February's workday, even with all the rain, was quite productive. We were lucky in that most of the day was only light drizzles, but even so we concentrated on inside projects. More progress was made on the remodel of the machine shop, the entire south wall is now insulated, paneled and painted. Randy was able to install the electrical feeder for the air compressor. Fitz spearheaded the activity of building an enclosure for the air compressor sitting outside on the south wall of the machine shop. A little more insulation and paneling was installed in the roundhouse. Working right behind the paneling crew were Bob Wilkerson and Dick Toulson who were painting.

Ed-ski and Andy were tending to housekeeping and other projects in the car barn. Geoff Tobin had purchased some shelves and brought them over to be assembled. After they get painted they will be used to organize the spare parts within the machine shop and roundhouse. The weather didn't permit too much work to be done in the way of gardening, but some weedin' and tendin' did occur.

Would also like to express our thanks to Bruce Sherman who came a week earlier to get some welding done on the hopper car. If you haven't seen it, be sure to stop by and take a look at it as it is really beginning to take shape. The next project on the hopper car is to come up with some prototypical side re-enforcement members, which we haven't done as of yet. We haven't found any yet, but if any of you know of where some might be, let myself or Fitz know so that we can obtain them.

A Board Meeting was held on Sunday and will covered later in the newsletter. Most of us left following the Board Meeting since a storm came in. Our original plans were to stay and leave Monday morning. However, as the day and evening wore on the rains kept coming. Wally came by to say that water was starting to go over Swanton Rd. so we decided to pack up and leave. Maybe selling our boat wasn't such a good idea! As we proceeded south on Swanton Rd. water was running over the road along with some relatively large rocks. We made it across alright, but as we proceeded into town we kept hearing a thump, thump sound. A rock had gotten lodged between our dual wheels. We finally stopped and pried it out and thought everything was O.K. The next day we discovered we had a flat tire as a result of the thump thump. The rock had damaged the side wall so we will have to purchase a new tire (cheaper than a boat).

A few days later we received news that several trees came down as a result of the storm. One of the trees landed on the Little Creek Bridge and the confluence between Little Creek and Scott Creek is now getting closer and closer to the bridge. We were informed that we have another washout south of our existing washout, which is very discouraging, as mother nature is operating faster than bureaucracy is on getting a permit to replace storm damage from three years ago! Luckily we had already reinforced the Cal Barn. Apparently two trees had fallen on it, but no damage was incurred.

Don't forget the upcoming Al Smith Day on April 9.

We will be getting everything ready on the workdays before the event, March 11/12 and April 8. We have a lot of cleanup to do so any help will be greatly appreciated. An invitation to the event is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calendar of events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, March 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, March 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, April 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, April 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, May 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, May 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, June 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
D

epend on the weather, and projects that we may
 undertake, we will hopefully start having our two work
 weekends a month beginning in May/June. That means
 the second and fourth Saturday/Sunday of each month.
 We will keep you posted. However, if any of you want to
 contribute time other than on the work weekends you are
 more than welcome to come when it best fits your sched-
 ule. Just be sure to let the Director, Ed Carnegie know
 that you will be on the premises.

 April is not that far around the corner and our
 "Opening" railroad event of the year will be Al Smith Day.
 Mark your calendar for April 9—Sunday. There will be lots
 of sprucing up pre-preparations to do the day before at
 our scheduled workday. At the March workday we will be
 taking sign-ups for various duties that will need to be ac-
 complished to make the event successful. If you prefer to
 choose what you want to volunteer for be at the March
 workday to sign up specifically for the task, otherwise you
 may get assigned to help out on something else.

 REMINDER: Please return your RSVP form for the Al
 Smith Day as it helps us to better plan on ordering food,
 etc.

 BYLAWS

 Have you read over the proposed by-law changes? Have questions or concerns? Call Fitz to
 discuss or have them clarified. All Swanton Pacific
 members will be voting on the proposed by-law
 changes on Al Smith Day. Be an informed voter, af-
 ter all it is your society.

 If you did not receive a copy of the proposed by-
 law changes, please contact Fitz, the President, and


clocks. Mr. McDermott (sic) seems determined that the passing of time shall be pleasantly marked. [Oakland Times, August 10, 1878]

The West Oakland... account continues:

"For some time, the income from San Francisco real-state investments allowed Louis "Mac" McDermott (the son of Charles McDermott) to devote himself to crafting scale model railroad equipment in his own machine shops, hidden among the luxuriant vegetation of the mature gardens of his estate. The miniature trains received wide publicity during the 1915 Panama Pacific Exposition, where they carried passengers around the amusement zone (sic)."

