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**SPRING 2017**  
131st Edition

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**THE NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM**  
An Agency of the Nevada Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs



**NEWSLETTER OF THE NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM**

**Railroad Museum in Carson City Suffers Major Damage**  
*By Geoff Dornan from the Nevada Appeal*

All eyes may have been on the Carson and Truckee Rivers during January's flooding, but some of the worst damage was far from the rivers as a torrent of water roared through the Nevada State Railroad Museum. Museum Director Dan Thielen and State museums division Administrator Peter Barton said the problem wasn't simply the amount of water. They said there was actually more rainfall in the storms of 2005 and the museum's water control system handled it.



Flood waters inundated the museum grounds on January 8, 2017, causing damage and requiring the museum to close for two months.

This time, city crews diverted the flow down Rhodes Drive to prevent it from flooding Carson Street. To prevent that, Carson City public

works crews sandbagged the area where Rhodes crosses Curry Street. Carson City Manager Nick Marano, said they put more than a thousand sandbags down.

available down," he said. "We ran out."

"Unfortunately, their diversion stopped right at our property line," said Thielen. (continued on Page 6)

"We put every sandbag we had

**NSRM Recovers from Major Flood Disaster**

*By Adam Michalski*

The winter of 2017 was a record year for precipitation in the Sierra Nevada. Meteorologists reported over 700 inches of snow fell during the winter. With the region facing drought the past several years, many area residents were thankful for the additional precipitation. Unfortunately, NSRM was not immune to the effects of the winter storms. The additional precipitation created a huge mess for NSRM, causing a headache for staff and shutting down operations for months.

During the weekend of January 7-8,



Flood waters percolated through ballast in the JIC.

(Continued on page 4)

## VISIT THE MUSEUM

Open 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
 Thursday through Monday  
 (closed Tuesday & Wednesday)

Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day

### Museum Admission:

Adults 18 & Over - \$6.00  
 Children (Under 18) - FREE  
 Museum Members - FREE

## STEAM TRAIN & MOTORCAR RIDES

Rides run every weekend May through September with select dates in October, November and December. The complete 2017 operating schedule is available at: [nvculture.org/nevadastaterailroadmuseumcarsoncity](http://nvculture.org/nevadastaterailroadmuseumcarsoncity)

## STATE OF NEVADA

**Brian Sandoval**, Governor

## DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

**Claudia Vecchio**, Director

## DIVISION OF MUSEUMS AND HISTORY

**Peter Barton**, Administrator

## NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM, CARSON CITY

**Dan Thielen**, Director

## SAGEBRUSH HEADLIGHT NEWSLETTER

**Adam Michalski**, Curator of Education: Editor  
**Lara Brown**, Museum Store Manager: Designer

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## Message from the President of the Friends of the NSRM, Barry Simcoe

Well, we finally recovered from the Flood of 2017. As you will read in this issue the museum, working along with some excellent outside help, is back better than ever. Director Dan Thielen did a fantastic job organizing the different organizations involved in this process. We have completed two steam-ups after the repairs and everything worked perfectly. The volunteers also helped a lot with the clean-up process.

We have completed two big weekends at the museum: Memorial Day where we ran the Steam Train and the Glenbrook and "Steampunk 'N' Trains" weekend where operated the Steam Train and the McKeen car. Both were successful although the weather did not cooperate on the second weekend.

Our next big weekend will be the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. We will operate Saturday through Tuesday on this weekend and will have the 25, Inyo, and Glenbrook under steam. We need as many volunteers as we can get for this weekend, not just for operations but for all areas of the museum.

This operating season we are trying to train and move-up as many folks as we can. We are not getting any younger and some of us are getting downright crispy. To ensure the success of the Museum in the future we need to train our replacements.

As I have mentioned before, we welcome participation from any of you that are interested in our planning meetings. These are held every couple of weeks and are announced in Adam's *Monday Morning Line*. All ideas will be considered.

I want to thank all of you for all the effort you put into supporting our museum.

Please call me if you have any issues you would like to discuss.

Email: [barrysimcoe@sbcglobal.net](mailto:barrysimcoe@sbcglobal.net)  
 Phone: (775) 379-1353

*Thanks,  
 Barry*

## Handcar Travels to Two Events in Northern Nevada

By Adam Michalski

As part of NSRM's outreach efforts the museum is trying to get involved with more community events as staff and volunteers become available. One of the popular outreach tools is the museum's handcar. In April the museum was invited to bring its handcar to two events in the region. After finding volunteers to help with the handcar the museum accepted the invitations.

