

Sacramento Northern Railway  
Historic District  
Name of Property

Solano County, California  
County and State

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Sacramento Northern Railway Historic District  
other names/site number Western Railway Museum



## 2. Location

street & number 5848 State Highway 12  
city or town Suisun City  
state California code CA county Solano code 095 zip code 94585

not for publication  
 vicinity

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this \_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide \_\_\_ local

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government \_\_\_\_\_

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**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register                       determined eligible for the National Register  
 determined not eligible for the National Register                       removed from the National Register  
 other (explain: \_\_\_\_\_)

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
 (Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
 (Check only **one** box.)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private  
 public - Local  
 public - State  
 public - Federal

- building(s)  
 district  
 site  
 structure  
 object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
5	5	Buildings
0	0	sites
23	57	structures
0	0	objects
28	62	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

**Current Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION / rail-related

RECREATION and CULTURE / Museum

LANDSCAPE / unoccupied land, natural feature

LANDSCAPE / unoccupied land, natural feature

**7. Description**

**Narrative Description**

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(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

### Summary Paragraph

The Sacramento Northern Railway Historic District is a 277 acre district located in a largely unpopulated section of Solano County consisting of a 21 mile-long segment (255 acres) of the former Sacramento Northern Railway high speed electric interurban railroad and the Western Railway Museum (22 acres). Sacramento Northern Railway was once the largest interurban system in Northern California and one of the longest in the country. Fourteen miles of the rail line segment and its right of way, originally constructed in 1913 by the Oakland, Antioch and Eastern Railway, winds from Montezuma (milepost 49.98) to Dozier (milepost 64.55). The remaining seven mile segment is a branch line constructed by the Federal government on behalf of the Sacramento Northern Railway in 1946 connecting Dozier with Cannon and the Southern Pacific Railroad. The Western Railway Museum has its origins in 1946 when the Bay Area Electric Railroad Association was created to foster interest in streetcar, interurban, and mainline electric railroad operations, and to preserve these rapidly vanishing pieces of history. In 1960 Rio Vista Junction, an actual stop on the Sacramento Northern main line in Solano County, was selected as the Museum site, and the task of transforming 22 vacant acres into a living history Museum began. In 1985, the name "Western Railway Museum" was officially adopted. The Western Railway Museum has restored and re-electrified over five miles of the old Sacramento Northern main line, and recreates an authentic interurban trip using original, restored rolling stock running on the original rails. The district retains much of the historic integrity and character from the line's original construction and contains many features and characteristics of 20<sup>th</sup> century electric interurban freight and passenger railroading. Although the overhead electrification is not original, it has been replicated to the original Oakland Antioch and Eastern standards, using drawings and schematics preserved in the Western Railway Museum archives. Additionally, the district has a rural setting largely unchanged from the time of the line's original construction. Principal contributing resources include roadbed, track, bridges, and several buildings from the original construction and operation of the line.

### Narrative Description

The Sacramento Northern Railway Historic District is composed of a 21 mile-long segment of the former Sacramento Northern electric interurban railroad as it passes through rural Solano County, and the adjacent 22-acre Western Railway Museum. The main 14 mile rail line segment and its right-of-way winds from Montezuma to Dozier. It contains many features and characteristics, including a rural setting largely unchanged from the time of the line's original construction in 1911-1913. There is also a seven mile branch line segment running from Dozier to Cannon.

The route of this rail line was largely selected to provide a more direct electric interurban passenger and light freight railroad competitive route between the growing California population centers of the Bay Cities and Sacramento. While the Oakland to Pittsburg segment posed engineering challenges of steep hills and Suisun Bay, the line segment running through the historic district crosses gently rolling prairie grassland, skirting the westerly edge of the Montezuma Hills, with grades rarely exceeding .5%. A 23 mile-long tangent running north of Denverton (MP 59.5) allowed trains in this area to run up to 60 miles per hour—a strong competitive advantage of interurban railroads over standard railroads.

Most of the land along right of way was and continues to be primarily grassland used extensively for cattle and sheep grazing. Several ranches and farms along the line have been owned by the same families since prior to construction of the railroad. Soil in this area is not well suited for growing most agricultural crops other than hay. In recent years the land to the east of the right of way, while continuing to be used for agricultural purposes, also contains over 800 300-foot tall wind turbines used for electricity generation. About 100 turbines can be seen along the rail line, with the nearest being about a third of a mile away. These 21<sup>st</sup> century electric power structures provide an interesting contrast with the Bay Area Electric Railroad Association's early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century electrically-powered trains running on the line. Marshlands near Suisun Bay provide a large natural habitat for water fowl and other migratory birds. The concentration of waterfowl has attracted many hunters and duck clubs to the area. The Sacramento Northern took advantage of this by running "duck hunter special" trains to the area. In fact virtually all local passengers to the area consisted of duck hunters.

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The historic district encompasses the right of way acquired by the Bay Area Electric Railroad Association from the Union Pacific Railroad and the adjacent 22 acre site of the Western Railway Museum. The right of way is 100 feet wide along its entire 21 mile length. It contains various structures that together create an accurate picture of an early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century rural interurban railroad landscape. These structures include the railroad's earthen grade, the tracks themselves, line poles, culverts, bridges, and a few remaining buildings.

The railroad grade and track were originally constructed with mainly manual and animal labor. Two steam locomotives purchased from the Southern Pacific Railroad were used to haul ties, ballast and other materials to construction sites. Crushed stone for ballast came from the Valle Vista Quarry in Contra Costa County. Various cedar pole wooden trestles were built to cross gullies and other natural depressions on the line. Corrugated steel culverts directed water drainage under the roadbed and grade. Track was built of substantial 70 pound rail spiked to redwood ties. Forty-foot wooden poles spaced 90'-150' supported the overhead electric line. A "state of the art" automatic block signal system helped to eliminate collision hazards and promote efficient operations.

Most of the railroad track and ties remain intact and date to the period of active operation by the Sacramento Northern and Western Pacific Railroads, preserving the historic trace of the line. The track and overhead electrification have been restored by the Bay Area Electric Railroad Association to allow operation of trains along over 5 miles of the line running from the Western Railway Museum property south to near Birds Landing Road. Restoration involved using existing rails and ties from the period of significance whenever possible and similar materials when required.

Due to corrosive soil conditions, the original corrugated steel culverts are being gradually replaced by cast iron pipe culverts. Most bridges and trestles, originally of cedar pole construction, were replaced with treated wood members during the period of significance. Such maintenance and upgrades were common aspects of any railroad operation. When electric operations ended in the early 1950's, poles supporting overhead electrification wires were removed. New poles and wires have been installed within 6 inches of the original pole locations along the restored section of the line. Of the line's various buildings, several survive.

**A. Locations & Names:**

Historic railroad practice uses mileposts to locate resources. The Bay Area Electric Railroad Association and the Western Railway Museum continue this practice using the historic Sacramento Northern Railway mileposts measured from San Francisco via Oakland's Key Pier.

Milepost and map coordinates of the limits of the property and stations are:

Milepost	Present Name	Former Name	Longitude	Latitude
49.98	Montezuma	Montezuma	38° 05' 06.70" N	121° 52' 33.58" W
51.97	Molena	Molena	38° 07' 39.46" N	121° 52' 37.11" W
52.5	Birds Landing Road	Birds Landing Road	38° 07' 58.09" N	121° 52' 45.51" W
53.7	Gum Grove (Shiloh Road)	Shiloh Road	38° 08' 50.75" N	121° 53' 16.28" W
55.38	Blacklock	None	38° 10' 09.69" N	121° 53' 10.53" W
56.42	Garfield	Garfield	38° 11' 00.95" N	121° 53' 01.67" W
57.78	Rio Vista Junction (1922)	Creed (1914) Curtis (1913)	38° 12' 22.55" N	121° 52' 35.28" W
59.5	Denverton (1926)	Solano City(1913)	38° 13' 28.40" N	121° 52' 16.92" W
60.78	Creed (1925)	Reservoir	38° 14' 31.39" N	121° 51' 20.38" W
63.7	Olcott	Dixon Junction(1914) Rio Junction(1913)	38° 16' 30.91" N	121° 49' 33.74" W
64.55	Dozier	Dozier	38° 17' 12.21" N	121° 48' 56.35" W

The following is a summary of the many names that referred to the railroad through the proposed district.

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“Sacramento Northern Railway Historic District”

A general term for the railroad segment under consideration for the National Register

“Bay Area Electric Railroad Association” 1946-Present

Name for the non-profit public benefit historical and educational corporation currently owning and operating the Western Railway Museum and the rail line within the proposed district

“Oakland & Antioch Railway”

Incorporated and organized in 1909 to provide a direct line between San Francisco and the valleys of Moraga, San Ramon, Ygnacio and Pacheco. Completed line between Bay Point and Oakland in 1913.

“Oakland, Antioch and Eastern Railway” 1911-1920

Incorporated in 1911 to build a line from Bay Point to Sacramento. Leased Oakland & Antioch Railway and completed the line to Sacramento in 1913.

“San Francisco-Sacramento Railroad” 1920-1927

Name of the reorganized Oakland, Antioch and Eastern Railway. Purchased by the Western Pacific Railroad in 1927.

“Sacramento Northern Railway” 1905-1983

Originally a 93-mile electric interurban railway linking Chico to Sacramento. Original name of the line was the Chico Electric Railway founded in 1905. The CERY was sold later in 1905 to a new company, the Northern Electric Railway. The line went bankrupt in 1914. New investors incorporated under the name Sacramento Northern Railroad and bought the Northern Electric Railway in 1918. Sacramento Northern Railroad control passed to the Western Pacific Railroad in 1922. In 1925, the Sacramento Northern Railroad was sold to the Sacramento Northern *Railway* Company, a Western Pacific subsidiary specifically designed to consolidate and manage their growing interurban railway holdings. The 1927 purchase of the San Francisco-Sacramento Railroad was merged with the Sacramento Northern Railway in 1929.

“South End”

Common name for the Sacramento Northern Railroad trolley wire-powered line running south of Sacramento to Oakland. The South End includes the 14-mile segment owned by the Bay Area Electric Railroad Association.

“North End”

Common name for the Sacramento Northern Railroad third rail-powered line running from Sacramento north to Chico.

“Western Pacific Railroad” 1910-1982

Owner of the Sacramento Northern Railway and several successors until being merged with the Union Pacific Railroad in 1982.

## B. Linear Resources

The Montezuma to Dozier segment represents approximately 12% of the Sacramento Northern Railway line that ran from San Francisco to Chico. It is one of only a few sections still in regular service and the only portion still operated under wire.

### B1. Railroad Grade

Railroad alignments are largely defined by two criteria: these are ruling grade (number of feet of ascent per hundred feet of track or percent) and maximum curvature (measured in degrees of curve per hundred feet of track). These two factors determine the size and speed of the trains that can be operated along a given route. The engineers of the Oakland, Antioch and Eastern endeavored to build the railroad as flat and straight as possible, while providing curves and grades to economically negotiate natural terrain. This section of the line is quite level with the exception of a short distance through the Montezuma hills just north of Suisun Bay. Grades on this section of the line are mostly .5%, with the maximum being .7%, and curves don't exceed 4 degrees. The grade was elevated above the adjacent terrain to provide drainage and to move surface runoff from the area around, and under the tracks. The roadbed is typically crowned in the middle and flanked by parallel drainage ditches that are occasionally connected via culverts. The grade consists of a continuous earthen roadbed 15-20 feet wide. The majority of the current roadbed is along the original 1913 alignment and is largely unchanged from when it was built between 1911 and 1913. Some roadbed has been realigned or modified during, or since the conclusion of, the period of significance. These modifications are noted in the location narratives in Section C

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below. The swath of land owned by a railroad is known as a right of way. The right of way for this section is 100 feet, acquired through purchase of privately owned land.

