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REPORT

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Benjamin Hill: Railfan Heaven!

There are two passenger trains a day between Guadalajara and Nogales over the Ferrocarril del Pacifico. Cars are exchanged with the Ferrocarril Sonora-Baja California for through service to Mexicali. The scene of this action is Benjamin Hill, a sleepy little railroad company town about 100 miles due south of Nogales. Benjamin Hill is not one of Mexico's better known tourist towns, in fact, nothing much happens in the little high desert town except some great railroading. This was the lure for about twenty hardcore train enthusiasts the weekend before the association's annual dinner and what a time they had!

The fun started with an overnight trip on a beautifully maintained, freshly painted Pullman built coche dormitorio chartered for the occasion by PSRMA. Because we were the last car, the vestibule saw a lot of folks leaning out to bask in the glow of traditional "hay burner" marker lamps both coming and going on the 523 kilometer trip between Mexicali and Benjamin Hill.

The "El Mexicali" leaves at 8:45 p.m. daily for the eleven hour run to the junction with the FCP. The fans arrived in Benjamin Hill in time for a morning freight to Nogales featuring an all Alco locomotive trio, one of which was an RSD5! Twenty cameras clicked in unison!

A super tour of the S-BC shops had been arranged for us where we saw GP40's

being overhauled and heavyweight passenger cars getting new wheels. In front of the loco shop was a first generation FTA and FTB diesel set waiting to be rebuilt and an ancient doodlebug railcar that once belonged to California's old Tonopah and Tidewater and now awaits an uncertain fate.



Steam boilered FP7 No. 2101 is the yard switcher in Benjamin Hill, and is shown here backing down to the depot. Steam loco in the background is a 1909 Baldwin product on display between FCP and S-BC rails that bracket the station.

L. Rose photo

(continued from front page)

The boneyard outback was full of old Pullman sleepers, Harriman coaches and old freight equipment of all kinds. Several cars in the boneyard as well as the car shop were still in Illinois Central colors and lettering. The adjacent freight yard was a jumble of the newest and oldest equipment. Boxcars with straight brake staffs at least sixty years old were seen in service. As we wandered back to the depot in the evening, the day was capped off as a southbound freight rolled through with an Alco FA on the point! What an amazing place!

Passenger trains were seen several times during the day and included everything from ancient clerestory heavyweights still in traditional dark green livery to the most modern stainless steel lightweight equipment all in the same train!

The trip back included more vestibule riding and a snooze beneath Pullman blankets after being lulled to sleep by the music of the rails.

This trip was so much fun it will just have to be run again in the Fall or early next year. This excursion is not for the casual tourist, but is a must for the hard-core railfan. The trip was sold out quickly and the editor of this sheet got to go only because of a last minute cancellation. So the next time you see the Benjamin Hill flyer in the REPORT.....jump on it!! Eric Sanders deserves high praise for flawlessly organizing this highly enjoyable sojourn to Railfan Heaven. L.R.

RESTORATION NEWS

by Ken Helm

As can generally be expected, there has been a little slippage in completion dates, all for good reasons, I might add. The Shay is now ready for a hydro test one month late. This is after a complete boiler wash-out as well as interior visual inspection by John Ashman. In addition, Knud Antonsen has lapped in all valves, the steam driven fire pump reworked by Dick Mc Intyre, and oil analysis by John Ashman. With the completion of this and other jobs, the Shay is now close to being ready for its first firing in five years.

Now for the reason of the delay and great news it is. Because of a trip run by the Pacific Railroad Society, which we have been invited to join, the 1509 is being prepared for Amtrak service. In the last three weeks the hallway and kitchen have been prepared and the painting is underway, the last to be done on the interior. Duane Leal, Larry Rose and Jim Lundquist are the painters. All light bulbs have been replaced and all electrical equipment checked out by Harry Hurry. Bob Martin and Duane Leal have been sewing up holes in the diaphragm. The roof has been re-tarred by Norm Hill, Jim Lundquist and Ron Milot. The outside is undergoing some final touch-ups prior to a new paint job in traditional green enamel. The running gear, as well as the aesthetics, are being seen to with the brakes, brake cylinders, triple valve and wheel bearings receiving attention from Ken Helm. The two major tasks to be completed before April 15th are coupler conversions to tight-locks and buffer plate modification. Unless there are major snags, all these jobs will be finished on time and 1509 will ride the mainline again.

