

# SAGEBRUSH HEADLIGHT

Vol. 33, No. 2  
119th Ed.

THE NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM  
An Agency of the Division of Museums & History

Summer 2012

## Relocating and Restoring the Wabuska Depot

by Lara Mather, Curator of Education

In 1880, H.M. Yerington, President of the Virginia & Truckee Railroad's new, narrow-gauge subsidiary, the Carson & Colorado Railroad, ordered a small station to be constructed on the C&C at Wabuska. With the U.S. Post Office, the two-story Commercial Hotel and J. M. Feeny's general merchandise store, the C&C station became the hub of the small settlement at the upper end of Mason Valley. Deposits of copper sulfate discovered by John Ludwig in 1870 had not prompted a rush to the region.

Earnings didn't reach expectations on the Carson & Colorado, and the V&T sold it to the Southern Pacific Company in March 1900. In May gold and silver were discovered at Tonopah. In August Collis P. Huntington died. In February 1901, Edward Henry Harriman's purchase of SP stock held by Huntington's heirs brought the Southern Pacific under Union Pacific Railroad control.

Development at Tonopah of what proved to be the second-richest silver strike in Nevada history and discovery of gold at Goldfield in 1902 led to standard-gauging of the C&C to Tonopah Junction and the building of what became the Tonopah & Goldfield Railroad. This generated tremendous demand for shipment of Mason Valley hay, grain, potatoes and other agricultural products.

Because the C&C terminated at Mound House, Tonopah or Goldfield traffic had to travel Virginia & Truckee rails to reach the SP at Reno. In 1905 the V&T was offered for sale to the SP but the latter would pay only 80 percent of the asking price, and instead bypassed the V&T.

On September 1, 1906, the SP completed a connection from Churchill on the C&C to its Central Pacific mainline at Hazen. The tremendous increase in freight out of Wabuska influenced the SP to replace the original C&C depot with a larger station and freight shed.

A new SP subsidiary, the Nevada & California Railway, was chartered April 7, 1905, to build the Hazen cutoff and assume ownership of the C&C. This new corporation was leased in July 1909 to the Southern Pacific Company, which transferred the lease to the Central Pacific Railway in February of 1912. On December 2, 1912, the U.S. Supreme Court directed the Union Pacific Railroad to divest itself of Southern Pacific Company stock. As the final link in the Wabuska depot's chain of railroad ownership, the Central Pacific was merged into the SP in 1959. The 24-by-80 foot, single-story, wood-frame freight and passenger station served the Mason Valley agricultural and mining region until September 1, 1979, when the railroad closed the station.



*Wabuska Depot, September 1946.*

Al Phelps photo, NSRM

*Continued on Page 4*

**NEVADA STATE  
RAILROAD MUSEUM**

2180 South Carson Street  
Carson City, NV 89701  
775-687-6953

[www.NevadaCulture.org/museums](http://www.NevadaCulture.org/museums)

Open 9 to 5 Fridays through Mondays  
except Dec. 25 and Jan.1

Admission: \$6. Children under 18, and  
members of the Friends of the Nevada  
State Railroad Museum, admitted FREE.



**NEVADA**  
DEPARTMENT OF  
TOURISM AND  
CULTURAL AFFAIRS



The museum is an agency of the  
**State of Nevada**

Brian Sandoval, Governor  
**Nevada Department of  
Tourism & Cultural Affairs**

Claudia Vecchio, Director

**Division of Museums & History**

Peter D. Barton, Administrator

**Nevada State Railroad Museum**

Frank Ackerman, Museum Director  
Lara Mather, Curator of Education  
and Editor *Sagebrush Headlight*  
lmather@nevadaculture.org  
775-687-6953 ext. 224

The Nevada State Railroad Museum  
publishes the *Sagebrush Headlight*  
newsletter three times a year. The Friends  
of the Nevada State Railroad Museum  
distribute it as a membership benefit.

**Board of Trustees, Friends of the  
Nevada State Railroad Museum**

President: Ron Allen—2014

frontieradjusters@pyramid.net

Vice President: Stan Cronwall—2012

stlaine@aol.com

Secretary: Christopher MacMahon—2013

chris@cmmacmahon.com

Treasurer: Bruce Armbrust—2012

armbrust@ltcc.edu

Ken Allen—2014

David Brambley—2013

Matt Digangi—2013

Ralph Elligott—2012

Mark Owens—2014

*Terms of office end in December.*

Correspondence may be sent to:

Friends of NSRM

PO Box 1330

Carson City, NV 89702

**NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM**

**2012 Summer and Fall Events**

New museum hours 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM  
Train rides (except Santa Train) 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM

**Labor Day Weekend**

Saturday, Sunday & Monday, September 1, 2 & 3

**Steam Train and Special Exhibits**

All-inclusive tickets \$12 for adults; \$3 for children 4-11 and  
members with membership card; children 3 or younger, free.

