Two events of cataclysmic proportions are being celebrated in Griffith Park during the summer of 2003: Travel Town is closer to the planet Mars than it has been in 60,000 years and (after a slightly shorter waiting period) Travel Town’s new Locomotive Pavilion exhibit and restoration building is nearing completion! A big “Mars viewing party” on August 26th attracted some 18,000 people to the nearby Griffith Observatory Satellite facility, and we suspect many times that number will enjoy the Locomotive Pavilion in the years to come. I haven’t seen any little green men, but what an exciting time this is to be a part of the Griffith Park experience!

Out at the Pavilion construction site, workers are finishing up the surfacing work on the concrete sidewalks and are now installing the metal sheeting on the enormous shed roof. Water and compressed air piping for the restoration work is now in place and glaziers are currently installing the glass panels in the long banks of clerestory windows, high above the tracks. The Museum Administration looks forward to completion of the building itself within just a few more weeks! Meanwhile, Travel Town volunteers are busily working on track modifications and other preparations necessary in advance of the arduous task of moving the historic cars and locomotive into their new display positions, once the Pavilion construction is completed. We’re hitting the home stretch, but there are still a lot of things to do. If you’d like to be a part of the Travel Town Volunteer Team, please give us a call!

Not to neglect the Planet Mars… for those interested in learning more about the red planet, the Griffith Observatory still has a number of Mars-viewing opportunities available throughout the remainder of the year. You can find out more by visiting their Satellite facility, in the Zoo parking lot near the Autry Museum, or by checking out their special Mars 2003 website at: www.griffithobs.org/mars2003.html. Phone (323) 664-1181.

Enjoy the cooling weather and come visit us at the Museum!

Greg Gneier, President
October, 2003

The new Locomotive Pavilion is nearing completion.
Here’s a short story of local railroad history we thought you might enjoy, reprinted with permission from the Los Angeles Times. The old Southern Pacific station of “Roscoe” is present-day Sun Valley, near today’s busy intersection of San Fernando Road and Sunland Boulevard, just a few miles north of Travel Town!

In the West, as Mark Twain keenly observed, “whiskey is for drinking and water is for fighting over.”

No one knew this better than a family of Sunland homesteaders whose bitter water feud split a family apart and prompted one of them to rob a train to finance their water wars.

The dispute was so intense that it pitted father against son and brother against brother, yet descendants could only dimly recall its origins.

Over time, the feud turned a respected rancher and father of four into a train robber and killer.

Roscoe — the town where a derailed train and robbery left two men dead — would eventually change its name to Sun Valley.

In the early 1880s, Farmer A. Johnson and two of his sons, John and Cornelius, homesteaded land in the tiny, rugged and remote community of Monte Vista, which later was renamed Sunland.

A stream trickled down Big Tujunga Canyon to the Johnson land. A few miles downstream, Johnson’s third son, Alvarado — nicknamed Alva — owned a ranch and farmland he had gotten by marrying the widow of the man who had homesteaded it.

For nearly a decade, all the Johnsons managed to overcome what nature dished out: fire, mudslides, landslides, floods and grizzly bears. But when it came to water, more precious than gold, they parted ways.

Bitterness began to grow in the late 1880s when the father, along with John and Cornelius, started a water company by damming the water in Big Tujunga Canyon, cutting off the supply to Alva’s ranch below. Redheaded Alva, who had a temper to match, hired a lawyer who sued to restore the flow of water. But the costly process drove Alva deeper into debt, and the water stayed upstream.

After years of the Southern Pacific Railroad’s jacking up its price for shipping produce at harvest time, Alva was driven out of farming. Although he stayed on the ranch, he managed a grain store in downtown Los Angeles.

Alva hired two ranch hands, William H. “Kid” Thompson and George Smith, both of whom had criminal records, to work his land. Within a few months unsolved train robberies began plaguing the Southern Pacific.

On the rainy night of Dec. 23, 1893, three armed outlaws in masks and long dark dusters robbed the northbound Southern Pacific No. 20 at the Roscoe flag stop, at what is now San Fernando Road and Sunland Boulevard in Sun Valley. The town of Roscoe, believed to have been named for a local land developer or possibly a railroad brakeman whose first or last name is lost to history, consisted of a railroad depot, water tank and grocery store.

Stuffing their pockets with $150 from the train’s safe, the trio made off on horseback, leaving no tracks in the rain.