With the final push on getting 1509 ready, we will need every warm body we can get. Come on up to Miramar Naval Air Station and lend a hand!

THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN!

The worst job at Miramar has long been identified as the scraping and painting of the 1509 galley. It is a maze of pipes and overhead cabinets covered with peeling paint and cracked porcelain that is extremely difficult to get to. For the last few weeks Norm Hill has led a small squad of PSRMA foot troops that have been slugging it out on this most miserable, filthy job. The "Galley Gang" deserve special recognition for taking on a job that most of the crew have been avoiding like the plague. They are: Norm Hill, David Black, Bill Barbour, Dan Ginther, Mike Niles, Russ Sargeant and John "Nick" Nichols.

RECORD CROWD AT FEB. MEETING

by H. A. Hurry

PSRMA's annual bash at the Hanalei Hotel last month capped a fantastic year for the museum. A total of 128 members and friends showed up, drawn by the promise of some rare film of steam in action shot in the late 40's by Mr. Chadwell O'Connor of Costa Mesa.

They were not disappointed. Mr. O'Connor screened excellent films of the Virginia and Truckee, Rio Grande Southern and heavy S.P. power including some GS4's in Daylight colors. PSRMA's own pride and joy, Cafe Observation Car #1509, was seen bringing up the rear of a Santa Fe farewell to steam excursion filmed by Mr. O'Connor in 1951. Mr. O'Connor also outlined in his opening remarks, the latest on the full size replicas of the Jupiter and U. P. Number 119 that are near completion in his firm's shops in Costa Mesa. (Watch for an article and pictures of the locomotives in next month's REPORT.)

Other highlights of the evening included a brief report on PSRMA projects and progress during the last year by President H. C. "Chop" Kerr, and introduction of the museum officers for 1979. Chop also presented the "Railfan of the Year" award to Jo Pressnall for her tireless efforts to keep our downtown exhibit open and staffed every weekend. Certificates of appreciation were also presented to Vern Cook for his fine work as Excursion Director in 1978, to Norm Hill for his outstanding contribution to the restoration effort, and the museum Director of Personnel Tanya Rose....for being Tanya Rose!

Special guests introduced were Bill Kingston, owner of the Whistle Stop Model Railroad Shop, for years a heavy donor of rail books to our annual raffle, James Setter, Los Angeles Division Special Agent and J. J. Gomez, Assistant Division Special Agent for the Santa Fe Railroad, and Bob Nelson, General Manager of the MTDB.

The annual raffle distributed a wealth of rail items donated by John Engstrom, owner of Reed's Hobby Shop, Bill Kingston of the Whistle Stop, Dan Marnell, Nadine Bristow, and several others. Thanks to everyone who contributed to the excellent raffle ticket bait. Special thanks to George Geyer, Special Activities Director, for setting up a very fine annual banquet and show.

Membership News

by Tanya Rose

Each month our ranks are expanding to include not only more members, but people who were or are now directly involved with railroading. Among this month's roster you'll find Bob Nelson, formerly General Manager of the MTDB and U.E. (Eulie)Cox, one of the niciest conductors you'll meet on the passenger run between San Diego and L. A. Each new member adds to our status as one of the finest and fastest growing railroad museums in the country. Welcome to every single one of you!

REGULAR MEMBERS

U.E. Cox	Michael H. Niles
William C. Evans, Jr.	John J. Stark
Daniel E. Ginther	Dan Trunk
George J. Mitchell	

CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS

Sophia E. Crosley	Tonia H. Gale
N. S. Henderson	Larry E. Mc Cleary

FAMILY MEMBERS

John, J., Audrey, Julianne & John, Jr. Blenkle
Curtis, Linda J. & Anne M. Croulet (upgrade)
Robert W. & Shirley Nelson
William A. & Martha M. Sells
Barbara & Sean Storm
Dave & Ronna Young

REPORT

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One hundred years ago this article appeared in RAILWAY AGE magazine: "An exchange says that Dr. Mary Walker prefers a smoking car to a Pullman car. She says she will never enter a sleeping car until the railroads put on Pullwomen palace cars, and give the fair sex a chance."