**Saturday and Sunday, October 20 & 21**

Steam Train : Adults \$6; children 4-11 and members with  
membership card \$3;

**Nevada Day—Saturday, October 27**

McKeen Motor Car : Adults, \$10; children 4-11 and members  
with membership card \$5; children 3 or younger, free.

**Santa Train (New Dates)**

Saturday & Sunday, December 1 & 2

Saturday & Sunday, December 15 & 16

Rides begin at 9:00 AM; All seats \$3

**Restoration Update**

The *Glenbrook* restoration has been on hold while the shop staff  
put other equipment in service for the summer. When we get  
back to the *Glenbrook* we will focus on fitting the barrel and  
front tube sheet to the rear section of the boiler, repainting the  
tender frame, and timing the engine. Contractor Jim Wilke is  
well into the paint research and will present his findings this  
summer. A Reno cabinet shop is under contract to replicate the  
cab.



The restoration team loads the *Glenbrook's* tender tank.  
The tank is being sent out to be repainted the correct color.

**Publication Schedule**

The next *Sagebrush Headlight* will be published in November.  
The Spring 2013 issue is scheduled for March, the Summer  
issue will be out in June, and the Fall issue in November.

## FNSRM President's Message

Summer is definitely here. Our days have been very hot and the nights somewhat warmer. Since my last writing, the long 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend operations went off without a hitch. The museum attendance was somewhat less\* this year compared to last year. That may have been due to the economy or some other reason. I guess time will tell.

The next steam up weekend will be the Labor Day event, so hopefully it will be busy during those days. The motorcar runs on the non-steam up weekends and volunteers are always welcome to assist with those operations. Speaking of volunteers, a huge hearty thank you is going out for all who assisted with the 4 of July weekend. We could not have done it without each and every one of you. So give yourselves a round of applause and thank you again.

The Board of Directors for the **Friends** will be undertaking a huge financial project in the coming months. This should be announced soon and will require a substantial fundraising effort. Just as soon as the final figures have been determined, we will be developing a campaign and the accompanying marketing effort. This is not meant to be a tease, so the effort will be to rebuild and rehabilitate our locomotive # 8, which has been out of service for the past couple of years. It will definitely be the single largest undertaking by our organization since we formed over twenty five years ago. It is hoped that we can accomplish this effort within a couple of years and start using it for our regular operations. Therefore once we initiate this program, we will be requesting every member's assistance. So please keep this worthy project in your minds and how you will be able to assist with it.

This message is proving to be shorter than my usual ones, as I goofed and the deadline for submission is past and I need to get this into the editor. Thank you Lara for accepting this later than requested.

Oh by the way! Be sure to mark your calendars for September 20 – 23, 2012 for the annual Railroad History Symposium in Ely, Nevada. Mark Bassett and crew are planning an excellent program with lots of good and interesting topics. Also, the **Friends** annual Board of Directors Meeting is set for October 5, 2012 during the V & T History Conference. In Carson City. Got to go!

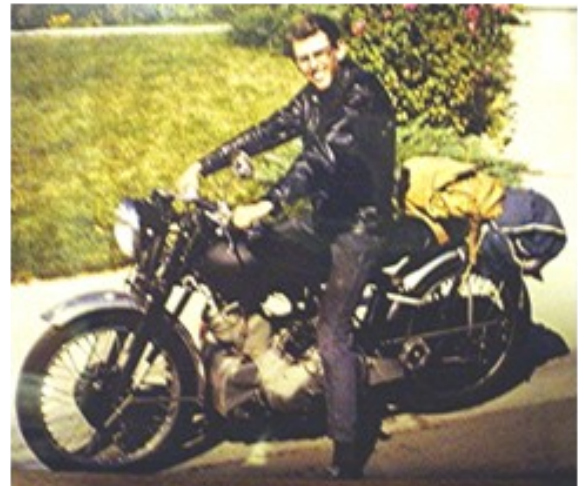
—Ronald J. Allen

\*Train-ride revenue was 4 percent higher last year. Admissions revenue was 51 percent higher this year—*Editor*

### Spotlight on Jeff Van Hatten

Jeff was born in upstate New York in the '40s. He graduated from Trinity Lutheran College in Issaquah, WA with a Bachelor of Arts in Biblical Studies. Jeff lived all over the country, and retired after many years as a slot-machine repairman for Bill Harrah, Harvey Gross, and Costa Cruise Line. He also was a longtime employee of Outdoor Ministry where he maintained buildings and grounds and was a camp counselor in Colorado.

