

The Peninsula Commuter Story

By Steve Miller, October 7, 1987

Introduction

It's a typical weekday afternoon. The modest station at Fourth and Townsend Streets in San Francisco has been resting since mid-morning. Just before 9:00 AM the last of the morning rush hour Peninsula Commuter trains, now known as CalTrain, arrived from San Jose and intermediate points.

There have been spurts of activity as mid-day trains arrive and depart, but nothing like the commuter rush. Maintenance crews make minor repairs and clean the cars. Switch crews move the trains around and take the diesel locomotives to the servicing area at Seventh Street. Janitors sweep the platforms and station areas. The newsstand operator rearranges magazines and newspapers and the flower vendor straightens the roses on display. The ticket sellers count their change and the workers in the snack bar make popcorn and coffee or wipe off the counter while talking to train crews waiting for their next run. Everyone is waiting.

Just after four o'clock the bustle begins. The San Francisco Municipal Railway buses arrive more frequently with more passengers. The ticket lines grow and the snack bar gets busy. The passengers, many dressed in suits and toting briefcases, buy newspapers, beer, or coffee and walk to track four to board train number 46. As it gets nearer to departure time, they walk faster. A few last-minute arrivals run for the train as the gatekeeper studies his watch. At four sixteen, the gate closes. Those who didn't quite make it have been bolting for the gate, but as it closes, they stop and head for track 12 — the 4:20 PM train, and the whole process begins again.

The commuter rush intensifies at five o'clock. Beginning at 5:16 PM with train number 54,

four expresses leave four to five minutes apart. Number 54 runs non-stop all the way to California Avenue station in Palo Alto — 31.8 miles from San Francisco. This stretch is covered in only 36 minutes. Train number 56, departing at 5:20 PM, does not stop until Hillsdale station in San Mateo, 20.3 miles away. No. 58's first stop is Burlingame, and No. 60's is South San Francisco. After their first stop, each of the expresses skips stops to San Jose, pausing only at selected stations. Riders must be sure they are on a train that stops at their station. The expresses all load passengers simultaneously on different tracks, and their departures have a certain rhythm, like a very slow drum beat.

After No. 60 departs at 5:30 PM, the pace slackens. No. 62 at 5:57 PM is an express to Hillsdale, and No. 62 at 6:00 PM is an all-stops local, like the mid-day trains. No. 66 at 6:30 PM and No. 68 at 7:15 PM are the last of the peak period trains. The basic script is acted out every weekday evening. Each performance is somewhat different, but the plot changes only very slowly.

Few of the 16,000 daily riders realize how long ago it all started, and few are aware of the historical significance of the railroad and the facilities they use daily.

The Railroad's History

The railroad between San Francisco and San Jose, currently used by the CalTrain Peninsula Commuter Service (PCS), is among the oldest in California. A line connecting the booming trading center of San Francisco with California's first state capital, San Jose, was originally proposed in 1851. At that time, the stagecoach trip to cover the 47 miles between the two towns took all day. The trip was either dusty or muddy, depending on the weather. The only alternative was to sail to Alviso Landing, with the shorter stage ride into San Jose from there, but, even when the tides were favorable, this trip took almost as long, and the passengers still arrived with half the countryside covering their clothes.

California became a state in September 1850. Four months later, Judge Davis Devine called a public meeting in San Jose to announce that the time had come for a railroad. Although he managed to raise \$100,000 within a month, the idea fizzled when the state capital was abruptly moved to Vallejo.

Soon, however, talk of a railroad surfaced again. San Jose quickly found that much of its business had left with the lawmakers. A railroad was the logical way for San Jose to regain some importance. In September, the Pacific and Atlantic Railroad was incorporated — the first one in California. As the name implies, the ultimate goals were somewhat more grandiose than San Francisco and San Jose. The inability to raise capital doomed the company, and two others that followed. In the meantime, however, a group built a railroad east from Sacramento, and that line — the Sacramento Valley Rail Road — became California's first.

Finally, a fourth company, appropriately named the San Francisco and San Jose Rail Road, was incorporated in 1860. A considerable amount of the financing for the venture came from the three counties through which it would run: San Francisco, San Mateo, and Santa Clara. (Interestingly, these same three counties are now financing part of the operating cost of CalTrain.)

Ground was broken in May 1861 at San Francisquito Creek, on the Santa Clara-San Mateo County line. Five construction camps were set up and the work progressed slowly. The only difficult construction was the line over the San Bruno hills between San Bruno and San Francisco. This segment required extensive cuts and fills and resulted in rather steep grades. The route over the hills was chosen instead of the Bayshore line because of several attractions along the line: a racetrack, resorts, and amusement areas. Forty years later, after many of the attractions had disappeared and large cemeteries filled much of the land along the tracks south of San Francisco, the Bayshore line was constructed.

In October 1863 regular service began between San Francisco and Mayfield (now California Avenue). The train trip took two hours to Mayfield, where passengers connected with stages to San Jose.

Stops were scheduled for San Miguel, San Bruno, 17 Mile House (Millbrae), San Mateo, Belmont, Redwood City, and Menlo Park.

Construction continued until January 16, 1864, when a large ceremony in San Jose celebrated completion of the line. Spectators came from far and wide. In San Francisco, over 2000 people mobbed the station in hopes of riding the excursion train. Obviously, the six coaches that the SF & SJ owned were not enough, so box cars and even cattle cars were added to the train. At San Mateo, Redwood City, and Hayfield, the special stopped to squeeze on a few more passengers.

The festivities included a 36-gun salute by the California Guards, a welcoming address by San Jose Mayor John Quimby, and a speech by the railroads president, Timothy Dame. Dame referred to the railroad as the "first link in the grand chain of railroads which is to bind the golden shores of the Pacific with the cornfields of the Mississippi Valley". Following the speeches, there was a giant barbecue with wine and champagne — all provided for free.

After the opening celebration, the line settled down to business. Two trains daily operated in each direction between San Francisco and San Jose. The San Francisco terminal was initially located near 16th and Valencia Streets. After several moves, a permanent station was opened on Townsend between Third and Fourth Streets, one-half block east of the current depot.

The San Francisco and San Jose Rail Road was combined with the Southern Pacific Railroad about 1870. The Southern Pacific was controlled by the famous "Big Four" — Leland Stanford, Collis P. Huntington, Charles Crocker, and Mark Hopkins — builders of the western part of the first transcontinental railroad.

With the good transportation provided by the railroad, the Peninsula towns began to grow. The University of Santa Clara, established in 1851, was California's first institution of higher education. With the coming of the railroad, the academic community had much easier access to San Francisco and the rest of the world. Santa Clara also became famous for its orchards, and fruit was shipped via rail to all parts of the country. In the 1880s, Leland Stanford built a University on his farm near Menlo Park. The City of Palo Alto later grew up east of Stanford University along the railroad tracks.