RAILFAN PATROL NEWS

by Larry Rose

A total of 58 rail vandals have been arrested by railroad special agents acting on information supplied by PSRMA's Railfan Patrol in its first year of operation. Fourteen chronic train chasers now make up the R. P. hardcore with Director Ed Smith



KNOW THE ENEMY! Ed Smith's telephoto lens caught this creep throwing rocks at waterfowl in practice for a much bigger target that would soon be rolling along the surf line to San Diego.

the most dedicated and the most prolific vandal smasher of the group.

Ed has seen vandals caught in the act on the Santa Fe, Southern Pacific and the Burlington Northern. The miserable wretches had no idea they had been spotted by a railfan, thinking, no doubt, that they were merely unlucky being caught with rocks in their hands or stolen ties in their vehicles.

Media interest in the patrol has been intense compared to any other PSRMA activity. The Los Angeles TIMES ran an extensive article with pictures in all editions and KNX news radio in Los Angeles interviewed Ed. Locally, Channel 39 did a nice spot on the evening news not long ago and, on a national level, TRAINS MAGAZINE has twice mentioned patrol activities in Dave Ingall's Second Section column.

Anyone interested in ridding the right-of-way of vermin can contact Ed through the museum P. O. box. He will be glad to send you the rules of the game of bagging vandals by remote control. If you are going to watch trains, you might as well know what to do if you see some beach bum or teenage punk attempt to damage or derail the object of our affection. The train crews will thank you, the passengers will thank you, and the railroad police will thank you.

VICTORIA STAFFERS

by Jo Pressnall

Our February exhibit staffers deserve special thanks because contributions are up a little this month. It would take me ten pages to really tell how nice and important these good people are. They represent our hardcore Victoria addicts and I know any one of them would like to share their staffing expertise with you. Call me at 435-5022 (collect, if necessary) and share the experience of hosting with these nice folks.

Curtis Croulet

Ron Milot

Nick & lovely Thelma Nichols

John Patterson

Harry Hurry

"Good Guy" Ed Smith

Berle & Kathi Maxey

Mike & Steve Retz

Ann McVeagh

Tanya Rose

NEXT GENERAL MEETING APRIL 27th

The next general meeting will be Friday, April 27th in the Casa del Prado (tentatively in the Granada Room, call Linda Di Giorgio at 280-1781 to verify) Balboa Park. The program will feature rail slides from the extensive collections of PSRMA's own members. If you would like to share some of your favorites with the gang, call George Geyer at 284-0998 or see him at the Whistle Stop downtown for the details.





The cleanup of San Diego's worst derailment is shown well underway in this shot by member David Black. Seventeen cars piled up in Rose Canyon last month when a burnt wheel bearing dropped a cement hopper on the ground in the wee hours of the morning. Eleven covered cement hoppers, a tank car of fish oil, a couple of pig flats loaded with new washers and dryers and a couple of boxcars were compressed in a mess of twisted rail, smashed appliance crates and cement dust. No trainmen were injured, but a hobo on one of the pig flats was hospitalized with a concussion. San Diego traffic was at a standstill for 24 hours as Santa Fe crews untangled the wreckage. One of the saddest sights for railfans was an old Santa Fe Grand Canyon Line boxcar, still with roofwalk, jack-knifed near the end of the crash. Once common, name train boxcars are fast disappearing from the rails and local fans winced when the bulldozers dumped it upside down in the creekbed along the tracks.

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

The San Marcos Depot built by the California Central Railroad in the late 80's is shown here in a 1957 photo by Phil Rush, Publisher of the SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA RANCHER. This gingerbread building sat boarded up for years along Santa Fe's Escondido branch before being torn down in the late 1950's. Pictures of this depot are being sought by the REPORT Editor for a proposed display of San Diego County train stations. Can you help? Call me at 469-3064.



