THE SOUNDER

Volume 69 | Number 4

Winter 2025

Railway Crossing Upgrades

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NORTHWEST RAILWAY MUSEUM

Preserving Railway History Since 1957

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The Northwest Railway Museum acknowledges it is built on the traditional lands of the Snoqualmie Tribe and other Coast Salish peoples. The Museum's railway runs through land and features considered sacred to the beliefs, values, and heritage of the Snoqualmie Tribe and other First Nations.

Winter Train Schedule

Saturdays — February 2026 - March 2026

North Bend

10:30am	**12:30pm**	**2:30pm**

Snoqualmie

11:00am	**1:00pm**	**3:00pm**

** Prices and schedule may vary on special event dates, visit TrainMuseum.org for more details.*

CONTACT US

Have questions or feedback? We'd love to hear from you.

You may contact us at: info@TrainMuseum.org or 425-888-3030 ext. 7202.

The Museum gratefully acknowledges funding and support received from:

Snoqualmie Tribe · 4Culture King County Lodging Tax · City of Snoqualmie Lodging Tax Fund · King County · Washington Trust for Historic Preservation · dahp

and the many individuals and businesses who give generously each year.

If you wish to give a gift, please visit TrainMuseum.org/Support

THE SOUNDER

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THE NORTHWEST RAILWAY MUSEUM MISSION

To operate a nationally significant museum and heritage railway where the public experiences captivating exhibits and educational programs that confront the impactful and challenging history of railways in shaping the Pacific Northwest, actively engaging the community and inspiring future generations to preserve this transformative heritage.

The railway changed everything

NORTHWEST RAILWAY MUSEUM

A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Join us in building a sustainable future for generations

The first weekend of another attendance record-breaking Santa Train has concluded, and this year's total paid and unpaid attendance will again top 200,000. Last summer's Day Out With Thomas was a similar story, too. These two events occur over 17 days yet welcome nearly 30,000 visitors, including individuals and families.

During peak periods, the Museum does not have the capacity to accommodate additional visitors, and some facilities are strained to serve larger audiences. Access programs, including Doors Open and the Toddler Story Time, are making it easier to visit the Museum, but this adds further complexity to the attendance puzzle.

Tracks to the Future is the Northwest Railway Museum's campaign to fund, improve, and expand facilities, growing awareness and understanding of the history of our region, state, and Pacific Northwest artifacts and people. Our growing audience has increasingly diverse interests, which require new and better exhibits, interactive programming, and more space. Renewal is needed, too. Tens of thousands of annual train passengers take a toll on the infrastructure, impacting everything from track to upholstery to restroom facilities.

Tracks to the Future will add more than space: It will include 35,000 square feet of exhibit, gallery, multi-use classroom, and program spaces, a 5,000 square foot HO scale working model railway exhibit, a locomotive turntable, improved track and crossings, and it will rehabilitate eight large artifacts, including another steam locomotive. The campaign objective is $60 million, with $12 million raised to date through

the generosity of individuals, private foundations, and public grants. Much of the $12 million has already been expended on work, including the new parking lot and the North Bend crossing safety improvements described later in this issue. This campaign has several phases to allow us to sequence the construction of facilities and large artifact restoration.

Please join me in supporting ***Tracks to the Future***. The train is arriving.

Richard R. Anderson

Executive Director

PRESERVING HISTORY

Fruits of the (Rail)Road

By Kacy H., Retail & Visitor Services Manager

The train passes by an apple tree laden with little red and yellow fruits in the foreground on the left. This one turned out to be one of the two sampled crab apple trees.

Apple season has come and gone in the Pacific Northwest. In September, the Museum had a speaker from Humanities Washington do a talk on the history of apple orchards here in the northwest. It sparked a curiosity that led to the start of an ongoing research project.

The Museum knows that its railway line cuts through the historic orchard of the first Snoqualmie Valley settler, Jeremiah Borst. Visit the NRM blog to read more on the history of Borst and his settlement.

