

# *SAGEBRUSH*

# HEADLIGHT

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THE NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM  
An Agency of the Division of Museums and History  
Nevada Department of Cultural Affairs

FALL 2005

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## ***Social Evolution of a Train Depot***

**Virginia City, Nevada**

by Joe Bensigner

Part I. The Depot

Although railroad depots today hold little mystique for the average person, they were of significant note and import to small towns of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, having access to a railroad, or not, meant life or death to many small towns in this country. The railroad, and depot, brought and sent freight and people, and generally became hubs of town activity where they were established. John Stilgoe, in his book, “Metropolitan Corridor: Railroads and the American Scene”, notes, that particularly in the years after 1880, that “railroad depots became the hubs of small-town life... making Main Street into an extension of Depot Street or Railroad Avenue.”<sup>1</sup> To the average small-town person of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, not tied to the economic hustle and bustle it created, the depot represented a portal to the outside world, a journey, and a corridor to more metropolitan areas. But, at least early on, it may also have represented a portal to a large unfamiliar machine to be feared and distrusted. It was the introduction to mechanized transport. In any case, the excitement was certainly there.

For the Virginia and Truckee Railroad, “the principle need for a railroad was not to carry the relatively small amount of freight and passengers... Rather, it was for the transportation of ores... and for the conveyance of lumber and firewood...”<sup>2</sup> Thus, a Virginia City depot took second in importance to the mining industries needs. Nevertheless, passenger and freight service did represent some significant business and was given due consideration - in time.

The Virginia City towns people, at least as represented by the Territorial Enterprise newspaper, seemed to think that the best place for a depot would, logically, be near the center of town. This was ‘spelled out’ as Union Street. As will be seen, it took, for a number of reasons, several years longer then it should have to get it there.

The chronicle of the V&T is a chronicle of life, and presents us with an intimate view of life in a 19<sup>th</sup> century mining boom town. The life of the two were intimately tied together in health, wealth, and decline. Furthermore, as Mallory Hope Ferrell notes, “From the newspaper articles and old photographs, it appears to have been a grand show, while the “Big Bonanza” lasted.”<sup>3</sup>

There is probably nothing more exciting to a ethnohistorian then finding that primary source material exists from the past in the form of personal correspondence. Finding a transcript of some of the correspondence of H. M. Yerington to the president of the V&T Railroad at NSRM stirred up the desire to write this paper. This source material presents, along with

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*Sagebrush Headlight* newsletter is published by the Nevada State Railroad Museum and the Friends of the Nevada State Railroad Museum and distributed to the membership as part of their annual dues.

The museum is an agency of the **State of Nevada**  
Kenny C. Guinn, Governor  
**Nevada Department of Cultural Affairs**  
Scott K. Sisco, Interim Dept. Director  
**Division of Museums and History**  
Wally A. Steffan, Division Administrator  
**Nevada State Railroad Museum**  
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Correspondence to the FRIENDS may be sent to:  
Friends of NSRM  
PO Box 1330  
Carson City, NV 89702-1330

Geoff Brunner, Editor  
webmaster@nsrm-friends.org  
775-265-2990

**NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM**  
2180 South Carson St.  
Carson City, NV 89701  
775-687-6953

[www.nevadaculture.org](http://www.nevadaculture.org)  
[www.nsrm-friends.org](http://www.nsrm-friends.org)

Open Daily 8:30 to 4:30  
Admission:  
Adults \$4, Senior \$3  
Children under 18 FREE

## Symposium 2005 Milestones on the Railroad: Dates in Railroad History

The Nevada State Railroad Museum and the Friends of the Nevada State Railroad Museum invite you to attend the 34th Annual Virginia and Truckee Railroad Symposium held October 20-23, 2005, at the **Plaza Hotel and Conference Center**, Carson City. The 2005 Symposium will continue a year-long theme celebrating many anniversaries and milestones including the 25th anniversary of the Nevada State Railroad Museum, the 100th birthday of V&T locomotive No. 25, and the 130th birthday of V&T locomotive, *Inyo*.

REGISTER NOW: [www.nsrm-friends.org](http://www.nsrm-friends.org)

### Plan to attend Symposium 2005!

## NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM STEAM UPS

Sunday: October 30.....Symposium  
Friday and Saturday: November 25 and 26.....Turkey Train  
Saturday and Sunday: December 10 and 11.....Santa Train

Trains depart daily from the historic Wabuska Depot, 10:00 am-4:00 pm

Steam Train Fares:  
Adults- \$5.00, Seniors (65 and above)-\$4.00,  
Children 6-11- \$3.00, 5 and under FREE  
FNSRM Members ride free with their membership card

SCHEDULES SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Thanks to all of you who donated periodicals and books to the Friends of the Nevada State Railroad Museum successful fundraisers. The Friends are continuing to collect books and periodicals (*if they are 1950 and older*). If you would like to to donate books and older periodicals to the Friends, please contact Ann or John North at 775/786-4303 or [jsnorth@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jsnorth@sbcglobal.net). You will be provided a receipt for tax purposes.

If it is found that a donated book or magazine is needed for the museum's reference library, that item will be donated to the museum.

## On Track with the Department of Cultural Affairs

By Scott K. Sisco,  
Interim Department Director

I have been repeatedly reminded lately of the amazing accomplishments the Department of Cultural Affairs can achieve when our divisions work together with the common goal of promoting culture and protecting our historic past.

The Department of Cultural Affairs has spent many years making the dream of the new Comstock History Center in Virginia City a reality. The center is now virtually complete and will open this fall. Staff of the State Historic Preservation Office worked tirelessly to make this project happen, and it all came together when the Nevada State Railroad Museum in Carson City recently moved the Virginia and Truckee Engine No. 18, the Dayton, to the center where it will remain on display. Besides exhibiting the engine, the building will serve as home for the Comstock Historic District Commission and provide space for a variety of interpretive displays on the history of the Comstock Mining District.

