

By the time we reached the starting line, however, any hopes of bringing home a trophy had long been dashed. Watching the other teams earlier, we realized



Handcar Team '87 — Goleta Depot Railroad Museum

that this is a very serious competition for most of the entrants. Many teams train year-round and their members include professional football players, bodybuilders, and other athletes.

We were entered in one of the more recreational classes, the "Masters Mixed" division, but even here our team was plainly outmatched. After all, the average age of our members was greater than for any other team at the races by at least 10 years!

Our trip up the tracks to the starting line killed any lingering doubts about our chances like a sharpshooter's bullet. Now we realized, as never before, how long the course really was — over three football fields set end to end — and some of us were already feeling a little winded.

There was no stopping at this point, of course, so we readied ourselves for the big run. Riders all face forward, a pair each behind the front and rear bars, which are pumped in see-saw fashion. Members Gary Coombs and Phyllis Olsen took up places behind the front bar, while Gene Allen and Anna Dato took hold of the rear bar.

The fifth member doesn't ride, but is instead responsible for putting the car into motion with a big shove. Our "pusher" was George Adams, the oldest participant in the competition, who positioned himself behind the car, his feet firmly against the pusher's starting-block.

For a moment there was silence, which was shattered by the report of the starting gun. George leaned into the car, giving it a mighty push, then falling for-

ward into an awaiting mattress. The car's initial movement set the bars into motion, which the team members quickly accelerated, and we were off! Before long we had reached top speed and all around was a blur.

Although the run lasted less than a minute, many dramas were played out in those few fleeting moments spent hurtling down the track. The course is not straight — its curves, dips, and bumps adding unnecessary tumult to an already thrilling experience. The front riders, their view unimpeded, were especially unnerved by the two switches along the way, with their sharp steel points aimed threateningly at the on-coming handcar and its passengers.

We learned quickly that it isn't possible just to enjoy the ride, relaxing while one's fellows do all the work. The bar, which must be held to avoid a fall, pumps incessantly, with or without your participation, thus causing arms, back, legs, and lungs to be exercised at a rapid and unrelenting rate.

At least one of us wanted to disembark early, before we reached the finish. Unfortunately, she expressed her desire openly, loudly, and in a fashion which caused a young woman spectator to emit an anxious gasp, fearful that her young daughter had heard the adult word discharged like garbage from the passing car.

On we sped, until, mercifully, we reached the end. Fortunately, a somewhat disoriented Gary remembered the brake — and was able to gather enough wits to reconstruct its location, and enough energy to move a fatigued leg to the spot — thereby avoiding a collision with a full-size passenger car from the railroad museum's historical collection.

Our qualifying time was 49.9 seconds, or an average of about 13.5 miles per hour for the 300-meter course. Not enough to make Sunday's finals, but a respectable showing, we thought, all things considered. Our wounds — mostly mental — healed quickly, in any case, and we soon found ourselves yearning for next year's competition and the chance to best this year's time.

The balance of our Sacramento trip was a relaxing departure from the excitement of the races and a thorough pleasure. We visited the capitol, the railroad museum on the free passes issued to all competitors, and many of the other historical museums and sites. Much time was spent shopping in Old Sacramento and enjoying some of the city's fine restaurants. A Sunday river trip and brunch aboard an old stern-wheeler was especially memorable.