### **B2. Rails, Ties and Ballast**

The tracks currently in place are representative of railroad construction practices during the period of significance. The original rails were 70 pounds per yard. This was fairly substantial for an interurban railroad, considering major steam railroads such as the Southern Pacific were using 75 to 90 pound rails. The 70 pound rail was required because of scheduled high speeds in the range of 60 miles per hour. The rails were spiked directly to redwood ties, mostly without the use of tie plates. The tracks were ballasted with crushed rock. The steel rails used during the period of significance remain largely in place and are a contributing resource.

Redwood ties were replaced in kind as a part of regular line maintenance until 1945. At that time all ties were replaced with creosote-treated Douglas Fir ties and tie plates were installed. Many of the ties date from the period of significance and are a contributing resource, preserving the historic route of the line.

### **B3. Line Poles and Overhead Electrification**

The standard trolley construction consisted of catenary supported by brackets on single 40-foot cedar poles spaced 90-150 feet apart along the main line. In addition to the contact and substation power wires, the line poles also carried signal and telephone lines. In 1953 all electrification and line poles were removed north of Suisun Bay. Over 5 miles of the line has been restored and re-electrified by the BAERA. Using historic Sacramento Northern engineering files, augmented by photographs and motion picture footage of the section of line being restored, and a large cache of overhead line parts donated by the Sacramento Northern, the BAERA precisely replicated the line poles and overhead electrification to original specifications. For instance, line poles are set within 6 inches of the original poles. The only deviance from Sacramento Northern standards and specifications is trolley wire height, which was historically 21 feet. The State of California currently requires that trolley wire be 23 feet above the top of the railhead. Because this height is greater than the reach of current collectors on some of the equipment operated by the Association, the State Public Utilities Commission granted a 21 ½ -feet above the railhead variance. While the line poles and overhead electrification is a non-contributing resource, the attention to detail in their replication not only fulfills the Western Railway Museum's preservation policy, it also establishes a standard for other Museums.

## **C. Setting, Sites, Use, Buildings & Structures**

The route connects marshland and rolling prairie landscapes. These landscapes may be characterized by their setting, sites, use, buildings and structures.

### **C1. Stations & Other Notable Sites**

1. **Montezuma** (MP 49.98) Montezuma is the southern end of the line. The line itself is barely visible due to heavy vegetation and can be identified by some remaining line and power poles along the right of way. To the south wetlands extend to Chipps Island and Suisun Bay. Remnants of the wooden trestles that crossed the wetlands are visible from Montezuma. The land near the tracks remains much as it was in 1913. The region is rural with family owned farms, ranches and wildlife preserves in the immediate area. Sheep and cows are still visible along the right of way. A 1000-foot livestock loading spur and depot were adjacent to the main line. The spur remains in place, along with a few portions of the adjacent livestock holding pens. The depot no longer exists.
2. **Molena** (MP 51.97) Molena Station was established on land purchased from Moses and Lena Dinkenspiel in 1913 to serve the nearby community of Birds Landing. It was named Molena in honor of Moses and Lena. The region remains rural with much of the surrounding area containing family-owned farms and hunting preserves. A small waiting shelter was built there along with a speeder shed and a freight shed, where space was provided for an express agent. Express service was provided at Molena until 1926, when the agent retired, and locals had to go to Birds Landing to pick up items shipped on the railroad. A spur was built from the north to provide freight service to a large warehouse. In 1926 the San Francisco-Sacramento Railroad Company converted the spur to a 1018-foot passing siding by extending the spur across Dinkenspiel Road. The passing siding is still in place. The last passenger train passed through Molena in 1940. With the

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elimination of passenger service, Molena began a gradual decline. The only surviving buildings are a speeder shed and warehouse. A few line poles also remain.

The following buildings are contributors:

**The Molena warehouse** was constructed in the 1920's. It was used by area farmers to transfer and store grain and other agricultural products for eventual loading onto Sacramento Northern rail cars on the adjacent spur for shipment to markets. The warehouse is of wood frame construction with walls and roof covered with corrugated steel panels. There are few windows or interior walls, reflecting a utilitarian style typical of line side buildings constructed by the Sacramento Northern and others at the time. A large door at the northeast corner allowed trucks to enter the building from an adjacent access road. On the west side there are five large sliding doors that were used to transfer goods to rail cars on the spur. The building is 85 feet wide by 220 feet long. The roof is divided into two parts, with a gable roof over the main warehouse and a hip roof over the south end. The building is currently used by area farmers for hay bale storage.

**The Molena speeder shed** was constructed in the 1920's and is typical of many track maintenance buildings located along the Sacramento Northern line. The shed is of wood frame construction with walls and roof covered with corrugated steel panels. It is 10 feet wide by 18 feet long. The simple design and use of economical materials allowed the railroad to quickly erect these buildings whenever and wherever needed. The north end of the building was used for storage of a small gasoline powered track inspection vehicle commonly called a "speeder." A set of rails ran from inside the shed to the edge of the main line track. The track maintenance crew would push the speeder on these rails out of the shed onto wooden planks set between the mainline tracks. Remnants of these planks remain. The crew would then manually lift the speeder onto the main line track. The south end of the shed was used for storage of track maintenance tools and parts. The west speeder door is the only shed opening.

3. **Gum Grove (MP 53.7)** While never a station stop, Gum Grove was instead a reference point in Sacramento Northern timetables. The land adjacent to the tracks is rural and remains much as it was during the period of significance. Today Gum Grove is a site for the Western Railway Museum's annual Pumpkin Patch Festival. Each October electric trains transport visitors on a 10-mile round trip from the Museum to Gum Grove passenger platform. The tree grove adjacent to the platform is transformed into an old time harvest festival site where a hay bale fort, hay rides, live music, games, homemade baked goods, views of Mt. Diablo, old farm equipment, and of course, pumpkins for sale are available for visitors. All proceeds benefit the Western Railway Museum, along with three area Rotary Clubs who provide volunteers for the event. Just south of the passenger platform and just north of the Shiloh Road grade crossing is an electric substation constructed in 2011 to provide supplemental power to the Museum's overhead lines. While new, the structure was designed to resemble original interurban railroad substations. The passenger platform and substation are non-contributing.
4. **Blacklock (MP 55.38)** A way station named by the BAERA in honor of the pioneering Blacklock family which settled this area over 100 years ago.
5. **Garfield (MP 56.42)** Garfield was a station site located to the north of Little Honker Bay Road. This site is rural with several family-owned farms adjacent to the tracks. Looking west, the view is very similar to what rail passengers would've seen in 1913. Looking east, however, the scene is quite different with large wind turbine structures dotting the rural landscape. The site contained a small wood frame station, along with a freight platform, and a livestock loading spur and holding pens. None of the original structures survive. In 2011 the Western Railway Museum added a new spur at the location of the original livestock spur, used for storage of track maintenance equipment.

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6. **Rio Vista Junction (Western Railway Museum) (MP 57.78)** Rio Vista Junction dates to the 1913 opening of the Oakland, Antioch and Eastern's line to Sacramento. Solano City, a real estate promotion about a mile north, was expected to be a significant source of passenger and freight traffic for the new line. Solano City never materialized, but the off-line community of Denverton was large enough to warrant a flag stop of some kind. Because of this a flag stop station named Curtis was established in 1914 at the site later to be called Rio Vista Junction. Shortly after that Curtis station was renamed Creed.

The construction of a state highway between Suisun City and Lodi (the present Highway 12) in 1922 prompted the San Francisco-Sacramento Railroad to construct a 600' spur at Creed to handle shipments of road construction material. After various hearings, the California Railroad Commission handed down a decision in August 1922 authorizing the construction of the highway overpass over the rail line at Creed. Around the same time, Rio Vista Transit Co., a stage line whose buses met the San Francisco-Sacramento interurbans at Molena to carry people to Rio Vista and Isleton, decided to meet the trains at Creed instead of Molena as soon as the new highway allowed. This change prompted the railroad to change the name of Creed to Rio Vista Junction in October 1922. Construction of a new combination depot and stage station was authorized. Once the highway and overpass were completed, Rio Vista Transit Co. buses began meeting the trains at Rio Vista Junction in May 1923.

Area farmers, the Blakemore family, leased land adjacent to the rail line and further developed Rio Vista Junction. During the remainder of the 1920's and into the 1930's, a grain storage and transfer warehouse (Blakemore Warehouse), adjacent livestock corrals and holding pens, the Blakemore residence, a bus garage/bus transfer station, a freight dock, a sheep barn and various other small farm structures were erected.

The bus line was abandoned in 1941 when the Sacramento Northern Railway's passenger service was discontinued, but the Rio Vista Junction name remained as a station on the Sacramento Northern, and on the service station that operated there until the early 1950's. With the removal of overhead electrification and discontinuation of Suisun Bay ferry service in 1953, the line became a very secondary branch.

When the Bay Area Electric Railroad Association purchased the Rio Vista Junction property in 1960, only a few structures remained, including the Blakemore Warehouse, the Blakemore residence, garage/gas station, sheep barn and two smaller dwellings. Plans were to rent the dwellings as a source of income to help develop the site as a Museum. Poor quality construction and poor quality tenants forced the BAERA to abandon those plans.

When purchased by the BAERA, Rio Vista Junction was mainly flat grassland with almost no trees. Trees were eventually planted to provide a shady picnic grove for visitors. The first new building added to the site was Car House #1 in 1961 built to shelter the growing collection of electric railway equipment from the elements. New track and overhead electrification were added to allow for storage, movement and operation of the collection.

The following buildings are contributors:

**The Blakemore warehouse** was constructed in the 1920's. It was used by the Blakemore family and other area farmers to transfer and store grain and other agricultural products for eventual loading onto Sacramento Northern rail cars on the adjacent spur for shipment to markets. The warehouse is of wood frame construction with walls and roof covered with corrugated steel panels. There are few windows, doors or interior walls, reflecting a utilitarian style typical of line side buildings constructed by the Sacramento Northern and others at the time. The main warehouse is 65 feet wide by 200 feet long. A 30 feet wide by 35 feet long section at the northeast corner contained a scale and allowed trucks to enter the building from an adjacent access road. The roof is divided into three parts, with a gable roof over the main warehouse and hip roofs over the northeast truck entrance and south end. The building is currently used by the Western Railway Museum for miscellaneous storage of machinery and equipment.



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**The Blakemore residence** is a one story dwelling constructed in the 1920's by area farmers, the Blakemore family. While the family constructed three dwellings on the Rio Vista Junction property, the Blakemore residence is the sole survivor. The 40 feet wide by 42 feet long dwelling is of wood construction and was designed in the Craftsman style that was fashionable at the time. The wood frame walls are primarily covered with shiplap wood siding. The enclosed front porch at the south end includes a river rock-covered partial wall below double hung windows. The windows in the remainder of the building are primarily double hung. The hip roof covering is galvanized corrugated steel. In addition to the enclosed porch, other rooms include a living room, kitchen, bath and bedrooms. The exterior appearance and the number and configuration of rooms has remained the same since the dwelling was constructed. The dwelling is currently used by the Western Railway Museum as overnight accommodations for out of area volunteers working at the Museum.

