

**Inside this issue:**

Featured Article: Moving  
the Joe. Douglass

The Sheffield Velocipede

Message from Friends' 2  
President Barry Simcoe

Santa's Pajama Express 3

Message From the 6  
Director

# SAGEBRUSH HEADLIGHT

NEWSLETTER OF THE NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM

## Moving the Joe. Douglass

*By Chris de Witt*

The railroad museum is preparing a new exhibit to be installed in the Jacobsen Interpretive Center, the JIC, to celebrate the sesquicentennial anniversary of the driving of the golden spike at Promontory, Utah. One of the tasks to be completed for this new exhibit was the removal of the *Joe. Douglass* locomotive from its plinth at the north end of the JIC, so that we could utilize this space for the new exhibit.

*(Continued on page 4)*



Museum staff members carefully removed the *Joe. Douglass* from the Jacobsen Interpretive Center in preparation for a new exhibit.

## The Sheffield Velocipede

*By Wendell Huffman*

One of the recent changes in the Jacobsen Interpretive Center was the removal of the *Joe. Douglass* locomotive from the platform at the north end of the building and the standard gauging of that track. For the time being, we have installed the museum's yellow velocipede on that track.

*(Continued on page 6)*

*A velocipede, restored in 2006 by Robert Recks, is currently on display in the Jacobsen Interpretive Center.*



## VISIT THE MUSEUM

**Open 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
Thursday through Monday  
(closed Tuesday & Wednesday)**

Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day

### Museum Admission:

Adults 18 & Over - \$6.00  
Children (Under 18) - FREE  
Museum Members - FREE

## STEAM TRAIN & MOTORCAR RIDES

Rides run every weekend May through September with select dates in October, November, and December.

The complete 2019 operating schedule will be available soon at: [carsonrailroadmuseum.org](http://carsonrailroadmuseum.org)

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**Brenda Nebesky**, Interim Director

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**Peter Barton**, Administrator

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PO Box 1330  
Carson City, NV 89702



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RAILROAD MUSEUM**  
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Carson City, NV 89701  
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## Message from the President of the Friends of the NSRM, Barry Simcoe

Email: [barrysimcoe@sbcglobal.net](mailto:barrysimcoe@sbcglobal.net)

Phone: (775) 379-1353

WOW. We just had a fantastic end to a fantastic year. This year's Santa Train was, in my opinion, the best ever and believe it or not I've been on all of them. The trains were full, the customers were happy, and the weather, although cold, was good. I want to personally thank all the volunteers; in the depot, in the museum, taking pictures, and on the train crew. This is our signature event and we did it **spectacularly!**

We had a better than normal interest in membership on the Board this year. We actually had enough interest to have an election. When we lost Howie Foster his wife Carol expressed an interest in filling out the balance of his term and the Board decided to appoint her to the Board. She started off running and has not slowed down. When one of our Board members resigned Verne Horton expressed an interest in joining the Board. Verne has previously served as President of the Friends and has been a crew chief. In addition Verne received the fourth highest vote total in the election. During the December meeting we voted to appoint Verne to the Board and he accepted. His expertise and input will be a welcome addition to the Board.

I appreciate all your support for the Friends and for the museum. We could not do what we do without each and every one of you. Please call me if you have any questions or concerns.

Have a Wonderful New Year.

*Thanks,  
Barry*

**Note: FNSRM Board Meetings are scheduled for February 4 & April 1, 2019. All members of the Friends organization are encouraged to attend.**



## Santa's Pajama Express *by Rebecca Bevans and Alex Bevans*

The train blows the last whistle of the day, but the fun has only begun. The general public begin to leave, everyone happy and satisfied. After everyone is gone, Santa's helpers get to work, cleaning down every inch of the inside of the 10 car, from top to bottom! By the time they're completed, the entire train car is clean. But soon, an odd thing starts to happen, people begin arriving. These people have some very precious children getting to take a very special train ride.

This special train is the Santa's Pajama Express, a run at the end of the day for children battling cancer. Because of their compromised immune systems, these children cannot be around the general public. They can no

longer play with friends, go to school, or partake in many family traditions, like riding the Santa Train. But three years ago, the Friends of the Nevada State Railroad Museum made it their mission to make these children's lives a little brighter. In partnership with the Northern Nevada Children's Cancer Foundation (NNCCF), they have done just that.

