



Coast Mail

News from the San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum

Issue Number 67 – Spring 2019

San Luis Obispo, California

slorrm.com

The Museum is open every Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm. It opens other times for groups by arrangement. Contact media@slorrm.com.



Bob Wilson photo

In October 2018 docent Bob Wilson represented our organization at Paso Robles Pioneer Days. Bob (not pictured above) had help from two on-the-spot volunteers, who ran trains and made sure younger visitors participated carefully. Southern Pacific Railroad reached northern San Luis Obispo County in 1887, but needed time and persuasion to continue building south to the City of San Luis Obispo, reached in 1894.

North County pioneers

Imagine the route-finders for the 19th Century transcontinental railroads looking up at the west slope of the Sierras, or the east slopes of the northern Rockies, and wondering how they would map a way through. No one had seen the topography from high above, as we have today. Museum docent Bob Wilson's October trip to Paso Robles wasn't quite that challenging, but it required careful planning and a sense of adventure.

That's because he brought, neatly stowed in his van, his multitrack, operating model train display, which has been a very popular temporary, interactive exhibit at the Freighthouse. Bob built the layout in bolt-and-plug sections to make it portable. The occasion for the visit was Pioneer Days, and the host was the Paso Robles Pioneer Museum.

www.pasoroblespioneermuseum.org

Looking Forward

Nearly every town with a railroad has a street or avenue named Railroad, and sometimes one using an actual railroad name. San Luis Obispo even has Roundhouse Avenue, and a Railroad Historic District with the Museum at its heart.

Paso Robles also has a rich railroad heritage, and an Amtrak stop. That city is thinking about establishing a railroad district as a magnet for artistic enterprises.

Image by Wallace Group



S.L.O. Train Day: Golden Spike

Join us Saturday, May 11, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of joining Central Pacific and Union Pacific rails in Utah. That, with other railroads east of Nebraska, created the first transcontinental rail route. The contributions of Irish and Chinese workers will be recognized. See our website for schedule details.

<http://www.slorrm.com>.

Docent of the Year

At our annual docent appreciation gathering in January, David Weisman was recognized for his many contributions, especially his onboard commentaries during the Museum's wine-rail excursions.



Thank you, sponsors of the 2018 Central Coast RR Festival!

Sands Inn & Suites

KSBY TV

Pomar Junction Winery



**Preserving California's
Central Coast Railroad History**

The San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum is a non-profit educational institution. Founded to preserve and present California Central Coast railroad history by collecting, restoring, displaying, and operating relevant railroad artifacts, photographs, models, and documents, its goal is to facilitate a better understanding of railroads' impact on our area's social, cultural, and economic history.

Board of Directors

John Marchetti	President
Stephanie Hovanitz	Vice-president
Norma Dengler	Brad LaRose
Glen Matteson	Duane Powell
Feride Schroeder	Charles A. Jordan
Dave Rohr	Andrew Merriam

Crew List

Museum Manager	Diane Marchetti
Assistant Manager	Stephanie Hovanitz
Curator	Brad LaRose
Treasurer	Dave Rohr
Librarian	Chris Hurd
Webmaster	Jamie Foster
Operations Manager	Stephanie Hovanitz
Events Coordinator:	Saphya Lotery
Model RR Superintendent ...	Andrew Merriam
Membership Chairman	John Marchetti
Fundraising Chair	Feride Schroeder
Secretary, Archivist, Newsletter Editor	Glen Matteson (newsletter@slorrm.com)

Contact

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 Website: www.slorrm.com
 Mail: 1940 Santa Barbara Avenue
 San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE

Anyone may access the Museum's *Bylaws, Collections Policy, Development & Operations Plan, Code of Conduct*, and other documents at slorrm.com. Or request a paper copy via info@slorrm.com.

Museum Store

To raise funds, the Museum offers several items for sale. T-shirts, baseball caps, belt buckles, mugs, enameled pins, embroidered patches, engineer hats, and videos are available through the Museum website www.slorrm.com. Click on **Company Store**.

Coast Mail is published quarterly by the San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum.
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Become a member

Membership provides opportunities for anyone interested in today's railroads, railroad history, train travel, or model railroading.

Individual members pay \$36 per year, a family \$60, and a sustaining member \$100. Junior memberships (ages 12-18) for the model railroaders are available (see our Model Railroad Superintendent for details).

