



## Our Vintage Signals Are Reconnected

### Sentinels of the Rails Restored

By Ross Harper, Jeremy Steinert and Jeffrey Pardee

This story picks up from December 2019 when member Steve Altmayer donated six vintage railroad signals from his private collection.

A crew of six members partially disassembled them at Steve's home in Chatsworth, and carefully brought them to the Club in several trips. After several onsite discussions, it was decided to site four of them around the tracks on the east side of the layout, and two in the G-scale garden railroad to be an interactive public display.

Drew and Tim poured concrete slabs with conduit included for wiring, and the signals were mounted in place before Christmas.

### Restoration From An Idea to Reality

They stood as silent, sleeping sentinels until July 2020, when Ross Harper suggested we restore them back to working life, and connect them to our track

signals system if possible.

On the morning of Saturday, August 1st there was a short meeting and inspection of the six full-size signals.

Tim LaGaly explained how each was installed for future wiring. Decisions were made about where to pull power from, and Jeremy Steinert gave direction on where to hook into the existing signals system.

The labor intensive part has been putting in the electrical conduit and wiring. Ross Harper and Steve Rodstein have done the bulk of that work, with some help from Ron Nelson and Bill Walker.

Despite a couple weeks of extreme heat and some ground that was so hard that it bent the blade of a pickaxe, new conduit has been put in underground. There is 12-volt wire for the signal system and separate conduit with 110 volt electrical wiring where necessary for four of the six signals.

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WRRS Wigwag at entrance gate. Unlike our other wigwag signals, this one is a "disappearing banner type." (Diana Manchester photo) More photos inside.

## New Wagons Will Make Hauling Easier

By Ron Nelson

Bill Schirmer and I picked up and assembled three new wagons to use at the Club. These wagons have the large 13" wheels and the track is wide enough to span our rail ties, which will be especially useful when transferring green debris.

They have bigger wheels and stronger axles, and are much easier to pull than the old wagons. Plus they were on sale. *Please note:* the tires are pneumatic, so if they are low, please fill them with no more than 30 psi of air. Low tire pressure really damages the tires and too high pressure blows them out.



2020 Fall Meet  
Cancelled Due to  
Coronavirus

# Longtime Tree Removed

By Ted Merchant

On Friday, September 18, Los Angeles Live Steamers Railroad Museum lost an old friend, the 62-year-old Aleppo Pine (*Aleppo-slabophobia*) located next to the Members' Bell Memorial.

The Aleppo was repurposed at LALS RM after serving as a Christmas tree in 1958. It subsequently served with distinction, first as an aesthetic attraction then as a shade canopy for train watchers and picnickers. Many LALS RM members remember climbing the Aleppo as they (and the tree) matured to plethoric dimensions.

In August 2020 Club members noted cracking in the concrete at the Green Gazebo (a.k.a. the Picnic Pavilion), a condition unique to urbanization. The footing for the Picnic Pavilion was threatened, and multiple experts agreed that the tree must be removed.

Special Tree Services cut the tree down, and on Saturday, September 18,

the LALS RM forklift transferred the trunk to a Special Tree Services truck.

A number of Aleppo pines still remain on the property, providing beauty, shade, tradition and recreation.



The tree comes down. *Above:* Bear and Tim LaGaly before cutting, *Upper right:* Special Tree Services lops off major limb; *inset:* remaining stump.



## Los Angeles Live Steamers Railroad Museum

In Griffith Park  
Mailing Address—PO Box 2156,  
Toluca Lake, CA 91610

LALS RM.org  
(323) 661-8958

### 2020 Officers and Directors

|                       |                |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| <b>President</b>      | Ted Merchant   |
| <b>Vice President</b> | Bill Schirmer  |
| <b>Secretary</b>      | Steve Rodstein |
| <b>Treasurer</b>      | Tim LaGaly     |
| Martha Figueroa       | David Holman   |
| Les Kovacs            | Nick Suncin    |



High temperature shown at the Club on September 5. On September 6, Los Angeles County recorded a new all-time record high of 121 degrees in Woodland Hills. (Jeremy Steinert photo)



## New Order Underway for Member Badges

*Batch #2 ready pickup at Souvenir Booth*

*Batch #3 will be ordered in late September*

The Souvenir Booth will be open Sunday, September 27 from 11 am to 2 pm. Badges from our second order are awaiting pickup and purchase: badges are \$10 each.

