



THE CLUB CAR



Bulletin 711

Pacific Locomotive Association, Inc.

November 2022

The Skookum steamed up and ready



Photo by Alan Siegarth

Skookum waits for the runaround switch to be thrown in Niles.

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First off, I want to thank those who answered our want ads in the Club Car the past couple months. We received a dozen almost new pallets (we have plenty now) and a beautiful pallet jack donated by Steve Rosconi. Thank you all for answering the ads – your donations are a huge help!

The Steam Department had a busy month finishing the annual and operating the Skookum. The month started with an FRA visit to witness the hydrotest

and perform a boiler inspection just weeks before the October steam operations. With the inspection over, a substantial amount of time was spent putting the locomotive quickly back together both during the week and on weekends to ensure the Skookum was ready for operations. In addition to pulling the Sunday operations, the Steam Department was honored to have the Skookum pull Len Leavitt's

Continued on Page 8

OUR MISSION: To be an operating railroad museum for standard gauge railroading, past, present and future, with emphasis on the Western United States and special emphasis on Northern California

NILES CANYON RAILWAY

MEETINGS

Board of Directors Meeting

NOVEMBER 11

5:30 PM

In Whitehouse @ Brightside
In-person & Teleconference

General Meeting

JANUARY 13

7:00 PM

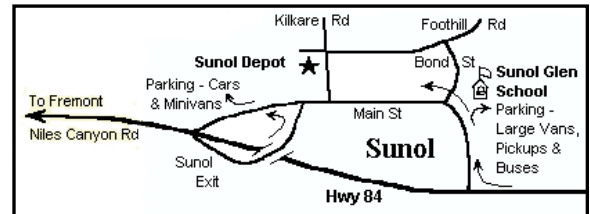
In Whitehouse @ Brightside
In-person & Teleconference

Meetings are held in
January, March, May, June,
July, and October, but can be
subject to cancellation.

BOARDING LOCATIONS

SUNOL DEPOT

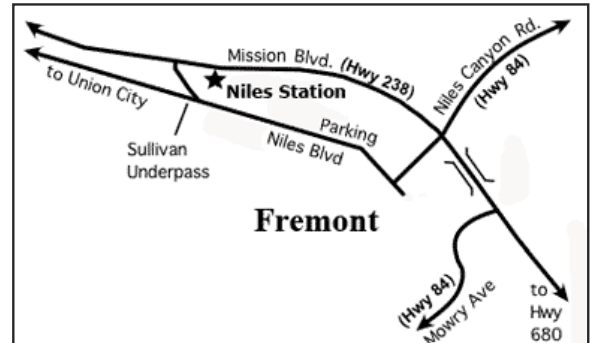
6 Kilcare Road
Sunol, CA 94586



NILES STATION

37029 Mission Blvd.
Fremont, CA 94536

This station
temporarily closed



===== BOARD OF DIRECTORS =====

President	Henry Baum	(925) 447-7358
Vice President	Mike Strider	(707) 318-2633
Recording Secretary	Matt Petach	(408) 256-2883
Membership Secretary	Rich Alexander	(510) 508-0503
Treasurer	Pat Stratton	(650) 888-8619
General Manager	Stephen Barkkarie	(510) 368-1733
Director-At-Large	Justin Legg	(510) 717-4944
Director-At-Large	Warren Haack	(650) 726-7952
Director-At-Large	Bob Pratt	(510) 421-7483

CLUB CAR DEADLINE

The deadline for submitting articles and photos for next month's issue of The Club Car is the
20th OF THIS MONTH!

Submit articles by e-mail in **WORD** text format. Digital photos may also be submitted by e-mail.

Digital photos should be saved as PC format .jpg files.

A **WORD** file with the photo number, description of photo and
identifying the people in them **IS REQUIRED**.

Send to the Editor, Barry Lependorf at clubcar@ncry.org

The editor reserves the right to hold or edit material as necessary.

The Club Car is an official publication of the Pacific Locomotive Association, Inc., P.O. Box 515, Sunol, CA 94586-0515.

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General Meetings are held on the 3rd Friday of January, May & July at 7:30 p.m. and the 3rd Saturday of March, June & October at 3:30 pm at the Sunol Glen School, two blocks east of the Depot on Main Street in Sunol, CA. Members, Sponsors & Guests are welcome.

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Views expressed herein are those of the author unless specifically noted by the editor as official policy.

The Pacific Locomotive Association is a member of the HeritageRail Alliance (HRA).

NILES CANYON RAILWAY

===== November Activities =====

November 5	1st Saturday	MoW Building East, 8:00 am - Brightside - Mike Strider
November 6	2nd Sunday	Speeder Charter - Jim Evans
November 11	2nd Friday	Board of Directors Meeting, 5:30 pm - Brightside - Henry Baum
November 14	2nd Monday	TOL Test Train, 6:00 pm - Niles
November 18	3rd Friday	TOL 4:30 pm - Niles, TOL 7:30 pm - Sunol
November 19	3rd Saturday	TOL 4:30 pm - Niles, TOL Volunteer Train, 7:30 pm - Sunol
November 20	3rd Sunday	TOL Volunteer Train, 4:30 pm - Niles, TOL 7:30 pm - Sunol
November 26	4th Saturday	TOL 4:30 pm - Niles, TOL 7:30 pm - Sunol
November 27	4th Sunday	TOL 4:30 pm - Niles, TOL 7:30 pm - Sunol
November 30	5th Wednesday	TOL 4:30 pm - Niles, TOL 7:30 pm - Sunol

Volunteer Report

Ed Best - Volunteer Coordinator

The people listed below reported over 2,870 volunteer hours for the month of September. Please continue to report your volunteer hours to me by e-mail at volunteers@ncry.org. Train Crew hours are collected directly from the log sheets and meeting attendance by teleconference is reported to me by the Membership Secretary.