Sonora Report

by Ron Palhegyi

(Editor's note: Long time PSRMA member Ron Palhegyi has moved his family to California's Mother Lode country, right in the middle of the finest steam railroading in the West. Ron has settled in the quaint Gold Rush town of Sonora, halfway between Jamestown, home of the Sierra Railroad and Tuolumne, where the Westside and Cherry Valley narrow gauge railway is being re-built.)

SIERRA RAILROAD TO REBUILD DEPOT

The Jamestown depot that was burned by vandals last Fall will be re-built to its original 1887 form. While the construction is underway, two Western Pacific "cabeese" with a platform built around them will serve as a depot and the steam trains will run as usual. This year, the "Cannonball" will go all the way to standard, affording the passengers a look at the Pickering Lumber Co. operation that was not possible in the past.

There is a possibility of the Sierra Railroad operating all the way to the Westside and Cherry Valley Railroad, but not this year. The track is still in, having been left alone after the old Westside Lumber operation shut down years ago. The track needs some maintenance and a paved grade crossing needs to be uncovered.

WESTSIDE AND CHERRY VALLEY RAILWAY OPEN AT LAST

In 1976, restaurateur Glen Bell, Jr. purchased the Westside property with the idea of creating an operating museum and historical park. After three years and many millions of dollars, the railroad lives again with narrow gauge Shays pulling regular scheduled excursion trains. While most of the plant is still under construction, there is much to interest the railfan. The railroad equipment has been beautifully restored and the engine house has been re-built to look like the one that burned years ago. Everything is first class about this operation and there is enough to see and do to make a day of a visit.

The possibility of interchange with the standard gauge Sierra Railroad has also been acknowledged by the Westside people. Extra width ties have been observed laid on the narrow gauge roadbed where the Sierra track enters the property. It seems some dual gauge trackage is a future possibility. The future plans that have been announced by Westside include running their track all the way to the Tuolumne River. This would have to be one of the most scenic rides in the western states and will probably get underway in 1982 or 83.

If you are planning a trip to the Jamestown-Tuolumne area, motel reservations are recommended. Sonora is the closest to both railroads and accommodations are also available in Jamestown and nearby Twain Harte. If you miss the smell of oil smoke and hot valve oil, its about time you got reacquainted with the iron horse in California's beautiful Mother Lode country. See you there!

CHICKEN LOAF--GREAT NORTHERN STYLE

(As prepared by former Chef Ben Roselle of "The Western Star"--39 years of service)

2 cups cold cooked chicken	2 TBS chopped parsley
2 cups scalded milk	1 tsp salt
1/4 cup butter	1/8 tsp white pepper
3/4 cup shredded wheat biscuit crumbs	Yolks of 3 eggs & whites of 3 eggs, beaten dry

Scald the milk, add butter, crumbs, salt and pepper; cook three minutes. Take from fire, add chicken, parsley and yolks of eggs beaten light. Last of all, fold in whites of eggs, turn into buttered dish and bake 45 minutes in moderate oven. Serve with sauce made from 2 cupfuls of chicken stock, 2 TBS flour, 2 TBS butter, 1/2 tsp salt, 1/8 tsp paprika. Mushroom sauce may be used.

(This is a yummy recipe taken from the book "Dinner in the Diner--Great Railroad Recipes of All Time" by Will C. Hollister, published by Trans-Anglo Books. I love this one from the Great Northern, and hope you try it soon. Get the book for equally interesting dishes prepared by chefs from The Santa Fe, Illinois Central, Monon, Southern Pacific and many other railways. You won't be disappointed. Happy eating!

Tanya Rose

Industrial Railways of San Diego County

P. Allen Copeland

PART 13--M. H. GOLDEN CONSTRUCTION COMPANY, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

The M. H. Golden Construction Co. is known to have owned at least one locomotive, but the circumstances under which it was operated and where are uncertain. The second Porter 0-4-OT locomotive from the Charles R. McCormick Lumber Co. was observed and photographed in the Santa Fe yards at Tenth Street lettered for M. H. Golden and carrying the number "4". The road number would seem to indicate that three additional engines were owned, but this is only conjecture, as all records relating to old equipment owned by Golden has since been destroyed.

