

SWANTON PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY

Number 86

Cal Poly

July 2000

On Track

With your director,

Ed Carnegie



On June 3rd an antique car club came to visit our railroad. They were given a tour of the facilities, a history lesson of both the RR and the surrounding area. After a quick check of their automobiles they were on the road again. They all came and left on their own power. It was very interesting to see these beautifully restored cars and was especially interesting as many were of the same vintage as our own locomotives, (1905-1915).

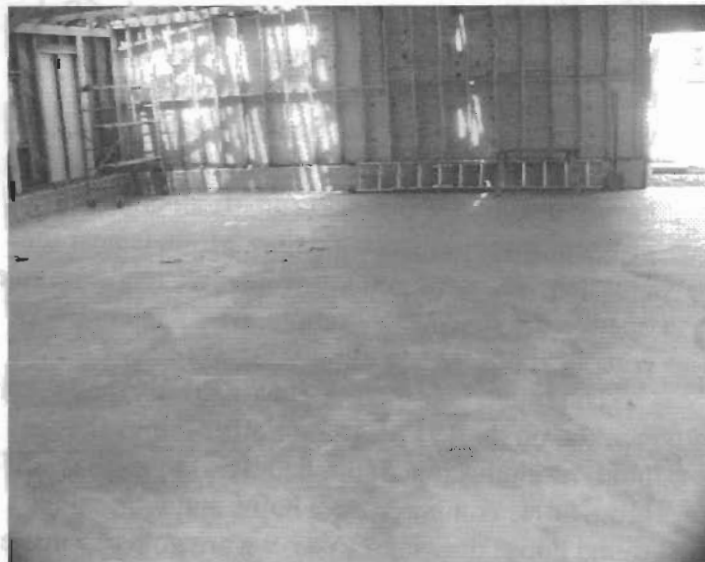


The week before the June workday Tom and I worked on the Cal Barn. We spent the majority of the time getting ready for a major concrete pour of the floor. In order to do this we had to level the ground. This task required us to have 12 yards of sand brought in, and leveled. We then set the rebar on top of the sand. It was now ready for the concrete to come. By the time all the sand was leveled and the rebar was laid we

sure had a pair of sore backs.



We finally got smart and hired a concrete finishing crew to take care of the floor. It was nice to be able to stand by and watch others do all the hard work. All we needed to do for this pour was lean on our shovels and be inspectors and make sure supplies arrived on time. This was one of the easiest pours we, the volunteers, have ever had!



The week following the workday, a roofing crew arrived to place a new galvanized steel roof on the Cal Barn. This will now complete the major tasks in refurbishing the Cal Barn. We will now be able to concentrate on finishing work, such as the shingles on the outside walls, windows and what we will want to do in the interior. So we're "calling for all carpenters to come on down and help out. There are countless projects for you to show your talents and creativity."



On Saturday, Dick Toulson and I took on the role of monkeys as we clung to whatever we could while removing the old steel roof and rotten shingles.

We're not quite as agile as monkeys, but neither of us fell! Many of the pearlins (boards going across the trusses that support the galvanized roofing) needed to be replaced. So, as we stripped off the old roof, we either renailed or replaced the pearlins.

The track crew this weekend consisted of Bob Morehouse and Hart Fairclough. They worked on the road-crossing signal going to College Park, which is just north of the Santa Fe caboose. This will be a flashing light unit, with a bell. We plan on having it ready for our next run. If all goes as planned, it should work anytime a train is near the crossing. If any of you know how we might be able to operate the signal, very simply, with a minimum of complications, let me know.

The round house crew, Randy, Marty, and Geoff worked on the 1912. Among other things they re-built, re-plumbed and installed a sight glass. Geoff brought his computer from home and worked on round house drawings. Yes, we are going to make

some real plans and finish the remodeling inside the roundhouse. If you are a wood finisher and would like to do some oak paneling that will look first class, please contact me.

Bill McNab, along with Hart Fairclough gave the grounds crew a hand this weekend and cut down the dead walnut tree next to the track by the station. The next day Anthony, Marlene and Tony gave Mary Ann and me a helping hand cleaning up the downed tree and planting two oaks in its place. Martha continued to fight the battle of the weeds on the hillsides and is beginning to win. We also planted four more trees east of the tracks next to the cabooses. When they get larger, they should make a real nice shade area.

