



Jean Bartlett photo

On May 16, 2013, Car 1409 was moved from Shamrock Ranch to its new space at the Calera Creek Water Recycling Plant.

Historic car bound for glory

LOCALS NEEDED TO GET ON BOARD

By Jean Bartlett
Tribune Writer

"It's so cool that we have the last passenger car of the Ocean Shore Railroad," longtime Pacifican and history buff Jim Wagner said. "To have another icon of Pacifica history on display for all to enjoy, touch, and experience will be an instant hit. Who doesn't like old trains, especially one so important to Pacifica's past?"

Let's begin that past in the summer of 1909. Andrea Sbarboro, founder of the Italian-Swiss Colony Wine Company, had just been interviewed to describe his experience as a passenger on the Ocean Shore Railway.

"I was astonished, more than surprised, at the magnificent grandeur of the scenery along the Ocean Shore Railway. It is wonderful, rivaling in beauty the famous Italian railway along the Riviera from Nice to Genoa."



The scenic route of the train, renamed the Ocean Shore Railroad, chugged back and forth along the coast from San Francisco to Tunitas Glen, 26 miles north of Santa Cruz, and included stops in Pacifica: Edgemar, Salada, Brighton, Vallemar, Rockaway and San Pedro-Terrace by the Sea. For those now living along the San Mateo County Coast, this train helped build their community.

Built for the OSRR, Car 1409 was a Holman passenger car and she was a beauty. Birds-eye maple veneering looked down from the ceiling. There were brass fixtures, mahogany trim and stunningly crafted upholstered seats. She was the ride of a lifetime.

Photo from the files of Bruno Crenci. **Ocean Shore Railroad 1910, south of Pedro Point.**

But the world happened to Car 1409 and to the OSRR. There were landslides and labor strikes, and with the increase in automobiles, the train made its last run in 1920. Sometime after that, Car 1409 vanished.

In 2004, railcar restoration expert Jeff Millerick and railroad historian John Schmale headed out to a backyard in Sebastopol. There was an old train car there.

Lodged between two oak trees, the car was submerged a foot into the ground. Eighty years of vegetation covered it. The men knew at once "the faded beauty" was a Holman car. Numbers over the door frame revealed her identity, Car 1409.



Courtesy photo
Once a railroad beauty, Car 1409 was discovered in a Sebastopol backyard in 2004.

No railway museum collection wanted her. Talk of a bulldozer loomed. Schmale called Kathleen Manning. Then president of the Pacifica Historical Society (PHS), Manning asked the all-volunteer PHS members to save Car 1409 and they responded. Work began immediately. Under the guidance of master carpenter Scott Lindner, months were spent in Sebastopol constructing shoring to stabilize her roof and walls. That was the only way she would survive the ride to Pacifica. In 2005, she made the journey home.

Shamrock Ranch generously offered a space to park her and work began on undercarriage reconstruction. This included replacing rusted I-beam ends and replacing the majority of the wood beams bolted to the I-beams to form the base for the coachwork. Then there was the framing work which needed all kiln-dried, custom-melded white oak. By 2013, the PHS had raised and spent \$45,000 on this project.

Then there were the "unplanned" vandal-created expenses of graffiti and a 12-inch hole burned in the floor from a campfire. In 2013, the 20-ton railroad car was skillfully maneuvered onto an 18-wheeler and moved to its new, worksite at Calera Creek. Also generously donated, this site provides more security. Restoration work was then put on hold. The PHS needed to finish their other project – to save, preserve and restore the Little Brown Church and turn it into the Pacifica Coastside Museum.



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In May of 2013, master carpenter Scott Lindner supervised the car's placement on the back of an 18-wheeler.

For that project, which began in 2001, the PHS members blew past the naysayers to raise the \$500,000 needed to get the job done. The doors to the Pacifica Coastside Museum opened in August of 2015 and have welcomed thousands of visitors since.

In late 2015, PHS renewed "1409" fundraising efforts. In 2018, Pacifica's first city manager, Karl Baldwin, donated \$25,000 to bring those funds up to \$100,000. He hopes the car can reside in the parking lot across the street from the museum. This site is the Society's hope as well. They are also investigating other possibilities.

But here's the thing. The move to Calera Creek to restore Car 1409 was always temporary. In 2019, the PHS needs to move her to her final Pacifica location and that location has yet to be identified. Time ticks yet again on the fate of 1409.

Lynn Roberts, owner of the P-Town Cafe on Highway 1, completely understands the merits of a historic train car. Her business is in a 1942 Union Pacific Railroad caboose.

"I feel very privileged and lucky to work in this train car along the Pacific Coast Highway," she said. "People love trains and they love coming here and taking pictures of the caboose. I think that Car 1409 really provides another way for people to come into this city and spend money."

"I think that trains are awesome," said Lynn Adams, president of the Pacifica Beach Coalition. "And the history of the Ocean Shore Railroad going along our shore is incredible. To think that so much of that train track has since gone back to the sea. We've got Car 1409 now. It's our history and it's fascinating."

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Against all odds, the PHS saved Car 1409. Now they are asking Pacificans to help them find and secure that perfect, visitor-friendly spot to permanently house her. They are also looking to hire craft woodworkers to complete the restoration. Contact the PHS through their website, www.pacificahistory.org, or phone 650-359-5462.

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