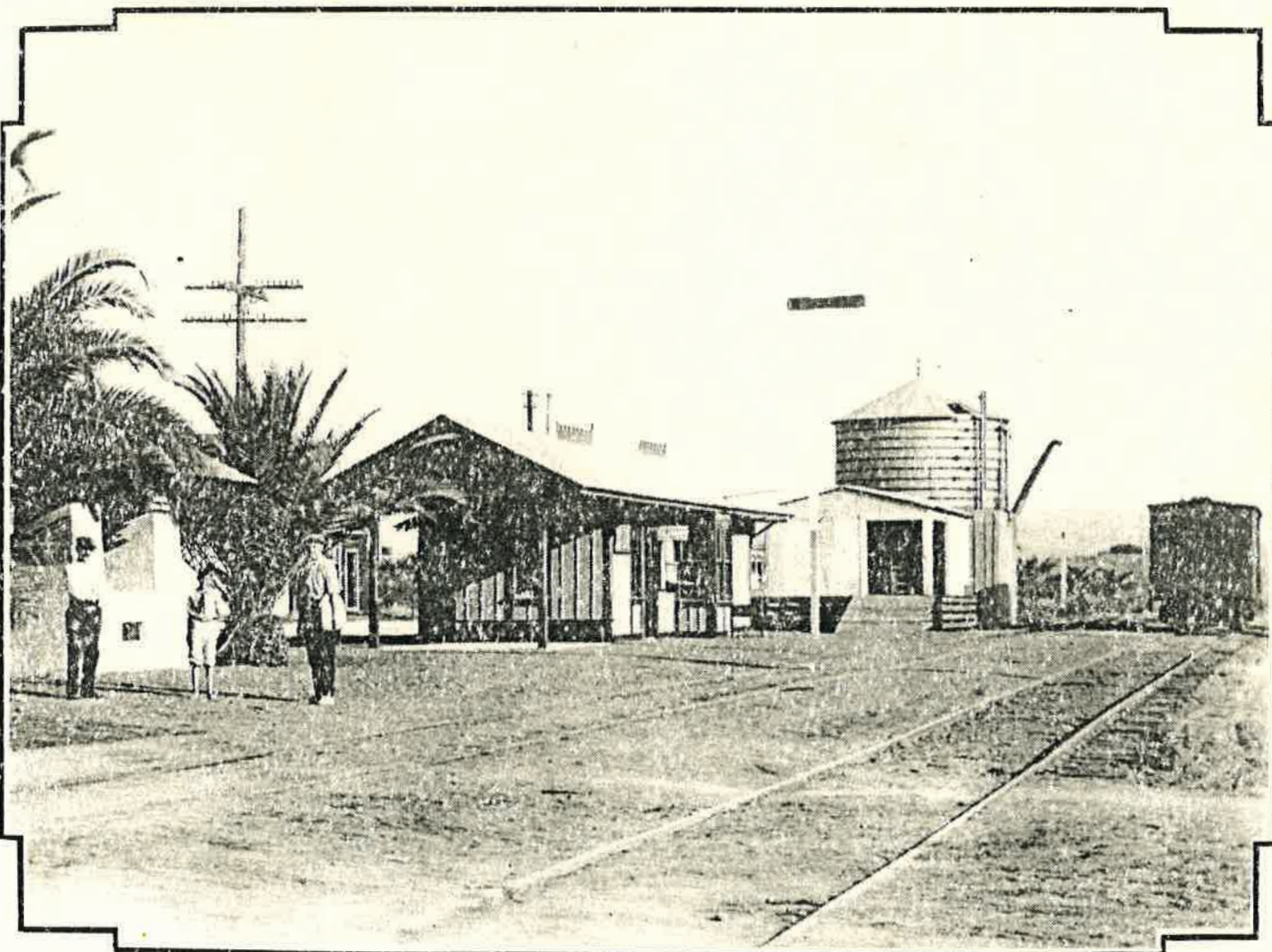


LA MESA DEPOT



La Mesa Historical Society
P.O. Box 882
La Mesa, CA 91944

LA MESA HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION FORM

1. Name

historic LA MESA DEPOT

and/or common LA MESA DEPOT

2. Location

street & number _____ not for publication _____

city, town La Mesa _____ vicinity of _____

state CA code 06 county San Diego code _____

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
☐ district	☐ public	☒ occupied	☐ agriculture	☒ museum
☒ building(s)	☒ private	☐ unoccupied	☐ commercial	☐ park
☐ structure	☐ both	☐ work in progress	☐ educational	☐ private residence
☐ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	☐ entertainment	☐ religious
☐ object	☐ in process	☐ yes: restricted	☐ government	☐ scientific
	☐ being considered	☒ yes: unrestricted	☐ industrial	☐ transportation
		☐ no	☐ military	☐ other:

4. Owner of Property

name PACIFIC SOUTHWEST RAILWAY MUSEUM ASSOCIATION

street & number 4695 Nebo Drive

city, town La Mesa _____ vicinity of _____ state CA 92041

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the County Recorder, San Diego County

street & number 1600 Pacific Highway

city, town San Diego _____ state CA 92101

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Historic & Cultural Resources Inventory
title Historic Preservation Element, has this property been determined eligible? ☒ yes ☐ no
La Mesa General Plan
date June, 1984 ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☒ local

depository for survey records Office of the La Mesa City Clerk

city, town La Mesa _____ state CA 92041

7. Description

Condition

☒ excellent
☐ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☐ original site
☒ moved

date 1915, 1954, 1978

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

When first constructed in 1894, this one-story, wood frame building had a rectangular enclosed section and an open covered porch with post supports. Over the years, the depot underwent a number of changes, but in 1980 and 1981, it was returned to its 1915 appearance. The depot features redwood board and batten siding, double hung windows with a square bay on the trackside, and a medium pitch gable roof with wide overhangs. The eaves are supported by corbels. The depot has several sections: a baggage room on the north end, next a ticket office and waiting room, and finally an open porch or shelter on the south end with square post supports. Cresting and a "La Mesa" sign grace the roof.

According to architect Larry Rose, the architectural style of this building "was in the tradition of small town America, board and batt siding, corbelled eaves....The three room floor plan of waiting room and baggage room sandwiched around the ticket office with its projecting agent's bay toward the trackside was repeated thousands of times across America for more than a hundred years. The little wooden depot in La Mesa would be right at home in any rural area in the country though less common in the east where brick and stone were the more preferred building materials."