**The bus maintenance/storage garage and transfer station** was constructed in the 1920's for the Rio Vista Transit Co. The building is of wood frame construction designed in a utilitarian style typical of many commercial buildings of the time. The garage at the west end is 65 feet wide by 75 feet long. A large rolling door at the south end was used to allow buses to enter and exit the building. The only windows in this section are two twelve pane windows in each roof gable end. Exterior walls are mainly covered with painted corrugated steel panels. Upper sections are covered with vertical and diagonal wood siding. The interior is mostly open with few interior walls. The roof is primarily gable with small hip roof sections at the north and south ends. Roof covering is painted corrugated steel panels. The transfer station/gas station at the east end consists of office space, waiting area and several other small rooms. Exterior walls are covered with vertical and horizontal wood siding. Windows are double hung and multiple pane. The hip roof is covered with painted corrugated steel panels. At the east end is an open sided covered canopy where vehicles parked while being fueled. The gas pumps no longer exist, although the concrete pad that supported them remains. Besides serving as a transfer station and gas station, this section was also used as a general store and brothel. After purchase of the Rio Vista Junction site by the BAERA, the building served as the first visitor center and bookstore for the Western Railway Museum. Current use is general storage of parts and equipment for the Museum.

The following structures are contributing:

**Sacramento Northern 1 (substation #1)**--SN 1 was the Sacramento Northern Railway's portable substation. The electrical equipment is fully enclosed in a boxcar like structure reportedly built on a flat car. The carbody is all wood and is 40 feet long. Electrical equipment converts 2400 volts AC to 600 volts DC and includes a step-down transformer, 300 KW rotary converter, current limiting power resistors, AC and DC circuit breakers, and associated control equipment. This is an automatic substation. The equipment is designed to start when the trolley voltage drops and shut down when the current drops. No operator was required. This may be the first automatic portable substation. The Sacramento Northern Railway built this portable substation in 1920. It was built prior to the merger and was used only on the north end. It may have been built on an existing flatcar. No data on the flat car is known. General Electric provided the electrical equipment. This substation was designed to be moved to locations that needed additional electrical capacity due to either seasonal shipping or where other substations were out of service. It actually was probably moved rarely. It was last used by the Western Pacific Railroad at the South Sacramento shops to test Sacramento Northern electric locomotives being maintained there.

It was acquired by BAERA in 1965. As substation #1, it provides power to the Western Railway Museum's overhead lines during one weekend each month.

**Substation #2** was originally constructed in the early 1900's to house the Northern Electric Railway's Del Paso substation (located between Riego and Sacramento). It is of wood frame construction, 20 feet wide by 30 feet long, and of utilitarian design typical of most of the Northern Electric Railway's substations. The gable roof and exterior walls are covered with painted corrugated steel panels. There are no windows or interior walls and the only door is at the south end. The structure was acquired by the BAERA in 1960's and relocated to Rio Vista Junction. Its original Westinghouse two-bearing motor-generator set was removed prior

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to the relocation. The structure currently houses 1960's-era generation equipment acquired from the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system. This equipment is the primary power source for the Western Railway Museum's overhead lines.

**Sacramento Northern 602--** SN 602 is an arch-roof, double-end, double-truck, wooden, box motor built by the Holman Car Company of San Francisco for the Oakland, Antioch and Eastern Railroad in 1911. The car was built with a clerestory roof. The roof was rebuilt to an arch in order to better harmonize with the other OA&E equipment in 1914. It went through all the South End ownership changes always retaining its 602 number until it was retired from revenue service in 1948 and became SNMW 83. Car 602 had various uses over its life. It was used to pull picnic trains out of Oakland to Redwood Canyon, was leased to the Tidewater Southern and the Central California Traction Company from time to time, was used as a switch engine at Concord and Walnut Creek during fruit season, and was used as a locomotive on the Walotta Branch.

**Oakland, Antioch and Eastern 1019--** This car was built in 1913 by the Hall Scott Motor Car Company of Berkeley, Ca. for the Oakland, Antioch and Eastern Railroad. It was part of an eight-car order, series 1019 to 1026. Although the car was a trailer, it came equipped with controls. In 1915 car 1019 was motorized using new equipment purchased from Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company, of Pittsburgh, Pa. In 1941 it was renumbered Sacramento Northern MW301 and was used for general maintenance duties and switching. It was demotorized and converted to a kitchen and dining car in 1947. It is preserved in unrestored condition

**Oakland, Antioch and Eastern 1020--** This car was built in 1913 by the Hall Scott Motor Car Company of Berkeley, Ca. for the Oakland, Antioch and Eastern Railroad. It was part of an eight-car order, series 1019 to 1026. Although the car was a trailer, it came equipped with controls. In 1915 car 1020 was motorized using new equipment purchased from Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company, of Pittsburgh, Pa. In January 1920, the O A and E was reorganized as the San Francisco-Sacramento Railroad. In 1928 the Sacramento Northern Railroad, formerly the Northern Electric, merged with the SF-S to form the Sacramento Northern Railway. Car 1020 was repainted in the Sacramento Northern Railway paint scheme at Chico, Ca. shortly after the merger. In 1938 cab signals and automatic train stop were installed to allow operation over the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge. The Sacramento Northern discontinued passenger service in 1940 and in October 1941 car 1020 became maintenance car MW 302. Car 1020 is the last passenger motor on the Sacramento Northern and was frequently used on excursions. Its electrical equipment was removed in 1956. It was given to the Bay Area Electric Railroad Association in October 1962 by the Sacramento Northern to compensate the Association for damaged done to car 1005 in a switching accident.

**Sacramento Northern 2314--** This is a forty-foot wooden boxcar with double-sheathed sides, Dreadnaught steel ends, and a steel underframe built for the Western Pacific Railroad by the Mt. Vernon Car Manufacturing Company in 1918. It was transferred from the Western Pacific to the Sacramento Northern in 1947. Original archbar trucks had been changed to Andrews cast steel side frames before it went into service on the SN. The car was removed from revenue service and transferred to work equipment service in June 1964. At this time the number was changed to SN 02314. It was retired in 1975 and was scrapped. The body was used by a turkey farm in Manteca, CA. The body was acquired by the Western Railway Museum and was restored to operating condition in 2007 by using parts from a Western Pacific gondola that had been heavily damaged in a 1980 fire.

**Sacramento Northern 2136—**This is a forty foot wooden boxcar with double sheathed sides, wooden ends and a steel underframe. It has plain bearing arch bar trucks. It was built by Mt. Vernon Car Manufacturing Company in 1920. It was retired in 1973. It was preserved by the Pacific Coast Chapter of the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society and given to the California State Railroad Museum in 1978. When the CSRM no longer could store the car it was donated to the Western Railway Museum in 2008. This is the only remaining boxcar that was built new for the Sacramento Northern Railroad. It has been backdated with original style trucks and will be renumbered with its original number.

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**Oakland, Antioch and Eastern 2002**—The Holman Car Company in San Francisco built this car in 1911 for the Oakland and Antioch Railway that became the Oakland Antioch and Eastern and eventually the Sacramento Northern Railway. It is a 36 foot thirty ton capacity wooden flatcar with a wooden frame and four wrought iron truss rods. After a wreck in 1927 it was built into a non-revenue tool car SNMW 32. It retired in 1972 and was preserved by the Pacific Coast Chapter of the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society and given to the California State Railroad Museum in 1978. During the 1999 Railfair, it was rebuilt as a demonstration restoration project. In 2008 when CSRM no longer had room to store the car, it was given to the Western Railway Museum.

**Sacramento Northern 1632**—This caboose began life as a Western Pacific outside braced wooden boxcar 15451 in 1916. Pullman Company built it as a part of a 1000 car order. Western Pacific rebuilt it into caboose 607 in 1937 to comply with a California Railroad Commission order requiring steel under frames in cabooses. Western Pacific sold it to wholly owned Sacramento Northern in 1956 when it was numbered 1632. It went back to Western Pacific in 1973 when it became a caboose on the Oroville derrick train as WPMW 37-9. It was donated to the Feather River Railroad Society of Portola, California by the Union Pacific Railroad that acquired the Western Pacific in 1984. It was acquired by the Western Railway Museum in 2005. It has been restored back to its 1956 configuration. All changes and modifications added since that time have been removed.

**Sacramento Northern 652**—This is a 65 ton steeple-cab locomotive built by General Electric in 1928. It was built as Sacramento Northern 1052 and was renumbered after the Sacramento Northern Railroad and San Francisco –Sacramento merger to SN 652. It was retained the Sacramento Northern Railway until the end of electric operation in 1965. Near the end of electric operation the locomotive was used as a source of spare parts to keep 653 and 654 operational.

**Sacramento Northern 654**—This is a 65 ton steeple-cab locomotive built by General Electric in 1930. SN 654 was ordered at the same time as 652 and 653, but its delivery was delayed two years. By time it was delivered the Sacramento Northern Railroad and San Francisco –Sacramento merger had already taken place and it was delivered as SN 654. At some point it received the trucks from SN 670, which was the former Tidewater Southern motor 106 (GE May 1921, builder number 8438) that SN purchased second hand. Evidence uncovered at the Western Railway Museum indicates that 654 was involved in an accident serious enough at some point in its life to require the replacement of one entire side sill. It was in service on the Sacramento Northern until the end of electric operation in 1965.

**Sacramento Northern 146**--Locomotive 146 was built new for the Sacramento Northern by General Electric in November 1946. It was one of seven 44-ton locomotives purchased by the Sacramento Northern after the California Public Utilities Commission adopted regulations making the continued operation of the third rail north of Sacramento no longer feasible. The reason to purchase 44-ton locomotives was the 90,000-pound rule in the 1937 labor contract with enginemen. This clause permitted railroads to operate locomotives below this weight without a fireman. The locomotive was retired by the Sacramento Northern on September 21, 1971. It was sold to Chrome Crankshaft, a locomotive broker. It was resold to the Northwest Oklahoma Railroad where it became their number 1 in 1974. Northwest Oklahoma Railroad sold 146 to the Feather River Railroad Society in 1996. Locomotive 146 was acquired by the Western Railway Museum from the Feather River Railroad Society on May 9, 2005.

**Sacramento Northern "Bidwell"**--The Bidwell is a wooden interurban dining parlor observation trailer car with a clerestory roof. It was built by the Northern Electric Railway in its Chico, California shops in 1914 under the direction of master car builder Adolphus O. Myers. It was built from wreck damaged coach number 202, which had been built by Niles Car and Manufacturing Company in 1906. The car was named for General John Bidwell, founder of the city of Chico. It was built as a full parlor–observation. A kitchen and dining room were added in 1921. The car was a control trailer, with controls in the rear only, for use when the car was on the rear of a train and the train was backed off the Key Pier. The Sacramento Northern discontinued passenger operation in 1940 and the car was retired and dismantled in 1941. The body was sold and used as a dwelling in the central valley town of Wheatland until the Bay Area Electric Railroad Association acquired it in 1978.

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The "Bidwell" is stored in unrestored condition: it does not have trucks and currently sits on a flatcar. The wood siding of the car shows some deterioration at the base, but the car retains its original exterior and interior, exhibiting a high degree of integrity of workmanship and materials.

**Sacramento Northern 1005**--Number 1005 is a double-end, double-truck, arch-roof, wooden interurban car with a steel underframe. It is a combination car with a main compartment, smoking compartment, baggage room, and toilet. The ends of the car have steel sheeting over the wood siding. It was built by the Holman Car Company of San Francisco in 1912 for the Oakland, Antioch and Eastern Railroad. It is part of a four car series, 1003 to 1006. The car went through the typical electric railroad reorganizations, but only operated on two different systems. On the SN system it ran as Oakland, Antioch, and Eastern 1005 until 1920, then San Francisco – Sacramento Railroad 1005 until 1928, and finally the Sacramento Northern 1005 until 1941. In 1936 Sacramento Northern entered into an agreement with the California Toll Bridge Authority to deed a portion of their equipment to the Authority in return for funds to adapt their equipment for coded cab signals, speed control for operation across the Bay Bridge. The 1005 was one of these cars deeded to and passed on to the Authority on abandonment of service in 1941. SN 1005 is currently being restored by WRM volunteers, using original or identical materials and original schematics.

