

Clutter and Confusion

By David Dewey

In the past we've discussed improving the public's perception of our museum by organizing our "spare parts" supplies. The main purpose of this organizing is to remove visual clutter, providing what the average person's eye interprets as a purposeful landscape. Few people will look at the "landscape" in a detailed manner, on average. Unless something catches the viewer's eye, they will spend less than 12 seconds looking at it.

Remember this 12 seconds--it applies to many areas of museum design and presentation. But back to our "landscape."

One advantage this short viewing time gives us is the opportunity to "clean up" an area without moving every item in the area. Usually just straightening up a pile of pipe, for instance, will give the illusion of an organized supply.

On the other hand, however, such a quick view makes it difficult to make some stuff look neat or organized (like a pile of spikes). The best solution here, of course, is to hide the stuff--put it in a barrel, or hide it in an enclosure (fenced area, shed, whatever).

So much for making stuff so its NOT noticed; what about the stuff we WANT noticed--like "don't climb on the loco roofs" signs? Twelve seconds does not give you much time to get a message across, let alone messages. Signs, whether directional, introductory, or interpretive should be simple, with as few words as possible. Also, as much as possible, the immediate area around the sign should be uncluttered too. In simple terms, don't pile a bunch of signs together, or write long texts on them (KISS--Keep It Simple & Singular).

Many studies have been made on what makes for a readable, noticed sign. They all boil down two four things: Location (like selling real estate), size of letters (so those of us who forgot our glasses can still read it), contrast (black letters on a black background don't work well) and length of text (don't write a whole book on the wall).

That's enough theory for this time. Take a look around your everyday haunts and notice how these ideas are used on the road, in stores... Hey, how about checking out a local museum! See you in Portola?

Questions and Answers

We often receive requests from members as to locomotive colors, train consists, bridge and depot plans, etc. While we will try to answer all questions if possible, we are all volunteers and have only so much time available. Our archive material is stored in a refrigerator car and is not available for research at this time. We hope to have it all organized and in a suitable location soon, but this also takes time and money. In the meantime it has been saved and is safe. If we can not answer your request please accept our apologies.

New Lifers

Please welcome the following people who have joined the ranks of FRRS Life Members:

William Allen
from Chico, CA

John Borgsteadt
from Palo Alto, CA

Thanks people, we appreciate your support.

CASH DONATIONS

The following generous people have made cash donations to the FRRS' general fund:

- Tom Alexander
- Michael Bozzini
- Jim Folsom
- Joseph Fuhrig
- David "Dusty" Galland
- Warren Gilleran
- Phil Gosney
- Phil & JoAnn Guidera
- Webber Hall
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- Harry Jamason
- Sally, Paul & Kevin Lucia
- Greg Lugo & Maggie Griffin
- Porter Meroney
- Steve Paluso
- Stuart H. T. Robinson
- Charles Robinson
- Gilbert Rogers
- Erwin & Virginia Rosa
- Ed Slintak
- Mr. & Mrs. Eugene Walker
- Steve Habeck, through his employer, PG&E

"Few wishes come true by themselves."

"Issac Dripps invented the locomotive cow catcher."

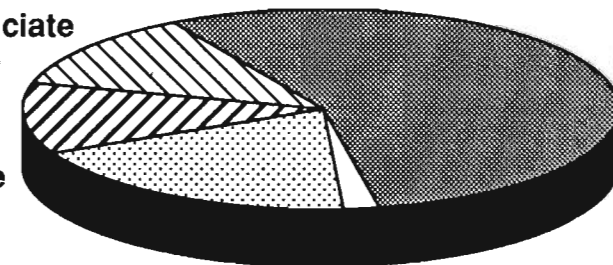
Membership Report

as of August 24, 1993

130 Associate

563 Active

114 Life



194 Family

20 Sustaining

Total FRRS membership is 1,021.
Of these, 30 are Charter members.