If you would like your name added to (or removed from) Batch #3, which will be ordered in late September, please contact Diana Manchester.

## President's Message



By  
Ted  
Merchant,  
President

**H**ello Railroad Fans!

The “word for the summer” might be **Spontaneous!** So much has happened with minimal or no encouragement other than the thought: “So, what can I do next?”

Bill Walker organized the Miniature Buildings Committee facilitating communication between members who fabricate scale model structures.

Richard Ronne fabricated a periscope, like a bomb site, useful for identifying irregular track elevations. Roger Williams and team painted the new 1” scale storage barn and restored the town of Inchberg. Richard Ronne is doing an artisan quality restoration of the Inchberg water tower.

Mark Weiss and son weeded the G-Scale railroad.

Steve Rodstein and Ross Harper worked tirelessly, in the heat, trenching and running electrical to the new full-scale signals. Jeremy Steinert designed fabricated and installed new circuit boards rendering the full-scale signals functional.

Al Way, new member Alex Acuña, Colin Westphal, Ricard Ronne, and new member Steve Borchert rebuilt the track and switches outside the Bresee Barn.

Dozens of members independently cleared leaves. Ron Nelson mowed lawns. Greg McMurry and Miles Kristman restored online access to our security system, point-of-sale system, office systems and library, saving the Club \$600 monthly.

All these members served the Club **spontaneously**, without compensation, without prompting, and without expectation. I know I failed to mention multiple additional members who have served the Club this summer. I regret the oversight, and our Board of Directors thanks you all.

These efforts remind me that members of LALS RM exist to serve our common goal, with no expectation for reward, except to enjoy our love of large-scale model

## SPLINTERS FROM THE BOARD

By Steve Rodstein, Secretary



September 14, 2020

**A**t 7:05 pm on September 14, 2020 the September BOD meeting was called to order by President Ted Merchant. Due to COVID-19 the meeting was teleconferenced on Zoom and all participants connected by computer and phone. All eight of the Directors were present and 33 members.

**President’s Report:** Ted again mentioned that the BOD meetings should follow the agenda, and that once the BOD meeting was adjourned anyone was welcome to stay and talk informally.

**Secretary’s Report:** The August minutes were approved. There are no events scheduled at the Club due to the Coronavirus. Diana will continue to update the Calendar as necessary.

**Treasurer’s Report:** Tim presented the prior periods financials. There was minor discussion and then the Board approved them.

**Membership Report:** Nick was unable to provide detailed information as he was attending the meeting while driving, but he stated that he would provide any information at the next BOD meeting.

**Superintendent’s Report:** Ted and Les filled in for the superintendent, as Drew was not available. It was confirmed that the Boney Island trailer at the west end of the Club failed the inspection and would be demolished. It was also agreed the surrounding items would be thrown away as well; only the chain link panels

railroads. That is who we are. What can you and we do next? Stay safe. Stay well. Think railroads.

Your comments are always welcome.

Ted Merchant

[www.EdwardBMerchant@gmail.com](mailto:www.EdwardBMerchant@gmail.com)

would be saved. A dumpster will be ordered to put the trash in.

Ron Nelson completed the purchase and assembly of the three work carts, which he had purchased with the Board’s prior approval. Bill Schirmer assisted Ron in transporting the carts in his truck to the Club.

Other members have been working on and off at the Club with no set schedule.

Les Kovacs’ FCR for the rebuilding of one of the electric cabinets in the parking lot was approved. The final estimate for this project came in lower than the original estimate.

Bill Walker presented an FCR from the small buildings committee to relocate the Blue Rock Mine and relandscape the area around Nelson summit. The FCR was approved for \$500.00.

The transfer table that faces the parking lot for the Phil-West Barn had been slightly damaged and would be repaired within the next several days.

**Website Update/communications:** Diana informed the Board that a good number of members had not paid their membership dues to renew for 2020. She attributed this situation to the fact that the Club had changed to an on-line renewal system. She also stated that her committee was in the process of contacting members who have not yet paid.

**Other items:** Bill Stewart, who is working on signage, was asked to hold off right now. The tree trimmers are scheduled to start their work Friday morning at 8:30 am September 18, 2020.