After the workday, the few who stayed were treated to a very delicious meal prepared by Martha. All of us had a great time sharing good laughs and camaraderie.

REDHOUSE RESERVATIONS:

The Ranch Director has been working with the Railroad to ensure that we have some space available at the Redhouse for our workdays. However, I do need to know at least one week in advance whether room reservations are needed or not. That way I can better coordinate with Wally Mark to make sure that things move smoothly. If you do not call in to reserve a room you may not have a place to stay.

Safety Simon Says:

With all the summer runs coming up and the many children in attendance, please remember:

Good Enough, Isn't!



PUBLICITY AND EVENT COORDINATION

Mary Ann Carnegie

Calendar of events

Sat/Sun	June 24	June 25	Work Weekend
Sat/Sun	July 8	July 9	Work Weekend
Saturday	July 22		Work/run day- Golden Spikes to honor Elmer Stone
Sunday	July 23		Work Weekend
Sat/Sun	Aug 12	Aug 13	Work Weekend
Sat/Sun	Aug 26	Aug 27	Work Weekend
Sat/Sun	Sept 9	Sept 10	Work Weekend
Saturday	Sept 23		Work day/Prep
Sunday	Sept 24		LAND TRUST RUN
Saturday	Sept 30		Work day/Prep
Sunday	Oct 1		LONE STAR RUN
Saturday	Oct 7		Work day/Prep
Sunday	Oct 8		CAL POLY DAY

August take note of two work weekends.

Sept./Oct is filled with several run weekends as well as an extra weekend, so mark your calendars.

We now have two work weekends per month. That means we will be here at Swanton on both the second and fourth Saturday/Sunday of each month. 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 schedule. Just be sure to let the Director, Ed Carnegie, know that you will be on the premises. We would also advise each of you to wear your nametags so that other personnel will know that you are officially affiliated with Swanton.

We will also be having very informal dinners, but only IF RSVPs are received prior to the workday. If we have no response we will have no meal at the end of a Saturday workday. SO THE LESSON IS RSVP!

The menu and cooks will vary, contributions for the meal will always be accepted. It is not potluck, even though we may have a pot (stew or whatever), as we do not want to rely on luck. We would like to plan it so if you wish to assist see/call Mary Ann prior to the workday so that plans can be made accordingly.

For the work weekend on July 23, there will be a BBQ/potluck lunch with the Golden Spikes. You are requested to bring your own meat to put on the "barbie". You are also welcome to bring a potluck dish for all to enjoy.

Down Behind the Railway

With your president, air monkey, and
carbarnist;

Reynold 'Fitz' FitzPatrick

RGBFitz@aol.com

Voice: 650.737.9584

Fax: 650.737.9583

The lazy days of summer are upon us. Nothing to do, except on the second and fourth weekend each month where we have:

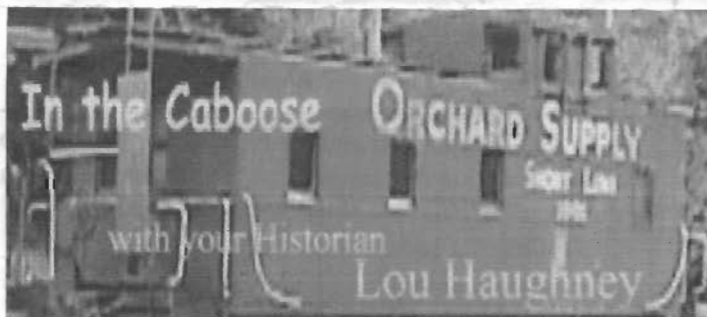
- 🚧 crossing signals to install,
- 🚧 trucks to build,
- 🚧 restoration of the Cal Barn,
- 🚧 paneling in the round house,
- 🚧 cleaning and inspecting the 1300's parts,
- 🚧 and, best of all, steam-up days to run.

