



MOTOR TRANSPORT MUSEUM NEWS

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The Cadillac Stage restoration is progressing with the nickel plating of the inside and outside door handles and headlights. Next is the radiator shell and bumpers.

In 1929 Las Vegas, NV was a thriving little town with a population of 7000. It was a stop on the Union Pacific Railroad that was a staging area for supplies delivered to the surrounding mines. Our feature article this quarter is a description of an early refrigerated truck service from Los Angeles that brought fresh fruits and produce directly to the citizens of Las Vegas. This article is reprinted from the October 1929 issue of *Commercial Car Journal* magazine. We would like to thank the publishers of the magazine for their permission to reprint the article.

Refrigerator Trucks Conquer the Desert

by George N. Kramer

Daily the desert sun beats down unmercifully upon a lone truck that seems to crawl over the bleaching sands toward the withering horizon, somewhere between Los Angeles and the boom town of Las Vegas, Nev., the site of the Boulder Dam project. Creeping through the death-like valleys at sea level and then climbing to elevations a mile high, only to drop again into the sweltering heat, the truck moves on like a phantom through the night and like a mirage by day.

The people of Las Vegas know it to be a reality and not a phantom, because it runs on schedule, bringing to them over a distance of 300 miles commodities collected from the seacoast markets and with the sea breeze still upon them. Ice cream, beverages, fruit, vegetables, fresh meats and other perishable foods are the cargoes that are carried across the Mojave Desert with the mercury hovering around the 115-deg. mark in the shade. But there is no shade, and even at night the thermometer rarely registers less than 100. Even so, the perishables repose in a refrigerated van at 50 deg. throughout the 16-hr. journey. Las Vegas has boomed within the past year, and its 7000 inhabitants, many of whom have been accustomed to other fare than the desert offers, require the better things of life. They look to the refrigerated three-ton model GA Reo Speedwagon to furnish them. Heretofore they could get these things by rail, but that necessitated re-handling, exposure to the heated atmosphere, inconvenience, a longer route and possibly delays. Now, the refrigerated truck rolls to the door of a clubhouse and delivers a consignment of fresh milk or other beverages right into the kitchen ice box; it drives to the corner drug store to drop several packing jackets of ice cream into the soda fountain; it brings the grocer fresh

vegetables, and supplies the fruit stand with crisp, cool fruits. And it costs no more.

Not only the inhabitants of Las Vegas, but hundreds living near the dozen or more way-points served by the truck, who have not even the accommodations of railway service, have come to depend upon the new system. Unlike the boom population at Las Vegas, these people are experiencing a new standard of living, for the city has been brought to their very doorsteps. This effect is not as yet very pronounced because the service is new, but the increasing orders for shipment of goods indicate the demand for it. This is so evident that plans are now being made for the extension of the system and the addition of more trucks.

The three-ton six-wheel Reo which, with the specially built body, weighs six tons net, leaves Los Angeles at 5 o'clock in the afternoon, taking a cargo averaging between six and seven tons. At San Bernardino the truck is re-iced, the amount depending upon the character and condition of the shipment. But for the remainder of the journey no more re-icing is done.



This Reo Speedwagon, traversing the most severe express route in Southern California, covers 600 miles three times a week with six to seven ton loads

This speaks volumes for the refrigerator body job, which required careful planning of details. It had to be strong to withstand the wear and tear over the unpaved roads, and yet not so heavy that it would be a deadweight. Weight, durability and refrigeration qualities were the three essential items that had to be taken into consideration, according to K. M. Stevenson, manager of the Las Vegas Motor Express, Inc., who planned the service and was instrumental in drawing specifications for the body

The aluminum-painted job is insulated with Dry-Zero, which is said to weigh only one-tenth as much as cork, has better insulating value, and does not absorb moisture. Even so, the body itself weighs 3000 lb. and cost

\$1,250. The total cost of the truck is in the neighborhood of \$5,000, which might seem prohibitive, but is not, because it is already paying for itself.

A side door, which may be seen in the accompanying photograph, permits the driver to unload or load shipments at the way-points without disturbing the remainder of the goods or impairing the refrigerating temperatures.

The durable qualities cannot be questioned when the nature of the long trek is considered. At one place, for instance, the truck rolls along the floor of the desert and then starts on a grade 26 miles long to the summit which is 30 ft. higher than any point on the Ridge route. Between Barstow and Baker another grade begins at Death Valley and rises to 5000 ft. within a distance of 31 miles, dropping again to sea level within 15 miles. Yet throughout this difficult grind an average speed of about 20 mph is maintained. Drivers are changed at Victorville, CA for the task would be too great for one man to pilot the truck from Los Angeles to Las Vegas.