Many of San Franciscans wealthy built country homes in places like Menlo Park and Atherton. The idea that one could live in the rural setting of the Peninsula and still work in the City gained acceptance by the 1890s. San Carlos was the first truly suburban town on the Peninsula — it had no industry or commercial activity to otherwise sustain it. The first Country Club on the West Coast was established in the area that became Burlingame.

The Southern Pacific later built a line to Los Angeles along the coast and the Peninsula line was the key link to San Francisco for this route. The Peninsula line was then, and still remains, the only all-rail connection between San Francisco and the rest of the country.

Bayshore Cutoff

E. H. Harriman, the famous railroad tycoon, was President of the Southern Pacific at the turn of the century. Under his direction, a line was surveyed along the Bayshore directly from San Bruno to San Francisco. Trains had been getting longer and the steep grades over the San Bruno hills made the use of helper locomotives necessary. Operating costs were rising and the smoke from the locomotives was bothering those who lived in new residential areas along the way.

Construction of the "Bayshore Cutoff" was approved in October 1904. The line, just over 10 miles long, would include five tunnels total-

ing almost two miles in length, and a 4,100 foot trestle over Islais Creek Basin. Another trestle was built from Bayshore station to Visitacion Point across Visitacion Bay and then filled in with rock. Most of the resulting lagoon was also filled and became the site of SP's Bayshore Yard.

The entire project cost over \$9 million, but before it was finished, the 1906 earthquake hit. Southern Pacific immediately turned its attention to disaster relief. The railroad hauled in hundreds of carloads of supplies, mostly food, and helped evacuate thousands of homeless from the devastated city. On the old San Bruno hills route, rails were twisted by the quake, but the line was quickly restored to operation. On the new cutoff, the twin bores of Tunnel 2 had completely collapsed and had to be rebuilt. A little over a year and a half after the earthquake, on December 8, 1907, the Bayshore Cutoff was finally finished. All of the through trains began using the new "super railroad." The old hill route was served by loop trains that ran out to South San Francisco by one route and returned to the City by the other. Improved streetcar service competing for the local passengers led to a gradual cutback of service on the old line until the final passenger train ran in 1942.

San Jose Cutoff

The last major change to the Peninsula route came in 1935. The station in San Jose had been located at Market and Bassett Streets in downtown. The main line to Southern California then headed east for a short distance and turned sharply south, running down the center of 4th Street. When the line was built, in 1868, competition from street traffic was not much of a problem, but as the number of cars increased, delays and safety hazards became major operating headaches, especially since longer and heavier freight trains made the railroad's location a growing nuisance to street traffic.

Southern Pacific began planning the relocation of the main line in 1906. The new line would skirt the west side of downtown with a new

station located at the site of the West San Jose depot on the Santa Cruz line. Southern Pacific began acquiring property and in 1916 received approval from the California Railroad Commission to build and operate the line.

The first delay came with World War I. During the War, the Federal government took over the railroads, and the line relocation was considered unimportant compared to the war effort. Southern Pacific was less interested in the project in the twenties than it was before the war, but the City of San Jose was becoming impatient. SP's franchise to run down 4th St. had expired quietly in 1918 — while the railroad was under Federal control. In 1925, San Jose began various tactics to force Southern Pacific to action. The City denied an Southern Pacific application for renewal of the franchise. When Southern Pacific again did not act, the City requested the Post Office Department cancel SP's mail contracts for operating without a franchise. Since Southern Pacific had a neat monopoly in California railroading, and highway and air haulage of mail had not yet developed, this ploy was not practical.

Just when Southern Pacific and San Jose were about to reach an agreement, in 1927, the City of Willow Glen, southwest of San Jose, incorporated with the specific purpose of blocking the Southern Pacific line relocation through its new boundaries. In spite of Willow Glen's refusal to issue a franchise, Southern Pacific went ahead and began construction. When the City went to court to stop the line, Southern Pacific countered that it did not need a franchise since there were no street or public property crossings. The case finally went to the Supreme Court, delaying the project for several years. The suit had much more than local significance, the right of a city to control public utilities within its borders was at stake.

Finally, a compromise was reached between Willow Glen and Southern Pacific in November 1934. The City granted a franchise and Southern Pacific promised to install an underpass for a future street extension. By the end of December 1935, the new line, including a

large new depot, was complete. In all, the project included nine grade separations, plus one to be added later for Willow Glen. The new line was proclaimed the safest of any city in the United States. Willow Glen, by the way, was later incorporated into San Jose.

Other Improvements

Since 1935, there have been no major changes to the railroad alignment. In 1956, as part of the construction of the Bayshore Freeway, the railroad was moved somewhat east at Sierra Point. Tunnel 5 between Brisbane and South San Francisco was eliminated in the process. The old north portal of the tunnel is still visible today on the west side of the tracks just north of the Bayshore Freeway overpass. Also, beginning in 1954, Southern Pacific filled in the Islais Creek trestle in San Francisco. The work involved moving in 140,000 cubic yards of material. The resulting fill across the basin averages 25 feet high.

A grade separation project was built at Hillsdale Boulevard in San Mateo in 1965, moving the tracks a few feet to the east and raising the elevation slightly. As a result, the Hillsdale depot is no longer adjacent to the railroad and now looks somewhat out of place sitting in the station parking lot.

Most of the recent changes in the Peninsula Commute Service have concerned schedules, equipment, and stations. Until the Bayshore Cutoff was built early in this century, the railroad retained the characteristics of a semi-rural intercity route. Many trains went beyond San Jose to Southern California or Monterey Bay. Trains were scheduled throughout the day without the high frequency of peak hour service prevalent today, but the Bayshore Cutoff changed that. The much faster entrance into San Francisco made commuting more attractive. The City was becoming crowded, while the Peninsula offered a peaceful, almost rural setting. Lots were large and land was cheap. With the fast, frequent train service, the Peninsula's growth intensified.

As mentioned before, San Carlos established in 1887 — was the first strictly suburban town on the Peninsula. San Carlos had no industry, as did San Mateo, San Bruno, or Santa Clara. It was neither a county seat nor a port like Redwood City — which was both. San Carlos was solely a bedroom community for San Francisco businessmen. Burlingame, Palo Alto, and Atherton soon followed, and gradually the suburban aspect became stronger, even in the established towns.

More and more commuters rode the trains. The cars used on the commute trains were generally older cars handed down from main-line service. Between 1923 and 1927, however, Southern Pacific bought 75 steel cars designed expressly for the commute service. A few of these cars operated until 1985.