Administration

Henry Baum
Mike Strider
Matt Petach
Rich Alexander
Pat Stratton
Steve Barkkarie
Justin Legg
Warren Haack
Bob Pratt
Chris Hauf
Dexter Day
Don Gholson
Donna Alexander
Ed Best
Jackie Vlasak
Jim Evans
Joe Scardino
Kent Hedberg
Mark Miller
Mary Asturias

Archives & Library

Brian Hitchcock

Car Department

Bob Pratt
Brooke Murphy
Bruce Burke
Chris Campi
Chris Hauf
Dee Murphy
Dennis Mann
Howard Wise
Jack Harrington

Car Department

John Link
Rhonda Dijean
Sierra Murphy
Steve Barkkarie
Wesley Van Osdol

Commissary

Bonnie Harrington
Dan Mills
Doug Debs
Jack Harrington
Matt Petach
Rob Giles
Sally Mills
Sue Thomas

Depot Crew & Operations

Donna Alexander
Kent Hedberg
Rich Alexander

Docents

Jim Evans
Dexter Day

Electrical & Signals

Bill Kenney
Curt Hoppins
Dan Furtado
Jacques Verdier
Jim Stewart
Logan Rubasky

Facilities

Bob Bailey
Bob Bradley
Brad Jones
Doug Debs
Doug Vanderlee
Jack Harrington
John Zielinski
Linda Stanley
Matt Petach
Wesley Van Osdol

Gift Shop

Charlene Murrell
Gail Hedberg
Patrice McDonald

Mechanical

Bill Stimmerman
Dee Murphy
Gerald Dewitt
Gerry Feeney
Howard Wise
Jeff Haslam
Karl Swartz
Kent Hedberg
Linda Stanley
Lou Bradas
Peter Bradas
Rich Gove
Steve Jones

Meetings

Bob Bradley
Bob Pratt

Meetings

Charlene Murrell
Chris Campi
Curt Hoppins
Dan Mills
Dave Burla
Don Gholson
Donald Kirker
Donna Alexander
Doug Vanderlee
Ed Best
Gail Hedberg
George Childs
Henry Baum
Jim Baber
Jim Evans
Jon Williamson
Jorg Linke
Karen Kadaja
Kent Hedberg
Leslie Smith
Lou Bradas
Marshall Williams
Matt Petach
Mike Strider
Pat Buder
Pat Stratton
Patrice McDonald
Paul Veltman
Peter Midnight
Rich Alexander
Rob Giles
Roger McCluney
Steve Barkkarie
Steve Jones

Meetings

Steve Slabach
Tim Flippo
Tom Eikerenkotter
Wade Dossantos
Zona Fowler

MoW & Track

Adam Weidenbach
Bob Gilbert
Bob Pratt
Brad Jones
Charles Navarra
Chris Campi
Doug Vanderlee
John Sutkus
Jorg Linke
Ken Southwick
Matt Petach
Mike Strider
Pat Stratton
Rick Cory
Ron Thomas
Shane Rivera
Steve Barkkarie
Steve Meyer
Wesley Van Osdol

Other

Alan Siegwarth
Barry Lependorf
Curt Hoppins
Dennis Mann
Dexter Day
Ed Best

Other

Jacques Verdier
Karl Swartz
Matt Petach
Mike Strider
Patrice Warren
Ray Crist
Sally Mills
Tom Eikerenkotter
Warren Haack
Zonker Harris

Switching Crew

Ed Best
Gerry Feeney
Jim Stewart
Kent Hedberg
Mark Miller
Steve Barkkarie

Train Crew

Bob Pratt
Brad Jones
Curt Hoppins
Ed Best
Gerry Feeney
Jackie Vlasak
Jim Stewart
John Sutkus
Jon Williamson
Jordan Hamilton
Jorg Linke
Justin Legg
Kent Hedberg
Liam O'Leary

Train Crew

Mark Miller
Michael Stockwell
Mike Carter
Nick Zamora
Peter Savoy
Ron Thomas
Sanjay Bhandari
Scott Crislip
Ted Unruh

Train of Lights

Bob Moore
Chris Hauf
Cynder Niemela
Dave Hipple
Denis Murchison
Dexter Day
Donna Alexander
Ed Best
Jim McDaniel
Joan Weber
John Link
Marshall Williams
Norm Fraga
Phil Stone
Ray Freeman
Ron Thomas
Steve Van Meter
Sue Thomas
Terry Stokes
Tim Flippo
Tom Crawford

President's Message

Henry Baum - President

First let me apologize for not having a report last month, as I missed the deadline. I was sick, and I normally wouldn't discuss it here, but the illness was so weird, I feel that I should get all the pity I can for the pain I suffered. I came down with a condition called Sialolithiasis, or for the layperson, a stone in my salivary gland. Ever heard of it? Me neither!

This stone, apparently, plugs up the salivary duct and prevents saliva from reaching the mouth. You have multiple salivary glands, so blocking one shouldn't be a big deal, and it probably happens to all of us numerous times in our lifetime. The human body can be not-too-bright at times, so even though the duct is blocked, the gland continues to make saliva. This increased pressure sometimes pushes the stone out, and all is well. If the stone doesn't pass, the body then sends its warrior white blood cells to the affected area to destroy the stone and the excess saliva, which is now breeding the bacteria from your mouth. The whole bottom of your face begins to swell, and swell, and swell.

