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**Fall 2020**  
145th Edition

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**THE NEVADA STATE  
RAILROAD MUSEUM**  
An Agency of the Nevada  
Department of Tourism  
and Cultural Affairs

# SAGEBRUSH HEADLIGHT

NEWSLETTER OF THE NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM

## Female Crew Operates *Suffrage Special Train*

By Cristol Digangi

Benjamin Franklin once said, "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn." That is exactly what our volunteers did while preparing for the *Suffrage Special Event*. They were involved in every step and in every job during the museum's first ever, female dominate, steam crew. The museum's female volunteers stepped in to learn and get involved.

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NSRM volunteer Amy Kohler (left) and NSRM staff member Cristol Digangi participate in a training session with V&T locomotive No. 25 prior to the *Suffrage Special* event in August 2020. (Photo by John Gaffney)

## Message from the Director

By Daniel Thielen

As we enter the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the pandemic, we are hopeful that we will get back to normal. The Museum has now returned to 50% visitor capacity and we see some light at the end of the tunnel. Our staff and most of our volunteers have weathered the pandemic without becoming infected, and

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Visitors explore the McKeen Motor Car on display outside the Annex. Attendance continues to improve off the lows during the pandemic.

## VISIT THE MUSEUM

**Open 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
Thursday through Monday**

Closed Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day

### Museum Admission:

Adults 18 & Over - \$8.00  
Children (Under 18) - FREE  
Museum Members - FREE

## STEAM TRAIN & MOTORCAR RIDES

Rides run select weekends May through December.

The complete 2021 operating schedule is available at:  
[carsonrailroadmuseum.org](http://carsonrailroadmuseum.org)

## STATE OF NEVADA

**Steve Sisolak**, Governor

## DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

**Brenda Scolari**, Director

## DIVISION OF MUSEUMS AND HISTORY

**Myron Freedman**, Interim Administrator

## NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM, CARSON CITY

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PO Box 1330  
Carson City, NV 89702



**NEVADA STATE  
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## Message from the President of the Friends of the NSRM, Barry Simcoe

Welcome to 2021. It looks like things are starting to open in Nevada. Restrictions are being eased; more people are getting vaccinated and hopefully we can see a return to a more normal world in the future.

We are resuming our events committee meetings. Look in the Monday Morning Line to see when.

Our Rail Camp is full for this year. This has been a great event for both the Friends and the museum in the past and should be successful again this year. Help is always needed for these events and you will be notified where and when volunteers will be needed if you plan to help us out.

Board elections will be coming soon. I encourage everyone interested to think about running. Three of the current Board members will be termed out after this term and will need to be replaced. As I have mentioned before the Board works closely with the museum to formulate the direction of the museum.

Thank you again for all the work you have done helping the museum be the best it can be.

Email: [barrysimcoe@sbcglobal.net](mailto:barrysimcoe@sbcglobal.net)  
Phone: (775) 379-1353

*Thanks,  
Barry*

**FNSRM Board Meetings are scheduled for June 7, 2021 & August 2, 2021. All members of the Friends organization are encouraged to attend.**



## Message from the Director

(continued from page 1)



NSRM Volunteer Mark Reese chats with museum visitors.

we are looking forward to our Summer of 2021 operating season.

We received a large donation from the Vera Silberstein Trust of

\$372,000. We are grateful to be remembered in this fashion. We are careful with these funds and will use them for curation, interpretation, and preservation. This is an amazing gift.

We are also well into this new legislative session. Many of you have made your voices heard as we discuss the weighty matters of heritage preservation. The Nevada Northern Rail-

road has been making a tremendous effort to seize the East Ely Depot Museum. We are careful in preserving the original fabric of the artifacts that we

are given in trust and we do not take this issue lightly. As such, we are opposed to the transfer. Thank you for raising your voice for the protection of artifacts.

As we look forward to the summer of 2021, we have a schedule that is exciting. Ironhorse Rail Camp is already solidly booked and the crew is ready to take on some additional challenges.



Visitors admire our beautiful V&T locomotive Inyo.

## With smile.amazon.com, Support the Museum at No Cost to You

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## *Suffrage Special* (continued from page 1)



NSRM Volunteer Cary Ingbar signals to the locomotive crew to proceed.

When I originally asked Cary Ingbar, a long-time volunteer, if she was interested in joining us for this event she replied with excitement, “With the switches and stuff?”. She learned the switches and much more during training and some shadowing during the event. It was about time she helped make some of the dirt and marks that she is always cleaning.

Training on the railroad operations took several days. First, the women learned about safe railroad operations, including the rules and how to give proper hand signals. Once together for initial safety training, confidence built as all the ladies joined together. Then, the women learned how to throw switches, couple cars, operate the steam locomotive, and other aspects of railroading.

