



A publication for the Pacific Southwest Railway Museum members

February 2025

New Wheels for Our Operating Equipment



Photo by Stephen Hager 1/25/25



**Pacific Southwest Railway Museum
Association, Inc. WWW.PSRM.ORG**

619-465-PSRM (7776)

Museum and Train Operations

Campo Depot
Highway 94 at Forrest Gate Rd, Campo
619-478-9937

La Mesa Depot Museum & Office

4695 Nebo Drive, La Mesa, CA 91941

PSRMA Board of Directors

Meetings are held on the 3rd Friday of the month except Dec at 6:30PM. A link to join the Zoom meeting will be provided on our website at members.psrn.org.

Museum Directors

President: Stephen Hager
Vice President: Colin Atwood
Treasurer: vacant
Secretary: Duke Schweikert
Equipment Dept: vacant
Facilities Dept: Frank E. Denison IV
Museum Services Dept: Jim Lundquist
Operations Dept: vacant

Museum Staff

Archivist: Bruce Semelsberger
Asst Dir. Of Facilities: Jim Lundquist
Asst Volunteer Coordinator: Colin Atwood
Fundraising: Donna Spevack
Gift Shop Manager: Jenn Brooker
Hot Scoop Editor: Jim Lundquist
Membership: Lena Ibarra
Social Media Mgr: Jason Drenkow
Station Master (La Mesa): Timothy Miller
Volunteer Coordinator: Jenn Brooker



MEMBERS UPCOMING EVENTS

Special Events:

February 28 - Membership Meeting at 7:00 p.m. at La Mesa Police Dept Community Room. The speaker for the evening will be Jim Price speaking about his adventures of restoring his caboose located in Nevada.

April 5, 6, 12, 13, 19 & 20 - Bunny Trains at Campo Railroad Museum

May 9 - Membership Meeting at 7:00 p.m. at La Mesa Police Dept. Community Room. The speaker for the evening will be Tom Larwin. Tom was the General Manager of the MTDB which built the San Diego Trolley.

October 24 - Membership Meeting at 7:00 p.m. at La Mesa Police Dept Community Room. The speaker for the evening will be Russ Low.

Regular Schedule:

At Campo Railroad Museum:

Saturday and Sunday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. - Museum open to public.

Saturday - Golden State train rides at 10:30 a.m., 1:00 p.m. and 2:30 p.m.

Saturdays and Sundays - volunteer work days.

Wednesdays and Saturdays - Library open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Call Bruce Semelsberger at 619-264-7282 for an appointment

La Mesa Depot Open:

Tuesday & Thursday Noon - 3 p.m. Saturday: 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Volunteers are at both locations during the week as well. For more information, please email: volunteer@psrm.org

Replacement of the wheelsets under our baggage car, SD&A 6700 was just completed

This “Economy Baggage” car was built for the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1960. It arrived at the museum in 1995 and has been riding on the same set of wheels ever since then. It operates on nearly all our trains and is likely the single most used piece of rolling equipment in our fleet by a wide margin. In the years since it was acquired, the wheels had become sufficiently worn that they needed to be replaced.



In 2024, PSRMA ordered four new wheelsets from Irwin Car & Equipment in Pennsylvania. The wheelsets arrived in December by truck and were unloaded onto Track 13 in our yard. On the last weekend of January, volunteers lifted SD&A 6700's carbody off its trucks using our four 35-ton electric screw jacks on the Track 11 jacking pad. Volunteers then rolled the trucks out from under the



car and lifted them up with our Santa Fe 25-ton gantry crane. This allowed the old wheelsets to be rolled out from under the trucks and the new wheelsets to be rolled in. Volunteers also took the opportunity to replace worn brake shoes and lubricate the center plates on the trucks.



The *Hot Scoop*® is a publication of the Pacific Southwest Railway Museum Association, Inc.

The opinions expressed in the *Hot Scoop* are those of the individual writer and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Pacific Southwest Railway Museum Association, Inc., (PSRMA) its officers or staff.

PSRMA Mission Statement:

PSRMA is dedicated to preserving the physical legacy and the experience of rail transportation. Programs address the historical, social, economic and technical impact of railroading with particular emphases on railroads of San Diego County and the systems with which they connected in the United States and Mexico.

PSRMA is a non-profit educational organization operating under section 501(c)3 of the tax codes. Donations may be tax deductible.