Throughout this fall, the Nevada State Museum in Carson City will showcase a fine arts exhibit the caliber of which the museum has never before attempted. The *Art and the Animal* exhibition and sale will take place from September 30 to November 28, 2005. Organized by the Society of Animal Artists of New York City, this international exhibit brings together 100 world-renowned wildlife painters and sculptors from the United States, Canada, France, England, Australia, and Netherlands.

It is devoted to promoting excellence in the portrayal of creatures sharing our planet, and includes both wild and domes-

tic animal art. This show was made possible through a partnership with the Board of Museums and History as well as being funded in part by the Nevada Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts.

The Nevada State Library and Archives is once again participating in the National Book Festival in Washington, D.C. Sponsored by the Library of Congress and hosted by First Lady Laura Bush, the 2005 festival features more than 80 award-winning authors, illustrators and poets. Representatives from the Nevada State Library and Archives will go to our nation's capitol to support literacy, endorse Nevada and promote Nevada authors.

Also in the spirit of working together to create something extraordinary, the Nevada State Museum and Historical Society in Las Vegas has been working with several outside entities, including the Las Vegas Centennial Committee and the City of Las Vegas, to create the *24 Hour Show*. This exhibit takes viewers through a full day in the life of a person who lives in Las Vegas and works in the casino industry.

The museum has also built an exhibit as part of the *24 Hour Show* that details the real living and working environments of Las Vegas to contrast false images that tourists to the area may have. Interactive displays with voice recordings of real Las Vegas residents describe their life and work. If you make it to Las Vegas this fall, don't miss the *24 Hour Show*.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**Wed. Evening Programs  
(7:00 p.m.)**

**November 9th**  
*Take the Train Home  
For the Holidays...*  
by Phil Gosney

**December 7th**  
*Open House  
Meet The Authors*

**Post Nevada Day Steamup**  
*Sunday, October 30th*  
10 am to 4 pm

**Thanksgiving Steamup**  
*Fri. & Sat. Nov. 25 & 26*  
10 am to 4 pm

**Santa Train**  
*Sat. & Sun. Dec. 10 & 11*  
10 am to 4 pm  
*Everybody Rides FREE*

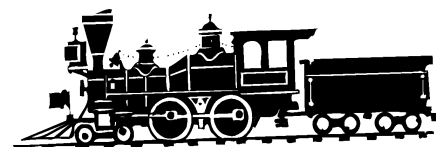
For information, please call 687-6953

**The Museum will be closed:**

*Thursday, November 24th*  
*Thanksgiving*

*Sunday, December 25th*  
*Christmas*

*Sunday, January 1st, 2006*  
*New Year's Day*



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newspaper sources, the voices of the past. Let the voices speak for themselves:

## Part II. The Train's Coming

Territorial Enterprise, Virginia City, November 5, 1869.

Another Locomotive. - The boiler and fixings of another locomotive - we did not learn its name - passed through C street yesterday on its way to the "front." The bell attached was kept constantly ringing as it moved along the street. The locomotive will at once be set up at the works of the company in this city.

November 13.

... Yesterday was a day long to be remembered by the people of Gold Hill, as the first train on the Virginia and Truckee Railroad then entered the town - passing over the trestle work at Crown Point Ravine, 83 feet in hight [sic]. At this point the road really enters the town...

November 17.

The Railroad. - The cars yesterday passed through the last tunnel, near the tunnel of the Tunnel Toll Road, and today will probably reach the Company's workshop in this city. Just where the depot in this city will be is not yet known - probably where the road crosses Union street.

November 27.

Passenger car. - The first passenger car on the Virginia and Truckee Railroad goes out to-day. It is completed in every respect, even down to the last coat of varnish. Hereafter there will be some comfort in making the trip by rail to Carson. The company should push the

track along up town - at least as far as Union street. Many who would patronize the road prefer remaining at home to walking out to the Divide to take the cars. As it is now, the terminus of the road might as well be at American Flat. Let it come into town or telescopically retrograde.

December 7.

The Railroad. - The Virginia & Truckee Railroad is being graded up into town. The depot will probably be somewhere near the Gould & Curry works. Let us have the iron horse in the city at all events. The dept [sic] should be on Union street, however, to properly balance everything and to be convenient for residents of the whole town.

January 4, 1870.

The Railroad. - Good progress is being made on the railroad, and before long the cars will run as far north as the Hale & Norcross [Silver & G Street]. There has been some pretty heavy work done in getting into town, but all will soon be completed with the strong force of men employed. A side track to the Chollar-Potosi is about completed. The trains are making regular trips to the river with ore, returning with wood and timbers.

January 7.

A Blasting Accident on the Railroad. Yesterday afternoon a heavy blast was set off on the line of the Virginia and Truckee Railroad, at a point on E street about midway between the Gould & Curry and Savage works, which threw a tie through the roof of a house, greatly frightening the inmates; but luckily hurting no one. The blast was put down to the depth of nine feet in a bank of earth, frozen on top to the depth two feet. Before the blast was set off a lot of ties

were piled upon the bank to prevent the frozen dirt from flying about, and it was one of these ties that went through the roof of the building, which stood but two or three rods from the blast. The house is occupied by Mr. John M. Delaney, and Mrs. Delaney and three children were in it at the time of the unceremonious intrusion of the timber, but luckily were in a back room where only two or three slivers peeped down through the cloth lining of the ceiling. The tie cut through the kitchen roof, knocked down the stove pipe and raised a great racket. The lady of the house at first thought that a tremendous earthquake had occurred. Another big blast, quite as close to the house as the one mentioned above, was being put in last evening. When that is set off Mrs. Delaney intends being absent on a visit to some distant neighbor. These deep ground blasts throw up an immense amount of earth. The accident last evening is the first of which we have heard, though the work of blasting is going on in a narrow street with houses on both sides.

January 29.

The railroad was yesterday completed up into town to where it is proposed to establish the passenger depot [purchased land from Gould and Curry Mine Works, below Gould & Curry Mine, between E and F Street, south of Washington].

January 30.

