

Special  
Convention  
Edition

Summer 2000



*The Santa Clara*

# BLOCK



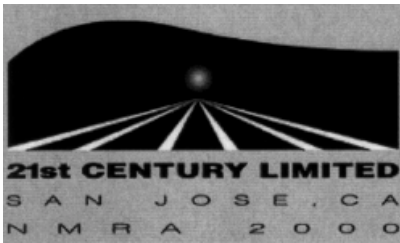
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# WELCOME CONVENTIONERS!

*A Guide to Your Tour at the Santa Clara Depot*

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*Inside this Special Edition . . .*



Welcome to Santa Clara Depot *Page CS2*



Depot's History Dates to 1863 *Page CS2*



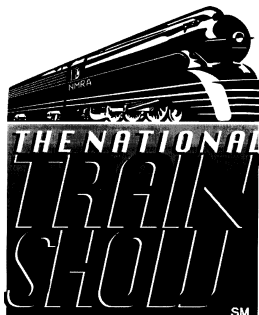
Real-time Railfanning *Page CS2*



Tower Another Link to Past *Page CS3*



Fast Facts about the Layouts *Page CS4*



## The Chairman's Corner



By Bob Dolci, Chairman, SBHRS

**W**elcome to the Santa Clara Depot! Nearly 15 years ago, the South Bay Historical Railroad Society was founded by a group of model railroaders who saw an opportunity to turn their interests in their hobby into a positive partnership for the good of the local community. In 1985, the SBHRS undertook restoration of the exterior of the former Southern Pacific Railroad freight house and passenger depot in Santa Clara. In exchange for this work, and the establishment of a library and museum dedicated to railroad history, the membership also would develop, build, and operate museum-quality model railroad displays.

What you see today are the products of on-going processes. Today, the exterior of the depot has been restored to its as-built appearance of the 1860s; a first-class library is maintained in the former baggage room of the passenger depot; and a static collection of artifacts adorns locations throughout our facility. In addition, an interlocking control tower, and two nearby outbuildings have been made our responsibility. Finally, two scale model display layouts are fully operational for your visit to Santa Clara Depot.

Despite taking a back seat to restoration and maintenance of our facility (because that work pays our rent), we are nonetheless proud of the progress on our layouts.

Our N-scale display features lengthy train consists, elevated operations made possible by the aid of two helixes, both DCC and analog walk-around control, and an eye-level viewpoint.

Our HO-scale layout demonstrates similar functionality. Two lines showcase lengthy train consists. And scenery that includes landscaping and highly-detailed structures, as well as artistic backdrops, continue to be developed by the membership.

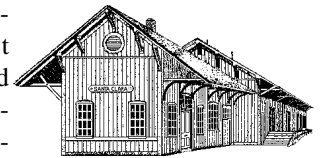
Just this year, the members have undertaken DCC operations while still maintaining analog operating capabilities.

Whatever your interests in railroading — model railroading, historical preservation and restoration, museum railroad artifacts, or real-time viewing from the freight dock of the Santa Clara Depot, you can find it here.

## A Matter of Survival and Restoration Santa Clara Depot Dates to 1863

The Santa Clara passenger depot was originally constructed by the San Francisco and San Jose Railroad Company in late 1863, and until May 1997, was the oldest continuously operating railroad depot in the State of California. It was placed on the National Register of Historical Places in 1985. The depot was one of two "way depots" built between San Francisco and San Jose. The original 24 x 50-foot portion of the depot was constructed on the east side of the railroad tracks, adjacent to the south side of Brokaw Road. The political influence exerted on the San Francisco and San Jose Railroad Company by the Santa Clara University Board of Trustees, who were stockholders of the railroad, was a decisive factor in having a "way depot" built only three miles from the railroad terminus in San Jose. The first regular through passenger service to San Francisco was started on 17 January 1864.

Southern Pacific Railroad absorbed the San Francisco and San Jose railroad and its property in 1870. In 1877, the original depot was moved from across the tracks to its present location and was attached to an existing 32 x 50-foot freight house that had been constructed several years earlier. At this time, because of the large volume of agricultural freight that was shipped from the depot, the freight house was increased in size to its present dimensions of 32 x 160 feet.



The depot was constructed of clear heart redwood lumber milled from trees taken out the local Coast Mountain range west of Santa Clara Valley. Square nails were used in all phases of construction. The fact that the depot survived the 1906 and 1989 earth

(Continued on Page CS4)

## Watching Trains at Santa Clara

Perhaps some of the most attractive and unique aspects of operating model trains in the restored Santa Clara Caltrain Depot are the opportunities to watch real-time railroad action right outside the doors.