Several volunteer groups exist with the goal of identifying historic apple varieties no longer grown. Typically, these groups discount apple trees found along railway tracks, as they have a high likelihood of being a tree grown from a discarded apple core from a trainman's lunch. However, a group based out of the Washington State University showed interest when the historical context of the original orchard was explained.

To gather data, the trees were photographed, their location mapped, and their fruits sampled. As is typical of historic apple species, most were not anywhere near on par with the sweet flavors of a modern-day store-bought apple. A couple even turned out to be extra bitter crab apples - an unpleasant surprise for the taste tester.

To properly identify the cultivars, leaf samples from each tree will need to be collected and sent in for molecular and DNA analysis then compared against the historical record of apples brought over by settlers of the area. This part of the project will have to wait until spring or summer.

In the mean time, Museum staff are looking into ways to help protect the remaining trees. Two were lost during a recent construction project and many are starting to become overgrown with invasive English ivy and Himalayan blackberry brambles since the last brush clearing in 2017.

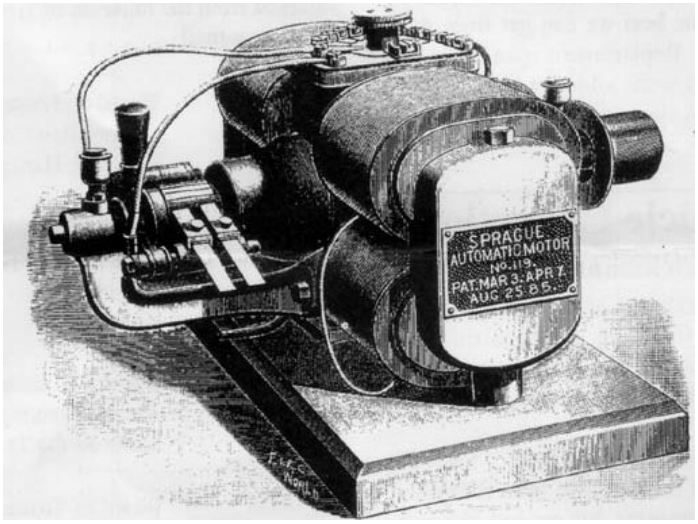
Another one of the apple trees along the railway line.

SPECIAL FEATURE

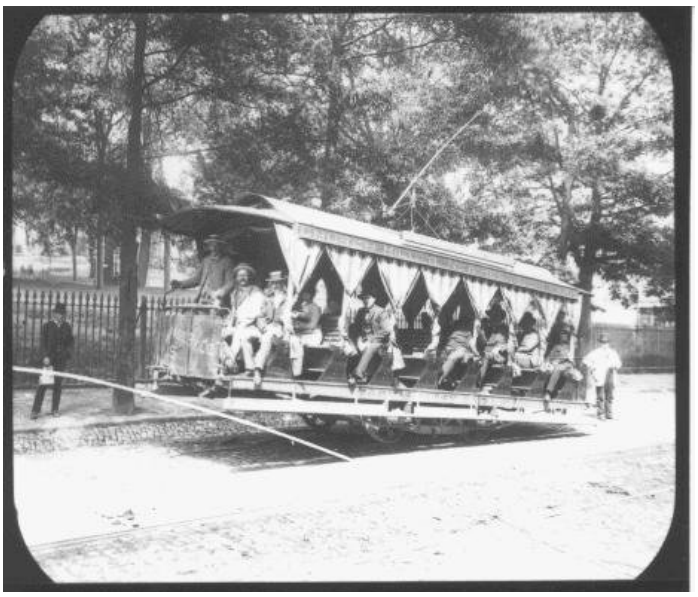
The Father of the Electric Railway

By Amy L., Visitor Services

While a lesser-known figure of the Industrial Revolution, Frank Sprague was nonetheless a crucial one - responsible for a number of new motor technologies, improvements to existing ones, and the development of the world's first large scale electric railway system. A graduate of the United States Naval Academy, Sprague's was a creative and prolific mind, responsible for, in his own words, "three score," inventions across his 5 years of navy service. After a short time spent working for Thomas Edison, he split off to form his own company which favored development and production of motors over Edison's focus on lighting. In the years following the creation of the Sprague Electric and Railway Motor Company, he created a new motor, capable of maintaining constant speeds under variable loads - one that Edison claimed to be "the only true motor" of the time - and a system of regenerative braking, where unused power was recycled. In 1887, after a failed attempt to sell the Manhattan Elevated Railway on electrification, he was approached by the



