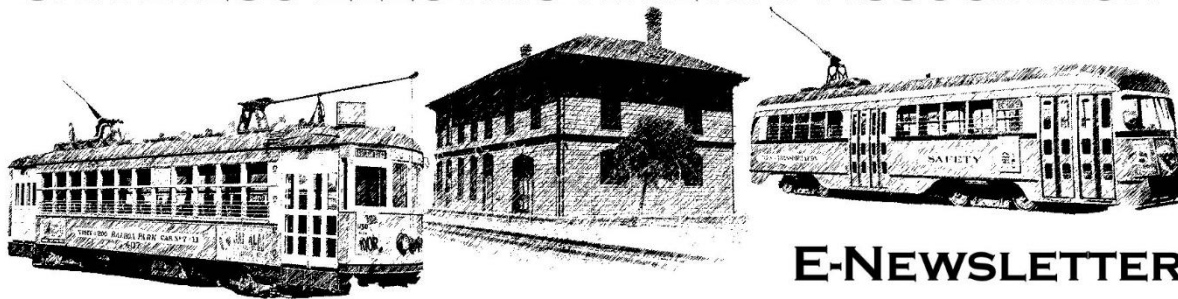


SAN DIEGO ELECTRIC RAILWAY ASSOCIATION



E-NEWSLETTER

December 2020

Welcome to the first issue of SDERA's monthly E-Newsletter for our members.

We miss seeing you at the Depot, sitting around the table in the freight room sharing stories, and enjoying the 3-Rail layout. So then, this E-Newsletter is designed to keep us current on developments at the Depot and the Association. Content will include current and future Depot projects and events, equipment acquisition and maintenance, significant donations, and Association developments.

We also miss our visitors enjoying the model trains, our streetcars, and other exhibits. The last "normal" year at the Depot, 2019, hosted 1,457 non-member

visitors and 10 group visits/special events, compared to 291 visitors and no events this year. Fortunately, with the help of membership renewals and contributions, we did cover our fixed expenses, maintained the grounds and building, and embarked on the deck replacement project. Thank you for your continuing support!

2021 looks promising. We will let you know when opening the museum looks possible and how you can help with reopening. There will be a bit of cleaning to do and decent support will be needed.

CLASS 1 CARS TO ARRIVE AT THE DEPOT By John DeLalla

Elizabeth Chaffee, the late Christian Chaffee's spouse, graciously volunteered to donate the three Class 1 streetcars that Mr. Chaffee was restoring, knowing that they would have a proper home at the Depot. The cars should be received in January 2021, after their move from a storage facility near Allied Gardens. The car bodies are on trailers, facilitating the move to the Depot.

Ms. Chaffee's donation includes the peripheral collection Mr. Chaffee had to go with these cars: a headlight, a bag containing 3 brass plaques for the cars, blueprints of each car and 3 boxes of papers, photos, and such.

The plan is to display car 138, the most complete car, on the south side of the Depot. The other two cars (126 and 128)

will be placed near the northwest corner of the Depot property. A structure like the one for car 54 is being considered to protect the cars.

The donation represents a significant addition to

our collection. These St. Louis Car Company center-entrance cars were part of a 24-car order of modern cars acquired by SDERY in 1912. Their service life ended between 1937 and 1940. Mr. Chaffee acquired the cars in 1996. The San Diego Historical Resources board designated the cars historic landmarks in 1998.



Class 1 Car 138 at storage location, 6/19/20

REA BAGGAGE CART RESTORATION

By Jeff Trimble, Tom Carnes and Marilyn Carnes

On June 6, 2020, the National City Depot had its 1950s REA Express Baggage Cart brought back restored.

It was restored by Eagle Scout candidate James Sherwood, Orange County Troop 12. James welded the towbar and sandblasted and painted the metal. It was driven to the depot by his father Bob.

The unit now has 4 new tires (tractor tires since the original tires are no longer available). The boards were cut and varnished by James' grandfather Tom Carnes.

Once the depot is reopened, you can view this first-class restoration.