Conventioneers' visit to Santa Clara affords the opportunity to watch various freight movements of the Union Pacific Railroad running between Los Angeles and Oakland; numerous Caltrain commute trains operating to and from San Francisco via the Peninsula Line; Amtrak *Capitols* operating between San Jose and Sacramento; and in the early week-day evenings, commute consists that operate over the Altamont Pass between San Jose and Stockton as part of the Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) system. The *Capitols* and the ACE trains are not scheduled for stops at the Santa Clara Depot.

The highlight of most evenings is the passing northbound of Amtrak's *Coast Startlight* that is scheduled for a 7:47 p.m. departure from San Jose. Often, that train is held for a few moments in front of the depot to await a San Jose-bound *Capitol* scheduled to arrive at the convention host city at 8:00 p.m.

Freight train traffic includes intermodal consists with multiple-unit power often in a rainbow of colors representing parent Union Pacific and the absorbed Southern Pacific; and local freight traffic that still occasionally includes Denver & Rio Grande Western power.

Railfans are invited to watch trains from various locations around the Santa Clara Depot, but are expected to do so with the utmost in Safety in mind.



Graphic: Ed Del Prete



# Restored Control Tower Provides Another Link to Railroad's Past

The Santa Clara interlocking control tower is one of two unmodified Harriman Standard No. 4 towers in California. It was built circa 1926, but was not put into operation until the fall of 1927. This was due to a last minute decision by Southern Pacific management to change the local area signals from General Railway Signal Co. semaphore type units to Union Switch and Signal Co. H-2 searchlight type signals.

## Tower Tours Available

**Tours of the Santa Clara Interlocking Control Tower are available. Please follow the signs and the on-site docents for directions. Due to space limitations, visitors to the tower are limited to five at any one time.**

On the upper floor is a General Railway Signal Co. Model 2, unit-lever type interlocking machine. This machine controlled many switches and signals from the north end of the Santa Clara yard to the junction switches and signals controlling the tracks to and from both San Francisco (the Peninsula line) and Oakland (the Mulford line). The lower half of the tower originally housed the relays and batteries for the tower mechanism. In the late 1960s, these were moved to adjacent metal sheds and the lower half of the tower became the signal maintainers' shop and work area.

The tower and its interlocking machine were used around the clock until 17 July 1993. On that date, control of all switches and signals on the Peninsula line was transferred to the control center at the Southern Pacific's San Jose Depot on Cahill Street. After 65 years of continuous service, the end of an era had come to the tower.

Adjacent to the tower are two out buildings that were used by the Southern Pacific Railroad until 1993. The speeder shed (on the right, as one faces the two buildings) once housed a motorized track inspector's car that was used to check the condition of the rails. The other building was used as a tool shed. The "Company Standard Design"

numbers and the construction dates of these buildings have not yet been determined.

In conjunction with the City of Santa Clara, the SBHRS started the renovation and preservation of these three structures in 1996. This effort is for the benefit of the local community and visitors, so that they may be able to appreciate these surviving structures and their contribution to past railroading practices.

The SBHRS is a non-profit public benefit corporation whose goals are the renovation and preservation of the Santa Clara railroad depot, along with the establishment and operation of a railroad museum and library. The SBHRS is always looking for individuals or groups wishing to donate or loan railroad artifacts and memorabilia to the museum. All donations, monetary and material, are tax deductible. Recognition is given to donors and lenders for all items.



Photo: Joe Hoffmann

## Tell Us How We're Doing!

As a part of your attendance at the conventions in San Jose, we are interested in your feedback on the programs of the South Bay Historical Railroad Society. When you return home, kindly take a minute to let us know what you think about some of these items:

- Our HO- and N-scale Layout Displays
- Our Museum of Railroad Artifacts and Railroadiana
- Our Restored former Southern Pacific Depot
- Our Restored Interlocking Control Tower
- Our Membership in Hosting Your Visit to the Santa Clara Depot

*You can send your response via E-mail to:*

Webmaster at: [webmaster@sbhrs.org](mailto:webmaster@sbhrs.org) or to [johoff@ix.netcom.com](mailto:johoff@ix.netcom.com)

*You can also send your thoughts via U. S. Mail to:*

Newsletter Editor  
South Bay Historical Railroad Society, Inc.  
Santa Clara Caltrain Depot  
1005 Railroad Avenue  
Santa Clara, CA 95050-4319

**Thanks for visiting the SBHRS at Santa Clara Depot**

## State Standards Govern Santa Clara Depot Restoration

(Continued from Page CS2)

quakes attests to the soundness of the original construction techniques used by our forefathers.