PSRMA is a member of the Heritage Rail Alliance.

Submission guidelines: All articles should be single spaced and submitted in Microsoft Word format. Photographs are also welcomed. Please include photographer and date of photo. Send all submissions to Editor@psrm.org

The *Hot Scoop* is available in color via email. To receive the electronic version in PDF format, send an email to editor@psrm.org and include your name, membership number and email. Note that if you opt for the e-mail version, you will no longer receive the printed copy.

Comments are always welcome.

Send your feedback to:

editor@psrm.org

Members Meeting on February 28th at 7:00 p.m. in La Mesa Police Community Room, 8085 University Avenue in La Mesa. Free parking.

“WHATEVER HAPPENED TO NEVADA COPPER BELT CABOOSE #2?”

Museum member Jim Price will talk about the restoration of his caboose in Goldfield, Nevada. This interesting talk will cover:

- how and why they have a place in Goldfield
- the history of the car
- how they acquired the car and moved it to their property in Goldfield
- research they did on the Nevada Copper Belt Railway
- its “before” state, and how we figured out how it had looked back in the day
- finding the right people to do the work – woodwork, metal work, painting, etc.
- year-by-year progress
- their annual “Sunset Celebration in the Caboose” parties
- plans for the future

Jim Price and his wife of 46 years, Joan Sieber, call San Diego, CA their home. They spent their working careers at a Navy Research and Development Laboratory there. But a long-term interest in ghost towns led them to also become homeowners in Goldfield, NV for the past 20 years. They purchased a vacant lot at auction in 2000. A new home was built in 2007. An historic miner’s cabin, converted to a garage, was moved to their property and restored in 2012.

Then in 2014, the opportunity came to buy what had been Nevada Copper Belt Railway Caboose #2. It was moved to their property.

Meanwhile, they wrote and published the book “Discovering the Ghost Railroads of Central Nevada” in 2015. This talk will discuss the 8-year process of restoring Caboose #2, an interesting piece of Nevada railroad’s past.



From the Back Platform By Stephen Hager, President

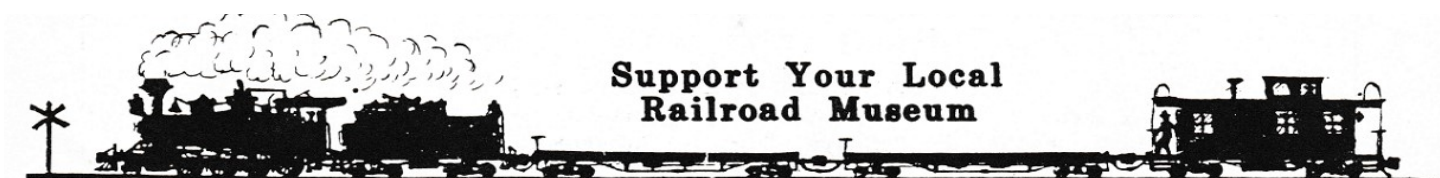
After some restful time off over the holidays, volunteers at the Pacific Southwest Railway Museum Association hit the ground running with numerous projects to kick off the new year. Following the North Pole Limited trains in December, volunteers undecorated the Campo Depot, train cars, and North Pole to return the museum grounds in Campo to their normal appearance. Volunteers in the Facilities Department have been hard at work doing preparatory work for the large stormwater project that we are undertaking in Campo. Volunteers have cleared several acres of land of vegetation and waste materials to permit upcoming construction work. Volunteers also installed new culvert pipes to lengthen existing culverts. As this preparatory work wraps up, the engineering phase of the project is starting. PSRMA is hiring an engineering consulting firm and two subconsultants to design stormwater improvements throughout the property at Campo. These improvements will be designed to serve and function harmoniously with future building expansions at the museum including new exhibit halls and a roundhouse. Our consultants will also assist with getting the improvements permitted by the County of San Diego. Design and permitting is expected to take until late 2025 to complete. Following this work, we will move into construction in late 2025/early 2026. I will continue to provide updates on this project as we hit future milestones.

In January, the Equipment Department held a meeting to discuss plans for projects that will be undertaken during the first quarter of the year. The department is primarily focused on wrapping up existing projects and taking care of critical maintenance work, some of which was deferred from last year. Volunteers have already completed some of this maintenance work including getting our Fairmont A-5 Gang Car, SD&A 103, back up and running following a carburetor rebuild. This Gang Car can carry a crew of 8-9 track workers and tow multiple motorcar trailers. We rely heavily on it to support our in-house Maintenance of Way efforts

and it will be a welcome addition back into our operating fleet.