Seven weeks later, money spent, the trio pulled off another heist at the same spot, but with more serious consequences.

As a result, on the night of Feb. 15, 1894, the northbound No. 20 lay beside the railroad tracks like a dead horse.

Instead of slowing for one of the robbers, who waved a torch at the Roscoe depot, engineer David W. Thomas speeded up the engine because he saw a rifle in the man’s other hand. But the well-organized bandits had already thrown the spur switch, pitching the engine and two freight cars filled with oranges from the tracks.

Engineer Thomas crawled to safety behind a cactus, while fireman Arthur Masters, 27, lay pinned against the blazing hot boiler, his legs crushed. Train stowaway Harry Daly — alternately spelled Dailey — was hurled into the left cylinder. The 19-year-old died from the impact.

Water Dispute Led to Train Robbery

By Cecilia Rasmussen, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

(Reprinted with permission)
Scratch an American, Find a Railroader

Travel Town’s “Interactive” Exhibit

by John Vertrees

Hugh G. Mac Cormack. That’s the railroader I found in my past.

The Travel Town Museum made the first public appearance of the “Scratch an American” exhibit at the California State Railroad Museum in June of 1999. The premise of the exhibit is “Railroad history is not a story of iron and smoke and machines and capitalism. It’s a story of people, people who worked for railroads, who built railroads, whose lives were tied to the railroads.” The exhibit asks “Please share the stories of the railroader in your history…”

Railroading is such an important part of American growth that many Americans have a family connection to railroading in their past – if you scratch an American, odds are that you will find a railroader beneath the surface. This approach demonstrates how deeply we are all connected to railroading and is a clever way to get people interacting with railroad history. In spite of volunteering at Travel Town for many years, I have never looked into the railroader in my history with any depth until visiting this Travel Town exhibit. The display is located in the brick exhibit building in front of the newly remodeled Museum Foundation Gift Shop.

After thinking about the railroader in my family, I decided to visit my Grandmother June Hoover, whose grandfather was a veteran railroad man. She told me he was the conductor on the first train to San Jose in February 1864 and showed me newspaper articles from the San Jose Mercury Herald, in which my great-great grandfather reflects on that “great day.” Many people have shared their stories of the railroader in their pasts by filling out cards and posting them in the exhibit, but when I started to share my story I did not expect to have documented reports, plus photos!

“Yes, sir, that was a great day,” muses Hugh Mac Cormack, veteran railroad man, as he regards a photo of that first arrival in San Jose. The newspaper article reports that “It was a great occasion, this beginning of the Southern Pacific. The line from San Francisco to San Jose...was the first railway in the state with the exception of a line from Sacramento to Placerville.” In our work at the Travel Town Museum, we focus so much on the traveler’s experience, and the workings of the trains that I have to re-read the article to fully understand he was witness to the birth and growth of the railroad. My GG Grandfather says “I have watched the Southern Pacific grow from its infancy. In 1869 the road was extended to Gilroy and Tres Pinos. The intention was to make the road from Hollister into the San Joaquin valley. In 1872 the road was built from Gilroy to Watsonville and Salinas. Then the road was built as far as Santa Margarita with a branch going to Lompoc. From here a stage took passengers to Santa Barbara, where they connected with a railroad going to Los Angeles. When I went to Mexico in the early nineties, I traveled part of the way by stage.” This was such a long time ago that its difficult to realize there was no railroad when he started his career. He actually had a connection via horse drawn stagecoach. On the day the first train arrived in San Jose there was also a “Barbecue” that celebrated the great occasion and was attended by many. “Beaves (beef) were roasted to the number of six or seven... Three men were busy for hours carving.” There was even a Barbecue committee whose members “...tried to make a good impression on the directors of the road and Mr. Mac Cormack by serving them the best cuts.” Yes, sir, that was a great day.

Who is the railroader in your history? Next time you are at the museum stop in and read some of the stories that visitors have posted, and maybe add one of your own.

The “Scratch an American” exhibit is a presentation of the Travel Town Museum, City of Los Angeles, Department of Recreation and Parks.
That’s right, the new Metro “Gold Line” transit route is now up and running from Downtown Los Angeles out to Pasadena! Following the old Santa Fe Route, the tracks of the new electric-powered light rail line run 13.7 miles, from L.A. Union Station, through Highland Park, South Pasadena and downtown Pasadena, out to an eastern terminus at the intersection of the 210 Freeway and Sierra Madre Villa. The average one-way trip takes about 35 minutes, including stops at 11 intermediate stations. The trains operate from 4 A.M. to 2 A.M., seven days a week. The base fare is only $1.35, with transfers costing just a quarter. There are reduced rates for seniors and disabled persons. The line formally opened to the public on July 26th.