Application forms can be downloaded from the Museum's website and mailed with payment, or you can join online by clicking Membership and using PayPal. (Mailing and web addresses are in left-hand column.)

Membership benefits include free admission to the Museum and access to Members Only features of the website, including full current issues of *Coast Mail*.

**Already a member?
Don't forget to renew.**

New, returning directors

Welcome new Board of Directors member Charles A. Jordan and returning members Andrew Merriam and Dave Rohr.

More faces of railroading in San Luis Obispo

The Fall 2018 *Coast Mail* featured some Southern Pacific workers from the 1940s, when due to the war women were better represented than before or after. Here are more women, believed to be employees during 1943, posed in front of what was then a very new depot.

From left to right: [not named]; Faye - ; Thais Ruiz; Lucille Sanders; [not named]; Helen - ; Josephine "Jo" Milne. SLORRM Archives P8220.4



Online extras

On page 5 you'll find some cute dimples and an arresting detail. Page 6 holds a real surprise. This year the Museum's *Annual Report* is available online as pages 7 and 8.

TIMETABLE

Board of Directors meetings are held at 6:00 p.m., at 1940 Santa Barbara Avenue, San Luis Obispo, on the second Tuesday of each month: March 12; April 8; May 14.

For committee meetings, use the number or email in left-hand column.

Train Day – May 10.

Beer train excursions – June 1, July 6, and September 7.

A long life, well lived

Robert McEntire, Southern Pacific locomotive engineer from 1938 to 1980, passed away in January at age 100. He was among the first volunteers for the Museum's Train Tales oral history program, and founder of a local "railroad family."

Meet the Modelers

Electronics bring exhibit to life.

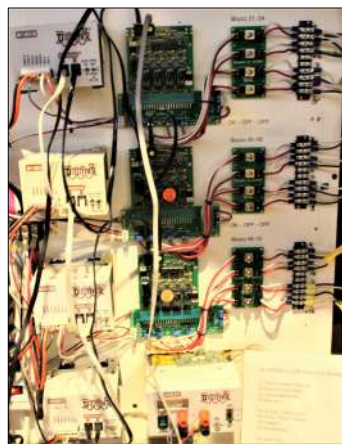
The Museum’s model railroad display is the work of the Central Coast Model Railroaders (CCMR). It’s hard to appreciate the breadth and depth of the group’s expertise until you’ve closely examined all the scenes and even peeked behind them.

This edition we introduce two of the electronics experts: Bob Schrempp, recently retired from Cal Poly, who works on power routing and locomotive control; and Chad Stallworth, a mostly retired consultant in international communications, who designs and obtains specialized components for control and signal systems.

CCMR Superintendent Andrew Merriam worked with CCMR founders to set goals for realistic operation and scene lighting, including digital controls that allow many locomotive sounds and lights, and dimmable area lighting to portray nights. Features being designed into the display include interior building lights, operating oil well pumps, stationary sound effects such as surf at Avila, and remotely controlled track turnouts.



Above left, Bob Schrempp works on the layout wiring for the location of Surf. Above right, Chad Stallworth with some of the specialized electrical parts he designed and ordered from a source in China. Below left, Andrew Merriam installs a sound decoder in a steam locomotive. Below right, part of the main panel that routes power to a dozen track segments. Andrew Merriam photos



Kevin Conlan, owner of The Tire Store near downtown San Luis Obispo, donated the challenging job of mounting tires for the Museum’s 1934 Pacific Motor Trucking trailer, to be displayed next to the Freighthouse.

Restoration Progress

Hey, that’s not train stuff!

In a way, it is. Southern Pacific Railroad subsidiary Pacific Motor Trucking provided door-to-door service, even if a shipper or receiver was not on a siding or spur. Many less-than-carload shipments went all or part the way in truck trailers. For the long haul the trailers often rode “piggyback” on flatcars.

In the 1980s, this was marketed as Golden Pig service. But in the 1930’s SP was among the pioneers. The Museum’s collection includes what is thought to be the only intact example of a 22-foot, round-nose Trailmobile trailer, with rear and curbside doors –in its original red and orange Daylight colors (shown below, before the wheel work). Manufactured in 1934, it was registered until 1957.

Life member Dwight Peterson of Dwight Peterson Lowbed Service in Atascadero, who also transported the trailer from the San Joaquin Valley at no charge, donated the tires. Members Brad LaRose and Howard Amborn donated the Daylight red paint for the wheels.