During World War II, traffic increased dramatically on all types of passenger trains. Every passenger car that could still turn a wheel was pressed into service. Lounge cars, observation cars, dining cars, and even some leased cars from New Jersey were used to haul commuters on the Peninsula. Ridership mushroomed to 26,000 daily passengers, almost 10,000 more than before the war. Most of the gains were kept in the post-war years as the Peninsula became the center of a housing construction boom.

In the early 1950s, diesel locomotives began pulling the commute trains. Steam locomotives had done the job for 90 years, yet, in barely six years, they were entirely replaced with diesels. Some of the original 1954 vintage diesel locomotives were still sprinting up and down the Peninsula until 1985 when replacements finally arrived.

About 1950, a couple of the commuter railroads in the Chicago area began experimenting with two-level coaches. Since the upper level is in the form of a balcony, these are known as “gallery” cars. The advantage was obvious — instead of 96 passengers, each car could accommodate 145. Southern Pacific watched the experiments carefully. At the time, ridership was increasing and trains were getting too long

for the station platforms in San Francisco. With bi-level cars, the trains would have much greater capacity, even with fewer cars. Southern Pacific ordered ten of the gallery cars that were delivered in June of 1955. Initially, all ten cars were used in a single rush hour train.

The hi-levels were an instant success with both the commuters and the operating department. In January 1956, only six months after the first cars went into service, Southern Pacific ordered 21 more. These were delivered in 1957, and replaced 36 of the older cars. The railroad bought 15 more gallery cars in 1968. These last cars managed to squeeze in 164 seats by eliminating the restroom (there is always one on the earlier bi-levels, which have restrooms, on every train) and having about half the upstairs seats face the center of the car, rather than all facing forward.

With a fleet of 46 hi-levels, most of the older cars were eventually retired. Those that remained were finally relegated to rush-hour-only service.

Soon after introducing hi-level cars, the Chicago commuter railroads also successfully tried “push-pull” operation with the gallery cars. The locomotive always remains on the end of the train away from Chicago. When the train heads out to the suburbs, it operates in the conventional manner with the locomotive pulling the train. When the train returns, however, the engineer uses an auxiliary control cab at the rear of the last car (which becomes the front of the first car). The locomotive pushes the train; saving the time and expense of turning trains around, or (as was done on the Peninsula) coupling another locomotive on to the other end of the train for the return trip. For various reasons, Southern Pacific chose not to institute push-pull operation.

Sixty-three new gallery cars were constructed in 1985 by Nippon Sharyo, a Japanese car builder, for CalTrain. The stainless steel shells were fabricated in Japan and then shipped to San Francisco where final assembly was completed at Pier 50. These cars are essentially the same configuration as the older gallery cars,

except that they are equipped for push-pull operation. The first of the new cars was delivered in April 1985 for testing, and revenue service began in June. The new cars have now replaced the entire fleet of older gallery and conventional cars. In 1986, eight more cars were added to the fleet, and in 1987, two additional cars brought the total fleet size to 73 cars. These last two coaches were supposed to have been delivered with the other eight in 1986, however the shells were heavily damaged by a hurricane during shipment from Japan. As a result, it was necessary for Nippon Sharyo to construct two more shells to replace the damaged ones.

The Peninsula Commute schedules have not changed substantially since World War II, although other passenger train schedules on the Peninsula have. In the fifties, Southern Pacific had as many as five trains daily from San Francisco to Los Angeles via the Coast Route, plus the Del Monte to Monterey and a commute train to Los Gatos. The Los Gatos train left the main line at California Avenue and traveled on a branch line via Los Altos to Los Gatos. This train was discontinued in 1964 and the line was torn up to make way for the Foothill Expressway.

As intercity passenger trains began to lose money, Southern Pacific began to discontinue the least viable trains. The overnight Lark, once one of the most fashionable trains in California, made its final run in April 1968. This left the Coast Daylight to Los Angeles and the Del Monte as the only long distance trains on the Peninsula line. By this time, the Del Monte had been combined with a commute train between San Francisco and San Jose—the suburban cars were simply attached to the rear of tike train north of San Jose.

On May 1, 1971, Amtrak took over most of the long-distance passenger train service in the United States. Amtrak chose to combine the Coast Daylight with the Cascade an Oakland-Portland train. This meant that the train would have to run from San Jose to Oakland, bypassing San Francisco completely. This train, which

became known as the Coast Starlight travels over the Peninsula line on only the 2.6 miles between San Jose and Santa Clara.

Amtrak decided not to run a Monterey train, but there was some discussion as to whether the Del Monte was an intercity or commute train. As a commute, Southern Pacific would be required to continue operating it. At the last minute it was officially deemed an intercity train and discontinued on April 30. As a result, the commute trains became the only passenger service north of Santa Clara on the Peninsula line. With the exception of a few special train operations, that situation still exists today.

As the cost of operating the Peninsula service increased and the number of riders began to decline, Southern Pacific became disenchanted. A few of the least patronized trains were discontinued in the 1960's and fares were gradually increased, but losses mounted. By the mid-1970s, Southern Pacific decided it wanted out and sought discontinuance of the service. A bitter fight followed in the media, before the State Public Utilities Commission, and later before the Interstate Commerce Commission. At one point, Southern Pacific even offered to buy 1,000 vans and give them to the 9,000 daily riders. Energy crises and increasing congestion on the parallel Bayshore Freeway, however, served to unify the opposition. Finally, after long hours of negotiation, the three counties through which the service runs, the State Department of Transportation (Caltrans), and Southern Pacific reached agreement. Southern Pacific would become a contractor and the public agencies (with help from the Federal Government) would cover most of the operating losses.

Caltrans, a State agency, became involved in what is essentially local suburban transportation, because without the Peninsula Commute Service, the highway congestion on the Bayshore Freeway — part of Caltrans State Highway system — would have become chronic. Expansion of the highway, if feasible at all, would be very costly. The rail service, on the other hand, had a large unused capacity avail-

able for future travel growth. Since it is responsible for the highway, Caltrans felt it was logical to become involved in alternative measures to highway expansion as well.

The new agreement took effect on July 1, 1980. Although there were no obvious service changes immediately, the schedules were extensively modified in October 1981. Several “reverse commute” trains were added — trains that operate southbound to San Jose in the morning, and leave San Jose in the evening. The off-peak sad weekend trains were “regularized” — trains left each end of the line every two hours on the even hour and stopped at each intermediate station at the same time after the hour all day long. The total number of trains was increased from 22 to 23 each way on weekdays. To accommodate the reverse commute trains, a couple of evening and late night trains were discontinued.