For the third year in a row, the Santa's Pajama Express runs the track circling the NSRM property. On the train, Santa gives out candy to the children and gifts donated by the community. The children and their families can sit and



(above) Santa Claus greets children riding the 2018 Santa's Pajama Express. (below) The children get a special treat by having an opportunity to take a look inside the cab of V&T locomotive No. 25. One of the children takes the fireman's seat to get an idea of what it is like to be a locomotive fireman. (photos courtesy of Off the Rails Photography)



talk with Santa, tell him what they would like for Christmas, take pictures, and enjoy their time on the train. The families laugh, and take pleasure in a family tradition that helps them feel "normal" at a time when life is far from that.

But it is not just the sick child that benefits from this special train ride. Their siblings and parents do as well. Autumn,

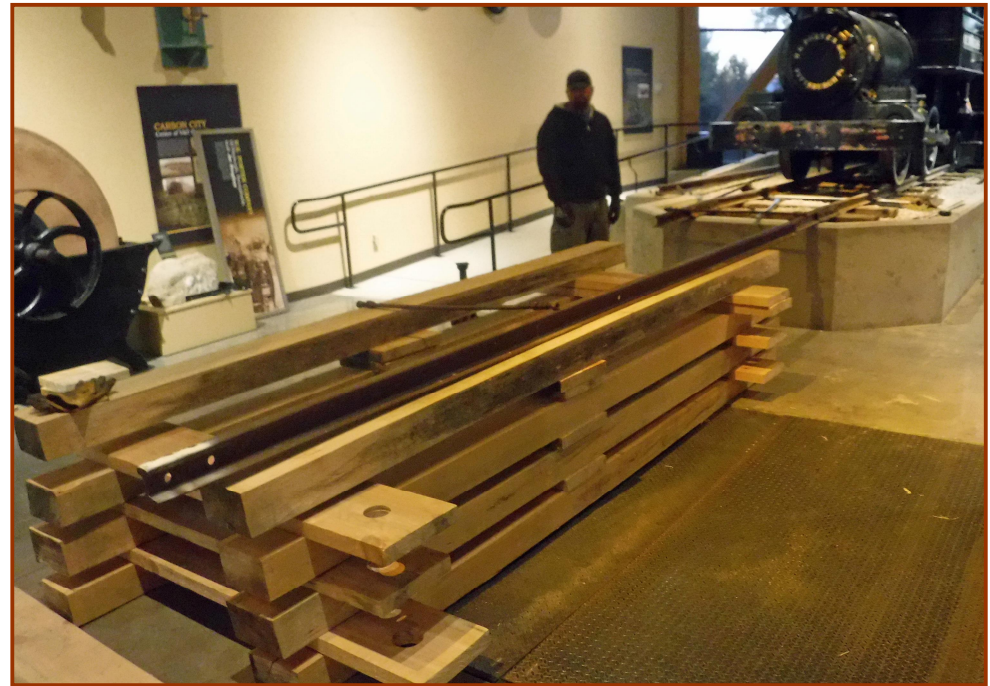
*(Continued on page 7)*



## Moving the Joe. Douglass *(continued from page 1)*

The *Joe. Douglass* was placed on the plinth during the installation of the previous exhibit several years ago. This was accomplished through the assistance of Industrial Logistics Services of Carson City who have a very large fork lift. The effort required that the east track be vacated of rolling stock and the tracks be filled in with wood blocks to provide a level surface upon which the fork-lift could operate. The locomotive was picked up, driven into the JIC and gently set upon its plinth with this forklift.

Today the east track can't be vacated of rolling stock and so the installation process can't be reversed. A different approach to moving the locomotive was needed. This presented a challenge, which the restoration shop was prepared to undertake. A plan was formulated wherein a crib, or a stack of timbers, would be made on the floor of the JIC at the west end of the plinth track. Rails would be



*Museum staff built cribbing to move the Joe. Douglass from the plinth to the narrow gauge tracks on the west track of the JIC.*

set on the crib upon which the *Joe. Douglass* could be rolled. When the locomotive was on the crib individual timbers would be removed sequentially thereby lowering the locomotive to the JIC floor.

We are fortunate in that we recently received a shipment of new timbers from the California Department of Forestry which were just about perfect in dimension and quantity for this project. On a Tuesday, a day not open to the public, the Restoration Shop staff, the

Buildings and Grounds staff, and the Curator of History stacked the crib and set the rails. There re-

sulted a short distance from the permanent rails on the plinth and the rails on the crib. Using

*Museum staff used jacks to lift the locomotive slightly to remove the timbers and slowly lower the Joe. Douglass to the next set of timbers.*





short “bridge” rails to span the gap from the permanent rails and the crib rails the set up was completed. The locomotive was rolled easily onto the crib by hand where it was secured.