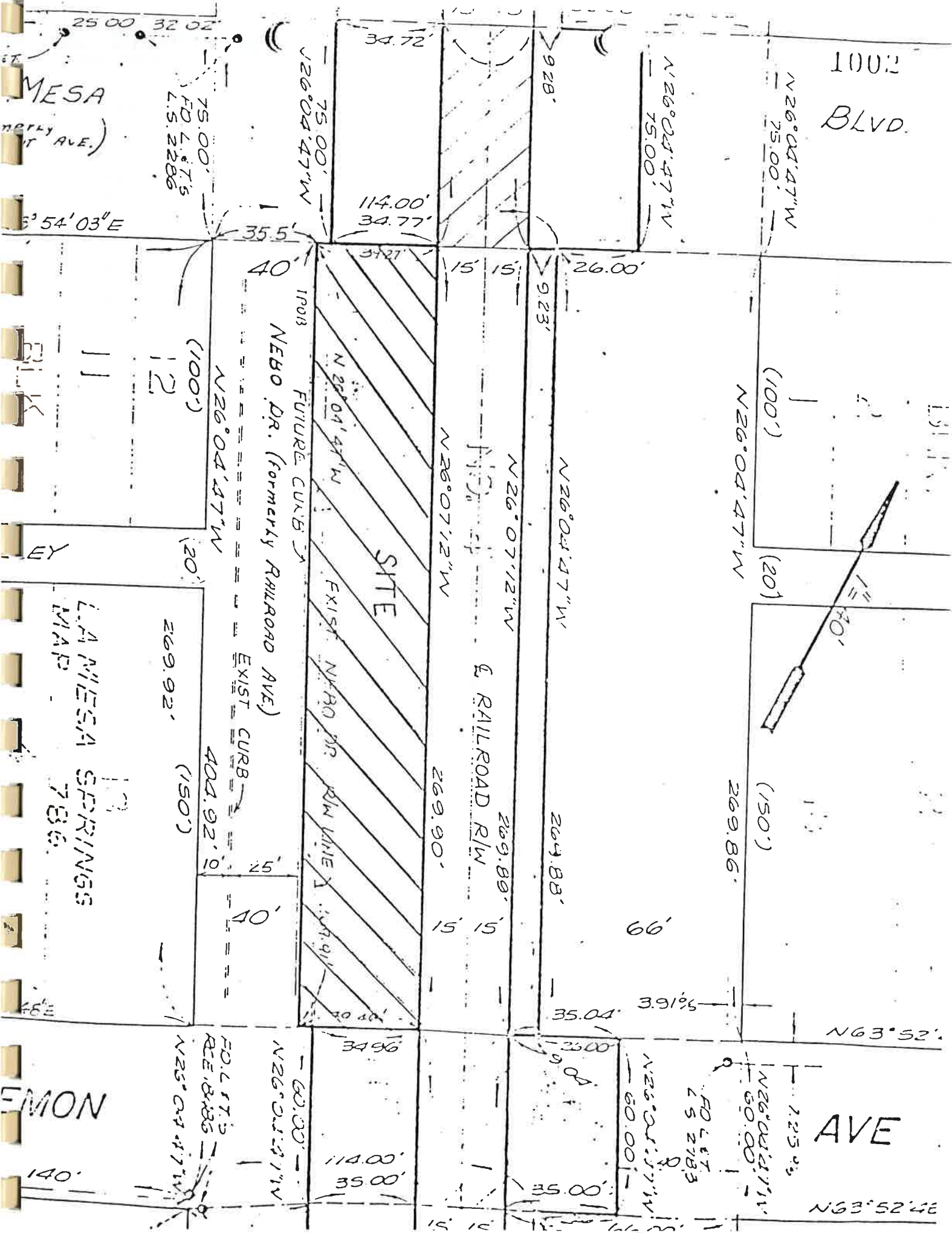
The La Mesa Depot when designated as a landmark will include the depot building (owned by PSRMA) and the strip of land leased from the city described as extending from La Mesa Boulevard to Lemon Avenue and lying between Nebo Drive on the west and the MTDB (Trolley) right-of-way on the east. The landmark will not include railroad rolling stock or other items of personal property on the site.

AVE

MESA

LA MESA SPRINGS
MAP 736

EMON



8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
☐ prehistoric	☐ archeology-prehistoric	☐ community planning	☐ landscape architecture	☐ religion
☐ 1400-1499	☐ archeology-historic	☐ conservation	☐ law	☐ science
☐ 1500-1599	☐ agriculture	☒ economics	☐ literature	☐ sculpture
☐ 1600-1699	☐ architecture	☐ education	☐ military	☐ social/
☐ 1700-1799	☐ art	☐ engineering	☐ music	☐ humanitarian
☒ 1800-1899	☐ commerce	☐ exploration/settlement	☐ philosophy	☐ theater
☐ 1900-	☐ communications	☐ industry	☐ politics/government	☒ transportation
		☐ invention		☐ other (specify)

Specific dates 1894/1915 Builder/Architect Unknown

Statement of Significance

THE LA MESA DEPOT

The La Mesa Depot, one of the oldest buildings in the city, has a remarkable history. In conjunction with the railroad and the nearby La Mesa Lemon Company store and packing sheds, the depot provided the transportation link and the economic stimulus that created La Mesa as a community. Although much of the original wood in the building has been replaced with identical pieces, the structure as it stands today has historical significance and also represents an immense volunteer effort in partnership with the City of La Mesa to save this important remnant of La Mesa's past.

The story of the depot begins with the arrival of the railroad in La Mesa nearly a century ago. In 1888, the San Diego Cuyamaca & Eastern Railway laid tracks from San Diego through Lemon Grove and La Mesa (then known as Allison Springs) towards El Cajon, Santee, Lakeside and Foster. By March 28, 1889, construction had been completed as far as Lakeside, and on "opening day," March 30, 1889, three trains operated on the line. Although owners of the railroad at one time hoped to run the rails through the mountains to connect with a transcontinental railroad at Needles, the tracks never went beyond Foster.

According to several sources, the railroad built the La Mesa Depot in 1894. The depot, as constructed at that time, was a small rectangular building with a closed section and a covered platform. (There are some newspaper references to a previous station, but whether the earlier "station" was just a stopping place, or a platform or other structure is unknown.) The La Mesa Lemon Company store, which still stands today on the corner of La Mesa Boulevard and Nebo, was also constructed in 1894. Developers laid out the La Mesa Springs subdivision just east of the tracks and graded the streets in the same year.

(continued next page)

Soon after its construction, the depot became the center of considerable activity as freight and passenger trains traveled the rail line daily. La Mesa ranchers as well as those in surrounding areas brought their citrus, olives, tomatoes and other products to the depot and nearby packing sheds for shipment, and a small community began to develop around the depot. By 1911, as many as 18 passenger trains traveled the line daily in addition to the freight trains. Passengers bound for places in the back country mountains rode the trains to Lakeside and Foster for connection with stage lines that carried them to Ramona, Julian, Alpine Tavern, the Willows, Pine Valley, Flinn Springs and Warner's Hot Springs. Some La Mesa businessmen and professionals commuted to their jobs in San Diego. Students rode the same trains to attend high school.

As the community developed and rail traffic increased, some changes in the depot became necessary. According to members of PSRMA (Pacific Southwest Railroad Museum Association) who researched the various structural changes to the building, the open shelter on the north end was filled in around the turn of the century. In 1915, the depot was moved to the east side of the tracks, turned around, a restroom added to the east side (current west side), a bay window for the agent built on the track side and a covered shelter constructed on the north end (the current south end). The building also received a new concrete slab foundation. Workmen painted the depot yellow with brown trim in the same shades it has today. The railroad also added a small freight building and a water tank to complete the station facility.

Although passenger service on the railroad ended on March 4, 1928, the La Mesa depot remained in use for some years as a telegraph office and freight depot even though the number of trains decreased. Due to heavy rains in 1916, some of the track between Santee, Lakeside and Foster had been washed out, and service to Foster never resumed after that. By 1938, the line had been shortened to Santee. Then during World War II when Gillespie Field was built, freight trains went only as far as El Cajon. Stations along the line disappeared one by one, and finally, in 1954, the La Mesa Depot faced demolition due to the widening of Spring Street.

On November 26, 1954, the Lakeside Chamber of Commerce, at the instigation of Lakeside resident Mrs. Flossie Beadle, purchased the old depot for \$1.00 with the idea of creating a "western town" in Lindo Lake Park. In December, workmen dismantled the depot and the parts to Lakeside for storage on Mrs. Beadle's property at Maple and Ashwood in Lakeside. After discovering that the proposed western town would be incompatible with the master plan for the park, the Chamber of Commerce sold the depot to Mrs. Beadle for one dollar. On July 11, 1959, Mrs. Beadle opened the depot as the Beadle Historical Museum and antique shop. After her death in the 1960s, a brush fire swept through the area and scorched the former baggage room wall. Then for a while the old building housed a chicken coop and even a worm farm for a time.