On April 19, the Carson City Library hosted an event titled, "Culture and Diversity in Carson City." The event featured booths and displays from several local nonprofits and government agencies to bring awareness about cultural resources in Carson City. NSRM was invited to bring its handcar to the event, which was set up in the library's parking lot. Event attendees and library patrons were offered handcar rides throughout the evening.

The second event, Kids on Big Rigs, occurred on April 29 at Peterbilt in Sparks. Kids on Big Rigs is an event where children and their parents get to experience large machines such as dump trucks, fire trucks, helicopters, etc., up close. Children climb into the cab, honk the horns, and turn on the sirens and have a fun time. However, what made the handcar unique from all the other machines was that the

children could actually climb aboard and operate it.

The gates at Kids on Big Rigs opened at 10:00am and the handcar operated constantly until the event ended at 4:00pm. Lines formed throughout the day to ride the handcar with many visitors riding several times. Staff and volunteers who attended the event surmised this was due to the fact that the handcar was situated in a prime location by the entrance next to the food trucks. An added benefit for staff and volunteers was Peterbilt's convenient location next to the Union Pacific mainline. The staff and volunteers enjoyed watching trains pass by between handcar runs. Over 3,700 visitors attended Kids on Big Rigs, making the event wildly successful. NSRM intends to return for another outing in 2018.



NSRM Volunteer Steven Struman operates the handcar with four lucky riders at the 2017 Kids on Big Rigs event in Sparks on April 29.

The handcar is available for events. If you would like to learn more about requesting the handcar for your special event or would be interested in learning more about volunteer opportunities to set up and operate the handcar at special events please contact Curator of Education Adam Michalski at (775) 687-6953 x224. He can be reached by email, as well: [amichalski@nevadaculutre.org](mailto:amichalski@nevadaculutre.org). 🚂

## 2017 Friends of the Nevada State Railroad Museum Board of Trustees Election

Applications are being accepted for the 2017 Friends of the Nevada State Railroad Museum Board of Trustees election. Trustee terms are three years in length with meetings held in Carson City bi-monthly. To be considered please submit a concise biography including name, address, phone number, and e-mail address, any railroading or applicable experience, and any other personal information that you feel may be valuable to the Nevada State Railroad Museum and/or the Friends. Submissions may be sent to the Registrar, David Brambley, by email at: [VTRRLoco18@aol.com](mailto:VTRRLoco18@aol.com). Also, you may mail your submission to: David Brambley, Registrar, Friends of the NSRM, 2016 State Ln., Big Bear City, CA 92314. Deadline for submissions is August 21, 2017.

## Recovery (continued from page 1)

2017, heavy rains drenched Carson City. Raging waters flowed out of the canyon just west of the museum and down Rhodes Street. To prevent flooding Carson Street and Highway 395, crews with the City of Carson City and the Nevada Division of Forestry used sandbags to divert the flood waters to a retaining pond and drainage ditches along Curry Street. Unfortunately, the crews ran out of sandbags at the museum's property line. Water started flowing down the emergency access road, over the railroad crossing, and towards the Restoration Shop and Annex. By late afternoon the yard tracks, Restoration Shop, and Annex were inundated with water. In the interest of public safety, at approximately 3:30pm on January 8 staff closed the museum for

the rest of the day. Little did we know the museum would not reopen again for several weeks.

After the flood the museum staff assessed the damage. Flood waters washed out portions of the emergency access road leading from Curry Street. The emergency access road grade crossing got washed out, as well. Silt piled up along the fire access road behind the restoration shop and next to Gibson Park. All of the emergency access roads became impassable for emergency vehicles. Additionally, the restoration shop and annex floors were caked with several inches of mud and silt. Layers of silt blanketed the yard tracks in front of the annex, as well. Water seeped through the ballast in the Jacobsen Inter-

pretive Center (JIC), creating the potential for high humidity levels and mold growth. The museum needed help and quickly.

In the days following the disaster the museum sought help to mitigate the damages and make repairs. Crews from the Nevada Division of Forestry arrived on the scene to provide sandbags preventing further damage and to remove the mud and silt out of the restoration shop and annex and drainage ditches. The buildings and grounds crews pumped standing water from various locations throughout the museum. Crews were called in to pump water from the turntable pit and the locomotive pit in the annex, as well. While all of this was going on the JIC needed attention, too.

Humidity levels in the JIC

were rising fast, which is not good for the museum's precious artifacts. Disaster response crews delivered two industrial desiccant dehumidifiers from California to dry the JIC. The process took several days of circulating the air and heating the building to lower the humidity to an acceptable level. It also displaced museum staff from their JIC offices and into the Nelson House for several days. While this process was necessary to protect the artifacts, the result was that a fine layer of dust accumulated on the railroad equipment and exhibits in the JIC. The museum could not be reopened until the dust was removed.