The locomotive was sold by 1943 to the Benson Lumber Company.



PHOTO R.P. MIDDLEBROOK

Roster of Locomotives:

M. H. Golden Construction Co., San Diego, California
Standard Gauge

4 0-4-OST 36" 15x24" Porter #6486 9/22 Acq. from Charles R. McCormick Lumber Co.
#2. Sold Benson Lumber Co. #4.

CAJON PASS--TRAIN WATCHING HOT SPOT

by Edwin Smith

One of America's most popular train watching locations is right here in Southern California, Cajon Pass. Most people that go up to the pass actually see only about twenty percent of the entire area. There are over sixty miles of roads and literally hundreds of places to watch and photograph trains. Places like "Blue Cut", "Sullivan's Curve", and "Rail Buff Bluff".

For three years I have been taking regular trips to Cajon Pass, and I'm now offering one day trips to anyone who is interested in seeing "back-stage" of one of the busiest main lines in the nation. I go the third Sunday of every month, leaving San Diego at 7:30 am, arriving at the pass around 11:00 am. I usually make a side trip to Southern Pacific's Colton Yard, where there are often numerous diesel locomotives from various railroads. In Cajon Pass, I spend most of the time on the many well driven dirt service roads which skirt the tracks the entire length of the pass. Due to the weather conditions in the winter and spring months, some roads may be impassable, or on rare occasions, the trip cancelled completely. My van is equipped with a scanner to monitor the railroads' radio frequencies in aiding in locating trains. I usually start back to San Diego at dusk, with a dinner stop along the way.

Because I go up to Cajon Pass every month anyway, I thought I would make these trips available to the members of the Museum and their friends. I'm only able to take four people per trip, so the trips will be on a first come, first served basis. If you are interested in going, please let me know and I'll get in touch with you as soon as possible. You can reach me by dropping a note to: Edwin Smith, P.O. Box 2141, El Cajon, CA 92021, or calling me at 449-0968 before 12:00 noon or after 9:00 pm.

This trip is a must for any railfan!! Don't be left standing by some branch line, write or call now!

VIEW ^{from} _{the} VESTIBULE

by Jim Lundquist

AMTRAK

Incredible as it may seem, on the same day that Energy Secretary Schlesinger warned of impending gasoline shortages, Transportation Secretary Adams announced the administration's plan to reduce Amtrak service! The D.O.T. proposal to reduce Amtrak route mileage while "saving" the citizens' tax money will go to the vote of the Senate, Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee sometime in mid-April. (90% of the "savings" will go to union job protection.)

San Diego's Lionel Van Deerlin is a member of the committee and has been identified by Citizens for Rail California as a key vote. The need for citizen input to Mr. Van Deerlin is great. Write him immediately and urge him to vote to save the Amtrak system, and stop the D.O.T. plan. I suggest that you point out the "San Diegans" are now a success story and not an experiment, and recommend that five of the six trains be picked up by Amtrak funds. Also, we need track improvement monies to increase average speed. The Northeast Corridor is getting 2.2 billion while the rest of the country gets zero! Remind him that trains are four times more fuel efficient than cars and trucks and that the gas shortage Summer of 1974 brought about a reduction of 40% in tourism for San Diego. Please write Rep. Lionel Van Deerlin, 42nd Dist., Room 2427, Rayburn House Office, Washington, D.C. 20515, and send copies to other representatives.

MTDB

The light-rail transit plans continue, with various obstacles removed as time goes by. The final approval is expected from the Interstate Commerce Commission in June or July.

The San Diego Transit Corporation may fold under the weight of the drivers union hassle and it is possible that MTDB could run buses for public transportation in their place.

Finally, the Gas Lamp District Fifth Avenue Trolley proposal is still alive and may indeed become a reality. It would run, in stage one, up Fifth from "L" Street to "C", then down MTDB's track to the depot. More information will be forthcoming.

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