

OUT OF THE ARCHIVES

The Force is strong with this one

THE RAILROAD HERITAGE VISUAL ARCHIVE at the Center currently preserves the work of approximately ninety visual artists and photographers. Each of our permanent holdings represents a partnership that the Center has built with an individual collection donor and/or creator. While this process can be incredibly enriching, the labor required to establish and nurture these relationships—which includes activities like ensuring that donors’ questions are answered and needs are met, explaining acquisition paperwork, managing collection transfers, and communicating with the public on behalf of the Center’s Collections & Acquisitions Committee—can be involved and time consuming, especially considering the rail community’s increasing needs for our services. It has been a privilege to carry out most of these tasks on my own for nearly the past five years, but I’ve recently had to admit that the donor relations aspect of our collections work has become labor intensive enough to warrant an extra set of hands.

This is where Acquisitions & Marketing Coordinator Elrond Lawrence comes in. A well-known name in railroad photography, Elrond has more than thirty years of communications experience, logged forty years as a member of the rail community, and is quite possibly a Jedi Master in disguise (or at least one of the biggest Star Wars fans you’re likely to meet). Elrond joined the Center’s staff full-time in February of this year, and while he splits his work hours between marketing and our donors, he’s already made himself indispensable to our archival and collecting efforts. With Elrond’s help, we have been able to keep up with all of our prospective and new donors while also offering our existing donors a level of engagement that we have never been able to accomplish before. Read on to learn more about Elrond and how the new position is treating him so far.

An interview with Elrond Lawrence (EL)

How he got started, how he splits his time in his dual role, and what he sees for the Center’s future.

Adrienne Evans (AE): *Could you share a little bit about how you got started with railroad photography?*

EL: I grew up in Southern California and during the 1970s my dad would take my mom and me to Barstow, California, in the Mojave Desert to take pictures of the Santa Fe Railway yard and diesel shops. We’d drive along Route 66 and I’d count Santa

Fe and Union Pacific trains while my dad took pictures. It shaped my love for trains and the open road. In 1980, at age fourteen, I got an Instamatic camera and started taking my own pictures in nearby Cajon Pass as well as San Bernardino and Southern Pacific’s West Colton yard.

Within a year or so, two events changed my life. First, my grandfather decided that I needed a good camera and he gave me his Minolta SRT101, a manual SLR that was his retirement present from Kaiser Steel. It was so exciting. Then two railfan friends from New York gave me a trio of 1970s issues of *Trains* magazine featuring landmark photo essays by Dick Steinheimer and Ted Benson. Their photography stopped me in my tracks—it opened my eyes to what was possible in railroad photography, and I knew instantly that’s what I wanted to do with my life. My career started as a journalist and then moved into public relations and marketing, but at my heart I have always loved being a storyteller, especially weaving words and pictures together.

AE: *How does working for the CRP&A complement your passion for the genre?*

EL: I’ve been very fortunate over the years to have my photography and stories featured in many railroad magazines, books, and advertising. The only difficulty has been revolving that passion around a separate full-time “day job,” whether it’s been for the healthcare organization Kaiser Permanente, a marketing firm, or handling communications for an Episcopal Church diocese. Even when I worked as a full-time freelancer I had to balance rail-related freelancing with non-rail corporate clients. But now for the first time I can fully concentrate on railroad photography, art, and storytelling—and help the Center, which I have always admired. Best of all, I get to play a role in preserving and sharing the legacy of photographers and artists who were my idols while growing up, and who had a profound influence on my style.

During the past ten years I had become increasingly involved with nonprofit rail preservation groups, helping them share their mission and projects with a wider audience. Most recently I worked with a Los Angeles based group and I got a taste of what it was like to share historic photography with railfans, casual fans, and the general public. There’s nothing more exciting to me than sharing great railroad photographs

ARTICLE

Adrienne Evans

PHOTOGRAPHS

Collection of the Center



Above: Santa Fe's *El Capitan* leaves Los Angeles Union Station during the blue hour of a July evening in 1962. Photograph by Stan Kistler



Left: To prepare for visits to the CRP&A offices in Wisconsin, Elrond Lawrence visited Tehachapi, California, on a freezing December day... if 31 degrees can qualify as "freezing" in the Upper Midwest! Photograph by Laura Lawrence

with people who never previously associated that art form with trains. Being exposed (pardon the pun) to the Center's archive of outstanding photography and paintings will only enhance my own work and spark new photographic ideas.