James Sherwood and cart, 6/6/20

SAN DIEGO ELECTRIC RAILWAY MATERIALS DONATED TO SDERA

By Jim Price

In March of this year, we received a very generous donation of genuine San Diego Electric Railway (SDERY) memorabilia. The materials were donated by Jerry and Kate Bower here in San Diego. My wife Joan, and I are very good friends with them.

Jerry's father, J.D. Bower (full name), was born in Oklahoma. But as a young man, he and his family moved in 1936 to San Diego to escape the Dust Bowl. He lived in this area the rest of his life. He passed away in year 2000.

From 1942 to 1972, J.D. Bower worked for the SDERY, then later the San Diego Transit System (precursor to today's San Diego Metropolitan Transit System). He drove trolleys until they were taken out of service in 1949, and then drove buses the rest of his career.

A few anecdotes about J.D. Bower as recalled by his son, Jerry:

- To make more money, he signed up for extra routes taking children to school in La Jolla and Pt Loma. This meant he often worked 11 hour days.
- During World War II, a high percentage of his riders were workers at Convair.
- On his favorite route serving La Jolla he got to know his regular riders, this was his favorite part of the job. He received several commendation letters from his regular riders.
- He received several safety and driver of the month awards.
- He loved his job.

And now some of his mementos have been shared with SDERA. See the photo on p.3 of his badge, service pin, Union pin,

and SDERy lapel pin. In addition, we received his “first day on the job” training manual which offers amazing insights into



THE DISPOSITION OF HERBIE By Michael Reading

One of the San Diego Electric Railway Association's (SDERA) long time exhibit and sometimes parade float, Herbie, our 3/5th Scale Volkswagen powered, rubber-tired streetcar, was in need of a major restoration! Unfortunately for us, Gene Calman, one of our longtime members and Herbie's champion, has moved onto that big carbarn in the sky. Most of the crew that helped Gene with the previous restoration of Herbie have also moved onto that same carbarn or moved onto other aspects of their lives and Herbie has sat, sad and neglected in the yard at the National City Depot for years.

Over those intervening years, visitors to the Depot have enjoyed seeing Herbie and asked when it would run again. We had a few visitors ask if Herbie was for sale and we would tell them that due to a grant from the 20th Century Electric Railway Foundation, (20thCERF) the SDERA was required to hold Herbie in perpetuity.

The Board and other interested members of SDERA had been discussing what to do with Herbie and we decided to send a letter to the 20thCERF regarding Herbie and to let them know we have had offers to purchase Herbie from us and asked if we could be released from the agreement to keep Herbie. In response, I was contacted by Sheila Cook from the

the care that went into ensuring the safety of transit riders.

Thank you very much to Jerry & Kate Bower!

For detailed information about the history of San Diego transit since “day 1” in the 1880s, see <https://www.sdmts.com/about-mts/history>.

20thCERF and was invited to contact Art Jones, the man behind the Foundation.

I met with Art at his home in San Diego and during our discussion regarding

SDERA and Herbie, Art mentioned that his Foundation would be interested in purchasing Herbie from us and to send it to the Old Pueblo Trolley organization in Tucson, Arizona.

He felt that the Old Pueblo group had the shop and restoration crew that could bring Herbie back to his original glory! The Old Pueblo group numbers a few historic buses in their collection!

A price was agreed upon and Art set about arranging for transportation to move Herbie from National City to Tucson, while SDERA members prepped Herbie for the move.

Finally moving day arrived and Art, the truck driver and a couple SDERA members worked to get Herbie loaded and tied down on a trailer and off for Tucson Herbie went!



Herbie at the National City Car Show, 8/14/13

DEPOT DECKING REPLACEMENT By John DeLalla

Whillock Contracting, Inc. of El Cajon, is replacing the decking around the perimeter of the Depot, to eliminate safety issues with the old decking. The project involves removing the wood deck, strengthening the framing and base, installing new Trex composite decking, and running electrical connections under the deck to the exterior of the Depot building. The project began in early November, with anticipated completion by the end of 2020. SDERA is responsible for the approximately \$45,000 cost of the project which is only possible thanks to the generosity of our Members!



