

## SWANTON PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY

Number 105

Cal Poly

February 2002

### ON TRACK with your Director

Ed Carnegie:

We had a wonderful NEW Year's Eve. There was no need for long underwear and besides, our neighbors, the McCrarys kept us all warm. Bud with a "night of a 1,000 ties", and Ken with his 20 year tradition of hot mulled apple cider. The master brewer Ken has this down to a fine art, with just the right amount of apple juice, orange juice and spices. Not only were we kept warm with the fire and hot cider, but the weather cooperated--we had no rain. We were bracketed with rain the day before and the day after. Later in the article you will see photos of heavy flows in Scott Creek as a result of the rains.

Preparations for the New Years run however began a few days before. Some of our volunteers began to trickle in on Wed., Dec. 28. The Campbells and Andy made sure the 1912 steam engine would be in prime operating condition. No problems there, however when they went to work on the diesel 502, the battery was not being charged. After three trips and a few telephone calls, on New Year's Eve we were finally successful in getting an alternator to charge the battery.

Thurs., Jan. 29, we arrived, as did Bob Wilkinson. Friday brought in Ken Fischer, Geoff Tobin and Dennis Johnson. As the volunteers arrived, each seemed to take on their favorite projects. Bob installed two phones in the roundhouse, where he made the statement of "I don't know why I put phone lines in here"--ironically the next three calls were all for Bob!

Due to the rains, most of our members tried to stay dry by working on inside projects, i.e. working on the motor car, the drives for the flail chopper, the alternator for the 502, rebuilding the sanders on the 1912, installing telephones and their lines in the roundhouse, or working on the cabooses.

As the New Year approached, Martha, Carol, and Mary Ann started getting the Cal Barn ready for the potluck. For those of you who weren't there you missed a starry night of decorations. All the CD's collected over the year were glued, threaded, and made into reflective discs or Saturns and hung from the rafters. Approximately 75 came for dinner. As the

night progressed the crowds grew to 200 plus for the train runs. Had life- members Brenda Smith, Kevin Piper and son Austin drop in for a few runs and visit. It was a real treat to see all of them.

After the final run in the new year and getting all the equipment put away an end to another successful event was called at 2:30AM. Most slept in the next day, but stirrings were occurring around 9AM. Later in the morning a couple visited us from Australia. We gave them a ride and tour of the facilities. Some light rains came, and after checking out the creek and track all was holding pretty good.

Tuesday we left, but before leaving Andy and I checked out what the rains may have done after raining all night. The wye was under water, the daffodil field was completely flooded, the culverts were gushing water but our new crib wall from the washout two years ago was holding its ground. The two culverts were working very well. If we didn't have them we would have mud and water running over the track destroying the track work we did this summer.

The first work weekend of the New Year, various projects were accomplished. Track crew (Dennis, Erik, & Andy.) worked on constructing a drainage ditch at the wye to remove runoff from the hill. Erik is becoming a very efficient backhoe operator, doing most of the work. Marty, Edski, and Natasha worked on the 1912 by pressure washing the boiler. Bob Wilkerson installed a phone line between all four cabooses. While Fitz, Bill McNab and I finished the water system for the first caboose; Mark Cooper, Corine Monroe, and Randy Jones worked on the 1500. Mike Robinson worked in the carbarn welding on the hopper car. Martha and Dick Toulson took decorations down from the Cal Barn and Lou tended to January rose pruning. Fitz, Andys McMean, & McLean, Dennis and myself relocated the rails from behind the cabooses to a new storage location north of the bridge. This allowed Andy McLean and I to construct a retaining wall along the south side of the curve coming from the roundhouse to the meadow. By spring this area will be all cleaned up and ready for our grounds crew.

**REMINDER:**

BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE SWANTON PREMISES, **PLEASE**, BE SURE TO FILL OUT THE WORK LOG FOR THE HOURS THAT YOU WORKED. THE WORK LOG IS KEPT IN THE MACHINE SHOP NEXT TO THE PHONE and SIGN IT.

With your president, air monkey, and carbarnist;  
Reynold "Fitz" FitzPatrick  
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My Fellow Swantoons:

Happy birthday to those Aquarians, and antiquarians, among us.

Here in the middle of California winter we look forward to a little more rain and longer days in which much can be accomplished.

At the top of the To-Do list, after finding the list, is the rebuild of the motor car. Several committee meetings reduced the drive options to a belt drive system, championed by Randy, and a hydraulic system, championed by Ed.

Randy originally designed and built the motorcar as a belt drive and it worked well for many years both here and at Calistoga., lending Randy's championship a great deal of credibility. How it came to be a hydraulic drive is a story in itself.

