

THE SIDE TRACK

NEWS

from the Toy Train Operating Society
Sacramento Valley Division

FALL

2023

When you are young, you have to fake wisdom, and when you're old, you have to fake energy. - Salman Rushdie

Jerry Azzaro, editor

President's Message by Ed Strisar, SVD President

CHANGE IS IN THE WIND

National TTOS will dissolve as of December 31, 2023. As of January 1, 2024, ten TTOS Divisions will become sole entities; two Division have chosen to no longer exist. SVD TTOS will continue to thrive.

- ◆ Under the new structure TTOS members will no longer pay dues to National.
- ◆ The TTOS logo and other items will revert to the SP Division.
- ◆ All remaining Divisions will be required to purchase their own insurance and possibly change their organizational structure. Local SVD board members are currently working on this and will keep SVD TTOS members informed.

The SVD Board is requesting our members to assist in SVD TTOS administration and other endeavors. One such item is the planning and execution of our annual December Pot Luck Dinner. If you can help, please e-mail Ed at stein.ed.0530@gmail.com
Together, let's take SVD TTOS forward into 2024.

"CALIFORNIA SPECIAL"

TRAIN, TOY & MODEL KIT SHOW

PLUS ... OPERATING TRAIN LAYOUTS

***** Open to the Public *****

International Agri-Center, Tulare, CA

4500 S. Laspina ... next to Route 99; Paige Ave. exit

½ way between Sacramento and L.A. → **Car Pool with Friends**

2023 Show Dates: Nov 18 – 19 (10 – 4)

\$10/person; \$15/family (cash only at door) - (good both days)

– **FREE PARKING!**

Up to 400 sales tables + parts + clinic in 60,000 sq ft building
{Vendors – Send SASE to TTOS, PO Box 6710, Fullerton, CA 92834}

July 15 meeting

Photos by Lisa Stanton
Notes by Bob Phillips

Bryan Stanton presented 2 Bing tin plate freight stations circa 1920
Rose Craighead presented a flatcar that Don Rosa gave to Kit Craighead many years ago.
Carl Curtis presented a "rowdy car" that was made by modifying an MTH 1940 O gauge caboose which became a Sacramento Northern caboose.





August 19 Meeting

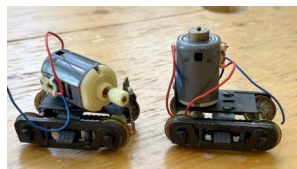
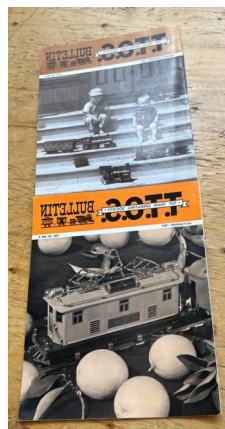
Show and Tell Photos and notes
by Bob Phillips

Jeff Silvera presented two trolley trucks made by David O. King circa 1985. He also showed a cover for a TTOS bulletin designed by Ward Kimball.

Bryan Stanton presented two different American Flyer 484 cabooses from 1938. One caboose was constructed from steel. The other caboose was die cast.

Keith Anderson gave an informative presentation about tenders. Rivets going in a diagonal direction indicate where the compartments for coal and water are separated.

Bob Rhodes described his unique shirt. The late Jack Hornor wore one just like it. The shirt is a Maxx Boxer from North Carolina.



The Last, Last TTOS Convention

By Phil Fravesi

The “last” TTOS Convention was held in Columbus, OH July 31 through August 5, 2023. Emma and I bypassed the first days of tours, rented a car, and drove 694 miles RT to visit the Rutherford Hayes Presidential Library in Fremont, OH and Gerald Ford Museum/Library in Grand Rapids, MI. We have visited 13 Libraries to date, spread all around the country.

Thursday, we boarded a tour bus for The Warren Harding Presidential Library in Marion, OH and the restored Marion train depot and switch tower. The tower has been moved from its original location across the tracks but contains all the original equipment to control the double crossovers that are still active. There are two tracks that are crossed by two sets of tracks and about 50 yards away is another double set of tracks crossing. In about a one hour time, we were treated to seven long freight trains roaring through in different directions, all with horns blaring. A train lover’s dream!

There was a BOD meeting that evening which by now you know resulted in the dissolution of TTOS National at the end of 2023. As you might imagine, there was a very spirited discussion but in the end, reality won.

Friday took us east away from the flat farmland to the rolling hills of Amish country. Sugarcreek OH is the home of Age of Steam. This is the result of one man’s vision and life’s work. He built an 18 stall roundhouse with a 115 foot turntable to house his personal collection of steam locomotives. The structure is spectacular with the timber construction completed by Amish craftsman. There are about 2 million bricks from a local brick manufacturer. Of all the spectacular locos, the one most interesting to me was a little 0-4-0 “fireless cooker” built by Heisler in 1940 and operated close-by at the Columbus & Southern Ohio Electric, hauling coal into the plant. It runs 8 hours on a tank of superheated water contained under pressure. Yes, he had diesels but they were relegated to the outdoors. Note the red wheel car in the photo. Post war Lionel collectors can appreciate the value and humor. We also visited the Dennison RR depot that played a big role in serving WW II troops traveling coast to coast.