Richmond Union Passenger Railway, a company looking to improve the city of the same name's existing system of horse and mule drawn rail carts. The inventor, whose on-paper designs were made to contend with the practical demands of reality, received a timeline of only 90 days to install 12 miles of the new electrified rail system. This led to further refinements and innovation, including undercarriage motors and a maneuverable pole system, until the first full scale electric railway was operational and financially successful in February of 1882. This became the model for electrified urban transportation in the decades to follow.



A photo of a car on the Richmond line is climbing over a "hose jumper", a small raised section of the tracks that allowed firemen to safely run hoses across the tracks. The white line is damage to the original photo plate. (Photo courtesy of the Branford Electric Railway Association.)

While the electric railway in Richmond was perhaps his crowning success, and most relevant to this publication, Sprague was responsible for more beyond that. For a more thorough biography, check out *Engineering Invention: Frank J Sprague and the U.S. Electrical Industry by Frederick Dalzell.*

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Taking Care of Business

By Emily B.,
Collections Registrar

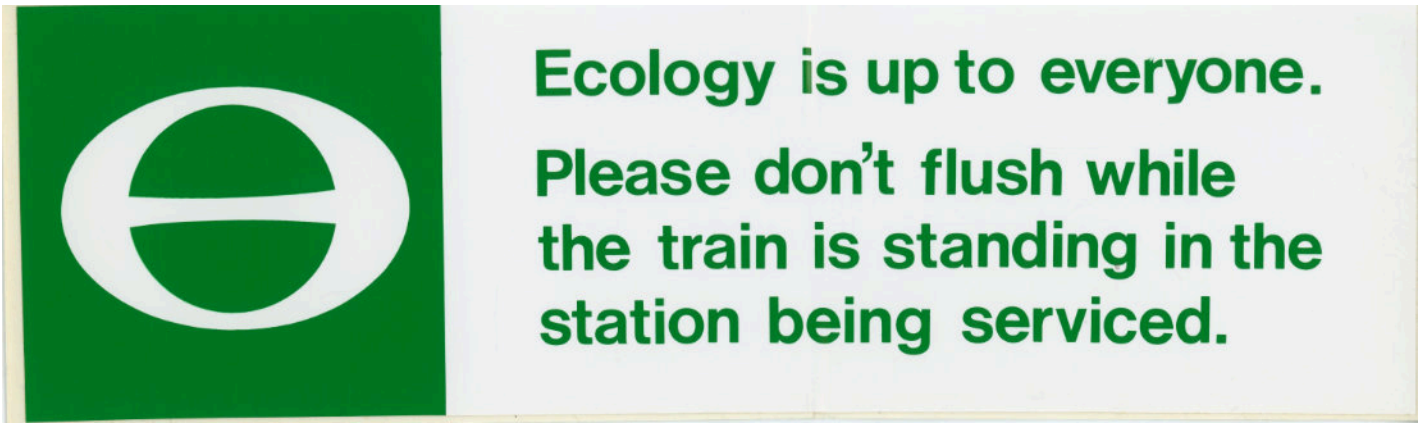
Though the Museum's historic trains do not have working restrooms on board, historically, lavatories were and still are crucial features aboard passenger trains.

On early coaches, waste and water would drop through a chute and dump directly onto the railway tracks as the train was in motion. Signs would be placed to remind passengers to "kindly flush toilet after each use except when train is standing in station;" otherwise, there would be unpleasant results.