Over in the hydraulic camp we have fewer moving parts and things to break, but not the coasting ability of the belt drive system.

I decided we should use a hydraulic system as; I believe simpler is better, industry is replacing multiple belt drive mechanisms with either a single serpentine belt or an electric or hydraulic motor, we have an electric drive workcar in the works to answer the coasting question, and we can have the motor car in operation before Al Smith Day.

To that end I asked those involved to proceed with rebuilding the motorcar as a hydraulic unit and order such parts as necessary.

Second on the list is the completion of the refitting of the cabooses followed by track work, car inspection, ballast car completion, air brake cylinder repair (thanks to Marty for finding cylinder cups), and the rest of the To-Do list.

Saturday, February 9<sup>th</sup> is our next workday and the following Sunday, the 10<sup>th</sup> we will have our first Executive Board meeting this year starting at 9:00AM in the Redhouse. All members are welcome to come and observe.

Come on over, lots to do, we'll have fun. Fitz

## 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.

## **MARK YOUR CALENDARS - upcoming events**

Feb. 09/10 Work weekend

Mar 09/10 Work weekend

April 13 Work day

April 14 Al Smith Day Run-Be sure to mark this your calendar as this run opens our RR Season.

If you will be participating in the February work weekend-- please be sure and let us know I would like to provide the dinner for all on Sat. evening. Having an RSVP will allow for better planning. Call 805-995-3659 or [ecarnegi@calpoly.edu](mailto:ecarnegi@calpoly.edu)



Andy checking track during flooding at the Wye



Flow through culvert from McNab Redwood grove



## **CONTRIBUTIONS ARE DUE FOR 2002**

Just a reminder, contributions for 2002 are due and payable. Submit via the form in the newsletter.



Crew moving rail

### **OBSERVATION CAR By SPRR Volunteers**

A Reminder: The Swanton Pacific Railroad Society offers self-study courses in Safety and in Conductor & Brakeman. The Safety course is a requirement for those who wish to work on building the railroad. The Conductor & Brakeman course introduces Swantons to the running of the railroad and includes such topics as signaling, coupling, and run day procedure.

To obtain an electronic version of the manuals, contact Tony & Anthony Pratkanis at [peitho@cats.ucsc.edu](mailto:peitho@cats.ucsc.edu). They can be slo-mailed at 166 Montclair Dr., Santa Cruz, CA 95060. A hard copy of the manuals is also available.

Trees Trees Trees  
By Bill McNab

What started out as one bedraggled redwood tree planted in early 1994 has now finally become a hundred planted and growing redwoods near the south end of the railroad tracks. It took every eager and some (maybe many) not so eager railroad volunteers to accomplish this task. We also had help from friends of Cal Poly, alumni, and enthusiasts.

The trials and tribulations cover from tree number one 1994 to and through December 2001 when tree 100 was planted before year-end.

In between we all learned a lot. All the way from deer sampling all the really small seedlings to the deer rubbing their horns on the young trees causing severe bark removal and broken branches.

Along the way time-wise we encountered a rail bridge washout, a rail bank complete washout, numerous mudslides covering the tracks, and oh yes did we mention the poison oak.

Our Director, Ed Carnegie, acquired a new nickname that over time he has proved again and again how appropriate it is. Of course Ed shares some of the fame with Backhoe Bob also known as Bob Nichols.

By the time year 2001 rolled around we had pretty much perfected the collection of seedlings, planting into one gallon containers, half a year later planting into 5 gallon pots, grow them another year with water and TLC, then at about 3 feet tall, the trees were ready to plant.

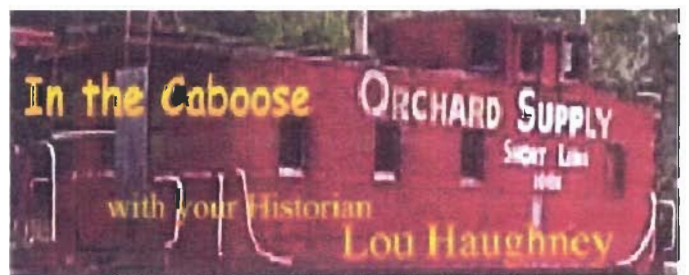
It all started with about a 5-foot redwood volunteer tree growing so close to the car barn that branches blocked the rollup door track. To operate the door someone had to first pull the tree back so the track of the door was clear and then someone else operated the door.