The General Membership meeting was held Saturday morning. After the usual introductions, President Randy Giroux read a statement announcing the shutdown of TTOS National. There were questions from the floor but the one that seem to be the most sobering was “what about conventions?” The answer was “this is the last convention”. Things went quiet.

The banquet was fun and the live auction featured some unusual items from the archives. I looked around the table and room and was sad to think this group of friends will never get together like this again. When you attend conventions on a regular basis, you make friends from all over and look forward to catching up every year. Sad indeed.



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150 Years of Cable Cars

- Jerry Azzaro

Seeing a cable car in operation is a lot like watching a duck glide across a pond. There's a lot going on below that you don't see.

The 150th anniversary of the first San Francisco cable car occurred while I was composing this article, so that gave me my title. I was going to write all about the gritty details of how cable cars work, describing things like pull curves, deflection pulleys and the "TAKE ROPE" and "LET GO" pavement markings. However, [this YouTube video](#) does a much better job than I ever could. It's from 1984, so it's dated and a bit corny. (It is also on a continuous loop at the cable car museum). Certainly, the digital electronics shown around the powerhouse have changed since 1984 - but the cable cars and their propulsion system haven't basically changed since 1873.

Well, one thing has changed: the cars now have LED headlights and running lights powered by storage batteries, instead of kerosene lamps ... and of course, giant electric motors have replaced steam power to move the cables.

Here are some things not addressed or fully explored in the video:

The first cable line to operate in San Francisco was the Clay Street Hill Railroad on August 2, 1873. Each unit consisted of a grip car towing a single enclosed passenger car.

There are two types of cable cars now used in San Francisco, single-grip and double-grip. There are 28 single-grip cars and 12 double-grip cars. The cars weigh 15,500 and 16,800 pounds respectively. The track gauge is 3-½ feet.

The single-grip cars have one set of controls and operate only in one direction. They require a turnaround (turntable) at each terminus - there are no return loops.

Single-grip cars are used on the Powell-Hyde and Powell-Taylor lines. At each end of the line, the car coasts onto the turntable and the brakes are set. The two crewmembers rotate the turntable by hand, and then push the car off onto the departure track. The lead-in and lead-out tracks are slightly graded to give a gravity assist. In the old days, waiting passengers would often step forward to help, but now everybody has to stay behind the rope line.

The double-grip cars have controls at both ends, and can operate in either direction. These run on

California Street between Market Street and Van Ness Avenue. All that is needed at each terminus is a simple switchback. There are no curves in this line.

The Powell-Hyde and Powell-Taylor lines originate at Market and Powell Streets. At Powell and California Streets, they cross the California Street cable line. The Powell Street cables pass below those of the California Street line, so Powell Street cars have

to coast across and pick up the cable at the other side. There is a full-time signalman in a little hut posted there to make sure all cable cars get through this intersection successfully.

After crossing California Street, the two Powell Street lines diverge at Mason and Jackson Streets, near the powerhouse, with one line terminating at Hyde and Beach Streets and the other at Taylor and Bay Streets.

Not all San Franciscans have always loved the cable cars. In 1947, Mayor Roger Lapham proposed abolishing them. Led by socialite Friedel Klussmann, 27 women's civic organizations united to form the "Citizens' Committee to Save the Cable Cars" and got the issue on the ballot. Their measure to retain and maintain the cable cars won by 166,989 to 51,457 votes.

There is now a "Friedel Klussmann Memorial Turnaround" at the terminus of the Powell-Hyde line (across from the Buena Vista Café),



Above: Double-grip car (California Street)
Below: Single-grip car (Powell-Hyde and Powell-Taylor)



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while the Lapham name appears only on a one-block street in a residential neighborhood at the outskirts of the City, near the Cow Palace. Today the cable cars are a National Historic Monument, so their future is secure.

For most of our years living in San Francisco, the cable cars were just another - somewhat funky - way to get around. The fare in 1960 was 15 cents - the same as for the buses and streetcars - and transfers were allowed. Today the regular fare for Metro streetcars and buses is \$3.00 (\$1.50 for seniors) with transfers allowed. Residents under 19 ride free. But the cable car fare is \$8 with no discounts and no transfers. Visitors to the City can purchase 1-day, 3-day or 7-day "Visitor Passports" that offer unlimited rides on all Muni lines, including the cable cars.

Due to safety and reliability concerns, the entire cable car system was shut down in 1982 for two years to undergo a major overhaul at a cost of \$60 million (\$208 million in 2023). Then-mayor Dianne Feinstein felt that visitors to the City would be disappointed, so she initiated the "Trolley Festival" on Market Street. Antique

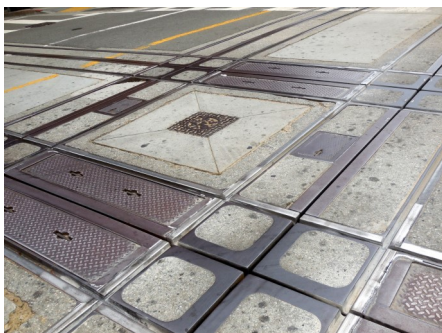
SF Municipal Railway streetcars were put into service, and vintage cars from around the world were brought in. This was the forerunner of the current F-Market & Wharves line. Some of the foreign cars became the property of the Western Railway Museum in Suisun when the cables began running again.

