On Track
With your director. Ed Carnegie

Can you believe it; the washout crib wall is completed? A lot of work has been accomplished in the last month. A crew has worked every weekend from Thursday or Friday through Monday in order to get the job done; and done it is at last. All we have now to do is some landscaping and track work.

Before the end of October, the last log was in place on the crib wall and the back filling behind the crib wall was well underway. The back fill that we used was delivered to us by a road crew from the County of Santa Cruz. Our crew then loaded the soil onto the side dumps mounted onto one of our flat cars. Each load of fill was about two yards and required about 15 minutes to make a round trip. As the back fill was being placed and compacted, live willow cuttings were placed between the logs in the crib wall. This is what will make it a "live crib wall."

The weekend of Nov 4 - 6 Dennis, Eric, Jan, Anthony, Tony, Dick, Bob, Richard, Fitz, Cosmo, Randy and I either worked at delivering, placing, and/or compacting approx. 53 loads of fill. Unfortunately, the trucks on the flat car were beginning to show signs of wearing because of the heavy loads that were being placed on them from moving the fill. The wear was causing the car frame and the truck to interfere, and eventually caused derailments. By the end of the day we were having a derailment about every other run. It became evident that some work now needed to be done on the car to enable it to haul the loads that we were carrying. After some modifications were made, the problems with derailments were gone at least for that day.

After the last log was in place and a good portion of the back filling had been placed, we then made an appointment for Fish and Game to make a site visit. They were also to supervise the removal of the coffer dam and creek diversion. Thanks goes to the Swanton Pacific Ranch who delivered the John Deere Bulldozer which we used to remove the Scotts Creek diversion.
The creek is back 11/6.

The next week started off on Friday with Veterans Day on Nov. 10. With the three-day weekend several of our volunteers—Dennis, Eric, Richard, Cosmo, Bob, Fitz, and I showed up under predicted skies of rain. Neither rain nor sleet could keep our volunteers away. Work continued on filling in the crib wall with backfill, willows, and more muscle building. Fortunately the skies remained sunny and the day was quite successful with no derailments for its 22 runs. On Saturday, the crew was increased with volunteers Dick, Andy, Mark, Anthony and Tony showing up to assist and to make another 19 runs of back fill.

Unfortunately, we also experienced a pretty massive derailment today. The entire flat car turned over, but not exactly where we wanted to dump the fill. After getting it righted, refilled and dumped where it was supposed to be, we ate lunch, rested and had a general meeting for turning in ballots for the election of officers.

While the backfill crew worked down the track, other volunteers, Bill and Molly worked on installing the radio on the 1914 and getting the railroad's repeater to give a signal every 15 minutes. Randy and Mark worked some more on the tracks that were derailing and they eventually solved the problem. Lifting eyes on the new fish tote truck were also installed, and Edski worked on getting the tank of the grader installed. Lou busily worked away in the cabooses on updating historical records and other data, while Martha, Trillium, Linda and Mary Ann worked on doing some general maintenance work and doing continual "weeding" on the overall grounds at College Park.

Cosmo diligently worked away, in between times, removing siding and other debris within the two cabooses recently acquired. This cleanup is being done in preparation of getting them ready for remodeling.

Everyone was having so much fun this weekend, trying to complete the project of backfilling that on Sunday, they all returned to do some more work. After three days of some fairly intense work, everyone took the next week off in order to rest up and take care of projects at home.

However, come the following Saturday, November 18, some of us were back. On Saturday, Marty, along with his friend Rick, came down and brought a stainless steel stove to assist with outdoor cooking. It was placed down by the BBQ pits and will eventually get hooked up to propane. The backfill crew consisted of Mac, Fitz, Dennis, Eric, Gander, Richard and me. We completed 27 runs on Saturday and a few more on Sunday, thus bringing the project to its final completion. All that is left to do now is some landscaping and track work.

**NEW MEMBERS**

New memberships received over the last month were as follows:

- John Furtado  Benicia
- Bryce Reynolds  San Jose
- Arlie Worley  San Mateo
On behalf of the entire organization we welcome each of 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 yourselves so that we can get to better know you and vice versa.

REMEMBER:
BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE SWANTON PREMISES PLEASE BE SURE TO FILL OUT THE WORK LOG KEPT IN THE MACHINE SHOP NEXT TO THE PHONE. This is the best record we have to keep track of your volunteer hours.

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.

Secretary's notes
The end of the year means the end of your membership. Dues are due by December 31, so don't get sidetracked. Renewal forms are on the cover sheet of this newsletter.

