

SEP 30 2015

STATE PUBLICATIONS

SAGEBRUSH HEADLIGHT

Vol. 35, No. 1
119th Ed.

[121]

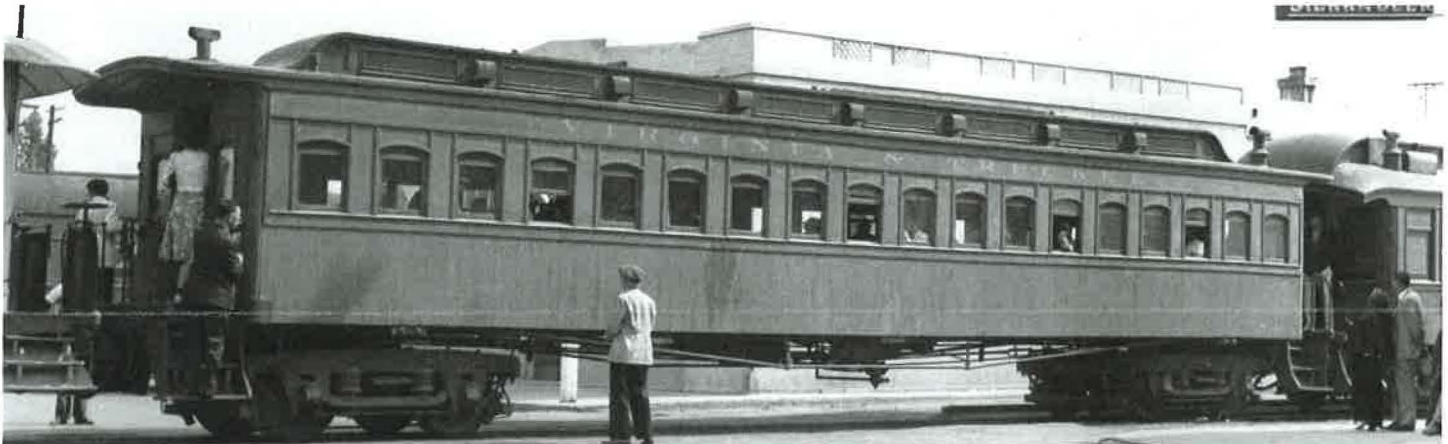
THE NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM
An Agency of the Division of Museums & History
Nevada Department of Tourism & Cultural Affairs

Spring 2013

Restoration v. Preservation

Virginia & Truckee Coach No. 17

By Lara Mather, Curator of Education



Coach No. 17 in Reno, June 5, 1938. Gerald Best photo. Daun Bohall copy negative, NSRM.

Last summer, a study of the feasibility of restoring V&T coach no. 17 was carried out to help the museum determine the car's future. This study documents the complex history of the car. The oldest in our collection, it was built by the Central Pacific Railroad in 1868 in their Sacramento shops and made available to four federal commissioners who were to certify that standards specified in the Pacific Railroad Acts were being met during construction of the Central Pacific. The car next carried CPRR President Leland Stanford, California's golden spike and Nevada's silver spike to Promontory, Utah, for the joining of Central Pacific and Union Pacific rails on May 10, 1869.

From 1869 to 1875 the car served CPRR executives, most often Charles Crocker. In this period the CPRR modified the car with air brakes and Miller platforms. Civil engineer Ezra Miller had patented his design in 1865. It replaced the original platform, which was lower than the car floor and not an integral part of the car's structure. The Miller platform became part of the main frame, giving added protection in the event of a collision.

After the V&T gained ownership of it in December 1875 the car underwent 984 hours of work at the Carson City Shops. Renamed *Bonanza*, it served officials such as V&T Superintendent Henry M. Yerington and Senator William Sharon. In 1878, as the fortunes of the V&T began to decline, the executive car was converted to a day coach labeled No. 17. It remained in that configuration for sixty years.

With V&T passenger service diminishing, coach no. 17 was rarely used after 1924. In September 1938, however, it was brought out of retirement to participate in a California-Nevada Railroad Historical Society excursion from Reno to Virginia City and back. Later that year Twentieth-Century Fox Studios purchased it and other V&T equipment. In 1939, the coach appeared in its first film, *Jesse James*.