Other Equipment work to be done over the next few months includes replacing the plywood window plugs in several of our unrestored passenger cars, including the Pullman Commandant, ATSF 1304 Chief Manakaja, and SD&A 351. This work will ensure that the interiors of these cars remain sealed off from the elements until time, volunteer resources, and funding permit restoration of the cars. Volunteers will also continue working on the birthday party caboose. This project has been moving along slowly for several years, but noticeable progress has been made. New roofing is being installed, lighting and fans are being added to the interior, and the exterior is being painted. There is still plenty of work to be done on this project before the caboose is ready to host birthday parties at the museum. If you are interested in working on this or many of the numerous other projects taking place at Campo, please send an email to our Volunteer Coordinator at volunteer@psrm.org and let us know how you would like to help!

Volunteers in the Maintenance of Way branch of the Operations Department picked up where they left off last year with track rehabilitation work in the museum's yard in Campo. Volunteers replaced a switch tie and tamped and spiked in a second switch tie that was previously installed. There are more track work days being planned for February and March including one on Saturday, February 1. The first few months of the year are ideal for track projects because the temperatures are cool and there aren't too many special events to divert volunteer resources away. A small but dedicated core group of volunteers has been toiling away on track projects for the past year and they could use more help. Track work can be accomplished significantly faster with a larger group of volunteers. If you would like to help with track work on February 1 or on any other upcoming track work days, please send an email to our Volunteer Coordinator at the email address that I listed above.



From the Back Platform continued

In February, we expect to kick off a project to replace the existing wood siding on the Campo Depot with Hardie Board fiber cement siding. Hardie Board is fire-proof, moisture resistant, weather resistant, and won't be attacked by termites or other pests. It is textured to look just like wood and it will be shipped from the factory pre-colored in the proper Southern Pacific common standard colors. This project is being

funded partially by a \$50,000 grant that we got from the County of San Diego. The project is expected to take about a month to complete once demolition starts. If you visit the museum during the project, please pardon our dust as we complete this important work to ensure the longevity of the Campo Depot.

As always, if you would like to get in touch with me, please send a note to president@psrm.org. Until next time, keep it on the high iron!

Surplus Library Books Found A New Home by Jim Lundquist. Director of Museum Services

Our library staff identified 89 boxes of books which were duplicate to our collection. They were first offered to our members, then other museums for their collection. Jim found that Western Railway Museum in Rio Vista was interested in them. Jim and his wife Dawn drove them in their truck pulling a trailer from Campo to near Sacramento for their new home. Loading in Campo was done by Jim, Bruce Semelsberger and Richard Finch. Unloading was done by volunteers at the Western Railway Museum along with Jim, Dawn and Dawn's sister Pam.



Photo by Jim Lundquist 1/23/25

Welcome New Members by Lena Ibarra, Membership Coordinator

It was also a great month for the museum's life membership rolls, Reverend Canon Keith Brown of Fresno, California joined the museum as our newest Life Member. We also recognize that David Choy joined as a Life Member as well. The museum is fortunate to have such dedicated members who commit to financially supporting the museum.

As always, PSRM is excited to welcome the following

eight new family, senior, and individual, members of our museum: Cheryl Anderson; Kevin Epps; Gregory Flores; Guido Hamacher; Kirstie Hanson; Bennett Hardy; Jessica Robledo-Hauenstein; and Teresa Tange-man.

Lastly, I am happy to report that María (Lena) Elena Ibarra (mibarra@psrm.org) has taken over as Membership Coordinator for the museum! She has been volunteering in the library with Bruce but has jumped in with both feet to make sure Membership continues to run smoothly. If you see Lena around the museum or La Mesa Depot be sure to say hi and thank her for

Fundraising Updates by Donna Spevack, Administrator of Fund Development

January has blown in with a chill but thankfully that does not stop our wonderful volunteers at PSRM from continuing with restorations and upgrades to the Museum. These restorations have been made possible by all of our wonderful donors who support PSRM not only in January, but throughout the year!

Thank you to all of our wonderful donors for January-Great start to a great year!

