

Celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the Transcontinental Railroad with the Alameda County Fair Model Railroad

As if anyone ever needs a great reason to go to the Alameda County Fair, this year there is an exciting event to celebrate and new reasons to go. At this year's Alameda County Fair, the Fair Model Railroad will host a celebration of the 150th Anniversary of Completion of the Transcontinental Railroad. In May 1869, the entire United States celebrated the completion of a railroad from coast to coast. A golden spike was driven on May 9th in Promontory, Utah to represent the completion of the largest engineering endeavor in the history of the country to that point. The transcontinental railroad linked the country together and enabled the westward expansion that settled the west and made the US what it is today. Before the railroad, a journey to California took 3 to 7 months and was incredibly dangerous, either by covered wagon or by ship around South America. The transcontinental railroad cut the New York to San Francisco journey to just one week, in the safety of a rail car. For the next hundred years, until the emergence of the Interstate highway system and jet air travel in the 1960s, rail travel was the primary way travel across America was done. Even today, railroads are the dominant mode for goods moved over distances greater than 750 miles and less than 2,000 miles, accounting for 37 percent of total tons moved.

In addition to major renovations that have occurred this year, the non-profit Alameda County Central Railroad Society that maintains and operates the HO and O Scale model railroads at the Alameda County Fairgrounds will have new exhibits and activities to celebrate the 150th Anniversary and educate about how the transcontinental railroad created the California we all enjoy today. A scavenger hunt will involve guests with the facts of the transcontinental railroad, while having surprises for the younger guests as well. The new multi-media audio and video educational exhibits will focus on how the transcontinental railroad was built, the challenging conditions for the workers, the path through the most rugged mountains ever crossed by rail, and how the railroad and sea shipping changed America. Of special interest is how the western part of the railroad, the Central Pacific, was built primarily by Chinese immigrant workers. How these workers tunneled through miles of solid granite by hand with no more than pick-axes and nitro glycerin is a story of human accomplishment and triumph over incredible obstacles.

In addition to the new exhibits focusing on the 150th Anniversary, the ACCRS has made many improvements to the facility to make enjoying the model trains and what they represent more enjoyable. This includes a focus on the four major railroads that have served California, the Central Pacific, Santa Fe, Western Pacific, and Union Pacific. These railroads transformed California, bringing goods and people from the east and carrying products and produce east for a growing population. A special focus is on the branded passenger trains that each railroad ran in the 1940s to 1960s from the east to California. In this era, known as the golden age of rail travel, trains such as the California Zephyr or the Coast Sunset defined travel for Americans.

If you have never visited the railroad at the Alameda County Fair, or if you remember it from a past visit, this is great year to go to the fair and visit the railroad. Children of all ages will be amazed at the miniature world and the trains that run in it. The new exhibits and changes enhance the experience and the 150th Anniversary of the Transcontinental railroad provides an excellent educational opportunity. The interactive exhibits show how the model railroads represent the incredible story of how the railroads changed Alameda County, California, and the US. The model layouts of the Fair Railroad have

been built to represent the varied terrain, communities and industries served by railroads in California. The volunteers and docents of ACCRS look forward to explaining the incredible story of railroads in the west and how model railroading and the 150th Anniversary celebrates that heritage. The ACCRS model railroad at the Alameda Fairgrounds is one of the most visited model railroads in the United States with over 60,000 visitors per year. Don't miss the chance to visit the Alameda County Fair this year and be amazed by the model railroads and learn about the rich railroad heritage of Alameda County and California. The Alameda County Fair will be open from June 13 to July 7.