I went to the ER Sunday morning, where the doctor prescribed oral antibiotics and opioids for pain. By Sunday evening, I was back in the ER, as the infection was spiking, and the pain was unbearable. I have had tetanus, and pancreatitis, and the pain from this was right up there with those diseases. I was admitted and put on IV pain meds and IV antibiotics. Eventually something gives up and the stone passes or breaks. That leaves the infection, which now needs to be knocked out with the IV antibiotics, and they begin to wean you off the pain meds. After 4 days they sent me home and after a few more days, the situation finally resolved back to normal. I am as normal as normal now.

There have been a number of changes in how hospitals treat patients, and although I found them to be strange, my doctor explained them to me thoroughly when I had my follow-



Bob Pratt manning the Niles Canyon Railway booth at the Sunol Heritage Festival at Sunol Regional Wilderness on October 15th.

up, and I can see the wisdom as to why the changes were made. The biggest change was that your Primary Care Physician (PCP) no longer sees you on rounds. Instead, you are assigned a Hospitalist, a specialist doctor (or even doctors) who are handling your care, and the computerized records alert your PCP that you visited the ER, the status of that visit, and if you are admitted. He follows along with your treatment and can consult with the Hospitalist if necessary. This new paradigm actually allows more effective treatment, as the wasted motion of your doctor visiting the hospital is eliminated. He could video visit if necessary, but his time is better used seeing patients in his office, and the Hospitalist has more time to manage more patients. Trust me, it was better. And once I got off an all-liquid diet, the food in the hospital has improved greatly. It was good last time I was hospitalized, now it is even better. Delicious.

Change is good, and change is inevitable. I am sure Stanford Medical, which has swallowed up my local hospital and doctors, tried a number of things before settling on this new paradigm, and my PCP told me that all the other medical groups (John Muir, Sutter, etc.) are following suit. Some of the changes Stanford made suck, but most are good, or eventually get good. One can always make changes to the changes.

We will all need to be open to changes our organization must make to continue to grow and thrive. And to do that effectively, one needs to know what is happening, and be willing to expend some energy to spreading the word. I joined Bob Pratt at the Sunol Heritage Festival that was held at Sunol Regional Wilderness picnic grounds. We talked to many folks, some who were excited to learn about volunteering opportunities. One person was excited about helping us put

President's Message

Henry Baum - President

together the displays we should be showing at these events to better tell our story. Another couple were up from Santa Barbara visiting their daughter, and were excited to learn about TOL opportunities, and were even more excited when they learned we run real steam trains, which they love. I hope they were able to get the chance to take a steam train ride the next day behind the Skookum.

Our organization has grown large enough that we should be able to spend more time manning booths at festivals, attracting new volunteers

and identifying train/railroad lovers. We used to have a group of volunteers who specialized in going to these events and setting up booths and talking the PLA up. That seems to have died off, as there was really no way of gauging what was working bringing in new riders and what was bringing in new volunteers. We can probably do a much better job collecting info from booth visitors, and hopefully be able to pass that info on to others in the organization who can help capitalize the info into new business.

This is where our Marketing team needs to shine, and we need to

reconstitute that team, as we have lost a number of key players. If you are interested in joining this team, and especially if you have professional experience leading teams such as this, please contact me ASAP. But don't let it interfere with your TOL preparations! As always, if you would like to discuss this opportunity or any topic in further detail, please contact me by phone at 925.447.7358 or by email at president@ncry.org.

Respectfully submitted
Henry Baum

TOL Volunteers needed

We're only 3 weeks away from the Train of Lights and we need a lot of volunteers to make this happen. By the time you read this we will be even closer to the beginning of the TOL, and scampering for volunteers. Can we count on you?? Thank you if you've already signed up for a spot on the ground or on the train. If you haven't signed up yet, please do. And if you're able to volunteer one more night please help. A lot of you have signed up for multiple days/nights and it is greatly appreciated. We had a lot of new volunteers last year and it was so nice to see new and happy faces joining us. This year we have so many spots with no one, or only one person signed up, and with some spots the only person signed up is a new person who might not be sure what needs to be done.

Again, to volunteer for the TOL, please follow these notes:

If interested in volunteering and riding the train during the Train of Lights, you can volunteer by going to ncry.org and then click on Members' Website under About on the pull downs at the top of the page or menu. You don't have to be a member to volunteer. Then click

on Volunteer Opportunities under Volunteer. Then you'll see 2 pages for volunteering. We need people specifically in the snack bar and as car hosts. For the snack bar, we ask the volunteers to work both trains. For the dome or parlor car hosts, volunteers can work either the 4:30 or the 7:30, and if they want to work both trains, they need to sign up for both individually. To sign up you would click under the green hand to the right of the opportunity that says Volunteer Yourself. This will take you to the page with dates to click and put in your name, phone number, and email and then click Next at the bottom, review the dates selected, and click Finish. If working both trains, then on the deadhead, the empty train going from Niles/Fremont to Sunol at 6:00, the volunteers eat on board the train with food prepared by volunteers each night. It's fun and a happy time of the year to interact with passengers and get to see the train.

Thank you for your volunteer heart,
donna alexander
station-agent@ncry.org
510-996-8420

Train of Lights Commissary Training Meeting

For all those already signed up, and for anyone interested in finding out about volunteering for TOL commissary in the Snack Bar, Dome Car and Parlor Car, please join us Saturday, November 12th, at 10:00 a.m. at Brightside. Please meet in between the two engine buildings by the porta-potty. Everyone will be escorted to the train since we have some new volunteers who might not know where to board the train. You will learn what's new this year, especially what a captain position is as compared to crew positions. You are welcome to stay and help stock all the cars with our Train of Lights snacks, too.