Swooping into the future, in 1993

Two images Southern Pacific

SLORRM Archives No. 5660.4

In 1993 Amtrak, the European train builder ABB, and several U.S. railroads sponsored a nationwide tour of a newly developed train that could dramatically reduce trip times and increase comfort. It was called the X2000, and it could go 150 mph –if it had access to an overhead electrical power supply and suitable tracks.

One of the hosting railroads was “The New Southern Pacific Lines,” which produced a flashy foldout brochure 33 inches long. It used some imaginative art to pitch potential improved Coast Line service. The demonstration train came through San Luis Obispo, moved by a conventional diesel locomotive.

In the image above, a stylized version of the train swoops out of the sky to journey along cartoonish coastal cliffs approaching a version of –look closely– San Francisco. (There’s a bay entrance crossed by a suspension bridge.) In the late 1800s the Ocean Shore Railroad built south from San Francisco along that route, hoping to serve the Monterey area. Lack of traffic and instable bluffs doomed that venture.

As shown by the brochure’s map at right, whomever SP contracted to produce the piece did not know the spelling of San Luis Obispo. The rail approach is up the bay side of the peninsula. But Amtrak trains don’t serve San Francisco directly. One needs to use the Caltrain commuter service or Amtrak buses. For years, a new Coast Daylight service has been discussed, one that would extend a midday Surfliner from its present San Luis Obispo terminus to downtown San Francisco.



SLORRM Archives PS5000.1(B)

Coming or going?

“From the Archives” has mentioned that rail-roading before the 1970s was more a retail business (*Coast Mail* Winter 2018). Later, less-than-carload and express shipments mostly moved to trucks.

But as we see at left, in 1994 Amtrak’s south-bound *Coast Starlight* had at least four cartons of “Live Plants” being loaded or unloaded at San Luis Obispo, along with passengers’ baggage. The baggage handler (in hardhat) and the baggageman or express messenger (in tie, checking his watch) are hustling to keep things moving. With wholesale growers, retail nurseries, and hobbyists in the area, we can’t tell whether this shipment is coming or going. The shipments’ origin and destination are probably between Seattle and Los Angeles.

From the Library

Unlucky Strikes Diverted

Your archivist personally remembers three lightning strikes in San Luis Obispo, one in the Foothill Boulevard area, one downtown, and one so close to home in the south Broad Street neighborhood that there were zero seconds between the flash and the boom. That last one split a tree, made a neighbor's large windowpane flex in and out, and eliminated power and telephone service for a day.

Railroads, with long metallic conductors stretched along the ground, telegraph and signal-circuit pole lines next to the tracks, and signal masts standing tall in open country, were rightly concerned about lightning. If anyone has an account of lightning affecting Central Coast railroads, let us know.

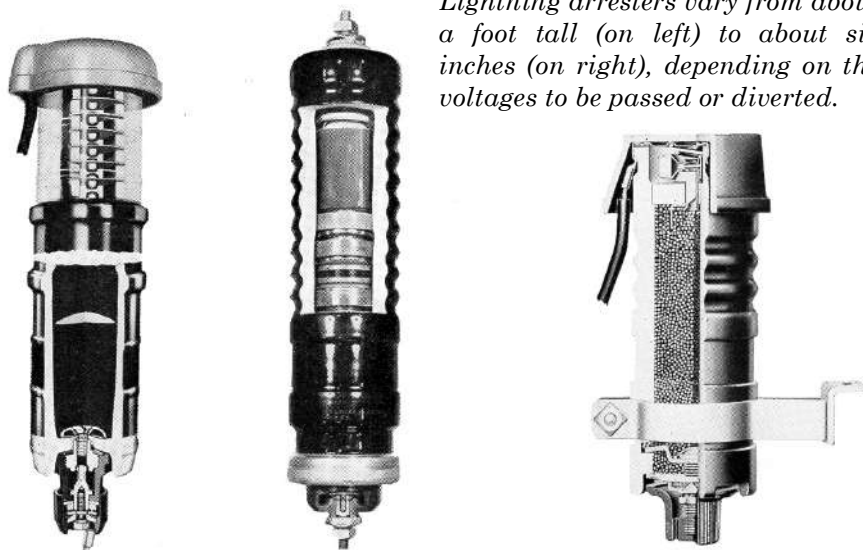
In Kansas, Arizona, and New Mexico in particular, railroads had to learn to live with lightning's millions of volts seeking a path through systems that normally carried tens to hundreds of volts.