With the beginning of World War Two, the Key System was in need of additional equipment and purchased several of the retired SN cars, including 1005. The SN third rail shoes were replaced with Key System third rail shoes for service on the Bay Bridge at the Key System's 600 volt third rail voltage. The 1005 ran on the Key System's F line as Key System 495 until June 1949, when the Key took it out of service. The Bay Area Electric Railroad Association purchased the car from the Key System in May 1951 and restored it to its SN appearance for fan trip service. There were many of modifications made to the car by the Key System, and then when retired the car was stripped for parts by the Key System making returning it to service a large project. The car was damaged in switching accidents in April 1953 and again in June 1962. After spending time at Western Pacific's Jeffrey Shops where the railroad determined that the damage was too extensive to repair, 1005 was delivered to the Western Railway Museum in February 1964. It was fully restored to pre-1934 status in 2011.

The following buildings are non-contributing:

**Western Railway Museum visitor center, Museum store, library/archives**—inspired by Southern Pacific Railroad's Atascadero mission-revival station, this building was constructed in 2001. It houses the visitor center, including numerous displays and artifacts, the Museum store, the F.M Smith Memorial Library, archives, restrooms and snack bar.

**Car House #1**—metal clad building, open at both ends, constructed in 1961. It contains four tracks for storage/display of a portion of the Western Railway Museum's rolling stock collection. Car House #1 was constructed after the end of the period of significance.

**Car House #2**—metal clad building used for storage of a portion of the Western Railway Museum's rolling stock collection, constructed after Car House #1, and thus after the end of the period of significance.

**Car House #3 (Loring Jensen Memorial Car House)**--climate controlled metal building opened in 2008. It contains six tracks for storage/display of a portion of the Western Railway Museum's rolling stock collection.

**Shops**—metal building erected in the 1970s to house Western Railway Museum collection restoration/conservation and maintenance operations. It includes wood and metal working equipment, paint shop and storage. The Shops building was constructed after the end of the period of significance.

**Substation #1 protective shed**—three sided metal shed used to protect SN1 (substation #1) from the elements. Substation #1 protective shed was constructed after the end of the period of significance.

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7. **Denverton (MP 59.5)** Denverton was once a thriving community of several hundred people built along a navigable slough. Originally named Nurses Landing, it was renamed Denverton in 1858 to honor a member of Congress from the district, J. W. Denver. The coming of the California Pacific Railroad signaled the long slow decline of Denverton. It was far more economical to ship by rail than by water. In addition, nearby Collinsville had better river access for shipping, a factor which also contributed heavily to the demise of the community. Hardly a trace of the village remains, thus this station marker is not a contributor to the district due to lack of integrity in all aspects.
8. **Creed (MP 60.78)** Site of a former Sacramento Northern Railway wye (1929-1946). This wye and its connection to the Southern Pacific Railroad was relocated to Dozier during World War II to allow expansion of nearby Travis Army Airfield (now Travis Air Force Base). A 3523' siding was adjacent to the wye.
9. **Jepson Prairie** Site of a series of seasonal vernal pools which sustain rare and endangered species. Owned by the Solano Land Trust, Jepson Prairie is designated as a National Natural Landmark. The Western Railway Museum ran spring excursion trains to the area until the mid-1990's. The property is not a constructed or vernacular landscape and thus not eligible under National Register criteria as a contributor to the district.
10. **Dozier (MP 64.55)** Site of a wye built in 1946 by the Federal government on behalf of the Sacramento Northern Railway to compensate for the elimination of the Railway's wye at Creed to allow for expansion at nearby Travis Air Force Base. A 697' spur, substation, freight dock and several other small line side structures were at the site. From this point Sacramento Northern trains ran north and west. The wye was partially removed in 1993. None of the structures remain. Thus, Dozier station is a non-contributor due to a lack of historic integrity.

## C2. Bridges

Bridges allowed the line to cross various water courses and drainages along the route. They were originally constructed of cedar with concrete abutments. Vertical support posts were driven into the soil. Over time, soil conditions caused these support posts to deteriorate and rot at and just below ground level. These posts were cut at ground level and new concrete footings were added underneath the cut areas to support the posts. As a part of Sacramento Northern's on-going maintenance and upgrades, the original cedar structures were eventually replaced with creosote-treated wood timbers. All these changes occurred during the period of significance. The 7 bridges in the district are contributing and listed by mile post from south to north.

MP 50.49 – 60 feet long  
MP 52.54 – 155 feet long  
MP 54.07 – 60 feet long  
MP 55.13 – 60 feet long  
MP 56.51 – 60 feet long  
MP 56.94 – 60 feet long  
MP 64.28 – 120 feet long

The following construction details apply to each of the 7 bridges:

Approximate dates of construction for all bridges is the early to mid 1920's. Bridges are constructed of creosote-treated heavy wood timbers of various dimensions following standard railroad engineering practices of the time. The timbers are connected with heavy nut, bolt and washer assemblies to form the structure. The key component of the bridges that supports the track is the "bent." Each bent consists of five vertical 12" x 12" support posts that spread out as they go from "top" to "bottom." Diagonal 3" x 9" sway braces are attached to the support posts for lateral strength. On top of each bent is a 12" x 15" horizontal cap. Horizontal 6" x 18" stringers running the length of the bridge rest on the cap and support the ties and rails. Each end of the bridge is supported by poured in place concrete abutments. Bents are spaced approximately every 15 feet over the length of the bridge between the abutments. Each bent rests on poured in place concrete footings.

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### C3. Culverts

Corrugated galvanized steel culverts 8"-48" in diameter are buried under the tracks and used for light-duty drainage. While all of the 42 culverts in the district date to the period of significance, they are non-contributing structures because they are currently being replaced with cast iron pipe for better corrosion resistance. The culverts are listed by mile post from south to north.

MP 50.49 36"	MP 55.33 24"	MP 60.62 12"	MP 64.40 12"
MP 51.85 18"	MP 55.74 18"	MP 60.83 12"	MP 64.45 12"
MP 52.27 8"	MP 56.03 48"	MP 60.84 12"	MP 64.68 12"
MP 52.67 12"	MP 56.36 12"	MP 61.83 12"	
MP 52.82 18"	MP 56.39 18"	MP 61.95 12"	
MP 53.14 24"	MP 57.60 12"	MP 62.10 36"	
MP 53.39 12"	MP 57.74 18"	MP 62.29 12"	
MP 53.59 12"	MP 57.85 18"	MP 62.41 12"	
MP 53.68 24"	MP 58.61 18"	MP 62.75 12"	
MP 54.56 12"	MP 59.01 12"	MP 62.86 18"	
MP 54.68 12"	MP 59.41 24"	MP 63.00 12"	
MP 54.84 24"	MP 60.32 24"	MP 63.31 36"	
MP 55.28 24"	MP 60.49 8"	MP 63.82 12"	

### C4. Grade Crossings

All 11 of the public road grade crossings over the rail line are at historic locations. All have been upgraded to comply with current state and county requirements for public road grade crossings. The grade crossings are non-contributing structures because no signage or other physical materials dating from the period of significance remain.

Montezuma to Dozier (mainline south to north):

- Dinkelspiel Rd. (MP 51.97)
- Birds Landing Rd. (MP 52.50)
- Shiloh Rd. (MP 53.90)
- Little Honker Bay Rd. (MP 56.40)
- Lambie Rd. (MP 59.00)
- Creed Rd. (MP 60.78)
- Cook Ln. (MP 63.70)
- State Highway 113 (MP 64.50)

Dozier to Cannon (branch line east to west):

- Cook Ln. (MP.25)
- Meridian Rd. (MP 5.40)
- North Gate Rd. (MP 6.35)

## D. Contributing and Non-Contributing Resource Summary

### Contributing Buildings:

- Molena warehouse
- Molena speeder shed
- Blakemore residence
- Blakemore warehouse
- Bus maintenance/storage garage and transfer station

### Contributing Structures:

- 22-mile long Sacramento Northern Railway roadbed
- Rails and ties in place on the 22-mile Sacramento Northern Railway roadbed

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- Sacramento Northern 1 (substation #1)
- Substation #2 (Del Paso substation)
- Sacramento Northern 602
- Oakland, Antioch & Eastern 1019
- Oakland, Antioch & Eastern 1020
- Sacramento Northern 2314
- Sacramento Northern 2136
- Oakland, Antioch & Eastern 2002
- Sacramento Northern 1632
- Sacramento Northern 652
- Sacramento Northern 654
- Sacramento Northern 146
- Sacramento Northern "Bidwell"
- Sacramento Northern 1005
- 7 bridges

**Non-Contributing Buildings:**

- Western Railway Museum visitor center
- Car House #1
- Car House #2
- Car House #3
- Shops

**Non-Contributing Structures:**

- Overhead electrification and line poles
- Gum Grove passenger platform
- Gum Grove substation
- Substation #1 protective shed
- 42 culverts
- 11 public grade crossings

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

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- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Transportation

Engineering / Architecture

Commerce

Education

**Period of Significance**

1913-1960

**Significant Dates**

1913, 1928, 1940, 1946, 1953, 1960

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Crider, J.L.

Quimby, C.H.

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The Period of Significance was chosen to encompass the 1913 opening of the Oakland, Antioch and Eastern Railway's 93-mile route from San Francisco to Sacramento as a high-speed electric interurban railway (including the 22 mile segment now owned by the Bay Area Electric Railroad Association) to the 1960 establishment of the Solano County property as the site of the future Western Railway Museum.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**



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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

Sacramento Northern Railway Historic District is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A at the local level of significance for transportation, commerce, engineering/architecture and education. The period of significance is from 1913-1960.

The Sacramento Northern Railway Historic District's 22-mile segment of the former Sacramento Northern Railway was part of the largest electric interurban system in Northern California and one of the longest in the entire United States. The 185-mile mainline from San Francisco to Chico provided convenient and efficient high speed electric interurban freight and passenger service that positively impacted the economy, development and population throughout the region. The Sacramento Northern Railway was built and operated to interurban railway standards of the time and included a ferry operation. Although there was at least one other interurban line with a ferry operation, Sacramento Northern's was arguably the most sophisticated operation of its type in the United States. With 41 years of service, it was also probably the longest-lived.

The district's right of way segment contains a number of features from its construction, including most of its original grade, much original track, bridges, and culverts. Other resources are representative of early to mid-20th century interurban railroading. The landscape and setting has changed little from the time of the railroad's construction. The district thus retains a high degree of integrity in all aspects.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Sacramento Northern Railway Historic District is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A at the local level of significance for:

- **Transportation and Commerce:** The District is a lasting example of one of the longest interurban transportation systems in the country. It facilitated the rapid and economical movement of people and freight between the Bay Area, the state capitol in Sacramento and numerous other communities along its route. This was especially beneficial to the farmers, ranchers and other rural residents of Solano County who lived in the vicinity of the line.
- **Engineering/Architecture:** The District reflects the evolution of interurban railroad engineering and construction technology from the early to the mid 20th century.
- **Education:** The role of electric railroads in our national story is shared with present and future generations through the preservation and interpretation of artifacts, images and memories of the business of the Sacramento Northern and other railroads.