\$1,000 to \$5,000 category:

- Mr. and Mrs. Robert Stebbins -Donation in support of PSRM restorations

\$1-\$1,000 category

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Robert and Lillian Jarrett | • Jack O'Lexey |
| • Jeffrey Rule | • T. Duff Joseph |
| • Jared Green | • John C. Hayman |
| • Teresa Tangeman | • Kevin Epps |
| • Harish Sundaram | • Duke and Raine Schweikert |
| • Jessica Robledo-Hauenstein | • David Choy |
| • Robin D. and Kathy Becker | • Gary Klockenga |
| • Sally Fl Saltstein | |
| • Bennett Hardy | |

***And special thanks to Timothy Miller for decorating the holiday tree at the La Mesa Depot for all to enjoy!**

It is your donations that enables us to acquire and share new exhibits and make restorations and upgrades to the museum.

If you too would like to make a donation please go online at: [Donate – Pacific Southwest Railway Museum](#) or if you prefer to mail in a donation, you can send it to: **PSRM-La Mesa Depot, 4695 Nebo Dr., La Mesa, CA 91941-5259**. (Please specify if you would like it to go to a specific project or a general donation).

You also have the option to make **an automatic monthly gift** to support PSRM. Thank you to the long-time donors who have decided to do that for the coming year. If you are interested, we will be glad to assist you with any questions you may have!

Get rewarded for doing what you love to do. Just search, shop, or play with Microsoft to start earning points. Redeem you points for money to support your favorite nonprofit to get started. Microsoft Rewards points can now be automatically donated to charity as part of a new initiative called [Give with Bing](#). The points that [Microsoft Rewards](#) users earn by searching the internet via Bing will be changed into money when it's donated to one of more than a million non-profit organizations. **This includes the Pacific Southwest Railway Museum.** I do it and it is easy to sign up and have our favorite railway museum benefit.

Thank you and Have a Great 2025!

Down at the La Mesa Depot

by Timothy Miller, Station Master

As I take down the NPL banners and put away the Christmas decorations I am excited over the opportunities shaping up for 2025. Having the La Mesa Depot open and staffed has allowed a personal connection with the community and allowed people to walk in and make notable donations. Attendance seems to be

increased lately as well. Always welcoming anyone interested in bolstering our staff at the Depot.

A cosmetic restoration of the Mojave Northern #3 is being planned. Hopefully this will encourage more community interaction. Work on the model railroad is being continued.

The Bunny Train banners will be up before you know it! 2025 is looking great!

Facilities Department by Jim Lundquist, Assistant Director of Facilities

Jim Lundquist and Kerry Hebert have been very busy removing weeds and debris from our property in advance of the future grading and drainage work expected later this year. We can not thank Hawthorne Equipment enough for their continuing support in this effort. In addition, Frank Denison and Morgan Snyder were back installing siding on the doublewide office trailer. Many projects are underway all around the Campo Railroad Museum. Most will be completed as the year moves forward. There aren't establish work days for this work, work days are available both weekdays and weekends.

Some projects are better as one person jobs, others can use all the help we can get.

If you would like to get involved, reach out to Jim via email at Jim@psrm.org

Right - Morgan Snyder working on the doublewide office trailer. Photo by Frank Denison 1/16/25