One approach would have been to put a lightning rod with a thick wire directly to ground on every lineside pole. A more economical approach was to install a "lightning arrester" between wires likely to carry lightning discharges and valuable equipment (and people, such as telegraph operators). It may seem that any device claiming to "arrest" lightning would be like Barney Fife taking on Al Capone. Maybe "lightning diverter" would be a better term.

Shown below are three kinds of arresters, from American Railway Signaling Principles and Practices, "Signal Power and Lightning Protection," by the Association of American Railroads Signal Section, March 1959 [SLORRM Library catalog 560 A46]. The one on the left, a "distribution valve" type, uses a carefully positioned stack of parallel electrodes and "a stable refractory crystalline material," all sealed in a Pyrex glass housing. The one in the middle is a "Magne-valve" type, whose "action consists of a series-gap operating in conjunction with the valve action of Thyrite disks." And the cut-away illustration on the right is a "pellet distribution" type, filled with lead-dioxide beads. It appears to be the grandfather of today's arresters, most of which use various quantities of other types of finely ground metallic oxides to select which voltage levels go where.

Most arresters are designed to divert lightning's voltage, allow a circuit's normal voltage to flow, and obviously show their functional or damaged state. Your archivist can quote the text, but we'd need Museum member Gary See, our resident electrical engineer, to explain the fine points. And then some of us would still just stand there looking confused.

Lightning arresters vary from about a foot tall (on left) to about six inches (on right), depending on the voltages to be passed or diverted.



Hey, cute dimples!

There's a good chance that at certain times the Museum's little Plymouth switch engine will take on the personality of Danny the Diesel Locomotive. In fact, a children's book featuring Danny is in the works. And Danny, taking great care not to infringe on the registered identities of any other locomotive with railway-equipment friends, is likely to be on good terms with Clara the Caboose, who also lives at the Museum.

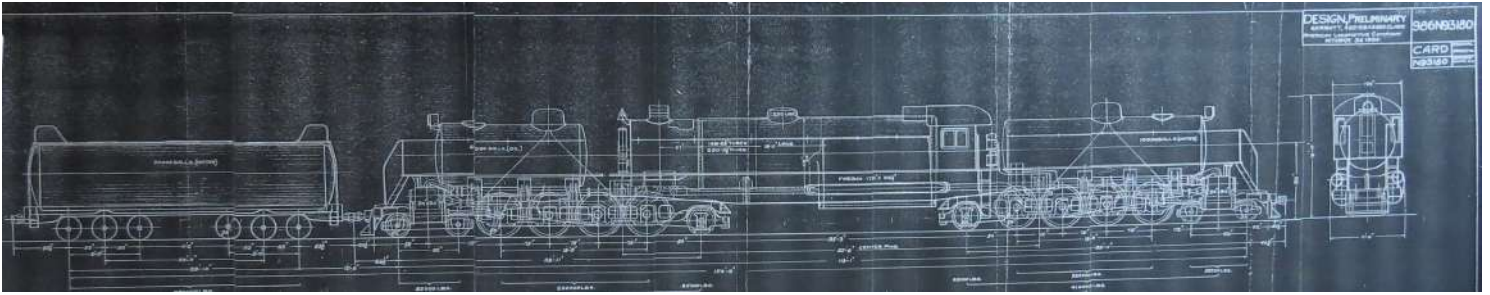
Clara, being a bit more outgoing, might even produce the comment above, just to see its effect on the normally quiet and businesslike Danny. And, true to form, Danny will blush and explain seriously that he does not have dimples. Those are his poling pockets.

From around 1900 to about 1960, nearly all locomotives used mainly for switching and all freight cars had such "dimples" at the corners of their frames. They allowed yard crews to set a push pole, about 12 feet long, between a locomotive and a car on an adjacent track, to move the car without having to run the locomotive to the nearest switch and onto the adjacent track.

Push poles saved some time; they also caused some serious injuries when they slipped or broke, sending splinters flying. Most railroads prohibited their use by the 1960s. Current engines and cars don't have poling pockets.



A push pole in use, between a steam locomotive and a gondola car. From an image by L.G. Gibson via Industrial Scenery online.



Cab Sort-of-ahead

“You’re kidding, right?” That was an understandable response when Museum member Karl Hovanitz returned from the Southern Pacific Historical & Technical Society’s annual convention, held in Monterey last November, and presented the drawing above. The American Locomotive Company (Alco) prepared the design for Southern Pacific in 1930.