Continued on Page 2

NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM

2180 South Carson St.
Carson City, NV 89701
775-687-6953

www.NevadaCulture.org/museums

Open 9:00 to 5:00

Fridays through Mondays

Admission: \$6. Children under 18, and members of the Friends of the Nevada State Railroad Museum, admitted FREE.



NEVADA
DEPARTMENT OF
TOURISM AND
CULTURAL AFFAIRS



The museum is an agency of the
State of Nevada

Brian Sandoval, Governor
Nevada Department of

Tourism & Cultural Affairs

Claudia Vecchio, Director

Division of Museums & History

Peter D. Barton, Administrator

Nevada State Railroad Museum

Frank Ackerman, Museum Director

Vacant, Curator of Education
and Editor **Sagebrush Headlight**

The Nevada State Railroad Museum publishes the **Sagebrush Headlight** newsletter three times a year. The Friends of the Nevada State Railroad Museum distribute it as a membership benefit.

Board of Trustees, Friends of the Nevada State Railroad Museum

President: Ron Allen—2014

frontieradjusters@pyramid.net

Vice President: Barry Simcoe—2015

barrysimcoe@sbcglobal.net

Secretary: Kevin Owens—2013

vntsandman@clearwire.net

Treasurer: Larry Knack—2015

knackworst@charter.net

Ken Allen—2014

Daryl DiBitonto—2015

Matt Digangi—2013

Bill Kohler—2013

Mark Owens—2014

Terms of office end in December.

Address correspondence to:

Friends of NSRM

PO Box 1330

Carson City, NV 89702

2013 Spring/Summer Operations

Starting **May 11**, TC&GB Ry. **Edwards Motor Car no. 401** will operate every **Saturday & Sunday** through **September 29**, departing from Wabuska Depot, 10:00AM till 4:00PM, except when the McKeen Car or Steam Train is operating.

Edwards Car Fares: \$4; Children 4-11, \$2.

Steam Train Fares: \$6; Children 4-11, \$3.

Museum Admission/Train Ride combination tickets will be sold for Memorial Day and Labor Day weekends. **FNSRM Members ride half-fare** with Membership Card.

Memorial Day Weekend

May 25, 26 & 27: McKeen Motor Car

Fourth of July: McKeen Motor Car

Saturday/Sunday July 6 & 7: Steam Train

Labor Day Weekend

August 31, September 1 & 2: Steam Train

The 2013 *Sagebrush Headlight* will be published in April, August and November. **August items are due July 5.**

Continued from Page 1

Short Line Enterprises purchased the car, and moved it to Jamestown, California, in 1973. The car's film career ended with *Kenny Rogers as the Gambler* in 1980. NSRM acquired the car in 1988. Before it came to the museum, woodpeckers had pecked the holes in its sides that arouse the curiosity of our visitors. The birds embedded acorns in these holes to attract insects.

The feasibility study documented the car's current condition. Because of significant structural deterioration the body of the car sags visibly, the roof framing is broken in several places, the platforms sag and steps are missing from one end. Film studios added a partition and supports for the roof.

The car should be stabilized to arrest further decay. The acorns should be removed, so that rodents and insects no longer are attracted. Siding and flooring need to be removed so that the underframe and wall-framing can be documented. The study team (Peter Hansen, Randy Hees, Bill Withuhn and Kyle Wyatt) believe this car exemplifies early passenger-car construction on the West Coast, and much can be learned from an inspection of its inner structure.

Restoration of the car as the Central Pacific directors' car was considered. Photographs of that time document the exterior of the car, but not its interior. Records exist of items that were in the car, but none provide details as to their appearance. A lot of guesswork would be required, as would removal of all of the car's more recent historical fabric, if it were to be restored to this period.

Even less documentation was found for the V&T directors' car, of which there are no known photos. V&T records of the hours of modification work that the car underwent in the Carson City shops contain little descriptive information.

