

# SAGEBRUSH HEADLIGHT



*Newsletter of the Nevada State Railroad Museum*

Vol. 10, No. 1

47th Edition

April, 1989

Except for the ongoing work on the *Glenbrook* engine in the restoration shop by Chris deWitt and his crew, things have been sort of quiet since the Museum's excursion train event in southern Nevada on the Boulder City branch last December.

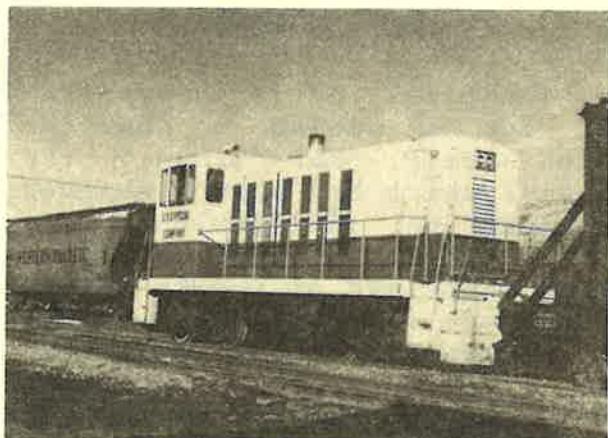
In February, the Museum was the recipient of a historical narrow-gauge train by the Gold Spike Inn & Casino of Boulder City. It was what the Casino labelled their "E&P Train," the three-car narrow-gauge passenger consist which had been displayed for many years alongside their complex on the Boulder City highway. Before that it was located on the Las Vegas strip at the Last Frontier Casino. The donation comprised of Eureka-Nevada Ry. engine No. 12, a 2-8-0 built by Baldwin in 1896. The road's second No. 12 originally ran on the Florence & Cripple Creek RR. as their No. 10, then it went to the Cripple Creek & Colorado Springs RR. as their No. 36, then to the Unintah Ry. as No. 12 before its acquisition by the Eureka-Nevada in 1937. Next in line is Eureka-Nevada baggage car No. 10 (ex-Colusa & Lake RR.), Eureka-Nevada combination baggage/coach No. 2 (ex-Colusa & Lake RR.), and Eureka-Nevada combo/coach No. 3 (ex-Eureka & Palisade No. 3). The latter car is of historical significance as it was outshopped about 1873 by Billmeyer & Small of York, PA. This combine could well be the oldest commercially-built narrow-gauge passenger car extant. The ex-Colusa & Lake cars are apparently products of the J.S. Hammond & Co., car builders of San Francisco. The train gift is slated for display in the proposed state railroad museum to be located at Boulder City.

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**NEVADA'S LAST REAL SHORT LINE.** In 1923, the Pacific Portland Cement Co. transferred their gypsum operations from Mound House, NV to a site six-miles south of Gerlach, NV which they promptly named Empire, with the obligatory company town for employees. A five-mile long aerial tramway was constructed to bring the rock in from the quarry and a six-mile long railroad was built to connect the cement and plaster plant with the Western Pacific at Gerlach. In 1948 U. S. Gypsum purchased the plant and related properties and in 1962 the aerial tramway was taken down and replaced by trucks. Later, the operation expanded to include a sheetrock manufacturing plant.

In February 1989 I had the pleasure of visiting this remote operation, some 100 miles north of Reno, and found it to be

thriving, including the little railroad. The plant is on-line 24 hours a day with 110 people working around the clock to meet production demands for sheetrock, board stucco, #2 rock for cement and bagged finishing plaster. Motive power on the railroad consists of a 9TM Trackmobile for plant switching and a re-powered (CAT D398)



70-ton GE diesel that is used to transport the loads out to the interchange in Gerlach. Eight to ten car loads are being shipped each day, seven days a week, and it is interesting to note that the regular train crew of two are women who just happen to be sisters. They are both qualified engineers and alternate between running and braking.

Plant production is considerably more than what the railroad can handle and most materials leave the plant by truck. The future of the little railroad appears to be secure as the company has invested in relaying the entire line with 110 lb. rail, replacing the 70 lb. rail laid in 1923, and production at the plant shows no signs of slowing down.  
[Contributed by John Ballweber]

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#### NEWS OF THE FRIENDS DEPT.