Board Briefs by Jim Lundquist, Editor

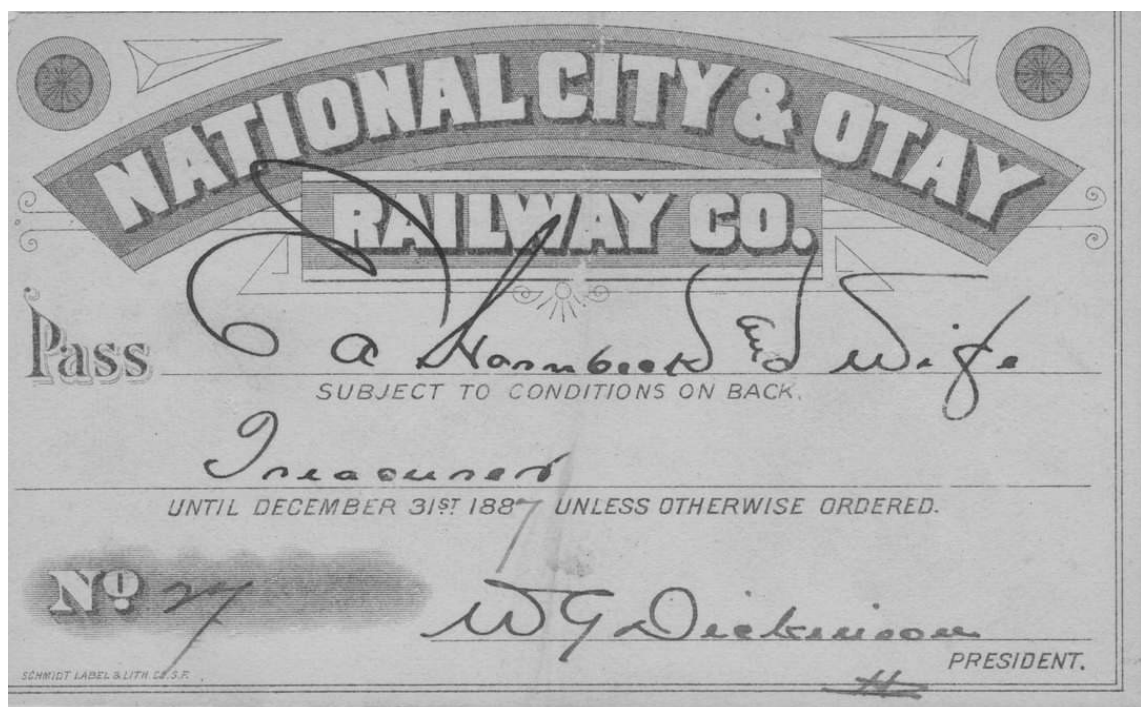
The Board of Directors met on January 17, 2025. Present were Board members Hager, Atwood, Schweikert, Denison and Lundquist. A recap of the actions taken:

Authorized submission of a Museum Assessment Program application for the Library
Transferred responsibility of supervising workcampers from the President to the Vice-President and will identify roles and responsibilities for each
Returned using the name "Campo Railroad Museum" for our railroad museum site in Campo
Supported efforts to find sponsors for events at the Campo Railroad Museum
Authorized Jim Lundquist to sell or donate surplus vehicles at the Campo Railroad Museum
Set aside \$40,000 representing 20% net of North Pole Limited (NPL) profits into the contingency fund
Authorized \$1000 for the purchase of a new laptop computer
Authorized \$1240 for 20 yards of $\frac{3}{4}$ rock for drainage pipes, funds coming from ARPA grant
Authorized \$1519 for moving donated rental rock truck to the Campo Railroad Museum, funds coming from ARPA grant
Media committee reported on good feedback on the NPL trains, which were basically 100% sold out
Special Events committee reported that the Wine Train planning is coming along, Bunny Trains will be the first three weekends in April and we will host approximately 300 Boy Scouts the weekend of March 14-16.

Decades of Museum History by Jim Lundquist, Editor

February 1965 (60 years ago) - 35 members in the Museum with hopeful plans for a museum site in Otay Mesa. Motorcar trip from Mexicali into the desert on the Mexican railroad.

February 1975 (50 years ago) – 200 members. Museum purchases La Mesa Depot for \$1.00 which was then in Lakeside. Tours of museum equipment were given at NAS Miramar. Vandals broke into the Robert Peary and the Shay locomotive.



Let's Ride the Dam Train!

A sketch from the pen of Hiram H. Bice, Editor of the National City Record, edition of May 5, 1892, with technical interfusions by Richard V. Dodge

Originally printed in DISPATCHER, Issue 38, December 31, 1961

Sweetwater Dam that is! The steam motor road, named National City & Otay Railway, began operating 60-Mile Excursions for a fare of One Dollar over its entire system in 1888 and they became very popular attractions for many years. "One of the pleasantest jaunts I ever enjoyed in Southern California was a trip to the sleepy old Mexican town of Tia Juana (now spelled Tijuana). The day was bright and cloudless."

The N. C. & O. depot was near the foot of Fifth Street, now Avenue, in San Diego. For motive power the road had originally two steam dummies of 0-4-2 wheel arrangement, built by Fulton Iron Works in San Francisco, four Saddle Tank engines of the same wheel type, built by the Porter Company in Pittsburgh, Pa., and "the big engine", a Porter Saddle Tank 0-6-0 (rebuilt to 0-6-2) used for freight service. Numbers 3, 4 and 5, the regular passenger engines, weighed a mere 28,000 pounds on the driving wheels. The engines were fitted with "cow-catchers" at each end so that they did not have to be turned around. All were coal burners and there was an exuberant profusion of smoke and cinders.