Address for our Brightside train yard is 5550 Niles Canyon Road, about 4 miles from Mission Boulevard at Niles Canyon/Highway 84 corner by Vallejo Mill Park and 2 miles west from the 680 Freeway at exit 21.

Sue Thomas



Along the Right of Way

Stephen Barkkarie - General Manager

November is a time to remember the good things in life and the good things we have done. Many would say one of the best things in life in the Bay area is the Niles Canyon Railway's Train of Lights. I must agree with the idea but with a unique perspective from behind the scenes. The experience of the train in full Holiday mode has become a multi-generational tradition with families from all over the bay area and beyond, though what I am most grateful for is the myriad of efforts that go into putting together this amazing spectacle. Our volunteers give countless hours to bring happiness to others. (Actually, we do have a volunteer who counts the hours, thanks Ed.) I want to take a moment to point out a couple who stand out this year.

As always there is a flurry of activity as summer ends with the operating season, wrapping up the restoration and repairs of the equipment, making sure the track is ready for Winter and making ready plans to give joy through a cup of hot cider or chocolate. It takes a village of people to put together the whole thing and if I tried to tell all the tales it would fill volumes, so I want to point out just a couple where I have firsthand knowledge.

For starters our WP 315 Coach has had the elements taking a toll on the windows with several coming apart at the seams. You see daylight through some and not through the glass but the corners. This presents a danger to little fingers and had to be repaired before going back into service. We pulled the worst ones to be reproduced by Tom Crawford (he has a great wood shop at his house), but he set his limit at six because of the time it takes to make a window from scratch. True to his word he made six copies, now I needed to find someone to mount them. I knew that a lot of window work was being done in the Gothic Peak sleeper, so

one day I asked volunteer Bruce Burke if he would have a look at the windows. We had a great conversation about methods of joinery, benefits of different wood species, finishes, and how to best protect from the weather. Bruce has a lot of knowledge and straightforward attitude toward repairs and before long he agreed to lend a hand at getting the car back in service.

First order of business was to remove the Xmas decorations that remained from last season and as it turned out birds had found a way into the car and nested (and left droppings all over). Bruce took the lead in recruiting a team to dispose of refuse and sanitize the car. (Thanks Doug, Dee, Rhonda, Bev, et. al.) Then he sized up the job and determined a great deal of preparation was needed and he worked for weeks on removing rust and cleaning parts. (Again, thanks Rhonda, Dee, John, Pat, Wes and all you others I missed.) With all that work done, Bruce suggested we should look into having all the windows

replaced at once instead of piecemeal. That made a lot of sense. He had found a window maker to construct windows for the Gothic Peak and proposed a contract for the WP 315 windows that was well thought out and negotiated the project with the manufacturer who came forward with a reasonable price for a real quality product. The idea was approved, and Bruce oversaw the project to delivery, now we have a full set of replacements. Turns out that was the easy part. Now they must be installed.



Photo by Stephen Barkkarie

Ballast screen and Dump truck cleaning asphalt grindings.



Photo by donna alexander

Bruce Burke has worked on replacing the windows in the 315 for many weeks.



Photo by Stephen Barkkarie

Chris Hauf and Chris Campi; dueling spray guns painting Park car.

NILES CANYON RAILWAY

Along the Right of Way

Stephen Barkkarie - General Manager



Photo by Stephen Barkkarie

Mark Whitman sets a box while Bob Bradley observes.

Like clockwork, Bruce showed up Wednesdays and Saturdays all summer and what I admire most is his no compromise attitude toward repairs saying, "If you do it right the first time, you don't have to do it over". With determination he chased materials, monitored the contractor and recruited assistance all the time telling me he was not very good at leading a project. I respectfully disagree. We could use a few more people like him.

As time got short to get the car ready for TOL, Bruce (and John) had to put in a marathon week double coating the windowpanes and painting the car frames and guide tracks. I think he pushed his volunteer enthusiasm to the limit, but the result is the coach is done on time and the windows he did look fantastic. The Association is very



Photo by Stephen Barkkarie

Terry's Trees removing dead pines at Brightside.

proud to have him aboard, and I offer him my personal thanks. (P.S. I think he is going to stick around; I saw him back at work on the Gothic Peak he loves so much.)

Another instance of stepping up to the plate by one of our members came as a result of tree falling on the powerline to the Yard office (Blake's Palace). We needed to get the power back before TOL because this is the train crew sign-in and dispatch, so it was decided to get a contractor to underground the line back in. Because I was neck deep in the NCRY 3380 refit, I neglected due diligence into the guy we hired and as a result, after three half-days of work, our "contractor" skated out leaving us with a meandering ditch half-way through the yard right down the main road.

Luckily, the day before the deadbeat fled, Mark Whitman returned from vacation. He knew right away this guy was not going to be able to pull off the job because of his many years of experience in the field. Despite the guy's bad attitude (and with hardly an "I told you so" to me) he offered to jump in and help get the job done. As soon as

we found out the guy bolted Mark took charge. He sized up what materials we needed, and we planned to finish the job ourselves. Rich Alexander would consult on the electrical, I would dig the trench and together we would lay the pipe and fill the trench. The next day, Mark went to work at Niles screening out fine materials to bed the pipe with our ballast screen, Rich ran for conduit pipe, and I took the controls of the rented excavator. (Fortunately we found a copy of the rental contract on the machine, so we have an address to follow.) Two days later it's Wednesday and we are laying conduit and backfilling trenches help from MOW crew (thanks Matt, Dee, Chris and Pat, Bob, Ken, Steve and Wes for picking up the slack on the "Park" car). Let me tell you, when you know what you are doing, like Mark does, a job can come together quickly. It is a pleasure to work with a guy who "clicks" and anticipates what needs to be done next. By Thursday, we are done digging we have all the conduit, and we are setting ground boxes. Come Friday we are connecting to buildings blowing fish tape into conduits. (Right on the schedule we need to meet.) Now all that is left is to order wire, pull it in and hook it up. Because we have such talent in our volunteer pool, and despite having to go after our deposit, we will actually get the job done under budget. Just goes to show how working together we can overcome adversity and come out on top.