Using four mechanical jacks we picked up the top layer of cribbing and the locomotive. When the crib and locomotive were just clear of the timbers below we removed that one tier of timbers and lowered the locomotive down to the next level. Repeating this procedure the locomotive was slowly and carefully lowered to the floor.

Of course, we could not remove the tier of timbers that the jacks were lifting so we ended this procedure with the locomotive on rails on one tier of timber, about 10 inches above the floor. We then brought in our forklift and spun the entire assemblage, timbers, rails, and locomotive, 90 degrees to line up the *Joe. Douglass* with the west track narrow gauge rails. The finely



waxed floor of the JIC added to the ease of this maneuver. Using a pair of rails that tapered to a point on one end we ramped the locomotive off of the timbers and onto the west track of the JIC and rolled it outside of the building.

The *Joe. Douglass* was switched into the Annex and the timbers picked up and returned to storage.

Wendell Huffman changed the track on the plinth from narrow gauge to standard gauge, preparing for the installation of the next exhibit. The plinth currently displays a velocipede on the newly

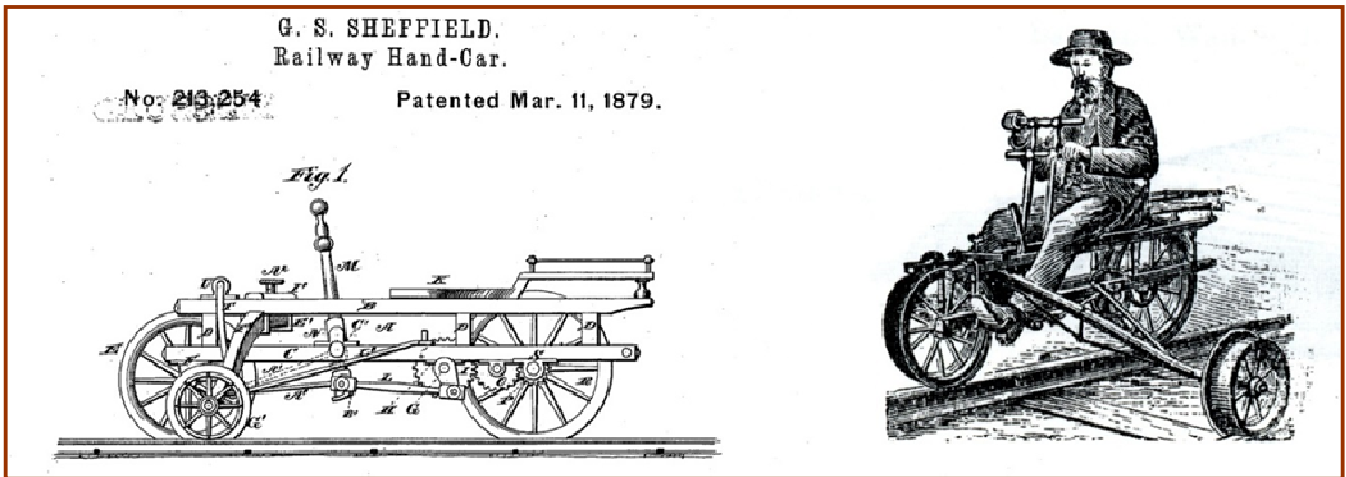
re-gauged rails.

The operation went smoothly and quickly through team work and cooperation. Thanks to all who participated in the project. 🚂

(above) Museum staff used the forklift to rotate the *Joe. Douglass* 90 degrees to line up the locomotive with the narrow gauge track in the JIC. (below) Next, the museum staff installed rails with tapered points to meet with rails of the west track in the JIC. Then, museum staff pulled the *Joe. Douglass* onto the west track with the forklift.



## The Sheffield Velocipede *(continued from Page 1)*



Both to assure safety and reliable operation, a railroad track requires frequent and diligent inspection. For this, railroads relied on the solitary track walker. However, if a repair required more than a single man could accomplish with his maul, some way was needed to carry an extra man and other tools to the trouble as rapidly possible, on a vehicle that could be gotten out of the way of an approaching train quickly. The three-wheel pump car was one of the solutions developed. In North America, these three wheeled hand cars are generally called “velocipedes”, which literally means foot-powered.