Caroline Fallu is a brand-new volunteer. Having translated the museum’s exhibits into French, this was a unique opportunity for her to receive hands on training with the museum’s railroad equipment. “I had no idea I had a marked interest for trains until I changed switches, coupled and uncoupled a wagon (coach), and gave driving the locomotive a try,” Caroline said. Bill Kohler was one of the many veteran volunteers that took the time to come in to work with the new volunteers individually and in small groups. “The ladies who participated showed that they were willing to learn new skills and were also willing to take on jobs that were difficult and dirty,” said Bill. There was no hesitation with any of the new volunteers. We had brand new volunteers, as well as some who were only new to the steam crew. As we know, our volunteers are passionate about the history and their work. We appreciate every one of them.

The *Suffrage Special* Event would not have been possible without the Nevada Women’s History Project. Patti Bernard of the NWHP did a lot of the initial research

on the suffrage history and how it linked to our equipment. Patti visited Special Collections at the University of Nevada, Reno, to browse the Virginia & Truckee Collection. There, she discovered in the train registers that the museum had most of the railroad equipment used on the original *Suffrage Special* in its collection. Patti contacted the museum and the idea of the *Suffrage Special* Event was born. The NWHP and NSRM had the ability to connect written history to real artifacts in action and that is exactly what we did. Patti was “thrilled in the camaraderie and enthusiasm that existed between

(Continued on page 6)



Volunteer Breana Owens (left) gets soaked as she fills No. 25’s tender with Volunteers Rick Bieniek (center) and Caroline Fallu (right).



## What Was the *Suffrage Special*?

Nevada Governor Emmet Boyle was slated to sign the bill giving Nevada's endorsement of ratification of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the United States Constitution on Saturday February 7, 1920. To accommodate Reno-area suffragists who might want to witness this event, the Virginia & Truckee modified the equipment on the regular train. More powerful locomotive No. 25 was substituted for the regular No. 11, and cars No. 4 and 17 were added to the north-bound train when it paused at Carson City on the afternoon of February 6<sup>th</sup>. However, only 30 or so enthusiasts showed up on Saturday morning, so only one extra car was used behind the regular consist of cars No. 13, 14, 3, and 18. The train sheets do not disclose which car was used, but the *Reno Evening Gazette* reported that the suffragists decorated their car with a 40-foot banner that proclaimed "Suffrage Special". Of the two extra cars, only car No. 17 was long enough to carry a banner of that length. The train departed Reno at 8:50 Saturday morning and arrived in Carson City at 10:05.

Remarkably, all of the equipment used in this train still exist in some form. Car No. 4 has been restored and is regularly exhibited in the Jacobson Interpretative Center. Unrestored express car No. 14 and passenger car No. 18 are stored under cover in the museum Annex. Mail car No. 13 is located on C Street in Virginia City. And locomotive No. 25 is regu-



Nevada Governor Emmett Boyle poses with suffragists on the steps of the Nevada State Capitol (above). The *Reno Evening Gazette* reported on the disappearance of the "Suffrage Special" banner on February 10, 1920 (below).

larly used at the museum. No. 17, the car actually used by the suffragists, is unrestored, but it is presently on exhibit in the Interpretative Center because of its prior association with the completion of the Pacific Railroad in 1869. It is noteworthy that the same car that participated in the completion of the Pacific Railroad in 1869 was also involved in extending the right to vote to women in 1920. And the museum is fortunate to have this piece of American history in its collection.

The 40-foot banner that the suffragists put on the special car itself became part of the story. The suffragists had actually nailed the banner to the car. While the women were at the capitol building watching the ceremony, railroad officials had the banner removed while



the car was waiting at the depot. The conductor was left with the task of pointing out to the ladies that they had no right to deface private property. Unfortunately, the original banner has long since disappeared. 🚂

## *Suffrage Special* (continued from page 5)



The Suffrage Special crew consisted of (Left to Right): Cary Ingbar, Amanda Thompson, Amy Kohler, Cristol Digangi, Breana Owens, Terry Bunkowski, and Caroline Fallu. (Photo by Adam Michalski)

NWHP and train museum staff in producing this event, and (the) joy in witnessing the excitement of the public in learning about Nevada's suffrage history."

The day of the event the new volunteers were beyond excited. Women staffed every area of the event, from our depot agent Nancy Humphries, to an all-female cab crew with Amy Kohler training in the engineer's seat. Amy is a long-term volunteer, and she is a third-generation volunteer. "Volunteering on the *Suffrage Special* was a once in a lifetime experience," Amy says looking back, "It is not often that we get to take the time to remember history in such a

unique way. Having running steam engines in and of itself is a fantastic preservation of history, but to use the same equipment used for the original *Suffrage Special* was truly amazing. Another important part of the day for me was getting to learn from the other women around me to make the day successful." Many of the visitors appreciated seeing women operating the steam train, which was something not lost on our female crew members. "I felt distinctly empowered by the fact that an all-female crew was participating in the commemoration of such an important historical milestone," said Caroline. "The *Suffrage Special Event* was a great way to reinforce the fact that representation matters."