That is just two of the amazing people doing amazing things for the Niles Canyon Railway and there are many more stories just like this. They make me grateful to be a part of such a giving and talented group. I would invite you to come out and join us. You might discover you have talent that will benefit others and thereby yourself.

Stephen Barkkarie

Stacktalk

Alan Siegwarth

Continued from Page 1

90th Birthday Charter. Len is a long time PLA volunteer who spent many years as treasurer of the organization. When Len was treasurer, he always was a big supporter of PLA steam and invariably found money in the budget to help with steam restoration/repairs even in the early years when PLA was not as financially fortunate as we are today. Happy Birthday Len from all of us in the Steam Department!

When we were not working on the Skookum, work continued on both the SP #1744 and #2479. Furnace bearer, frame repairs and suspension work continued on the #1744. Progress is being made and I am hoping we will soon be putting parts of the suspension back together – so we can move on to the next section needing work. One step at a time. The other big news this month is the brand new tires for the #1744 have been delivered! We have some prep work to complete first, but we are planning to schedule installing the new tires on the drivers in Sacramento. More news on this exciting step in the future.

The SP #2479, which has taken up residence on yard track 1 just across from the shop continues to have the parts reinstalled that were taken off for the move from San Jose. The #2479 crew loads parts in San Jose, brings them to the Canyon and gets them installed on the locomotive right away as much as possible so we don't have a lot of parts stored in our limited available space at Brightside. So far this plan has been working well but at some point in the future there will be a lot of material to store when it needs to be moved out of San Jose. The logistical planning for all this material is extremely difficult due to the lack of space at Brightside but we will come up with a solution – we always do.



Photo by Alan Siegwarth

The passenger train leaves Niles on a foggy morning in October.



Photograph Courtesy Al DiPaulo

Brand new tires for the SP#1744 arrive in Sacramento.

The #2479 crew has been a great addition to our team at Brightside. We have been helping them by switching the locomotive when necessary, operating equipment, showing them where tools are stored and lending a



Photograph Courtesy Al DiPaulo

Shiny new tires show the machined tread and flanges.

helping hand. They have jumped right in as part of the Steam Department and are actively involved with work on the #1744, our operating locomotives and shop work. Welcome aboard guys – we are excited to have you all in the Canyon!

Alan Siegwarth

Len Leavitt 90th Birthday Charter Train

The afternoon train on Saturday Oct 8 was a special charter to celebrate Len Leavitt's 90th Birthday. Len has been a PLA member for 55 years! About 200 people were onboard. The train was pulled by steam locomotive #7 Skookum. When Skookum ran around the train at Niles, Conductor Jorg Linke arranged for Len to be right next to an open wheelchair-access side door. Skookum was stopped with the cab right next to Len. Jorge then led everyone singing Happy Birthday, with the whistle added too!

Lunch onboard was catered by the NCRy Commissary Dept. The Leavitts generously covered the cost of food & drink. We set up the buffet in the snack-bar car, plus coolers of citrus sodas in the adjacent open-air car. There was a slight snafu about invitations, so we had to be prepared to serve anywhere from 75 to 200 people. Bonnie Harrington made 150 delicious small sandwiches. If we needed more (we sure did!), then we also had lots of sliced ham, salami, cheddar cheese, Gouda cheese, 3 kinds of baked-that-morning sourdough bread, potato salad, dill pickles, bread-&-butter pickles, watermelon, grapes, almond croissants, homemade gingerbread, and homemade chocolate cake. Also champagne, Martinelli's sparkling cider, sodas, water, & coffee.

Many thanks to Commissary volunteers Laura Bajuk, Bob Bradley, Bonnie Harrington, Sally Liska Mills, Dee Murphy, Mike Pechner, Matt Petach, Bob Pratt, Joe Romani, & Sue Thomas, plus lots of help from Henry Baum, Kent Hedberg, Donna Alexander, Rich Alexander, the entire train crew, and several other great volunteers who helped put everything away after returning to Sunol (I apologize for not



Photo by Doug Debs

Len & Elaine Leavitt Family after Len's 90th Birthday Train.



Photo by Doug Debs

Elaine Leavitt & son on wheelchair lift at Sunol

having everyone's name).

After we returned to Sunol, Conductor Jorg Linke asked the guests to form a big circle around the wheelchair lift.

Everyone clapped and cheered as Len and Elaine Leavitt got off the train. It was a great day for everyone.

Doug Debs

Tales of the Past

Dexter D. Day - Operations Manager

This Month's tale:

A TALE OF THREE GANGS IN THE CANYON "HAND-BUILDING AN IRON ROAD, 1865-1869"

By Victor K. Wong

This month's tale has our guest writer Victor K. Wong laying out what it took the three track gangs to build the railroad through the canyon which now the Niles Canyon Railway runs trains over this historic right of way. Our tale begins in the Spring of 1865 when a work gang started grading, by hand, an earthen roadbed for the first iron road in the canyon (now known as Niles Canyon).

