

Volume 12

Number 3

Fall 2003



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The Santa Clara

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www.sbhrs.org

“Give Yourself a Present – Discover the Past”

SBHRS Helps Heritage Council Celebrate History Month

By Chuck Catania

The Heritage Council of Santa Clara County, a group of 27 Santa Clara County museums, is celebrating History Month during October. On each October weekend, a selected group of museums will offer a special program or activity. SBHRS members can enjoy membership privileges at all Heritage Council museums during History Month.



History Month
Discover The Past!

SBHRS, a Heritage Council Board Member actively assisted in the planning and creation of History Month starting in 2001. Our featured function in 2002 was the dedication of the Santa Clara Tower as part of the City of Santa Clara’s Sesquicentennial celebration.

SBHRS will devote Saturday, 11 October, to have the HO and N scale layouts fully running, the Museum open and will conduct tours of the Santa Clara Tower. Also, during History Month, any purchases from the Company Store will have a 10 percent discount applied.

All are welcome to attend. To find out what’s happening at other historical museums and institutions in Santa Clara County, visit the History Month website at: www.historymonth.org

Several Work Projects Make Progress Over Summer Months

Work on several projects of the South Bay Historical Railroad Society has moved forward during the warm summer months. Several members have worked to complete the long-delayed renovation of the south wall of the Santa Clara Depot. The wall, which by its location faces morning and some afternoon sun, has received the bulk of the time and effort this summer.

November Target Date

Redwood siding and battens have been nailed in place and the wall has been painted. It’s anticipated that the wall will be completed and the scaffolding removed in time for the SBHRS’ Open House in November.

Meanwhile, work has progressed in the design and drafting of plans for a new ramp at the south end of the dock, adjacent to the south wall.

Ramp is Damaged

The ramp was removed about two years ago when extensive damage to the decking and the support structure of the ramp was discovered.

It also was desirous at the time to make any new ramp compliant with the standards of the Americans with Disability Act and
(Continued on Page 2)

**Elsewhere
in the
Block . . .**



*SP Passenger Cars —
Volume 1 Reviewed*

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*A Short History
of the Lark’s Collisions*

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**United
We
Stand**

Santa Clara Stop Planned for Toys for Tots Train

A special Toys for Tots train will visit Santa Clara Depot on Saturday, 29 November, to enable local residents to make contributions of new toys and cash that will bring joy and happiness to children at Christmas time.

For the special event, the Santa Clara Depot will be open to visitors from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., when docents and members of the South Bay Historical Railroad Society, with the help of Marine Corps Reservists, will accept donations of unwrapped new toys and cash.

The two model railroad displays in the depot also will be in operation to entertain visitors.

It's the third year that the SBHRS has participated in the event, which is sponsored by the U. S. Marine Corps Reserves, along with local sponsors Caltrain, and the Golden Gate Railroad Museum.

A festively decorated and lighted Caltrain consist will bring Christmas merry-makers



TOYS FOR TOTS

U.S. Marine Corps Reserve
For more information, visit www.toysfortots.org

**Toys for Tots Train
at Santa Clara Depot
Saturday, 29 November
7:45-8:05 p.m.
(Depot Open to Public 7-8:30 p.m.)**

to the depot. The stop at Santa Clara Depot is scheduled for a 20 minute period between 7:45 and 8:05 p.m. The train also will stop at other Peninsula stations. The same train will operate on Sunday at four different station stops.

Created in 1947 and expanded nationwide in 1948, Toys for Tots is an official activity of the U.S. Marine Corps, an official mission of Marine Forces Reserve and the Marine Corps' premier community action program. From 1947-2002, U.S. Marines distributed over 298 million toys to over 145 million needy children. Today, Toys for Tots is one of the nation's flagship and most visible Christmas charitable causes with local Toys for Tots campaigns conducted in more than 400 communities throughout the nation.

