

WPRM BSA RR Merit Badge*- Loren Ross*

On Saturday June 1, 2019, Boy Scout Troop 341 from Carson City, NV came to the WPRM to receive a merit badge training class for the Railroading merit badge. The troop arrived with fifteen young men and six adults and were met by Superintendent of Operations Loren Ross who was the instructor for their class. It turns out that this was the second time this troop has come to the museum for this merit badge, having last been here in October 2015. In fact, five of the Scouts on this trip were present on the earlier training and already had their Railroading merit badge.

Rather than sit in on the class again, those five scouts offered to help out with some “community service” type projects around the building. Taking advantage of free labor, they were first assigned to enter the Pullman Troop Sleeper and install the new mattresses on the bunks. Since they were going to spend the night in this car, they all agreed that it would benefit them to help with this project. Once that was completed, these five scouts then assisted Board member Janet Steeper in setting up tables for the Membership Meeting that was to be held that evening.

Meanwhile, the merit badge class was conducted in the board room where the scouts were exposed to a plethora of railroading information ranging from types of trains and railroad signals, to Operation Lifesaver and passenger train schedules. While this class at the museum is helpful to the scouts, there is a substantial amount of work they must do away from the museum to complete the requirements of this merit badge. If the scouts apply themselves, they could complete the requirements in 2 to 3 weeks.

After the class, the scouts went to the picnic area for lunch, and then re-grouped for a guided tour of some of our most popular equipment including the Centennial locomotive and our rotary snow plow. After the tour, the scouts had free time to explore on their own and to ride the passenger caboose trains.

Later that afternoon, after caboose trains were finished, the entire scout troop (including adults) boarded a caboose pulled by the SP 2873, and were treated to a Run-A-Locomotive adventure. Every scout, and every adult received some “throttle time” while pulling the Southern Pacific caboose around the balloon track. The reason for adding the caboose to the train is to keep the scouts all together until they each get their turn at the throttle. Keeping them in the caboose means we don’t have to look all over the museum to get everyone together for their turn. All in all, the RAL lasted two full hours to get everyone through.

The scouts cooked an amazing jambalaya meal in the parking lot, and then spent the night at the museum. While the scouts bunked in the troop sleeper, the adults took over the caboose bunks. The next morning after a quick breakfast and final tour of the grounds, the scouts left for home. At this time, we are holding Boy Scout merit badge classes 3-4 times during the year. There are at least two more troops from the Sacramento area working on scheduling a class this summer.



Loren Ross poses with his class of scouts from Troop 341 from Carson City, Nevada on June 1st, 2019 at the museum for a BSA RR Merit Badge session.

- photo by Kerry Cochran