Jeff has a passion for motorcycles. He has owned a Black Shadow and a Black Comet made by Phillip Vincent. He also likes boating and has taught water skiing at Lake Tahoe. In the winter he also snow skis. After talking with Bill Kohler and Russ Tanner he participated in this year's motorman class and started volunteering. He volunteers in the annex where he enjoys giving handcar rides, and wants one day to operate the McKeen car.



—Christopher Thompson

*Correction from last issue: Cristol Greer's family is from Canada. She was born in Seattle, Washington.*

**November 2012 Sagebrush Headlight items are due Monday, October 15.**

*Continued from Page 1*



*July 21, 1983. Wabuska Depot in Dayton, on its way to NSRM.*  
Daun Bohall photo, NSRM

On June 30, 1916, the railroad provided the Interstate Commerce Commission with a list of the depot's contents. Historic documents such as this provide an accurate account of what was in the depot and used by the stationmaster. It included:

2 standard flat-top hardwood desks	1 copy press
1 standard flat-top oak desk	1 wringer
1 table	1 stationery case
2 rocking chairs	1 oil tray 1 scale
5 armchairs	2 wicker wastebaskets
2 chair cushions	1 duster
2 ten-foot benches	1 ticket date-stamp
2 six-foot benches	1 ticket punch
2 cabooses stoves	4 lanterns
8 stovepipe lengths	6 flags
4 stovepipe elbows	1 two-wheeled baggage truck
2 water coolers	1 four-wheeled baggage truck
2 coal hods	1 ladder
1 coal shovel	3 warehouse trucks
4 lamps	4 fire barrels & buckets
8 window shades	1 fire ladder
1 ticket case	1 broom
1 fire extinguisher	14-foot round rug
1 clock	[quantity not shown]

An Interstate Commerce Commission inventory of the Wabuska Depot on August 6, 1917, included a detailed drawing of the building that gives us a glimpse of the interior at that time. This inventory added the following items not shown in the 1916 document:

9 Shannon files	1 sealing iron
1 swinging typewriter table	3 [illegible] files
ink well	1 axe
rubber stamps, etc.	1 army stretcher
1 wire letter tray	150 board feet shelving
1 ticket punch	1 wall lamp
1 baggage punch	1 locker (1000 lb.)
	1 locker

1 bucket	1 fire extinguisher
1 Rochester lamp	1 hand saw
1 telegraph table [illegible]	1 letter press stand
1 gem clipboard	1 inspector's lantern
1 wire waste basket	100 ft. of 1-1/2" hose w/couplings & nozzle
25 tariff file cases	1 lamp
36 letter file cases	1 bulletin board (30 lb.)
1 trunk gauge	1 bulletin board (60 lb.)

There was a 4-by-16 foot platform with one step outside what is now the northeast public entrance. The waiting room and office were similar to what exists today.

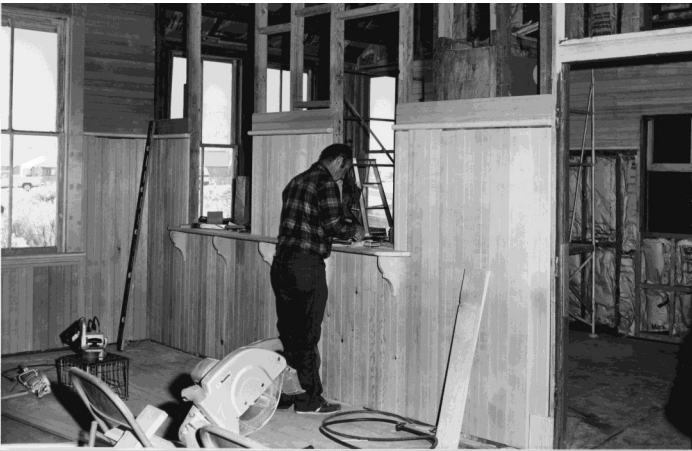
The freight room, however, was split into two sections. An 18-by-24 foot area adjacent to the office was designated as express space, with a 10-by-12 foot room within. The northwest and northeast freight doors opened into this space. Outside the northeast freight door was an 18-by-8 foot loading platform. The remaining 28-by-24 foot area included another room, 10 feet square. A 16-by-24 foot loading platform was outside the south end of the building.