Because the Toys for Tots program is operated under the umbrella of the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation, all charitable contributions are tax deductible.

SP Passenger Car Book, SoCal Rails Video Highlight New Additions to SBHRS Library

The first comprehensive volume of a series on passenger cars of the Southern Pacific railroad has been added to the Library of the South Bay Historical Railroad Society. The 456-page book, *Southern Pacific Passenger Cars - Volume 1: Coaches and Chair Cars*, is published by the Southern Pacific Historical and Technical Society. Officially, the authors are the members of the Passenger Car Book Committee from the

SPH&TS.

Also added to the Library is a new Pentrex video, *Above Southern California Rails*, which was donated. Several guides for employees of the Union Pacific Railroad were donated to the library, and the past quarter saw the addition of *Southern Pacific Historic Diesels, Volume 9, Alco PA/PB Passenger Locomotives*, authored by Joseph Strapac.

City Approval Next Step for Ramp Project

(Continued from Page 1)

to construct a ramp that would provide easier access for wheelchairs. The new ramp is planned with a lesser grade than the old ramp, which was very steep.

After completion of plans and technical illustrations for the proposed ramp, the specifics of the project must be approved by the Santa Clara Historical and Landmarks Commission and the Planning Department of the City of Santa Clara.

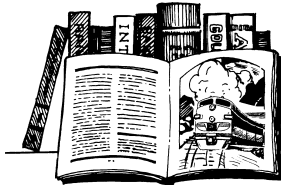


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Book Review



Southern Pacific Passenger Cars — Volume 1: Coaches and Chair Cars

456 pages, Text, Black & White and some Color Photographs

©2003 by Southern Pacific Historical & Technical Society

Southern Pacific Historical & Technical Society has released the first of a multi-volume set on SP's passenger cars. As the subtitle indicates, this book showcases the line's coaches and chair cars.

This lengthy history describes the railroad's equipment from the early 1900s (the period between 1869 and 1900 is largely ignored in this treatise).

Instead, the book introduces the reader to the early 60-foot coaches and chair cars that were of steel construction, most of those by the Pullman Company or the Standard Steel Car Company, which later was acquired by Pullman, and became the Pullman-Standard Company.

The historical and technical society has relied on a collection of experts on SP equipment — truly a work by committee. But "The SPH&TS Passenger Car Book Committee" is a *Who's Who* of SP historians, technical experts and photographers. Included in the credits are Jeff Cauthen, who served as chair of the committee, Ken Harrison, Bruce Heard, Fred Hill, Sheldon King, Don Munger, Steve Peery, John Signor, and Tony Thompson. Two other significant contributors, John Carrol, and the SBHRS's own Will Anderson passed away between 1999 and 2002 before they could enjoy in publication the fruits of their labor.

This is a highly technical volume. It's unfortunate that the largest audience for this and future volumes — those who experienced those cars as workers, riders, or just

fans — are in or approaching their senior years. The audience with the greatest interest is passing on. The prospective audience for a book of this subject is mostly age 55 and above. Only hardcore historians performing in-depth research many years from now will have a genuine need to use a book of this technical depth. And then, they would be more likely to obtain it from a library than purchase the book. It retails for \$100.

The book introduces the reader to those 60-foot coaches and chair cars that served so admirably between the early 1900s and the late 1970s.

As Bay Area residents, we can especially enjoy

the histories of the development of the IC-series of coaches (Interurban Coaches) that were used exclusively in the Bay Area for San Francisco peninsula commute service. The same can be said for the technical data provided on the three series of Southern Pacific gallery double-deck commute cars that graced the peninsula rails between 1954 and 1981, when the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board finally replaced these cars with the present double deck commute cars of Japanese manufacture.

Between those two series of cars are, chronologically, thorough studies of clerestory roof coaches and chair cars, pre-World War II single-unit and articulated streamlined chair cars for such trains as the *Daylights*, *City of San Francisco*, and others, as well as postwar new-build and rebuilt cars.