The Cars. - The cars are now running up into the centre [sic] of the city. The present terminus of the railroad is at the Gould & Curry dump. To hear the toot, toot of the engine's whistle and the ding,

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ding of the bell is quite inspiring to us of Virginia, who have for so long been accustomed to the jingle of the bells of a ten-mule team and "hi-yah mula" of Mexican packers.

April 17.

The Virginia and Truckee Railroad Company have placed a new passenger car on the line of the road between Virginia and Carson City... The road is now a real convenience to the traveling public. It saves time and money and is much pleasanter than the old way of traveling by stage.

### Part III. Need to Grow

June 6, 1872

The Railroad Extension. - Before the Board of Alderman [sic] night before last speeches were made by lawyer Wood and by Aldermen Smith and Schwab upon the question of the propriety of granting the Virginia and Truckee Railroad Company the right of way through E street for their proposed extension northward from their present depot... There will probably be some property more or less damaged further north - no railroad has ever been built that did not damage somebody - but this damage, whatever it may be, the railroad company will doubtless pay... Mr. Wood said that it was the intention of the company to build a large passenger building, freight-house, and other needed buildings in the northern part of the city, where would be the grand terminus of the road...

June 12.

The railroad company have quite a force of men engaged in the construction of a track side in Gold Hill. Until this side

track is completed, there will probably be but little work done on the extension north from the depot. Property owners along E street are becoming more and more on the war-path as they consider the railroad extension, and the company are likely to see very lively times before they pass through certain lots north of Taylor street. They will be obliged to face mountain howitzers and all manner of arms, and the worst of it is that the biggest guns will be "manned" by women, who will have no better sense than to touch them off just at the time when they will do the most damage. The best way is to say nothing; let the company run through your ground, then go after them for all they are worth; if you get \$4.75 [sic] you are doing well, and if you get this sum multiplied by ten you are doing better - anything is better than doing nothing.

June 26.

Railroad Tunnel. - Work on the extension of the Virginia and Truckee Railroad was commenced yesterday at Union street under the supervision of Mr. Hay. It will be necessary to build fences on each side of the cut to prevent teams from being driven into it.

July 12.

Tunnel Excavation of the Virginia and Truckee Railroad. - Rapid progress was made yesterday on both ends of the excavation. Thomas Sisk's gang of workmen nearly covered themselves with gravel, so rapidly did they penetrate the earth. There is quite a lively contest between the two working parties as to which shall first reach the mid-way point of the tunnel. Grave apprehensions are entertained that the two parties, in their haste to complete their

portion of the work, will pass each other without knowing it, and keep on tunneling all Summer. Some excellent work is being done in the way of reclaiming some hitherto worthless land, between D and E streets, by grading it up to the street level...

July 17.

... We hear it rumored that the passenger depot will be located on E street, near Union, somewhere about the place lately occupied by the Cornish wrestling amphitheatre.

August 22.

Freight Depot. - A huge freight depot will be required in this city as soon as freight trains are run directly from Reno here. The present accommodations at the terminus of the railroad are totally inadequate to the reception of a tenth part of the freight which will daily arrive here. The company will probably erect a large freight depot on E street, somewhere north of Union.

September 4.

Grading. - A large gang of men were yesterday employed in grading the ground in the vicinity of the Virginia Consolidated mine, preparatory to the erection of a warehouse for the Virginia and Truckee Railroad Company. No decision as yet has been arrived at as to whether the passenger depot will be located at this point or not.

September 27.

New Freight Depot. - The Virginia and Truckee Railroad Company are building a large freight depot on E street, just north of Union. The building will be 100 feet in length by 30 in width, with a roomy platform on both sides.

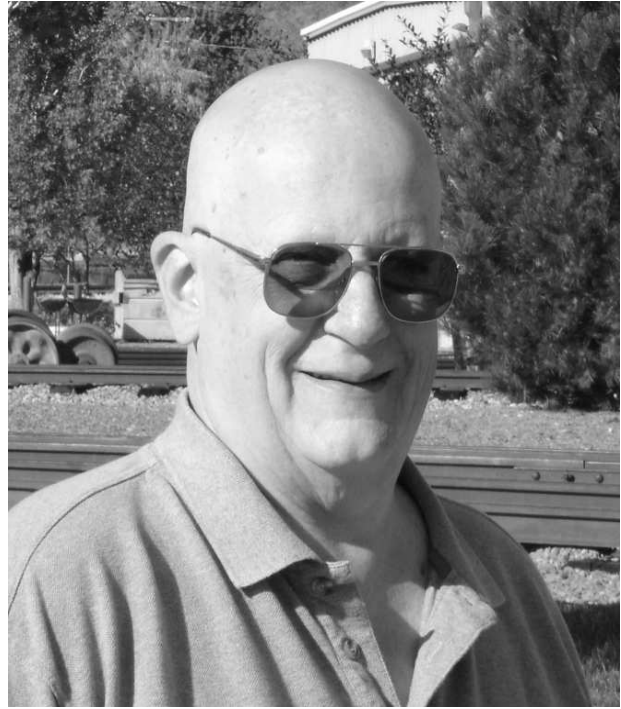
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## Spotlight on Volunteer Stan Cronwall

By John Frink

A volunteer since 2000, Stan Cronwall grew up in Oak Park, Illinois. After a stint in the Army (high points: crawling under barbed wire and machine gun fire in training and an assignment, in civvies, as security detail at Kennedy's inauguration – armed with a gun but NO ammo!) and university, he returned to Chicago for a career in the advertising business. In fact, he commuted by train to Chi-town's Prudential Building which featured a South Shore Line station in its basement. He then spent sixteen years in Arizona running a business consulting firm and a couple of sign companies (don't paint a truck at two in the afternoon in the Arizona sun – do it at 6 AM!).

A member of the Friends' Board of Trustees, Stan has been tireless in his recent efforts to expand membership. His efforts have born fruit – so far, the 2005 operating season has netted more than sixty new members, with more than a few becoming volunteers. He is currently in his fourth year handling marketing functions on the Symposium committee.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Well here it is fall already. Where does the time go? The summer season was a busy one around the Museum. The steam train-operating season is over with the exception of the Symposium train, the Thanksgiving train, and of course, Santa Train. It appeared to be a very successful year, as the rider ship on the train was ahead of last year.