One of the latter locomotives was waiting with a train of three or four coaches of fair size with open platforms, link-and-pin couplings and no air brakes. Open cars with single transverse benches were used when the weather warranted. The N. C. & O track was in the north side of L Street, while the Coronado Railroad's occupied the south side.

"We left at 9 o'clock in the morning on the excursion train which was filled with sightseers."

The route was east on L Street to 13th Street, turning south into what is now Newton Avenue. At that time the area was entirely unimproved. The track was ballasted and planked and bridges carried the rails over several sloughs from San Diego Bay. (The original line had run out Harrison Avenue.) Out Newton the train jogged along to just beyond 32nd Street. There it curved to the right, descended into Chollas Valley "and soon we were speeding over the low, tide-washed land which separates San Diego from National City."

"As we pass through that town of 1,400 people, we find the same air of carelessness and attention which marks all Southern California towns. National City is very much scattered and from the Steele Block (4.2 miles, all distances in figures are from San Diego, on the northwest corner of National Avenue and 8th Street. It still stands, 1962, though somewhat modernized.) to Terrace is a distance of three miles (due to the fact that the route swings west on 12th Street to Eighth, now Cleveland Avenue in order to traverse the old section of the town, thence east out 24th Street. The Company's Shops and Round House are located on 24th St. at Seventh Ave.) Near Terrace we pass the beautiful home of Mr. W. C. Kimball, one of the pioneers of the region (and founders of National City).....Beyond are some handsome residences. All this section is planted with young orange trees...."

"Now we descend into Sweetwater Valley (cross the river to Sweetwater Junction - 7.6 miles) and, after mounting a grade which brings into play all the power of the locomotive, we are in Chula Vista, one of the most favored spots in this favored land. From this gently sloping tract we look off upon the peerless bay, sleeping beneath the summer sun. Beyond are the hazy outlines of the Coronado Islands belonging to Mexico. To the east we see the Cuyamaca Mountains, while only five miles away rises the blue heights of San Miguel. Far away in the south, rising clear from the hills around it, is Table Mountain, so-called from its flat-topped appearance. Though apparently so near it is 40 miles below the Mexican line." "All around us are orange trees, pleasant homes and grounds and flowers..... Five years ago it was a desert of prickly pear and sage brush....."

"After passing (south on Third Avenue through Chula Vista) we came to an uncultivated section and after a mile or so of this, we begin to see on either side great fields of wheat. Grain growing has increased in importance in the last year.." "We pass the town of Otay (12.2 miles) and see the large brick building once occupied (1890) by the Otay Watch Company. For a time this town enjoyed considerable prosperity from the presence of the large number of watch factory employees..... Large flocks of sheep are pastured in the upper portion (of Otay Valley) and much wine of excellent quality is made by the Italians who own vineyards here."

The train then crossed Otay River and climbed the south bank to what is now Palm City, proceeding due south to Tia Juana Junction near Nestor Post Office, 14.4 miles. There it turned west, then south to the village of Oneonta, where an exquisite view of Tia Juana River Valley greeted the tourists' smoke-filled eyes.

Grading had been started and a contract reportedly had been let for an extension of the motor road to the south, crossing the river and curving west to "International City", a subdivision laid out by the visionary William H. (Billy) Carlson and his partner, Higgins,

Let's Ride the Dam Train! continues

near the initial monument marking the boundary between California, U.S.A. and Baja California, Mexico. Border Field is now located there. Like most all of Billy's projects, it fizzled.

The train probably backed to the Junction and headed for Tia Juana, "the last town in Southern California (18.5 miles). The boundary line passes through it and cuts it in two, the American half consisting of a single street of frame buildings and a few scattered houses. The American part has a live air but the Mexican part is the deadest place imaginable." (Note: Probably the California town would have looked just as dead except that, due to the floods in 1891, the old town was washed out and the remaining buildings were moved to higher ground near the border.)

"We join a file of tourists and put ourselves in a foreign country as soon as possible. The houses here are made of mud and most of the residents look as if they were. The only respectable persons seem to be the Custom Officers and the proprietor of a curio shop, who we fancy, must live on the American side and go down to the town when he knows the tourists are coming." "At the end of a straggling street is a small adobe church which, with its bell mounted on a post near the front door, is picturesque. Here the itinerant friar, who supplies the mission churches of Lower California, keeps his library and here he comes at stated intervals to say mass."

