

## SWANTON PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY

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### ON TRACK with your Director

Ed Carnegie:

Well, here it is 2004 already—a lot has been going on and we are sorry that this newsletter is a little late, but as the saying goes, “Better late than never!” Cold and wet has been a sign of the times lately, as 11 out of the last 12 weekends it has rained—so it has been wet, wet, wet. Even so, we had a series of successful work days. We also had a Cal Poly alumni donate a small bulldozer & trailer that Fitz and I picked up and brought over to Swanton. Bob Wilkinson is presently researching for additional information on the tractor so that we will be able to maintain and operate it properly.

Additional progress has been made on the water tank truck that will have multiple uses, i.e. watering trees, spraying weeds, and as an emergency fire water supply. Final touch up work was completed on the newly painted hopper car. Marty Campbell had the lettering cut, and so all that remains is to place the lettering, and then put the car in service.

The track crew has been busy replacing ties and the first switch at San Vicente Junction, which is the lead to the siding tract at our station. Many of the ties were in definite need of replacement. At the same time, they moved the switch-stand further away from the track for safety reasons. After the ties were replaced, ballast was applied and the track was realigned.

The roundhouse crew, were busy installing a new brake valve in the 1912, and making preparations to paint the drivers on the 1913. On the days prior to the New Year's Eve Run, Marty Campbell put together a rigid-foam-oven to heat up the drivers so that they could be painted in the cool atmosphere, so typical of Swanton this time of the year. By the end of the day the drivers looked brand spanking new with the new paint job and with the machining done earlier on the tires of the drivers. By the 30<sup>th</sup> of Dec. we had a full crew getting things spruced up for New Year's Eve. Pete McFall and Ernie Ortiz outdid themselves by putting up lights on anything that could carry them. They lit up the Cal

Barn, the walkway up to the barn, the SP, and the turntable. Olin Anderson, a recent volunteer, made some marker lights for the end-passenger cars, which added a great touch for the night's run to illuminate the end of the train.

In addition to the New Year's Eve potluck, which was a roaring success, our work crews in the preceding days had more than enough to eat, thanks to Bob Wilkinson, Carol Campbell and Mary Ann. As a bystander, it was like going from one meal to the next. By the time New Year's Eve came around, the train crews were anxious to operate and get going. The food was being cooked and the first train left around 5. The bonfire had already been on for a few hours under the leadership of Ken Fischer. One could not get within ten feet of the fire without singeing their eyelashes! The feeding frenzy started slightly before 7 where more than 70 friends gathered to participate in the potluck. I am always amazed at how well an unorganized potluck comes off with a large variety of tasty foods that fits any gourmet's palate.

Trains started running again around 8. Ken McCrary kept our insides warm with his 20 some plus year tradition of serving his special hot mulled cider, and the huge bonfire kept us warm on the outside. With discussions between Martha, Bud, Ken and others, it was decided that this was the 25<sup>th</sup> New Year's Celebration at Swanton. It was also mentioned that the first year there were only nine chugs from the engine till they came to the end of track [there are 4 chugs to a wheel revolution—so this means there was only about 16 ft. of track until the end of the line. Today we have 1500 chug chugs to a trip!].

This year's run was a huge success with about 200 people showing up. We also had a very international flair to the event, in that we had about 12-15 guests formally dressed in tuxedos, minks, and formals coming from Russia, and earlier in the day we had guests from England. Both groups informed us that the only reason they came was to see the infamous trains! We were also most fortunate to just have a few

sporadic sprinkles during the early part of the day; it was relatively warm and dry throughout the evening, and then the rains came down around 2am, just after all the equipment had been put away. By the next morning we registered a little over 1.87" of rain.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to all the volunteers that have helped throughout the year. Each of you have contributed in so many many ways to help make this a very rewarding year as we continue to make progress in the restoration and operation of the Swanton Pacific Railroad. A Happy New Year to all of you, and I wish the very best to all of you and your families.

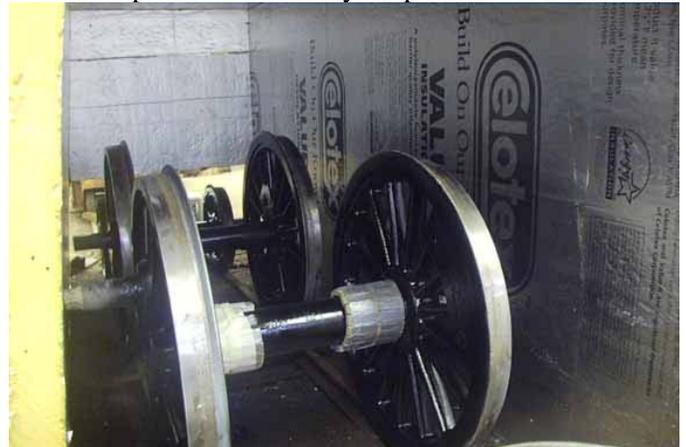


Marker lights on Chief Car

**IMPORTANT news re: Redhouse:** Right now we have minimum access for overnight accommodations. Please keep me informed of your plans.