Everyone was busy, including Stan Cronwall, Membership Campaign Chairman, and all of his faithful crew; as they were able to secure over 100 new members during the steam-up weekends. A very appreciative THANK YOU to them for their efforts. Speaking of memberships, let's all give Stan some help and sign up at least one new member each before the end of the year. Remember, the dues collected through memberships keep the programs and activities alive at and around the Museum. The dues collection is the single largest contributor to the *Friends* treasury.

As most everyone has heard, the Museum lost a very knowledgeable and dedicated employee in August when Jane O'Cain left to accept a position with a museum in Northern California. It is certainly their gain and our loss. We will miss you Jane.

Whistlin Billy is now alive and well. You ask what is Whistlin Billy; it is a locomotive that was specially constructed for "hands on" interpretation for kids visiting the museum. Loren Jahn, a faithful volunteer for many years created the character and prepared the drawings for its construction. It is a very fine exhibit and is a big hit with the children, some "older" children too. Be sure to check it out during your next visit.

Until next time, enjoy the fall season and see you soon.

Ronald J. Allen,  
President

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strongly timbered, with a slanting roof and covered with shingles. Taken altogether, this improvement is highly appreciated by our business men. The old depot answered well all the purposes required so long as the railroad extended only to Carson City, but so soon as it was completed through to Reno, thereby bringing passengers and freights from the east and California to our doors, larger accommodations were called for, and the railroad company has happily anticipated the wants of this community. Those who have not paid a visit to the new depot will be astonished... to witness the improvements which have been made.

October 16.

Passenger depot. - The comfort of the traveling public will be promoted and much time will be saved in passing to and from the train, if the railroad company decide to locate their passenger depot in the vicinity of Union street.

November 8.

Railroad Freight. - We are authorized to state that from and after to-day freight for this city by the railroad will be received at the new depot, and all shippers can call there and settle with "Nasby," the freight agent, who will receive all customers with that politeness and uniform courtesy characteristic of him.

November 19.

New Passenger Depot. - The foundation timbers have been framed and put in position for the new passenger depot of the Virginia and Truckee Railroad, in this city. The passenger depot is to be on the east side of E street, a little to the south of the freight depot. Opposite the freight depot will be an immense platform, on which a derrick

will be erected for the purpose of unloading and loading heavy freight.

November 27.

A large force of men were engaged yesterday in the erection of a new passenger depot and restaurant, at the corner of Union and E streets. The coming season, we understand, is to be first class in all its appointments.

#### Part IV. The Great Virginia City Fire of 1875

To the left and northward the freight and passenger depots of the Virginia and Truckee Railroad Company, with many smaller buildings, were pouring great streams of fire to the eastward into the hoisting works of the Consolidated Virginia Mining Company [Con Va], which in turn, with over a million feet of lumber, sent a broad river of flame into and over the big mill of the company - a mill the most costly and complete then in operation in any part of the world.<sup>4</sup>

Letters of H. M. Yerington, V&T General Superintendent and also soon to be Director, to D.O. Mills of San Francisco, V&T President:

October 29, 1875.

...Now in reference to the Railroad its evident to me that every body at the fire was demoralized & trusted too much to the chance of the fire not spreading & when it did spread with a rush, it caught them all out. I believe if I had been there I could have saved our cars altho [sic], the idiotic action of the Chief of Police in ordering our men & engines out of our yard & then blowing up Pipers Opera House whereby he set the first fire to our offices [depot] & filled up open cut of tunnel [#6] & caused it

to be burned out was one great cause of loss of cars, freight & baggage, a portion of tunnel has caved in consequence of all the timber being burned. I am working horses and carts at one end cleaning out tunnel & have ballast train with a heavy force of men working at other end-both gangs working night & day, we are framing a portion of the timbers at Virginia [City] & another portion in our shops here [Carson City], using machinery to excellent advantage. If we have no bad luck I think we can finish the tunnel in a week or ten days, which will be a blessing for we are jamd. [sic] & crowded with freight at the old office [depot #1 still existing]. All tracks & sidings being filled with cars which I am unloading everywhere!

...Am busy getting plans out & bills of timber for the warehouse [freight depot] for we are in great trouble for want of it, as nearly every private warehouse in the City was destroyed-on looking over the ground yesterday morning it struck me it would be well for us to place our offices & depot [#3] where the warehouse [west side of E street] formerly stood & thus avoid the necessity of passengers crossing our tracks [the center of town to the west] & as there is a splendid block of ground to the north of the car shed lots near end of Ophir trestle, level & of easy grade for teams to haul up on to D & C streets. This block is 410 feet long [not exactly] & is owned principally by parties willing to sell reasonably [again, not exactly], now if the Con Va would buy the land where our offices stood & we took the money & bought this 410 feet then we would own all the land between Union Street & Mill [Hill] Street on the West side of E street, then Con Va would buy our 190 feet where offices stood & also the lots North of them to

*Continued on page 8*

*Continued from page 7*

The ground is being graded up to D street, so that teams can pass entirely round the depot on perfectly level ground...

September 27.

There are swarms of workmen about the new depot grounds on E street, north of Union, and soon that will be a lively part of the city. There are but 100 feet of tunnel to be made before the cars will reach Union street, and about this time the new depot will be ready for the reception of equate...

October 2.

No More Staging: Opening of the Virginia and Truckee Railroad - Woodruff & Ennor's Stages Withdrawn. Night before last, in company with George Trimble, agent, and Erastus Woodruff, one of the proprietors of the stage line between Virginia and Steamboat, we made our last voyage out of town on a Concord coach... One can hardly witness the gradual encroachments of the railroad upon the domain of men of this stamp without feelings of regret. They form a class by themselves, and possess in a high degree many of the qualities which go to make up a noble and heroic manhood, and are equally ready to stop their coach in midwinter to pull a stalled teamster out of the mud or to give their overcoat to a shivering woman on the summit of the Sierras...

October 8.