This event brought the knowledge of the original *Suffrage Special* to many of people who may have never known about it otherwise. Some riders came dressed up and ready to share history while others left with some new information. The teamwork of this event is what made it truly spectacular. Mona Reno of the Nevada Women's Project said, "I want to thank the Nevada State Railroad Museum and the Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs for the opportunity to partner on this re-creation of an historical event in Nevada women's suffrage history." The *Suffrage Special Event* was a unique event, full of high energy, education, and empowerment. 🚂



## Tours Now Available Online

By Adam Michalski



Screenshot of the homepage for NSRM's online app.

The Nevada State Railroad Museum has added some new components to its exhibit *The Pacific Railroad: What a Difference it Made* to make it more accessible to the public during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Nevada State Museums have partnered with online audio tour provider, OnCell, to deliver audio, images, and text tours of the exhibit.

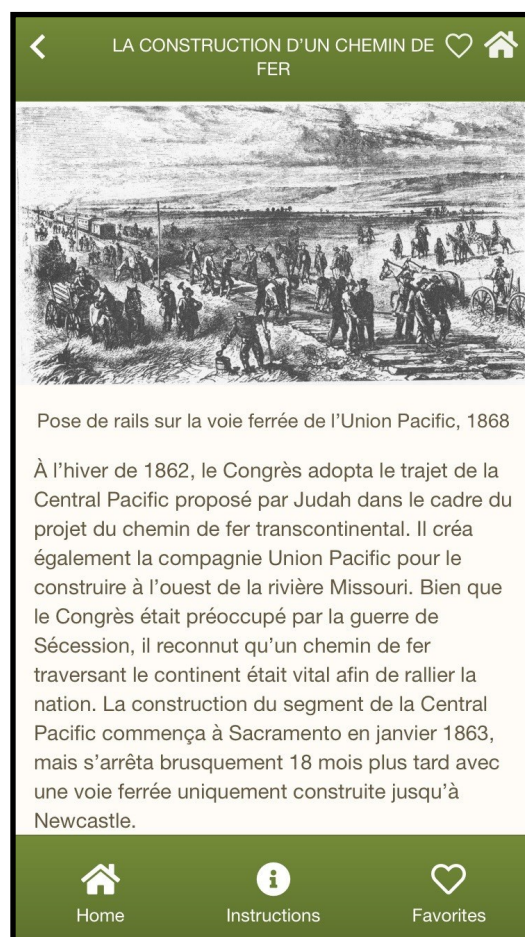
Visitors who are visually impaired or would like to listen to the tour instead of reading the text panels now have the option of an audio tour of the *Pacific Railroad* exhibit. Each text panel has a recording of the text read by a museum curator along with an image and the panel's text.

Tu parles Français? In addition to the audio tour, the exhibit's text panels have been translated into French. The text of the exhibit was translated by museum volunteer, Caroline Fallu, who is a native French speaker. This was no small task, since Caroline had to become familiar with American railroad parlance written in English and find a way to translate it for a francophone audience. She did an amazing job with the translation and we believe francophone visitors will appreciate the effort. Also, this tour gives the museum an opportunity to reach out to an audience that may be deficient with English, but is proficient with French. The text is available on OnCell under "Visites en français."



Phone app icon.

Check out the bar at the bottom of this page to learn more on where to find the museum's online tours. 🚂



An example of the Pacific Railroad exhibit in French.

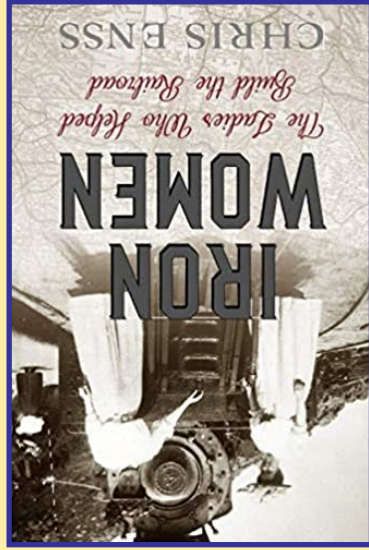
## Where do you find the online tours?

There are two ways you can access the audio tour and the exhibit text in French. You can download the Nevada State Museums app on your cell phone and click on the Nevada State Railroad Museum, Carson City, button to find the tours. Also, you can go to the Nevada State Museums OnCell website: <https://nevadastatemuseums.ocell.com/en/museums-109362.html>. Check in often, as other online tours are in the works for 2021.

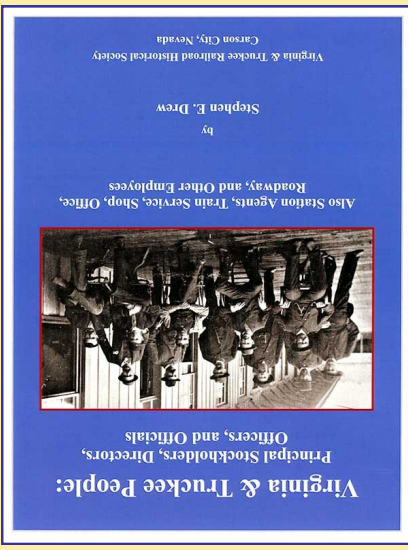
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