Meanwhile, history buffs and railroad buffs still hoped to save the deteriorating structure. One of Mrs. Beadle's heirs offered for

\$1.00 it to any non-profit organization that would move it, and in 1974, PSRMA accepted this offer in the hope of finding some way to preserve the old depot. At that time, however, there was no place to put it. Fortunately, due to a series of events which included damage to the railroad by tropical storm Kathleen, the City of La Mesa managed to acquire a mile-long, thirty-five foot wide strip of former railroad land alongside the tracks through the center of town. PSRMA then presented to the City Council a detailed plan to move the depot back to La Mesa and restore it on part of that strip at the depot's original 1894 location. PSRMA applied to the La Mesa City Council for a \$15,000 grant of Community Development Block Grant Funds to restore the depot. When the city submitted the application to the federal government, the project received the requested grant funds.

Before the structure could be moved back to La Mesa, however, vandals stole hardware, windows and doors and set fires causing further damage to the building. PSRMA trucked the depot back to La Mesa on November 21, 1978 and placed it temporarily on the nearby police department parking lot, while the permanent site was being prepared. Three months later, the structure was moved to its present location and put down on a new foundation just thirty-six inches from its original site. (PSRMA retained ownership of the building and leased the land it stands on from the city.)

Architect Larry Rose, a member of PSRMA, directed the effort to reconstruct the depot. After considerable discussion and study, PSRMA decided to return the depot as closely as possible to its 1915 appearance. The discovery by PSRMA members of drawings and other documents in a dumpster cleared up any problems about the construction of the building. During 1980 and 1981, volunteers donated thousands of hours of labor, additional funds and material. John Maxwell of the La Mesa Planing Mill was a major contributor.

According to architect Rose, most of the exterior material of the building including the board and batten siding, the doors, and the window sashes, was replaced with identical materials. The original porch support posts, corbels, and the ceiling boards were kept. Some of the interior paneling was also replaced.

The La Mesa Depot Museum opened to the public on April 18, 1982 and large crowds viewed the structure with its authentic interior furnishings which included the ticket counter and telegraph key. Since that time, thousands of schoolchildren and La Mesans have visited the museum and the PSRMA locomotives and rolling stock on the spur next to the depot.

Today, the restored La Mesa Depot is one of the few small railroad depots left in San Diego County. It represents an era of early La Mesa that no longer exists.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Larry Rose, "From Chicken Coop to Orchid, The La Mesa Depot Story" n.d.
Anon. La Mesa Depot Museum, Official Opening, Apr 18, 1982
Eric Sanders, "The Cuyamaca Line." n.d. (1956 or 1957)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References

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3	6	2	4	9	1	0
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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification _____

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state CA code 06 county San Diego code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

Mrs. Karna Webster, La Mesa Historic Preservation Commission

LA MESA NOTES.

Mrs. Walker has been seriously ill for the last week, but is now on the road to recovery.

The King's Daughters gave a "hard-times social" at the school house last Friday evening.

The La Mesa Dramatic club are rehearsing several new plays, which they intend soon to present.

Dr. Mead has opened an office in San Diego, but still retains his interest in the "Los Hermanos" ranch.

The Rev. G. K. Owen, of the Seventh-day Adventists, gave a series of lectures at the school house last week.

Kirk Cornell and Miss Clara Clingman attend high school and Miss Florence Williams the institute in San Diego.

It was stated sometime since that Mrs. G. A. Duke had left for London. This is an error, as Mrs. Duke has bought the Sweetwater nursery and resides there.

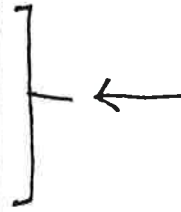
Julius Lacey has been appointed principal of the La Mesa grammar school and will open school the first Monday in October. Mr. and Mrs. Lacey will reside in the Babcock mansion.

Mrs. Martha Groves left last week for her old home in Taunton, Somershire, England. Mrs. Groves is the mother of Dr. Mead and G. A. Groves, and was accompanied as far as San Francisco by Mrs. Mead.

A draft of the proposed La Mesa Cabrillo Boat may be seen at the store. Subscriptions are requested and volunteers wanted so that it will be a complete success. See Messrs. Williams and Putnam.

The flume water still holds out and all orchards are in first-class condition. With this month's irrigation watering will probably cease, as early rains are predicted, and, owing to cooler weather and shorter days, less evaporation is taking place.

It is announced that the name of Allison Springs has been changed to La Mesa Springs. Plans are being drawn for an ornamental depot near the springs, to be called by the above name, to take the place of the present La Mesa and Allison depot on the S. D., C. & E. Ry.



1894

MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE.

A LA MESA MISSING—ALLISON SPRINGS
BOOMING—AN ENGLISHMAN'S
INVESTMENT.

LA MESA, August 23.—Frank Gordon is among the missing. He left home two weeks ago and has not been heard of since. He was a brick mason by trade and has been building reservoirs. No cause or reason has been assigned for his disappearance.

Allison Springs is booming. A submerged reservoir is being built. The Spring has a flow of an inch of water, "great for medical purposes," say the chemists.

The hall above the new store was opened by a dance last night.

The blacksmith's shop is completed.

A new depot is the next on the list, then a sanitarium, and residences.

Last spring an Englishman, Mr. Gilbert Ashton Dade, purchased the Babcock orchard; price, \$5500. It was considered cheap as orchards go, being a pretty piece of land, well planted. He paid \$1000 down, took care of the ranch for several months and now is tired of it and thrown it up, losing his money and several hundred more that he had put in in improvements. Mrs. Babcock is a very lucky woman, and now all ranches here are for sale on the same terms. If there are any more such purchasers in town, send them out.

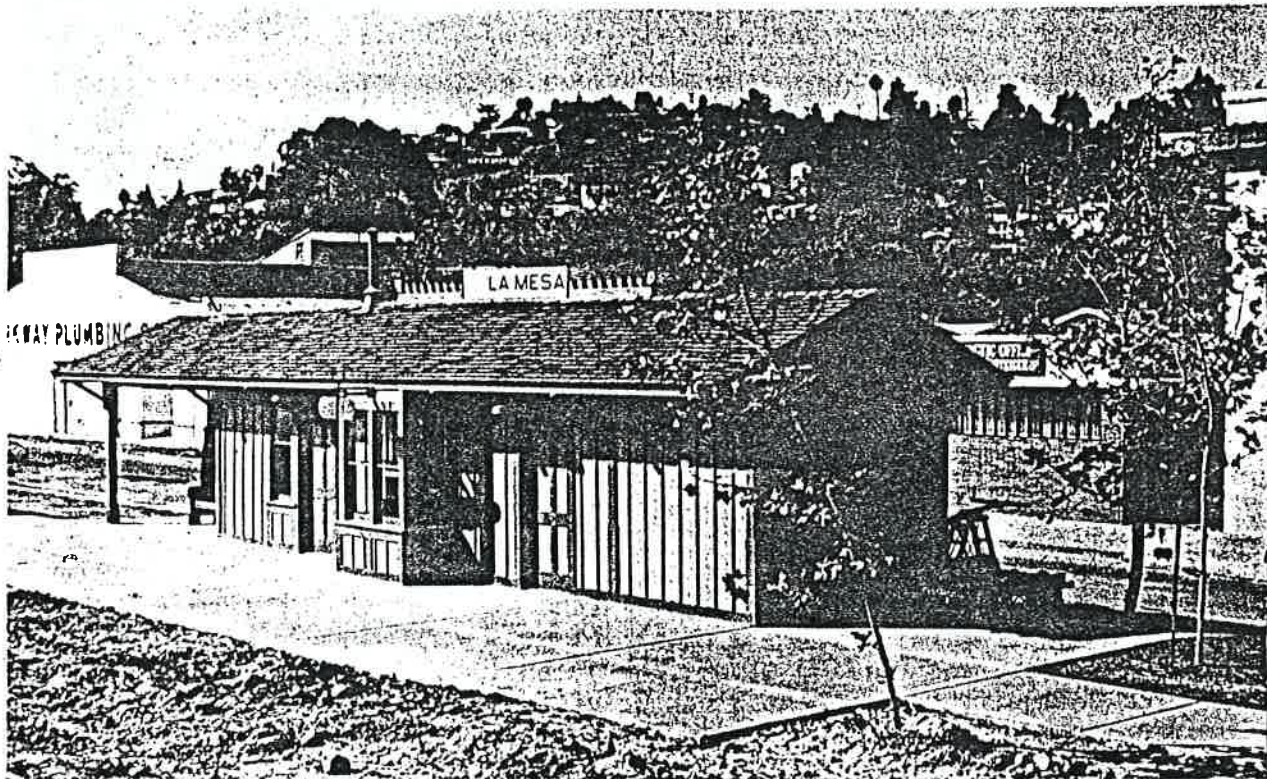
LA MESA DEPOT MUSEUM

OFFICIAL OPENING - APRIL 18, 1982

LA MESA DEPOT MUSEUM

The little depot is back in town where it belongs. This is the story of the little station that could - and did! Survive, that is!