Tim notified the Board he had purchased another steam cleaner for \$709.00. Ted said he talked to James Femino, who wants to resume his Club project (Eagle Scouts).

Ted also mentioned that any members who had not completed their service hours would now be notified by the Board of the loss of their ability to rent track to store their equipment and would be requested to remove their equipment from the sheds.

A member mentioned a possible grant opportunity that we might think about pursuing. The meeting was adjourned at 8:14 pm.

The next public BOD meeting will be October 5, 2020 at 7:00 pm.

# Vintage Signals Reconnected

(Continued from page 1)

## Figuring Out Mechanisms and Wiring

Jeremy was involved with figuring out the internal mechanisms and the final wiring into our signaling system. He did some research online and found pdf copies of the original manuals for each of the signals, with one going back to 1895, another to 1913.

With a lot of assistance from Hugo Budd and Jeff Pardee, he opened the mechanisms and reverse engineered each signal using the related instruction manuals as guides. They also cleaned off dirt and grime and lubricated all of the mechanical systems. The signals had to be rewired as the old wiring had been disconnected for transport to the Club.

All the light bulbs were replaced with LEDs so that they would be brighter and not need maintenance for a while. After the mechanisms were overhauled, Jeremy carefully turned on each signal and checked for any short circuits or other electrical issues.

Linking the signals to the track's electronic signaling system was Jeremy's next challenge. He built new circuit boards to decipher the logic of the older signal and convert it into the correct output for the semaphore and the wigwags. Each full-sized signal required a different control logic scheme as they have different internal mechanisms.

To adapt them to the LALS signaling system, Jeremy designed and soldered up a set of special controller boards to act as

"shims." Each board reads the logic signal from our signaling panels and uses a small microprocessor to drive high-current power sources for the full-sized mechanisms. Traditionally the railroads would do this with relays that would be wired specifically for each signal, but using a reprogrammable microprocessor means that a single universal circuit board design can be adapted for each of our unique signals with a simple code change.

Jeremy remarked, "It feels strange that these pre-1950's signals might need the occasional firmware update, but that's the ever-forward march of modern technology!"

The PCB board uses solid state electronics to drive the motors and lights, in-

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▲ Jeremy Steinert in bucket works on wigwag at front entrance.



► Steve Rodstein working on a Halo type signal at the driveway at Sutchville Station. (Photos by Ross Harper)

If you haven't renewed your 2020 membership yet, please visit [www.lalsrm.org](http://www.lalsrm.org) and register and choose your membership level. Payments can be made by check or PayPal. If you need assistance contact Diana Manchester or Nick Suncin. Diana will be at the Club Sunday from 11 - 2 to assist in person.

# Vintage Signals

(Continued from page 4)

stead of electromechanical relays which wear out over time. It also has some diagnostic capabilities in case there is an electrical fault in the future, such as a lightning strike.

The inner field crossings all work now. Up next for the crew is to repair the gate crossing signal out at the east entrance. After this is finished the plan is to tackle the semaphore on the north end of the property and do the same work as the one next to Nelson Tunnel.

Infrastructure work has already begun for the remaining two signals in the G-scale garden. Those two signals will not be hooked up to our track signal system, rather, plans are being developed for an education display for the public.

Ross says, "it is gratifying to see these signals operational and already being enjoyed by the members."



## Type T2 Semaphore

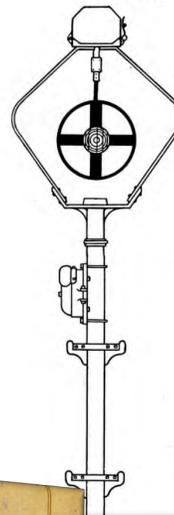
USS Type T2 Semaphore (left center) installed near Nelson Tunnel. Jeff re-wired of the semaphore head on the signal closest to Nelson Tunnel. It currently mimics the tunnel's signal light going to the west end.

It will display yellow from about half-way out the west end, then to red at the Smith Valley switches/crossing, and red until the train clears the tunnel, allowing engineers to see past the blind turn there.