Durability must, therefore, extend even to the chassis and down to the rugged highway itself. Firestone balloon tires of the 9:75 bus-type are used.

"Although we considered this something of a gamble at first," Mr. Stevenson, who has been operating truck lines for the past eight years, relates, "we believed there was a real need for a refrigerator line. The success of the venture exceeded our expectations, and we have made of it a profitable business. We anticipate a greater volume as time goes on, so that next season we will be required to increase our service. There is every reason to expect that once the Boulder Dam will get under way the demand for perishables will increase, but even as conditions are now, a steady business is assured."

Again the desert has been conquered, not by the primitive methods that called for the life blood of the early pioneers, but by the inventiveness and industry of those who are daily causing the earth to shrink in size and enabling all men, even those in the desert, to enjoy the good things of life.

Return of the Rail Spur to the Museum

by Carl Calvert

The Museum has been interested for some time in reinstalling the rail spur at the rear of our main building in Campo. This spur was installed about 1919 to serve the site before the building was built to process feldspar. This rail spur was used to bring materials to the area for building the Barrett dam hence the point in the rail line was known as Barrett. It is also at the rail line mile marker 67. Both signs still remain on the right-of-way.

After the mill building was built and began operation the spur was used to bring in boxcars that were then loaded with feldspar that had been crushed to a fine powder and bagged. The feldspar was then shipped to Richmond, CA

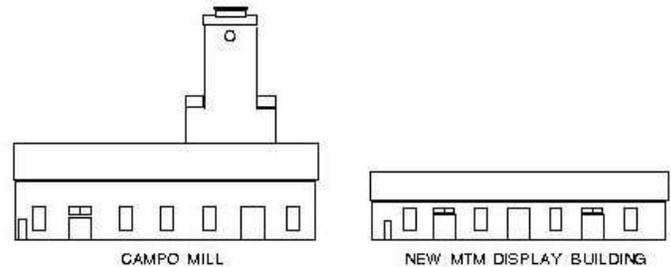
for use in the manufacture of bathroom fixtures. After the feldspar operations were closed (ca. 1946) the railroad removed the spur because of non-use.

The museum has been interested in reinstalling the spur to represent the history of how feldspar was transported out of the mill. Additionally, we would like to use the spur for occasional rail tours to and from our museum by the San Diego Railroad Museum.

Our museum has a benefactor who has spent considerable time and money in locating switches, rails and ties to reinstall the spur. This equipment has been procured and is now stored at Campo awaiting the final go-ahead for its use. In July the museum submitted a request to the San Diego and Imperial Valley Railroad (SDIV) and the Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) for permission to install the spur. Our request was approved. We are now awaiting the final permission to reinstall the railroad spur.

Museum's long awaited Building Plans Begin

The Museum has begun the building permit process to add a new 60 ft. by 120 ft. display building to exhibit our collections under cover. This new building will extend to the west adjacent to the existing mill building. It is planned to be a Butler-style covered with



corrugated iron siding similar to the existing mill. The county's permit process for us is rather lengthy, time consuming and expensive: at best it will take us about a year to obtain the permits. Various fees must be paid to a host of organizations such as Caltrans, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and Fish and Game. Additionally we must complete studies for landscaping, topography and water run-off, among others. The building is expected to be purchased as a pre-fab and erected on-site. We will publish more information as the work progresses.

Museum Awarded New Grant

The County of San Diego has awarded a 2009 grant to the Motor Transport Museum. Carl Calvert, Treasurer, applied to the County of San Diego for the Grant in March, 2009 The grant will fund a number of items including the installation of a security camera system for the museum, a fire suppression system for the library, installation of a designated handicap parking area, and the procurement of 100 additional vehicle

description signs in the yard. The amount requested was \$9,600. The County of San Diego awarded the full amount to the museum in September. Members interested in seeing these items completed are encouraged to volunteer to help spend the money.

Last year a similar grant request was made to the county for funds to begin the permit process to add a display building to the museum in Campo. The County of San Diego award of \$6,000 for this purpose has already been spent this year.

The museum has been fortunate to work with Diane Jacob, County Supervisor, Second District, who has been a strong supporter of the museum's progress over the years. We owe her a big Thank You! These grants have enhanced our ability to continue our community programs, services, education and public awareness.