The 1916 Car Builders Dictionary allowed companies to pick from the finest parts available so every part of a passenger's experience would be first-class. (Northwest Railway Museum Archives, 2017.016.115)

In the U.S., drop chute toilets, or dry hoppers, in passenger trains began phasing out in the 1980s, as environmental factors and sanitation issues were considered. Today, passenger trains are often equipped with holding tanks or vacuum toilets, similar to those found in airplanes, in which untreated waste is not dropped along the tracks.

Circa 1970s sticker with the ecology movement logo. (Northwest Railway Museum Archives, 2021.030.044)



Chugging Along

NP 924 stopped on the tracks up at the Snoqualmie River Valley overlook, in front, the staff and volunteers who got her out and running again.

The generator under Locomotive 125's hood.

By Kacy H., Retail & Visitor Services Manager

After a reluctant start in May, steam locomotive NP 924 took some extra time for rest, relaxation, and additional routine maintenance this year. Can you blame her? Last year was her 125th birthday!

The Museum called in a steam locomotive expert to help identify areas where 924's performance could be improved. Many improvements will have to wait until the Conservation and Restoration Workshop's drop table is installed, but staff and volunteers were able to address the most immediate needs and get 924 ready for a three-day operating weekend.

Just around dusk on All Hallows Eve, 924's ghostly wails could be heard all down the line as she steamed back to life for the Halloween Snoqualmie Valley Wine Train, eager to pull the train set after that extended vacation. The whistle drew in large crowds for the next two days of daytime steam excursions as well. A heartfelt thank you goes out to all the staff and volunteers who put in the time and effort to get 924 back out on the rails this year!

Locomotive 125's restoration has seen promising progress. Injector nozzles sent out for cleaning and repair recently returned to the workshop and are awaiting the return of the injectors, which were sent out to be rebuilt. Volunteer Rob R. sourced a company able to make new hoses to replace the aged, dried out ones. Inspections of the engine revealed it to be in excellent condition.

Railway Crossing Upgrades

Workers from Stacy Witbeck fasten new "Omega" concrete panels to the new railway ties in North Bend Way in a marathon work session of more than 48 hours. The road closed Friday afternoon and opened to traffic again the following Wednesday morning with just a brief rain delay.

The lights of Nintendo are visible in the distance as workers execute a project to replace the railroad crossing on NW 8th in North Bend. The work window was limited so work was scheduled to occur 24 hours per day. Precast concrete panels were set on a subgrade with the welded rail laced in afterwards. Later, reinforced concrete will be poured on either side of the crossing.

By Richard A., Executive Director

The Northwest Railway Museum operates between Snoqualmie Falls and North Bend on nearly six miles of former Northern Pacific Railway track, as well as a few remaining sections of Seattle, Lake Shore & Eastern Railway track. Many of the rails and structures are more than 100 years old and the Museum continues to preserve this prewar character. However, the Museum also has ownership of 13 public railway crossings, which represent a continuing maintenance responsibility - as safety is the Museum's number one priority when it comes to railway operations.

The Museum recently secured funding to upgrade several of the busiest crossings in North Bend and unincorporated King County. The project is intended to improve safety, reliability, and aesthetics such as the ride quality.

Bendigo Boulevard, NW 8th Avenue, and North Bend Way are all receiving new or upgraded signals, new rail, drainage, and new driving surfaces. This $4.8 million project represents a partnership between the Museum, the City of North Bend, and Washington State Department of Transportation. The project has required nearly five years of planning, design work, and negotiation. Construction kicked off on October 13 with substantial completion of the civil work just prior to Thanksgiving 2025. Just in time for the Museum's Santa Trains!

Bendigo Blvd. required the most effort of the three crossings and also involved an incidental realignment of Main Avenue. This crossing was relocated 14 feet to the south to better allow cars approaching the crossing from the north to see the flashing light or crossbuck. The relocation required 800 feet of new rail, new drainage, and completely new signals. As a railway crossing and road bed on a new alignment, rail was upgraded to a larger size and welded into lengths about 400 feet long in order to reduce long-term maintenance. Furthermore, the new crossings on Bendigo and Main were assembled from precast concrete modules.

