

PLUGGED IN

FUN FOR KIDS

A COOPERATIVE PROJECT OF THE SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS AND THE MUSEUM EDUCATORS' ROUNDTABLE TO PROMOTE LEARNING AMONG YOUNG READERS IN NATURAL SCIENCE, HISTORY, TECHNOLOGY AND ART.

This Month's Theme: **Transportation**

Coast Line Celebrates 100th Birthday

By Gary B. Coombs
South Coast Railroad Museum

Today, most Americans travel by car. For going longer distances, most of us take an airplane.

One hundred years ago, back in 1901, things were a lot different. Roads were primitive and cars were rare. The automobile was a stubborn contraption that was used mainly for short-distance recreation by the wealthy. The Wright brothers first flight at Kitty Hawk was still two years in the future.

Back then, the railroad was the most important means of travel in America. The United States had over 193,000 miles of railroad in 1901, but not one highway or airport! The big railroads were some of the largest corporations in the world.

In 1901, the Southern Pacific Railroad completed the Coast Line, the route along the Pacific Ocean from San Francisco to Los Angeles. People in Santa Barbara and other California coastal communities had been waiting for years for the Coast



Amtrak's Coast Starlight crosses the century-old bridge towering above Gaviota State Beach Park. Photo by Perry Lorentzen.

Line to be ready. They found that the trains were faster, cheaper, and more comfortable than the competition, which included stagecoaches and coastal steamships. In fact, the stagecoach company that served Santa Barbara went out of business the same day that the first Coast Line trains ran.

While transportation has changed greatly since 1901, the railroads are still important. Locally, the Coast Line lives on. Its route is almost the same as when it first opened. Freight trains of the Union Pacific Railroad (which purchased the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1996) still rumble through our area. (They are pulled by modern diesel locomotives, rather than the steam locomotives of 1901.)

And, you can still catch a ride on an Amtrak train from stations at Carpinteria, Santa Barbara, Goleta, Surf (near Lompoc), and Guadalupe to destinations that are nearby or clear across the country. What a great way to join in celebrating the 100th birthday of the Coast Line, and become a part of history, yourself!

To learn more, visit the library and read: *Closing The Gap: The Coast Line and Its Bridges in Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties* by Nan Lawler. 24 pages. Published by the Institute for

American Research. *Santa Barbara County Railroads: A Centennial History* by David F. Myrick. 51 pages. Published by the Santa Barbara Historical Society. *Southern Pacific's Coast Line* by John R. Signor. 324 pages. Published by Signature Press. *Stagecoach Days In Santa Barbara County* by Walker A. Tompkins. 136 pages. Published by McNally & Loftin.

The Coast Line trains brought a quick end to Santa Barbara's stagecoach days. Santa Barbara Historical Society photo.



Goleta Depot is also 100 years old. It was built in 1901 as part of the Coast Line work. South Coast Railroad Museum photo.



BRIGHT IDEA Milepost Math

By the Educational Staff
South Coast Railroad Museum

Along railroad tracks there are signs, called *mileposts*, that help train crews and other rail workers know where they are and how far it is to other places along the tracks. The milepost shows a number, which indicates the distance, in miles, from that milepost to the beginning of that railroad or branch.

Almost every railroad in the United States uses this milepost system, with one milepost marker placed every mile along the track. Milepost numbers are also given to stations, signals and other landmarks along the railroad right-of-way.

By using a little math, we can do a

lot with milepost information. The table on the right has milepost numbers for some of the places you would visit on an Amtrak train between



Milepost 358, in Goleta, is 358 miles from San Francisco, the historic home base of the Southern Pacific Railroad.

Photo courtesy of Jean-Guy Dubé.

MILEPOST INFORMATION

Santa Barbara depot – Milepost 367.4
Goleta Amtrak station – 358.2
Dos Pueblos Canyon bridge – 351.1
El Capitan State Beach Park – 347.3
Gaviota State Beach Park – 335.3
Point Conception – 322
Jalama Beach County Park – 317
Santa Ynez River crossing – 298.6
Least Tern nesting area – 289
Guadalupe depot – 273.2
Pismo Beach – 259.4
San Luis Obispo – 249.6

Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo. See if you can solve these “milepost math” problems. (You might also look at a map of California or Santa Barbara County.) The answers are at the end:

1. How far is it from the Santa Ynez River crossing to the protected Least Tern nesting area on Vandenberg Air Force Base?
2. Which city is closer to Point Conception? Santa Barbara or Guadalupe.
3. If a freight train keeps a constant speed of 30 miles per hour, how long will it take the train to travel from

San Luis Obispo to Dos Pueblos Canyon (west of Goleta)?

4. A passenger wants to know how fast her train is going. According to her watch, it takes exactly four minutes for the train to go from Jalama Beach County Park to Milepost 314. How fast was the train moving?

The answers are below.
Answers: 1. 9.6 miles (298.6 minus 289 equals 9.6); 2. Santa Barbara is closer (45.4 miles versus 48.8 miles for Guadalupe); 3. About 3 hours, 23 minutes (101.5 miles] divided by 30 mph] equals 3.383 [hours], or approx. 3 hours, 23 minutes); 4. 45 miles per hour (3 [miles] divided by 4 [minutes] equals 0.75 [miles per minute] times 60 [minutes per hour] equals 45 [miles per hour]).

**Our Next Issue:
June 24th
Theme:
Natural
History**

GET connected connected

GET CONNECTED WITH THE MEMBERS OF THE MUSEUM EDUCATORS' ROUNDTABLE:

Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary
805-966-7107; www.cinms.nos.noaa.gov

Outdoors Santa Barbara Visitor Center open daily from 11am -7pm.

Santa Barbara Mission Museum
805-682-4149

Tour includes historical art, artifacts, gardens, church and cemetery. Children free, Adults \$4.

Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation
805-965-0093; www.sbthp.org

Encourages the preservation and interpretation of historic buildings and sites in Santa Barbara County

Santa Barbara Botanic Garden
805-682-4726; www.sbbg.org
Summer Nature Camp, spaces and scholarships still available.

Channel Islands National Park
805658-5730; www.nps.gov/chis

Tidepool Programs Saturdays and Sundays, 11 a.m. Ventura Visitor Center

Ganna Walska Lotusland
805-969-3767; www.lotusland.org

Promoting Plant Conservation, Education, and Preservation

Goleta Valley Historical Society
805-964-4407; www.goletahistory.org

New wedding display, with dresses from the 1950-60 era, is now open. Tours 2-4 p.m. on the half hour.

Santa Barbara Historical Society
805-966-1601

To promote an appreciation and understanding of Santa Barbara regional history and the importance of history in general.

Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History & Sea Center

www.sbnature2.org; 805-682-4711; 805-963-1067 (Sea Center)

Butterflies Alive! May 29–Sept. 9. Flutter By!

Santa Barbara Zoological Gardens
805-962-5339
www.santabarbarazoo.org

Sign up now for Zoo Camp before its too late!

Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum

805-966-5373; www.sbcaf.org

In Paseo Nuevo, 2nd level, Arts Terrace. Hours: Tues.–Sat. 11-5, Sun. 12-5. Admission is free.

South Coast Railroad Museum
805-964-3540; www.goletadepot.org

Open Wed. through Sun. 1 to 4 pm. 300 N. Los Carneros Road, Goleta. Come Ride the Train!

Art From Scrap
805-884-0459
www.communityenvironmentalcouncil.org/afs

Art From Scrap is an environmental education and art program of the Community Environmental Council.

Karpeles Manuscript Library and Museum
805-962-5322

The world's largest private holding of important original documents and manuscripts.