**Sacramento Northern Historic Narrative:**

The Sacramento Northern Railway was built by the former Oakland & Antioch Railway and its successor the Oakland, Antioch and Eastern Railway, between 1911 and 1913. The district was part of a line that stretched south of Sacramento through farmland and marshes, over Suisun Bay by ferry to Pittsburg-Concord and then into the Contra Costa County hills to the Key System's Oakland ferry terminal. At the terminal passengers debarked the trains and continued to San Francisco via ferry. In 1939 trains began running between San Francisco's Transbay Terminal and Oakland via the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge. The Oakland Antioch and Eastern (becoming the San Francisco-Sacramento Railroad in 1920) provided convenient and efficient high speed electric interurban freight and passenger service that positively impacted the economy, development and population between the East Bay and the State Capitol.

In 1928 the Sacramento Northern Railway, which ran a 93-mile electric interurban railway connecting Chico in Northern California with Sacramento, acquired the San Francisco-Sacramento Railroad. This acquisition created a 185-mile combined high speed mainline that stretched from San Francisco to Chico. The "new" Sacramento Northern Railway was built and operated to interurban railway standards of the time and was likely one of only two electric interurban railroads in the country to include a ferry operation.

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The original Sacramento Northern Railway was purchased by the Western Pacific Railroad in 1925 to handle its growing interurban holdings. The Sacramento Northern Railway increased Western Pacific profits when freight was shipped by Sacramento Northern Railway line side businesses and transferred to Western Pacific. The Western Pacific's Sacramento Northern Railway holdings and profits were further increased with the 1928 acquisition of the San Francisco-Sacramento Railroad.

With the rise of the automobile and the impact of the Great Depression, passenger business was less than expected and became increasingly unprofitable. Passenger service between West Pittsburg and Sacramento ended August 26, 1940. On October 31, 1940, the last passenger train ran between Chico and Sacramento. The final regular passenger trains on the "South End" ran June 30, 1941. World War II saw a tremendous increase in freight business because this route allowed the WP access to the new Oakland Army Terminal. Finally in 1953, thanks to trackage rights gained over other lines, the Sacramento Northern Railway's ferryboat *Ramon* (used to transfer trains across Suisun Bay) was retired, the electrification north of the ferry to Sacramento was taken down, and the once high-speed mainline reverted to a very secondary branch. With the abandonment of the ferry crossing in 1953, the line was kept for feed lot business at first, and later for its potential as a route to a possible port or coal-burning power station on the Suisun Bay, neither of which ever materialized. With the demise of these plans, the Union Pacific, which had acquired the line in 1987 by merger, decided to abandon the line.

Today nearly all Sacramento Northern Railway track outside the district is gone, or lies dormant. The only major pieces in regular service are the former Woodland Branch, now operated by the Yolo Short Line, and some industrial track in West Sacramento. Western Railway Museum's restored mainline section is the only portion of the Sacramento Northern mainline still operated under wire.

#### **Bay Area Electric Railroad Association & Western Railway Museum Historic Narrative:**

In 1946, a group of like-minded individuals learned that an old Oakland streetcar that they had chartered for a day's outing was to be scrapped within a week. They immediately dug into their pockets and gathered together enough money to buy the car right there on the spot. In this spirit of philanthropy and historic preservation, the Bay Area Electric Railroad Association was created to foster interest in streetcar, interurban, and mainline electric railroad operations, and to preserve these rapidly vanishing pieces of history.

In the following years, many interurbans and streetcars were collected, as well as smaller artifacts such as photographs, corporate records, books, fare boxes, and signage. By 1960, the need for a permanent site was clear. Rio Vista Junction (see section below), an actual stop on the Sacramento Northern Railway main line in Solano County, was selected as the Museum site, and the task of transforming 22 vacant acres into a living history Museum began. In 1985, the name "Western Railway Museum" was officially adopted.

During 1993, the Union Pacific Railroad donated 21 miles of the underlying right-of-way to the Museum under the Rails to Trails Act. Donations totaling \$225,000 from Museum members and friends enabled the Association to purchase the rails, ties, and associated hardware. To date, the Association has restored and re-electrified over five miles of the old Sacramento Northern line to operation, with another mile under wire scheduled to be added by year end 2011. The Western Railway Museum is one of the few places in the world that recreates an authentic interurban trip using original, restored rolling stock, running on the original rails. The Museum has the largest collection of surviving SN equipment.

Although regular passenger service on the Sacramento Northern line through Rio Vista Junction ended in 1940, many excursions were held over the SN with Association-owned equipment before de-electrification in 1953. In the 1960s and 1970s some trips, including trains of Key System bridge units hauled by a Sacramento Northern Railway diesel or using Nevada Copper Belt gasoline motorcar #21, originated at the Museum and operated to Montezuma and Vacaville. In the pre-Amtrak era, popular "Rio Vista Junction Limited" excursions originated in the Bay Area and operated direct to the Museum with 21-car trains.

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With declining freight service, the portion of the line between the Museum and Dozier (seven miles north of the Museum) was leased to the Association, first on a freight only basis. Eventually the lease was amended to allow the Museum to begin operation of its popular "Prairie Train" services that ran to the vernal pools at Jepson Prairie from 1985 - 1994.

From its opening, the Oakland, Antioch and Eastern offered connecting service via water from its Chipps ferry terminal to river towns such as the then important Collinsville and to Rio Vista and Isleton. In 1915, connecting bus service to Rio Vista began from Molena. In the early 1920s, when the new Highway 12 crossed the railroad at Creed (previously named Curtis), the railroad and Rio Vista Transit Co. built a joint transfer station here. The station was renamed Rio Vista Junction, and the bus connection operated from here to Rio Vista until the end of passenger service in 1940.

The bus line was abandoned with the Sacramento Northern Railway's passenger service, but the name remained as a station on the Sacramento Northern, on the service station that operated there until the early 1950s and on road maps to this day. Rio Vista Junction also has a modern railroad connection: it serves as a stop for Amtrak buses that travel on Highway 12. Although the Post Office address is Suisun City, the Western Railway Museum is located at the rail station of Rio Vista Junction.

## Historic Themes:

### Transportation & Commerce

The 1910 census gave the population of the Bay cities of California as 653,449 and the State capitol of Sacramento as 63,696. Providing a direct, economical and efficient rail link between these growing population centers was becoming increasingly evident. The Oakland Hills (part of the Coastal Range) separated Oakland and the growing villages of Concord, Walnut Creek and Lafayette. This natural barrier made travel slow—a 50 mile trip by steam train was needed to cover an "as the crow flies" distance of 20 miles. The challenge of the Oakland Hills prompted engineers of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe and the Southern Pacific Railroads to avoid more direct routes. Promoters the Oakland and Antioch and the Oakland, Antioch and Eastern Railroads, however, saw an opportunity to leverage the advantages of electric interurban railroads and provide that more direct route. The result was what became known as the "South End" of the Sacramento Northern Railway, the last major independent interurban railroad construction in California.

The Sacramento Northern Railway electric interurban line grew out of the rapidly growing network of city-based electric streetcars which sprang up almost overnight during the 1890s in Northern California and around the country. Forces such as urbanization, industrial growth and the end of rural isolation combined to prompt Sacramento Northern and many other larger streetcar companies around the country to expand their electric networks into the countryside. By providing frequent, inexpensive high speed transportation between cities, interurbans such as the Sacramento Northern were able to compete against steam railroads. Because of their economical operation, electric interurbans could offer lower fares and more frequent service than steam railroads. Powerful electric motors also allowed interurbans to accelerate to top speed more rapidly and provide faster service between cities than their steam competitors. Faster acceleration meant interurbans could make more frequent stops. This was especially popular with Solano County ranchers, farmers and other people living in rural areas because it allowed interurbans to serve markets that were not economically feasible for steam railroads. Interurbans could also move farmer's products to larger cities. In Northern California and many other parts of the country, before automobiles and trucks, the interurbans were the only way to travel and move products to market quickly and economically. Because interurbans were relatively cheap to build, cheap to operate and cheaper to ride than full-fledged railroads, they rapidly became the common people's transportation network.

While some railroads viewed interurbans with anxiety, because local steam traffic was often cut to a small fraction by electric lines, they were often blessings in disguise. In general, most railroads lost money on their local service. Management learned that the two transportation systems often worked well together through interchange of passengers and freight. Western Pacific's purchase of the Sacramento Northern Railway illustrates this point well. Profits were increased when freight was shipped by Sacramento Northern Railway line side businesses and transferred to Western

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Pacific. At night, when passenger service was limited, Sacramento Northern could haul freight cars directly to factories and carry mail and express to rural destinations.

The Sacramento Northern Railway right of way segment owned by the Bay Area Electric Railroad Association is a lasting example of one of the longest interurban transportation systems in the country. It facilitated the rapid and economical movement of people and freight between the Bay Area, the state capitol in Sacramento and numerous other communities along its route. This was especially beneficial to the farmers, ranchers and other rural residents of Solano County who lived in the vicinity of the line.

### Engineering/Architecture

The Sacramento Northern Railway "South End" right of way segment owned by the Bay Area Electric Railroad Association reflects the evolution of interurban railroad engineering and construction technology from the early to the mid 20th century. Although the right of way segment does not contain significant engineering innovations or architectural achievements, it is a remarkably complete representation of typical single-track electric interurban railroads from the period of significance. The line is still primarily on the original alignment. Its grade and remaining structures are in generally good condition, and have a high level of historic integrity.

After crossing extensive marshland adjacent to Suisun Bay, this section of the line crosses gently rolling prairie grasslands. The original roadbed and track construction was largely completed using animal and manual labor. Mechanical pile drivers were likely used for setting wooden bridge piles. This "economical" construction approach was typical of interurban railroads. The lack of significant physical barriers in this area meant few curves, cuts and fills, trestles and minimal grades. This resulted in speedier and less expensive roadbed and track construction for the Oakland, Antioch and Eastern. The track consisted of 70 pound per yard rails laid on wood cross ties placed in rock ballast. This was typical of main line steam railroads of the time. Such heavy construction was needed because of high speeds planned. Scheduled speeds were in the neighborhood of 60 miles per hour. With the purchase of the line by the Western Pacific Railroad, and the subsequent increase in freight traffic, the track and roadbed were upgraded to better support those operations. These in-kind replacements and upgrades were common through the life of any railroad and show the evolution of railroad construction practices. The tracks currently reflect their appearance from the 1920s to 1960s.

In contrast to the line section running through the historic district, the Oakland to Pittsburg section of the "South End" traversed a number of hills and canyons which required steeper grades (some over 4.5%), the 3,600-foot Redwood Peak Tunnel under the Oakland Hills, and significant cuts, fills and trestles. The most significant engineering barrier, however, was crossing Suisun Bay. The location and means of crossing the Bay directly influenced the location and operations of the line segment that runs through the proposed historic district. The 2,600-foot Bay span between West Pittsburg on the south side and Chipps Island on the north side was selected as the crossing because it was the shortest and potentially least expensive option. Because of heavy shipping traffic, however, a high-level drawbridge with substantial approaches was required. Since bridge construction would take approximately 2 ½ years and delay opening of the railroad, temporary ferry service was implemented. Due to high construction costs and the railway not meeting revenue expectations, construction was halted and the "temporary" ferry service became permanent. Frequent high winds and dangerous currents in the Bay, along with switching operations required to move cars on and off the ferries, likely played havoc with passenger schedules. The Suisun Bay ferry crossing was one of Sacramento Northern's most unique features. Although there was at least one other interurban line with a ferry operation, SN's was arguably the most sophisticated operation of its type in the United States. With 41 years of service, it was also probably the longest-lived.