Visitors from Russia



Marty's Hot House to paint 1913 drivers

**REMINDER: BEFORE LEAVING SWANTON'S PREMISES, PLEASE, BE SURE TO FILL OUT & SIGN THE WORK LOG FOR HOURS YOU WORKED. THE WORK LOG IS IN THE MACHINE SHOP NEXT TO THE PHONE.**



New Year's Eve fire, thanks to Ken and Geoff

**UPCOMING EVENTS/PUBLICITY**

Mary Ann Carnegie

- Jan. 10/11 first work weekend of 2004
- Feb. 14/15 Valentine's Day work weekend
- 16 Presidents Day 3-day-weekend
- March 13/14 St. Patrick's Day work weekend
- April 3 Work Day getting ready for Sunday
- April 4 AL SMITH DAY RUN [Palm Sun]
- April 13/14 Easter weekend—

**NO WORKDAY SCHEDULED**

As we reflect back on the past year we hope you were all able to accomplish all you had planned to do, though we all know that even the best intentions have a way of getting sidetracked by unexpected circumstances. The unforeseen twists and turns of life are always a challenge, but as we reflect on last year's problems &

struggles we can & will push them aside as a dim memory, as we now focus on the new year & new beginnings. The year ahead is filled with many new plans & lots of celebrations, so stay on track & mark your calendars for the upcoming events. We have listed the next few work weekends. Obviously the immediate one is in Jan. It is followed by the three day weekend in February. This work weekend also happens to be on Valentine's Day so we will try to think of some special festivities for this holiday. Then March marches in with what we hope to celebrate with our usual corn-beef & cabbage meal.



Three Jokers, or Our Juniors at work

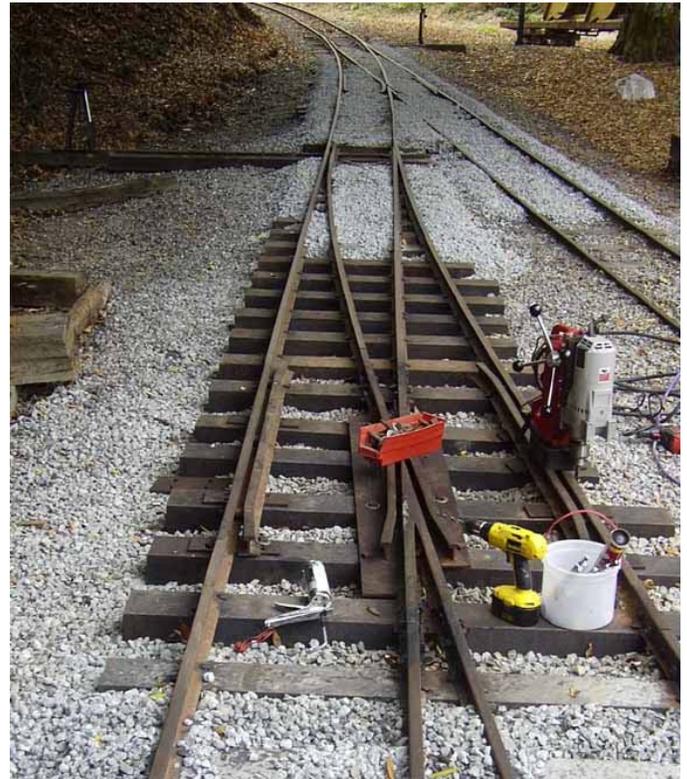
Please note this year Easter Sunday falls on the second Sunday of the month & thus we **WILL NOT HAVE A REGULARLY SCHEDULED WORK WEEKEND** that month. However, because Al's birthday is April 9 we will be celebrating the beginning of our "train running season" AKA AL SMITH DAY on Sunday, April 4—the next closest Sunday to what would be his birthday. Sunday, April 4, will also mark the beginning of daylight savings – we loose an hour, but gain more daylight! On Saturday, April 3, we will be getting everything spruced up for the run. Be sure to mark your calendars for these dates.