...The tunnel... was completed last Saturday evening. Track laying is now going on through the tunnel with all the speed... The depot for the railroad now building is 120 feet long by 50 feet wide, and is approaching completion as fast as is necessary... The depot is a frame structure, with solid foundations and

Mill Street then the two cos. [sic] would own all the land on both sides of E Street, have plenty of room to do our business in etc. etc.

...The poverty & distress in Virginia is very great & every exertion is being made to help the poor people, a great many men, women, & children wish to leave for Cal. going to friends etc. and the prominent citizens have asked us to issue passes to Reno which I am doing [a little bit of social pressure, but good public relations]. The C.P. refuse to issue passes but have donated \$3000 in Coin & will give more if required...

October 30.

...I am busy arranging to put up a new warehouse for we must have it at once, shall frame timbers in our yards here as I am doing with the trestle timbers for its a large saving in expenses, wages being less here etc. etc... I now enclose a sketch showing the position of things before the fire together with the changes I have suggested... it...gives us the long coveted room we have so long wanted for our business... I have done nothing about the new office. We can manage for a while at the old one [depot #1] & when new one is built we can make it small & temporary for the winter [but problems always delay the best of plans] & not cost much, being desirous of using all the economy we possibly can in these things...

November 1.

Today we have made splendid progress in Va tunnel & I think we can get trains through it by tomorrow night...

November 6.

... I am planning to put up warehouse 30 x 125 instead 40 x 125 as I wrote you. We will make more use of platforms they being cheaper than a building & will answer... I think we can use the old office this winter so the new ones can be put off till spring... I suppose Mr. Ralston has told you about our purchase from Leggate of the bal [sic] of block on which old warehouse stood, for \$2800, with a view of our building the new Warehouse at North end of the block, next Sutton Avenue, and putting new offices & station at south end of block... When up there yesterday [Con Va] both Mackey & Fair insisted that we should not put up Warehouse where I proposed-say directly opposite Con Vahoisting works-insisting that we would likely burn them out and that we ought to buy the next block of 388 feet further North, which I have already written you about & which, through the exorbitant prices asked, I failed to secure. I found they were inclined to talk & act ugly over this, altho [sic], I explained the situation very fully-they said condemn and you will get the land at fair rates etc...

November 11.

...After considerable reflection I have thought it proper to write again today to say that in view of the fact if we had this block north of Sutton Avenue it would give more facilities for our business and taking into consideration the strong determination of Mackey & Fair that we should not put our Ware-House on the Leggate Land & also knowing the desire of Mr. Sharon [V&T Director] & yourself to conciliate these people as far as possible, I don't know but it would be well to buy the Land if we could get it for about \$15,000, or say \$40 per front foot, this is a very long way more than its worth...

November 13.

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...on Monday I propose to take possession of the whole & hold it till Judge Rising arrives so we can condemn, he cant help himself & I think it will show these liberal property owners that they cant rob us with impunity for their action since the fire has been outrageous! Three of them have commenced to build houses on the lots we wish to condemn altho [sic], I notified them of our intention & also offered two pieces for their land but went ahead simply to black mail us. Am glad to say the high wind last night blew down every one of these houses, smashing them all in pieces, its an ill wind that blows nobody good...

November 16.

...Yesterday afternoon Judge Rising gave us all the necessary papers required in condemnation of the Lands and went below again last night. ... today we go into possession; so we are all fixed to go ahead & grade lots for Warehouse which is being done. I having put on a gang of men yesterday morning... I had put up a temporary platform for goods where old Warehouse stood, had plenty tarpaulians [sic] so goods recvd no damage...

November 19.

...Matters at Va are all right, Ophir trestle will be finished in a few days, have got possession of the lots we were after & commenced grading them today for Warehouse, which is partly framed, our business continues first rate & notwithstanding fire, famine, & storms I trust our showing this month will prove satisfactory...

November 22.

...have now secured the whole 366

feet excepting 50 belonging to a Swiss, that lot I expect we must condemn & ought to get it for \$50 per foot in that event the block of land will cost about \$19500, which is much better than I expected, considerable strategy has been used throughout this matter...

November 30.

...It has been raining tonight but if its fair tomorrow shall commence raising new Warehouse in Va-all our work there is going ahead splendidly...

December 6.

...At first Fair wanted all East of Ophir trestle including the ground where Haynie & Co Lumber sheds stood saying he would let us reserve right of way covered by our Con Va trestle. I told him at once that that would not do, that we wanted the Haynie & Co lot for our Coach Sheds, the V piece between trestle we expected would be filled up by towns people hauling in debris... and that we also wanted room all around our trestles to dump wood etc for Canon Mills...this worried him & he at once suggested that we could put Coach on our land directly opposite Con Va hoisting works but said I Mackey & yourself insisted that we should not put any buildings there fearing danger from fire & forced us to place our Warehouse away north at an enormous cost for the Land, he then said it was just the place for Coach sheds (and it really is) & there was no danger from fire he was sure [and around the block we go - so to speak - and back to Yerington's original vision]...

December 21.

...We shall move into our Va Warehouse this week & that about completes our work in the way of rebuilding for the winter...

December 27.

...We are now doing business in our Virginia Warehouse & its far ahead of the old one in every respect.

On 31<sup>st</sup> I propose discharging every outside man at Va & Gold Hill-closing our reconstruction a/c [account] until spring, then when the days are long & weather fine we can go ahead with the new offices. There will also be some grading of lots to be done, but not much...

April 19, 1876, Territorial Enterprise. The New Passenger Depot. - O. L. Anderson, engineer of the Virginia and Truckee Railroad Company, yesterday surveyed and staked off the grounds on which will stand the new passenger depot. The depot will stand 100 feet north of Union street and, with its platform, will cover a space of ground 46x118 feet. The coach-house will be located to the northward and its noth [sic] end will rest on Sutton avenue. It will be 20x225 feet in size. Work on these improvements will be commenced today.

April 20.

...have commenced work on the Virginia office & shall crowd it as rapidly as possible...

April 21, Territorial Enterprise.