In 1894, the then-San Diego, Cuyamaca & Eastern Railway Company built the depot on the site where it now stands. It was a little station with a covered platform and a closed section. In 1897, the open area was enclosed. The community was then



Larry Rose photo

known as La Mesa Springs, and the station was called Allison, the surname of pioneer settler, sheep rancher, and railroad developer Robert W. Allison.

In 1915, the station was carried across the tracks, turned around and relocated, and a bay window, a rest room, and a new porch were added. A small freight building and a water tank completed the station facility.

Steam passenger and freight trains served the depot in earlier years. Motor trains gradually replaced the steam passenger trains but the railroad abandoned all passenger service in 1928. At mid-century diesel locomotives took over the freight service. By 1954, Western Union and Railway Express had moved to other locations, the station agent's office was closed, and the City of La Mesa planned to widen Spring Street. The depot had to go.

On November 26, 1954, the Lakeside Chamber of Commerce purchased the depot for \$1 in support of a proposal by Mrs. Florence Beadle to acquire the depot for a "western town" to be located in Lindo Lake Park in Lakeside. In December, the depot was dismantled and its parts taken to the Beadle property at Maple and Ashwood in Lakeside for storage. Learning that the proposed western town was incompatible with the master plan for the park, the Chamber elected to sell the depot to Mrs. Beadle again for \$1.

Mrs. Beadle on July 11, 1959, opened the depot as the Beadle Historical Museum.



Railroad Ave. (now Nebo Dr.), - La Mesa Depot, far left; La Mesa Lemon Co. packing plant with loading ramp, center; La Mesa Store, right, is half of existing building across from the depot. (S.D. Historical Society)

and antique store. Later, after both Mr. and Mrs. Beadle had passed away, the depot was closed, and in the mid 1970s, the Beadle heirs sold the depot to the Pacific Southwest Railway Museum Association for \$1.

Meanwhile, there was talk in La Mesa about returning the depot to its "rightful home." It all came together when owner-PSRMA and the La Mesa Historical Society shared ideas and appointed a planning committee.

Conversations were held with officials and staff of the City of La Mesa and the La Mesa Redevelopment Agency. As a result, leases were signed with the City for sites for the depot and rolling stock, and an application was made with the City of La Mesa for Community Development Block Grant funds. The city submitted the application to the federal government, and grant funds were awarded for the project. Individuals, PSRMA members, and business firms contributed additional funds.

Before the depot was trucked back to La Mesa, it suffered further indignity. The vandals moved in. Fires were set, and most doors, windows, and hardware were stolen. Earlier, the baggage room wall had been scorched by a brush fire. The years had also taken their toll. The depot was a sorry sight on November 21, 1978, when it was trucked to La Mesa for temporary storage. Three months later, it was transported two blocks to its original site for placement on a new foundation. The structure was shaky but remained intact.

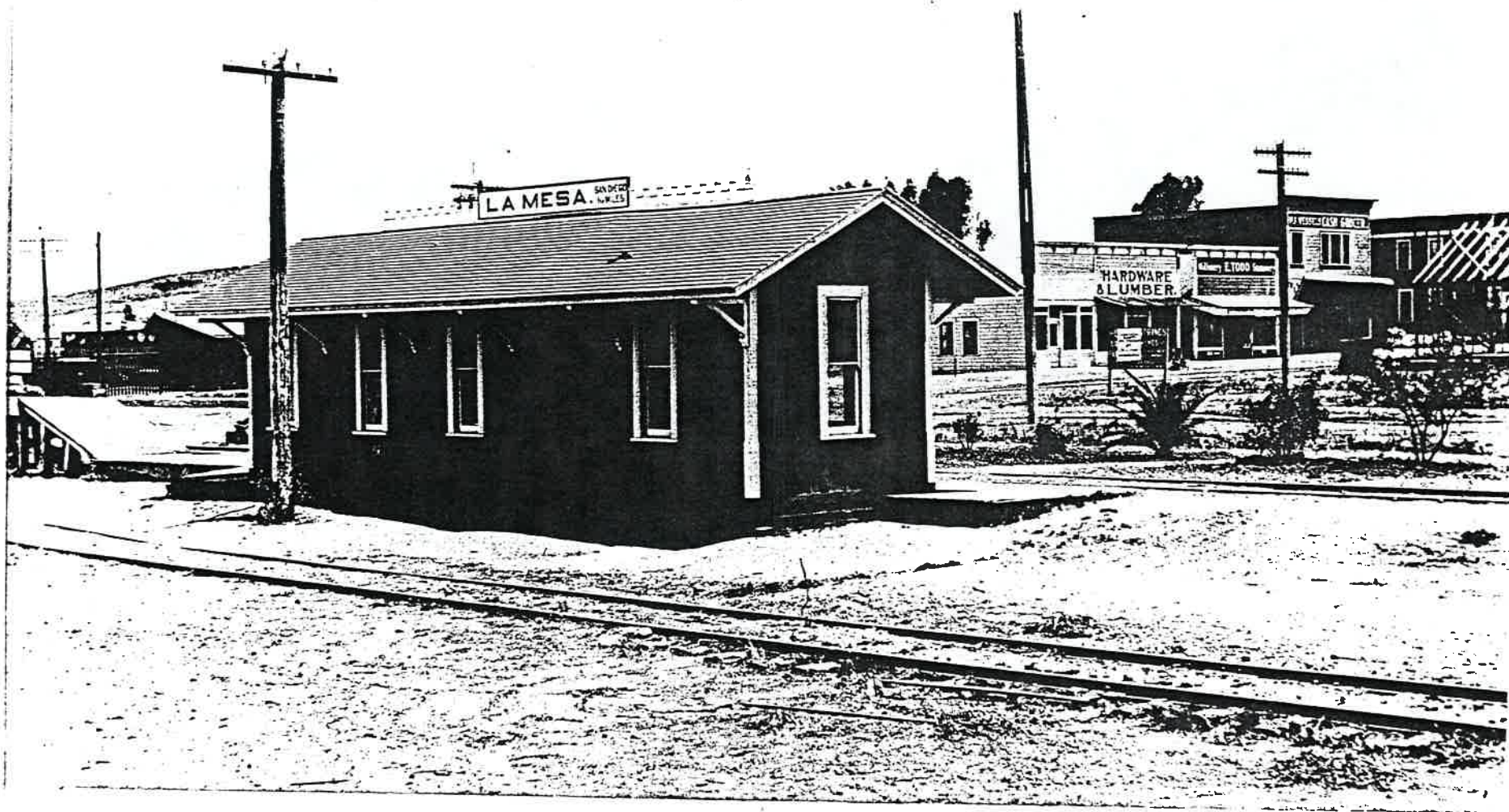
But look at the depot today! PSRMA Project Director Larry Rose and the volunteer PSRMA workers gave it tender, loving care, and contributions of money, materials, talent, artifacts and, in some instances, memories, continued to come in.

To cap it all off - the "La Mesa Train Depot" received an award. The American Institute of Architects, San Diego Chapter; the American Society of Interior Design; the American Planning Association; and the American Society of Landscape Architects awarded an ORCHID, an award in the Environment Awareness Program. The jury announced the award as "an example of what can be done through the use of volunteer labor. A brilliant restoration of this historic building in the outlying community of La Mesa shows what can be done to continue our historical heritage on a small scale."