Now for the rest of the year. . . .If any of you would like to host a workday evening meal on the Saturday nights you are more than welcomed to do so. If you would like to have it with a theme, special entertainment (?) whatever, just let me know as I would very much like to put a calendar of events together and have it posted on the website. Knowing or having this information might perhaps help draw an even more international crowd, or even bring out some of our more gourmet cooks to try out new recipes on us—we will however, have the cooks try their food first on themselves—we don't want any "Mad train people" on the premises!

I too would like to take this opportunity to thank each of you for all the support you have showered on all of us throughout the past year. Each and everyone of you always stepped up to the plate to help out whenever

or however any assistance was needed in order to make the tasks easier—be it with cooking, cleaning, washing, serving, hosting our guests, offering advice, coming up with ideas, etc. etc. you could always be counted on to help out, and your assistance was always appreciated. So I thank you all very very much, and certainly look forward to working with all of you in the coming year.

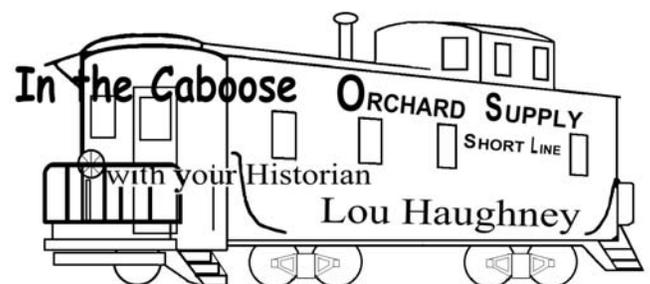
MAC



Switch work, replacing ties



Tank car on the rail for the first time



## MOVING THE OVERFAIR RAILWAY TO THE OAKLAND ZOO, 1940

By Lou Haughney

After being stored for 25 years on the MacDermot estate's grounds, the Overfair Railway's rolling stock was moved in November 1940 to a new home at the Oakland Zoo (then known formally as the Alameda County Zoological Gardens). Finally, Louis MacDermot had found a place where he could operate his railroad again even though the operation would be much reduced in size and scope from the layout at the P.P.I.E.

As stated in last month's report, the move was likely caused by the pending loss of the mansion and grounds to the city or the county. An unverified report said MacDermot lost the property because he did not or could not pay the annual property taxes. Certainly, his financial assets had deteriorated by that time in the late 1930's.



Figure 1 Loading an Overfair Pacific locomotive for transfer to the Oakland Zoo from the MacDermot estate. Nov. 1940. Louis MacDermot in dark clothes on the right. SPRS Archive Photo No. 1940-1944 LMM-0001 (CD-OP 1913GO~1). Photograph from the archives of the *Oakland Tribune*

Whatever the reason, the move began in early November 1940, according to a lengthy article in the *Oakland Tribune* on November 10, 1940, page A11. Just as he had done in 1914 and 1915 to transfer the Overfair equipment to the P.P.I.E., so in 1940 Louis MacDermot had to engage a heavy-duty hauling company to transfer the rolling stock. Figure 1 shows MacDermot watching the draymen maneuvering a Pacific locomotive onto a low-bed, double 8-wheeler dray. Louis' face shows a hint of a smile in anticipation of soon running the engine on a track despite the fact

that he was leaving his life-long home of about 60 years. Loading the locomotive occurred out on the street.. Probably, a temporary track was laid from the engine's shop to the street. The buildings in the background indicate how the character of the neighborhood had changed by 1940 from that of a neighborhood for large, luxurious mansions and grounds built around 1870's to an area of commercial and business interests. No longer was the neighborhood the desirable residential area for the wealthy social and business leaders of Oakland and San Francisco, such as were Louis' parents.

The loading of the passenger cars is shown in Figure 2. Here, the draymen are pulling the cars onto a platform on the grounds, near the mansion in the background. The weather-worn condition of the cars is evident in this photo after 2-1/2 decades of outdoor storage helter skelter throughout the grounds. The draymen seem to be performing their work in a careful but routine procedure by using the classical tools of inclined planes and pulleys.



Figure 2: Loading an Overfair passenger car onto a truck for the move to the Oakland Zoological Gardens in November 1940. Note the MacDermot mansion in the background. SPRS Archive Photo No. 1940-1944 LMM-0002 (CD-BB IMAGE30) From the *Oakland Tribune* files and from the Doug Richter collection.

The MacDermot estate was located in the northwest area of Oakland, bounded by 7th and 8th streets between Center and Cypress Streets; the latter is now named the Mandela Parkway. The Oakland Zoo is in the southeast part of Oakland. The straight line distance between the two sites is about 8 miles.

Neither the costs of moving the equipment nor the parties paying for the move are stated in the *Oakland Tribune* articles. Perhaps, MacDermot still had a small amount of cash on hand, or some benefactor helped.