"Back to the Santa Train [of Dec. 17 & 18]. We have been negligent in giving credit where credit is due. Jim Taylor, a member of the Friends and a professional Santa Claus, was to be Santa on the train, but came down with pneumonia during the preceding week. So he loaned the Santa Claus suit so that the train could operate as advertised. Sorry, Jim.

"We're going to need help from the membership at a few of the upcoming items on the schedule. The first one is over the Memorial Day weekend, when the railroad museum opens and holds the Antique Transportation Display. There will be other locomotives besides those of the museum on the property. Already two have assured us of their presence. The first is the *Falk* from the North Counties Interpretive Logging Association in Eureka, California. The other is Pacific Locomotive Association's No. 3 from the Steptoe Valley Mining & Smelting Co. of McGill, Nevada, coming up from Niles in California. And there may be another engine coming, also. These are both standard gauge.

"There will be track laid in front of the museum's [Wabuska] depot in 7-1/2 inch gauge (1-1/2 inch scale) for live steamers from Southern California and Oregon, as well as from Gardnerville and Carson City. So we will need extra hands to assist with all of this, in crowd control, answering questions, and whatever. And our participation will be only a small part of the events that

will be taking place that weekend at the railroad museum [see John Ballweber's notes in this edition, ed.].

"Then on Nevada Day, which this year will not be an operating day [the Museum will be closed, ed.] as it falls on Tuesday, the Friends are planning on holding hand car races as one of the events for Nevada Day, which will also give us a handle on running a big hand car event next year. For this event we will be needing the help of many Friends, also. So, if it will be within your power to assist, keep us and the dates in mind.

"The good news is that work on completing the Interpretive Center has started. George Heun, a member of the Friends and a general contractor, will be handling the construction part of the deal and the Friends will be furnishing the material. George will be remembered as the contractor that erected the water tower at the museum. We all hope that it will be completed or far enough along so that it can be used over the Memorial Day weekend."

Contributed by Jack Gibson.

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**WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO... DEPT.**  
From the Hawthorne, NV *Walker Lake Bulletin* of May 14, 1912 we discovered a lost "last" spike. "A fond reminder of railroad day. Goldfield's first notable celebration was received there this week upon the arrival of the gold spike which was used to mark the completion into Goldfield of the Tonopah & Goldfield railroad and which had

a varied and somewhat remarkable history before being sent to Milton and Detch, to whose care it had been intrusted by E.O. Paterson, receiver of the defunct Nye & Ormsby bank [of Tonopah]. The spike is now on exhibition in the window of the [Goldfield] Tribune. It is made of gold from the Red Top mine, weighs eleven and four-fifths ounces and is valued, by tests made at the United States branch mint in Carson City at \$238.65. Mr. Detch made the address of presentation when the golden spike, of full size used on standard gauge roads and of pure gold, was given into the custody of Alonzo H. Tripp as general manager of the railroad.

"It appears that Manager Tripp later found himself in need of funds and 'hocked' the spike to the Nye & Ormsby County Bank for the sum of \$250. The spike has remained in the hands of the receiver who desires to realize the amount due the bank and in order to determine its exact value had it tested at the mint." [So where is it now?]

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*Readers who discover the words "LAST ISSUE" typed on the envelope containing this newsletter are reminded that this is the only notice they will receive. They may, however, continue receiving the SAGEBRUSH HEADLIGHT by sending six or more self-addressed, stamped business-size envelopes to: Nevada State Railroad Museum, Capitol Complex, Carson City, Nevada 89710. Subscribers who have become a member of either the Railroad Museum or "Friends of the V&T" need not be*

concerned about the supply of envelopes as you automatically receive the *HEADLIGHT* as part of your year-long membership.

ODDS n' ENDS DEPT. The Museum's 1989 operating schedule is enclosed. Speaking of schedules, the Nevada Northern in Ely has embarked on an ambitious tourist train schedule this season with steam-powered trips to the Keystone wye and diesel-powered runs to McGill. For further information, maybe a current newsletter, and the 1989 operating schedule, write: Nevada Northern Railway, P.O. Box 40, East Ely, NV. 89315.

Construction of the Carson City Chamber of Commerce new headquarters at the Railroad Museum is moving along now that the recent spate of frigid weather and snowstorms is passed. The exterior walls have been framed and partially covered as of March 23.