(Continued on Page 7)

Train Show Set for 1-2 November

Two model railroad layouts, a new crossing signal and other recently acquired artifacts highlight the Model Train Show and Open House scheduled for the Santa Clara Depot on Saturday and Sunday, 1-2 November


Also a part of the weekend activities will be tours of the control tower, in which the movements of trains through the Santa Clara Yard can be observed and followed by a computer simulation.

The fall show of the South Bay Historical Railroad Society will be open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day.

The Company Store also will be open to the public. For sale during the show will be numerous used model railroad items, magazines, used books, and memorabilia.

The SBHRS All-Day Lunch also will sell hot dogs, Polish sausages, and other items.






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SP's *Lark*: A Short History of Major Collisions

By Joe Hoffmann

Newsletter Editor & Publisher

(First of a Series)

Train-to-train collisions involving the nation's passenger trains historically have been few and far between. Yet one of the premier train's of the Coast Route in California, Southern Pacific's streamlined *Lark*, was central to three major train-to-train collisions over an 18-year period between 1941 and 1959.¹

The first two accidents, separated by 15 months, involved the *Lark*'s rear-ending following an unscheduled stop. The second accident killed one, and both injured several passengers and crewmen.

Painted in a classic scheme of two-tone gray with black roofs and underbodies, Southern Pacific Railroad on 10 July 1941 introduced two entirely new streamlined trainsets for its first-class overnight service between San Francisco and Los Angeles via the Coast Route. These new Pullman-Standard consists replaced conventional heavy-weight Pullman equipment which had formed the basis of *Lark* consists from the train's inauguration in May 1910.

The equipment introduced in 1941 included only all-enclosed bedroom cars (versus cars with open sections), along with the crown jewels in lounge and dining car equipment. Included in each trainset were the famous *Lark* articulated triple-unit diner-dormitory kitchen-lounge cars that operated mid-train. Included also on these sets were round-end buffet-observation-sleeping cars which, along with another sleeper placed forward of it, actually traveled to and from Oakland north of San Jose.

It was only 72 days following its introduction, however, that the streamlined *Lark* experienced its first major collision with another train.

It was 1:37 a.m. on Friday, 19 September 1941 when No. 76, the 16-car eastbound (geographically southbound) *Lark* stopped

for an unexpected red semaphore signal on a curve adjacent to Wellsona, a 5,382-foot siding on the Salinas Subdivision, just north of Paso Robles. Easing GS-4 No. 4441 forward, Engineer E. I. Tucker soon discovered a taxicab that had stalled on the tracks at Estrella Avenue, an unimproved grade crossing 4-1/2 miles north of town. According to news reports in the *San Luis Obispo County Telegram-Tribune*, a 34-year old San Miguel cab driver, Charles C. Callender, had taken three soldiers based at Camp Roberts from San Miguel to a nearby ranch near midnight, and while returning alone, he had skidded onto the track on a grade crossing that intersects the tracks at a difficult angle. His tires had become wedged in the rails.

His efforts to remove his car were in vain. Later he was aided by the soldiers who were returning on foot from the nearby home. But before the cab could be removed, the southbound *Lark* was heard and Army Sgt. Lewis J. Contios flagged it to a halt by igniting and waving pieces of clothing. The crew from the *Lark*'s engine now aided in the taxicab's removal.

When the *Lark* stopped, the Rear Brakeman of the passenger express, Sproul Kelley, had quickly disembarked to protect the rear of his train.

As was common for Coast Route traffic

LARK'S SHORT-LIVED OBSERVATION CARS

Pictured as a part of this SP *Lark* brochure published circa 1941 is one of the two original buffet-observation-sleeping cars built specifically for the newly-equipped streamliner that was introduced in July. Little did the railroad's marketing department know that neither of these original, round-end cars would survive past 18 months of service before both were demolished in rear-end collisions. SP 400 was destroyed in September 1941 in the collision at Wellsona siding, while the second car, SP 401, was destroyed when it was rear-ended at Casmalia, CA. Each car was scrapped, and replaced with similar cars from the Pullman pool.