In October 1986, another extensive schedule modification was made. Three trains in each direction were added, bringing the total to 26. Southbound to San Jose, two new expresses at non-traditional times were added. No. 46 departs at 4:16 PM, while No. 62 leaves at 5:57 PM. Each of these trains runs non-stop to Hillsdale, than operates as an all-stops local the rest of the way to San Jose. The 7:15 PM local was also reinstated. Service in the reverse peak direction was also increased with the addition of 4:50 AM and 7:30 AM trains from San Francisco in the morning. Northbound morning peak service was modified with the addition of an early express leaving San Jose at 5:56 AM, and a late one at 7:31. Like their southbound counterparts, these two trains make all stops to Hillsdale, than run non-stop to San Francisco. In the reverse peak service, 4:00 PM and 6:45 PM departures from San Jose were added, and the 5:15 PM was replaced by trains at 5:00 and 5:35 PM.

In the spring of 1982, one locomotive and three gallery cars were unveiled in a blue and silver paint scheme with red, green, and blue stripes and black “CalTrain” lettering. This replaced the familiar but somber gray of Southern Pa-

cific. The image was brighter, but no other equipment was given this treatment. The new paint job was expensive and replacement cars and locomotives were on the way, so the rest of the fleet remained gray.

Caltrans organized a marketing campaign to increase public awareness of the service, and, in some cases, the three counties transit agencies coordinated local bus schedules with the trains (although Santa Clara’s efforts were much more comprehensive than either San Mateo’s or San Francisco’s). Caltrans embarked on a Peninsula Commute Improvement Program to upgrade service. Key elements of the program included the acquisition of new cars and locomotives, track reconditioning, station purchase and rehabilitation, and parking lot improvements.

One of the main problems preventing expansion of ridership on Caltrain is the location of the San Francisco terminal. At Fourth and Townsend Streets, it was well over a mile away from the Financial District and nearly a mile from the Union Square shopping area. Almost all passengers have to ride a connecting bus to their final destination, adding time and expense to their trip.

When Southern Pacific opened the old station, at Third and Townsend in 1915, it was to be a temporary facility until the line could be extended to a permanent depot behind the Southern Pacific office building at the foot of Market Street. The office building was built to accommodate a depot, but the service was never extended. The “temporary facility” was used until 1975, when it was replaced by a new station one block west. By 1975 all thoughts of the extension were long forgotten by Southern Pacific.

When Caltrans took control in 1980, talk of extending the service nearer the financial district resurfaced. The Municipal Railway experienced a severe bus shortage in 1981. In order to free buses for other routes, Muni discontinued express routes to the station, and talk of the extension intensified. Caltrans proposed running three peak hour trains over existing

freight tracks to the Ferry Building, however the City of San Francisco did not want large, noisy, smoky diesel locomotives running on surface streets in the financial district during rush hour. No permit was issued, and the idea was quietly forgotten.

Through the years, various proposals have been discussed, including using the now vacant Rincon Annex Post Office — one block south of Market St. — as a new depot. In 1983, Caltrans went back to the drawing board and a new plan emerged. Caltrans proposed building a hook-shaped subway from Fourth and Townsend to the rear of the Transbay Terminal at Mission and Fremont—also one block from Market St. Although the idea met with a cool reception at first, it has been gaining support.

In addition to the ongoing improvement program mentioned earlier, and the proposed downtown San Francisco extension, there is considerable discussion about other improvements for the Peninsula Corridor. The ideas range from doing nothing to converting the line to a BART extension. Other ideas include a continuation of the current program of incremental upgrading; converting the line to a light rail system, an exclusive busway, or a high-speed electric suburban railway.

Closely related to any long-range plan for the Peninsula service are the future plans for BART in the West Bay. Most observers agree that BART's Daly City turnback and yard, now under construction, are the first steps in the extension of BART service south into San Mateo County. The most often mentioned goal for BART is the San Francisco International Airport. A BART extension to the airport would have to cross the Peninsula line somewhere between South San Francisco and Millbrae. Many see this as an opportunity to interface the two systems, but others look at the two as competitors.

Similarly, San Francisco Muni has plans to extend the Muni Metro light rail system from the Embarcadero Station near the Ferry Building, to the Peninsula Commute Terminal at Fourth and Townsend Streets. Obviously, this exten-

sion would run parallel to the PCS downtown extension, raising the question of duplicative facilities, but both Caltrans and Muni now agree that the two lines would serve different markets. The PCS extension would be used entirely by travelers to or from the Peninsula, while the Muni extension would basically serve the local travel market, including the massive Mission Bay Development proposed by the Santa Fe Pacific Land Co.

Most forecasters predict that the population will continue to increase in the Peninsula area and employment will grow in both Downtown San Francisco and the South Bay/Silicon Valley area. Such growth will increasingly strain the available transportation. Of the three major facilities — Highway 101 (the Bayshore Freeway), Interstate 280, and the Peninsula Commute Service — only the PCS has unused capacity during peak periods. Expansion of capacity in the future on the two highways would be very expensive, and in some cases the right of way is just not available. On the other hand, use of excess capacity on the PCS is relatively affordable, and, in most cases, would not require additional land. For these reasons, the Peninsula trains, in one form or another, should be running for many years to come.

A Ride on the Peninsula Line

The Peninsula line is one of the oldest railroads in California, providing dependable and convenient passenger service for over 120 years. When service began, the Peninsula was rural countryside with a few scattered farms and orchards. Today the Peninsula is home to 1-1/2 million people, and it is a booming high-tech industrial area.

There is little doubt that the Peninsula rail line has played a major role in the history of the area, but the historical significance is not always obvious. The trains themselves are new — the cars and locomotives were all placed in operation in 1985. The rails and ties have been

replaced many times. Perhaps the most evident reminders of the lines past are the permanent facilities — especially the depots.

Let us take a trip down the Peninsula, beginning at the San Francisco Terminal, and pause at a few points of interest.

San Francisco

The small modern concrete station at Fourth and Townsend Streets in San Francisco was opened on January 31, 1975. This depot replaced the old mission style depot one block east at Third Street, which had been built to handle the crowds for the Panama Pacific International Exposition in 1915. The site of the old station is currently occupied by a recreational vehicle park.

The new Fourth Street station is Spartan and utilitarian, but serves its purpose well. For several years a poignant reminder of the old station remained — the old red train signs at the gates that listed the stops for each train. Careful inspection of the wooden signs showed blank places where stops like Lomita Park had been eliminated, while different lettering styles indicated added stops. Caltrans replaced these relics with new black and white train signs when the schedules were changed in October 1981.