A strong force of men with many horses and carts were yesterday engaged in grading the site of the new passenger depot on E street north of Union. The depot and coach-house will fill a spot of ground where for some months starting vacancy has been painfully apparent.

July 11, Territorial Enterprise.

The New Passenger Depot. - The furniture, books, etc., of the old depot, from which trains have taken their de-

*Continued on page 10*

*Continued from page 9*

parture since the fire of October last, have been removed to the new depot, near the corner of E and Union streets. The passenger train left the new depot for the first time last night. The new depot is centrally situated and much more convenient than was the old one. The 6:15 train from Carson last evening was the first to arrive at the new depot and the regular lightning express down was the first to leave it.

### Part V. Conclusion

What we see is the age old struggles dealing with ambition, power, control, opportunism, need, fear, possession, and catastrophe, with attendant inspiration, manipulation and some politics-as-usual. It reminds us that all endeavors are human endeavors and fraught with the frailties associated with human beings. These endeavors can affect and change lives and can even become an outward manifestation of life itself. They exhibit the same fundamental qualities of life - birth, life and death with the inherent transitional phases between them. Thus, 'projects', as endeavors, provide insight, not only to the personalities involved, but also to the 'personality' of the human culture within which they manifest. The manifestations, from architecture to religion, reflect functional needs or desires of a people. Some needs or desires are obvious; others are hidden and have to be discovered. Some are simple - others are complex.

Culture and personality are both abstractions that reflect the patterned ways by which an identifiable group of people and individuals think, feel, and behave. Sometimes the terms used to describe them are different, but only because of the different levels or layers of description required. It is not as de-

scribing apples and oranges, but core and skin of the same apple. The 'seeds', of course, can vary widely from any statistical norm - and basic personalities are determined as a complex product. The product is determined by all the conditions that culture and the environment create. Not the least of these conditions is the socio-political economic system that prevails.<sup>5</sup>

The efficiency of ore processing, indeed the survival of a whole community at a point in time, depended on economical transportation of ores from mine to mill. Furthermore, as John Galloway notes, "The high cost of freight of all kinds made it impracticable to mine and mill any but the most productive ores. There were signs that the Comstock lode was nearing its end and the towns on the lode would decay as other mining camps had done in the past."<sup>6</sup> The V&T provided lower transport cost for the "freight of all kinds" and the movement of people. Thus, the life of Virginia City, and the opportunistic way of life it presented, was extended beyond what it otherwise would have been in its early period.<sup>7</sup> Yerington and Company seemed to have recognized the situation.

There are always those with a vision, and those who only see from one day to the next. Both are needed to drive a society forward. For visions are not necessarily grounded to realities; and realities are not always so concrete as to not be mutated or manipulated in practical ways to press the limits of those realities.

The saga continues...Notes:

1. John R. Stilgoe, "Metropolitan Corridor: Railroads and the American Scene", 193. Though beyond the scope of this paper, Stilgoe provides an interesting dissection

of the depot with an eye towards efficiency of purpose, management of needs, and enticement towards travel - see chapter seven, "Depot".

2. John Debo Galloway, "Early Engineering Works Contributing to the Comstock", 44.

3. Mallory Hope Ferrell, "Virginia & Truckee: The Bonanza Road", 11.

4. Dan DeQuille, "History of the Big Bonanza", 431.

5. Marvin Harris, "Culture, Man, Nature".

6. John Debo Galloway, "Early Engineering Works Contributing to the Comstock", 47.

7. Ibid.

### Meet The Author

Joe Bensinger is a retired Computer Systems Manager residing in Carson City with his wife, Twila, and his five year old son, Jesse. He also has an older daughter, Jennifer, currently living in Santa Barbara. He is walking proof that older couples can still have the patience to raise young children.

By formal education, Joe is an electronics engineer, an anthropologist (ethnohistorian), and has the necessary credits for certification as an archivist. His interests include hiking, railroad and boat modeling, and nature photography. He currently can be found Monday through Wednesday archiving and cataloging NSRM collections.

## Little engines that can

Old maintenance buggies  
roll on as touring cars

By Paul Duchene Special to the Tribune

September 11, 2005

Snowcapped mountains. Vast lakes of periwinkle. A ribbon of steel stretching to the horizon. A 100-car freight train with bellowing horn scaring away moose and bear.



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track maintenance buggies and drive across country to take weekend tours on branch lines, they are right where they belong-getting views of America long lost to travelers.

Trips range from Canada, Alaska or Montana, to Maine and Florida, through the post-industrial Midwestern heartland, down to California and even Mexico.

"The Durango-Silverton line in Colorado is the famous one and the Cumbres and Toltec in New Mexico,"

says longtime speeder Hank Brown, of Cottage Grove, Wis., east of Madison.

Speeders evolved from up-and-down handcars in the 1840s to steam-powered cars in the 1860s to gasoline versions in the 1920s. The latter were available in open and closed styles. The last one rolled off the assembly line in 1989.

As the interstate highway system plunged passenger rail service into its final decline in 1955, thousands of miles of track were abandoned by the railroads but left in place, a magnet to enthusiasts.

Peter Barton is a lifetime railroad historian and director of the Nevada State Railroad Museum in Carson City. He grew up in New York's Hudson Valley and remembers the situation in the 1970s, which planted the seeds of the speeder association.

He was looking to document abandoned lines and a friend noticed that railroads were selling motorized speeders as they downsized and switched to pickup trucks that can raise and lower train wheels hydraulically.

Older speeders could be had cheaply. Inspection cars are the most common and carry two to four people. Larger section cars carry six. Both have simple controls for their 1- or 2-cylinder engines and can weigh 600-1,000 pounds, making them fairly easy to winch onto a small trailer.

"My friend and I went to a railroad equipment dealer in Ohio and bought a Fairmont M19AA--2-cylinder motor car--for about \$800 in 1977 or '78," he recalls.

Barton and his friend "bootlegged" around the Northeast, documenting the lines they rode. They looked official and "flagged" every crossing they encountered.

"The tracks were abandoned, and we never sought official permission to ride," he admits.