With regards to the opening weekend festivities mentioned earlier in this issue, its going to be real big. Well, its going to be bigger then a normal opening weekend for the Museum. The reason behind the event deserves an explanation. It is part of the Department of Museums & History's "History Expo 89", a week-long celebration of the history of our wonderful State. The event kicks off May 20 & 21 at the Nevada State Museum with International Museum Day and the Nevada State Museum's 50th Birthday. During the week a lecture series is being presented in the State Museum Auditorium. On Memorial Day Weekend, May 27 - 29, the Nevada

State Railroad Museum will celebrate the commencement of its 10th season with an *Antique Transportation Fair*. Be on the lookout for future bulletins as the fair draws near.

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A SLICE FROM THE WAY-BE-GONE PAST. Although the Western Pacific tapped their last spike home in November, 1909, passenger service over the line did not begin until August, 1910. On December 28, 1910, readers of the *RENO EVENING GAZETTE* learned about some thrilling adventures experienced by passengers traveling over a certain section of the new railroad in mid-Nevada. "Trainmen are bringing [in] stories of exciting races that are now taking place between Western Pacific and Southern Pacific trains. For a period of 40 miles near Palisade the two tracks parallel each other, running on long stretches so near together that were the trains standing the passengers in the Western Pacific coaches could shake hands with those riding upon Southern Pacific trains.

"Under the new schedule," continued the *GAZETTE*, "the Western Pacific and Southern Pacific trains both enter this stretch of track at practically the same moment. The result has been some thrilling races, in which passengers have crowded to the windows, engineers have derided each other with triumphant shrieks of the whistle, as, owing to a stop or for other causes, one train might forge ahead, and brakemen have waved a taunting farewell

with lanterns to rival  
brakemen.

"Owing to the fact that the Southern Pacific engines are more powerful, thus far the Southern Pacific has in every instance been able to emerge first from the stretch of parallel track. The number of stops is practically the same, so that the two roads have an opportunity to make an exact test of their respective speed."

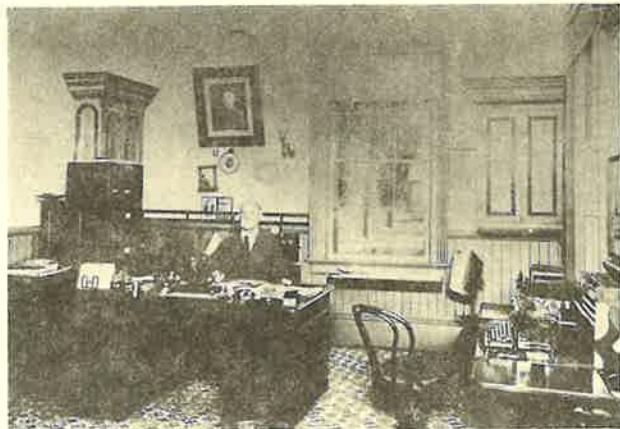
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#### IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF HENRY M. YERINGTON

The Virginia & Truckee Railroad was a remarkable institution and one of the most outstanding characteristics of the famed line was the number of employees of long standing. No doubt the best known of these perennials was Henry M. Yerington, who served for over 40 years as the road's superintendent. Another gentleman, and a Carson City resident for most of his 71 years, was Frank E. Murphy. Fifty-two of those years were spent with the V&T--a great achievement for a much admired man who was both a railroader, an attorney and a politician. [The following biography of Mr. Murphy was written several years ago for the the *Gaslight Observer* column of the NEVADA APPEAL's *APPLE TREE* Sunday supplement section.]

Frank Edward Murphy, son of Michael A. and Martha J., was born in Aurora [former county seat of Nevada's Esmeralda County and now a ghost town] on June 7, 1868. His dad served as District Attorney of Esmeralda County for three terms before the family moved to Carson City where young Frank attended school. In 1878, M. A. Murphy became the Republican candidate for state attorney general and was elected. He served in this position from 1879 to 1882. Later, the senior Murphy became District Judge for Lyon and Esmeralda counties from 1883 to 1886. He was a member of the Nevada Supreme Court from 1889 to 1894. Then from 1903 to 1906 Murphy served as Judge of Judicial District No. 1 which comprised the counties of Storey (Virginia City), Douglas (Minden), Ormsby (Carson City), Lyon (Yerington) and Esmeralda (Goldfield).