"It was during the depression of the 1930s that Vernon Sappers and his father visited Louis McDermott. By then, there was no servant to greet visitors, and the cultivated arbors of the 1870s had become densely overgrown:

We would go down to visit the old McDermott place on Sunday morning. We couldn't get in. We would toss a rock against the side of the house and he would let us in. He would lead us down a secret passage, all overgrown--to me it was like the jungles of Africa. Lots of vines. Ivy. We always went to the machine shop. Mac had a wonderful library out in the barn--all those beautiful books on mechanics. He was a gifted machinist. He built large-scale model trains, big enough for adults to ride on. They were absolutely perfect--real works of machine art. He made his own trucks. My dad helped him build the passenger coaches.

He lived to make his trains. They never seemed to pay any attention to their declining income. Or know what to do about it. So in time they were really poor. Finally, they became paupers and were taken in to live by a man they had lent money to and befriended in the past. They moved into his big estate down near Los Gatos. All those trains went with them [Sappers/Olmstead interview, April 20, 1993].

The McDermott house and its gardens survived until 1942, when the Federal Housing Authority bulldozed the historic estate to build temporary barracks for war workers."

[End of excerpts from the text in West Oakland... about the MacDermot mansion.]

Three photographs from the "Collection of Vernon J. Sappers" are included in the report. Vernon J. Sappers was a member of a long-time Oakland family. He knew the history of Oakland and its residents. He had collected a large number of valuable and rare photographs about Oakland, the East Bay, the railroads of the area, etc.

The photograph, captioned "The MacDermot Estate in the 1880s", shows the front of the MacDermot house with a small part of the garden in the foreground. Louis MacDermot and his sister Florence, together with a large dog at their feet, are standing in a walkway in front of a corner of the house. They appear to be of school age, about ten and eight years old, more or less.

The U.S. Census records indicate that Louis was born in 1878 and Florence two years later. The other two photographs are interior views of the front and the rear parlors. The front parlor was the formal one; the rear parlor was the family room. Both were furnished and decorated in the crowded Victorian manner of that era with Oriental, Parisian, and a few American furnishings. Shelves, tables, and all flat surfaces were densely covered with hand-painted plates, photographs, odds and ends, etc.

The lengthy captions under the photographs include two short but informative quotations from a local publication called the West of Market Boy's Journal.

"The MacDermot children had two governesses. Two highly cultured and refined spinsters who hailed from England..." (Dr. Ed Anthony, June 1941). [The Census records of 1880 and 1900 list two sisters, Annie and Maggie Bone, natives of England, as residents of the household.]

"Remember those grand blow-outs at the McDermott house." [Unfortunately, that comment was not explained further. It suggests that the MacDermot home was a popular site of social events in Oakland around the turn of the century.]

This account of the MacDermot family and estate has provided more valuable information about Louis MacDermot. The photographs are especially useful, particularly that of Louis and Florence as children. The report tells us about the fate of the house and grounds, that the mansion was torn down in 1942, information for which we have been searching.

Newspaper accounts in late November 1941 tell about MacDermot's moving all the Overfair Railroad equipment to the Oakland Zoo at that time; but, they do not mention the pending demise of the house. Our SPRS archives contain photographs of draymen loading the locomotives onto their trucks from the "back yard" of the estate. Also, we have a photograph showing a large "For Sale" sign at a corner of the grounds. Was the property taken over by the County for lack of tax payments? Had Louis MacDermot become aware earlier that he was going to lose his family home and grounds? If so, maybe that is why he arranged to move to the Oakland Zoo. So, the next question is: Where did he live during the time, 1941-1943, when he was running the #1913 train at the Oakland Zoo?

Sappers makes a puzzling comment about MacDermot's last years. "Finally they became paupers and were taken in by a man they lent money to and befriended in the past..." That "man" was Billy Jones, an engineer on the Southern Pacific "Daylight" express train and the owner of his own miniature railroad, the Wildcat Railroad. The intriguing statement is that MacDermot had loaned money to Jones in the past.

Does anyone of the early Jones/Wildcat RR era know of Jones' borrowing money from MacDermot? Or, could it have been the opposite, that Jones lent money to MacDermot in the latter's last years. Certainly, Billy Jones and others of the SP/Wildcat group, particularly, Charlie Hoyle, did take care of Louis MacDermot from 1943 until his death in 1948.

Another puzzling part of Sapper's account is his changing from the use of "he" to "they" during the interview when he, Sappers, is referring to Louis MacDermot.

For example, "He lived to make his trains. They never seemed to pay any attention to their declining income...." Was Sappers referring to Louis and his wife Hortense? As I have stated in earlier articles, very little is known about his wife.
other than her name. I have not seen any reference to Hortense's being with Louis when the latter moved, or was moved, to Los Gatos.