In late February a professional cleaning crew arrived from Ohio to clean the JIC. The crew spent



Flood waters seep through the ballast underneath Virginia & Truckee baggage, mail, and express car No. 21 in the annex. Fortunately, no artifacts were harmed during the flood.

several days dusting and cleaning the JIC from the rafters to the floors. After the crews dusted they cleaned all of the fine dust and silt that accumulated on the floor and lower surfaces. When that was completed they swept and polished the JIC floors. The JIC looked spotless when the cleaners finished their task. Soon enough the JIC would reopen to the public.

After being closed nearly two months the museum reopened the JIC to the public during the weekend of March 4-5. To thank the community for their patience and support NSRM offered free admission throughout the weekend. The museum received an overwhelming response with hundreds of guests taking advantage of the offer. The museum was packed all day Saturday with visitors exploring the exhibits and taking in the sights of the *Glenbrook* and the *Inyo*. One silver lining to the museum closure was that it allowed our museum store manager, Lara Brown, to revamp and restock the museum store with a wide variety of new merchandise. Her efforts were rewarded with strong sales figures during the reopening weekend. The grand reopening was a great success, but more work still needed to be completed.

Unfortunately, the museum could not reopen the annex until the equipment and exhibits on display were cleaned. Volunteers worked tirelessly over several weekends to clean the

annex. Staff and volunteers discovered, however, that the silt, which was still caked to the tracks in front of the annex, would get dusted up in the wind. If the annex doors were left open the silt would make its way back into the building. Staff decided to keep the annex closed until after the major repairs to the tracks were completed.

In late April and early May track repairs started in earnest. The goal was to have the track ready for the first steam up of the season during Memorial Day weekend. First, earth moving equipment was brought in to remove the layers of silt that piled up in front of the annex. Next, specialized machines were brought in to lift the track. The silt had to be removed from the tracks and the ballast. If there was too much silt in the ballast, it had to be removed and new ballast put in place. In addition, the contractors had to rebuild the grade crossing to stabilize it for train movements and allow access for emergency vehicles. Next, track crews cleaned the ties to prevent them from rotting. Then, the subgrade was compacted, ties and rails spiked, ballasted, then tamped to line and level. Finally, the contractors put new timbers in place at the grade crossing, completing the track repairs about ten days before the Memorial Day weekend.

Some minor improvements were made to the restoration shop parking lot and



Track crews from Mountain States Contractors repair the grade crossing on the emergency access road, May 2017.

the tracks outside the annex. After the track work was completed another construction crew graded the restoration shop parking lot. Then, crews compacted ground asphalt from highway construction projects into the parking lot and between the Annex tracks for several feet. This, along with clean ballast, will help to minimize the impact from dust and silt on the artifacts in the annex during windy days.

All of the heavy construc-

tion work was completed the week before Memorial Day weekend. The steam crews brought out No. 25 for a test run several days before Memorial Day weekend to assess the track. The track worked perfectly and exceeded the steam crew's expectations. The State Public Works Division gave its blessing for the loop to return to service. Additionally, museum staff approved the reopening of the annex to the public. Four months after the flood the museum was back in full operation. 🚂

## Flooding (continued from Page 1)

The water flooded downhill across the museum's property. It dug a channel more than two feet deep across the entrance to the storage yard and nearly four feet deep along one section of railroad tracks, completely undermining them.

Water flowed through the shop where museum experts repair and restore their ancient, historic and valuable locomotives and cars. Several inches of water flooded the other annex buildings as well. Football sized rocks were rolled down the hill by the force of the water.

More than three weeks later, the museum property was a sea of mud and pools of water. There was standing water in the shop and storage buildings, still percolating beneath the cement floors and walls of those buildings. "There was nothing on our property that could hold this back," said Thielen.

It will cost the state at least \$500,000 just to repair the damage. The actual cost, said Barton, is likely higher. That amount is simply the deductible under the state's insurance policy for flood damage.

Another big problem was silt filling the ballast. Ballast is the gravel bed beneath the rails and ties and, Thielen said, "when the ballast doesn't drain, the ties rot." That meant much of the track around the sides and behind the museum had to be pulled up, the gravel bed cleaned and compacted and the rails re-laid.