The two started on the New Haven Line, the Ulster and Delaware, the old New York Central Upper Harlem Division, reopening lines overgrown with weeds and fallen trees. "A working chainsaw was our best friend," he says.

Barton preferred the Lackawanna cutoff, which offered 30 miles of running around Greendell, N.J., over the Delaware River and through the Delaware Water Gap. "Not a single grade crossing, through tunnels and over high bridges on a railroad built for 90 m.p.h. running," he recalls happily.

By 1980 the pair found others doing the same thing, and that brought about the North America Rail Car Operators Association ([www.narcoa.org](http://www.narcoa.org)). It was founded in 1988 and is based in Lock Haven, PA.

Co-founder Joel Williams remains the club's secretary.

"By the early 1980s, the railroads were getting very nervous about these kooks who might set down on their rails and be killed by an oncoming train," says Barton.

"So NARCOA gave credence to the hobby, offered insurance and negotiated with tourist railroads and short lines to sponsor official, authorized runs. By 1985 as many as 25 or 30

*Continued on page 12*

*Continued from page 11*

cars might show up to run the Hobo Railroad in New Hampshire," Barton says.

Pat Coleman has been president of NARCOA, which boasts 1,800 members, 900 of whom are licensed and insured, for eight years. Like many members, he has railroad connections--his grandfather was chief conductor on the Louisville & Nashville Railroad--and he has spent a lifetime with model trains.

Coleman says few club members are retired railroaders, and the club continues to add 50-60 members a year, mostly older "people who've got their kids out of college."

Members pay \$24 a year and must pass written and operational tests before they can take part in tours, which can cost from \$30 for a day trip to \$5,000 for the eight-day Copper Canyon excursion. Members took 187 trips last year, from Florida to Alaska.

Insurance is \$125 a year, and speeders must pass operational tests as well.

Coleman says speeder prices range from \$2,500 for a runner that needs work to \$12,000 for a trailer queen. He strongly advises buying a running rig that has passed inspection (but isn't perfect) for about \$5,500.

Owners pull their conveyances on customized snowmobile trailers and, once launched onto the track, think nothing of covering 200 miles a day at a stately, but smooth, 35 m.p.h.

Coleman lives in California, but his longest runs have been in Canada, as far north as Dawson City in the Yukon, west to Hyder, Alaska, and south to Prince Rupert, British Columbia. He reckons he has traveled 10,000 speeder miles.

There's worldwide interest in the hobby but rail gauges (widths) present problems. For example,

each Australian state has a different gauge instead of the standard 4 foot 8 1/2 inches, says Coleman. New Zealand is all 42-inch track, and Central America has various gauges that preclude towing a U.S. speeder down there. The answer of course is to build or rebuild different gauge speeders, which NARCOA member Les King can do for you from about \$9,500 in North Lawrence, Ohio.

Brown, a longtime speeder and retired bus driver, is now a full-time model railroad builder.

He has standard- and narrow-gauge Fairmont speeders. Because of the narrow-gauge ability to handle tight turns, such railroads are usually mountainous with spectacular views.

On his busiest speeder year, he and his wife, Carol, covered 4,300 miles on 27 trips, until she cried "uncle." Still, Carol Brown says she enjoys her husband's avocation as much as he does.

"After 15 years, I told him I'm taking a year off," she says cheerfully.

Brown inaugurated the Copper Canyon run in 1995 and reckons it's the best line he's been on: "You can't do it once; you miss so much."

But he's intrigued by all the track in the U.S. he has yet to run.

"There are 125 different railroads in North America. I've got 38,000 miles but one of our members has ridden every state but Hawaii and all the provinces in Canada except the Yukon. He's done 42,000 miles," he says admiringly.

NARCOA has a good relationship with the railroads, and joyriding without permission gets you the boot, says Brown.

"It's a safety issue. We only ride on active lines, now. And how many people would give you \$2 million worth of equipment for two days and

say 'go have fun?'"

Brown says railroads like the publicity as it puts a human face on their corporations. "We ride a branch line through a farmer's field, he waves and sees a friendly aspect," he says.

Brown is looking forward to next year's excursion to Churchill, Manitoba, on Hudson's Bay in Canada. Beyond Churchill you find mosquitoes in the summer and polar bears in the winter. It's as far north as you can go by train in that area.

"There'll be two trips up there. Just think: 187 miles without a grade crossing," he says.

Types of cars

Three types of cars were built:

- Inspection cars for light maintenance weighed from 600 to 1,000 pounds and could transport two to four people. They were powered by 1- or 2-cylinder engines.

- Section cars transported six-member section crews and weigh 800 to 1,000 pounds. Same engines as inspection cars.

- Gang cars were used for transporting work gangs of up to 100 men. They could pull trailer cars loaded with tools and men. They weigh from 1,500 to 5,000 pounds and are powered by 4- 6- or 8-cylinder engines.

Source: North American Railcar Operators Association

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Paul Duchene, author of this article, is a new (2005) member of the Friends of the Nevada State Railroad Museum. Paul resided in Carson City for a time and is a frequent visitor and an enthusiastic supporter of the Museum.

# V&T Locomotive No. 18, the *Dayton*, moved to Virginia City

A Virginia and Truckee Railway steam locomotive from the collection of the Nevada State Railroad Museum returned to Virginia City on September 15, 2005. Locomotive No. 18, the *Dayton*, was moved to the newly completed Department of Cultural Affairs Comstock History Center, located on the historic V&T rail yard at E and Union Streets in Virginia City. This marks the first time since 1993 that a V&T Railway locomotive has been placed on display in the landmark historic district. It was in 1993 that locomotive No. 27 was removed to the Nevada State Railroad Museum in Carson City for restoration. No. 27 was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2004 and remains on display in the Jacobsen Interpretive Center of the Nevada State Railroad Museum.

At the request of Governor Kenny Guinn, the 2003 Legislature authorized funding a new building for the Department of Cultural Affairs. The Comstock History Center, completed by Miles Brothers Construction under the supervision of State Public Works, will open later in the fall of 2005. Carson City architect John Copoulos designed the structure using elements from historic railroad buildings that stood nearby. Besides exhibiting the locomotive, the building will serve as home for the Comstock Historic District Commission and provide space for a variety of interpretive exhibits on the history of the Comstock Mining District.