Front deck removed, 11/10/20



New support and deck in progress, 12/10/20



New decking, 12/21/20. Note wood from old deck on trailer at upper left

WEBSITE REFRESH

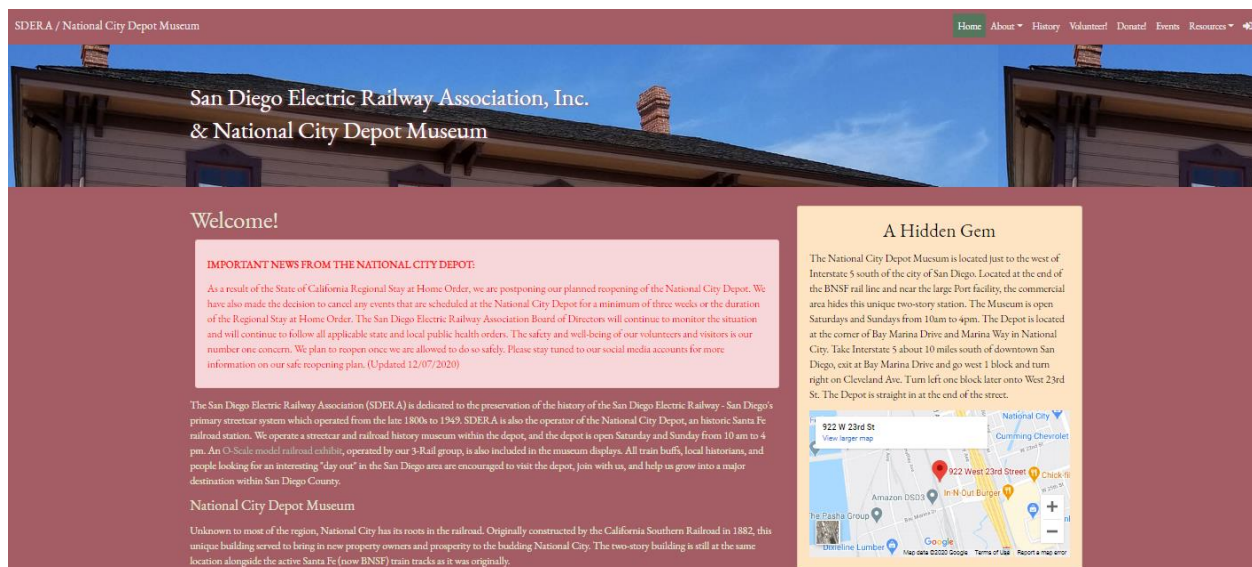
By Chris Higgins

It's hard to believe that our initial website was 10 years old! Technology has changed substantially in that time and it was time that our Internet Front Door change with the times. Over the years, I've met several visitors that found us from a Google search or our Facebook page. As the Depot continues to change and improve, we need to be able to reflect that electronically.

In the last year, nearly 90% of the content has been refreshed and moved to newer technology platforms. Today's cell phones are where so many people go to get information, rather than sitting in front of their computer screen at home. The refresh included making the pages mobile-friendly so users can get the information

even while wandering the Depot Yard. Cell phone, tablet, PC... we are ready! We continue to make changes and clean up those little programming surprises so pardon the remaining dust.

Please check out our website – still at www.sdera.org – and make sure you check out our “Donate!” and “Volunteer!” pages. We hope to have on-line membership renewals available by early January. You can also keep up with the latest happenings at the Depot by following our Facebook page by searching for “San Diego Electric Railway Association” or “National City Depot.” For those that just have to be totally connected, you can find us on Instagram by searching for “national_city_depot.”



SDERA.org Home Page (partial view)

Comment from the Editor

Thank you for reading the first edition of our E-Newsletter. Your contributions to the newsletter, comments, and questions are welcome. Please forward them to [John DeLalla at Docents@SDERA.org](mailto:John.DeLalla@SDERA.org). Phone calls are also welcome. John's mobile number is 760-330-3949.