Thielen said job one was to restore the grounds to what they were before the flood and to clean up everything inside. They brought in huge blowers to dry out the 60 percent humidity inside those buildings. But the result of five days of running the driers was a fine white dust that settled on every surface inside including the historic



*Flood waters and silt destroyed the rear entrance road of the museum, which limited access in the event of an emergency.*

Inyo locomotive in the showroom. He said all that had to be cleaned up as well because, "it looks like it's uncared for. We want it to be perfect."

They said the good news is none of the collections were damaged by the flooding and none of the staff or volunteers were injured.

To save money on cleanup costs, Thielen said, they will rely on the museum's cadre of volunteers to do a lot of the cleanup. But much of the rest of the work will require professionals including engineers to design improvements to their drainage and water handling systems. He said Public Works estimates that making sure this doesn't happen again will cost \$1.6 million.

Unfortunately, since the flood occurred more than a month after state budgets were finalized, that money isn't in the budget at this point. But Barton said the governor is well aware of the situation. He visited the museum grounds the day after the flooding. And Barton let lawmakers know what had happened in his budget preview hearing this past week.

Barton and Thielen praised the cooperation they have received from risk management, emergency management and Public Works as well as from Carson City.

Marano said since the flooding, city crews have been working on mitigation along Rhodes Drive to prepare for possible future flooding. 🚧

## Two new employees join the NSRM Staff



Kevin Owens (left) and Cristol Digangi were recently hired at the Nevada State Railroad Museum.

Director Dan Thielen is pleased to announce the hiring of two new staff members in recent months to fill long-time vacancies at the Nevada State Railroad Museum.

In February, the museum hired Kevin

Owens for the position of Restoration Specialist. Kevin was a long-time volunteer in the restoration shop and on the steam crew at NSRM. He has been an active member of the Friends of NSRM for several years, as well. Kevin comes to us after working in the shops for the V&T in Virginia City and the Nevada Northern in Ely.

Another long-time vacancy was filled in May when the museum hired Cristol Digangi for the position of Museum Attendant. Like Kevin, Cristol was a long-time volunteer at NSRM, working with the steam crew and special events. Also, Cristol has been an active member with the Friends of

NSRM for many years. Cristol is passionate about railroad history and excited to contribute her skills to make NSRM a better place. She will be working closely with the volunteers coordinating schedules and tours and helping with various projects throughout the museum.

Both Kevin and Cristol bring years of experience and knowledge from the volunteer ranks that can be applied to their work at NSRM. The museum staff is excited to have both Kevin and Cristol onboard at NSRM and looks forward to working with them.

Kevin can be reached in the restoration shop at (775) 687-6953 x225 or email at [kowens@nevadaculture.org](mailto:kowens@nevadaculture.org). Cristol can be contacted in the front office at (775) 687-6953 x233 or by email at [cdigangi@nevadaculture.org](mailto:cdigangi@nevadaculture.org). Congratulations, Kevin and Cristol, on your new positions at NSRM! 🎉

## A Message from the Museum Director

By Daniel Thielen

The Museum is up and running! The damage to the railroad, annex and Jacobsen Interpretive Center during the 2017 storm season is largely repaired. There are still a couple of major projects, but we expect to have them done by August. The flooding only affected the physical plant of the Museum. The collections were not touched. Wendell Huffman and his volunteers spent years preparing the museum for this danger. Many thanks are due to the Friends of the Nevada State Railroad Museum, Risk Management, State Public Works Board, ARMAC Construction and Mountain States Contracting. These agencies and companies worked overtime to get us open for Memorial Day. I would be remiss if I did not mention the efforts of Rick

Stiver, Mort Dolan, Jason Stultz, and Peter Parker. These members of the Staff worked many hours, quietly, to get the Museum put back together. Thank you.

Our operating season is well underway. Memorial Day weekend and Steampunk 'N' Trains were a great success. Also, the Edwards Car has returned to service after being down much of 2016. In addition, we have a four-day Independence Weekend steam up with Inyo, Glenbrook and #25 in their glory. Later in the year, we will be hosting the Nevada Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America for the railroading merit badge. Harvest Train and Santa Train are on track to be a terrific success, as well.



The Museum functions best with both State funding and donations working together. If you value the NSRM, consider remembering the museum through planned giving. I am happy to discuss how your wishes can be realized. 🎉

**MANY NEW  
ITEMS!  
UNIQUE  
BOOKS,  
APPAREL,  
TOYS AND  
NOVELTY  
ITEMS!**

No visit to the  
museum is complete  
without a stop at the  
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Proceeds from sales at the Museum Store are used to fund museum projects and programs.  
Thank you for supporting the Nevada State Railroad Museum!



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