

# SAN DIEGO ELECTRIC RAILWAY ASSOCIATION



## TROLLEY LINES

San Diego Electric  
Railway Association  
DBA San Diego  
Electric Railway Co.  
PO Box 89068  
San Diego, CA 92138  
(619) 474-4400

August 2010

Check us out at our  
web site:

[www.sdera.org](http://www.sdera.org)

## New Depot Yard Nears Completion!



National City committed to integrating the Depot into the Marina Gateway redevelopment effort and they've really delivered! The dirt, dust, and heavy equipment are slowly turning into a park-like mall that showcases our Depot.

While we have watched our parking lot disappear into mounds of dirt and the old Harrison Ave. and West 23rd St. disappear in ruts and steel plating, crews were aiming for a friendlier, more pedestrian accessible area with no places for large 18 wheel trucks to park over the weekend. The contractor installed new wiring for our sign at the corner of Bay Marina Drive and Marina Way for an upcoming re-lighting. West 23rd St. now guides visitors in both directions with wide sidewalks and palm trees. Harrison St. has flat, paved areas for handicapped parking. The new decomposed granite surface on what used to be our parking area will soon host some of our rolling stock as a calling card for hotel visitors and commuters on Interstate 5.

In a surprise move, the crossing signal that used to be on Cleveland Ave. has been moved to the entrance to the Depot. The lights and bell have been reconnected, and spot lights are installed on the back to light the Depot and make it really stand out at night!

(Continued on page 6)

### Inside this issue:

<i>Depot Yard Nears Completion</i>	1, 6
<i>PCC Car Project Update</i>	2
<i>President's Message</i>	3
<i>Welcome SDERA's New Librarian</i>	3
<i>George Geyer: Blue Flag Lifted</i>	3
<i>Herbie Rings Bell at NC Car Show</i>	7
<i>SDERy Centerfold</i>	4, 5
<i>Depot Featured in June Star News Article</i>	7
<i>Quiet on the Set! Trolleys Air on TV...</i>	7
<i>Upcoming Events</i>	<i>Back</i>

*Psst! Wanna Know a Secret?*

This newsletter is available in **color** on our website. See [www.sdera.org](http://www.sdera.org) and look on our Newsletters page.

*SDERA operates the historic National City Depot museum which is open Thursday through Sunday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Phone 619-474-4400.*

### San Diego Electric Railway Association, Inc.

- David Slater, President
- Tom Carnes, Vice President
- Chris Higgins, Secretary / Webmaster / Newsletter Editor
- Tom Matson, Treasurer / Docent & Membership Coordinator
- Directors: Jim Price, Mitch Beauchamp, Jeff Trimble, Jim Anderson, Steve Bovee
- Gift Shop Manager: Jim Anderson

## PCC Car Project Update

- Dave Slater, Project Manager

Now on the web at [www.sdera.org/sdvt](http://www.sdera.org/sdvt)

All but two correctly reupholstered seats should be installed in our first restored PCC Street Car, SDERy #529. Last week, in my sub job as Quality Assurance, I had 9 seats pulled and sent back to the upholstery shop and added 5 more seat bottoms that have the correct shape. The shop will also properly redo the seat back for the operator's chair. We will assemble that and bring it from the A Shop. The new LED Illuminator front destination sign has been installed and tested and works well. We are waiting for the new glass to be installed in the sign box. Currently, Sal Carini and Gil Cavasos installed a piece of Lexan to protect the delicate



Mike Ballard And Dave Slater examine a seat that needs upholstery work.  
Photos by Ron Sutch

mechanism. We will be using the original roll style destination sign on the side of the car. We have been doing some low voltage operation and testing on our latest PCC car #533 in the C Yard. The batteries have taken a full charge and are holding the charge! We have put them on our rotating charge schedule with all the rest of our current 5 car PCC fleet. We have gotten most of the low voltage systems to operate on this car as well, and that is a plus!

Over the years of my tenure as Project Manager of San Diego Vintage Trolley, I have put together a network of all major similar organizations for mutual benefit. This is working very well, for all concerned.

Member R. L. Thomas has very generously donated a complete maintenance manual for both G.E. as well as Westinghouse PCC cars! These copies are VERY expensive. One of them is ours, and the other is being presented to LRV Project Manager Ed Lindstrom. This donation is in memory of our dear friend, Art Aydelotte, who died last September. Thomas is a former long time Southern Pacific Locomotive Engineer and Coaster Locomotive Engineer. He is also Vice President of the El Paso, TX organization



that has 9 of the former San Diego cars. MANY THANKS, R. L.!!!