Anthony Pratkanis has finished the first of the home study courses, General Safety, and is working on the Conductor and Brakeman course. These courses are designed to be completed by you at your leisure at home and followed by a question and answer / hands on session at the railroad. Every active member will receive the General Safety and Conductor/Brakeman courses, which are the basis for operating the railroad and the first steps up the educational ladder to Steam Locomotive Engineer. The other steps are, and should be completed in order, Motor Car operator, Diesel engineer, and Locomotive Fireman. Your past president Bill Engelman has the Motor Car operator course materials waiting to be put in home study format.

And while you're resting, think about the 1500 - MacDermot's tank engine. Mark Cooper graciously agreed to develop some proposals for the 1500's restoration and use. The 1500 has been in parts and pieces for far to long. We need to get it back together before it gets lost or misplaced. I see as a possible resolution of previous conflicting opinions, that of retaining its original configuration as a museum piece versus reconfiguration into an readily operational 'work and training' loco for use on workdays, by being able to remove the saddle tanks and open the sides of the cab when used for training and restoring them for 'Kodak moments' when we have our equipment on display.

For those of you not familiar with the 1500, to be operated safely on our railway the saddle tanks (which obstruct the engineer's view) must be removed, the cab enlarged to allow room for the engineer and fireman, and a pilot truck added to keep the loco on the rails. By making the tanks removable and giving the cab side doors, I believe we can have the best of two worlds.

Come on down next workday, we'll have fun.



VOICES FROM THE PAST

Al Smith and Charlie Hoyle had a conversation one day in 1985 about Charlie's recollections of Louis MacDermot's final years in the Campbell and Los Gatos area. An audio tape of their remarks was found recently in Al's Los Gatos home.

The recording is very difficult to understand. The first side must be played at maximum volume; even then, only brief snatches of their conversation are understandable. The second side is almost entirely unintelligible. Thus, the remarks are fragmented and incomplete. Such as they are, interesting tidbits of information can be extracted from the tape.

More often, however, these truncated phrases offer only tantalizing suggestions about many aspects of MacDermot's later life and his trains. A few of these remarks are presented below.

Louis MacDermot and his wife lived in a small house on the grounds of the Oakland Zoological Gardens, also known as Durant Park, in the early 1940s after they had been "run out" of their mansion near 7th and Cypress Streets in Oakland.

Most of the Overfair Railway's 62 passenger cars were stored helter-skelter in a small canyon on the Park's grounds near 95th St. in south Oakland.

Some of them were moved down to the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad yard after the operation at the Oakland Zoo was discontinued about 1943 or 1944. The rest stayed in the canyon at the Zoo until after MacDermot's death in 1948. (What happened to them then? In all likelihood, they had probably rotted and disintegrated.)

Between 1936-1938, there was some talk about operating the Overfair Railway again at the San Francisco International Exposition held on Treasure Island in the late 1930s; but, "nothing came of that."

Al and Charlie had much discussion about a few MacDermot passenger cars, such as nos. 1001 and 1002, which had six-wheel trucks. (MacDermot drawing C-26, dated Feb. 26, 1913, shows six-wheel trucks on a passenger car 24 ft. long, with five compartments, and without a top.)

MacDermot kept a log book of his Oakland Zoo operations (and of other operations and events?); but that log book, and other MacDermot papers were destroyed in a fire. Al and Charlie mention a fire a couple times. It was apparently in a storage shed at Billy Jones' railroad yard.

Jones and Hoyle moved MacDermot and his wife with their belongings to the Campbell/Los Gatos area in 1945. The tape is frustratingly unintelligible at this point. There are many brief phrases here that need to be completed, such as the following:

Jones put Mac and his wife in an apartment over the garage.

Then, he put them in a small house.

Finally, Mac and Jones had a falling out.

Mrs. MacDermot died in 1946 or 1947.

These are intriguing samples that, hopefully, can be completed so that a more coherent and accurate account is available. If anyone is experienced and/or interested in transcribing an audio tape of poor quality, please contact us. Thanks to Guy LaMar for finding this tape.

MORE VOICES FROM THE PAST

Neil Vodden had a conversation with SPRS member Phil Reader on December 21, 1992 about Neil's recollections of Louis MacDermot and the Overfair Railway. Neil knew Louis for the last 5 five years of the latter's life.

Here are excerpts from the tape. (Due to technical problems, the entire interview was not recorded.)