PUBLICITY AND EVENT COORDINATION
Mary Ann Carnegie

Projects:
December 09/10 Work Weekend
Work on cabooses, track work, tree removal, general cleanup, maintenance, clean up the sty at Folger! Continue cleaning up in machine shop, roundhouse and car barn work. Do final plantings at the washout.
December 30/31 Work weekend
Prepare for New Year's Eve Run
December 31 Fortnight and New Year's Eve Run

We have tried over the past few months to offer our volunteers very informal dinners based on their RSVP's. Unfortunately only a small handful have usually RSVP'd. As a result, meals will now be as catch as catch can until further notice.

NEW YEAR'S EVE RUN
The SPRR and our Swanton neighbors are planning on having a New Year's Eve celebration in the Cal Barn at Swanton. All of us will begin to mingle around five-thirty for appetizers, and other refreshments prior to the potluck. As tradition has it we will once again have the last train ride of the year on Sunday, Dec. 31, followed by the first train ride after midnight on January 1, 2001.

Every year we have traditionally enjoyed these festivities. If you have never been to New Year's Eve celebration at Swanton, be sure to mark this date on your calendar and be here to celebrate with all of us. Martha Stewart won't be there, but hopefully you will. This truly is a great family event for all to take part in, as well as for all of us to get to know our Swanton neighbors. Be sure to bring warm clothes, and prepare for a good time to ring in the New Year 2001. And remember if you are coming to the potluck bring a dish to feed at least 8 people. Choose a dish for either appetizers, main or side dish, salad, or dessert.
Reminder, no alcohol please, because of university regulations!
Down Behind the Railway
With your president, air monkey, and carman: 
Reynold 'Fitz' FitzPatrick
RGBFitz@aol.com 
Voice: 650.737.9584 Fax: 650.737.9583

Fellow Swantons

No recounts here!

As you may have noticed the ballots for this year's election of officers were opened a little late.

To accomplish the greatest participation of members we have delayed the tally until our December workday, Saturday, December 9, 2000. The new officers will start their terms in January next year.

Our Executive Board will have its last meeting of the year on Sunday, December 10, 2000. We will have the usual social hour before the meeting starting nine-ish and the meeting will be called to order at 10:00 AM in the Red House. All members are welcome to attend.

Jubilation!

My thanks to all those who finished the cribwall just on time and completed the backfill. Re-vegetation may be needed by the end of the year, if the willow cuttings haven't taken over.

Next on the list.

We haven't run out of things to do. Now that the cribwall is in place we need to ballast and level the track between the bridge and the washout - the heavy loads of material left it up. South of the washout is the grove at Cosgrove siding - three years of growth needs to be cleared, and then the mud slide over the rail south of Windy Point. For you what like track work - what more could you ask for?

Up at the yard there are two cabooses to be cleaned and refurbished as living quarters, shelter for the boiler water system to be built, welding on the ballast car, and completion of the many projects that were deferred while working on the crib wall.

Come on down and join the fun; many have the best of the coming holidays.

MacDermot and the Cagney 4-4-0, 1923-1925

An article and a letter in recent issues of Live Steam provide new information about Louis MacDermot's activities in the mid-1920s. The article, "Restoring the San Francisco Zoo Train," was written by Don Micheltete of the Golden Gate Railroad Museum (GGRM). Starting in October 1997, Micheltett and other GGRM members restored a 22" gauge Cagney 4-4-0 locomotive for the San Francisco Fleishacker Zoo. Following a complete overhaul, they put it into operation on August 24, 1998 after a hiatus of twenty years. The Zoo's train operation had been discontinued in 1978, and the locomotive was then stored in the elephant house. While researching the history of the Cagney locomotive, Micheltett found in the San Francisco Zoo's files an account of a previous restoration of the engine in 1923. This latter account was written by Henry W. Debshow, the financial sponsor of the earlier restoration. Another principal in that restoration was Joseph Cornelius Hayes, "a skilled machinist and all-around mechanic," a Ford dealer, an automobile salesman, and a full-fledged "wholesale dealer". Another member of the group was an SP engineer, Frank J. Keneally. Louis MacDermot was the fourth member of the coalition. According to Micheltett, their adventures in locating, restoring, and trying to set up a miniature railroad were "filled with intrigue and scheming". Apparently, MacDermot stayed out of their business shenanigans; he was occupied fully with the mechanical restoration of the locomotive. After Hayes and Keneally found the Cagney in a San Francisco scrap yard, Hayes traded its owner three cases of genuine, imported gin and a second-hand Oldsmobile for the Cagney. (At that
time during the Prohibition era, the gin carried a high bargaining value.

Dickow's fascinating history of those events is retold in full in Mischellett's article. Only those excerpts pertaining to MacDermot will be copied here. [After trading for the locomotive, Hayes] needed money, and a lot of it. Repairs to locomotives don't come cheap. A miniature railroad...could cost upwards of twenty thousand dollars, exclusive of labor.