We have gotten donations of standard gauge PCC truck frames and axles, sans wheels, from our friends at the Western Railway Museum, via CEO Cameron Beach, and a truck, wheel, and axle, courtesy of Executive Director Molly Butterworth from the Museum of Transport in St. Louis, MO.

In other donation news, we are getting a set of door operating rods from SEPTA at Philadelphia to replace the ones that were missing from our latest arrival, former SEPTA PCC #2785, now SDERy #533. Two of the electric door operating motors were also removed before the car arrived here, and I contacted our friend John Engleman of the Baltimore Street Car Museum. He will likely get permission from their Board to donate two of these motors to us. These motors are unique to the SEPTA 2000 series cars.

Shipment of PCC 529's rebuilt trucks from Carlisle, PA, may be in the offing, according to contractor sources. PCC 529 is now outside on jacks, as the old shop trucks were rolled to the end of the track to make room for new high voltage cables that are being installed from the pantograph and down through the chase in the side wall to the area under the car where they will be hooked to the proper electrical connections, when the rebuilt trucks arrive.

Workers for this period are Sal Carini, Gil Cavasos, Dan Kelly, Dennis Frazier, Aaron Donovan, R.L. Thomas, Ron Sutch, Michael Ballard, Chuck Bencik, and of course, yours truly, Dave Slater.



Harry Mathis and Elsa Sevilla after an interview for "San Diego's Historic Places."

**Upcoming Work Party Dates:** Work Sessions are now being held Tuesday and Thursday (Saturday sessions have been suspended for now) from 10AM to 2PM. *Due to security requirements, please contact Dave Slater / 619-222-5442 for authorization to be on the Trolley grounds.*

## President's Message

Dave Slater

As many of you may know, we are still making major changes to the landscape. Due to the scope of the Marina Gateway construction project, our painting contractor, Lori Kaye, has, by mutual agreement, delayed until mid-August. She should then have unrestricted access to the entire building, and can move in her scaffolding and other materials and equipment needed for the repair and painting of the Depot. Her current job site schedule has been delayed somewhat due to the unusual cooler and damper weather conditions.

I have been juggling many items that need completion, and they will be apparent in the finished product. We had a full house at our last General Meeting, and look forward to seeing you at the August General Meeting. The great surge in attendance is due to the speakers, and their topics. We find that each topic tends to bring out different interest groups of our membership, and this is the idea: something for everyone. Thanks to Dave Puglisi for last month's presentation on the light rail work ahead for the Los Angeles area and Jim Price for our June presentation on Alaska's tourist railways. A special thanks to Tom Matson for scheduling these presenters and coordinating topics for our meetings.

We look forward to seeing you! Come early and catch up!

### Welcome SDERA's New Librarian

One of the key roles of any good museum is that of Librarian and we have had a vacancy here for years. New member Tom Sapien has offered to take on this important task. Tom worked for several years at the recently-closed Trains Are Good toy shop and has a background as a medical librarian. Welcome Tom and Thanks!

### Herbie Rings Bell at NC Car Show

Our VW streetcar on wheels, Herbie, made an annual appearance at the National City Car Show. Thanks to Chuck Bencik for driving to and from the show, Susan Walter for staffing, Hubert Jansen, Jim Anderson, Bill Steinmetz, Jeff Trimble, and Jason Ballard for helping with setup, teardown, and staffing, and Mike Quigg and Pete Person for loading materials.

### George Geyer: Blue Flag Lifted

Depot staff and visitors were glad to see that long time member and volunteer George Geyer was at the Depot this week. After several months of rehabilitation, George has recovered sufficiently to return home and is getting around much better!

After retirement, George had taken on Docent duty on Thursdays until his health forced him to stop. It took several volunteers to fill his shoes. While he will likely not be back to the Super Docent role, members and friends are glad to see him back to sharing his extensive knowledge of streetcar operations and San Diego history.

George Geyer goes through some historic photos with Elsa Sevilla during an interview for an upcoming TV show about the Depot. Photo by Ron Sutch





Sergio Lopez shows Dave Slater the operation of a Johnson Model D fare box, fare box, which is on display at the National City Depot. This box was donated to SDERA by President Slater years ago.  
Photos by Ron Sutch.