The State of California, through Caltrans, (the state's transportation department) acquired the depot from Southern Pacific Transportation Company in 1983. In November 1985, the South Bay Historical Railroad Society (SBHRS) entered into a lease agreement with Caltrans to renovate and preserve the depot and occupy the property in lieu of rent. Restoration work has been done in accordance with standards set by the State Historian and the State Architect, using donations and volunteer work force. Exterior renovation was completed in 1990. Interior renovation continues today.

### Station Closed in 1997

In 1992, the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board (JPB), a quasi-governmental authority comprised of representatives from the three counties through which the commute line to San Francisco passes, acquired the property from the state. The JPB continued to provide Caltrain commute rail service using the passenger portion of the depot until May 1997 when it was closed. Although the building no longer provides active passenger or freight handling service, Caltrain commute passenger trains still stop at the depot and service approximately 600 travelers per day, Monday through Friday, with less frequent weekend service.

After renovating the depot, the SBHRS now occupies the former baggage room and freight house where a railroad museum of static artifacts, and two model railroad displays depicting local and regional railroad heritage are available for public viewing.

### Historical Facts . . .

In 1929, the Southern Pacific Railroad employed an average of 89,304 employees. By March of 1933, that number had been reduced to 41,863. Today's Union Pacific, a conglomerate through mergers and acquisitions of several railroads including the SP, employs around 52,000 nationwide.

—Source: Ed Peterman; UP website

# Fast Facts About the Model Railroad Displays at Santa Clara Depot

## HO-Scale Layout

**Name of railroad:** *South Bay & Pacific*  
**Size:** 15 x 80 feet  
**Operations Control:** Digitrax DCC plus Chubb-based analog  
**Prototype:** Freelance, based on western railroading, sometimes influenced by members' New York and New England roots.  
**Locales:** California, Arizona  
**Period:** 1940s through 1960s  
**Layout style:** Walk-in island  
**Layout Routes:** Two main "show" lines, plus point-to-point operations. Several integrated modules portray industrial districts that produce freight traffic such as timber, cattle, gravel, and oil products.  
**Layout Height:** Average 45 inches to the mainline  
**Benchwork:** L-girder, spline, and platform  
**Roadbed:** Homasote and HO-scale Homabed  
**Track:** Flex-track Code 70 (95%) and Code 83 (5%) for exposed track work; Code 100 for hidden tracks (lower staging yards)  
**Length of Mainline:** ~200 feet  
**Turnout minimum:** No. 8 on mainline; No. 4 at some module locations  
**Minimum Radius:** 54-inches on the mainline; 32-inches on secondary track  
**Maximum grade:** 1.3 percent on mainline; 2 percent for underground staging  
**Scenery:** Zip texture plus hand-carved rock molds  
**Backdrops:** Plywood dividers; sheet rock on back wall  
**Tracks Ahead:** Completion of DCC installation; completion of staging yard behind semaphore; addition of roundhouse and engine servicing facility; completion of scenery.

## N-Scale Layout

**Name of railroad:** To be determined  
**Size:** 11 x 52 feet  
**Operations Control:** Digitrax DCC and walk around (home-built) DC throttle  
**Prototype:** Freelance portrayal of western railroads: Union Pacific, Southern Pacific, and Western Pacific.  
**Locales:** Northern California and Nevada  
**Period:** Transition: steam and diesel into the 1970s  
**Layout style:** Walk around peninsula  
**Layout Routes:** Three looping main lines, plus an independent interurban/trolley line  
**Layout Height:** Average 54 inches to the mainline  
**Bench work:** L-girder, plywood  
**Roadbed:** Homasote  
**Track:** Code 80 flex track  
**Length of Mainline:** 113-177 feet. Fiddle yard: 180 feet  
**Turnout minimum:** No. 6 (medium and long turnouts)  
**Minimum Radius:** 24 to 26 inches on the mainline  
**Maximum grade:** 2 percent average (3.8% maximum in one location in helix)  
**Scenery:** Hard shell with plaster molds; 15 percent complete  
**Backdrop:** Sheet rock  
**Tracks Ahead:** Completion of the automated, operator independent interurban/trolley line, turnout electrical control panels, completion of the roundhouse and engine servicing facility, scenery, industrial switching area.