All in all, this account in West Oakland... has significantly increased our knowledge of the MacDermot family. The photographs, in particular, give insights into the MacDermot family of 100 years ago!

Acknowledgments:
Bob Parkinson, SPRS member in Berkeley, found the report when he was researching information in the Oakland Public Library. William Strum, Director of the Oakland History Room, helped Bob to find this and other old accounts of the MacDermot's.

Mary Praetzellis, Editor of West Oakland... and Operations Manager of the Anthropological Studies Center at Sonoma State University, graciously provided us with a copy of the report and with information about the source of the photographs.

We are indebted to Nancy Leigh Olmstead for the valuable information in her chapter on the history of West Oakland. Her research and writing has answered many of our questions.

The large collection of photographs gathered by the late Vernon J. Sappers are now in the archives of the Bay Area Electric Railroad Society at Rio Vista, California. Ted Miles, a member of the Board of Directors, has kindly granted us permission to reproduce those photographs pertaining to the MacDermot's.

**NEW MEMBERS**

New memberships received last month:

Carl Becker  
Felton  

Carl Halbach  
Palo Alto  

Robert Poole  
Sherman Oaks  

Richard Toulson  
Los Altos

On behalf of the entire organization we welcome you into our "train family" and we certainly look forward to seeing you at some of our next events. Many of our members may not recognize you right away so please introduce yourself so that we can get to better know you.

**Champions wanted!**

No, not the dragon slaying type. Dragons are an endangered species and are handy to have around in cold weather. We need you to take on a project, such as the restoration of the Santa Fe Caboose or the maintenance of the Overfa ir style railcars - the woodwork in particular, or one of the other needful things. You could be a star! and get your name in the newsletter. Cosmo DiFrancesco has taken on the inspection and maintenance records of the railcars (see, there’s a star already) and has noted several cars that need cosmetic work. We’ll even give you a title - Railcar Cosmetologist. The pay is the same, whatever you can afford to donate.

I look forward to seeing you next workday, Saturday, March 11th.

Fitz
Ride the Swanton Pacific Railroad

For the Seventh Annual

Al Smith Day

Enjoy a fun-filled Sunday to remember and honor our friend

Sunday, April 9, 2000

Train Rides 10:00-12:00
BBQ Lunch/comments 12:00-2:00
Ranch Tour/Dog Demonstration 1:30-4:00
More Train Rides 1:00-4:00

Hear an update on Swanton Ranch activities & tour the Ranch, or see a sheep dog demonstration. A casual Western style meal will be served/soft drink provided.

Adults $12.00 To cover the cost of the BBQ and train rides
Children $6.00 8 & younger.

RSVP by April 2, 2000:

To: E. J. Carnegie
BioRes & Ag Engineering Dept. Cal Poly
San Luis Obispo, CA 93407 or Phone in at: (805) 995-3659

Please return this form, with pertinent information, and your check made payable to:

Swanton Pacific Railroad (SPRR)

== Detach and return information below with check

From: Name(s)
Indicate
(a) = adult
(c) = child =
8 yrs. & younger
Have you sent in your 2000 gift?

Dear Member:

If you have not yet made your membership contribution for this year we hope that this is an oversight as we would hate to lose a good member.

Of particular importance this year is the General Meeting on Al Smith Day, Sunday, April 9, 2000 where we will vote to accept the proposed revision to our bylaws. Only active members will be able to participate and cast a ballot. If you have not done so, please return the form below with your gift before the end of March so you will be included on our roster of active members.

MEMBERSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM 2000

Name: ____________________________________________

Address: ____________________________________________

City: __________________________ State: ______ Zip: _______

Spouse/Partner's Name: ____________________________

Children names & ages: _____________________________

Home Ph: (____) __________ FAX: (____) __________

Business/Other Ph: (____) __________ Page: (____) __________

E-mail: ____________________________

I wish to support The Swanton Pacific Railroad Society with a gift of $25. or more

Gandy Dancer: $25./year __

Attendant: $100./year __

New Application: _____ Renewal Application: ____ My 2000 gift is $_________

________

Conductor: $1,000./year __

Engineer's Club: $10,000./year __

In addition, as time permits, I would like to assist as a volunteer and I have checked areas of expertise or interest in which I would like to be of help.

- Barbecue & Food Service/Event Days
- Archives & library Management
- Newsletter
- Gardening & Grounds
- Infrastructure Improvements & Maintenance; (i.e. painting, carpentry, etc.)

Shop Skills (Machinists, welders, etc.)

Signature: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________

We sincerely thank you! Your gift may be deductible for income tax purposes.