The South End was electrified largely at 1,200 volts dc until 1936, after which it operated at 1,500 volts, with areas of 600 volts in Oakland and Sacramento. This section used catenary rather than single trolley wire, leading to the eventual exclusive use of pantographs rather than trolley poles everywhere south of Sacramento. Single line pole construction and increased pole spacing allowed by catenary helped to control construction and on-going maintenance expenses. In addition to the contact and substation power wires, the line poles also carried signal and telephone lines. Power was supplied by the Great Western Power Company via five substations located along the line.

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The line segment within the proposed historic district required a limited number of culverts and bridges when originally constructed. Those structures remain largely intact, although some have been renovated to assure greater longevity, structural integrity and safety. Flag stop shelters at the various road crossings served as “stations” along the line. None of these inexpensive frame structures remain.

## Education

The roots of today's railway preservation movement can be traced to the 1930's. Since their inception in the early 1800's, railways have played a central role in the development of the United States. By the third decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, that role was evolving due to the impact of the Great Depression and the rise of automobiles and trucks as a major means of transportation and commerce. The Great Depression meant less freight revenue for railroads due to shuttered factories and reduced consumer spending. A number of railroads faced increased operating costs due to reduced revenues. This financial bind often led to cessations of operations, reorganizations and bankruptcies. Improvements in the number and quality of roads and motor vehicles provided stiff competition for railroads in the economical and efficient transportation of goods and people.

Against this rapidly changing transportation backdrop, small groups of railway enthusiasts began to form to document and preserve artifacts, images and memories of the business of railroading. While the simple love of watching and riding trains motivated many, most enthusiasts had a deeper motivation—preserving and interpreting the role of railroads in our national story for future generations.

In 1930's Northern California most railway preservation activities were rail fan trips and excursions by small groups. Cameras and photo opportunities created bonds between these railway enthusiasts. Historian and BAERA member Ted Wurm was especially active in the photographic and written documentation of the Sacramento Northern operations, equipment and locale. A number of his photos are included in this document. The events of December 7, 1941 and the resulting World War suspended most rail fan activities as the men either entered the armed forces or provided home front support.

As World War II moved to its close, returning rail fan servicemen renewed acquaintances and reestablished their friendships. One such serviceman was Major Eldon W. Lucy. In March 1945 Major Lucy found Napa Valley Route interurban trailer No. 53 on a spur in Vallejo, CA where it had been used as military barracks. No longer needed for the purpose, the car had become available for preservation. He formed a group of eight rail fans under the name Bay Area Railfans' Association for the purpose of preserving No. 53. Their success in electric railway preservation in California set the stage for other important events and many more preservation efforts.

In 1946 the Bay Area Railfans' Association started to reorganize and manifest itself into a new, more structured organization—the Bay Area Electric Railroad Association. The group's September 29, 1946 charter of Key System car 271 proved to be a pivotal moment in railway preservation. The BAERA group learned No. 271's next trip would be to the scrap yard. The group realized immediate action was necessary to prevent scrapping of the car. For \$250, the Association purchased the car and preserved. Car No. 271 became the first rolling stock artifact of the future Western Railway Museum. It continues to see regular service on the Museum's tracks.

In subsequent years the BAERA held a number of excursions on Bay Area interurban and street car lines, including the Sacramento Northern, along with excursions farther afield including Oregon and Montana. These excursions brought in much revenue to fund the purchase of cars and equipment for preservation. The car and equipment collection has expanded greatly over the years and includes rolling stock that actually ran over the rail line segment owned by the Association, along with historic equipment from a number of other street car, interurban and rapid transit lines.

The Association's mission statement has always listed the acquisition and preservation of such material as one of its goals as a resource for the membership and for public scholarly research. Shortly after the BAERA was founded it also began building its collection of small artifacts, a library and an archive.

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Mr. W. W. Nelson, the Sacramento Northern's Superintendent of Transportation, was the featured speaker at the Association's first annual dinner on December 6, 1947. Mr. Nelson had started with SN's predecessor company, the Northern Electric Railway, in 1906 and used the occasion of the Bay Area dinner to announce his retirement. In addition, he presented his personal collection of Northern Electric and Sacramento Northern employee timetables to the Association.

From this modest start the archive has grown as corporate files, maps, drawings and other records from numerous street railway, interurban and electric operating mainline railroads have been donated either directly or through private collections. Donations from private collectors have contributed hundreds of books on the histories of individual companies and the industry as well as many technical books that assist in the Association's restoration program. The Association has been beneficiary of the work of many long time member/photographers and collectors.

The F. M. Smith Memorial Library was established as a technical resource for employees of his Oakland Traction Co. and the Key System. At the Western Railway Museum, the library serves members and researchers as the interface to the Archives. A circulating collection of books is available to members. While the collection is constantly growing, major strengths already exist in original corporate documents from the Key System, Northern Electric, Oakland, Antioch & Eastern, San Francisco - Sacramento, and Sacramento Northern; operation records from the Napa Valley Route, Sacramento Northern and Market Street Railway; and engineering drawings from the Southern Pacific and Western Pacific. The planning, construction and growth of the Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART) is particularly well documented.

Through the acquisition, preservation and interpretation of historic artifacts, the BAERA and the Western Railway Museum preserve the regional heritage of electric railway transportation as a living resource for the benefit and education of present and future generations.

### **Period of Significance**

The period of significance for the district began in 1913 with the start of operations by the Oakland, Antioch and Eastern and concludes with the selection of Rio Vista Junction as the site of the future Western Railway Museum in 1960.

### **Significant Dates**

1913: Oakland, Antioch, and Eastern (OAE) is incorporated, and operations begin on an electrified railroad from Oakland to Sacramento.

1920: OAE becomes the San Francisco-Sacramento Railroad (SF-S).

1922: Sacramento Northern Railroad acquired by Western Pacific (WP) and becomes a subsidiary.

1925: Sacramento Northern Railway (SNR) is incorporated and purchases the Sacramento Northern Railroad on November 4, under WP ownership.

1928: SNR acquires SF-S and entire Chico-Oakland route is now the Sacramento Northern Railway.

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1939: SNR service begins over the new Bay Bridge into downtown San Francisco.

1940: Passenger service between West Pittsburg and Sacramento ends.

1946: Bay Area Electric Railroad Association formed

1953: Suisun Bay ferry *RAMON* at Pittsburg retired. SNR/WP arrange freight connection from Sacramento through Stockton to Pittsburg and Concord shippers via Santa Fe. Electrification north of the ferry to Sacramento is taken down.

1960: Rio Vista Junction selected as site of the future Western Railway Museum

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**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

### Articles

Borgwardt, Rick, *Our Heritage-The First 50 Years*, The Review, Western Railway Museum, September 1996

Eldridge, Bruce, *Destination Molina*, The Review, Western Railway Museum, March 2011

Evans, W.H., *Automatic Substation, Sacramento Northern Railroad*, General Electric Review, November 1920

Heise, C.E. and Kirker, G.B., *Oakland, Antioch & Eastern Railway*, The Electric Journal, October 1913

Low, Wendy, *Diversified Farming in the Montezuma Hills*, Solano Land Trust VISTAS, Fall 2004

*Oakland and Antioch Railway*, Journal of Electricity, Power and Gas, March 1912

*Sacramento Northern Railway and Predecessor Companies Chronology*, Bay Area Electric Railroad Association Archives Department, July 1994

### Books

Demoro, Harre, *California's Electric Railways Interurbans Special #100*, Interurban Press, Glendale, CA, 1986

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---, *Cars of the Sacramento Northern-Interurbans Special 32*, Interurbans, South Gate, CA 1963

---, *Sacramento Northern Album-Interurbans Special 34*, Interurbans, Los Angeles, CA 1963

### Maps/Diagrams

Map of Bay Area Electric Railroad Association's Preserved Sacramento Northern Rail Line, The Review, Western Railway Museum, February 1998

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Pagni, C. *Sacramento Northern Railway Standard Details of Type-A 45' Pole Construction*, Bay Area Electric Railroad Association, May 1996

Sacramento Northern Railway, Rio Vista Junction, March 1933

San Francisco-Sacramento Railroad Company, Rio Vista Junction Proposed Sale of Property to R.L. and K.K. Lambie, May 1923

---, Rio Vista Junction Proposed Yard Layout, September 1923

---, Rio Vista Junction Roadway to Passenger Depot, February 1924

---, Molena-Location of Lease to Cristian Blakemore, June 1925

Union Pacific Railroad engineering survey of Sacramento Northern Railway—Montezuma to Dozier, March 1984

**Reports & Studies**

Arnold, Bion J., consulting engineer, *Report to Hirsch, Lilientahl and Company on the Oakland, Antioch and Eastern Railway Line Extending from Oakland to Sacramento*, Chicago, IL, June 1914

Brown, H.O., chief engineer, *Track, Roadway and Structures: A Complete Status Report as of July 1939*, Sacramento Northern Railway, July 1939

**Websites**

Sacramento Northern On-Line <http://people.virginia.edu/~ggg9y/home.html>

Western Railway Museum <http://www.wrm.org>

Cowell Historical Society—Oakland, Antioch & Eastern Railway <http://cowellhistoricalsociety.org/html/oa-er.html>

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Approx. 277 acres  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**



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(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The proposed Sacramento Northern Railway Historic District totals approximately 277 acres. Most is stretched out 14 miles between Montezuma and Dozier and 7 miles from Dozier to Cannon. This portion of the property is 100 feet wide and represents the right of way segment donated to the Bay Area Electric Railroad Association by the Union Pacific Railroad in 1993. About 22 acres of the property is the site of the Western Railway Museum at Rio Vista Junction.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

These boundaries were selected in that they are the original properties of the Sacramento Northern Railway (Oakland, Antioch, and Eastern Railway; San Francisco-Sacramento Railroad; Western Pacific Railroad) in this segment. They are currently owned by The Bay Area Electric Railroad Association for its preservation and use as an operating electric railroad museum.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Stephen G. Greger, project manager  
organization Western Railway Museum date October, 2011  
street & number 1170 Hickory Ave telephone 707435.8312  
city or town Fairfield state CA zip code 94533  
e-mail stephengreger@gmail.com

**Additional Documentation**

• **Maps:**

**USGS maps** (7.5 series) indicating the district's location:

- Elmira
- Dozier
- Birds Landing
- Denverton
- Honkers Bay
- Antioch North

**Sketch maps** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources:

- Sacramento Northern Railway Historic District Contemporary Photo Locations (2)
- Sacramento Northern Railway Historic District Historic Photo Locations (2)
- Western Railway Museum Contemporary Photo Locations
- Western Railway Museum Site Map

• **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

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- o Continuation sheet with copies of Historic Photographs
- o Continuation sheet with Contemporary Photo Log and photos
- o Sacramento Northern Railway route map

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**Photographs:**

Forty-three contemporary photographs are attached of the district, as well as significant resources. Photo locations and direction of view are indicated in the photo log and on the five sketch maps.

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**Property Owner:**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Phil Kohlmetz, Executive Director, Bay Area Electric Railroad Association  
street & number 5848 State Highway 12 telephone 707.374.2978  
city or town Suisun City state CA zip code 94585

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

<b>Sacramento Northern Railway Historic District</b> Solano County, California
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## **National Register of Historic Places Historic Photos**

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### **Historic Photo 1 of 12**

Typical Oakland, Antioch and Eastern Railroad construction train used during construction of the "South End." Former Southern Pacific Railroad locomotive 1369 is providing motive power for the train.