A 1983 effort by the SP to eliminate excess property included bulldozing all depots that were not in use. The Company offered the Wabuska depot to the Nevada State Railroad Museum. The Thorne Depot, northeast of Hawthorne off highway 839, was also to be demolished. Because the depots were identical, the museum also accepted some items at Thorne, including the semaphore now positioned as the train-order board on the Wabuska Depot.

Prior to moving the depot, the roof, trusses, end walls and outhouse were removed (the outhouse was not replaced).



*August 1, 1983. Wabuska Depot being set on its new foundation.*  
Daun Bohall photo, NSRM



October 15, 1985. Tommy Barns restoring the waiting room. Daun Bohall photo, NSRM

The depot had to be partly dismantled in order to pass under the many power and phone lines on its 60-mile trip. On Thursday morning July 21, Dario E. Bevilacqua and a 3-man crew began the move from Wabuska, escorted by Sheriff's Deputies from Lyon County and Carson City. The trip was so time-consuming they had to park the depot overnight just east of Dayton. They began again at 6:00 AM on Friday in order to avoid morning commuter traffic.

A new foundation was poured in advance and the depot was set in place. The roof was replaced and the building enclosed. Afterward the building sat for three years. When the depot arrived at the museum, the Annex was the only building on the property.

At the southeast corner of the depot is the file room, which didn't exist at the time of the 1917 inventory. It's lined with zinc sheets to keep out rodents which were unable to chew through the metal. Now the file room is used for the water-treatment system for the water tank. Water used in a locomotive boiler is treated to extend the life of the boiler.

In 2004 a new floor replaced the original which was worn beyond repair. Most of the flooring was about 2-3/8 inches thick except near the freight doors where the thickness was only 3/4-inch. The original floor had remnants of the freight scale. Most of the scale had been stolen and only the base in the floor remained. It was removed when the floor was replaced.

The hobo-graffiti board inside the freight room was donated to the museum by a Reno resident in 2005. The board was recovered about 1985 from a warehouse near the railroad in Lovelock. The board is carved with several names, nicknames and symbols. The earliest date on the board is 1902; the latest, 1912.

When the museum opened on May 31, 1980, only about 50 feet of track extended from the annex. In 1985, Civil Engineer Bob Fuller completed a survey of the property for an extended track system.

In February 1986 about a mile of track donated by the Union Pacific Railroad arrived at NSRM. Union Pacific also provided two flatbed trucks and a hi-railer crane to deliver about 2 miles of 85-pound ties, spikes, bolts, joint bars, and tie plates; and ten switches.

Contrary to a widespread misconception, prison inmates did not build any of the museum's original trackage. A decade after the museum opened, however, inmates assisted Greg Corbin and then-contractor Rick Stiver with construction of track into the new Jacobson Interpretive Center.

In December 1986 the Brierley Construction Company of Sparks, Nevada, contracted to lay the track linking the depot to the rest of the property. Fill dirt for the track came from the site of the east parking structure of the Ormsby House. The first rail was spiked January 14, 1987; the last, on May 13, 1987.

With the operation of a steam locomotive, it was time for a water tower. In December, 1986, the museum successfully applied for a \$12,000 grant from the Robert Z. Hawkins Foundation of Reno for the construction of a water tower. The tower was designed by Chris de Witt based on detailed records from the Interstate Commerce Commission. The water tower is a two-thirds size Franktown replica with a 4,500 gallon capacity. The drawings for the foundation and water tower were approved by architect Ralph Eissmann. The spout and foot valve were built by Chris de Witt.

In an effort to re-create a railroad environment around the depot, the Nelson house was moved onto the property in 1985. The house was built by Louis Nelson in the 1920s. It was located at 211 West 8<sup>th</sup> Street, just east of the Carson Station Casino.