Northwest 8th was the next crossing contractor, Stacy Witbeck, worked on. This crossing sees little or no automobile traffic, but supports a constant flow of semi trucks carrying everything in and out of Nintendo of America's warehouse and package assembly plant. This crossing never had signals before, but the impending installation of a nearby round-a-bout necessitated this upgrade to flashing lights and gates.

A bystander might see this as a lightly traveled rural road, but looks can be deceiving. This is a view of the newly-completed NW 8th crossing, which will now be used to ship every video game or console shipped to customers by Nintendo of America. At this time of year, the road can see a semi truck every few minutes. Perhaps they should consider shipping by rail?

This $4.8 million project is one of the largest track and signal projects the Museum has ever undertaken.

North Bend Way is the largest of all the crossings on the Museum's railway and measures nearly 300 feet in length. Formerly part of Interstate 90, this monster of a crossing remains important as a key access road to the Snoqualmie Casino, and as a route for 64 daily school bus trips. This 50 mph highway crossing is being lengthened slightly to accommodate a separate pathway for pedestrians and bicycles and is receiving upgraded electronics to replace obsolete devices installed more than 25 years ago.

Crossings are regulated by the state and federal government and safety is paramount. While the Museum is working hard to preserve the character of its largely early 20th Century railway, crossings are being upgraded whenever possible to the most modern and efficient equipment. Work on the crossings in North Bend and King County will officially wrap up early in 2026, but motorists and trains began benefiting from improvements on December 1st.

All aboard on our Tracks to the Future!

SPECIAL EVENTS

Investing in History

How 4Culture Helps Us Preserve the Past and Create the Future

By VJ K., Museum Administrative Officer

At the Northwest Railway Museum, preserving history is not just about documenting the past. It is also about protecting the stories, spaces, and cultural touchpoints that connect our community today. Much of that critical work happens thanks to support from 4Culture, whose funding has made an extraordinary impact on our organization.

Over the past several years, grants from 4Culture have allowed us to pursue some of our most ambitious and important projects. Their support was crucial in the rehabilitation of the Snoqualmie Depot boardwalk, ensuring that this iconic feature remains safe and accessible to all members of the public. They also helped further fund the restoration of the Snoqualmie Depot windows, reinforcing the structural integrity of this landmark so it can be enjoyed for generations to come. 4Culture is also supporting our Tracks to the Future capital campaign! These projects are not only essential to the ongoing protection and expansion of the Museum, but they also directly enhance the visitor experience and keep heritage spaces active and usable as vibrant third spaces for our community.

4Culture's impact extends into all departments at the Museum. By supporting free access to programs and educational offerings, they help ensure that the stories we steward are available to all, regardless of financial circumstance. This generous grant funding allows us to remain welcoming, dynamic, and relevant to audiences of all ages and backgrounds. Just a few programs supported by 4Culture in the past year include all

As a special treat, Santa and Mrs. Claus prepare to read a story to families during the last Story Time of the Museum's 2025 season.

Story Time programs, a Humanities Washington public talk on apples, the reduced admission we offer for school field trips, and free admission Wednesdays - just to name a handful!

Perhaps one of the most exciting recent achievements was securing funding for the historic landmarking of the Amtrak Cascades Talgo Bistro Car 7304, a significant step in recognizing and protecting a unique piece of regional rail history.

As we look toward 2026 and beyond, we are grateful for the ongoing partnership and vision of 4Culture. With their support, we hope to pursue even more meaningful restoration efforts, community-driven initiatives, and experiences that bring railway history to life. Their investment helps ensure that history is both remembered and joyfully experienced.

Thank you, 4Culture, for helping us care for our past while we build for our future.

4 CULTURE

Winter Schedule Train Excursions

Saturdays beginning February 7, 2026

The Saturday-only Winter schedule train excursions begin February 7, 2026. Hop aboard the train at either the Snoqualmie Depot or North Bend Depot for an educational and scenic ride through the Upper Snoqualmie Valley. Sunday excursions will resume in April.