(Far left photo, Diana Manchester, left photo, Jeffrey Pardee)

## Model 5 Magnetic Autoflag

Center of Street Type  
For 6 or 8 Volts Direct Current



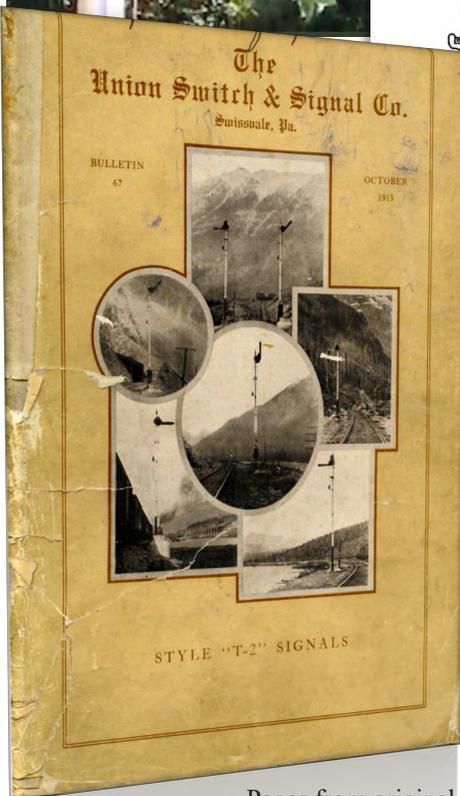
Where it is desired to place the warning signal in the center of the street on a safety island, this type of Model 5 Magnetic Autoflag is recommended. Signals of this type are in service on many of the prominent railroads. A pilot light, or marker, should be placed upon the pole or foundation when the signal is located in the center of the street.

We can supply either the reflecting type or electrically lighted marker or pilot lights when specified. (See pages 20 and 21.)

The signal as illustrated consists of:

- One Type C.S. Model 5 Magnetic Autoflag, with mechanism for operation on 6 or 8 volts D. C. (as specified), mechanism case mounted on channel iron frame work and illuminated banner.
- No. 710. 4"x10' pipe post (unless other length is specified).
- No. 8. Extra heavy cast iron foundation base.
- Three sets No. 10151 pole steps.
- No. 222A. Crossing bell.
- No. 51305. Complete as illustrated and listed above.
- No. 51320. No. 1220A Gong type bell is furnished instead of No. 222A Bell.
- No. 51344. No. 444 Locomotive type bell, with No. 161 crossneck bracket for

The Union Switch & Signal Co.



Pages from original manuals used to help rewire and repair signals.

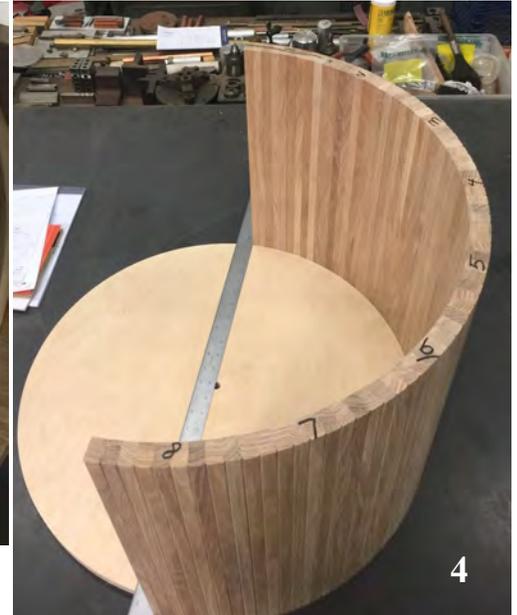
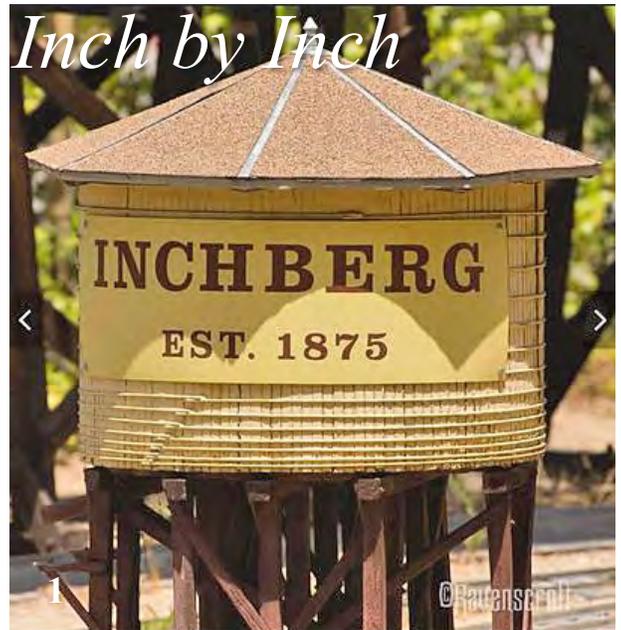
# Rebuilding Inchberg Tank *Inch by Inch*