— Author's Collection

in that era, a less-than-carload (LCL) merchandiser train was following the *Lark* on a headway of less than 10 minutes. Reportedly ignoring a trail of yellow signals on the assumption that the *Lark* was running slowly enough to trip the semaphores, No. 374, an eastbound first-class freight train consisting of engine No. 4446, 35 loaded cars and a caboose, rounded a curve with the stopped passenger train before it.

Walking along the ballast, however, Kelley had already heard the *Coast Merchandiser* — *East* approaching. Lighting a flare, he hastened up the right-of-way to signal the engineer.

But Engineer A. Bettick, of San Luis Obispo, at the throttle of the GS-4, failed initially to see the signaling brakeman. Sproul dove for the foliage adjacent to the right of way as the engine moved by. Sec-



onds later, while traveling at 22 miles per hour according to the locomotive's speed recorder, the big 4-8-4 slammed into the *Lark's* buffet-observation-sleeper, derailing it, and continued onward to slam into the 10-roomette 5-double bedroom Pullman immediately ahead.

As was common to the era, the Interstate Commerce Commission (the forerunner to the present Surface Transportation Board) investigated the accident. The findings were presented in a report dated 26 November 1941 from ICC investigating Commissioner Patterson. He reported that the accident "resulted in the (Ed note: apparently minor) injury of 43 passengers, 2 Pullman employees and 3 train-service employees." No mention is made in the report of fatalities, although some sources in subsequent years have indicated two passengers died in the accident.² These sources, however, cite no names.

In conflict with the ICC numbers, the *Telegram-Tribune* reported that those injured in the collision were *Lark* brakeman Sproul; and L. E. Mills of Burlingame, fireman; and L. A. Frazier, a brakeman, both on the freight. Mrs. H. B. MacRae of Castro Valley, a *Lark* passenger, was taken to the hospital but was not injured.

Remarkably, in the subsequent confusion at the accident site, the cab driver fled the scene. Callender, however was easily traced to his San Miguel home, where he was ar-

rested at 5 a.m. Friday morning after California Highway Patrol officers found him in his bedroom. The allegedly drunk cabbie was charged with being the proximate cause of the wreck and held in the county jail on \$50,000 bail, according to the *Telegram-Tribune* report.

The slow-speed collision took its toll on rail equipment. The luxurious observation car, SP No. 400, the 16th car in the train, was so badly crushed by the impact that it was quickly retired. The car was replaced by a Pullman pool car, *The American Milemaster*, of the same floor plan. Three months later, the car officially became second SP No. 400. Meanwhile, the 10-roomette, 5-bedroom sleeper involved was repaired and returned to service.

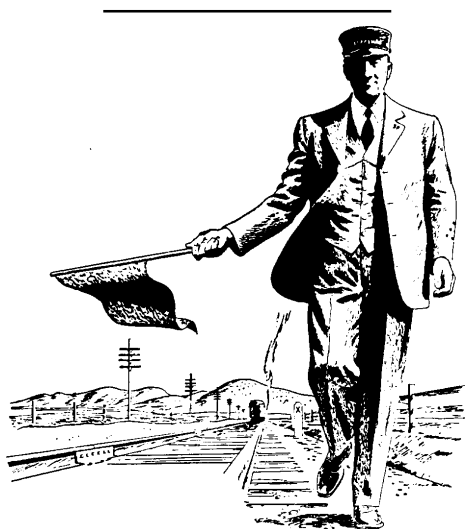
Subsequently, Patterson's ICC investigation and report placed significant contributory blame for the collision on the Southern Pacific. In brief, the investigator concluded that "this accident was caused by the failure to provide adequate flag protection for the first train and by failure to stop the second train in accordance with signal indications as a result of insufficient stopping distance for maximum authorized speed between the automatic signals involved."