George S. Sheffield, a cabinet maker living near Three Rivers, Michigan, is often credited with the invention of the velocipede in 1877, and while his company built most of them, there were examples dating back nearly twenty years earlier. The Buda Co. of Harvey, Illinois and the Kala-

mazoo (Michigan) Manufacturing Co. also built velocipedes.

Weighing less than 150 pounds, the three-wheeled track cars are easier to operate and get off the track than four-wheeled cars. Accordingly, they were favored by railroad employees who worked alone and needed few tools, such as track inspectors, switch maintainers, and telegraph linemen. On the other hand, the three-wheeled cars derail easily and cannot back up.

The museum’s yellow Sheffield velocipede is a reconstruction utilizing the steel and iron parts from a burned velocipede found along the Western Pacific Railroad right-of-way between Reno and Reno Junction. It was restored in 2006 by Robert Recks of San Diego, California, noted authority on the history and restoration of velocipedes. He donated it to

(above) George S. Sheffield received a patent for the velocipede in 1879. Shortly thereafter he established the George S. Sheffield Company to manufacture the velocipedes. Eventually, Sheffield expanded his business to include other small track cars and railroad appliances. Charles H. Morse of Fairbanks, Morse & Company purchased Sheffield’s business in 1888. The line of railroad maintenance products was added to the Fairbanks-Morse catalog.

the Nevada State Railroad Museum that same year.

The museum has another velocipede believed to have belonged to the Virginia & Truckee. It was owned by longtime V&T aficionado Graham Hardy and was restored by his step-son, Joe Curtis, who donated to the museum in 2016. And, there is also an unrestored velocipede found in the desert near Austin, Nevada. Because of that provenance, and the fact that it was never painted, it is believed to have belonged to the narrow-gauge Nevada Central, which ran between Battle Mountain and Austin. It was donated to the museum in 2008. 🚂



## Santa's Pajama Express *(continued from page 3)*

one of the moms, told us, "We've been riding the Santa Train every year for probably 12 years, and look forward to this holiday tradition. When our son got sick, so many of our traditions have fallen by the wayside so that we can focus on keeping him healthy. It was so wonderful to have the train sanitized and accessible to immunocompromised children, not just for my sick son, but for my other two healthy children who have lost so much as well. The whole family felt the spirit of the season in our continued tradition! We are so grateful to NNCCF and the Nevada State Railroad Museum for the gift of normalcy this year when very

*A child gazes out the window of V&T Coach 10 as Santa's Pajama Express circles the museum. Santa's Pajama Express for immunocompromised children has become an annual event at NSRM. (photo courtesy of Off the Rails Photography)*



little is normal. Also, being able to have so much one on one time with such a jolly Santa was a memory we'll treasure."

For over 30 years, the Santa Train has brought joy to so many families, and the Santa's Pajama Express brings joy to families that

need it the most. It provides a safe space where families can spend time together, children can get a unique chance to see Santa, and kids battling cancer can feel like kids again. A huge "thank you" to all the volunteers and staff at the NSRM for all they do to provide this wonderful opportunity for our community. 🙏

## Message from the Director *(by Daniel Thielen)*

2018 closed on a high note! Santa Train was the most successful ever. It is so rewarding to be part of such a great group of volunteers. Time and time again I witnessed our people working to ensure every visitor had a wonderful time. Happiness was the goal and happiness was achieved. A great deal of effort was taken to reduce the wait times for those to see Santa on the ride. The crowd was steady but the line was short. This was a tremendous end to our steaming season. My thanks to the volunteers for the many hours you provided to the mu-

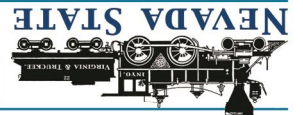
seum. My thanks in particular go to the Board of the Friends of the Nevada State Railroad Museum. We have had a great relationship. I have come to value the counsel and help that the Board provides. This is a wonderful group of committed volunteers that have dedicated their efforts to the development and support of the museum and its programs. They have taken that goal seriously and I truly appreciate the work they provide.

The museum received an unrestricted donation from the Silberstein Trust for \$200,000.

This wonderful gift will be used to protect and maintain our collection and develop exhibits. We are grateful to the Vera Silberstein family for including the museum in their estate planning.

The museum is developing an aggressive 2019 season. The sesquicentennial of the Transcontinental Railroad is in May and we have terrific talks planned. Check our Facebook page for details. We will have a reenactment of the driving of the Golden Spike with the *Dayton* and *Inyo*. In addition, Ironhorse Rail Camp is scheduled for Father's Day and is a great gift to your dad. 🙏

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For registration or more information, contact:  
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