Fans of South African steam locomotives will recognize it as a Garratt type. That country used many such locos to pack a lot of power into the smaller clearances along 42-inch gauge track that’s considered standard there, and which was inherited from the colonial era. At nearly 17 feet tall and 11 feet across the cylinders, there was nothing constrained about the Alco preliminary design (detail at right).

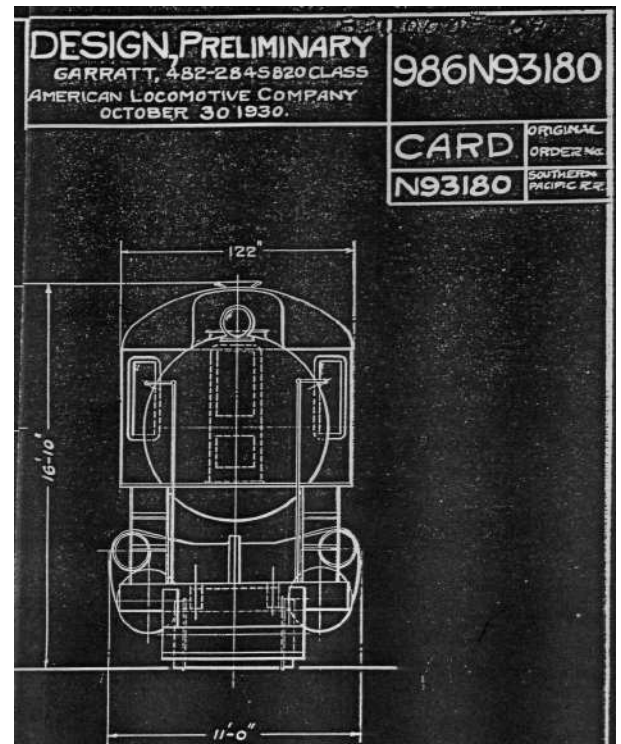
The usual advantage claimed for the Garratt design is that two engines (sets of cylinders and driving wheels) are articulated and carry the boiler weight slung between, with tanks for water and fuel oil at each end, over the driving wheels. In this Alco drawing, front is to the right. So, the cab would be ahead of the smokestack, the reason for SP’s cab-ahead design, to minimize exhaust inhalation by the crew in tunnels. SP’s cab-aheads had great forward visibility, because the cab was literally ahead of everything (to the extent that crews were concerned about grade-crossing collisions). We can see from the front elevation view at right that the engineer and fireman would have had to peek around the leading tank. This design also had a trailing tender.

While SP’s AC-series locos had a 4-8-8-2 wheel arrangement, Alco proposed 4-8-2+2-8-4. Proposed is the key word. All SP’s cab-aheads were built by Baldwin Locomotive Company, starting in 1910, and included 256 locomotives of all classes and wheel arrangements before production ceased in 1944.

Shown below is another Alco 1930 proposal, also a Garratt type, but with the cab in the position generally used for these types throughout Africa and Southeast Asia

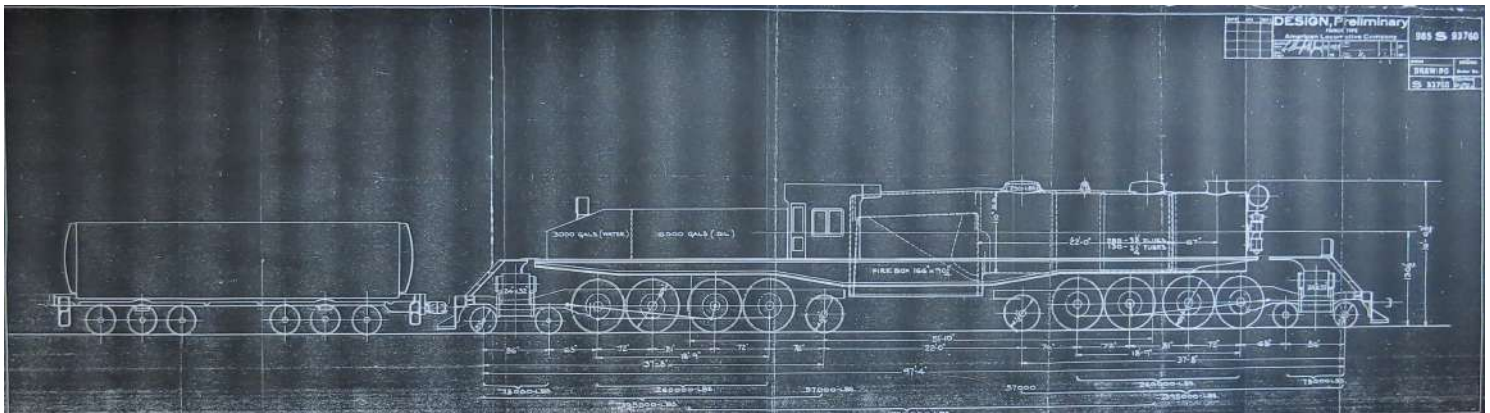
What’s 170 feet long, including tender, and looks strange to American eyes? This 1930 Alco design for an articulated locomotive. Alco apparently wanted some of Southern Pacific’s specialized locomotive business, but did not get this kind.

