



Western Division

Train Collectors Association

Newsletter



Volume 45, No. 9

October 1999

Monthly Meet Notification

This month's meeting of the TCA Western Division will be held on **Saturday, October 23rd, 1999**. It will take place at the *Arcadia Park Senior Citizen's Center, 405 S. Santa Anita Ave., Arcadia, CA 91006* (Santa Anita exit off of the 210 freeway, then head south).

Senior Citizen's Center hall doors will be opened at 10:00 AM for sellors only to enter and begin setting up their tables. The hall will be open at 11:00 AM for members and guests to enter, and for trading and festivities to commence.

The display theme for the October meet, appropriate for Halloween, will be **orange** colored items or Halloween themed toy train items. This can be rolling stock, accessories, engines or whatever. If it is toy train related, and **orange** in color, feel free to display it! Once again, as an added incentive to increase the amount of items on display, we will be giving away a special prize for the best display item to its displayer. Remember, a common item with a special story behind it, can earn an award just as easily as a unique item with just a boring story!

Our excellent raffle will be held once again. We have already given away 4 of the 6 K-Line heavyweight TCA Museum commemorative cars at previous meets. And one more will be available at the October meet. As well, we have a Lionel TCA aluminum diner car and a Lionel Mylar TTX car to award. An auction will take place after the business meeting.



Raffle winners: Katie & Mike Olaerts took home a K-Line Heavyweight TCA Museum car at the August meet.

Western Division's remaining 1999 regularly scheduled train meet will be held on **Saturday, November 27th**. On **Sunday, December 12th** we will be celebrating the holiday season in style, with a **planned train excursion to San Diego**.

Holiday Train Trip

Plans are set to rent the Overland Trail, a 1949 lounge car, which will be hauled by the regular Amtrak train to San Diego on the scenic ex-Santa Fe surf line. There are 39 seats available at the price per seat of \$68. The date set is **Sunday, Dec. 12th**. If you are one of the Western Division members who signed up at the August or September meets to take this excursion, please bring your check or payment for the tickets to our October meet. Checks should be made out to TCA Western Division. Or alternatively, you can mail your payment to:

Russ Lange
TCA Western Division Treasurer
28 E. Dufaucek Drive
Wofford Heights, CA 93285

Payments are due no later than November 13th. The train will be making stops at all the regular Amtrak stations between Union Station in Downtown L.A. and San Diego, so you may board at any of those stations. The trip departs Union Station at 6:10 AM. You will have the option of either a 'morning turn' that arrives at San Diego at 9:30 AM and makes its way back to L.A. by 12:00 noon. Or a second run, or afternoon turn, which departs L.A. at 2:00 PM, arrives in San Diego at 5:30 PM, and returns to L.A. by 9:00 PM. Or, you may be able to ride the train all day long! Please specify your preference when submitting payment.

September 1999 Meeting Recap

By Dave McCully

There were 45 members and guests present for our September Meet. President Harold Shapiro chaired the meeting.

Display: This month's theme was "Switchers" since this is the time of year the seasons, as well as the clock switch.

John Parker showed us a Rivarossi two rail 'O' switcher, an 0-8-0 configuration, that was produced in the late 40's and early 50's. It had a Chicago and Indiana Harbor Belt ensign.

Ward Kimball brought an early Howard switcher, made c. 1904. The Howard Company made miniature electric light bulbs and soon dropped the toy train end of their business. Ward also brought a Howard gondola for the switcher to shunt. Ward also brought a 1905 No. 5 with a slope back tender. Ward won a Lionel book as a prize for the best exhibit.

Emmert Stouffer looked in his garage and found an American Flyer 'S' Gauge switcher. It was a #21005 steam locomotive prototype, one of the few that runs well, he commented.

Harold showed his 1954 Lionel #6250 Seaboard switcher, which he acquired at the tender age of six. He noted it is an SW type, a workhorse diesel.

From the front page of Tom McCommas' book on Lionel, Bob Caplan showed us a #9765 Grand Trunk boxcar. The car had belonged to collector Nick de Grazia. It was issued in 1990 as a special item for the management of the Grand Trunk Railway. 50 of them went to that group and another 20 were distributed by Lionel to selected friends by Richard Kughn. The original issue by Lionel had been in 1976.

Sales Tables: There were 15 tables and one could choose between a pre-war Lionel 'O' gauge #248 electric with Pullman cars #629 and observation #630, offered at \$150, or a current production Rail King Big Boy #1129 at \$825. If you were looking for some good reading, there was a complete set of Model Craftsman magazines from 1934 to 1989. In post-war, you could have had a Lionel #53 Rio Grand for \$250 or a contemporary Norfolk and Western five-car set of coal hoppers and caboose for \$250.

The trains ran round and round on the layout, including Harold's Lionel 'O' gauge baby Hudson #646 c. 1954, a Lionel 'O' gauge #51 Navy Yard switcher, a Lionel #50 gang car (always fun to watch!) and Mike Jenkin's newly repainted standard gauge passenger set.

A brief auction was held with several post-war Lionel 'O' gauge items, newer MTH Standard gauge accessories and lots of used track on the block.

Announcements: Bob Caplan has offered to be Western Division's representative for the TCA Kids Club. Thank you Bob for volunteering.

An Interesting Set of Observations!

The US Standard railroad gauge (distance between the rails) is 4 feet, 8.5 inches. You have to admit that's an exceedingly odd number.

Why was that gauge used? Because that's the way they built them in England, and English expatriates built the US railroads. Why did the English people build them like that? Because the first rail lines were built by the same people who built the pre-railroad tramways, and that's the gauge they used.

Why did "they" use that gauge then? Because the people who built the tramways used the same jigs and tools that they used for building wagons, which used that wheel spacing. Okay! Why did the wagons use that odd wheel spacing? Well, if they tried to use any other spacing the wagons would break on some of the old, long distance roads, because that's the spacing of the old wheel ruts.

So who built these old rutted roads? Imperial Rome for the benefit of their legions built the first long distance roads in Europe. The roads have been used ever since. And the ruts? Roman war chariots first made the initial ruts, which everyone else had to match for fear of destroying their wagons. Since the chariots were made for or by Imperial Rome they were all alike in the matter of wheel spacing.

Thus, we have the answer to the original question. The United States standard railroad gauge of 4 feet, 8.5 inches derives from the original specification for an Imperial Roman army war chariot. Specs and Bureaucracies live forever. So, the next time you are handed a specification and wonder what horse's Ass came up with it, you may be exactly right. Because the Imperial Roman chariots were made to be just wide enough to accommodate the back ends of two war-horses.

Now the twist to the story....There's an interesting extension of the story about railroad gauge and horses' behinds. When we see a Space Shuttle sitting on the launch pad, there are two big booster rockets attached to the sides of the main fuel tank. These are the solid rocket boosters, or SRBs. Thiokol makes the SRBs at a factory in Utah. The engineers who designed the SRBs might have preferred to make them a bit fatter, but the SRBs had to be shipped by train from the factory to the launch site. The railroad line to the factory runs through a tunnel in the mountains. The SRBs had to fit through that tunnel. The tunnel is slightly wider than a railroad track, and the railroad track is about as wide as two horses' behinds.

So a major design feature of what is arguably the world's most advanced transportation system was determined by the width of a horse's Ass!