AE: *You started working full-time as the CRP&A's marketing and acquisitions coordinator in February, but before that you'd spent several months working part-time with our collection donors. Can you tell me about a few highlights from your work on behalf of the CRP&A thus far?*

EL: When I first joined the Center on a limited basis, the first donor I worked with was Peter Hasler of Wanaque, New Jersey, who has pledged to the Center his collection of more than 28,000 postcards that date back to 1860. Postcards are largely taken for granted and not always appreciated for their pivotal role in railroad history and art, but Pete's diverse collection and his enthusiasm turned me on to the amazing variety of postcards that were produced. Pete has deep history with rail preservation on the East Coast and I've learned a lot from him already. It was a thrill to photograph some of his rare and unique postcards as part of the announcement in March that his collection would be coming to the Center. Who knew that an aluminum postcard was produced, or that Alco made a flip-out photo album postcard in 1907? We are very

fortunate to be receiving one of the world's biggest railroad postcard collections.

Next, I began working with Tom Gildersleeve and Gordon Glattenberg, two Southern Californian friends and icons whose photography I've admired all of my life. They began photographing railroads in color in the 1950s and 1960s when most fans were still shooting black-and-white film, and now they have amazing treasure troves of Kodachrome color slides that look like they were shot yesterday. What surprised me was how extensive and wide-ranging their collections are. I was well aware of their mind-blowing Southern California photography, but I had no idea that Tom had traveled around the country and taken equally amazing pictures of the South Shore, Burlington *Zephyrs*, Milwaukee Road electrics, Rio Grande narrow gauge, and Pennsylvania commuter trains. And Gordon blew me away with his color and black-and-white photography from more than forty-five countries. His work shooting steam in Mexico, for example, is as jaw-dropping as the Santa Fe, Southern Pacific, Union Pacific, and other railroad images that he's made in California and across the southwest. It was great fun to announce last November that they have promised their collections to CRP&A.

AE: *What thrills you about the newly expanded role? Are there any particular projects or initiatives that you're most excited about?*

EL: It's unusual to split my near-full-time role between collections and developing a marketing program for the Center, but I relish having such variety...even if it can be a challenge to juggle now and then!

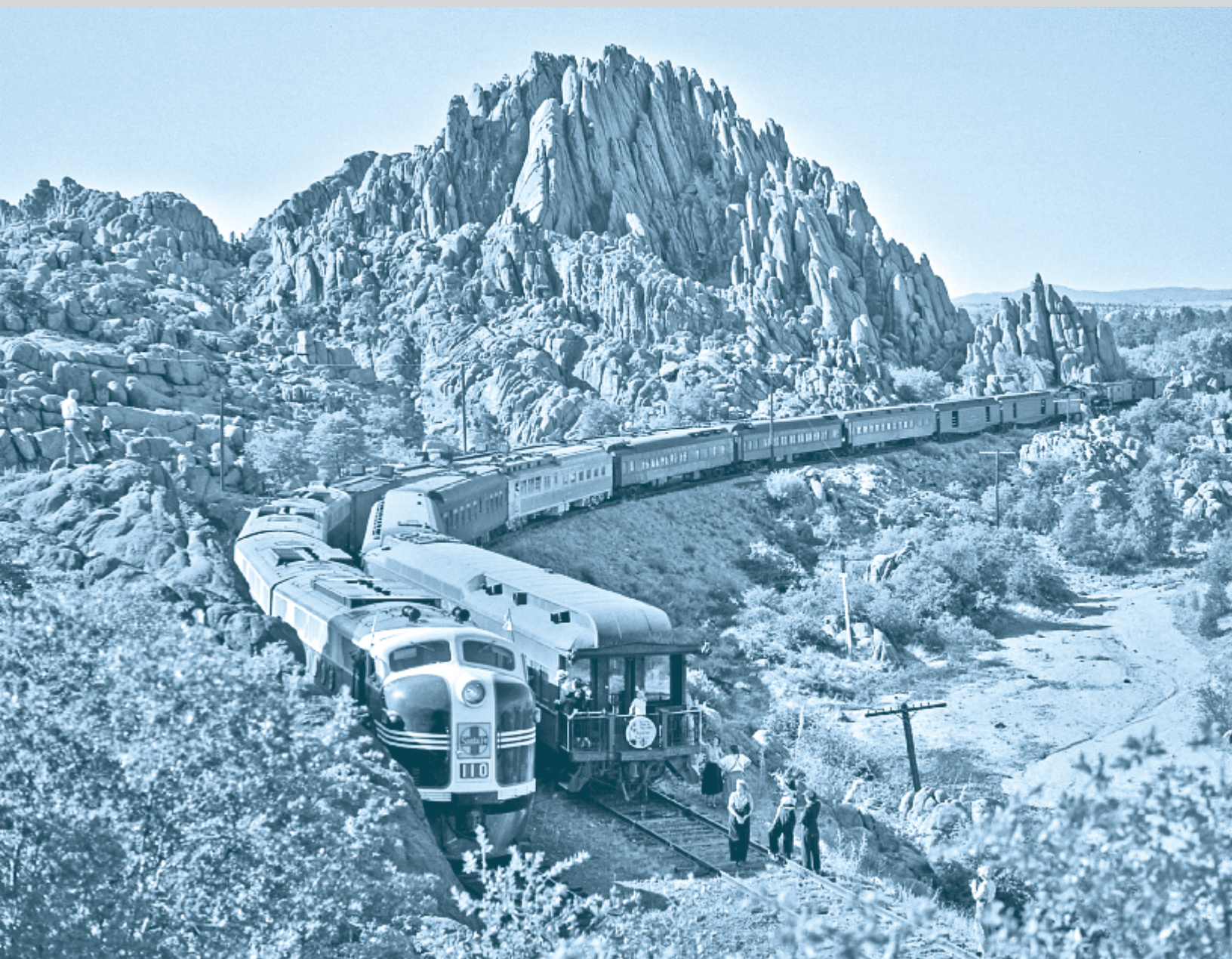
One project that leaps to mind is related to collections and acquisitions: I've been working with another legendary western photographer, Stan Kistler, one of my early photographic heroes and a longtime friend. We at the Center have been making arrangements to accession his Santa Fe black-and-white work, and then Stan offered his color photography collection to us, which we recently accepted. Stan took his first black-and-white photos in 1943 and his first color slides in 1953. His color photos are astonishing, ranging from creative twilight studies of Santa Fe passenger trains at LA Union Station to spectacular action portraits of Big Boys and other Union Pacific steam giants. His work also has surprising variety, covering much of the Southwest during the steam-to-diesel transition, including small steam-powered logging railroads and operations in Canada and Mexico. I can't wait to