Car 529 sports a new LED destination sign as it prepares for its debut on the Silver Line.

The control panel with new communications and route selection equipment necessary to operate this historic car on San Diego Trolley tracks.





SDVT' PCC 530 sits at the MTS yard with SD Trolley's fleet, Coaster trains, and the Coronado bridge in the background. Photo taken June 11, 2010.



The safety catcher has been installed on car 529. See article in October 2008 issue, pages 4 and 5.

Photos by Ron Sutch - the Staff Photographer for the Vintage Trolley project who has been documenting much of the extensive efforts to "Bring Back The Magic."

## Depot Yard Nears Completion!

*(Continued from page 1)*

In recent days, a new concrete entrance has been poured to allow heavy cranes to come onto the property. To the south, a small gravel French Drain will keep us from having our usual rain water ponds in the way of our guests. A new wrought iron fence will be installed this month with a motorized gate - much to docents' delight! Posts for the new fence have already been installed. Our old crossbucks that greeted visitors since our opening have been reinstalled with concrete posts and a stone veneer. The gates will be mounted to these new posts.

Due to the region's economic conditions, National City's planned changes for the north side of the Depot are on hold but work on painting the building will begin in a few weeks. Our contractor, Lori Kaye, started stripping paint but had to stop due to the dust and dirt from the yard construction. Attempts to get a High Lift to the site was blocked by excavations and the temporary fencing that blocked access for vehicles. She will resume her efforts as soon as she completes her current job in the Bay Area.

Come early for the General Meeting on August 14th and see some of these great changes. There are still a few things to do but contractors on the project expect to be done this month. Parking should be back to normal in time for the meeting though the temporary fencing will need to stay up a few more weeks until the new fencing is installed.



The remains of Harrison Ave. and the track that was connected to the BNSF main line look quite different than a year ago. Landscaping and new light fixtures match the look of those at the Railcar Plaza across Bay Marina Dr. Photos by Ron Sucht



The old Cleveland Ave. crossing signal now holds spotlights on the upper arm that will illuminate the Depot at night. The concrete posts (above and right) will support the new motorized gate.





## Depot Featured in June Star News Article

*The following is an article that appeared in National City's Star News submitted by Susan Walter. Susan has been developing a tour package available to local school students with history about National City's history, the Depot, and streetcars (one of our favorite subjects!). The Depot is great venue for teachers to bring students that need to meet certain requirement and Susan is preparing to make the trip memorable.*

National City has the *only* surviving example of a West Coast terminus Depot of a transcontinental railway. It was the beginning and ending point of what became the Santa Fe Railroad. It is also the only surviving example of an Italianate commercial building in the South Bay.

This Depot was part of Frank Kimball's dream to lure a railroad to National City. The Kimball brothers owned National Ranch, and wanted the railroad because it was seen as a sure fire way to grow property. After years of struggle Frank successfully lured the California Southern Railroad, soon to be owned by the Atchison, Topeka & the Santa Fe.

He did it by paying them money, giving them land, building a wharf, and bulldog determination. And he got a *transcontinental* line! It connected National City to points east – ultimately to Chicago. Kimball had managed to outmaneuver the powerful Central Pacific and Southern Pacific's monopoly on the West Coast.

The first transcontinental train from the National City Depot left for Chicago on November 16, 1885. To the east went carloads of exotic fruits, vegetables, flowers, and suntanned passengers, reaching their destination in the dead of winter. A rate war between the Santa Fe and Southern Pacific lines dropped fares from St. Louis to San

Diego from \$70 per person to \$1. Results for the entire San Diego region were dramatic as the region experienced the "Boom of the 80s" with a huge increase of population and wild land speculation that lasted from 1885 to 1889.

The Depot was built by contractor W.A. Stratton in 1882, for \$3,800. Rails were laid, and supporting structures built including shops to construct, repair and maintain railroad cars, house workers, and a fancy hotel nearby.

The Depot building is 2 stories. The bottom floor, open today to the public as a museum, includes the original Baggage and Freight Room, Ticket Sales Room, and Waiting Room. Originally the upper floors housed the offices for the Santa Fe's West Coast operations.