These comments, which are not in chronological order, supplement or verify statements made by Charlie Hoyle in the previous "Voices from the Past" article.

Louis MacDermot's death in February 1948 was caused by prostate cancer. His wife had passed away two or three years earlier. According to Neil, Louis was born in 1877. (This date is within the limits set by the U. S. Census records of sometime in late 1887 or early 1877.)

During his very last years, he lived with Charlie Hoyle's family. Neil recalls Louis saying "Those were the happiest years of my life". Neil interprets that statement to be due to Louis' first experience with a large family of parents, children, and grandchildren.

The MacDermots had to move from their dilapidated mansion and estate in West Oakland in 1939 or 1940, probably because the estate had been taken over by the County for non-payment of taxes.

They then resided in a small house at the Oakland Zoological Gardens while Louis operated the #1913 engine with a few cars on a 1/2-mile track. Billy Jones used to visit MacDermot at his deteriorating mansion and at the Zoological Gardens.

Billy was apparently one of the few remaining friends. After that operation ceased, Billy Jones, Charlie Hoyle, and their colleagues moved the MacDermots and much of the rolling stock to the Wildcat Railroad's site at Billy's Los Gatos ranch. (There is some confusion among the accounts as to just where the MacDermots lived in the Los Gatos area and as to which families hosted them.)

Neil goes on to tell how Billy Jones eventually acquired the Overfair Railway equipment. During that period of the 1940s, Billy loaned money to Louis and also supported him and his wife with monthly contributions of cash when the couple were in the Los Gatos area. Billy kept a record of the amounts he had spent in supporting the MacDermots.

After Louis' death, Billy submitted a bill for \$6,000 to the estate's executor. Since there was no cash nor any other assets in the estate, the executor asked Billy to take the Overfair Railway equipment as payment. Billy readily accepted the offer. So, that is how Billy Jones acquired the Overfair Railway equipment for \$6,000.

Today, that price seems like a "steal". Yet, in those years, that amount was a typical year's wages for many workers. Moreover, it was a convenient and quick solution for settlement of the estate. How else could the equipment have been disposed of in the late 1940s?

Neil says the locomotives were always kept under cover in sheds, both by MacDermot and by Jones. According to other accounts, MacDermot was continually tinkering with the engines during the years. Thus, they were kept in good condition.

As a result, Al Smith and his Swanton Pacific Railroad colleagues were able to put engines # 1912 and 1914 into running condition even though they had not been operated since the closing of the

Panama Pacific International Exposition in late 1914.

Another interesting tidbit about Louis MacDermot's life was found by Bob Parkinson, the SPRS' diligent researcher of the libraries in Berkeley, Oakland, and San Francisco.

Bob found in the Alameda County Law Library, a listing of a legal action in which Louis MacDermot was the appellant or respondent. The summary of the case indicates that it concerned trust and stocks. The case had been started years ago by Charles Main, Louis' maternal grandfather. It was continued by Louis' mother, Mrs. Flora B. (Main) MacDermot.

After her death in October 1914, Bob discovered listings of a couple of other legal cases involving MacDermots, but he was unable to obtain details. Perhaps, some SPRS member knowledgeable in research of legal records may be able to look into the old law records.

The intriguing point about this case is that both Neil Vodden and Wilbur Shaw, the railroading author, state that Louis MacDermot was an excellent design engineer, but that he was not a businessman. The financial sides of his engineering endeavors, mainly the Overfair Railway, were financial disasters. So, it would be interesting to find out how successful Louis was in these legal actions.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Frances Stone has given us Elmer's binders of SPRS related material; including his copies of Executive Board and Committee meetings, training manuals, Rules of Operation, and a track design manual.

Also included is Elmer's collection of the annual OSH railroad calendars. We appreciate Frances' thoughtfulness in sending these items. They will be

They will be kept in remembrance of Elmer's many contributions to the Swanton Pacific Railroad Society, his counseling, his enthusiasm, and his leadership.

An original poster and ride ticket of the Calistoga Steam railroad has been forwarded to us by Mark Cooper, who received them from Dave and Kathy Kernberger of St. Helena, CA. We have reproductions of the poster, but this is our first original copy. It and the ticket are welcome additions to our collection. Thanks to Dave and Kathy.

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