"On our return", we again pass through Otay and Chula Vista. (Editor Bice overlooked the all-important subject of eats. When the 60-mile excursions were started, there was a new hotel at Oneonta and the southerly routings were reversed to go to Tia Juana first and then to Oneonta for lunch. After the hotel closed down, the train returned to National City and the tourists' appetites were appeased at Olivewood, the residence of Warren Kimball, through whose efforts the California Southern Rail Road, now Santa Fe, was constructed from National City to Barstow, or at the International Hotel in the Old Town.)

Retracing the clickety-clicks to Sweetwater Junction, "we branch off once more", turning east up the valley. Farming communities enroute include: Munger's Ranch, Bonita, Bonnie Brae and Sunnyside. (In 1895, in the river bottom between Hungers and Bonita, an attractive picnic spot was known as Linwood Grove.) Passing La Presa Junction, later called Quarry Junction, we continue to the right "to visit the Sweetwater Dam, one of the greatest irrigating works in the west. The dam is placed in a narrow, deep gorge and is a splendid structure of solid masonry, costing \$296,000. It completely shuts off the flow of the Sweetwater River and commands an area of 300 acres." The rails ended near the base of the dam, 13.6 miles.

The construction of the dam was completed in 1888. It was of gravity arch design, 80 feet high. The capacity was 6,000,000,000 gallons. It was claimed to be the highest in the United States and was heralded as one of the wonders of the world. When greater storage volume became necessary, an addition raised the level ten feet in 1896. About that time a station was established on the La Presa Branch so that the tourists would not have to scale the heights. The crest of the dam was increased to a height of 110 feet in 1910. The upper portion at the north end failed in the flood of 1916.

The dam, as well as the railway, was built by The San Diego Land & Town Company, a subsidiary corporation of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad Company. The organization was formed for the purpose of improving and disposing of the lands donated by the people of National City and San Diego to subsidize the construction of the California Southern Rail Road. The Kimball Brothers had given more than 10,000 acres of their Rancho de la Nacion, expecting that National City would be made the Pacific Coast Terminus of the Santa Fe Route.

The editor failed to mention the side trip La Presa, which was part of the 60-Mile schedule. Again the train backed to the Junction, then crossed the Sweetwater River and climbed up the north bank until the Spring Valley Canyon was reached. Here the scenery "rivals" that of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad in Colorado - for a short distance. The train crosses the gorge on a deck type truss bridge of steel and wood, 70 feet above the creek bed and spanning 110 feet. It was designed to carry the loads of engines weighing 80 tons. Just beyond the bridge, the station was established and a pathway was cut to reach the top of the dam. The railroad continues east through deep cuts. Beyond, the track is very crooked, winding around the foothills to avoid having to climb a heavy grade. The curvatures make an equivalent of four complete circles, and the rails terminate in the townsite of La Presa, 15.5 miles. From that point, stage coaches carried passengers to El Cajon. Fruit, olives and other local products, including bottled mineral water, were loaded for shipment from that station. Materials for the construction of the Janal or Otay Dams were hauled by teams from La Presa to the sites.

"But the train is moving. We take our seats once more and soon we are in San Diego again."

Let's Ride the Dam Train! Continues

Before reaching the terminal and after climbing the grade on L Street from 12th to 11th Streets, it was the usual practice to stop the train, a brakeman would walk ahead and open the switch to a siding. Then a "drop" or "flying switch" was made. The engineer starts the train ahead, throws the reverse lever over to bunch the slack, the conductor pulls the coupling pin behind the engine, the engineer returns the lever and yanks open the throttle. The engine jumps ahead like a scared jack rabbit, takes the switch and glides into the sidetrack. The brakeman closes the switch and the train rolls down the main line. Then the engine backs out, runs ahead to couple with the cars and pushes them to the depot. And all is set for the return to National City.

Flying switches are dangerous, even with freight cars only. Sometimes the brakeman may not throw the switch over in time, the engine may derail at the switch or the frog or, as happened on the Coronado Railroad at the ferry landing, no one was at the car brakes. It was rough on the rolling stock and the bumping post, not to mention the passengers.

What a trip the 60-Mile Excursion would be for rail-fans!

Feb.11, 1959