The cable is 1-¼" diameter, with steel strands over a sisal rope center for flexibility. It moves at a steady 9.5 miles per hour. The useful life of a cable is 6-8 months. There are four cable runs serving the three lines: California (21,700 feet), Hyde (16,000 feet), Mason (10,300 feet), and Powell (9,300 feet).

All cars receive nightly inspections and maintenance as needed at the powerhouse shop. When they wear out, new cars are built at Muni's carpentry shop to original blueprints and materials specifications.

The powerhouse contains the cable car museum, car barn, repair and machine shops, and the cable winding machinery. [This Yelp.com page](#) includes visitors' photos and videos which show the machinery in operation, as well as views inside the museum.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about these little cars is that they operate with the exact same technology as they did 150 years ago. Nothing has been digitized, plasticized or modernized.



Diamonds inside of diamonds - where two cable lines cross on Nob Hill at California and Powell Streets.



California Street car #50 rolls through the crossing. "LET GO" markings tell the Powell grip to release the cable.



Looking down California Street toward Market Street.

Cable car track isn't like regular track, and it's more than just the slot down the center.

There are several unusual track configurations in the system. The one I find most interesting is where the Hyde Street and Taylor Street lines diverge.

Since the routes actually diverge on an uphill block, the choice of which one to take is made 1-½ blocks ahead, in a downhill section on Powell Street. At that point, there is a switch that divides into a gauntlet track. (Switches throughout the system are positioned so that cars can coast through, rather than being pulled by the cable.) Immediately following the switch is a “take rope pit” which allows the operator to grasp the cable for that route which will take that car the rest of the way.

Next comes the double pull curve at the corner of Powell and Jackson Streets, with a total of 66 pull curve pulleys handling both cables for the two side-by-side lines.

A block uphill, at the intersection of Jackson and Mason Streets, is where the gauntlet track divides. The Hyde Street cars continue straight across while the Taylor Street cars follow the pull curve to the right. (See the video next page).

Below (in the 1100 block of Powell Street): Views of the switch leading to the gauntlet track, the Take Rope pit, and (in the distance) the gauntlet double pull curve into Jackson Street.



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The Safety Latch

On many uphill runs where a car may need to stop, there are safety latches installed ... spring-loaded devices that close behind the grip and prevent the car from rolling backward down the hill.

If you learned to drive on a manual transmission car, you might recall the “hill-hold” feature available on some models.





Double pull curve into Jackson Street hill.



Car #20 rounds the pull curve on the outer track, which leads to Taylor Street.



Two views of the split at the end of the gauntlet track. Above, looking downhill. Below, looking uphill.



Car #10, headed up Jackson for Taylor Street, approaching the split. Note that the track takes a jog to accommodate the chafing bar and pulleys.



This YouTube video, taken by a tourist, is indexed to start at the point where the cable car begins the route selection into the gauntlet track. Click on the image above to view.

Down the track

Upcoming events of interest to SVD members (SVD events are in **BOLD**)
(Click the [underlined](#) links for more information)

September 30: SVD [River City Train Show](#), Elk's Lodge, Carmichael

October 1: [Just Trains Open House](#), Concord

October 14-15: [Carquinez MRS](#) and [CTTOM](#) Open House, Crockett

October 19-21: [TCA Eastern Division York Meet](#), York PA

October 21: SVD Meeting, St. Mark's Church, Sacramento*

November 11-12: Int'l Railfair Model Railroad Show, Cal Expo

November 18: SVD Meeting, St. Mark's Church, Sacramento*

November 18-19: "[California Special](#)" meet, Tulare

December 2-3: [San Joaquin Valley Toy Train Operators Show](#), Turlock

December 9-10: [The Great Train Show](#), Pleasanton

December 16: SVD Annual Potluck, St. Mark's Church, Sacramento*

January 20, 2024: SVD Meeting, St. Mark's Church, Sacramento*

January 27-28, 2024: [The Great Train Show](#), Cal Expo

***Meetings begin at 9:30 AM**

BRING YOUR SVD and TTOS NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP CARDS

Contact us:

Club business: Ed Strisar, President - (916) 395-3169 stein.ed.0530@gmail.com

Membership questions: Barbara Rohrs - (916) 730-1415 tjbrr@hotmail.com

Website: www.ttos-sv.org

TTOS-SVD Mission Statement:

Our mission is to bring together persons interested in the hobby of collecting and operating toy trains. The focus of activities shall be on promoting the best interests of the hobby through fellowship, a sense of good will, camaraderie within the membership, and exposing the general public to the hobby, encouraging greater interest in it and increasing membership.