Three of our regular Travel Town Museum Volunteers are already regular Gold Line riders! Bryan Reese, leader of the Museum’s M.177 Motorcar restoration project, works in Downtown L.A. and lives near the Gold Line’s Lake Avenue stop: “I’ve been riding nearly every day” says Bryan. “I find that while it takes just a little longer than driving, I spend that time relaxing and reading the paper, instead of fighting traffic. In the afternoon, it is definitely faster than driving. It’s also much cheaper!” Two other TT volunteers, Bill Dale and Ed Temm, actually go back and forth from home to the Museum via the Gold Line; riding the light rail from old town Pasadena to the Chinatown station where they catch an MTA bus bound for Griffith Park!

The line itself indeed has a golden history in the story of Los Angeles railroading. The first rails on the route were laid way back in 1885 as part of the Los Angeles & San Gabriel Valley Railroad. The LA&SGV eventually became part of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway with that company’s famous *California Limited* making its first run from Chicago to Los Angeles in November 1892. Santa Fe trains continued to ply the line through Pasadena and Highland Park for over 100 years, including perhaps the most well known train of all time, the streamlined *Super Chief*. During the *Super Chief*’s heyday, Pasadena was a station stop favored by many Hollywood movie stars… who could board or alight the train at this suburban station, avoiding the bustle of downtown as well as the fans and photographers that often congregated at Union Station.

The last main line passenger train over the line, Amtrak’s *Southwest Chief*, made its final stop at Pasadena in 1994, with Santa Fe having sold the old right-of-way to the Southern California Regional Rail Authority to make way for today’s new Gold Line.

So if you haven’t already ridden the Gold Line, give it a try. Trains run every few minutes and there are several great destinations along the way, including Old Town Pasadena, Mission Street in South Pasadena, the Southwest Museum and Heritage Square in the Highland Park area, Chinatown and the beautiful Los Angeles Union Station itself.

Gold Line Images and graphics on pages 4-5 courtesy of Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority.
The Metro gold Line brings commuter light rail service back to Pasadena in 2003 via 26 Siemens P2000 electric trains. The trains run along a 13.7-mile route, stopping at 13 stations in the communities of downtown Los Angeles, Lincoln Heights, Highland Park, South Pasadena and Pasadena. Between 26,000 and 32,000 weekday boarding passengers are expected in the first year.

Pacific Electric Red Car trolleys operated in Pasadena until the early 1950’s. This photo shows a Red Car trolley running down San Pedro Street en route to Pasadena, circa the late 1940’s.

**Metro Gold Line Timeline**

Make your next stop the Travel Town Museum Gift Shop!

- Books
- DVD/Video
- Toys
- Apparel
  . . . and more!

“*This Was Pacific Electric*”

Learn about the Pacific Electric railway and its influence on Los Angeles in this excellent history, available on video or DVD at the Travel Town Museum Gift Shop.

In addition to the new Gold Line, the Southland’s growing commuter light rail system includes the Red Line Subway as well as two other above-ground routes, the Blue Line and Green Line.
Masters’ screams of agony could be heard over the robbers’ bullets and over the explosion that blew open the safe containing a few thousand in cash and nearly 100 pounds of gold and silver coins.

When the gunfire stopped, the robbers headed out under the cover of darkness, with a wagon full of loot disguised as a milk wagon. Thomas and other survivors rushed to rescue Masters. Masters begged them to put a bullet into his head or to give him a gun so he could do it himself. Instead, they worked feverishly to free his trapped body. He died an hour later as they pulled him free.

U.S. Marshal George Gard and railroad detective Will “Whispering” Smith were recalled from the San Joaquin Valley, where they were just days away from capturing Christopher Evans, one of two notorious train robbers who had nothing to do with the Roscoe robberies.

As Gard and Smith shuttled between Los Angeles and Visalia in pursuit of train robbers, evidence began to mount. A witness swore he had seen Thompson on the train before the robbery and another claimed that Smith had paid for a prostitute at an Alameda bordello with gold coins from the heist. The lawmen found wagon tracks roughly matching those of Alva’s wagon with a worn axle; the tracks led from Roscoe to Sunland.