By Richard Ronne

**R**ichard Ronne has graciously taken on the challenge of “restoring” the 1970’s water tower from LALS RM’s one inch Cooper Yard.

What he is actually doing is rebuilding the tower from scratch, with plans to utilize some of the metal parts from the original. The pictures of the job in progress here were originally posted by Richard in the LALS RM Members’ Forum Facebook Page where he wrote, “A new water tower is inching along slowly and it is with high hopes STEAM will return to Inchberg. The water tower will be the perfect way to fill the tenders of thirsty steamers!”

The barrel is comprised of 144 white oak staves and each is cut with a 2-1/2 degree included angle. Every stave was hand-beveled with a block plane. All were glued to one another, then glued to the two round headers, and nailed after everything set up. The tank won’t be holding the water, even though it could. There will be a quick-acting valve, operated by a pull handle, that will control the water flow.



## Steps in Rebuilding

- 1 Existing water tower
- 2 Assembled wood floor for tank
- 3 Assembled tank
- 4 Tank sides halfway constructed

- 5 Checking stave dimensions by “stacking”
6. Water tower painted with marine alkyd enamel

(Photos by Richard Ronne)



# Rescue and Renovation of Inchberg

By Roger Williams

Last Saturday and Sunday, a small but determined group of members showed up to rescue Inchberg from the weathered clutches of nature and age.

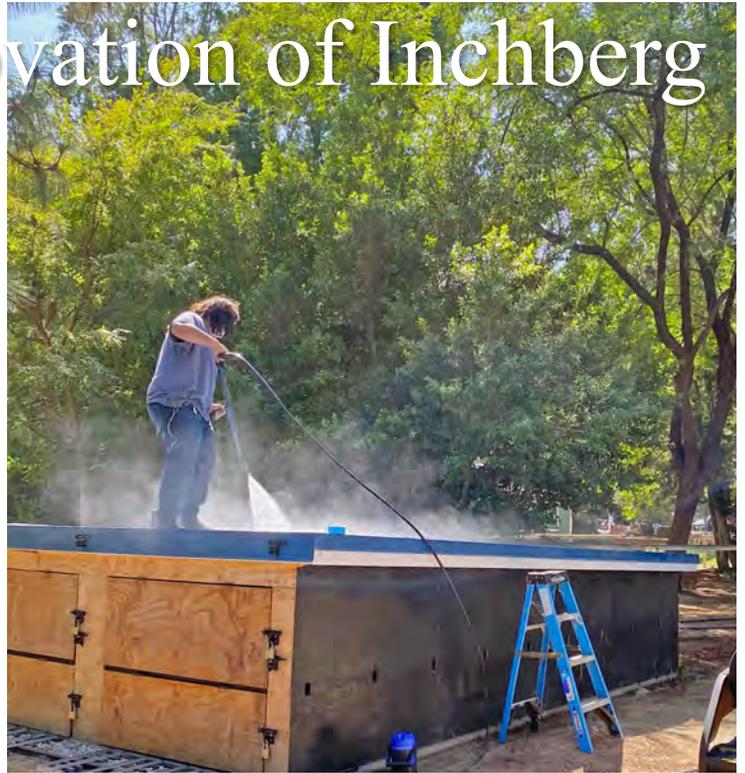
With Roger Williams leading the charge, Don Kallgren and Nick Guzman freed the roundhouse and diesel tank from a tangle of overgrown foliage and dead leaves.

Like uncovering Inca ruins, three large, unsightly shrubs and their stumps were removed. Trees and other bushes were trimmed, and more than 30 sacks of leaves were disposed of.