Just out of the depot are the servicing tracks where the cars are cleaned and maintained. At Seventh Street, the tracks make a 90-degree curve south. This is where the 1907 “Bayshore Cutoff” left the old main line over the San Bruno hills. A few industrial tracks are all that is left of the old line. On the north side, at Seventh Street, is the engine servicing facility for the commute locomotives. This site is one of the leading candidates for the location of a proposed downtown baseball stadium.

22nd Street

After passing through the short Tunnel 1, most trains stop briefly at 22nd Street. The station — just a platform with stairways up to Street level — is in perpetual shadow. Several years

ago, Interstate 280 was built directly above the railroad right of way, covering the entire distance between Tunnels 1 and 2.

Until Caltrans took over, the stop was called 23rd Street. This was because the stop had actually been at 23rd Street until the freeway was built. Southern Pacific did not change the name until late 1983, because a name change required California Public Utilities Commission approval — a cumbersome legal process.

Immediately after leaving 22nd Street, the line enters Tunnel 2. Unlike the other three tunnels on the line, all of which were bored, Tunnel 2 was a covered cut that allowed land development above. Tunnel 2 is also unique in that it was built to accommodate four tracks — it is actually two tunnels side by side, but the west tunnel was never used for anything more than industrial trackage.

At the south end of Tunnel 2, the line crosses the Islais Basin on a long fill. Originally a trestle over wetlands, the land was reclaimed and the trestle filled in the 1950s. At the south end of the fill is the site of the former Newcombe Avenue station, after which the line enters Tunnel 3.

Paul Avenue

Between Tunnels 3 and 4 is the Paul Avenue stop, a small, unimposing metal shelter. Tunnel 4 passes under the hill just west of Candlestick Park (controversial home of the Giants and 49ers).

Bayshore

At the south end of Tunnel 4 is Bayshore. The only facility is a wooden shed for southbound passengers. In 1984, a shed for northbound riders was removed for parking expansion. For years, very few people have been riding north from Bayshore because Muni transit service is much more frequent and less expensive. Both sheds were built in 1941, replacing the old Bayshore depot. Bayshore virtually straddles the San Francisco City Limits.

On the west side of the tracks, south of Bayshore, is SP's Bayshore Yard. Once it was the main freight yard for San Francisco, but in 1982 it was closed and is now used only for storing unused freight cars. The site of the yard was originally Visitacion Bay. The main line was built on a trestle across the bay, then the trestle was filled, as was most of the bay itself, to provide land for the yard.

At the south end of the yard is Brisbane, which has not been a stop for many years, although, a developer has recently been talking to Caltrans about reinstating the stop.

Just beyond Brisbane, at Sierra Point, the line makes a sweeping curve west, passing under the Bayshore Freeway. Before the underpass on the west side is the portal of Tunnel 5, which was bypassed when the freeway was built and the railroad was realigned.

South San Francisco

The first grade crossing in South San Francisco (and the first public street crossing since 16th Street in San Francisco) is Oyster Point Blvd. Until 1980 there was a steel plant just east of the tracks here and a couple of rush-hour trains used to stop at a small wooden shelter called Butler Road.

The first major stop on the Peninsula line is South San Francisco. The small handsome brick depot was built in 1948. The new Grand Avenue overpass crosses the tracks just south of the station, placing the building in semi-darkness.

South of the station is Tanforan Wye where a line curves off to the west. This was the route of the "loop trains" that served the San Bruno hills route after the Bayshore cutoff was built. To the west was the site of Tanforan Race Track, now the location of Tanforan Shopping Center.

San Bruno

Just after passing under Interstate 380, the railroad bends slightly to the south. Looking back

northwest, a vacant right of way can be seen — a straight line continuation of the line south of the bend. This was the San Francisco and San Jose Rail Road's original main line to San Francisco through Daly City. At the former junction was the old San Bruno station. In 1963, Southern Pacific closed the San Bruno depot and the Lomita Park stop, 1.1 mile south. A new stop was initiated about halfway between — this is the current San Bruno stop. Opened in October 1963, it consists of two shelters, one on each side of the tracks.

A sharp eye scanning the right of way on the west side of the tracks between San Bruno and Burlingame will occasionally see evidence of another rail line. A few bridge abutments and some gaps in the vegetation are about all that is left of the old Market Street Railway inter-urban streetcar lint from San Francisco to San Mateo. The service was discontinued in 1947 after the Market Street Railway was taken over by the San Francisco Muni.

Millbrae

Millbrae is the first station of real historical significance that we encounter. The original depot (called 17 Mile Rouse) was built in 1863, when the railroad was constructed. The land was donated by the famous early financier, Darius Ogden Mills, for whom the town is named. That depot was destroyed by fire in 1890 and was replaced by a new depot on the same site.

The current depot was built in 1907 after the second depot also burned. Of wood frame construction in the Colonial Revival style, the Millbrae depot was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in September 1973. The depot was moved 200 feet south in 1980 to allow for the widening of Millbrae Avenue. After the move, the building was extensively refurbished.

Broadway

The next stop is Broadway in the northern part of Burlingame. Until 1917, when part of

the current depot was constructed, Broadway station was known as Easton. The building is a fairly small frame and stucco structure in the Craftsman/Classicizing Mediterranean style. The architectural style is typical of railroad depots of the period and the Broadway depot is not a particularly noteworthy example.

Perhaps more interesting is the small building just to the north — now a restaurant. This small stucco structure is actually the previous station, used until 1928. Unfortunately, much of its architectural integrity has been lost through the years. Most of the original fittings and trim are either gone or modified. There were pergolas (colonnades) at each end of the building, but one was removed and the other enclosed during World War II. The resulting enclosure of the south pergola retains little of the original character — it is now just a rectangular box, with windows, which connects the two buildings.

Burlingame

Between Broadway and Burlingame, lining the west side of the tracks, is a stately grove of Eucalyptus trees. For decades this has been a favorite location for railroad photographers. Southern Pacific publicity photos from the heyday of passenger trains often show sleek, new streamlined steam locomotives speeding the Daylight or Lark down the line in the 1940s. Today, railroad enthusiasts frequently use the setting to capture the commutes on film.

The downtown Burlingame station is one of the most notable on the Peninsula. It was built in 1894 by the Burlingame Country Club — the first country club on the West Coast. The Burlingame Country Club was (and still is) located in the area that was to become Hillsborough, just west of Burlingame. It included in its membership some of the wealthiest young men in San Francisco.

The closest train station was a small flag stop called Oak Grove. The club members decided they needed a depot more appropriate to their

status. Southern Pacific agreed to contribute an amount equal to the cost of an “ordinary” station, and the Country Club would make up the difference.

Two club members, George H. Howard, Jr., and J. B. Mathisen, offered to design the depot. They were inspired by the work of architect A. Fag Brown, also a member of the country club. Brava had designed the California Building at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The design incorporated several styles that emphasized elements of the California Missions, such as tile roofs, long arcades, and archways.