With a $1,000 reward on their heads, John Johnson claimed his brother and Alva’s two ranch hands matched the descriptions of the thieves and murderers. He swore he had seen his brother returning home in his wagon in the early morning, hours after the robbery.

Thompson fled to Arizona, while his crime buddy Smith lay low around town. Alva was arrested, but robbery charges were soon dropped because the evidence was weak. Sunlanders sided with Alva as their outrage swelled against the rest of the Johnson family for turning against one of their own.

Eight months after the deadly robbery, lawmen got a break in the case. A man who helped Thompson launder some of the robbery money turned him in to Arizona authorities. In the meantime, local lawmen caught up with Smith and persuaded him to testify against Alva.

Alva, 36, confessed to the robbery at the urging of his wife and children. He told authorities where he had buried the booty in his Sunland orchard and agreed to testify against Thompson, accusing him of throwing the spur switch. Thompson would accuse Johnson of doing the same, an argument that would save Thompson’s neck.

In May 1895, Thompson was found guilty and sentenced to hang. But his lawyer managed to have the conviction overturned on appeal. He argued that Thompson had been convicted of throwing the spur switch, yet no one had proved he did so. Therefore, he could be punished only for robbery and not for murder. He was retried in 1897 and convicted, and sentenced to life in Folsom State Prison.

Alva also was spared hanging.

“During sentencing on November 17, 1895, Alva sobbed uncontrollably until the judge announced a life sentence at the state prison at San Quentin because he had saved the county the expense of a trial,” wrote Mary Lee Tierman, editor and publisher of the Foothill Sentinel, in her booklet “The Roscoe Robbers and the Sensational Train Wrecking of 1894.” While he was imprisoned at San Quentin, Alva’s wife divorced him. He escaped once and was recaptured. He was paroled in 1907, and moved to Ellensburg, Wash., where he remarried. He was granted a pardon two years later.

In 1920 Alva returned to California with his new wife, Catherine, and worked as a dairymen in Oakdale. “Apparently years had mended the family rift. Alva and his brother John were driving together in Sacramento on September 6, 1920, when a streetcar ran into John’s automobile. The impact threw Alva from the automobile and fractured his skull. He died three days later, at age 63,” Tierman wrote.

In 1948, more than three decades after Roscoe was annexed to Los Angeles and more than a half-century after the train robbery, Roscoe was reduced to a mere street name, which now serves as the primary dividing line between northern and southern San Fernando Valley. Although memories had dimmed, conflicting stories emerged as to whether Roscoe was the name of the robber, the train’s engineer or the brakeman. Never mind that Roscoe was probably a land developer — townsfolk didn’t want the community to be named for a notorious 19th century train robbery.

A chagrined Roscoe Chamber of Commerce polled local residents in 1948 and the name of the community was changed to Sun Valley.

Printing of the Travel Town Tender courtesy of:
All Aboard!

A warm welcome to all who have joined or renewed our membership between June and September of 2003. Members can renew or join online at Traveltown.org and clicking on the yellow membership button, or by contacting us at the Foundation office at 323-668-0104.

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(Travel Town Museum Foundation Group Number 1094834)

How does the eScrip program work?

• Supporters register any or all of their existing grocery loyalty, debit and credit cards for use in the program.

• Participating national, regional and local merchants will make contributions to enrolled organizations, based on purchases made by supporters, who use their registered grocery loyalty, debit and credit cards. The eScrip program will continually contract new merchants.

• By using these registered cards at participating merchants, supporters generate donations based on a percentage of purchases as determined by each merchant or service provider.

• Every month the enrolled organizations receive all merchant contributions made on behalf of all participants. A summarized report listing supporters, merchants, and contributions amounts are available online.

ASK A GIFT SHOP ASSOCIATE FOR MORE DETAILS!!
Travel Town received some expert assistance one day this summer from Bank of America, but it wasn’t in the form of financial planning. DeAnna Briones, Juan Diaz, Nancy Chavez and Anna Gonzalez are all from Bank of America’s Glendale Quality Assurance division and generously donate their time to different community service programs every three months. This quarter, they were lucky enough to come out and clean our Charlie Atkins engine! Travel Town was very grateful for the help, and will gladly work with groups (large and small) from any community service group. Give the Foundation a call!