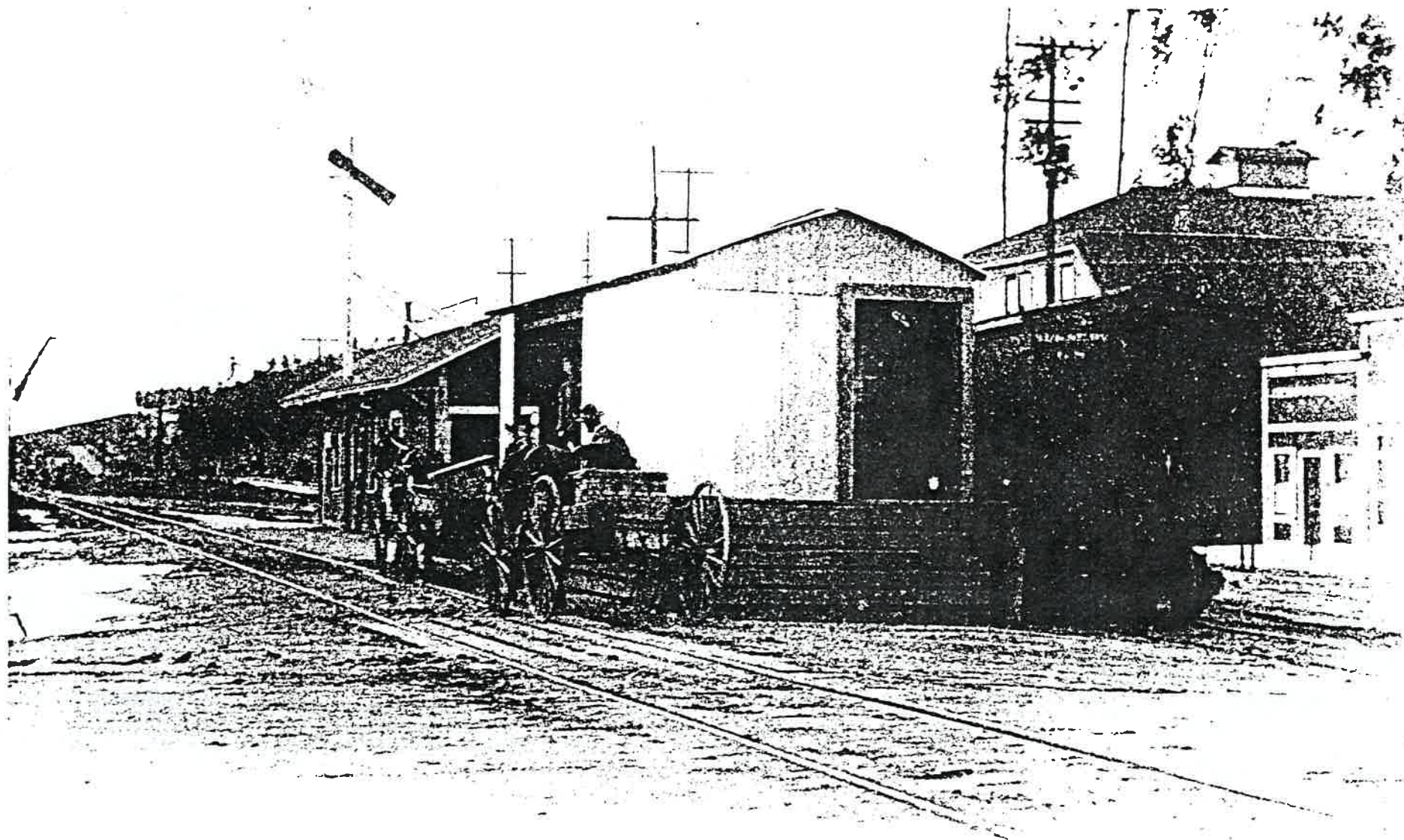
The La Mesa Depot Museum, 4695 Nebo Dr., La Mesa, CA 92041, is administered by the Depot Museum Management Committee on behalf of the Pacific Southwest Railway Museum Assn., Inc. and the La Mesa Historical Society.



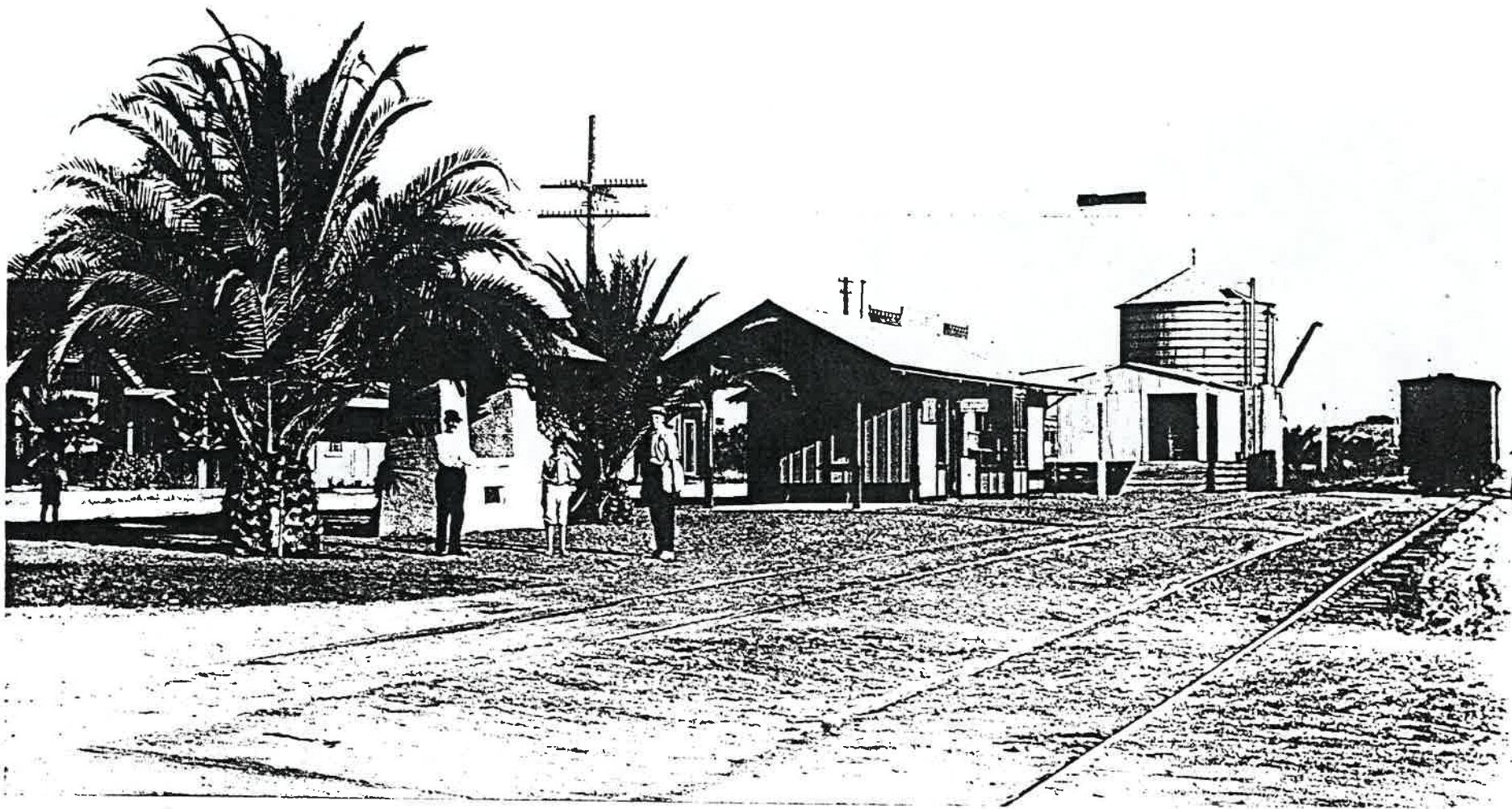
Looking west over La Mesa, circa 1897. The small La Mesa Depot is at right center. To its right is the two-story brick La Mesa Lemon Company Store; to its left, the lemon packing house with community hall above.