His last sentence is significant. The ICC investigator found that the distance between the signals involved was insufficient for a freight train moving at maximum authorized speed at the signal at the start of the siding to be stopped short of

the next signal (a distance of .4 mile), and that the SP had made no provision for safe guarding operation pending the planned respacing of signals to provide adequate stopping distance between the automatic signals involved in this accident. "If the speed of the following train had been restricted to conform to existing signal spacing, this accident would not have occurred," the commissioner stated.

The "failure to provide adequate flag protection" seems to stem for the contradictory statements of the rear flagman from the *Lark*, and the engineer of the freight train, who claimed he never saw the fusee which the *Lark* brakeman stated he placed on the

(Continued on Page 6)



FLAG PROTECTION — The ICC made it clear in its reports on the collisions that better flag protection for the *Lark* could have prevented the collisions at both Paso Robles and Casmalia, CA.

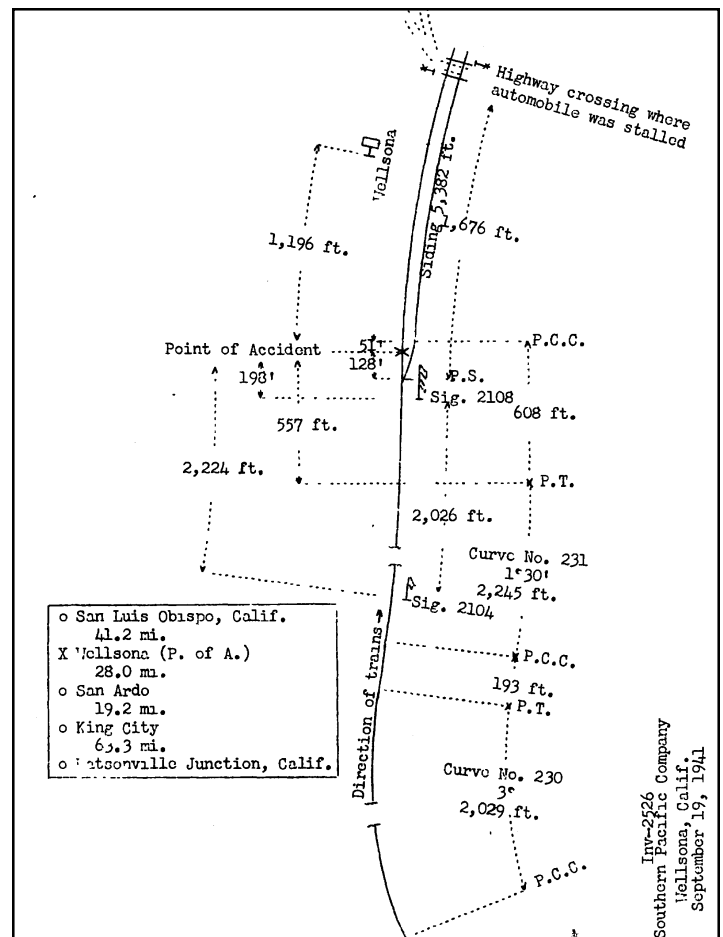


ILLUSTRATION OF A TRAIN COLLISION — The diagram above is a part of the Interstate Commerce Commission's (ICC) official report on the rear-end collision of the Southern Pacific's eastbound (to Los Angeles) *Coast Merchandiser — East* and the streamlined *Lark* preceding it on 19 September 1941. At this time, the newly-equipped passenger consist had been in service only 72 days. The collision was blamed by the ICC on several rules infractions. The *Lark* had stopped because a drunk cab driver had gotten his vehicle stuck on the tracks of a grade crossing north of Palo Robles, CA. — Interstate Commerce Commission