A proud reminder of the importance of the railroad to the building of our economy in the 1880s, the structure was restored to its original grandeur in 1998, and now slated for a new paint job to keep its beauty intact. National City is investing millions in redeveloping the area surrounding the Depot. Plans are in motion for businesses and landscaping, some of which will feature the Depot in all its glory.

Come see it now, then revisit later in the year! By visiting now, there is an adventurous drive through construction and anticipation of future improvements. Later, the contrast to your former experience will be a cool memory for comparison. Open Thursday through Sunday from 9:00 to 5:00. Exit I-5 at Bay Marina Drive, go West to the stop sign, turn right, go one block, turn left, and park in the Depot parking lot at 922 W. 22nd St., National City, CA 91950. More information at 619-474-4400 or [www.sdera.org](http://www.sdera.org).

## Quiet on the Set! Trolleys Air on TV on Sept 1st!

Elsa Sevilla from KPBS and a camera crew visited the National City Depot on August 6. "San Diego's Historic Places" is a locally produced program that spotlights different venues around San Diego.

The camera crew recorded the highlights of the Depot and Ms. Sevilla interviewed Dave Slater (right) and George Geyer and Harry Mathis at the Vintage Trolley project. Jeff Trimble was dressed in Conductor's attire and helped make the background come alive.

Of course, trying to record interviews in a construction zone made for a logistical challenge but Dave Slater worked with local contractors to assure "Quiet On The Set!"

The program is expected to be shown at 8:30pm on Wednesday, September 1 on KPBS-TV.

Photo by Ron Sutch





**San Diego Electric Railway Association**  
d.b.a. **San Diego Electric Railway**  
**PO Box 89068**  
**San Diego, CA 92138**  
**(619) 474-4400**

SDERA is at the historic National City Depot,  
off I-5 at Mile of Cars Way - take Bay Marina  
Dr. west, right on Cleveland, go one block and  
left on W. 23rd St and straight into the Depot

Open Thursday through Sunday, 9 AM — 5 PM.

Depot phone: call (619) 474-4400

Visit us on the Web! [www.sdera.org](http://www.sdera.org)

To submit items to the Newsletter, contact Chris Higgins  
via e-mail ([webmaster@sdera.org](mailto:webmaster@sdera.org)) or phone (858-521-  
0895). Items need to be submitted by the 18th of the  
month prior to publication.

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**Attention Members: Please look carefully at the mailing label. If your membership has expired, or will expire soon, please send your dues, and your tax deductible contribution, to SDERA, PO Box 89068, San Diego, CA 92138-9068. Thank you.**  
Life: \$400, Regular \$25, Family \$35 (please include names), Regular \$25, Senior (60 +) \$15, and Juniors 17 and below \$15.

## Upcoming Events

Monthly meetings are normally held at 7:30 PM on the 2nd Saturday at the National City Depot. Optional no-host dinner at **The Barbeque Pit Restaurant** - 920 E.Plaza Blvd, National City at 5:30PM about 1 block east of Highland Ave. and Plaza Blvd. (Except March, June, and September when we do a potluck). Plan to arrive at 7PM to see the Gift Shop, chat, and buy raffle tickets. The raffle starts at 7:15 PM.

**Saturday, August 14** - Don Brown a SDERA member and founding member of OERM who now lives in Hemet will give us a slide show of the then (opening in 1981) and now of the San Diego Blue Line to the border. He will also show us historic 1947 and before SDERY slides of streetcar lines 4, 12, 9, 20, 7,11 and 3.

**Saturday, September 11** - Bill Prey from the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) will be discussing improvements on the LOSSAN (Los Angeles - San Diego) rail corridor to the north.

**Next Board Meetings** - August 9, September 13, and October 11 at 7:00PM at the National City Depot.

## Wet Paint Ahead!

Please fresh paint that will be around - especially on weekdays. Our contractor, Lori Kaye, will have high-lifts and other equipment around the property. Again, if you can make a donation to help make us hit our goal to cover the painting costs, please do as soon as possible.



## Docents and Cashiers Wanted

Despite the construction in the area, visitors are still coming to the Depot. Even on days where we have regular docents, an alternate docent lets the regulars have a break. There are special events where we may even need help on normally closed days! If you cannot make a whole shift, working as cashier allows the docent to spend more time with visitors. Contact Tom Matson for information ([tmatson@sdera.org](mailto:tmatson@sdera.org)) or 619-275-0216. Training is available.