

Goleta DEPOT DISPATCH



Newsletter of the South Coast Railroad Museum

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El Niño Storms Ravage Museum and Grounds

Like so many others, the museum has not been spared the wrath of El Niño.

Due largely to a week-long museum shutdown, attendance for the month of February was down more than 50% compared with a year ago. The museum had to be closed when one of the 100-foot eucalyptus trees flanking our northern boundary, near the parking lot, fell in the first February storm, blocking the entry walkway and making normal public access to the property impossible.

The tree also fell across the miniature train track, buckling the rail in two places. Ride operations resumed about ten days later, with slow orders issued for this stretch of the line. **Gene Allen** replaced the damaged rail during the week of Feb. 23.

The storms also produced numerous wash-outs and sink-holes under or near the track, as well as elsewhere on the property. The train ran on only five of the 16 scheduled dates during the month, with the result that ridership was down over 60% compared to 1997.

Four other trees, all California peppers planted many years ago by the museum, also

Several trees blocked the Goleta Short Line.



Tree fall closed the museum for a week.

were toppled over in the same February storm. As this issue goes to press, a fifth pepper leans precariously, held in place by a 2x10 plank. This vulnerable specimen and another of the eucalyptus trees may still fall over in the water-softened ground and the high winds that have accompanied most El Niño storms.

The crawl space beneath the depot has been flooded several times already this year. On Feb. 16, we measured 16 inches of water under the building. Two submersible pumps were used to remove the accumulation. The extent of water damage to the building, if any, is unknown at this time.

In Memoriam: Ernest Thomsen

The museum family mourns the loss of **Ernest Thomsen**, longtime member, volunteer, and dedicated friend. He died Jan. 9.

We will remember Ernie for his gentle good-humor, and the special way that he could add so much to any occasion by his mere presence. Ernie kept a special place in his heart for Goleta Depot and the railroad museum. Many of us

have always felt much the same way about him.

Ernie was a museum agent for many years, until failing health forced his retirement. His skills as a professional carpenter benefitted the museum in numerous ways over the years, including help in the hanging of doors during the depot restoration back in 1982.

Ernie and his wife, Metta, were among the first local residents to become "Friends of Goleta Depot," in support of the campaign to save Goleta Depot. Later, they became Life Members and contributors to the museum endowment. Their daughter, artist Genie Thomsen, is a frequent contributor to the Depot Day auction.

The museum has received donations in memory of Ernest Thomsen from **Gary Coombs, Bob and Phyllis Flett, Mr and Mrs Arent H. Schuyler, Jr., Sheila van der Sleen, and Hilda Volkman.**

Easter Bunny Will Visit Museum On April 11

The *Easter Bunny Express* is one of the museum's most eagerly-awaited annual family events. This year marks the event's 6th anniversary. It will be held Saturday, April 11, from 11 a.m. until 4 p.m.

Those holding the event's egg-shaped tickets will be able to participate in a variety of fun activities, including scheduled stops at *Wabbit-Twacks Station* (to board the museum's miniature train for a 1/3-mile ride around the grounds); *Harvey's House* (where a cookie and beverage await); *Easter-Bunnyville* (to meet the **Easter Bunny** and select an egg surprise); *Jack-Rabbit Junction* (to enter a drawing for some marvelous gifts); and *What's Up Dock* (to collect another event souvenir).

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Tickets are \$3 for children and \$2.50 for adults (adult tickets do not include the *What's Up Dock* and *Easter-Bunnyville* activities).

Tickets will be available at the museum during the event until 3:30 p.m.; or they may be purchased in advance during regular visitor hours (Wed.-Sun., 1-4 p.m.).

Members of the **Goleta Lions Club** will be lending us a hand again this year. The Lions plan to sell hot sandwiches and other refreshments, with all proceeds from their booth benefitting the museum. So please plan to join us for lunch and support the Lions' participation!

Hop aboard the *Easter Bunny Express* on April 11. It promises to be another hare-raising eggs-perience for the whole family!

In case of rain on the 11th, the event will be held Saturday, April 18.

Neal Graffy To Speak May 20 on Arlington Hotel

Local lecturer and historian **Neal Graffy** will present a program, *Two Hotels and a Theater: A History of the Arlington*, on Wednesday, May 20. This spring-'98 installment of the railroad museum's *Continuing Lecture Series* will take place at Goleta Library, 500 North Fairview Ave., beginning at 7:30 p.m.

The presentation will be of particular interest to rail fans, in addition to those fascinated by local history. The original Arlington Hotel in Santa Barbara was built in 1887 to accommodate travelers arriving in town via the newly

completed Southern Pacific Railroad line.

Chairman of the Santa Barbara County Landmarks Committee, Neal Graffy has been a frequent contributor to the Continuing Lecture Series. Refreshments will be served following the program.