After purchasing the lot to build a parking lot, the casino owner donated the house to the State of Nevada for addition to the museum. Although the Nelson house was not associated with a railroad, the donation was accepted because the house was from the appropriate time period and was the right size for the location. Shaw construction volunteered to move the house to the museum grounds.

## The Nevada Copper Belt Railroad and its Influence on the Wabuska Depot

The town of Greenfield, named for its agriculture, changed its name Yerington in an attempt to persuade H.M. Yerington to build the Carson & Colorado Railroad through their community in 1881. Though their flattery was not successful, the town eventually got a railroad from Wabuska to the Ludwig mine.

Although copper mining dates back to the 1860s in the Mason Valley, renewed activity late in 1901 influenced the push for a railroad. In 1909 the newly organized Nevada Copper Belt Railroad urged citizens to buy \$50,000 in bonds. When the initial pitch suggested the shortest route would go directly from Wabuska to the Ludwig mine, the citizens of Yerington asked for a loan large enough for the route to take the trains to Yerington and the farms of Mason Valley, then west to the mine.

Five banks pledged \$22,000 in bonds and construction began at Wabuska on September 8, 1909. The first train reached the station for Yerington, one mile from town and across the Walker River, on January 14, 1910. The Nevada Copper Belt line reached Ludwig in October of 1911.

Copper ore was not the first shipment from Ludwig. Two cars of gypsum went to the Western Gypsum Company in Reno on October 28. The first shipment of copper ore went to the Thompson smelter north of Wabuska on December 1.

The wealth of the NCB depended heavily on the Nevada Douglas, Mason Valley, and Bluestone mines. The price of copper regulated traffic from the mines. At the start of World War I copper prices declined, closing the Thompson smelter.

Purchase of the Bluestone mine in 1917 by a new corporation rejuvenated activity on the NCB. Copper

Prices rose later in the war, and the smelter was reopened from February 1917 through February 1919. The new owner of the mine was able to increase productivity enough to warrant a spur from the mine to the NCB mainline. During the 1920s, the smelter was once again active when ore was hauled in from California. In 1929, the Thompson smelter was permanently closed and dismantled.

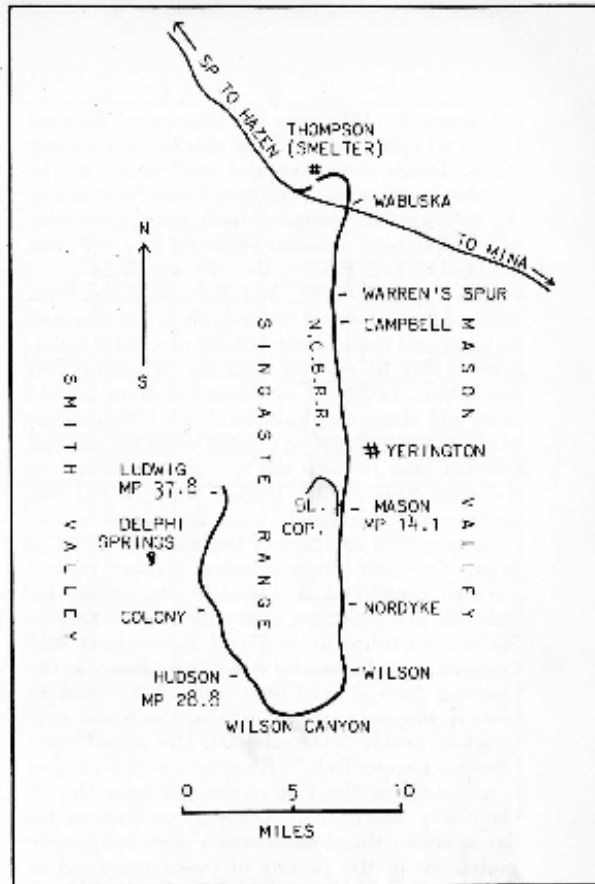
Over a period of 35 years, the NCB used three self-propelled passenger cars to shuttle Thompson and Wabuska children to school in Yerington and Mason and to transport business travelers to Yerington, Mason and Ludwig. Car No. 21, built by the Hall-Scott Company in 1911, is preserved at the California State Railroad Museum. Car No. 22 (Hall-Scott, 1914) is awaits restoration at NSRM.

In dry weather, Wabuska-to-Yerington auto stage lines competed with the NCB's all-weather service. Yerington passengers rode the C.J. Monahan auto stage the mile to town from the NCB.