At the end of a RR board meeting the problem tree became the focal point. Discussion centered on solution. First was, cut it down, get it out of there and be done with it, Why the nerve of the tree to grow there! Others took pity on the tree, felt that if it could survive there, that it was pretty determined, and we ought to help it survive elsewhere.

Next month, the plan, action, and problem.



New wall along the track



EARLY NEWSPAPER ARTICLE ABOUT THE  
OVERFAIR RAILWAY

On the opening day of the Panama Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, the local newspapers carried many articles on the Exposition's features and attractions. Bob Parkinson, our SPRS researcher of archives, found the following article about the Overfair Railway.

From *The San Francisco Bulletin* of Feb. 20, 1915  
OVERFAIR RAILWAY

Rapid means of transporting the footsore visitors along the scenic shore of the Exposition Grounds.

The Overfair Railway will carry footsore visitors about the Exposition grounds, and every person who rides behind the miniature locomotives will be impressed with the practicability of the railroad and perchance ponder upon its possibilities. It is a miniature railway, but not a toy.

The Overfair Railway project was conceived by L. M. MacDermot of Oakland, and in his shops across the bay the necessary locomotives and cars have been manufactured. The engines are of the Pacific type and are a marvel of compactness. They are about one-third the size of the ordinary engine; but just as carefully constructed. This means that every little part is the same in size, performs the same duty, but has been modeled just a little more carefully.

The locomotive is twenty-five feet long and burns hard coal, thus eliminating the smoke that comes from the use of soft coal. The cab is sufficiently large to comfortably house the engineer. And the locomotive is powerful enough to pull thirty loaded cars, if necessary.

The cars will seat sixteen people comfortably. They are twenty feet long and have curtains, which may be lowered, in case of rain. The passengers are afforded ample room to be comfortably seated.

The Overfair Railway will carry its passengers about two and a half miles. The line is double tracked and in every feature the "safety first" rule is adhered to. The terminus will be at the southeast corner of Machinery Hall. The line runs along the Marina, giving a beautiful view of the Bay, to the Exposition race track, where it branches off, one line going as far as the drill field at the extreme west end of the grounds, and the other going to the grandstand at the stadium.

Several trains will be operated on schedule time. There will be six stations where passengers may get on or off. The track will be equipped throughout with a block signal system, the same as used on standard roads. The trains are equipped with Westinghouse air brakes, and experienced and competent engineers will be in charge.

The engines used by the Overfair Railway are the first of the size to be constructed. They were designed by Mr. MacDermot and constructed at his machine shop in Oakland. They have opened a new field in locomotive construction, for they can be utilized by contractors in transporting supplies, by excavators in hauling dirt trains, by mining companies in

moving their ores. Their uses are many, and already Mr. MacDermot has received many calls for similar locomotives.

At the Exposition, the Overfair Railway promises to be of great convenience. The grounds stretch over three miles in length, a long walk for any person, and a walk that will take much time. But the Overfair Railway will take the footsore visitor from one end of the grounds to the other, quickly, comfortably, and free from dust, at a very small charge.

Comments by LCH. The article answers questions I have been researching about how and where the passengers got on and off the Overfair trains and about the layout of the tracks. The article states that there were six stations located along the layout for boarding and discharging passengers. One site map we have of the Exposition hints at the location of these "stations", but does not specifically identify them. We do have a MacDermot drawing of these passenger stations. They are simple, lengthy platforms with separated lanes for entrance and exit. The article also confirms what had been surmised from the site drawings; namely, that a branch line veered off from the main shore line to a station at the grandstands on the southeast side of the large athletic and parade field.

An intriguing paragraph in the article tells of possible future uses of the 1/3-scale trains. Undoubtedly, the anonymous writer must have obtained that information from MacDermot; that is, the speculation that similar trains could be used in the future in mining installations and in large construction sites. The statement, "Their uses are many, and Mr. MacDermot has received many calls for similar locomotives" is interesting in that it tells of MacDermot's hopes to establish a future business. Unfortunately, his hopes were never realized. Exception for his operation of engine #1913 and a few passenger cars at the Oakland Zoo in the early 1940's, there was no other use of the equipment in his lifetime nor was there any construction of more locomotives.

Frederic Shaw touches upon this aspect of MacDermot's life in the chapter on the Overfair Railway in the former's book *Little Railways of the World*. Shaw writes, "Something happened in his [MacDermot's] later life between the concept and the realization, as it does to many of us". That statement describes the fate of MacDermot's many dreams about continued use and expansion of the Overfair railway equipment.

(An article in the March 2001 SPRS newsletter tells of the only other MacDermot dream of which we are aware; the article is entitled, "MacDermot and the North Pacific Coast Railway".)