Following Frank Murphy's brief stint as a student at the University of Nevada campus in Reno during 1886, he dropped out of the Scientific Course to begin a long association with the V&T when he relieved his ailing brother on October 23, 1886. After the brother passed away on January 7, 1887, Frank was appointed to fill the vacancy of baggagemaster of the busy Carson City depot on the 10th of January. A year and a half later, he became secretary to David A. Bender, the General Freight and Passenger Agent. In 1897, the enterprising Murphy was elevated to chief clerk of that office, probably when Bender resigned and Edward B. Yerington was elected to fill the agent's position. In a year's time, General Superintendent H.M. Yerington selected Murphy as his secretary.



Darius Mills peers over Frank Murphy's shoulder at the V&T depot in Carson City. Those two wall file cabinets, left and right of the vice-president, were a highly prized gift of Bill & Barbara Alhouse of Los Altos, CA. in 1985.

When Henry M. Yerington passed away in 1910, Alex M. Ardery, another long-time V&T employee, was elected to Yerington's post. Frank Murphy continued as secretary to the new vice-president and general manager in addition to assuming the role as the V&T's attorney. Although he studied law, probably under his dad, and was admitted to the Nevada bar, Murphy never engaged in general practice. Upon Edward B. Yerington's surprise resignation as Secretary of the V&T in April, 1917, Murphy was selected for the post.

Following Ardery's death on June 1, 1921, the Board of Directors met on July 30 to elect Frank Murphy as vice-president, who then announced the appointment of Herbert Coffin, then superintendent of the road, as general manager. The selection of Coffin came as a genuine surprise to the man, as he had not expected the advancement. Coffin began his career with the V&T back in 1882 as the night operator and ticket agent at Reno.

He served as agent at several stations, including Gold Hill and Minden, until coming to Carson City where he had been the train dispatcher since 1909. Sam C. Bigelow filled Murphy's position as Secretary. In the case of Murphy, the appointment had been earned by his then lengthy service of 35 years. Coffin died in 1932 and Murphy assumed the dual duties, as Yerington and Ardery had earlier, of vice-president and general manager of the Virginia & Truckee.

From the date of his new post on June 10, 1922, Frank Murphy directed the railroad "through thick and thin" until concern for his health prompted him to tender his resignation effective November 1, 1938. He had little time to enjoy the pleasures of retirement as he soon passed away on April 21, 1939. During his lifetime, Murphy was very active in Masonic affairs. He held memberships in Carson Lodge No. 1, F. & A.M.; Lewis Chapter No. 1, Royal Arch Masons; De Witt Clinton Commandery No. 1; Knights Templar; and Kerak [Reno] Temple of the Shrine. He was also a member of the Sagebrush Club when that social organization existed in Carson City.

During his tenure as vice-president in charge of the Virginia & Truckee Ry., running the once prosperous line hardly resembled piloting a ship under fair skies--it was comparable to traveling in a worn out auto down a mountain trail strewn with rocks and potholes. The obstructions increased in magnitude as the road's revenues continued in a downward spiral, ultimately compelling the V&T to seek voluntary receivership by 1938. Throughout these troubled years, Murphy managed to keep the line afloat. Without occasional monetary assistance from the Mills family, the task would have been insurmountable.

While Frank Murphy never held public office, outside of being a Notary Public, he was a confidant of many politicians and businessmen. He did exert much influence over public affairs for many years, just like one of his predecessors, H.M. Yerington. His experience as secretary to both Yerington and Ardery brought him valuable knowledge of Nevada's political machinations. Not only was his intelligence sought, but it was given freely when it involved senators, assemblymen, representatives, as well as political party leaders like the staunch Nevada Republican and Reno banker George Wingfield.

On one particular occasion in late 1930, Wingfield, who became extremely wealthy during the Goldfield and Tonopah mining booms, wrote Murphy regarding a V&T employee named William Cobb. Cobb, who drove a bus for

the company's subsidiary V-T Transit line, had recently been elected assemblyman from Storey County on an independent ticket. In his letter, Wingfield suggested Murphy use some influence on his employee to turn Republican for the next session of the state Legislature. This tactic "should give them control," wrote Wingfield. "A little quiet work on this issue will be appreciated."