Howard and Mathisen decided to use this style — now known as Mission Revival — for their depot. This was one of the first uses of the Mission Revival style for a permanent structure, and one of the first two Mission Revival railroad depots — the other being San Juan Capistrano in Southern California. The style later became very popular, especially in California, and particularly for railroad depots. Derivations of the style are still being used today. A modernized Mission Revival style multimodal transportation center, including an Amtrak stop, was recently opened in Santa Ana.

The Burlingame depot was constructed of rough stucco to simulate adobe. The roof tiles, genuine 18th Century tiles hand made by Indians, are from the Mission Dolores Asistencia in San Mateo and from the decaying San Antonio Mission at Jolon in southern Monterey County. The depot incorporates most of the elements of Mission Revivalism in a relatively small, well proportioned building, including graceful, round arches and wide arcades. The tile roof is complemented by a wide overhang, which makes the structure appear deceptively large. There is a false gable on the trackside and a variety of window styles are used, including the Star window copied from Mission Cannel. The roofline is punctuated by a square, hip roofed rafter, reminiscent of Stanford University. Curiously, provision was made for a roof garden, but there is no way to get to it.

The depot was the first commercial building in Burlingame. The town literally grew up around the station. Burlingame Avenue, now the main business street, was originally a dirt lane lined with Eucalyptus trees, leading from the station to the Country Club.

Fortunately, the building has received very few alterations through the years. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in April of 1973. An extensive rehabilitation of the depot was recently completed.

San Mateo

San Mateo's old frame and stucco depot was torn down in 1976 to make way for a two level parking garage. A small, enclosed area of the lower level of the garage is the station facility.

Hayward Park

The Hayward Park stop (originally named Leslie) is situated in a residential area of San Mateo. The small wooden shelter, built in 1925, had deteriorated badly, so it was removed in late 1985. Caltran is proposing to relocate the stop nearer a shopping center on the other side of the tracks, so as to provide more parking and better access.

Bay Meadows

The Bay Meadows Race Track is located just east of the tracks, adjacent to the San Mateo County Fair Grounds. During horse racing season, many trains stop here for racing fans. Beginning in 1984, special express trains from San Francisco also serve the track on weekends. There is no depot; the platform along the tracks is the only facility.

Hillsdale

Hillsdale is the next stop. The depot, a small wood frame and stucco building in the Colonial Revival style, was built in 1941, and donated to Southern Pacific by the promoters of a nearby subdivision. At that time the station name was changed from Beresford to Hillsdale.

The depot is typical of Colonial style structures of the period with such features as a small eight-sided cupola on the roof, complete with weathervane and finial.

An underpass was built for Hillsdale Boulevard in 1965. As a result, the tracks were raised a few feet and moved a short distance east, but the depot remained in the same location, and two simple wooden shelters were built alongside the realigned tracks.

Belmont

A concrete block shelter is the only permanent facility at Belmont. The shelter was put up in 1964, replacing a wood frame depot that had been there since about 1867. The wooden depot was the standard design for San Francisco and San Jose RR depots — essentially the same as the passenger part of the Santa Clara depot. The original depots in both San Mateo and San Jose were also similar.

San Carlos

The San Carlos station is unique in many respects. In 1887, the San Carlos Land Company was organized to develop the property west of the railroad tracks. An SF official was a principal in the land company, and to promote sale of the land for residential use, the land company convinced Southern Pacific to build a depot. Leland Stanford, president of the railroad, was building Stanford University on his property near Menlo Park at about the same time. He hired Charles Coolidge, of Boston, to design the university, and quite possibly Coolidge also designed the San Carlos depot.

Both the depot and the university art of stone masonry construction using sandstone from the Graystone quarry in the Almaden Valley near San Jose. The depot features a separate baggage room connected to the main building by a covered breezeway. A round, conical roofed tower projects from the trackside of the building. The hipped roof is covered with cut slate. The architectural style is Richardsonian Romanesque Revival, a style developed by H.

H. Richardson, founder of the firm for which Coolidge worked. The architectural style and stone-masonry construction are quite common for railroad depots in the Eastern part of the United States, but very rare in the west.

San Carlos grew slowly, by the turn of the century there were only about a hundred residents. At various times the depot functioned as the town's first community church, library, and post office. The building was damaged somewhat in the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. Due to the town's small size, Southern Pacific was reluctant to restore the depot, but it was still the only public building in town, so the residents convinced the company to make the repairs.

Through the years, the depot has been little altered, although the surrounding landscaping was replaced by commuter parking. In 1967, Southern Pacific closed the ticket office, and the depot was leased to a real estate company for many years as an office. Caltrans purchased the depot in November 1982 and refurbished it. The waiting room is now leased as a restaurant. -

The depot was designated a City Historical Landmark in 1976 and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in September of 1984.

Redwood City

The Redwood City depot is undoubtedly the least distinctive station building on the Peninsula. In July 1980, the old wood-frame and stucco depot was heavily damaged by fire. Even before the burned out hulk was removed, a portable modular building (mobile home) was brought in and placed on the platform, and has been in use ever since. Ambitious plans to develop the adjacent property include a new depot, but the project is still in the talking stage.

The old depot had been built in 1909, and was originally located on the east side of the tracks — unusual for the Peninsula. In 1937, it was moved over to the west side. While all this was taking place, a passenger car was parked at the

site and used as a temporary depot — so the current one is not the first portable depot at Redwood City.

About a mile south of Redwood City, at Redwood Junction, is a line that diverges to the east. This route crosses the south end of San Francisco Bay on the Dumbarton railroad bridge, just south of the highway bridge, and continues east through Niles Canyon and Altamont Pass. The bridge line is no longer in service as Southern Pacific now routes the few freight trains that still serve the Peninsula around the south end of the bay.

Atherton

Atherton was called Fair Oaks until 1912, when the current structure was built. The picturesque concrete and wood-frame shelter, in the Classicizing Mediterranean style, features a Spanish tile roof and concrete Tuscan columns. Originally built as an entirely open shelter, it was extended at both ends and enclosed on all but the trackside by 1954. Fortunately, the design of these modifications was sensitive to the original style. The building is characteristic of the architectural quality of the spacious homes and large lots that surround it, many of which were built during the same period.

Menlo Park

For many years it was thought the Menlo Park depot was the oldest passenger station building in California. So says the plaque in front. Now it appears that Menlo Park is only the second oldest.

The wooden depot was built in 1867 by the San Francisco and San Jose Rail Road. It was originally of the "Picturesque Cottage" style, common in the period. In the 1890s, as the depot for Stanford University and the Stanford family home, it was extensively modified. Ornate Victorian trim, representative of "Stick Style", was added, blending well with the building.