One of Joe's many friends was another railroader named Louis M. MacDermot (sic). And he also knew Henry W. Dickow, co-owner of Pacific Radio Publishing Company, Inc., of San Francisco. Surely these men would help him build his railroad.

Louis (sic) MacDermot was a mechanical genius. He was also a wealthy man. Upon the death of his mother, who had extensive land holdings in the Santa Clara Valley, her estate of twenty-one million dollars was divided among her four survivors. Lonie was one of them...

The MacDermot estate in Oakland included a very large garage, which Louie converted into a machine shop. He, too, wanted to build a miniature railroad, but on a grandiose scale. A World's Fair, the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, was scheduled to open in San Francisco in 1915. Louie foresaw the need of a railroad within the Fair Grounds to transport the hundreds of thousands of visitors from place to place.

He made a contract with the Exposition management for the installation and operation of such a railroad on a commission basis; the management would receive twenty percent of the take. He then hired a crew of highly skilled mechanics from the Baldwin Locomotive Works, and the task of building the locomotives and passenger coaches began in earnest.

When completed, the project absorbed $250,000 of Lonie's fortune. He built three of the finest small locomotives, a switch engine, and a large number of passenger coaches, each with a capacity of sixteen people. And each of the three locomotives could pull sixteen fully loaded cars. The locomotives were of the Pacific-type...they were coal burners, about five feet in height, and carried the numbers 1912, 1913, and 1914. MacDermot labeled his system the Overfair Railway. The opening of the memorable Exposition brought disappointment and near-breakup to MacDermot. During the first week or so, only a scant few dozen passengers boarded his trains. He was ready to abandon the venture and turn it over to the management without reward of any kind. But the management pleaded with him to carry on, at least for another week or two. He would no longer be required to pay twenty percent of his take for the concession privilege. His contract was canceled. So he agreed to try it once more.

Then the worm turned. Soon he was unable to handle the crowds that clamored to board his trains. The reason was simple. During the opening days of the Exposition, people preferred to walk from place to place, building to building, to see it all. On subsequent visits they wanted to see perhaps one or two exhibition halls, and to get there quickly they rode the train. The closing of the Exposition found MacDermot with his railroad intact, and money to burn. And burn it did—all of it.

He (MacDermot) agreed to help Joe Hayes in every way, short of financial. His reluctance to invest in the new ventures remains a lifelong mystery. Without his skill and knowledge, however, the little locomotive now at the Fleshbacker Zoo would never have been rebuilt. He worked days and nights in Joe's basement shop, and he seldom uttered a word. He stayed with the project to its completion, then served as engineer when operations began in a nearly environment park.

One of his prized possessions was a tiny little steam engine, the first he ever made. It was built with watchmaker's precision. It is known that he made numerous bad investments, for he was a notably poor businessman, and along with countless others, he went down in the Great Depression of '29 and the early '30s.

He spent the last years of his life in the hills near Santa Cruz, where he lived in a child's playground on the property of strangers who fed him, and he died penniless. His earthly possessions were a battered shirt and trousers, and the little steam engine—the first he built, and which was left to the young daughter of the family who cared for him.
Perhaps a plaque to honor his memory will someday grace the railroad depot at Fleishacker Zoo.

The fourth man to join the miniature railroad venture was Henry W. Dichow (the writer of this history). He supplied the sorely needed cash, in return for which he was named President of the railroad, with nothing to reinforce this illustrious title but a badly damaged little locomotive in the basement of Joe Hayes' home.

Hayes ensured Dichow that a deal had been consummated with Mr. Friedel at San Francisco’s Ocean Beach (Park) whereby the little railroad would be allowed to run the full distance of the amusement zone.

[Unfortunately, this assurance was not true, but the fast-talking Hayes then] told Dichow that he had found an infinitely more promising site for the railroad — in an amusement Park called Pacific City, in San Mateo [This location is now called Coyote Point County park along the bay front of San Mateo and Burlingame]. The operators of prime concessions, such as the roller coaster and merry-go-round, had reaped a harvest in the two years past.

Inaugural Day for the Pacific City Miniature Railway] came soon thereafter. The new concession and its operators were received warmly, and the usual crowds scrambled for first places in line to ride the little train.

Only a quarter-mile of straightway track had so far been laid. But it served the purpose admirably. Up and down the track went the train, and the nickels and dimes came rolling in. Numerous riders paid 55 each for the privilege of riding the cab with the engineer, holding the throttle and doing what they were told. One enthusiastic offered $23 for the privilege of serving as engineer. But this was Louis MacDermot's job. You couldn't get him away from the throttle. As always, he worked without pay.

Disaster struck suddenly. [The Pacific City Amusement park went bankrupt], and all concessions and equipment would be impounded.

Joe Hayes, although frustrated and heartbroken, has a plan. He was one of the world's best salesmen. He sold himself to the management of Pacific City: He would serve as night watchman and protector of the park. Immediately he went to work.

