

REPORT

A chronicle of San Diego county rail museum activity

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BACKGROUND

Ten years ago, when the Railway Historical Society was but a handful of interested San Diego railfans meeting informally at each others house, the idea of an operating railroad museum was far-fetched; to say the least. It is true that, even then, they were interested in obtaining some of the railroad and streetcar equipment which was then in existence. But, due to lack of sufficient means of organization, such acquisition, unfortunately, was not possible.

It wasn't until 1959 that the possibility of a "Traveltown"-type of operating and stationary museum exhibit actually began to activate the imaginations of a small group of Society members.

Twelve interested persons met on Oct. 18, 1959 to exchange ideas on the possibility of an operating museum, and attempt to determine a plan of attack. Out of that meeting came many interesting ideas but we were still no closer to a solution. Since that time, several more meetings have been held, the most recent one on Oct. 9, of this year.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

Individuals are at present seeking suitable land for the museum project. Realtors are being canvassed. Land owners are being contacted. Every lead, however small, is being followed up. Used railroad rail, spikes, and other hardware is being collected and stockpiled.

Land is the major problem, however, and from recent reports, "problem" is an understatement.

Equipment is relatively plentiful. Even a full size, operating narrow-gauge steam locomotive is available, as is an operating San Francisco streetcar. The streetcar is now stored at Perris, Calif., near Riverside, until a place to store or operate it can be

found in the San Diego area.

Historic San Diego railroad car and streetcar bodies are available in the S.D. area and members are at present working on the acquisition of some of these car bodies, with the intention of eventually providing them with wheels for operation.

Also, the Society is now the owner of U.S. Gypsum Co.'s 3-foot-gauge "CABIN CAR", a caboose-like affair built on an old flat car in the Company's shops. This car, however, is still in storage at Plaster City, Calif., pending negotiations with the SD & AE Ry. for moving the car to San Diego.

It appears that, ultimately, the operating museum layout would necessarily be standard-gauge for trolley operation and narrow-gauge for steam operation.

The REPORT welcomes any comments.

OFFICIAL NOTICE

The next meeting of the Rail Museum Committee will be held Sunday, Nov. 13, 1960, 7:30 p.m., in the Balboa Park Organ Pavilion office. ALL interested persons are URGED to attend, and share in the privilege of "getting in on the ground floor". If you are interested in helping with the project, but cannot attend the meetings, mail your name, address, and phone to Dick Pennick, Chairman, 8689 Lamar St., Spring Valley, or phone HO#6 8206. The Committee would gratefully appreciate your interest. Remember: Nov. 13, 7:30 p.m.

GRIZZLY FLATS R.R. EXPANDS

Ward Kimball, President & General Manager of this back-yard railroad in San Gabriel, Calif., has recently acquired a flat-car and stock-car from the defunct narrow-gauge Keeler branch of the Southern Pacific, south of Bishop, Calif. He also acquired a narrow-gauge 4-wheel dump-car from a sugar plantation and is rebuilding it into an open-air passenger car. (Cont'd)

GRIZZLY FLATS (Cont'd)

Begun in 1939 with the purchase of an 80-year-old narrow-gauge steam engine from a defunct Nevada short-line, the Grizzly Flats R.R. now encompasses 1/6th of a mile of 3-foot-gauge track, a three-stall engine house, water tank with windmill, a Victorian-style depot, six cars, and two steam locomotives.

RAIL GATHERING SLOW BUT SURE

The 25-pound (per yard) rail, being gathered sporadically at Border Field, south of Imperial Beach, is slowly disappearing, but much remains to be moved. Many feet of the rail was buried under several inches of sand, necessitating a great deal of digging.

About 700 ft. of usable rail has already been salvaged, and since cooler weather is here again, volunteer work parties will attempt to salvage what remains. Volunteers generally take along a six-pack of beer or soda-pop and a sack lunch, and spend the day or part of a day. Anyone interested is encouraged to contact the REPORT.

P.S.: There is also less back-breaking work in the form of collecting spikes and rail joiners which litter the field.

OLD No. 54

Bill Morrison, manager of the streetcar No. 54 restoration project, extends a hearty invitation to all those interested in helping with the restoration of this historic old, wooden car, which was once a S.D. cable car! Official work parties are held on the first and third Saturdays of each month, but Bill is usually there every weekend. He, and those who have helped him on numerous weekends, deserves a hand for the progress already made on the car. It is planned to be placed on display at the Whaley House, in Old Town, upon completion of its restoration but it is hoped that it will someday be operated.

The car is located on a lot adjacent to the Star Machine Works, 418 10th St., San Diego. See you there!

TRAVELTOWN GETS NARROW-GAUGE CAR

Los Angeles' TravelTown museum

exhibit in Griffith Park acquired S.P. narrow-gauge baggage car No. 12, earlier this year. The ancient wooden car had been used as an auxiliary caboose on S.P.'s Keeler Branch, between Keeler and Laws, California, until the slim-gauge line was abandoned this Spring. The car is about eighty years old. The original trucks beneath it have long since been replaced with ordinary freight car trucks. It has been spotted with other old narrow gauge freight equipment on a siding of TravelTown's operating railroad.

WHAT ABOUT LAND?

According to some realtors in the San Diego area, land of a type and price range suitable for the needs of our museum project is not likely to be found within a thirty-mile radius of the city of San Diego.

The Museum Committee has expressed willingness to purchase land outright, if the price per acre did not exceed \$200. The alternative would be a long-term lease or other agreement. One member plans to purchase a plot of land for speculation, with the agreement that the Society could use the land until such time as it was able to purchase the land outright.

For a suitable museum site, it is felt the following conditions should be considered minimums:

(1) Land should be reasonably flat or gently rolling or sloping, so that a minimum of expensive grading would be required.

(2) It should be either accessible by a road or of a nature whereby a good road could be graded at *minimum expense*. The road must be sufficient to handle heavy equipment (particularly loaded flat-bed trucks).

(3) The land should be within a reasonable distance from San Diego proper. A thirty-mile radius is considered about maximum. Of course, the closer it is to San Diego, the better it will be from numerous standpoints.

(4) Availability of water, both for domestic and project use, and for possible steam operation.

REPORT is edited and published intermittently, in the public interest, at 8689 Lamar St., Spring Valley, Calif. Reader comments are encouraged.