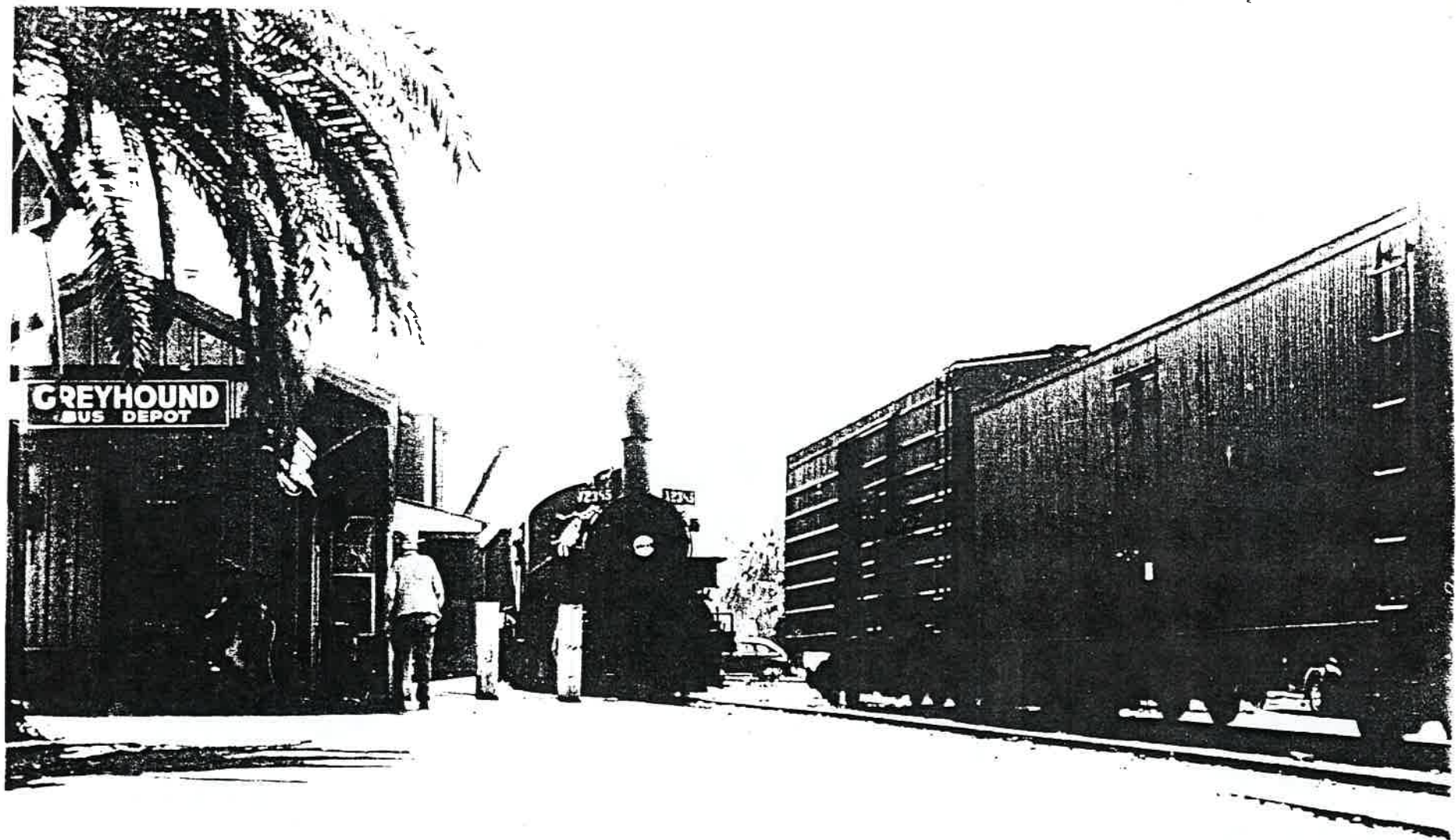
La Mesa Depot, circa 1908. North side of La Mesa Boulevard east of Spring Street is in background.



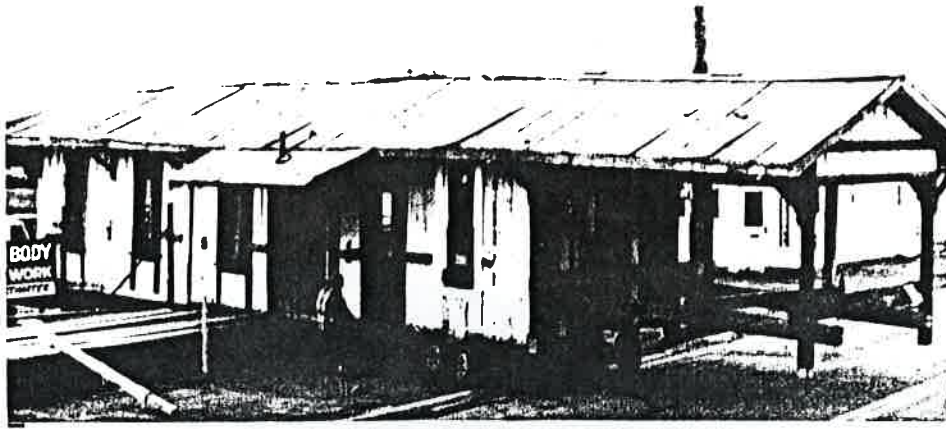
La Mesa Depot, circa 1910; freight shed in foreground.



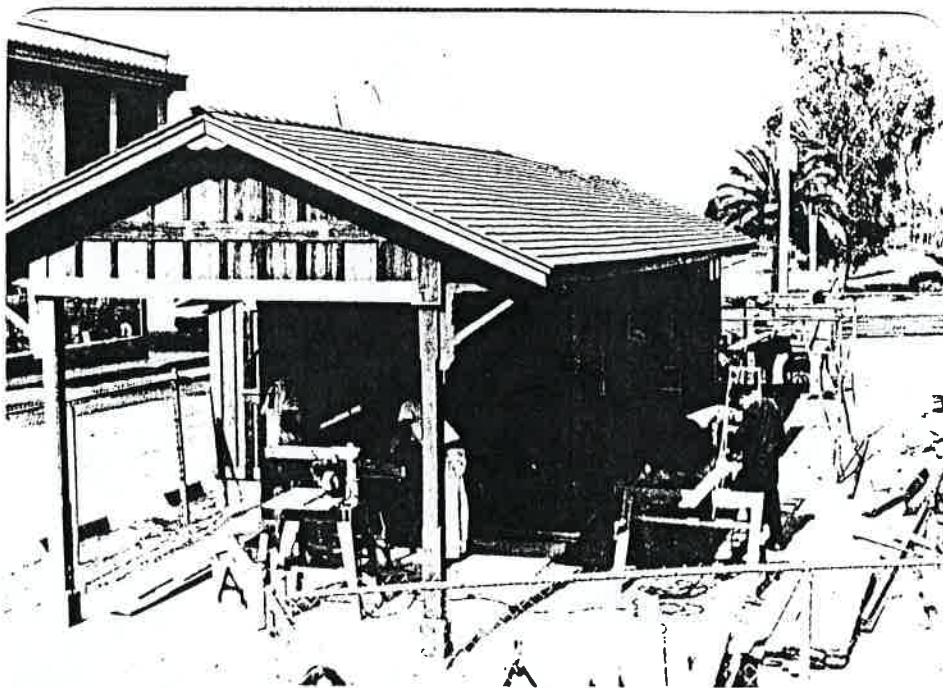
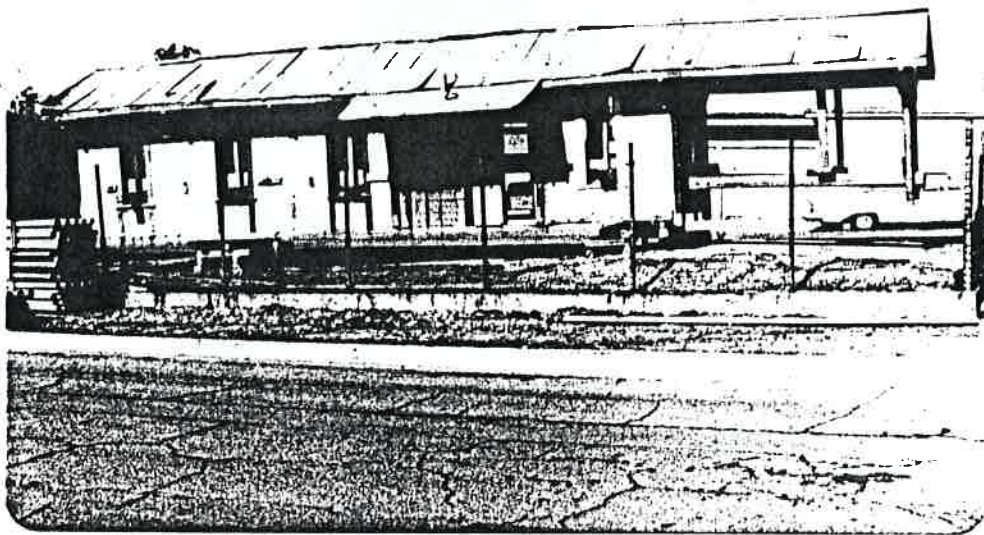
Looking south at the La Mesa Depot, freight shed and water tank, circa 1916.