The gang, supervised by Jerome Cox et al. (hereafter called the Cox gang), worked for Western Pacific Railroad (WPRR), which existed 1862-1870 to build the last leg of the first transcontinental railroad, from Sacramento to San Francisco Bay. The Cox gang, which had started from San Jose, graded past Milpitas and entered about a mile East of Vallejo Mills into the narrow twisty canyon, near MP 30.6 (Merienda). The Cox gang, that was in the canyon, was about 600 strong. Composed mainly of Chinese builders who emigrated almost 100% from a very small Southern parcel of the closed Qing-Dynasty in China. They emigrated from villages in the Pearl River Delta adjacent to, and Southwest of, the open-port city of Canton (Guangzhou); and they spoke mutually unintelligible village variants of Cantonese. In the canyon, they lived in tents and grouped themselves with their own cooks. One such "China camp" was near MP 32.7 beside Alameda Creek. Surely there must have been others, since about 600 young men had to be housed and fed. The Cox gang made heavy rock-cuts in the canyon using what they had at hand, which were hand tools (shovels,



Photo from Getty's Museum

San Jose Jct. built in 1869 by Strobridge gang, train heading South on San Jose branch built 1866 by Cox gang. Abutment corner (lower left) is of the first bridge.

picks, hammers, drills, etc.) black powder, horses and carts. The 20-ft wide roadbed for the first iron road had to thread through the canyon with many cuts and fills to maintain its approximately 1% ascending grade with curvature no more than 10 degrees in 100 feet. In January 1866 WPRR meeting at San Jose, some of the monumental handiwork they achieved were described: "through-cuts of over sixty feet in depth and side-hill cuttings of much greater depth"-some places so steep that landslides may occur during the wet season. The description

continued: "Some of the embankments are over fifty feet in height, and are retained at the bottom by huge walls of solid masonry." The large dry-laid buttressed stone retaining wall near MP 32.8 made from locally quarried coursed ashlar sandstone, still in use. In addition to the hand rock-cuts and masonry, the Cox gang completed by Summer of 1866 three very large massive bridges, built of the very best material, on solid stone masonry. Although the piers were solid stone, the original wooden "Howe's Truss" bridge was deemed light, strong and elegant

NILES CANYON RAILWAY

Tales of the Past

Dexter D. Day - Operations Manager



Photo from Dr. Robert Fisher collection

First bridge in canyon is a wooden Howe's Truss on solid stone piers and abutments completed September 1866 by the Cox gang. Track in foreground MP 30.5 by Strobridge gang in 1869.

as a work of art. (In 1866, while Central Pacific constructed temporary bridges on timber piers in the Sierra, WPRR built strong bridges with permanent stone piers and abutments.) The first bridge in the canyon (South of MP 30.6) was decommissioned April 1870, then later destroyed. The second bridge at MP 30.78 is the Dresser Bridge. The third bridge at MP 31.56 is the Farwell Bridge. Both Dresser and Farwell bridges are in use today with the superstructures that replaced the "Howe's Truss" bridges. The original stone piers were angled parallel to the course of the river below and were not perpendicular to the railroad's alignment. The original coursed sandstone piers are some of the best available examples of 19th-century masonry. To receive federal aid, WPRR had to complete 20 miles of track from where they started in San Jose, and the 20-mile mark was near MP 32.8 in the middle of the canyon. But when

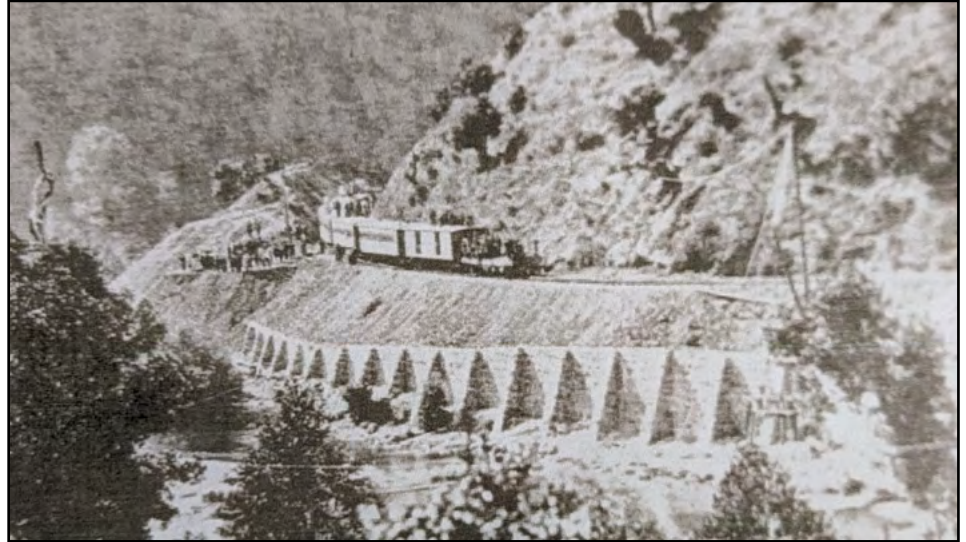


Photo from Clyde Arbuckle collection

Embankment over fifty feet in height, retained by buttressed retaining stone wall solid masonry hand built by the Cox gang and being inspected by federal commissioners near end of track 1866.

they finished 20 miles of track from San Jose at the end of September 1866, Cox abruptly halted the project, leaving equipment and supplies strewn in the canyon, and more disturbingly, abandoning his gang. WPRR had run out of money. More than a year later, on December 19, 1867, the Sacramento Daily Union ran the following story under the headline Verdict: "in the case of Ah Ying et al. vs. J.B. Cox et al. to recover for labor furnished to the Western Pacific Railroad Company, the Jury, in the Eleventh District Court, returned a verdict against the defendant Cox & Arnold for \$64,434.71". The amount awarded was equal to over 2,000 man-months of labor! The Cox gang had not been paid for work rendered over at least one quarter of a year! Early in July 1867, Central Pacific bought out the bankrupt WPRR and diverted its assets to aid their work in the Sierra. In February 1868, they contracted with Turton, Knox & Ryan to resume work on the WPRR line starting at the Sacramento end, and Ryan was supervisor of the work gang. In April