Year-End Appeal Gifts Earn Museum Dividends

Gifts totaling \$1,883 from members and friends in response to the Year-End Appeal have given the museum a much needed boost going into 1998.

Donors included **Richard M. Abbott; Christine Allen; Shirley Baird; Mrs. Elsie Boeseke; Betty J. Coombs; Gary Coombs; Michael and Betsy Couch; Craig, May and Brandon Droese; John L. Friend; Michael and Brenda Gartzke; Goleta Valley Paint; Sheila and Bill Holzer; Josiah F. Jenkins; Ellen Keeter; Ralph and Scott Kornahrens; Kip and Stella Kramer; David and Susan Kuehn; Noel Langle; Joseph L. Lemons; John Locke; Alyssa Lyon; Bob and Helen McPherin; Josephine A. Millett; Isabel Friend Newman; Lee and Suzanne Polansky; Dan and Liz Powell; S. and K. Romofsky; Stella Haverland Rouse; Mary H. Sonne (In Memory of Ruth C. Hammond); John Marshall Starr; Tom and Beulah Strout; Rich and Linda Thom; Michael Towbes; R.R. Dana Trout; and Hilda Volkman.**

On behalf of everyone who benefits from the museum and its programs, special thanks to all year-end givers.

Director Receives Community Award

In November, Museum Director Gary Coombs received the "Goleta Pride" award for service to the community. The monthly award is co-sponsored by the **Goleta Valley Chamber of Commerce, Goleta Beautiful**, and the **Goleta Rotary Clubs**.

Christmas Tree Purchases Helped Museum

Thank you to all of the area families who used the special museum coupons when purchasing their Christmas trees last year at the **Noel Tree Farm**. The museum earned a nice donation from the tree farm in recognition of your purchases.

Local Foundations Award Funds For Grounds-Improvement Work

The **Alice Tweed Tuohy Foundation** and **La Vista Foundation For The Blind and Physically Handicapped** each have awarded the railroad museum a capital-enhancement grant. Both grants will be applied toward planned improvements to the museum grounds.

The Tuohy Foundation's \$8,600 grant matches a grant for the same amount from the **Wood-Claeyssens Foundation**, which was reported in the Winter '97-'98 issue of the *Depot Dispatch*. Each of the two grants represents about 30% of the total project budget.

La Vista Foundation's \$2,865 award, about 10% of the total budget, will be used to help to ensure that the project is accessible to persons with disabilities.

As previously reported here, the proposed grounds plan includes four elements: (1) construction of a new museum entry structure, patterned after a country rail passenger stop, which visitors will pass through as they enter the museum grounds; (2) resurfacing of pathways between the depot and miniature-train boarding area for improved accessibility, especially for visitors in wheelchairs; (3) construction of a group-picnic area, to accommodate better the museum's usage for birthday parties and other public group gatherings; and; (4) installation of additional wooden post-and-rail fencing near the museum's eastern border, to provide greater visitor safety, especially with regard to the miniature train.

Bazemore Gift To Museum Library Announced

The museum is the recent recipient of a collection of railroad books from member **Tom Bazemore**, according to Museum Director Gary Coombs. The 33 books that comprise the Bazemore gift deal primarily with the railways of Great Britain.

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The collection has been added to the museum's library, which includes almost 1,000 railroad titles.

Candy Cane Train Endures Poor Weather

Despite a very wet holiday season, the 5th annual *Candy Cane Train* enjoyed a relatively successful 1997 run.

The event, which is held five days a week between Thanksgiving and Christmas, was rained out an unprecedented seven days over the four-week span, including four key weekend days. This left only 12 days for the event, compared with 16 operating days in 1996.

Most of those remaining 12 days, however, were productive ones. On Saturday, Dec. 20, for example, the museum set a Candy Cane Train record with 241 rides given. Nevertheless, total ridership for the event was down about 10% overall compared with 1996.

"Super Saturday II" Draws Big January Crowd

The Second Annual *Super Saturday!*, christened "*Super Saturday II*," was held Jan. 24. The offer of free rides on the Goleta Short Line for all visitors attracted another large crowd to the museum.

The 275 rides given set another one-day record for any date over the November-through-February period, surpassing the record total set last year during the inaugural *Super Saturday*.

Special thanks are owed to our six *Super Saturday* sponsors: **Alternative Graphics, Friedlander & Associates Insurance Services, Michael J. Gartzke, CPA, Mid-State Bank, Nancy and Walt Ried, and Timbers Restaurant & Catering.** They are *super*, too!



Storms Slow Goleta Rail Station Work

The opening date for the Goleta Amtrak station has been pushed back once again. This time, the delays are due to the same El Niño storms that have shut down Amtrak West train operations twice since Feb. 1.