During World War I an army training camp, Camp Fremont, was established nearby. To accommodate the increased passenger traffic, the

waiting room was extended 14 feet, and an open shelter was added to the northwest end of the depot. The shelter was enclosed on two of its three sides in 1959 to give more protection from the weather. In the early 1960s, Southern Pacific closed the ticket agency and leased the building to the City of Menlo Park, which, in turn, sublet it to the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber undertook a limited rehabilitation of the depot in 1965, with students in the woodshop classes at nearby Menlo Atherton High School creating authentic replicas of many of the Victorian details. The depot was registered as an historic place in 1974.

Just south of the passenger depot is the former freight house, a simple wood structure built about 1906, and now housing a model railroad club. Caltrans has purchased the station and its complete rehabilitation is well under way. As part of the project, the grounds and parking lot has been rearranged. To accommodate these changes, the freight house was moved to the southwest corner of the property. Caltrans historians feel that the freight house should be preserved for its historic significance, representing a type, period, and method of construction typical of railroad facilities. It also has significance in its relationship to the passenger depot — the two have coexisted for over 80 years.

Between Menlo Park and Palo Alto the line crosses San Francisquito Creek on a steel truss bridge. This is the site of the original groundbreaking for the railroad in 1861.

Palo Alto

The Southern Pacific depot in Palo Alto is an excellent example of the Streamlined Moderne style, a style inspired by transportation but rarely used for railroad stations. The depot was built in 1941 and makes use of many Art Deco materials and techniques. Constructed of reinforced concrete and stucco decorated with “technological materials” (glass block, aluminum, stainless steel, etc), it features the curved corners, horizontal striping, and portholes

characteristic of streamlined vehicles of the era.

Inside the depot at the south end of the waiting room is a large mural — a montage of California history painted by John MacQuarrie in 1944. It includes Indians, priests, conquistadors, the U. S. Cavalry, settlers, prospectors, cowboys, a Pony Express rider, a stagecoach, Stanford University, a Southern Pacific “Daylight” steam locomotive (also a representative of Streamlined Moderne styling), and a portrait of Leland Stanford.

The station is between downtown Palo Alto and Stanford University, just north of the University Avenue overcrossing, on the west side of the railroad. Across the tracks is a small concrete shelter that complements the depot design, and provides a place for passengers to wait for northbound trains. It is connected to the main station area by an underground passageway. Both the depot and the shelter areas have ramps leading down to the walkways on both sides of the University Avenue underpass.

Palo Alto was the first station on the Peninsula to be completely renovated. Aside from a transit bus waiting area in the parking lot just northwest of the depot, the station and grounds are little changed from their 1941 appearance. The main depot is owned by the City of Palo Alto on land leased from Stanford University. The shelter on the east side, however, is owned by Southern Pacific, and is included in the Caltrans acquisition program.

Stanford (Stadium)

About one-half mile south of Palo Alto is a station known as “Stadium”. Directly across El Camino Real is the Stanford University football stadium. For many years SF ran special trains to the “Big Game” between Stanford and the University of California, Berkeley, every other year (when the game was played at Stanford). These trains would stop and unload football fans at the stadium stop and pick them up again after the game.

Caltrans has continued this long-standing tradition. In fact, Caltrans has augmented this service. In 1983, when a large portion of the parking area at the stadium was flooded just before the game, Caltrans quickly added a second special train. This was the first tint in several years that more than one “Big Game” special had run.

In January 1985, the National Football League Super Bowl between the San Francisco 49ers and the Miami Dolphins was played at Stanford Stadium. Planners were worried that the huge crowds would create massive traffic and parking problems, but Caltrans came to the rescue, operating several special trains to the stadium. These trains carried several thousand passengers, many of whom would otherwise have driven. As part of the Super Bowl preparations, \$75,000 worth of boarding area improvements were made at the station.

California Avenue

California Avenue is a compact, convenient commercial area in the southern part of Palo Alto. The railroad stop has long been popular with area commuters. Until 1940, the station was known as Mayfield, and until the mid-1960’s it was the junction with the branch to Los Gatos. Just south of the depot, on the west side, the Los Gatos lines abandoned right of way can be seen.

The California Avenue station building is the newest on the Peninsula. It was built in 1983 by the developer of a nearby commercial and residential complex in exchange for a parking easement. Part of the lot is for commuter parking during the day and resident parking at night. The station itself is a modest Mission-style stucco building with an open waiting area and an enclosed ticket office.

Castro

Castro is one of the more lightly used stations on the Peninsula. Only a few rush-hour trains in each direction stop there. The small wooden shelter, built about 1906, is located at Reng-

storff Avenue in the City of Mountain View. Caltrans is planning to move the stop a few blocks west to the vicinity of San Antonio Avenue, providing a location nearer activity centers.

Castro station is located on land that was donated by the Castro family — among the earliest residents of the area. The land donation held the condition that a flag stop — named “Castro” — must be maintained adjacent to the family ranch.

Mountain View

In contrast to Castro, Mountain View is one of the most heavily used stations. Located near the central business district, the building, built in 1960, is an austere cinder block shelter that replaced the old two-story wood-frame depot dating from about 1888.

Sunnyvale

Sunnyvale is also one of the more heavily patronized stops on the Peninsula. Before the turn of the century, Sunnyvale was known as Murphy’s Station, or later just Murphy’s.

The current depot was built in 1952 to replace the previous depot that was heavily damaged by a rare (for California) tornado. It is a simple rectangular stucco building with little ornamentation.

Lawrence

Lawrence was the first new stop initiated by Caltrans. Actually it is the revival of a stop that existed until 1942. Before the stop was reinstated in October 1982, there were no stations in the five and one-half mile stretch between Sunnyvale and Santa Clara — the longest non-stop section on the route. Until the 1970s, this was not of much concern as the area was lightly populated. Recently, however, a great deal of the growth in Santa Clara County has occurred nearby.

Initiation of the new stop was a simple matter. The previous station had been called Law-

rence, and reinstatement of a former stop using the same name does not require State PUC approval, the name is appropriate since Lawrence Expressway crosses over the tracks at this point.

The station consists of platforms, a glass shelter (used typically for bus stops), an overhead pedestrian crossing, and a parking lot.

Lawrence has been a very successful addition to the service. Originally only some peak hour trains stopped; however, ridership has been so good that now all midday, evening, and weekend trains also stop.

Santa Clara

Just before arriving at Santa Clara, the Southern Pacific mainline from Oakland joins the Peninsula route. This is the route used by Amtrak's Coast Starlight on its journey between Los Angeles and Seattle. The line was originally built in the late 1870's by the narrow gauge South Pacific Coast Railroad that operated between Alameda, on the bay across from San Francisco, and Santa Cruz. Southern Pacific acquired the SPC in 1887 and was in the process of converting it to standard gauge when the San Francisco earthquake hit in 1906.