Story Time

1st, 3rd, & 5th Wednesdays at 11am

Returning January 21, 2026

Enjoy an afternoon out at the Museum's Train Shed Exhibit Hall, meant for rail fans of all ages. Listen to 1-3 stories together, experience a hands-on craft, and take the time to explore what this Museum location has to offer. As always, Story Time is completely free!

Train Shed

Reopens January 16, 2026

In mid-January, the Train Shed Exhibit Hall will reopen. The Winter hours of operation will be Friday through Monday, from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm.

MUSEUM UPDATES

Amtrak Cascades Bistro Car Landmarked

KING COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM
CERTIFICATE OF DESIGNATION
Snoqualmie Register of Historic Places

Talgo Bistro Car #7304
Built: 1998
Designated: 2025

In recognition of its contribution to the cultural heritage of Snoqualmie, the Snoqualmie Landmarks Commission and the King County Historic Preservation Program are pleased to present this Certificate of Designation in accordance with the provisions set forth in the King County Code Chapter 20.62.

Chair, Snoqualmie Landmarks Commission

King County Historic Preservation Officer

By Richard A., Executive Director

The Cesar Vergara-designed Amtrak Cascades Talgo Bistro Car #7304 is now a King County and City of Snoqualmie Landmark. The sole surviving Talgo series VI car was built in 1998 for the then-newly revitalized Amtrak Cascades, and was part of a semi-permanently coupled train set that operated daily in the corridor between Vancouver, BC and Eugene, OR.

The Talgo cars featured a monocoque carbody manufactured in Spain and shipped to Seattle where each car was assembled and completed by unemployed Boeing machinists using a design developed by Amtrak's then-chief designer Cesar Vergara. There were a total of four train sets, which each served twenty years before being retired.

The Cascades Talgo cars are perhaps the last great American streamliner. Mr. Vergara introduced many traditional streamliner features including mood lighting, the distinctive green and brown paint livery, and the first-ever complete ADA accommodation on a modern American railcar.

The Talgo car will be part of the future Roundhouse Gallery where it will be installed as a permanent exhibit. For now, it has been placed on exhibit in the Train Shed exhibit hall.

The Talgo Bistro Car as it arrived at the RHC from an Indiana scrap yard.

BOOKSTORE HIGHLIGHT

Come See What's New in the Museum Store

Visit the Depot Bookstore in the Historic Snoqualmie Depot or the Museum Gift Shop inside the foyer of the Train Shed Exhibit Hall to see these new arrivals and so much more!

While no longer a new arrival, this is the first holiday season the Squishable 4024 plush is available! Super soft and slightly weighted, these stuffed locomotives make the perfect holiday present for recipients of any age. These little guys are 100% Museum staff approved!

These lovable, little locomotives can be purchased at either Museum store location or even ordered online through the Museum's eBay store and sent directly to your loved ones.

These matching shot glasses and mugs joined the Museum store more recently. They have Locomotive 924 on the outside and the NRM logo on the inner rim printed with a metallic color-shift effect, but are still safe to put in the microwave and the dishwasher!

The Express Line

As a non-profit organization, it is rare for the Museum store to offer discounts on retail products. This year, as the Museum builds up steam for the Tracks to the Future fundraising campaign, it is offering discounts on retiring merchandise to clear space for new items. This will be the last chance to purchase certain products, so if there is something you have had your eye on for a while, now is the perfect chance to get it!

Retiring products include the blue and gold circle emblem t-shirts and matching grey hoodie, the Snoqualmie Depot stoneware mugs, candles, and a handful of other select items.

VOLUNTEER NEWS

Volunteer Spotlight

Volunteers contribute in so many different ways at the Northwest Railway Museum, sometimes for many years. This Sounder features the Museum's volunteers and their stories of connection with and passion for the Museum.

Nick G.