Despite the dark depression days of the early 1930s, Murphy performed remarkably well to keep the V&T operating, although he was stymied by the closure of the local banks, a tight money situation, and the ever increasing competition from "bootleg" trucking operators. In his highly informative letters to the road's president A. A. Hartman in New York, Murphy invariably chose to look at the brighter side of life. He wistfully longed for improvements in the local economy. And any evidence of renewed mining activity on the Comstock was immediately greeted with open optimism. But as the months clicked off and the banks remained closed, cash money became increasingly less. By late December, 1932, the continued appearance of deficit-ridden monthly statements caused Murphy to nearly apologize to Hartman. "Although, from all accounts," wrote Murphy, "we should consider ourselves fortunate. It has kept me hustling the past week to maintain our even keel, money is so scarce; the Washoe county treasurer has refused to cash our warrants for carrying school children, he is a hard boiled Democrat," said the embattled general manager, "but have just returned from Reno where the County recorder, a lady and a Republican, told me to bring them in Monday and she would cash them from her collections; all of which will help out."

As the road's financial woes became more acute, its problems seemed to grow. Some little "devil," as Murphy labelled the invisible troublemaker, reaped an enormous amount of pleasure at the expense of the hapless railroad. The first weeks of 1937 became a nightmare "to us on the receiving end of the line, times without number we were confident we had him down for keeps only to be disillusioned; we lost our snow plow [engine No. 18] at Franktown [on Feb. 10], skidding on the ice and down an embankment....Our locomotive No. 25 was off its full length on the ice but fortunately we were able to get it back without injury. It has been a constant fight, against tremendous odds, but by patience and determination we won out...," said Murphy.

As a result of the heavy snowstorms, the labor cost of fighting snow in February alone amounted to more than \$3,000, and it was almost as much again before the line straightened itself out. With the two derailments and a disabled snowplow, the situation forced the V&T to rent a locomotive from the Southern Pacific at a cost of \$2,475. Other extraordinary incidents, caused by adverse weather conditions such as land slides which occurred in the newly completed cut at Gold Hill and a washed out track at Washoe Canyon that took place only months later, brought an added expense of \$20,000 to remedy. This amount was more than the road could really afford, "but unfortunately we cannot regulate the weather and when we appear to be out of one mess we are in another...," said Murphy in March. Some of the V&T's financial problems were lightened when they sold the Inyo and the Kimball-built coaches 3 and 4 to Paramount Studios in March and June, 1937.

Faced with continuing losses in 1938, the V&T looked to other railroads as a means of salvation to take over the line. Overtures were made to the Western Pacific and Southern Pacific, but both companies turned thumbs down on the idea of utilizing the Virginia & Truckee as a feeder line. Serious thoughts were then given to abandoning the entire route. This notion, however, was soon discarded in favor of ending train service on the run-down Virginia City segment only. To get themselves out of the financial dilemma, the V&T petitioned for federal receivership in April. Murphy, together with Sam Bigelow of the V&T and P.H. Cook of Yerington were named to oversee the business as co-receivers, starting April 27, 1938.



Frank Murphy's long-time residence in mid-Carson City, corner of John and Carson streets. It is now, and still recognizable, as Adele's Restaurant.

All of these misfortunes took a toll on the 71-year-old general manager. While Murphy had been able to carry on up to this point in the interest of the stockholders, he was now impelled to give personal attention to his own condition. And of course the unexpected death of the road's chief benefactor, Ogden L. Mills, former Secretary of the Treasury and grandson of D.O. Mills, a year earlier on October 11, 1937 may have been a large factor. In late September, 1938, he submitted his resignation.

Since 1886, Frank Murphy had been in the employ of various Mills' organizations and during the past 17 years served as vice-president in charge of the V&T. In addition, he supervised the closure of two Mills Estate subsidiaries, the El Dorado Wood & Flume Co. and the Carson & Tahoe Lumber & Fluming Co. He also inaugurated and ran the Virginia-Truckee Transit Co., a wholly-owned trucking and passenger business, while finding time to grow a magnificent garden [according to his long-time friend the late Jay C. Robinson] behind his home (now Adele's Restaurant) in Carson City.

In one of Murphy's last letters to V&T President Hartman, he acknowledged all the courtesies and kindness shown and the happiness of their association. Said Murphy: "It has been pleasant, interesting and at times arduous experience," and he hoped Hartman "would realize with what poignant regret this happy employment is ended. May God's richest blessings be showered upon you and to those who survive to perpetuate the worthy Mills' name." Six months later Frank E. Murphy, employee and official of the V&T for 51 years, passed away.

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An earlier view of the Murphy home.