A Second Lark Collision Kills Soldier

(Continued from Page 5)

tracks. His action was substantiated by the flagman and middle brakeman of No. 374, each of whom said a fusee was burning at the location described by the *Lark's* brakeman when their caboose passed that point. The commissioner also found that the SP had failed to equip many of its freight cars with brakes of the current American Association of Railroads (AAR) standard for freight-car brake equipment, specifically K-2 triple valve brakes. On No. 374, only 16 of the 35 cars were equipped with the improved brakes. The commissioner went on to opine, "If No. 374 had had a sufficient number of cars equipped with brakes conforming to the present (since 1939) standards to secure an effective emergency application when the engineer moved the brake valve from service to emergency position, it is probable this accident would have been prevented."

The *Lark's* second major collision occurred only 15 months later.

By the night of 5 December 1942, the United States was about to mark the first anniversary of the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor and its entrance into World War II. And like the first collision, the second crash involved a following train whose engineer apparently ignored yellow semaphores.

The rear-end collision occurred at Casmalia, a quaint community in northwestern Santa Barbara County tucked against the northern boundary of Camp Cook, an area of some 86,000 acres of open lands that only recently had been taken over as an Army base. (Today, the sprawling military reservation is Vandenberg Air Force Base, the west coast site for missile and satellite launches.)

According to Southern Pacific officials and reported in the *San Luis Obispo Telegram-Tribune*, the 19-car northbound *Lark*, running an hour behind time, had stopped for a block signal at the Casmalia depot at 2:50 a.m. Following behind on the Guadalupe Subdivision was a passenger train (which according to some sources was

a military special movement, or Main train). The *Lark's* crew was unaccustomed to picking up train orders at this location, and overran the red signal and missed the train order hoop held up by the clerk at trackside. The engineer finally stopped the train about 100 feet north of the clerk. While the brakeman disembarked from the buffet-observation-sleeping car to retrieve the orders, the clerk waved him on, explaining that he only held a clearance card for SP's first No. 75. But it was too late.

Both the brakeman and the clerk could hear No. 69 pounding the rails, and together they fled into a nearby field.

According to the Accident Report of the ICC dated 9 February 1943, SP Train No. 69, a westbound first-class passenger train, consisted of GS-4 No. 4456, two baggage cars, sixteen coaches and one Pullman tourist car. It was foggy at the time of the accident. The engineer of the trailing passenger train had encountered a yellow sema-

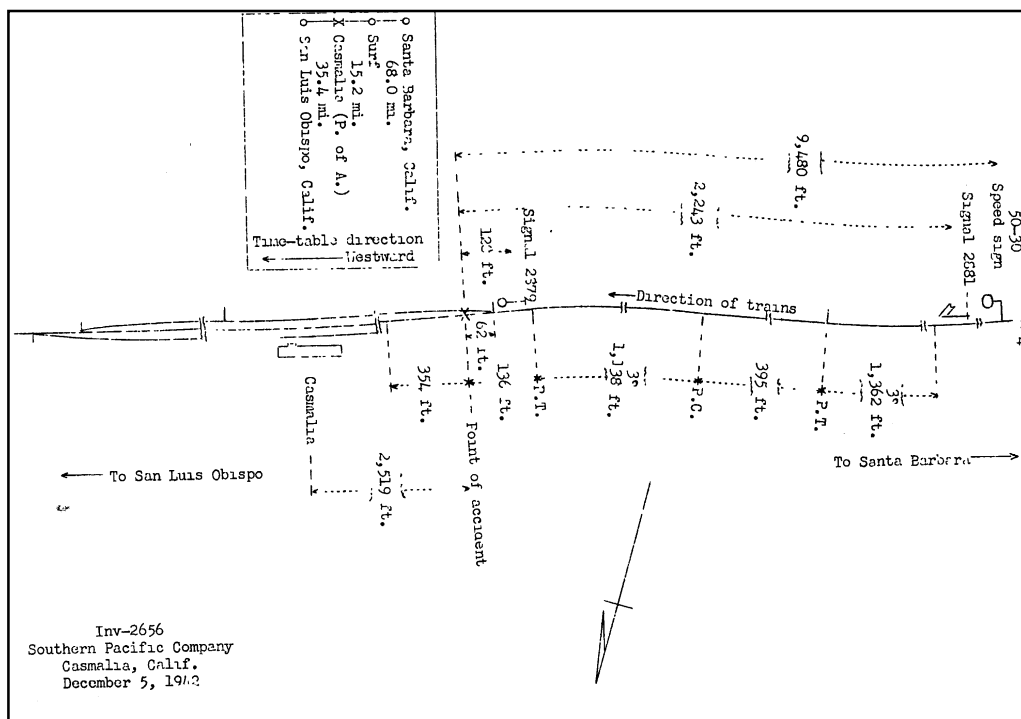
phore, but assumed the *Lark* was a safe distance ahead. When he rounded a sharp curve, there was the streamlined passenger train, just starting to move.