The 1971 roundhouse originally built by Doug Alkire and Jack Sessums is now clearly visible. (see story in box) The turntable by the roundhouse was cleaned and repaired and is now usable again.

The one-inch diesel tank was relocated from the rear of the roundhouse to a more visible area between the turntable and one inch carbarn and pressure-washed. Nick used a cutting torch to remove pieces of rebar embedded in the concrete base for the legs, deciding that the concrete's weight would hold the legs in place just fine.

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## The One Inch Cooper Yard

Cooper Yard was constructed from 1970-1973 using Doug Alkire turnouts and a transfer table constructed in 1969. The yard was named after Bill Cooper, a retired steam locomotive engineer, who was very active in 1" scale during the 1960's at LALSRM.

Interest in the small scales was high in the 1970's, but began to wane in the 1980's with the Westward expansion of the 7-1/2" gauge. Club resources focused on the large project, and over time members who had been so involved in the small scales since the founding of the Club started passing away. Eventually the small scale track fell into a terrible state of disrepair.

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Photos, this page. Above: Roger Williams and Don Kallgren clear overgrown bushes. Above right: Nick Guzman pressure washing carbarn roof. Right below: Club pioneers Ted Berg, Ginny Berg and Gordon Sherwood. More photos on next page.

# Inchberg Clean Up

(Continued from page 7)

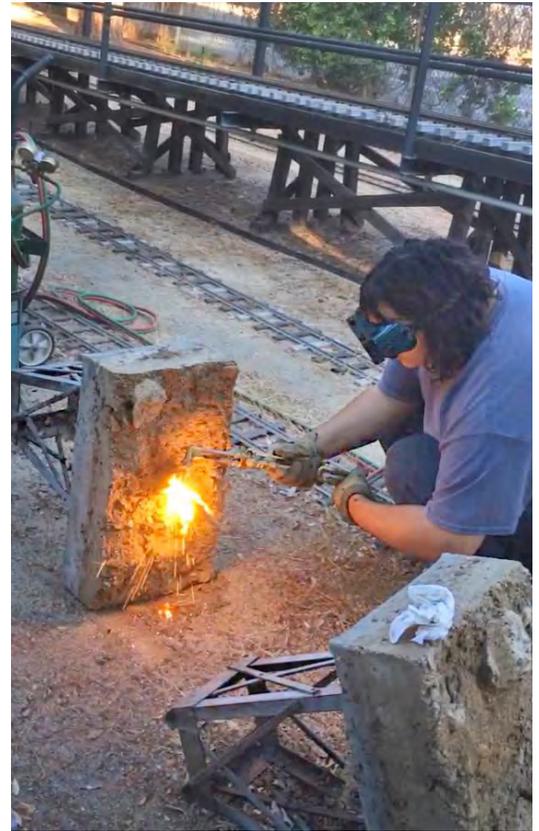
The 1" carbarn roof was pressured-washed by Nick, and the wood exterior walls and doors were given a generous coat of Tuscan red paint by Don. The roof will be painted in the near future. Roger is finishing up the car elevator/transfer table for the 1" barn, and will be installing some wood trim to dress it up a bit.

Meanwhile the Inchberg water tower is being rebuilt from scratch by Richard Ronne. The barrel portion, constructed of hand-cut and beveled white oak, is almost done, but there is a lot more work to do on the bands, base, and roof. We want to have Inchberg super presentable when the new water tower is ready to be installed.



More renovations will be scheduled in the next few weeks. We need to make wood rot repairs to the roundhouse and repaint it, install switches and track leading to the carbarn, and make track repairs in various areas. Members that use the 4-3/4" track are invited to help and contribute to Inchberg.

Please contact Roger Williams for more details.



◀ Don Kallgren paints new 1" carbarn.

▲ Nick Guzman removes rebar in diesel tank base with cutting torch.



## One Inch Cooper Yard

(Continued from page 7)

Ted and Ginny Berg came to the Club from Southern California Live Steamers, and worked tirelessly in the early 1990's building and replacing countless amounts of ties, switches, and short sections of track.

▲ Cooper Yard in the 1970's.

One of the noteworthy projects they worked on was the complete rebuilding and restoration of Cooper Yard roundhouse. They scratch built new ornamental doors, roofing, and windows with light-up window boxes.