SLORRM Archives No. 2571.77



At about 150 feet long, including tender, this 1930 Alco design for a “Fairlie” type articulated locomotive would have looked impressive (and foreign) steaming out of San Luis Obispo and heading up Cuesta Grade.

SLORRM Archives No. 2571.78



2018 ANNUAL REPORT



Visitors

The Museum had 52 regular open days and three special days, during which about 3,800 people came. The Museum continues to host a wide range of groups, including some that are not focused on railroad history. Our website averaged 520 visits per day, with a one-day peak over 1,000 during the Central Coast Railroad Festival. Online visitors were from 25 countries.



Events, Presentations & Outreach

Special events at the Freighthouse occurred during Train Day in May, the Festival in October, several gatherings for groups throughout the year, our second Art After Dark show, and for seasonal holidays. The Boy Scout Merit Badge program continued. A fundraising dinner was held at a miniature railroad in the Arroyo Grande area in June. Member volunteers represented the Museum at least 15 times at locations away from the Freighthouse, including 11 train excursions, and visits to Cal Poly classes or events.

Operations & Governance

About 30 active volunteers worked about 6,700 hours, including over 2,400 for the model railroad alone. The Board of Directors was expanded from seven to ten members. All major governance documents were made publicly available via the Museum's website.

Restoration

The roof of café-lounge car *La Cuesta* was sealed and painted, and a new electrical generator was installed. The former Southern Pacific bay window caboose received basic lettering, and research on the details of additional lettering was conducted. For our 1934 Pacific Motor Trucking trailer, the wheels have been repainted and new tires mounted. Devices to protect various rolling stock on display were added.



Exhibits & Facilities

The Museum hosted a temporary exhibit on the 1903 visit by President Teddy Roosevelt. A display on steam and diesel locomotive operation was completed. Display track extension was started, including disassembly of, and re-grading for, some existing track.



2018 ANNUAL REPORT Continued

Publications

Eleven issues of “From the Freighthouse” were distributed via email. Four issues of *Coast Mail* were published on a regular quarterly schedule, totaling 16 print and 34 digital pages.



Acquisitions

The star of the Museum’s 2018 acquisitions was former U. S. Army switcher #2038, made by the Plymouth Locomotive Company and used during the 1940s at Camp Roberts near San Miguel.

The Museum acquired several parts that will be useful in restoring artifacts, and continued to receive donations of books, documents, and photos.



Library & Archives

People Tracker database with about 2,200 records of previous coastal region railroad workers was made available for public access.

Researchers have begun to use information in the Museum’s collections.



Model Railroad

All mainline track, on both levels, was made operational. Additional historically accurate structures were added to the Avila area. Modelers completed the trestle for unloading sugar beets at Betteravia. Basic upper-level scenery was blocked in.

Social media presence was enhanced, and entryway signage was improved.



Membership

The number of memberships remained at about 200, with several of those being families.



Financial Status

Beginning Cash Balance		\$149,094,
Income		\$114,225,
Memberships	\$14,888	
Admissions	\$13,154	
Events & Excursions	\$23,717	
Museum Store Sales	\$ 7,424	
Grants and Donations	\$55,042	
Restricted	\$48,285	
Unrestricted	\$ 6,757	
Expenses		\$155,737
Operating	\$ 48,775	
Capital	\$106,962	
Year-end Cash Balance		\$107,582

Some Central Coast Model Railroad accounting is separate. The Museum has no paid staff.