No. 69 struck the tail-end car of the *Lark* at about 15 miles per hour, and crashed into the drawing room where Army Captain Vincent G. Maggiore, 39, of Brooklyn, NY, who was assigned to a medical battalion at Camp San Luis Obispo, was sleeping. The captain, who was returning to camp from a leave, was apparently killed instantly.

For hours, workmen used acetylene torches to remove Captain Maggiore's body from the twisted steel wreckage of the sleeper. Other injuries, fortunately, were minor. Two *Lark* porters, J. T. Steele and L. Hyde, were taken to the Camp Cook hospital. Other injured passengers did not require hospital treatment.

The buffet-observation-sleeper, SP No.401, an identical twin to No. 400 which

(Continued on Page 7)



CASMALIA COLLISION CLAIMS SLO SOLDIER — A second *Lark* collision in a span of 15 months claimed the life of an Army captain who was stationed at Camp San Luis Obispo. The victim was trapped in a drawing room of the Buffet-Observation-Sleeper. Shown above from a perspective looking to the south is the ICC commissioner's diagram of the scene at Casmalia, a sleepy community just outside the north gate of the Army's Camp Cook. In this collision, a trailing passenger train, according to the ICC report, slammed into the *Lark*, which had come to a stop after its crew had missed picking up train orders adjacent to the depot.

— Interstate Commerce Commission

Operating Personnel Blamed for Second Lark Crash in a 15-Month Period

(Continued from Page 6)

had been involved in the collision near Paso Robles, was demolished. The other six cars to the rear of the triple-unit *Lark Club* set derailed, but remained upright. It would be four months before SP 401 was replaced by Pullman-pool service car *Muskingum River*, which had been built in 1940. Configured with the same floor plan as No. 401, the car was assigned to *Lark* service after completing its second year's work on the seasonally operated *Arizona Limited*. This car became SP's second No. 401 in June 1943.

After transferring all of the *Lark's* passengers to the remaining 12 cars of the train, the abbreviated consist continued its trip north around 7 a.m.

ICC Commissioner Patterson again undertook investigation of this accident. He blamed operating personnel for the collision. "It is found that this accident was caused primarily by failure to stop the following train in accordance with signal indications as a result of excessive authorized speed in view of the distance between the automatic signals involved. A contributing cause was the inadequate manner in which the rules governing flag protection for the preceding train were enforced and observed." 🐞

(Continued in the Winter 2004 issue, when a 1959 accident involving both *Lark* trainsets is examined)

NOTES:

1 - An apparently non-injury, sideswipe collision involving the *Lark* near the Chorro siding north of San Luis Obispo in 1954 is documented photographically by Anthony Thompson and John Signor in *Coast Line Pictorial*, p. 176. Details of the accident remain sketchy at best, and the accident is not included in this article.