The *Dayton* is a remarkable locomotive that served Virginia City during the heyday of the Big Bonanza. Built in 1873, it is a rare survivor of the Central Pacific Engine Works in Sacramento. After serving for several decades, the *Dayton* retired to a career in film, working for Paramount Pictures as a classic nineteenth-century railroad engine. In 1969, it joined another V&T locomotive, the *Inyo*, to participate in the centennial celebration of the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad at Promontory Summit, Utah. Both engines were later acquired by the State of Nevada, refurbished, and placed on display at the Nevada State Railroad Museum.

Harco Trucking from Reno provided the equipment which enabled the locomotive and tender to be safely transported from Carson City and up the grade to Virginia City. Museum restoration shop forces, led by supervisor Chris deWitt, with the assistance of several members of the *Friends*, provided the manpower. The move started just before 7am and by 9:30 the trucks were on the move to Virginia City. It was quite a site to see this piece of history moving over the road, up the truck route to VC! Unloading at the new Comstock History Center went without a hitch and by shortly after Noon the tender and locomotive were safely inside the new Comstock History Center.

The locomotive is on loan to our sister agency, the State Historic Preservation Office, and plans are to rotate equipment between Carson City and the Comstock History Center every 5-10 years. Placing this locomotive on display in Virginia City gives the Railroad Museum an important presence in Virginia City and serves as a billboard for the Museum in Carson City.



## THE MUSEUM STORE...

The Museum Store specializes in railroad books for adults and children, train videos and DVD's, audio recordings and CD's, toys, train models, hats and apparel, railroad pins and jewelry, train novelties and souvenirs, notecards and artwork, calendars and Christmas season train items.

As the holiday season approaches, we invite you to visit the store in person for your gift shopping. But, if you don't have the opportunity to visit us in the near future, we offer a few of our interesting book selections on this page.

We welcome your telephone or written inquiries about any railroad merchandise you may be looking for. Please direct your requests to store manager, Rich Reitnauer, (775)687-8292. And, remember, *Friends of NSRM* members are entitled to a 15% discount on all museum store purchases. Proceeds from sales are used by NSRM to fund a variety of museum projects and interpretive programs.

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**#100672, \$7.95**

A concise description of the feel and joy of properly firing oil burning steam engines, with all technical aspects of operations covered.

**CLASSIC AMERICAN LOCOMOTIVES: STEAM LOCOMOTIVE TECHNOLOGY** (McShane), 711 pp.

**#100368, \$19.95**

Originally published in 1899, this work includes hundreds of fascinating mechanical illustrations and explains every aspect of how these incredible machines operate. A fascinating reference source and a centerpiece to any train fan's library.

**SNOWBOUND STREAMLINER: RESCUING THE 1952 CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO** (Church), 156 pp.

**#100797, \$49.95**

Text based on many first-hand recollections of those who were involved in the rescue, the extrication of the train and the reopening of the line during this famous Southern Pacific luxury train mishap at Yuba Gap. Illustrated with an extensive collection of photographs, many from SP files, depicting the events and aspects of this 17-day episode.

**THOSE AMAZING RAILWAY PATENTS** (Trostel), 150 pp.

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An illustrated and descriptive view of inventions and patents associated with the railroad industry, spanning the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, helping explain the story of railroad technology and its evolution.

**HOW STEAM LOCOMOTIVES REALLY WORK** (Simmens & Goldfinch), 348 pp.

**#102129, \$16.95**

An essential reference guide to steam locomotives: how they work, and how they have developed across the world over the past 150 years, including engine anatomy, design, function of various engine components, and safe and efficient operation and maintenance.

**RAILROADS AND STEAMERS OF LAKE TAHOE** (McKeon), 22 pp.

**#101985, \$4.95**

A concise history of the steam railroads and steamships which operated within the Lake Tahoe Basin during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**WORKIN' ON THE RAILROAD: REMINISCENCES FROM THE AGE OF STEAM** (Reinhardt), 327 pp.

#102522, \$19.95

A collection of firsthand accounts from engineers, brakemen, porters, conductors, section men, roundhouse workers, switchmen, telegraphers, surveyors and other neglected pioneers who worked the railroad during the Age of Steam, in America.

**THE OLD IRON ROAD: AN EPIC OF RAILS, ROADS AND THE URGE TO GO WEST** (Bain), 434 pp.

#100367, \$27.95

The author's personal account, interspersed with an extensive collection of historical facts and references, of his travels along the original route of the Transcontinental Railroad, comparing the old, former modes and attitudes of travel with the contemporary scene of Western America.

**THE MODOC: SOUTHERN PACIFIC'S BACKDOOR TO OREGON** (Bowden & Dill), 336 pp.

#102766, \$49.95

A detailed and illustrated history of this remote Southern Pacific line, from Klamath Falls, Oregon, through the high desert region of Northeastern California, to Fernly, Nevada.

**CLASSIC RAILROAD ADVERTISING** (Burness), 224 pp.

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Covering nearly a century of memories, this beautifully illustrated volume features nearly 200 colorful and nostalgic reproductions of magazine advertisements touting the ease, comfort, reliability and sense of traveling by American passenger trains during their heydays.

**ECHOES: THE RAILROAD PHOTOGRAPHY OF GLENN BEIER** (Beier), 288 pp.

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A significant collection of Mr. Beier's dramatic, action-filled black and white photographs of trains, capturing the essence of narrow gauge and logging railroads of the West, including the SP, Sierra Railroad, West Side Lumber Co., Carson & Colorado and the Northern.

**RAILROAD: IDENTITY, DESIGN AND CULTURE** (Lovegrove), 160 pp.

#103643, \$29.95

This handsome and lively work surveys the history, culture and design of railroads and trains from the early days of the Industrial Revolution through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The author examines all details of railroading from an aesthetic as well as an engineering point of view.

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