# HISTORY EXPO '89

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS - 4/7/89

**May 19**      **Changing Gallery Opening - "600 N. Carson Street: From Mint to Museum", 6-8 p.m.**

**May 20-21**      **International Museum Day & Nevada State Museum's 50th Birthday**

Participants: William F. Harrah Automobile Museum, Brewery Arts Center, Carson City Children's Museum, Nevada State Parks, Wilbur D. May Museum, No. Lake Tahoe Historical Society, Churchill Co. Museum (Fallon), Lahontan Brass Quintet (Rick Dawson)Brewery Arts Center, Fred Andreasen (single-jack demo), Joe Moore (flint-knapping demo), horse & buggy rides, Jeff Hunt (silversmith), Model-A's, classic cars, Bill Burleigh (mountain man), David Doty (live rattlesnakes), John Hunt (western artist), bagpipers, quilters, Sierra Stars western swing dancers, Bewery Arts Center, buckaroo illustrator, minting of silver and bronze commemorative coins, Putsy-Putsy (small engine) Club.

Rededication ceremony with Governor Miller and community dignitaries on Sunday (Governor's presence not confirmed until April).

Not yet confirmed: American Indian dancers, basketmakers, beadworkers, Basque dancers

**May 22**      **Lecture - Nevada State Museum Auditorium - 7 p.m.**  
Preservation of Native American Tradition in Nevada (not confirmed)

**May 23**      **Lecture - Nevada State Museum Auditorium - 7 p.m.**  
Nevada Heritage and Its Preservation - A discussion of wild fires and their effect on Nevada's environment.

**May 24**      **Lecture - Nevada State Museum Auditorium - 7 p.m.**  
Nevada's Unique Architectural Heritage (not confirmed)

**May 25**      **Lecture - Nevada State Museum - 7 p.m.**  
Virginia City: A case study (not confirmed)

**May 26**      **Lecture - Nevada State Museum - 7 p.m.**  
Nevada's railroad heritage (not confirmed)

**May 27-29**      **Nevada State Railroad Museum Antique Transportation Fair**

Participants: Nevada State Railroad Musem (steam-up of V&T locomotive #22, V&T locomotive #25, Nevada State Railroad Museum locomotive #8), Northern County Logging Inter. Assoc. (Falk locomotive and 4-wheel flat car) - Eureka, CA, Northern Nevada Live Steamers & L.A. Live Steamers (miniature steam locomotives), Bob Shields (1916 CASE Steam Tractor), Churchill County Museum (1909 Kelly-Springfield 12-ton steam roadroller), Carson City Rotary Club (food concession), Warren Engine Co. (antique fire equipment demo), Carson City Railroad Association Mills Park railway motorcar.

For more information call : John Ballweber, 885-4810

## NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM **1989 OPERATING SCHEDULE**

Open Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays, and Holidays, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

MAY 26 THROUGH OCTOBER 29

### **STEAM-UPS:**

May 27, 28 & 29 (Sat., Sun. & Mon.) V&T engines No.22 & No. 25, and NSRM No. 8. *Memorial Day Weekend*  
June 17 & 18 (Sat. & Sun.) NSRM No. 8  
July 1 & 2 (Sat. & Sun.) V&T No. 25 and/or NSRM No. 8  
July 15 & 16 (Sat. & Sun.) NSRM No. 8  
August 5 & 6 (Sat. & Sun.) V&T No. 25  
August 19 & 20 (Sat. & Sun.) NSRM No. 8  
Sept. 2, 3 & 4 (Sat., Sun. & Mon.) V&T No. 25 and/or NSRM No. 8. *Labor Day Weekend*  
Oct. 28 & 29 (Sat. & Sun.) V&T No. 22 & No. 25, and NSRM No. 8

### **MOTOR CAR:**

Friday, Saturday & Sunday (except during steam-ups)  
MEMORIAL DAY - LABOR DAY 9:00 - 4:00

September — Friday by appointment only (School tours, etc.)  
Saturday & Sunday 12:00 - 4:00

October — By appointment only (School tours, etc.)

### **FARES:**

STEAM TRAIN RIDE — Adult \$2.50	•	Child \$1.00 (under 12)
MOTOR CAR RIDE — Adult \$1.00	•	Child .50

Children five years-old and under ride free when accompanied by parents.

### **SCHEDULE AND EQUIPMENT SUBJECT TO CHANGE**

For more information, phone (702) 885-4810 during weekdays, 885-5168 during weekends  
when Museum is open.

**NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM**

Capitol Complex  
Carson City, Nevada 89710

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