In 1919 the railroad ran three trips daily between Wabuska and Mason and one daily Mason to Hudson. Mason-Hudson service had been reduced to three trips a week by 1922.

Parts of the railroad ceased to operate as the years passed: the line from Ludwig to Hudson closed in July 1933; from Wabuska to Thompson closed in August 1935. Business increased during World War II but not enough to be profitable. Passenger service on the NCB ended in 1945 and freight service in 1946. The NCB's last train operated on March 24, 1947. afterward the Virginia & Truckee Railway acquired NCB steam locomotive No. 5 and caboos No. 3. The caboose has been restored to operating condition at the Nevada State Railroad Museum.

Myrick, David F. 1962. *Railroads of Nevada and Eastern California: Vol. I - The Northern Roads*. Berkeley: Howell-North Books. Reprinted 1990, Reno: University of Nevada Press. pp. 214 - 229.



The route of the Nevada Copper Belt, with mines and towns it reached. Myrick: Railroads of Nevada.

## Growing up in Wabuska: an interview with Gene Bails

By Lara Mather, Curator of Education

*Photos courtesy of the Bails Family Collection*



*Station Master Dick Bails at work in Wabuska Depot.*

The Wabuska Depot Station Master from 1948 to 1975 was John Richard (Dick) Bails. His son, Gene Bails, has fond memories of growing up in Wabuska and recently talked with me. Gene's stories give us a glimpse of what daily life was like for the railroad station master and his family.

Gene's mother told him a story about using the depot to dry their laundry. The depot stove was located in the waiting room. When the depot was closed for the day, she would string up laundry lines in front of the stove and hang the children's diapers to dry. First thing in the morning, Gene's mother would remove the laundry before the depot was open to the public.

Gene also remembers his father getting rid of bats that had taken over the attic in the depot. Sulfur was commonly shipped from Canada to the mines in Mason Valley. Dick got the idea to take a bucket of sulfur and set it in the middle of the depot freight room. He opened all of the doors and lit the sulfur. He not only cleared out all of the bats, but almost cleared out the town of Wabuska from the stench of the burning sulfur.

When it was time for Gene's father to receive his annual raise, three executives from the Southern Pacific Railroad would be sent to negotiate the amount. During the height of its time, the Wabuska depot was the number one money earner in the west for the Southern Pacific Railroad. Gene's father simply asked for one percent of what came

across his desk. The three railroad executives answered, "that would be more than the three of us make combined."

Because the Wabuska Depot was so busy the entire Bails family would help with the workload. Both Gene and his mother would help Dick type the freight bills, sometimes working until midnight. Each freight bill had four copies plus carbons. One copy would go with the train, one went to the division office in San Francisco. The other two copies would stay at the depot.

Every few years Gene would load a truck with the freight bills and take them to their house across the street from the Depot. Across a road, behind their house they had dug a pit where he would dump the paperwork to be burned. One day during the summer between his sophomore and junior year, Gene lit the freight bills as usual.

On this occasion a dust devil blew over the pit and caught a few burning pieces of paper. The burning paper was blown to a field full of sagebrush and caught fire. As the fire began to spread, Gene remembers his only concern being that the fire was heading to the garage where his car was stored. Luckily, the car was saved.



*Gene poses with his mother and sister Lezlie in front of the Wabuska Depot, winter 1951.*

4216  
**NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM**  
2180 South Carson Street  
Carson City, Nevada 89701-5999  
775-687-6953  
Address Service Requested

**PRSRSTD**  
**U.S. Postage**  
**PAID**  
**Carson City, NV**  
**89701**  
**Permit No. 15**

On May 23, 2012, The National Park System Advisory Board recommended to Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar that he designate **Virginia & Truckee Railway McKeen Motor Car No. 22** as a **National Historic Landmark.**

The nomination awaits Secretary Salazar's review and approval.

### **Volunteers Wanted**

### **The Nevada State Railroad Museum Needs Your Help**

Support the museum through the donation of your time.

**WE NEED YOU**



Volunteers are needed for the Museum Store, Admissions Desk, Annex Building, Depot Ticket Sales; and to lead Tours. No prior experience necessary.



Shifts are Friday, Saturday, Sunday, or Monday Mornings from 9 AM to 1 PM or Afternoons from 1 to 5 PM  
Please contact Lara Mather, Curator of Education  
(775) 687-6953 ex 224 or [lmather@nevadaculture.org](mailto:lmather@nevadaculture.org)