The Santa Clara depot is the oldest passenger depot still in use in California. For many years some historians thought the depot was built in 1877, making it ten years newer than Menlo Park. Recent research by Caltrans historians has determined that the passenger portion of the depot was actually built in 1863 or 1864. It was the original "way station" constructed at the same time as the railroad.

When constructed, the depot was on the north side of the tracks. In 1877 it was moved across the tracks to its present location. This move put the depot on the same side of the tracks as the nearby University of Santa Clara and most of the other activity in town. After the move, the freight room was added to the east end of the station. This room was evidently added in stages, as there is a former exterior wall within it. In any event, the building

had reached its present size by no later than 1885.

The depot is a long, rambling wood-frame building with a broad overhanging gable roof and board-and-batten siding. The freight room is flanked on both sides by raised loading platforms.

The passenger end of the depot is little changed from its original appearance. The plan was the standard for the original San Francisco and San Jose Railroad depots, only the size being modified to suit specific needs. Since it was originally located on the opposite side of the tracks, the street side of the building was originally the trackside, which explains why the present street side eave braces are more elaborate curved brackets, while those on the other side are simple X-braces. In the early days, the focal point of the depot would have been the side where the trains passed.

At the time the railroad opened, Santa Clara was the busiest intermediate station on the line. Santa Clara became an agricultural, industrial, and cultural center for the area, and the station was its link to the outside world.

The depot, which had become somewhat weatherworn in recent years, is now owned by Caltrans, and its renovation is proceeding. The work includes structural and foundation repairs, painting, signs, paving, lighting, and landscaping.

As soon as the historical significance of the depot was realized, it was nominated for the National Register of Historic Places. On February 28, 1985, the Santa Clara station was officially added to the National Register.

College Park

Southern Pacific's San Jose Yard, a major facility in Northern California, stretches from the Santa Clara depot to College Park, 1.2 miles. For many years the College Park station was used mainly by Southern Pacific employees (going to and from work) and students.

The College of the Pacific was originally located nearby, hence the name College Park. The college later moved to Stockton and subsequently changed its name to University of the Pacific.

College Park achieved a small bit of notoriety in the work of Jack London. In the first chapter of *The Call of the Wild Buck*, the canine ruler of Judge Miller's place, was taken to "the little flag station known as College Park" by Manuel, the gardeners helper. There Manuel "sold" Buck to men who were acquiring sturdy, heavy-coated dogs to be used in the Klondike gold rush. Thus, College Park was the beginning of an adventure story that has thrilled generations of readers. *The Call of the Wild* was written in 1903 and Buck's abduction had occurred in 1897.

The newly refurbished shelter is a simple open wooden structure. Only three San Jose bound morning commutes and seven returning trains in the evening now stop at College Park. It is now used primarily by students of nearby Belarmine Prep School that occupies the old site of the College of the Pacific.

San Jose

Between College Park and San Jose (at College Park Tower) a line diverges to the east. This was the original main line. Until 1936 the San Jose depot was located about one mile down this line at Market Street. The line continues east and then turns north, forming a secondary line to Oakland via Milpitas, Niles, and Hayward. The old main line turned south and made its way down Fourth Street.

The present San Jose station was opened in January 1936, as part of the main line relocation around the west side of downtown. At this site once stood a station known as "West San Jose" or "West End". This was where the South Pacific Coast Railroad — the narrow gauge line to Santa Cruz — had its San Jose station.

The current depot is a large brick building in the Eclectic Moderne/Historicist style. The

main building is one story (38 feet tall, floor to ceiling) with adjoining two story wings at each end. The central section features three tall round arches framing the central entry and windows on each side. The main entrance is highlighted by a cantilevered marquee. The hipped roof is covered in red and sunset tile.

The waiting room also exhibits the blend of Moderne and Historicist design. Like Palo Alto, there is a large mural by John MacQuarrie above the ticket office. The mural depicts the colonization of the Santa Clara Valley with contemporary (1936) views of San Jose, the Lick Observatory, and a train in the background clouds.

There are five passenger tracks. Track one is reached directly from the depot, while the other four are connected to the depot by an under-track passageway.

The depot is one of the eight remaining large railroad depots in California. The others are Oakland, Sacramento, and Stockton — all on the Southern Pacific; San Diego, San Bernardino, and Needles — on the Santa Fe; and Los Angeles Union Station. All except Stockton are still used by Amtrak.

Caltrans, the City of San Jose, and the Santa Clara County Transit District have been working on a major improvement program for the CalTrain station. Several alternatives were considered, including moving the station back to a location very near the old Market Street site. Recently the preferred alternative was selected which includes a two-site approach. The present depot will be substantially refurbished. In addition, service will be extended about one mile south to Alma Street where a second depot will be constructed. This station will provide a direct connection to the light rail line now under construction.

The Future of Cal-train

The one hour and twenty-five minute trip between San Francisco and San Jose on the Peninsula Commute line is a journey into Californian history. The line was the first railroad planned and one of the first built in the state.

Five of the depots (Millbrae, Burlingame, San Carlos, Menlo Park, and Santa Clara) are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Of these, Santa Clara is the oldest railroad depot in continuous use in the State, and Menlo Park is the second oldest. Palo Alto's nomination to the Register is currently pending. The San Jose depot is eligible for listing, but the nomination will wait until it is purchased from Southern Pacific.

The line played a major part in the development of the Peninsula. What was once rural countryside is now almost continuous urbanization for 47 miles. The business districts of all but the newest communities grew up around the stations.

But nostalgia and history are not the whole story. As the brakeman of Train No. 56 announces "Redwood City! Redwood City Next!" several of the passengers rise from their seats and head for the doors. The Peninsula Commute trains provide daily transportation for 16,000 passengers. As the Peninsula grows, and the current improvement program progresses, the service will become even more important.

Changes have occurred for more than 120 years, and will continue to occur. New depots have replaced old. Tracks have been realigned. Diesel locomotives supplanted the venerable steamers. Bi-level cars took over from the old single levels. Gray paint, which replaced the old drab green, has now been replaced by stainless steel with green and blue stripes. Even the name has changed — San Francisco and San Jose Rail Road became Southern Pacific Railroad, and now the service is known as Cal-

Train. Trains now speed toward San Francisco with locomotives pushing from the rear. And more changes will occur. Extensions may be built at both ends of the line. New depots may materialize in San Francisco, Redwood City, and San Jose, and perhaps elsewhere. And who knows what else the future holds?