The *Engine Booster* is the monthly publication of the Los Angeles Live Steamers Railroad Museum, a not for profit 501(c)(3) organization.

Editor Peter Fuad

Associate Editor: Diana Manchester

## Member Schedule

### September

27 Souvenir Booth open 11-2

### October

5 BOD meeting via Zoom  
7:00 p.m.

25 Souvenir Booth open 11-2

# Close Encounters of the Insect Kind

## A Guide to Insects at the Club

By Jeremy Steinert

June through October is peak bug and spider season at LALS. As the caretaker, I've spent the last three years waging war and building alliances with our 6- and 8-legged critters – and some of our 4-legged ones too, but that will be another article – with whom we share the park. Here is a quick guide to the common "pests" of LALS:



### Honeybees

Rating: Remove if necessary.

While I appreciate the hard work that bees do, they sometimes like to take up residence in not-so-convenient places. In the past, they even took over our semaphore! If the hive is near our common areas, let me know so that I can contact someone who will give them a good home. Otherwise, leave them alone so that they can keep the wildflowers of the park happy!



### Western or German Yellowjacket, Paper Wasp

Rating: Exterminate on sight.

Bees are fuzzy; yellowjackets and wasps are not. These guys like to eat meat as well as sweets, so guard your lunch carefully. They are most active during the daytime, returning to the hive at sundown. Their hives are usually in the ground (Western) or multi-layered structures in the trees (German) or a single layer under the eaves of buildings (Paper Wasps). If they are near a critical area, wait until sunset when they return to the hive before spraying with the wasp spray. This foaming spray will shoot over 25 feet so you can stand back if the wind is cooperating. Cans of spray inside the tool shed. After spraying, wait a few days to knock down the hive.



### Argentine or Harvester Ants

Rating: Minor nuisance.

These little guys generally are not a problem except near the kitchen area. As they do a pretty good job cleaning up the park, I mostly leave them alone. However, this time of year they will be seeking water and cooler areas, making them more of a pest. Please help by keeping the kitchen area clean after eating as well as regularly taking out the trash cans. If they get into some area they aren't supposed to be in, let me know, and I'll spray a park-safe ant barrier.



### Mosquitos

Rating: Find that water puddle.

It's important to not leave water out for these bloodsuckers to breed. Our spider friends do a good job keeping the population in check as well. Please keep an eye out for any still water and dump it. Even two inches of water in a forgotten cup is enough to breed 'skeeters. The pond in the G Scale and the fountain in the garden are both treated regularly and are not a concern.



### Western Black Legged Ticks

Rating: Kill on sight.

Usually I find these out on our west end where the deer like to hang out in the morning. Even when it's hot, I wear jeans and long-sleeved t-shirts if I'll be working in the grass on the west end. They like to hang off the end of grass, branches, and other foliage waiting for a victim to pass by. Once they are on you, they will find a warm spot to attach and burrow into your skin, looking for that tasty blood. Check yourself at the end of each day and remove them as soon as possible.



### Orb Weaver Spider

Rating: Relocate if there is a problem.

There are at least 5 different species of orb weaver spiders at LALS. Their webs are easy to identify as they make the classic, "Charlotte's Web" style spiral web. They hide during the day, then start to build their webs at sunset. Orb Weavers can be quite entertaining to watch! Though they can get up to dime-sized, none of them are dangerous to us humans, and they keep the other bug populations in check. I usually relocate those in high-traffic areas, such as the stations, and leave the rest alone. If you are the first train out after a sunset, wave a broom or stick in front of you unless you enjoy webs in your hair!



### Black/Brown Widows

Rating: Kill on sight.

Unfortunately, these can be dangerous. They like to hide under our benches and inside sheds as well as any other dark corners. They are easily identifiable with their jet-black or brown coloration and red hourglass shape on their thorax. Use the squishing tool of your choice; my wife likes to use her sandals.



### Tarantula

Rating: Leave alone.

Yes, we have these big guys! In my three years as caretaker, I have only seen two, and both were at least four inches long. They like to hang out near the mountain division or other sandy areas. As they are not harmful to us and are fairly docile, I recommend leaving them alone. We probably have Mojave Tarantulas, but I haven't had a good look at them to confirm the identification.