We have lost a good friend

We are sorry to report MTM Director, Don Driggs passed away at his home in El Cajon August 26. He was 68. Raised in Wyoming, he enjoyed a colorful engineering career working in the Wyoming oil fields, at the shipyards in San Diego, and retired several years ago from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. He was active in MTM, writing a feature article, *My life with 'Screamin' Jimmies* for the Fall 2008 edition. He was voted a director of MTM in 2009. He restored a most unusual 1963 Ford truck, and built his own motor home. He and his wife Jane had planned on using it to tour the USA this year. In addition to Jane he is survived by his son Randy and daughter Dawn. We send our condolences to his family: he was truly a fine friend.



Board member Don Driggs
(photo by Glenn Collins)

New Members

Dave Stall of Alpine, CA **Richard Blaisdell** of Pine Valley, CA, **Ross Brock** of San Diego and **Richard Dormois** (vice president of the Studebaker Drivers' Club) of Mesa AZ, have enrolled as new general members of the Museum since publication of the summer newsletter. We welcome these new members to our museum.

Attention All Members

You can donate money towards MTM's cause without spending a dime by simply receiving these quarterly issues of the Motor Transport Museum News by e-mail. This way MTM can save mailing costs and use the savings towards operating expenses. Not only will you get

instantaneous delivery of your copy, you will get the photographs in glorious living color, a feat that we have not yet accomplished with the printed copy. Please Email us at motortransport@att.net and subscribe.

Also – MTM needs people like you to greet and educate our visitors. Being a docent is fun and rewarding.

Anyone interested in helping on any of the Saturdays during 2009 please call John Thomas at (619) 479-4318 or MTM at (619) 478-2492 to volunteer.

For Sale

The MTM has numerous items for sale at its main facility at the Mill in Campo, CA. One of these is a 1923 Seagraves fire engine for \$2500. To view these items visit our web site at www.motortransportmuseum.org.

Upcoming Events

On the weekend of Oct 3 & 4 **Branch 22** of the **Early Day Gas Engine and Tractor Association (EDGE&TA)** will hold its annual show at Santee Lakes Park in Santee, CA. For more information call (760) 788-2012 or (619) 478-5500

On the weekends of October 18/19 and 24/25 the **Antique Gas and Steam Engine Museum** of Vista, CA will hold its fall Tractor Show. There will be a blacksmith shop, a wheelwright shop, farming demonstrations, a sawmill an old tractor/car parade and train rides. For more information please visit www.agsem.com

Sometime this fall longtime MTM member **Bill West** who lives in the North Hollywood area is planning a sale of his fifty-year collection of tools, truck parts, trinkets etc. These include a 1927 three-axle Moreland truck, new old stock solid rubber tires, wheels, antique tools and more. Bill has not set a date yet, when he does we will publish it on the MTM website. Or you can call him at (818) 991-6582.

The **MTM Board of Directors'** meetings for the fall quarter of 2009 will be held at the Horseless Carriage Foundation library at 8186 Center St. La Mesa, CA at 6:30 PM on the following Thursdays: **October 15, November 19, and December 17.** All members are invited to attend.

Hours of Operation

The Museum facility at 31949 Highway 94 in Campo, CA is open to the public every Saturday from 10 AM to 5 PM. Admission is free, donations are accepted.

MTM Officers and Directors

The officers and directors of the Motor Transport Museum are as follows:

Officers: Greg Long, President

John W. Thomas, Secretary

Carl E. Calvert, Chief Financial Officer

Directors: Ed Dilginis, Jim Jensen, Don Driggs, Bill Jellyman, John Thomas, Jim Hamilton and Carl Calvert.



Motor Transport Museum

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

New Renewal

Name _____ Spouse _____
Street Address _____ City _____
State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ E-Mail _____

General Membership	1Yr \$20 _____	2Yr \$40 _____	3Yr \$60 _____
General - International Membership (Non USA Mailing Address)			1Yr \$25 _____
Corporate Membership			1Yr \$75 _____
Life Membership			\$250 _____
Endowing Life Membership			\$1000 _____
Associate Membership - Non Profit organization			1Yr \$35 _____
Jounior Membership - Children under 18 (non-voting)			1Yr \$1 _____
Student Membership - Full time students, 18 - 25			1Yr \$6 _____

I agree to comply strictly with the By Laws of the Motor Transport Museum; to conduct myself at all times in a manner which will support and promote the best interest of the Motor Transport Museum

Signature of Applicant _____ Date _____

PLACE
STAMP
HERE

MOTOR TRANSPORT MUSEUM
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CAMPO, CA 91906