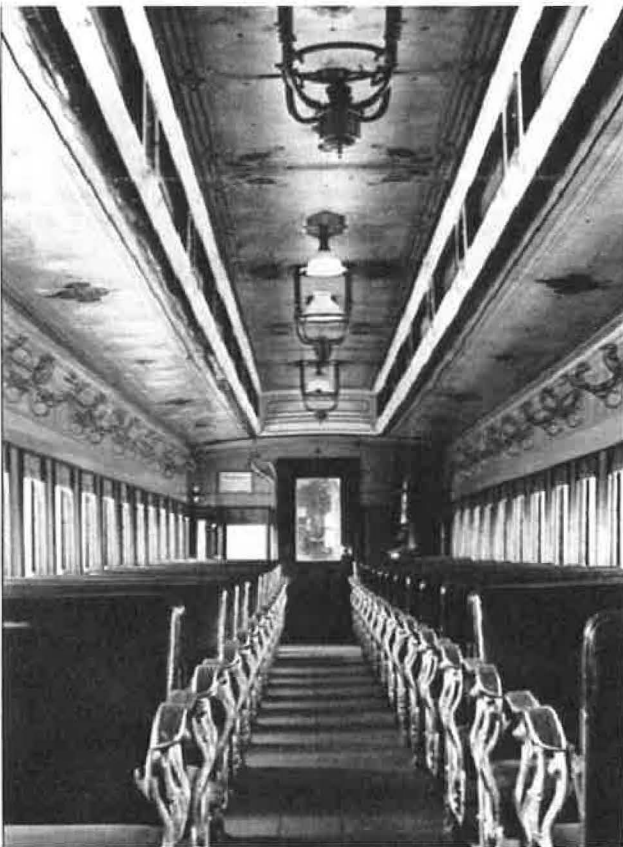
FNSRM President's Message

Spring is here. The tulip bulbs are starting to come out and the weather is getting nicer. In addition to the tulips, the tourists are also starting to come and visit the museum. This is one of the best times of the year.

The schedule will be getting busier as the next couple of months pass. The operations will begin May 11 with the regular motorcar weekends then the McKeen motorcar running on Memorial Day weekend. The first steam up is scheduled for July. As the time passes, more activities will start taking shape and the need for more volunteers will be necessary. So please, if you can spare some time, no matter in what capacity, your help will be needed and greatly appreciated. As always, the museum cannot function without your participation and your enthusiasm. In addition to the above, the Motorcar Training is also scheduled for mid April, so if you or anyone you know is interested in learning how to run the motorcar, please sign up.

As I write this, training sessions for all volunteers is scheduled for April 6, 2013 at 8:00 am, April 10, 2013 at 5:00 pm and on April 13, 2013 at 8:00 am. This year is different than past years, as all volunteers are required to attend one of the three sessions.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all who participate in the operation of the museum by volunteering. I know from personal experience that it is one of the greatest feelings of accomplishment and satisfaction known. So thanks to all of you and keep up the good work. See you at the museum. —Ronald J. Allen



Interior of V&T car no. 17 about 1938. NSRM.

restored to its most-famous role, when it carried Leland Stanford and the golden spike. In order to complete such a drastic restoration, all of its historic fabric from then on would be removed, however, and possibly destroyed in the process.

Besides being configured in four different ways during its career, the car underwent numerous upgrades and safety improvements in addition to regular maintenance. Although traces of each of the four chapters in its career exist, no one of them survives intact.

Its career as coach no. 17 represents the longest period in the car's history. The greatest amount of documentation and physical evidence survives from then. Modifications that would be needed for a restoration to this period are minor. The partition in the center of the car by would be removed and the car's framing repaired.

The car's current configuration most closely matches its 1902-1918 appearance, which would minimize costs of restoration. It retains its Tower couplers and air brakes installed between 1892 and 1898. The seats, perhaps with their 1909 cushions in place, would remain.

Although the option to represent the car as a 1938 – 1983 Hollywood film prop might interest the general public, it would not support the museum's mission.

The remaining option is to stabilize the car in its current condition, preserving the traces of each historical period, rather than restoring to one period and destroying traces of others. Photos, drawings, and one or more large-scale models would interpret the car's uses and physical evolution.

The final section of the feasibility study outlines possibilities for interpretation of the artifact. Studying the history of the car and documenting the changes it underwent will help us understand to what extent we can restore the car. Many fans of this car would like to see it

4216

NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM

2180 South Carson Street
Carson City, Nevada 89701-5999
775-687-6953
Address Service Requested

PRSRTSTD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Carson City, NV
89701
Permit No. 15



Virginia & Truckee Railroad coach no. 17 in June 2012. Its fictitious roadname dates from the car's movie career.