2 - There is no report of fatalities either in the ICC Investigation or the newspaper articles of this accident in the *San Luis Obispo County Telegram-Tribune*. However, authors Dennis Ryan and Joseph Shine report two unnamed fatalities in their book, *Southern Pacific Passenger Trains*, Volume 1.

THE SBHRS WEBSITE IS AT

www.sbhirs.org

SP Historical Society Releases New Book on Passenger Cars

(Continued from Page 3)

Even secondhand-purchase cars are covered here and lightweight cars not owned by SP, but operated on jointly-operated trains such as *Golden State* and *Overland*, among others.

This book is a wonderful success, and already has provided hours of learning pleasure for this reviewer.

Perhaps one critical comment you won't see anywhere else is this: the book is entirely too heavy (around 4 lbs) and its landscape format (12-inches wide by 8-1/2 inches high) that is necessary for the display of the material makes for unwieldy handling.

A reader must place this book on a flat surface to comfortably turn the pages. It also is printed on a lighter weight glossy paper stock that doesn't appear to be durable.

So, as an experienced publisher, we would suggest that future printings of Volume 1 be divided into two separately bound parts, then boxed as a set. While adding to publication costs, a work as significant as this deserves such treatment.

Our criticisms of its bulky weight aside, I'm glad I purchased one for myself, and one for the SBHRS library. It's a worthwhile addition to the library of any historian of the SP.

— Reviewed by Joe Hoffmann

The Santa Clara BLOCK



South Bay Historical Railroad Society, Inc.

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Leave a recorded message at the phone listed below if you have any suggestions, or if you have inputs, comments, or ideas for this newsletter.

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Joe Hoffmann
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TIMETABLES — A Calendar of Events

SPECIAL EVENTS

Weekends in October

The Heritage Council of Santa Clara County
History Month
Special events at local museums
throughout Santa Clara County.
See website for sites and dates.
Website: www.historymonth.org

Wednesday through Sunday 1-5 October 2003

Valley Mallet
Annual Convention
of the Southern Pacific
Historical & Technical Society
Sacramento

Saturday and Sunday

1-2 November 2003
10 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day
*Model Train Show
& Museum Open House*
Santa Clara Depot

SPECIAL EVENTS (Continued)

Sunday, 23 November 2003

9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
*Gold Coast Railroad
Antique Show & Sale*
Napredak Hall
770 Montague Expressway
San Jose

Saturday, 29 November 7:45 to 8:05 p.m.

Caltrain's *Toys for Tots Train*
at Santa Clara Depot
(Depot Open to Public,
7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.)

Saturday and Sunday 29-30 November

11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Great American Train Show
Alameda County Fairgrounds
Pleasanton

Items for the Calendar of Events that are of interest to
SBHRS members and friends must be submitted to the
club office or to the editor not later than the deadline of:

Tuesday, 13 January 2004

RECURRING EVENTS

Every Saturday, 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Open House at Santa Clara Depot

Every Saturday, 9:00 a.m.

Work Parties
for Depot and Tower Restoration,
and Facility Maintenance
Wear Appropriate Clothing

Second Tuesday in February, April, June, August, October & December 7:30 p.m.

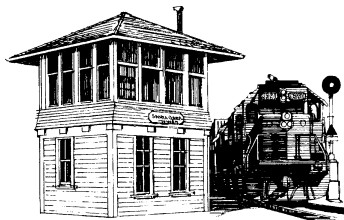
Bi-Monthly Meetings
of the Corporate Membership
of SBHRS
Santa Clara Depot



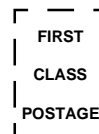
SBHRS Website: www.sbhirs.org

South Bay Historical Railroad Society, Inc.
Santa Clara Caltrain Station
1005 Railroad Avenue
Santa Clara, CA 95050-4319

FALL 2003
MODEL TRAIN SHOW
AND
OPEN HOUSE



Saturday and Sunday,
November 1st and 2nd
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Santa Clara Depot



First Class Mail

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