The first night on the job he cleared the grounds of all but a few trusted friends. He sent Louis MacDermot into Burlingame where a section gang of the Southern Pacific track-repair project was making ready to retire for the night. Louie hired the entire crew, heading each man a $5 bill. They went to Pacific City, tore up the rails, removed the ties, lifted the locomotive onto a low flat-bed track to which short rails had been attached, and then took off for an old abandoned livery stable in Burlingame, where the engine was hidden. The passenger coaches and rails and ties soon followed. The following morning nothing remained of Joe Hayes or the railroad but a memory. He succeeded in stealing his own railroad.

Almost two years of grueling physical labor by four men — Hayes, MacDermot, Kennedy, and Dichow — went for naught. The money, too.

A few months later, in an article entitled "Voices from the Past", I wrote about a tape recording of a conversation between Al Smith and Charlie Hoyle. Many parts of their talk were unintelligible due to the poor quality of the recording. The phrases 'Cagney locomotive' and "San Francisco Zoo" occurred several times on one section of the recording. I was unable, however, to make sense of their remarks because of the high background noise in the recording. Fortunately now, Michael's article explains clearly what Al and Charlie were discussing. Thus, this account of MacDermot's activities in the 1920s fills a gap in our chronology of his life.

Dickow's description of MacDermot as a 'mechanical genius' and as a taciturn person were attributes used by other writers about MacDermot, such as, Frederic Shaw and Harre Demoro. Dickow was puzzled as to why MacDermot did not contribute financially to the Hayes/Dichow venture; Dickow mentions several times the wealth of
MacDermot. Well, MacDermot may have been so upset by the financial losses of the Overfair Railway that he did not want to go through another similar flasco. He had learned his lesson.

Dickow's article contains items about MacDermot that I have not seen elsewhere, such as the details of the contract for the concession at the PPIE (20% of the 'take' to go to the PPIE), the hiring of mechanics from the Baldwin Locomotive Works to build the locomotives and cars, the lack of passengers in the first few weeks of operation. Dick must have heard these items from MacDermot during their close collaboration during that period.

When Dickow says, "the closing of the Exposition found MacDermot with his railroad intact, and money to burn. And burn it he did - all of it.", the former must have meant the money Louis inherited and not any profits from the Overfair Railway. Other sources, Shaw and Demoro, say he broke even after putting $250,000 into the construction and operation whereas the PPIE's "official history" states that the gross receipts of the Overfair Railway were less than $100,000.

Dickow's short description of MacDermot's final years in the Los Gatos area brought a "Letter to the Editor" in the July 2000 issue of Live Steam. Douglas Akira, of Monterey Park in Southern California, wrote that his friends Jim Lawrence and Frank Veniola stayed with Billy Jones as house guests for a week in 1964. Akira and Lawrence are members of the Los Angeles 'Live Steamers', as was Veniola who is now deceased. Veniola was a good friend of Billy Jones through whom the former came to know MacDermot personally. Jim Lawrence takes objection to Dickow's statement about where and how MacDermot lived in his last years. Lawrence states that MacDermot was housed in an "upper room apartment at his good friend Billy Jones' ten acre plum tree ranch" and not "in a playhouse on the property of strangers". Lawrence's statements agree with the recollections of the SPRS's old-timers who were associated with Billy Jones in those years. According to the information we have found, Billy Jones befriended MacDermot while the latter was running a short line version of the Overfair Railway at the Oakland Zoological Gardens in the early 1940s. After the demise of that operation about 1944, Jones took MacDermot and the Overfair equipment to his ranch in Los Gatos. (See the articles about MacDermot's final years with the Billy Jones and the Charlie Hoyle families that appeared in recent issues of the SPRS newsletter.) We in the SPRS are pleased to learn that MacDermot and Jones are still remembered by other "Live Steamers". Do they have any other such recollections?

Dickow mentions MacDermot's "little steam engine - "the first he built, and which was left to the young daughter of the family who cared for him". Has anyone heard about that? Would the daughter be in the Jones or the Hoyle family?

Many thanks to Don Michelelli for his discovery and publication of the Dickow article, which has added much to our history of MacDermot. Michelelli's account of restoring the Cagney locomotive is fascinating. It describes well and interestingly not only the history of the locomotive since 1904 but also the details of its restoration by a dedicated and competent GRRM crew. Of interest to those in the Santa Cruz area is the news that this Cagney engine was operated as the Bay Shore Limited on the Santa Cruz beach between 1907 and 1915. Michelelli found a connection of the Cagney locomotive to the Overfair Railway's engines here at the SPRS, that association will be related in a future story.

Safety Simon Says:

Happy Holidays and remember to drive safely so that we will see you all for the New Year's celebrations.