Photographer: Unknown. Bay Area Electric Railroad Association Archives collection

Location: Between Chipps and Sacramento—exact location unknown.

Date: 1913



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## National Register of Historic Places Historic Photos

### Historic Photo 2 of 12

Montezuma freight station and platform. Overhead electrification and line poles represent typical construction practices of the Sacramento Northern Railway. Modern overhead electrification and line poles erected by the Bay Area Electric Railroad Association closely replicate this original installation. Note cattle guards along the line, and two gondola cars on the Montezuma spur track at the right.

Photographer: Ted Wurm, Bay Area Electric Railroad Association Archives collection

Location: MP 49.98 looking north

Date: May 12, 1940



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## National Register of Historic Places Historic Photos

### Historic Photo 3 of 12

Small passenger shelter (foreground) and freight house at Molena. When the railroad was first opened in 1913, the Oakland, Antioch and Eastern provided passenger shelters at many flag stops like Molena. These shelters sometimes sat on wooden platforms, especially when the ground sloped away from the tracks. At other locations, such as Molena, the shelters were placed directly on the ground. The large warehouse in the background is served by a passing siding. Several boxcars are spotted on the siding along the warehouse. The warehouse is still standing today and is used by local farmers for hay storage.

Photographer: Ted Wurm, Bay Area Electric Railroad Association Archives collection

Location: MP 52.27 looking south

Date: May 12, 1940



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**Historic Photo 4 of 12**

Livestock loading ramp and corral adjacent to the Molena warehouse. Arrangement and construction is typical of other livestock facilities along the Sacramento Northern Railway.

Photographer: Ted Wurm, Bay Area Electric Railroad Association Archives collection

Location: MP 51.97 looking north

Date: May 12, 1940



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## National Register of Historic Places Historic Photos

### Historic Photo 5 of 12

The Shiloh Road grade crossing just south of Gum Grove was typical of such crossings along the line. Railroad crossing “cross bucks” and an early “wig wag” signal (left) were in place to warn rural Solano County motorists of on-coming trains. The grove of trees on the right is now gone. Western Railway Museum’s 2011 Julie Johnson substation now occupies that spot.

Photographer: Unknown, Bay Area Electric Railroad Association Archives collection

Location: MP 53.70, looking west

Date: Unknown, estimated mid-1920's



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## National Register of Historic Places Historic Photos

### Historic Photo 6 of 12

Garfield just north of the Little Honker Bay Road grade crossing. Typical wooden cattle guards are in the foreground. The Garfield flag stop passenger shelter is on the right with a freight platform behind it. The wind mill and elevated water tank provide water for a section house. Down the tracks is a switch leading to a livestock loading spur on the right. The Western Railway Museum replicated this spur at the same location in 2011.

Photographer: Ted Wurm, Bay Area Electric Railroad Association Archives collection

Location: MP 56.42 looking south

Date: May 12, 1940





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#### Historic Photo 7 of 12

Private road grade crossing and surrounding farmland at Creed (renamed Rio Vista Junction in 1922). A small freight shelter and platform are to the left of the road. An Oakland, Antioch and Eastern electric locomotive and flat car (possibly part of a track maintenance train) are at the far left. Land on either side of the road in the foreground is now part of the Western Railway Museum property. Land to the west of the tracks remains largely unchanged today.

Photographer: Unknown, Bay Area Electric Railroad Association Archives collection

Location: MP 57.60 looking west

Date: 1914



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## National Register of Historic Places Historic Photos

### Historic Photo 8 of 12

Southbound Sacramento Northern Railway train 9 at Rio Vista Junction. The foreground building is the combination depot and stage station. Passengers bound for Rio Vista or Isleton would complete their journey after boarding buses of the Rio Vista Transit Company under the building's canopy on the right. The freight station and platform is behind the depot and the 1922 State Highway 12 overpass is in the background.

Photographer: David Merrill, Bay Area Electric Railroad Association Archives collection

Location: MP 57.74 looking north

Date: August 1940



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## National Register of Historic Places Historic Photos

### Historic Photo 9 of 12

Sacramento Northern Railway interurban car 302 and one coach transport Bay Area Electric Railway Association members on an excursion south of Rio Vista Junction prior to the 1953 removal of overhead electrification. Trains operated by the Western Railway Museum on this same rail line provide today's museum visitors with rides on vintage interurban equipment similar to that shown in the photo.

Photographer: Unknown, Bay Area Electric Railroad Association Archives collection

Location: Looking northeast, south of Rio Vista Junction (exact location unknown)

Date: September 25, 1949



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## National Register of Historic Places Historic Photos

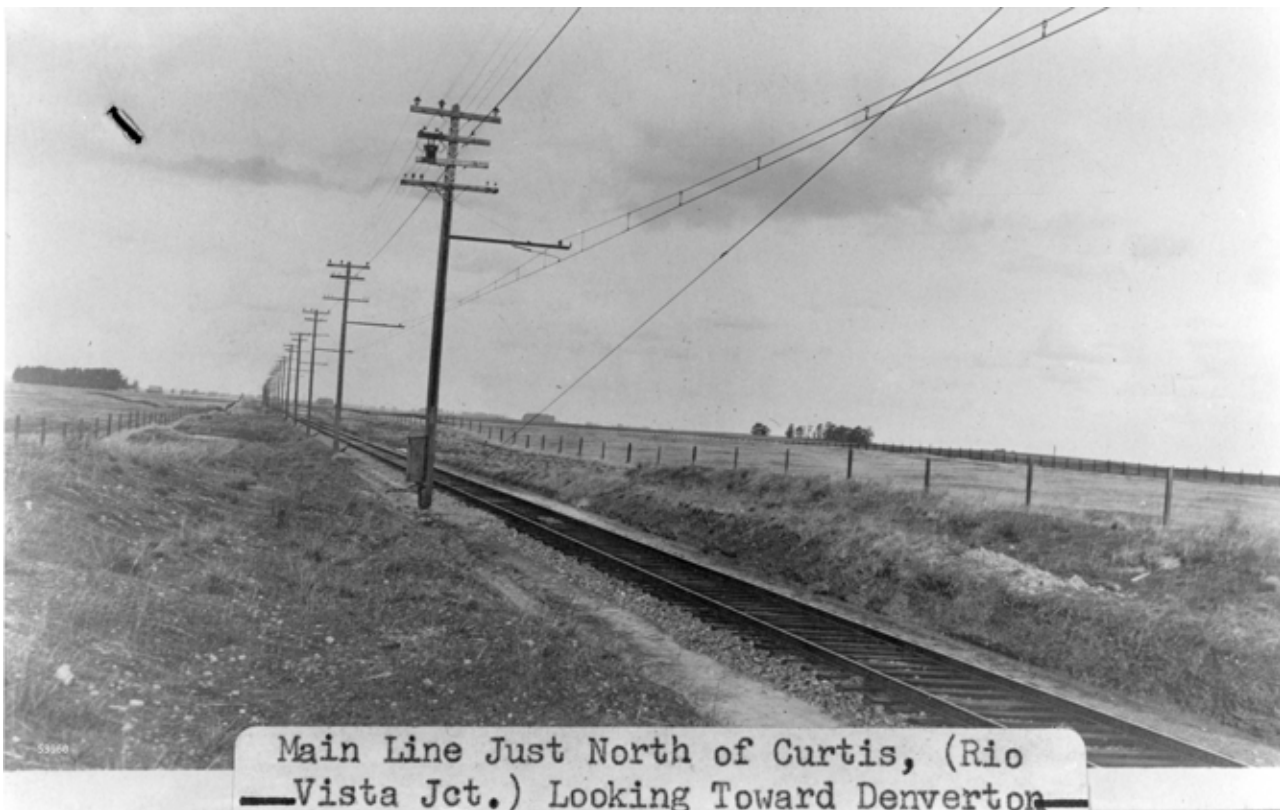
### Historic Photo 10 of 12

Oakland, Antioch and Eastern Railway mainline to Sacramento looking north toward Denverton shortly after its 1913 opening. With the exception of removed line poles and overhead electrification, the vista along the rails today is almost identical to that shown in the photo.

Photographer: Unknown, Bay Area Electric Railroad Association Archives collection

Location: Just north of Curtis (renamed Rio Vista Junction in 1922). Exact location unknown, but estimated near MP 59.0

Date: 1913



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### Historic Photo 11 of 12

Sacramento Northern Railway mainline toward Sacramento at Creed. The switch in the foreground leads to a 3523' siding and wye to the left. This wye and its connection to the Southern Pacific Railroad was relocated to Dozier during World War II to allow expansion of nearby Travis Army Airfield (now Travis Air Force Base).

Photographer: Ted Wurm, Bay Area Electric Railroad Association Archives collection

Location: MP 60.78, looking north

Date: May 12, 1940



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## National Register of Historic Places Historic Photos

### Historic Photo 12 of 12

Sacramento Northern Railway main line running toward Sacramento at Dozier. The track represents part of a 23 mile tangent (straight) section that began at Denverton (MP 59.5). This long tangent allowed trains in this area to run up to 60 miles per hour. The light colored building on the left is one of five substations on the "South End." A freight house and platform are down the line on the right. Six years after this photo was taken, Dozier took on increased importance for the Sacramento Northern when a wye and 7 mile branch line were built to replace the abandoned wye and branch at Creed.

Photographer: Ted Wurm, Bay Area Electric Railroad Association Archives collection

Location: MP 64.55, looking north

Date: May 12, 1940



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## National Register of Historic Places Contemporary Photo Log

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**NOTE:** Photographs 1-19 traverse the district from Montezuma to Dozier. Several of the photographs were taken from the approximate viewpoint of the historic images to demonstrate both the historic integrity and the evolution of the district. Images 20-31 are included to sample resources within the Western Railway Museum property. Images 32-43 include contributing equipment in the Western Railway Museum collection.

### CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0001

Southern boundary of the BAERHD at Montezuma. No rails or ties remain in this area. A portion of the grass covered raised roadbed can be seen at the left center. Remnants of the wooden trestle that carried trains north across the marshlands of Montezuma Slough after debarking the ferry *RAMON* are visible at the left and right center of the photo. Beyond the south shore of Suisun Bay is Contra Costa County and Mount Diablo.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 8/4/2011

MP 49.98 (at Fire Truck Rd.) looking south

### CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0002

Several remaining line poles located on the west side of the right of way at Montezuma. The roadbed itself is grass covered and barely visible to the right of the poles. Several of the large wind turbines that border the line to the south and east of Rio Vista Junction are in the distance.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 8/4/2011

MP 49.98 (at Fire Truck Rd.) looking north

### CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0003

Remnants of the Montezuma livestock loading ramp and corral. The grass covered rails of the spur are visible in the foreground.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 8/4/2011

MP 49.98 (at Fire Truck Rd.) looking northeast

### CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0004

Main line (left) and passing siding (right) at Molena. The large warehouse was used for storage and transfer of grain, hay and other commodities to Sacramento Northern rail cars that were spotted on the siding. The warehouse is still used for storage of hay by area farmers. The livestock loading ramp and corral shown in Historic Photo 4 were located to the left of the stack of hay bales. A track maintenance speeder house is located down the main line on the right.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 8/4/2011

MP 51.97 (at Dinklespeil Rd.) looking north

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## **National Register of Historic Places**

### **Contemporary Photo Log**

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CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0005

Molena track maintenance speeder house to the left. The stump of a line pole is in the foreground. The passenger shelter and freight house shown in historic photo 3 were located to the north (left) of this photo location. The large warehouse and switch leading to the passing siding are in the background.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 8/4/2011

MP 52.30 looking south

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0006

One hundred fifty-five feet long bridge located at MP 52.54. The length, location and construction are typical of many treated wood bridges located along the main line. Concrete abutments are used to support the ends of the horizontal members and stabilize the adjacent roadbed.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 8/4/2011

MP 52.54 looking southeast

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0007

Shiloh Road grade crossing located just south of Gum Grove from approximately the same location as Historic Photo 5. Western Railway Museum's 2011 Julie Johnson substation is located just to the right of the truck.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 8/4/2011

MP 53.90 looking west

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0008

Western Railway Museum's Key System 187 approaches Gum Grove (left), site of the museum's annual Pumpkin Patch Festival. Key System 187, a two-car articulated unit designed and built to run over the Bay Bridge, is typical of the restored electric railway equipment that regularly runs on the museum's re-electrified tracks. The line poles and overhead electrification were precisely replicated to original Sacramento Northern Railway specifications by Western Railway Museum volunteers.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 8/4/2011

MP 54.0 looking north



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CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0009

Sixty feet long bridge located just north of Gum Grove. When the line was built in 1913, bridges such as this were constructed of cedar timbers with concrete abutments. As a part of Sacramento Northern's on-going maintenance and upgrades, the original cedar structures were eventually replaced with creosote-treated wood members. The creosote members and original concrete abutments are clearly shown in this photo.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 8/4/2011

MP 54.07 looking north

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0010

This modern view of the rural landscape around the Little Honker Bay Rd. grade crossing would look very familiar to Sacramento Northern interurban train passengers in 1940. The Garfield passenger shelter and freight platform were to the right along the west side of the track.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 8/4/2011

MP 56.40 looking west

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0011

Just south of the Little Honker Bay Rd. grade crossing, Western Railway Museum volunteers recently constructed the switch and spur to the right. This installation replicates Sacramento Northern's Garfield livestock loading spur originally at this location.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 8/4/2011

MP 56.35 looking south

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0012

A portion of Western Railway Museum's freight car collection is stored on the former main line track at the southern edge of the museum's 22-acre site at Rio Vista Junction. The switch and track at the left lead to the rest of the museum.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 8/4/2011

MP 57.65 looking south

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CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0013

A private road grade crossing and surrounding farm land at Rio Vista Junction (Western Railway Museum) taken from approximately the same location as Historic Photo 7. The main line to Sacramento is just beyond the warning cross bucks.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 8/4/2011

MP 57.60 looking west

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0014

Main line at the Lambie Rd. grade crossing. The State Highway 12 overpass over the rail line at Rio Vista Junction is in the center of the photo. The trees to the left of the overpass are on the Western Railway Museum grounds. Mount Diablo dominates the horizon.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 9/5/2011

MP 59.0 looking south

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0015

The main line to Sacramento at Creed is at the right. This is part of a 23-mile long tangent (straight section) that ran from Denverton north, allowing trains in this area to run up to 60 miles per hour. The roadbed of the wye abandoned in 1946 to allow expansion of Travis Army Air Field is to the left.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 9/5/2011

MP 60.78 looking northeast

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0016

Taken from the deck of the 120 feet long bridge at MP 64.28, this photo shows the beginning of the wye at Dozier curving west to the 7 mile branch running to Cannon. The tracks in the foreground are part of the main line to Sacramento. The ballast of the main line roadbed is visible beyond, although the tracks were removed long ago. The buildings in the distance are private property and not part of the historic district.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 9/5/2011

MP 64.28 looking northeast

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CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0017

The south leg of the Dozier wye leading to Cannon and the Union Pacific Railroad (formerly Southern Pacific Railroad) interchange crosses State Highway 113.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 9/5/2011

MP 64.50 looking northwest

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0018

Branch leading to Cannon, with a portion of a passing siding on the left. In the distance are the cross bucks protecting the road leading to the seasonal vernal pools of Jepson Prairie National Natural Landmark (left).

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 9/5/2011

MP 64.50 looking west

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0019

Northern boundary of the SNRHD at Dozier (State Highway 113 in the foreground). Some ballast from the main line roadbed is visible between the two wooden posts. The south leg of the wye curving to the branch to Cannon is visible across the center of the photo.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 9/5/2011

MP 64.50 looking southwest

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0020

Western Railway Museum's mission-style visitor's center is the starting point of all museum visits. The center section is the reception area and exhibit hall. The low roofed section to the left is the museum's extensive archives and F.M. Smith Memorial Library. The low roofed section to the right is the museum store, restrooms and snack bar.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 9/5/2011

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CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0021

Substation #2 was originally constructed in the early 1900's to house the Northern Electric Railway's Del Paso substation (located between Riego and Sacramento). The corrugated metal structure was acquired by the BAERA in the 1960's and relocated to Rio Vista Junction. It currently houses 1960's-era generation equipment acquired from the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system. This equipment is the primary power source for the Western Railway Museum's overhead lines. A portion of Car House #3 (Loring Jensen Memorial Car House) is in the background.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 8/4/2011

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0022

Petaluma and Santa Rosa Railway's interurban combine 63, built in 1904, has just stopped to drop off visitors for a guided tour of Car House #3. As the main form of historic interpretation, this eye-catching car and other equipment in the collection regularly give visitors a 10-mile ride on the museum's restored line.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 8/4/2011

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0023

Car House #1 was the first structure erected to protect the BAERA's growing rolling stock collection from the elements. Car House #2 is to the left and the visitor's center is just visible at the far right. All track and overhead electrification were installed by museum volunteers.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 8/4/2011

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0024

The Loring Jensen Memorial Car House, the largest building at the Western Railway Museum, is climate controlled to protect rare rolling stock in the collection from the elements. Car House #2 is to the left and part of the museum's track maintenance equipment and storage is in the foreground.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 8/4/2011

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0025

Richmond Shipyard Railway 563, originally a New York City elevated car built in 1884, undergoes restoration in the museum's shops. Number 563 and its sister 561 are the two oldest pieces of rolling stock in the museum's collection.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 8/4/2011

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## **National Register of Historic Places Contemporary Photo Log**

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CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0026

Substation #1, originally Sacramento Northern Railway's 600 volt portable substation SNR 1, provides power to Western Railway Museum's overhead lines during one weekend each month. The three-sided metal structure protects the early-1920's car from the elements.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 8/4/2011

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0027

The original 1920's General Electric 300 kilowatt, 6-phase rotary convertor takes center stage inside Substation #1. All other equipment in the portable substation is also original. Bill Kluver (left) and Steve Greger are behind the rotary convertor.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 8/4/2011

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0028

East elevation of the Blakemore warehouse. Originally a grain storage and transfer warehouse, the structure is currently used by the Western Railway Museum for miscellaneous storage of machinery and equipment.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 8/4/2011

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0029

The 1920's Blakemore residence housed the family that leased the Rio Vista Junction property from the Sacramento Northern Railway. When the BAERA purchased the property in 1960, the residence, along with several other dwelling units, was leased to tenants. Eventually the residence was converted to provide overnight accommodations for volunteers working at the museum.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 8/4/2011

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0030

This frame building was originally a bus maintenance garage and transfer point. Over the years this end of the building also served as a gas station, general store and the museum's first visitor's center and bookstore.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 8/4/2011

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CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0031

The bus maintenance garage that once occupied the west (left) end of the building is now used for general storage. The gas station portion of the building shown in photo 30 is to the right.

Photographer: Jeffrey Greger 8/4/2011

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0032

Sacramento Northern 602 is an arch-roof, double-end, double-truck, wooden, box motor built by the Holman Car Company of San Francisco for the Oakland, Antioch and Eastern Railroad in 1911.

Photographer: Stephen Greger 11/30/2011

Location: Car House #1 Western Railway Museum

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0033

Oakland, Antioch and Eastern 1019 was built in 1913 by the Hall Scott Motor Car Company of Berkeley, CA. It was part of an eight-car order, series 1019 to 1026.

Photographer: Stephen Greger 11/30/2011

Location: Car House #1 Western Railway Museum

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0034

Oakland, Antioch and Eastern 1020 was built in 1913 by the Hall Scott Motor Car Company of Berkeley, CA. It was given to the Bay Area Electric Railroad Association by the Sacramento Northern in October 1962.

Photographer: Stephen Greger 11/30/2011

Location: Car House #1 Western Railway Museum

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0035

Sacramento Northern 2314 is a forty-foot wooden boxcar with double-sheathed sides, Dreadnaught steel ends, and a steel underframe built for the Western Pacific Railroad by the Mt. Vernon Car Manufacturing Company in 1918. It was restored to operating condition by the Western Railway Museum in 2007.

Photographer: Stephen Greger 11/30/2011

Location: Car House #3 Western Railway Museum

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CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0036

Sacramento Northern 2136 and is a forty foot wooden boxcar with double sheathed sides, wooden ends and a steel underframe built in 1920. It is the only remaining boxcar that was built new for the Sacramento Northern Railroad.

Photographer: Stephen Greger 11/30/2011

Location: Car House #3 Western Railway Museum

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0037

Oakland, Antioch and Eastern 2002 was built in 1911 by The Holman Car Company in San Francisco for the Oakland and Antioch Railway. It is a 36 foot thirty ton capacity wooden flatcar with a wooden frame and four wrought iron truss rods.

Photographer: Stephen Greger 11/30/2011

Location: Car House #3 Western Railway Museum

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0038

Sacramento Northern caboose 1632 began life as Western Pacific outside braced wooden boxcar 15451 built by the Pullman Company in 1916. Western Pacific rebuilt it into caboose 607 in 1937. It was sold to wholly owned Sacramento Northern in 1956 and re-numbered 1632.

Photographer: Stephen Greger 11/30/2011

Location: Car House #3 Western Railway Museum

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0039

This is a 65 ton steeple-cab locomotive built by General Electric in 1928. It was built as Sacramento Northern 1052 and was renumbered after the Sacramento Northern Railroad and San Francisco –Sacramento merger to SN 652.

Photographer: Stephen Greger 11/30/2011

Location: Car House #3 Western Railway Museum

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CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0040

This is a 65 ton steeple-cab locomotive built by General Electric in 1930. Number 654 was in service on the Sacramento Northern until the end of electric operation in 1965.

Photographer: Stephen Greger 11/30/2011

Location: Car House #3 Western Railway Museum

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0041

Locomotive 146 was built new for the Sacramento Northern by General Electric in November 1946. It was one of seven 44-ton locomotives purchased by the railroad.

Photographer: Stephen Greger 11/30/2011

Location: Car House #3 Western Railway Museum

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0042

Sacramento Northern's "Bidwell" is a wooden interurban dining parlor observation trailer car with a clerestory roof. It was built by the Northern Electric Railway in its Chico, California shops in 1914. The car was retired and dismantled in 1941. The body was sold and used as a dwelling in the central valley town of Wheatland until the Bay Area Electric Railroad Association acquired it in 1978.

Photographer: Stephen Greger 11/30/2011

Location: Car House #2 Western Railway Museum

CA\_Solano County\_SNRHD\_0043

Sacramento Northern 1005 is a double-end, double-truck, arch-roof, wooden interurban car with a steel underframe. It is a combination car with a main compartment, smoking compartment, baggage room, and toilet. The ends of the car have steel sheeting over the wood siding. It was built by the Holman Car Company of San Francisco in 1912 for the Oakland, Antioch and Eastern Railroad. It was fully restored by the Western Railway Museum in 2011.

Photographer: Stephen Greger 11/30/2011

Location: Western Railway Museum Shops



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