Opposite: An Apache Holiday steam excursion running down the Santa Fe's "Peavine" line to Phoenix waits at Entro, Arizona, to meet Extra 110 East beneath the Granite Dells rock formations on July 1, 1948. Photograph by Stan Kistler,

Opposite page sponsored by Michael S. Turrini

Below: Selections from the Pete Hasler postcard collection. Photograph by Elrond Lawrence





inspect his full collection and discover the jewels that await! We'll make a formal announcement in the future, but it was an honor to announce the news of Stan's collection at Conversations.

I'm equally thrilled to finally use my marketing, public relations, and social media experience to benefit the world of railroad photography and art! My early goals are to help us reach wider audiences, grow our membership, and get new people excited about our books and exhibitions...which includes promoting *Railroad Heritage*. I'm biased of course, but I believe we have the most beautiful magazine in the railroad community and there is no other publication like it.

I'm looking forward to refreshing our website and online presence, and developing a marketing campaign for the Center that can communicate our mission to preserve and share significant, historic photography and art—and how we challenge people by sharing the work of unique contemporary artists. Social media is another outreach program I'm excited about. We have an enormous collection of just under 500,000 images, and our Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter pages enable us to share those images with the world and reach new audiences.

AE: *What would you like prospective donors to know about the donation process at the Center?*

EL: Now that I'm seeing the donation process from the inside, I marvel at how much staff time and resources (and space!) go into cataloging and processing our archive. We are committed to processing several collections that will take years to complete, and there is more on the way! I ask prospective donors to be patient with the determination process and know that we strive to evaluate every collection fairly and consistently. We're building a world-class archive that needs to represent every time period, geographic region, and artistic style to tell the complete story of railroad photography, art, and the people who created it. We also greatly appreciate those who financially support the Center; it's amazing what we have accomplished with a small staff in the past twenty-five years. We're now growing at an amazing pace and we need everyone's help to continue.

AE: *Our annual conference "Conversations" was April 8-10, our first in-person conference in more than two years. It was your first time attending as a CRP&A staff member. What experiences and interactions did you enjoy the most?*

EL: Besides the joy of being together again after nearly three years, I really felt the excitement of our attendees. The atmosphere was electric, and it powered my energy through the conference. I loved that we had so many first-time attendees, the great diversity of people, and the welcoming, friendly atmosphere. It was everything a conference called "Conversations" should be!

I met some photographers who are featured in the new *Continuity & Change* book (see the announcement on page 7) and they got me even more excited about the state of rail photography (if that's possible) with their fresh perspectives and sense of fun. I was also honored to be part of the Collections Team update on Sunday morning and hear the audience "ooh" and "aahh" as each of us presented selections of our favorite images. And of course, we have now made cool hats a thing at the conference. I'm so proud to be part of the Center's team, and I can't wait for what comes next.