1868, Stanford led Central Pacific to acquire Oakland, not San Francisco, as the new Western terminus of the Pacific Railroad - President Lincoln's railroad "from the Missouri river to the Pacific Ocean". On May 10, 1869, the Pacific Railroad was mostly completed when the Central Pacific track from Sacramento was joined to the Union Pacific track from Omaha at Promontory Summit in Utah territory. When Stanford struck the Golden Spike at Promontory Summit, which sent out by the telegraph D.O.N.E. across the nation, he knew that the last leg of the Pacific Railroad from Sacramento to Oakland was not done. In fact, the Ryan gang at that time had completed only 30 miles of track from Sacramento to the Sacramento County line. Two weeks later, Stanford himself made an oral contract, according to historian Tutorow, with his construction boss James Strobridge to build a railroad from a junction in the canyon a mile East of Vallejo Mills on the 1866 WPRR to San Jose (hereafter called San Jose

Continued on next page

NILES CANYON RAILWAY

Tales of the Past

Dexter D. Day - Operations Manager

Continued from previous page

Junction) into Alameda Valley to Oakland. On June 4, 1869 Strobridge, with some of his men, horses, grading and camp tools, boarded the steamer Yosemite at Sacramento and sailed to begin work on the San Jose Junction at MP 30.6 in the canyon. Meanwhile, Ryan sent part of his gang, which had grown to about 2,000 strong, into the canyon (Sacramento Daily Union: June 5, 1869). "To build commencing twenty miles from San Jose, at the end of the section completed by former owners of the franchise at MP 32.8". They worked Eastward up the canyon towards Amador Valley. Thus, in June 1869, after more than two and a half years of little activity, the canyon was bursting with two separate work gangs working back to back toiling away building the railroad. The Strobridge gang at MP 30.6 working Westward from San Jose Junction and the Ryan gang at MP 32.8 working Eastward along Cox's old line up the canyon. The new line of the Strobridge gang (Daily Alta California: June 17, 1869). "Started about 100 yards above the Eastern end of the lower [first] bridge, and running down the creek on the North side, hugging around the hillsides entailed "some heavy side cuttings [for] only about a mile". A month later, the Alta observed



Photo from Thomas House Worth & Co.

Big cut above the third bridge in canyon (Cox gang 1866). The Cox gang hand dug through-cuts of over sixty feet in depth and side-hill cuttings of much greater depth.



1869 map. (a) The Cox gang (circle) 1865-1869 San Jose to 20 mile mark. (b) Ryan gang (circle) starting June 1869 where Cox had stopped. (c) Strobridge gang (red diamond) June 1869 at San Jose Jct. working Westward. (Left) San Francisco Bay Railroad to Alameda Valley.

(Daily Alta California: July 25, 1869) that the Chinese builders under Strobridge were "found to work admirably, no rows, no strikes, no dictation of terms to employers under the threats of violence, and in fact, nothing but square out work with no nonsense". Moreover, they had completed the heavy hillside-cutting and "already finished track-laying for about a mile and half, commencing at the [San Jose] Junction". Back then in July 1869, Niles did not exist in the valley at MP 29.2. Life there began April 28, 1870. Never less, the track at 1.5 miles West of San Jose Junction (MP 30.6) meant that the Strobridge gang had exited the canyon and reached the Alameda Valley, just West of Niles. Meanwhile, the Ryan gang, working Eastward from the San Jose 20-mile mark at MP 32.8, had to go (almost eight miles) further to reach Amador Valley and the village of Pleasanton which was established in 1867. Pleasanton had donated land to the WPRR in exchange for a railroad station at MP 40.6. Fortunately, the Ryan gang had some prior help from the Cox gang of 1865-1866. Cox had signed in 1865 a contract with WPRR for 75-mile stretch from San Jose to

Stockton and had in 1866 men working as far East as Livermore Pass (now Altamont Pass). When the original stone piers of the Arroyo De La Laguna Bridge (MP 36.9) were examined (Niles Canyon Transcontinental Railroad Historic District Documentation: 2009), "The stone work [was] indicative of WPRR construction c.a. 1866". In other words, the Cox gang probably built the original stone piers of all four bridges in the canyon before work was abruptly halted when the track reached the 20-mile mark from San Jose in September 1866. In any case, the Ryan gang started in June 1869 working Eastward from MP 32.8 where the Cox gang's track laying had stopped. Two months later, Marysville's newspaper reported that on Aug 14, 1869, the "railroad track working Eastward was completed to Pleasanton" at MP 40.6 in Amador Valley. The last rail of the first iron road between Niles and Pleasanton was laid in August 1869 at Pleasanton. Thus, this tale of three gangs in the canyon comes to an end.

(To be continued: Two gangs racing to finish the last leg of the Pacific Railroad)

I hope you enjoyed this great Tale on the history of the building of the Niles Canyon Railway.

Hazmat

Doug Debs - Hazmat Manager

Roof Installed Over Hazmat Sheds

Hazmat Sheds #1 & #2 are fireproof (6 hr rated) portable steel buildings with full secondary containment sump floors – perfect for oil & flammables storage. They were located inside a warehouse for 35+ years, so the roofs weren't built to be rainproof. Last winter we had to tarp the roofs – twice.

