

News Release



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***Grand Central: An American Treasure* to Premiere at Railroad Museum on February 22**

SACRAMENTO – California State Parks and the California State Railroad Museum are proud to announce the West Coast premiere of a new film, *Grand Central: An American Treasure*, by award-winning producer Richard Luckin. Two special screenings of this documentary -- introduced by Mr. Luckin and followed by a question and answer session -- will take place on Saturday, February 22, at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. in the Museum Theater. With more trains, tracks and track platforms than any other railroad passenger terminal in the world, Grand Central is the world's largest train terminal. Less well known is that Grand Central is at the very heart of the historic preservation movement in America.

The release of this documentary film in early 2014 coincides with the 101st anniversary of Grand Central Terminal, which opened in 1913 following a massive construction project which replaced an earlier station at the site. From its many tracks, famous express trains departed frequently and with great fanfare, packed with celebrities, movie stars, politicians and business tycoons. It was at its busiest during World War II, but by the 1950s and 1960s, the crush of rail passengers had subsided and the glory days of Grand Central were over. The once-glorious terminal was filthy and its financially struggling railroad owners allowed it to fall into disrepair. A steel and glass office tower was proposed in its place by owner Penn Central, but the New York Landmarks Preservation Commission refused to allow this to move forward. Penn Central in turn filed suit against the City of New York.

Grand Central thus became the centerpiece of a very public debate in the 1960s, regarding whether a city or other government body was “taking” a property when it required preservation of an existing structure based on exceptional historic value. Among the personalities engaged in the debate was Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, and the demolition just a few years earlier of nearby (and also quite grand) Pennsylvania Station had galvanized citizens across America. The courts ultimately ruled in favor of preservation, stopping Grand Central’s proposed demolition and setting the stage for significant structures to be protected all across America going forward.

Following the bankruptcy of Penn Central, the station soldiered on, still very much in need of repairs. New York’s MTA in the 1990s signed a lengthy lease on the terminal and, with support from the Municipal Art Society of New York and the dedication of civic groups, concerned citizens and the Metro-North Railroad, oversaw a successful \$200 million dollar preservation project. Today, 650 trains arrive and depart on weekdays and 750,000 people visit Grand Central each day.

For More, Visit www.parks.ca.gov/CapitalDistrict

Grand Central: An American Treasure producer Richard Luckin will be on-hand at the Railroad Museum on one special day in February to introduce the documentary showings and will be available afterward to answer questions and sign copies of the DVD for interested guests (the DVD will be also be available for purchase). For more information about this special event or the California State Railroad Museum in general, call 916-445-6645 or visit www.csrmf.org

About the California State Railroad Museum

Operated by California State Parks with financial assistance from the non-profit California State Railroad Museum Foundation, the California State Railroad Museum is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. Widely regarded as North America's finest and most popular railroad museum, the complex of facilities includes the 100,000-square foot Railroad History Museum plus the reconstructed Central Pacific Railroad Passenger Station and Freight Depot, 1849 Eagle Theatre, and Big Four and Dingley Spice Mill commercial buildings in Old Sacramento. For 24-hour information, please visit www.csrmf.org or call (916) 445-6645.