Railroad Heritage Visual Archive Updates

Several members of our collections staff were pleased to have the opportunity to present our first collections panel at Conversations 2022 at Lake Forest College in April. Conference attendees gave us a warm reception, and it has been gratifying to see all of the positive comments and questions (and yes, a few corrections) that have come in post-conference. Based on most of the conference attendee feedback, it sounds like you would be interested in another collections panel at the next Conversations. We'll be delighted to oblige.

Collections continue to arrive. At the conference, we announced a new project with Henry Posner III to archive, digitize, and share his photography. Through his Railroad Development Corporation, Posner has experienced and photographed railroading over all over the world. He was a presenter at Conversations 2012 where he dubbed himself "photographer of last resort" since he frequently has been the only person with a camera during his travels. He provides an intimate perspective on railroads and their impacts, with a keen eye for infrastructure and humanity, as well as humor and irony. His work expands and enhances the stories we can tell, and we look forward to sharing it.

I am also pleased to announce that five original watercolor paintings by the late Margaret Mailly have been donated to the Center by the Howard E. and Margaret E. Mailly Irrevocable Trust. Mailly lived



Henry Posner III and the CRP&A are partnering on a new project to archive, digitize, and share his photography, which portrays railroads around the world. Examples include:

Left: FEGUA diesel-electric locomotive "Alta Verapaz" 1009 leads a freight train across a trestle as it departs northbound from El Rancho, Guatemala, in February 1995.

Below: Bananas and other freight are loaded aboard a crowded CEAR train in Thekerani, Malawi, as passengers wait for departure in June 2006.





most of her life in the Cincinnati area and was an extremely prolific railroad artist, producing more than 500 watercolor paintings after she turned sixty. Her work is noteworthy for her depiction of railroad laborers, especially women. My predecessor, Jordan Radke, wrote a profile about Maily that appeared in the Summer 2015 issue of this publication.

Moving on to processing updates, intern Abigail Guidry is speeding through the John Gruber Collection at our main office in Madison; she's currently processing his black-and-white negatives from 1978. She and other staff members have collectively digitized just under 24,000 negatives from the Gruber Collection thus far. Meanwhile, Archives Associate Natalie Krecek and intern Charlie Tonelli are hard at work processing the Jim Shaughnessy Collection. They are wrapping up his Canadian Pacific and Delaware & Hudson series, and they are about to start digitizing negatives depicting the Denver & Rio Grande Western and the Duluth, Missabe & Iron Range Railway.

Reference & Digital Projects Archivist Erin Rose continues to provide timely responses to the growing number of image requests we receive from our members and the public. When she's not busy with her reference duties, Erin is also cataloging and rehousing the David Mainey Collection. To date, the Center's staff has processed a little over 7,700 of the Mainey images we have onsite. Finally, volunteers Larry Sallee and John Kelly continue to make great contributions to our processing efforts. Both regularly lend us their expertise to help identify the dates and locations of uncaptioned images from the John Gruber and Wallace Abbey collections. In addition, Larry has been labeling new archival housing for the Shaughnessy Collection.

Working at our archival storage space, Contract Archivist Gil Taylor has recently begun processing the Henry Posner III Collection. Gil has rehoused approximately 2,000 slides from the collection thus far, selecting roughly twenty percent for digitization. Associate Archivist Heather Sonntag has completed processing the slides in the Ron Hill Collection and is now concentrating on the launch of our cold storage preservation program. She recently completed a successful test run of our freezer and cold storage packaging, and we will have started preserving collection materials in the freezers as this issue goes to press. Stay tuned for a rundown of our experiences with cold storage in a future installment of OTA. •

Collection	Processing Status
Jim Shaughnessy	In progress, ~32% complete
John Gruber	In progress, ~27% complete
Ronald C. Hill	Slide series complete
David Mainey	In progress, ~75% complete of images on-site
Henry Posner III	In progress, ~5% complete
Karl Zimmermann	Next up, estimated start: 2022
John Illman	Estimated start: 2022~2023
Stan Kistler	Estimated start: 2022~2023



Left: Margaret Mailly
She's the Fireman, Steamtown
 National Historic Site,
 Pennsylvania, 1999
 Watercolor, 20 x 16 inches,
 collection of the CRP&A

Opposite: Canadian Pacific's
 elegant *Canadian* passenger
 train winds along the Canadian
 Rockies in Alberta in August
 1966. Photograph by Jim
 Shaughnessy, Shaughnessy-N-
 CP-0866