Nick has been volunteering with the Northwest Railway Museum for just over a year and has already put in 625 hours of volunteer service!

"I started volunteering with the NRM because my roommate mentioned that there was a scenic train ride 45-minutes away from Seattle that I just had to check out! I immediately looked at the website and found out about the Running Trades program and the rest is history! My favorite part about being at the Museum is being a member of the dedicated community while being able to expand my knowledge of railroading. I knew almost nothing about trains before I started volunteering. I'm still no expert, but being able to learn and explore has been the leading reason I keep coming back to the NRM!"

Nick G. has worked his way through crew positions and is one of the NRM's most recent qualified conductors!

PERKS

- **An invitation to the annual volunteer appreciation BBQ in June**
- **10% discount in the Museum's stores**
- **Reciprocal free admission to regional museums during National Volunteer Week in April**
- **Further training and educational opportunities**

Ready to Volunteer?

If you are interested in joining the Northwest Railway Museum's volunteer team, please visit: TrainMuseum.org and fill out an application under the Volunteer tab.

Questions?

Contact the Volunteer Coordinator, Matt, at Matt@TrainMuseum.org

Volunteer Opportunities

Looking for a chance to join the NRM community? Santa Train is the perfect time of year for it! The NRM is always looking for more hands to help with event activities and post-event cleanup.

Volunteering during special events is a great way to earn community service hours, talk to visitors, and contribute to a good cause - all at the same time! After the event ends, there is always more to be done. Museum staff are always grateful to anyone who comes to help with post-event cleanup! Those garlands do not wind themselves back up, no matter how much staff might wish they could.

Volunteers pose in coach 218 for a photo during Santa Train.

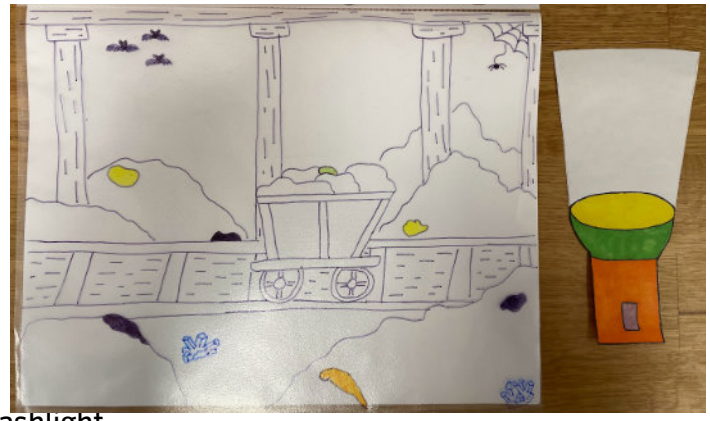
Jr. Sounder

Mess Free Mining

Humans have used coal for thousands of years, but it first became a popular power source in the 1800s. It was used in everything from heating homes to powering steam locomotives! When railroads expanded across the country, the demand for coal skyrocketed. This led to the creation of many mining towns across the nation. On the hunt for coal, these miners also ran across other rocks and minerals hiding in the ground. Gold, copper, quartz, gems, and more were all found in mines here in Washington. Being a miner was a dirty and dangerous job, but with this activity you can create your own mess-free mine to explore!

<u>Supplies:</u>

- White paper
- Black paper
- Black Permanent Marker
- Clear Sheet Protector or Large Clear Plastic Bag
- Colored Pencils, crayons, or markers



1. On a white sheet of paper, draw the outline of your flashlight and its beam of light. Decorate and color your flashlight with the colored pencils or crayons before cutting it out. Put it aside for later.

2. Take your sheet protector/ bag and draw the design of your mine on the *outside* with your black permanent marker. Make sure to fill your mine with different rocks and minerals (and maybe even a few surprises!) to find later. You can use multi-colored permanent markers for different colored minerals and gems!

3. Take the black sheet of paper and slip inside the sheet protector/ bag to darken your mine.

4. Slip your flashlight inside the sheet protector/ bag and explore your mine with your flashlight!

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