The last *Depot Dispatch* reported a projection from **Robert Crego**, District Manager for Amtrak West, that the platform at Goleta could be ready to handle some passengers as early as mid-December. Now, April or May would

appear to be the earliest possible start date.

Museum Director Gary Coombs has been writing a bi-weekly column for the *Goleta Valley Voice*, the community's weekly newspaper, leading up to the station opening. To date, the column has appeared in the Jan. 28, Feb. 11, and Feb. 25 issues. The last incorporated a brief history of Goleta's train stations, and included photographs of both Goleta Depot and the Ellwood station.

Memorial Gift Received

A gift in memory of **Robert B. McNeel**, longtime member and museum docent, has been received from **John Marshall Starr**.

Welcome New Members

New members are **Peter Baltuff, Victoria Blunt, Chrystal Carlson, Channel City Lumbar, D.C. DeMilio, Goleta National Bank, Lamar Hoover, Kristopher Killackey, Linnea Kindig, Nancy Smiler Levinson, Patrick Maloney, Tom Pollock, Anneliese Schneider, Marvin R. Winner, and Barrie Zaks.**

New Junior Engineers Club members include **Vaughn Anderson, Connor Riva, and Tyler Smith.**

A most hearty welcome to all new members!

Coast Starlight Guide Program Update



Onboard training of volunteers for the Coast Starlight Guide Program has gotten underway — but only barely. The program has become yet another victim of the winter's storms.

Two trips, which included about half of the program's 39 volunteer-trainees, were completed in January, but other scheduled trips had to be postponed, because of long train delays and cancellation of Coast Starlight operations due to track damage. Training will resume April 4.

The museum still hopes to be ready to implement the interpretive program this summer. In the program, which covers the area between Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo, onboard guides share the area's natural, cultural, and historical sites and points of interest with passengers aboard Amtrak's *Coast Starlight* train.

Sponsors of the interpretive program include **California State Parks, Goleta Valley Chamber of Commerce, Santa Barbara Conference & Visitors Bureau, and Santa Barbara County Parks.**

Holiday Display Features Member Keepsakes

A special thank-you to everyone who participated in this year's holiday-season display, which opened Nov. 28 and continued into the new year.

Eugene Allen's live-steam locomotives, the O-gauge LMS-265 and the "Birmingham Dribbler" were a big hit again this year.

Scotty Becker, son of museum docent **Ken Becker**, contributed "Merry-Lee," a huge stuffed bear, to the display.

Many Junior Engineer Club members and their families participated again this year. **Sean and Devin Urbany** shared two family stuffed animal keepsakes, "Bear" and "Pinky."

Kelso Calderwood built a "Kitten Choo-Choo" especially for the exhibition.

Bjorn and Nicholas Lensander loaned two teddy bears and their giant train, large enough for them to ride.

Emerson Temkin brought a wooden train handmade in Costa Rica.

Daniel Henry shared "Genoa" and her two little bear cubs.

"Train Dave," an engineer bear, came from the home of **Brandon Droese**.

The display also featured cars from **James Nivin's** train, handmade by his uncle.

The HO-scale "Santa Express" was the creation of **Rollin Gartzke**.

Kevin Blum assembled another short train for the display.

The display also featured several items from the museum collections: a spring-driven locomotive given by **Louise Marr**; an antique teddy bear from **Isabel Friend Newman**, and an O-gauge Lionel caboose, No. 817.

Fencing Work Completed

The new post-and-rail fencing near the east perimeter of the museum property is the only element of the planned grounds project that will utilize museum volunteers and County SWAP-program workers. **Gene Allen** is coordinating the effort, which was begun in late February and completed on March 7.

The fencing is designed to improve visitor safety, while affording better protection to the Goleta Short Line track and equipment.



Volunteers Needed

There is still an important need at the museum for more volunteers in all visitor-contact areas. Many of our dedicated volunteers are generously giving extra hours each month to cover the shortage. In January and February, for example, additional shifts were turned in by all of the following hard-working volunteers: **Edee Brown, Joel Bingham, Theresa Caccese, Ed Leska, Bruce Morden, Margaret Pryde, Ellyn Roberts, and Hilda Volkman.**

Please consider lending a hand!. If you have at least one afternoon (only about three hours) available each month to give to your museum and would like to share our wonderful historical landmark and activities with museum guests, please give Assistant Director Phyllis Olsen a call at 964-3540. She will be happy to tell you more about the duties and rewards of the museum's volunteer program.

Volunteer docents are crucial to many of the activities and services that our visitors enjoy. Some volunteers are engineers, conductors, and crew on the Goleta Short Line and handcar. Others are clerks in the Trackside Shop, operate the Gandy Dancer Theater, or share Goleta Depot and the model railroad exhibit.