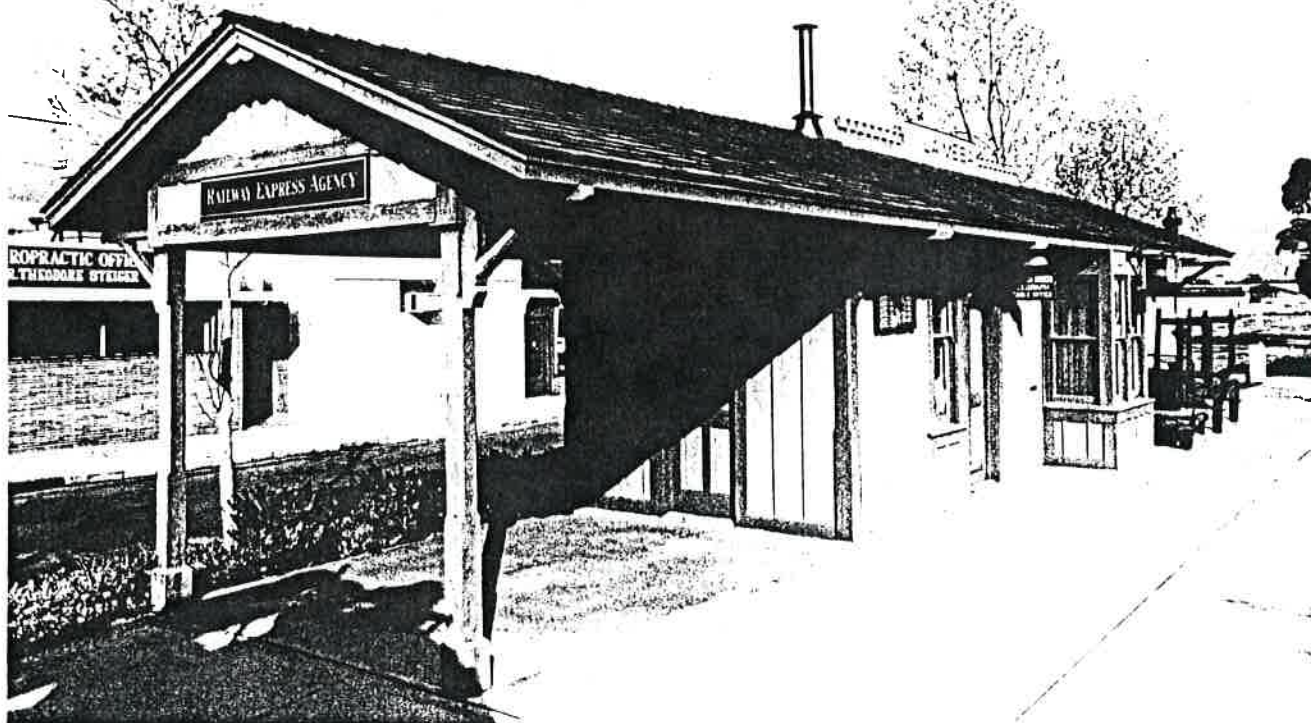
La Mesa Depot, circa 1940.



In transit and waiting, 1979.



Work in progress, 1980.



La Mesa Depot, circa 1982.



FROM CHICKEN COOP TO ORCHID
THE LA MESA DEPOT STORY

by
Larry L. Rose, AIA

In 1888, The San Diego Cuyamaca & Eastern Railway pushed through a place called La Mesa Springs ten miles from San Diego while working its way east in what was advertised as a transcontinental railway link for San Diego. The line reached Foster, twenty five miles from San Diego, in 1889 and never went beyond. Though the railroad never prospered as expected, the towns along the line did, and one of the most beautiful was La Mesa, which soon became known as the "Jewel of The Hills."

In 1894, the railroad built a depot in La Mesa with a siding to a packing shed to better handle the produce from the many orchards in the area. La Mesa was incorporated as a city in 1912. By 1914 there were seven trains a day through La Mesa in each direction serving the cattle ranches, farms and quarries of eastern San Diego County. The towns of Lemon Grove, El Cajon, Santee, Lakeside and Foster were also thriving and more than a dozen passenger stations were evenly spaced along the line.

The architectural style of these buildings was in the tradition of small town America, board and batt siding, corbelled eaves and a tasteful amount of "gingerbread" trim. The three room floor plan of waiting room and baggage room sandwiched around the ticket office with its projecting agent's bay toward the trackside was repeated thousands of times across America for more than a hundred years. The little wooden depot in La Mesa would be right at home in any rural area in the country though less common in the east where brick and stone were the more preferred building materials.

The Depression and changing transportation economics after World War II erased many of these small town landmarks and more than half were gone by 1960. Of the dozen stations on the short line east from San Diego, only the La Mesa Depot survived after the rails east of El Cajon were taken up in 1939. Most of them faded away soon after the last passenger train rolled on the line in 1928. The last ten miles of the rail line itself were gone soon after with most of it, including the town of Foster, being blown away by the great flood of 1916. Today, only one freight train a day creeps its way to the end of the line in El Cajon.

The La Mesa station would have disappeared with the others if it hadn't been for Flossie Beadle, a tough minded little old lady from the nearby town of Lakeside. It seems the depot was in the way of a street widening in 1954 and nobody in the city of La Mesa was much interested in saving what was, even then, the oldest building in town surviving in its original form. Flossie bought the depot for one dollar and moved it out to her ranch at her own expense. She had collected a whole mainstreet of western buildings on her property and the depot was to be the focal point of her own western museum town.

After Flossie died in the late 60's, a brush fire swept through her ranch and destroyed all of her old western buildings....except the

depot! After this close call, the building suffered the indignity of being used as a worm farm and chicken coop. It was in sad shape in 1974 when a potential savior stepped forward in the form of the Pacific Southwest Railway Museum Association (PSRMA) of San Diego. This all volunteer group of railroad buffs purchased the depot from Flossie's estate, again for one dollar, in the hope they might find some way to preserve it as part of a railway museum still in the pipe dream stage at that time.

