

# SPng Boxcar #84 comes to her new home in Dayton

*By Linda Clements and Bob Wallace (HSDV), based on information from Dennis Burke (SPng)*

If you drive by our 1881 Carson & Colorado depot at the corner of Hwy. 50E and Main Street at the center of Dayton you will see a new addition—a narrow-gauge boxcar almost as old as the depot itself. Arriving on September 21, SP boxcar #84 sits on top of the trailer used by volunteers from the Historical Society of Dayton Valley to transport her from her previous home in Bishop, Calif.

*SP 84 with banner that was applied on Oct. 1, by Tom Parcells, Ron Rowe, and Dietrich Papp. (Photo by Bob Wallace)*



The boxcar was built during 1888 at the Carter Brothers facility in Newark, Calif. It was a combination car, delivered to the South Pacific Coast Railroad as their #402. Built as a 15-ton car, her first assignment was to work for nearly 20 years between Alameda, San Jose and Santa Cruz, Calif. Then, on March 9, 1907, the car was transferred to the Nevada & California Railroad (the name of the former Carson & Colorado, now owned by the Southern Pacific) to run in the desert of the Owens Valley.

While the narrow-gauge boxcar undoubtedly was transported through Dayton in some manner, she could not be used in this area since the rails from Dayton to Mina, Nev., had been standard-gauged by July 1905. Therefore she must have passed through on a flatbed or on special standard-gauge trucks on her way to service in the Owens Valley.

Like many a busy, long-lived boxcar, she was altered and re-altered through her lifetime, including at some time removing her ventilated side doors. She retained the number 402, however, until a general re-lettering that occurred in 1946-47, at which time she became SP 84. After various smaller changes, in 1924 she was rebuilt sufficiently to increase her capacity from 15 tons to 20 tons. (This may have entailed only doubling the number of truss rods from two to four and/or adding larger/stronger Thielson trucks.)

In 1960, after 80 years of operation, the last service on the Southern Pacific narrow gauge—the Owens Valley remnant of the old Carson & Colorado—was terminated. Many boxcars were sold off by Inyo Builders Inc. for \$100-125 delivered. The trucks and many of the other metal parts were removed before delivery for reuse or salvage. SP 84

as well as SP 85 was sold to Wm. J. Reed in Bishop, Calif. At some point SP 84 came to rest at a home in Bishop where it was used for storage.

In the 1970s a Bishop woman purchased this property, in large part because she was enchanted by the lovely old boxcar. She enjoyed and protected it for years, and when she passed away the property was passed to her daughter and son-in-law, Linda and Rick Graves. Linda loved the boxcar because her mother loved it, so when she and Rick began contemplating retirement and selling the property she began considering passing the boxcar to someone who would also care for and preserve it.

At the same time Dayton was considering acquiring a boxcar to complement our depot. We made contact with the Southern Pacific narrow gauge group, a group with knowledge of the C&C, N&C and SP's narrow gauge operations in the Owens Valley. Dennis Burke and others from the SPng have spent years looking for and identifying old C&C/N&C/SPng equipment. What ensued was took a lot of searching, numerous exchanges of emails, lots of phone calls, and lots of working together over a period of years. Dennis Burke of SPng would not give up until he had found a suitable boxcar and until convinced HSDV to ensure another boxcar was preserved. Dennis made the connection between Linda and Rick Graves in Bishop and Tom Parcels and Linda Clements of HSDV. He also provided the information and inspiration to convince us we could rescue the boxcar, move it to Dayton, and plan its restoration.

Following a few monthly meetings to discuss the idea, the HSDV agreed to make arrangements to go to Bishop, lift the car off the ground, place it on a large trailer, and move it to Dayton. The work took three days of hard work by Stony Tennant ("moving crew leader"), Bernie Allen, Bob Foster, and Dietrich Papp of HSDV. Dennis Burke and others from SPng also helped at the Bishop end. The actual move occurred on September 21.

On that day people driving on US 395 between Bishop and Carson City must have been surprised to see a boxcar being towed by a pickup truck, making its way north on route to who knows where. Several news outlets were alerted that a box car would be coming up the highway to Dayton that day but only one that we are aware of—the Gardnerville Record-Courier—photographed the combination of pickup truck, trailer and boxcar as they made their way up US 395.



*SP 84 as it traveled through Gardnerville on the way to Dayton on September 21, 2011. (Photo courtesy of Kurt Hildebrand, Record-Courier)*

HSDV members and friends, about two dozen in all, were at the depot when the boxcar arrived at 6:50 p.m. that evening, shortly before sunset. Stony Tennant, Bob Foster, and Dietrich Papp brought SP 84 to her new home on the Dayton Depot property, having dropped off Bernie Allen in Carson City on the way. We owe a great deal of thanks to Stony and his crew, as well as the others who helped in Bishop.

*SP 84 being moved past the former site of Dayton's C&C depot, about a block from where the depot sits today. (Photo by Bob Wallace)*



*SP 84 with movers Stony Tennant, Bob Foster, Dietrich Papp; (not shown: Bernie Allen (Photo by Linda Clements)*

While SP 84 is 123 years old, she is in relatively good condition, all things considered. She came without trucks, couplers or brake hardware, but does have most everything else that would it obvious that she is a railroad boxcar. If you come by to see it you may feel that it is a large box car; however, if it is compared with a standard gauge box car of the same era, the size difference becomes obvious.

We own a HUGE debt to Dennis Burke, who refused to give up until everyone was comfortable with this transfer and was confident in its wisdom and success. Dennis was right—it is wonderful to have SP 84 now “at home” in Dayton. She will be dedicated to Linda Graves’ mother—the woman who loved her and kept her safe so she could someday join us in Dayton!