"Great Rail Race" Slated For May 16

With a reprise of last year's successful "Great Goleta Rail Race" theme, the museum's spring fundraiser celebrates its 17th anniversary on Saturday, May 16.

Reminiscent of the tale of John Henry, the *Great Goleta Rail Race* offers its own rendition of the epic struggle between man and machine, as the people-powered museum handcar is pitted against the Goleta Short Line miniature-train in a competition to determine which can complete the greatest number of passenger-miles over a three-hour period.

From 1 until 4 p.m. on race day, both the handcar and train will operate continuously, giving free rides to all visitors. Race officials will keep careful record of the total passengers carried and the distance completed by each conveyance.

The Great Race winner will be determined based on these totals, adjusted using a handicap based on last year's results, in which the miniature train compiled 50 more passenger-miles than the handcar.

Local high-school math classes and clubs again are being challenged to predict this year's results, with a prize for the most accurate estimations.

Museum members, as well as the general

public, are invited to attend, to observe the action and cheer on the participants, as well as to actively join in as rider-participants. At the event, you, your family members, and friends may throw your support behind either the handcar or train, simply by riding that vehicle once or as often as you like; or, you may use the opportunity to enjoy the free rides on both the train and handcar. All riders will receive a certificate acknowledging their *Great Race* participation.

The museum's normal, slow operating speeds will be maintained throughout the event on both rides. Train riders must be at least 34 inches tall; the handcar ride has a 48-inch height requirement.

In addition to the day's fun, the *Great Goleta Rail Race* also has a serious side. The spring fundraiser is one of the railroad museum's most important annual income sources, generating more than 10% of all monies needed for operations. Funds are raised by many of the event participants, including members of the Board of Trustees, who obtain financial pledges from sponsors, including area businesses, organizations, members, families, and individuals.

Money raised from the event will be used not only to underwrite general museum operations, but also to sponsor three days of free miniature-train rides during 1998, including the *Great Race* day, itself, plus two additional free days later in the year.

This year, the museum is also asking all members to support the event financially, by completing the accompanying donation form and returning it with your tax-deductible check. Everyone who becomes an event sponsor, with a gift of \$10 or more, or who obtains pledges totalling \$50 or more, will be named in the list of *Great Goleta Rail Race* supporters, which will be prominently displayed at the museum during all three free days and for at least one week preceding the July and November free days.

You are urged to assist in the fundraising effort, either by making a personal donation (please use the enclosed form) or seeking contributions from others. In any case, please mark your calendar, come out on May 16 and join in the fun!

Goleta National Bank Sponsors Free Rides for Moms and Dads

On Mother's Day, Sunday, May 10, all moms visiting the museum will be treated to a free ride on the Goleta Short Line, compliments of **Goleta National Bank**. Trains will run continuously beginning at 1:15, with the last train pulling out of the station at 3:45.

The complimentary tickets may be picked up in advance at Goleta National Bank's office at 5827 Hollister Ave. beginning April 13, or in Goleta Depot's Waiting Room, during event hours only. Tickets, at \$1 each, will also be available during the event for other family members and the general public.

Goleta National Bank is also sponsoring "Free Rides for Dads" at the museum on Father's Day, Sunday, June 21. The same train schedule as for Mother's Day will apply.

The bank helped to originate the museum's Father's Day event in 1994, and has sponsored both events since that occasion.

Goleta Chamber Supports New Museums Brochure

Area visitors will now find a colorful new brochure, promoting both the railroad museum and neighboring Stow House, in the display racks in their hotel lobbies and other local tourist spots. The brochure includes information on attractions, schedules, and events for both institutions, as well as a photograph of each historical landmark.

The project was underwritten by the **Goleta Valley Chamber of Commerce**, coordinated through the chamber's tourism committee, and funded using County of Santa Barbara bed-tax monies. About 10,000 of the brochures will be distributed over the next 12 months.

The brochure was designed by railroad museum staff and **Goleta Valley Historical Society** representatives, in collaboration with a graphic-design consultant provided by the Goleta chamber.

The Goleta Valley Chamber of Commerce has been a valued supporter of the railroad museum since the project to save Goleta Depot began in 1980. The chamber is a financial sponsor of the Coast Starlight Guide Program and helps annually to publicize the railroad museum through display advertising, the printing of brochures, and other means.

New Ride Records Set

For the second consecutive year, the museum has established new records for ridership on both the handcar and Goleta Short Line. The miniature train carried 14,586 passengers in 1997, a increase of more than 15% over the record set in 1996. This rise is all the more remarkable given the rain-shortened *Candy Cane Train* event at the end of the year.

The handcar ride did even better. The 1,704 rides given in 1997 represented an increase of about 65% over the previous high.