Many potential sites for the depot were investigated, but to no avail. The best location, the building's original site, was owned by the Southern Pacific Transportation Co, an indifferent outfit too big to assist in the resurrection of an old depot on one of its more obscure properties. The museum association continued to look under every rock for a home for themselves as well as their dilapidated railroad station, but met frustration at every turn. It seemed only God could save the La Mesa Depot and in 1976 He came up with the perfect solution: Tropical Storm Kathleen!

The El Cajon branch through La Mesa had become a small part of the San Diego & Arizona Eastern Railway, in 1933. The line runs 148 miles from San Diego east to El Centro, wandering 44 miles through Mexico and passing through the nation's only international railroad tunnel on the way. The line has always been subject to washouts, especially in the rugged high desert country in eastern San Diego County. An uncommonly fierce storm really blasted it in the fall of 1976 with flash floods roaring out of spectacular Carriso Gorge, knocking out bridges and trestles and causing miles of track to disappear completely.

Rather than attempt to rebuild the railroad, parent company Southern Pacific almost immediately filed to abandon the line. This act made lots of good things happen quickly. The I.C.C. refused the abandonment attempt but did allow the S.P. to sell the railroad to the Metropolitan Transit Development Board (MTDB) in San Diego. The San Diego Trolley, the nation's newest rail transit system, is now operating on a portion of the line after MTDB purchased the railroad for a million dollars less than the nineteen million the line cost when completed in 1919. The trolley is a spectacular success, having come in under budget and on time and all because of a rainstorm that went unnoticed in the rest of the country.

While sale of the railroad was being negotiated, S.P. sold off much of their excess property along the S.D.&A.E. Railway, including the original site of the La Mesa Depot. The City of La Mesa purchased a thirty five foot wide strip of land over a mile long through the middle of town and were immediately presented with a scheme to bring back their depot. The railroad museum had wasted no time and had a detailed plan waiting in the wings in anticipation of such a golden opportunity. The City quickly approved the all volunteer restoration project and offered to help with the site preparation as a part of a green belt and park development along the entire length of the newly purchased strip of railroad land.

The museum volunteers then applied for and received a \$15,000.00 federal grant from funds available for historic preservation.

Operation "Save The Depot" was now off the launching pad. While waiting for the city to remove some parking stalls that were intruding on the depot site, the museum group trucked the structure back into town and propped it up temporarily in the nearby police station parking lot. The funds for this move were donated by the thousand plus members of the Pacific Southwest Railway Museum (PSRMA), who also were to donate 100% of the labor to restore the depot during 1980 and 81 as well as thousands of dollars for materials not covered by the grant.

PSRMA also acquired a permanent home for their growing collection of vintage locomotives and railcars. A combination of a purchase and lease of surplus railroad land in Campo on the S.D. & A.E. Ry. occurred as another beneficial spin off of Tropical Storm Kathleen. New owner MTDB (the San Diego Trolley parent) enthusiastically endorsed the establishment of the railway museum adjacent to their right-of-way in San Diego County's beautiful back country. And the storm benefits continue.

The idea of extending the San Diego Trolley east to El Cajon was overwhelmingly approved by the voters last year and the La Mesa Depot is to be a regular stop on the line once again. In anticipation of this possible extension, PSRMA carefully coordinated the location of the depot with MTDB so the building would be correctly placed to accommodate the future trolley line. This resulted in the depot being placed about three feet west of its exact 1894 location. This was one of the few compromises tolerated in an exhaustive effort by PSRMA to keep the restoration authentic in every detail.

The La Mesa Historical Society offered their support as soon as the depot project was announced and were instrumental in getting the local citizens to enthusiastically back the project. The society also conducted an invaluable piece of detective work in turning up the daughter of the station agent who ran the depot from 1910 to 1936. This lady grew up in and around the depot in the 1920's and remembered all kinds of details, such as the contents of drawers and the location of equipment and furniture. Her information was backed up by a copy of an original 1920 contents inventory that turned up, again, as a direct result of San Diego's most beneficial gully washer.

As soon as the purchase of the railroad was finalized, MTDB brought in an outside operator, Kyle Railways, Inc., to run the freight on the trolley line to Tijuana at night and on the El Cajon branch in the daytime. The new operator retained the old name "San Diego & Arizona Eastern Ry." and set about remodeling the freight office, engine house and other buildings that came with the property purchased from S.P. While cleaning out mountains of old paperwork, the new short line company literally tossed out one hundred years of San Diego railroad history into a large industrial dumpster. PSRMA was, of course, waiting in the dumpster with open arms and hauled off several groaning truckloads of old photos, records and blueprints.

The time consuming task of sifting through the "Dumpster Collection" fell to the depot project architect, a La Mesa resident who just happened to be the vice president and general manager of the railroad museum and is the author of this narrative. The dumpster

windfall immediately began yielding great treasures thanks to said architect's wife who allowed the waist deep piles of musty paper to take up nearly every room in her house for two months.

Within a few weeks, original floor plans and contents inventories were discovered for every depot on the line. Records from previous railroad owners were found dating back to the 1880's and included work orders for repairs to the La Mesa Depot over a span of many years. Actual paint chip color samples for the depot walls and trim inside and out were found attached to a copy of the contract for the first of four moves the depot was to suffer. In 1915, the building was moved directly across the tracks to the east, turned around, repainted and reroofed all for less than \$400.00! Other choice items found included the original linen tracings of all the engineering work done when the various rail lines were built in the San Diego area from 1882 to 1919. The La Mesa Depot site plans were found, of course, with all changes made in the immediate area duly noted and dated. Over one hundred unpublished photos were found, including shots of many long gone depots, locomotives and railcars. The early history of the La Mesa station (and all of the others) was now known in great detail. This trash pile treasure made the architect's job easy and now guaranteed a perfect restoration.

The hammer and nails phase of the project now began, backed by the best research possible. A small but confident group of amateur handymen worked every weekend and almost every Wednesday evening for more than a year to bring the depot back to like new condition. The PSRMA membership comprised most every trade required, from architect to electrician to cabinet maker and they joined the group as required to keep things on schedule. Only one serious snag developed during the restoration when the cost of replacement siding threatened to eat up a disproportionate share of the grant money. The depot was built out of clear heart 1x12 redwood boards and most of them needed to be replaced. This material was 7/8 of an inch thick and not available off the shelf. The redwood batts were also of an unusual design not available anywhere. While the crew deliberated on how best to get around this problem, the answer presented itself in the form of John Maxwell, the owner of the La Mesa Planing Mill.

John strolled into the depot one day and said "Looks like you fellas need some special woodwork here and there." His donation of \$10,000.00 worth of custom millwork set an example to other donors during the next year as every hard to find piece of the puzzle fell into place on schedule. The material supplied by Mr. Maxwell was an exact match of the original material and blended in perfectly.

Even the hard to find contents of the depot matched the inventory list to a tee. Over a dozen companies and individuals donated such things as a 1910 railroad telegraph set, the right sized safe, a 1903 baggage scale, an antique train order signal, a ticket dater and punch, an ancient typewriter, a high tank pull chain toilet, the perfect sized oak desk and swivel chair and even authentic Railway Express Agency signs that were placed in their exact spots as shown on the old photos.

The restoration of this building was a magic thing that seemed to

follow its own program independent of the humans involved. When the completed structure was given an "Orchid" award a few months ago, it seemed to many to be the next logical step in a preordained progression. It is the survival of this building against all odds that sets it apart from other restored stations across the country. Even though several hundred people had a hand in its resurrection, the depot's existence is basically the result of one crusty little old lady and a fabled California "Hundred Year Flood."

The depot is now the center of downtown activity as it used to be in the good old days. Though humble in stature, it is no less important to the city of La Mesa than the fancy train stations of larger towns. Old men once again lounge in the shade of its platform on a Sunday afternoon. The postman now delivers PSRMA mail every day. The place is alive! And the best is yet to be as the station will soon become a working depot again. The trolley is coming!