We compared waterproofing options. The best long-term solution is an all-steel 20' x 36' roof, same design as the roof over Yosemite Valley #330 parlor-observation car.

To minimize cost and volunteer hours, the roof is bolted to 3"x3" angle "iron" (steel, actually). Many thanks to Bob Bradley, Jack Herrington, Brad Jones, Dee Murphy, & John Zielinski for marking, drilling, cleaning, priming, & painting the angle iron, and to John Blaine for welding a support post to the retaining wall.

The angle iron was attached with high-strength self-tapping 5/16"-24 structural bolts. The percolation pond embankment next to Hazmat Shed #1 made ladder use challenging.

Doug Debs



Photo by Doug Debs

Dee Murphy lying on shed #1 roof, holding drill over nothing but air, while drilling holes for angle iron anchor bolts.



Photo by Doug Debs

Roof frame being installed by Mardera Carports team, Roof edges are 4' high.



Photo by Doug Debs

Framing completed, Note cross-braces, Siding being installed.



Photo by Doug Debs

Completed roof over Hazmat Shed.

NILES CANYON RAILWAY

Treasurer's Report

Pat Stratton - Treasurer

Our balance sheet at the end of September shows we have used cash for major expenses this month. We have pretty well topped off our gift shop inventory for TOL operations and the first half of next year. We purchased the actual tickets our TOL passengers use to board the train for \$6,000. We have nearly completed the painting and upgrade of the Park Car. And we put \$45,000 into Wildfire Mitigation.

September was another busy month with good work done on a number of projects. We earned \$20k in operating revenue during the month. We spent \$10,000 on paint and upgrades to the Park Car, \$1,700 on the Ranch Car restoration, \$11,000 on 2 pallets of TrackMat, and \$1,920 on inspecting and recharging our many fire extinguishers.

Without including TOL ticket revenue, which went on sale October 1, we still have a significant cash cushion. We have already sold nearly all TOL tickets, so the cash from those sales (temporarily held by our ticket vendor) will join our bank account each day starting November 18 as we complete that day's runs and earn its revenue. We are always careful to not pocket our ticket revenue until after we have earned it. Between pandemics, mud

slides, and equipment malfunctions there are always a number of things lurking that could derail our operations.

Donations for the month included \$1,700 to the General Fund; \$1,250 to the Steam Department; \$116 to the Diesel Dept.; \$1,000 to aid the integration of CTCR buildings into Niles; and \$250 for new facilities, a donation received in memory of David & Shirley Ernest.

Many years ago the PLA had the foresight to set up and fund an Endowment. It was designed to grow the funds donated to it (\$3.5 million to date) safely within whatever the existing investment climate; and to shield that principal from use by PLA's everyday train operations. By agreement, a portion (most, but not all) of its earnings are available for specific purposes to further the PLA's historic equipment collection and restoration efforts. The current balance in the fund is nearly \$3.9 million. This fund is where your Board directs the more sizable donations and bequests received.

Let me know if you have questions or comments.

Pat Stratton

650-888-8619

treasurer@ncry.org

Membership Report

Rich Alexander - Membership

Another sad note that Stan Kistler has passed. We received word from his daughter. He has been a long-time member and supporter of the PLA.

New Members:

Marco C. Alcaino; Ronald S. Arth; Paul Bartz; Teri Berwick; Avery Fizzell; Meredith Galloway; Jonathan Izen; Dylan R. Olson.

Susan Thomas has requested voting member status. She has met the qualifications. I recommend that we approve her request and send it on for voting at the next General Membership Meeting. The Board agreed to this action. Voting will take place at the next regularly scheduled Membership Meeting, which will be in January.

Tickets for the Volunteer Trains were mailed out. You should have received them by now. If for some reason you didn't get them contact me at membership@ncry.org or at 510-508-0503. You will have noticed that you received two coupons per ticket to be used in the snack bar car for two complimentary items of your choice. Additional items can be purchased with cash. This is something new from the Commissary Department.

There is still time to sign up to volunteer on the Train of Lights. We still have many slots that need to be filled.

Rich Alexander

When doing online shopping with Amazon, go to Smile.Amazon.com and type in "Pacific Locomotive Association". You can set the PLA as beneficiary of a quarterly contribution of 0.5 percent of eligible purchases you make. Add up this small amount from all of us and your railroad will see real money!



E-COUPLING INFORMATION

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Email: To Join Members Email List, send an Email to: info@ncry.org

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YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/NilesCanyonRailRoad>



NILES CANYON RAILWAY

TWO BLACK WIDOWS VISIT HAPPY VALLEY ROAD BRIDGE

On Friday September 9, both SP Black Widow EMD's 5472 (SD-9) and 5623 (GP-9) were called on to run to Happy Valley Road bridge for two tasks. The first task involved running over the beginning of the newly constructed curve about ¼ mile west of Happy Valley Road bridge to flatten out a high spot by running over it about 4 consecutive times with both locomotives. The second task was to demonstrate and get a measurement of the clearance of the low AT&T wire line over the west end of the Happy Valley Road bridge. The bottom of the wire was basically touching the radio antenna of the 5623.

Mike Strider



Photo by Mike Strider

Steve Barkkarie in cab of 5623 at Happy Valley Road bridge.



Photo by Mike Strider

Both 5472 and 5623 posing at Happy Valley Road bridge looking railroad east.



Photo by Mike Strider

Steve Barkkarie piloting the 5623 showing the vertical clearance under the AT&T wire at the bridge.

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Time Sensitive Material



Steam locomotive, Skookum #7, departs Brightside yard on a cool, overcast morning to start its day.

Photo by Chris Hauf