

SWANTON PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY

Number 132

Cal Poly

June 2004

ON TRACK with your Director

Ed Carnegie:

Aloha! We had a wonderful 14 days in the warm tropics of Hawaii and the Fanning Islands. The Fanning Islands are 1,100 miles South of the Big Island of Hawaii, 59 miles north of the equator. It is a small atoll where the highest elevation is 15 ft.; the native population is about 800 that literally live off the land and sea. It was good to have a break away, but now back to reality.

First I would like to thank all of you that filled in while Mary Ann and I had a luxurious restful cruise. We thought about you all the time (ha, ha) but the swaying coconut palms, rum/pineapple umbrella drinks kept our minds occupied, but we are in dire need to get back to the SP Fitness Center after all the continuous dining.

Mother's Day weekend saw only a small but active group of volunteers. Much was done: the train field was disked, a new motor was installed on the cement mixer, a new starter was installed on the crane car, trees along the track all got watered, plus more but this seems so long ago that I can't recall everything!

Upon returning I was able to download my email, all 512 messages, and was pleased to see that Fitz and crew built a towing winch that will pull the locomotives out of the round house without the use of the motor car or diesel. This is a project that has been discussed many times over the years and is now completed.

Andy and Richard have been working on cleaning and landscaping in the midst of planning a lawn area between the machine shop and the round-house. When completed, this will add a classic

touch to that area. So if you know how to install sprinklers and plant a lawn, contact Andy. Mahalo!

Down Behind the Railway

With your president, air monkey, and cabernets;

Reynolds "Fitz" FitzPatrick

RGBFitz@aol.com 650.737.9584

My fellow Swantoons:

Usually I look forward to what to do next. This time I'll recap what we did on the first of the year's second work weekend with all the usual suspects in attendance, and an occasional comment of things to do.

First though: Pete, in his role as Society Secretary, would appreciate you sending any change of your email address to him at pmcfall@prodigy.net

Aaron, Logan, and Eric rescued the plastic pipes we have for repairs from windblown leaves and placed them in a finely crafted pipe rack they built from scrap tube. Waste not, want not. And practice welding skills.

Frank and Andy, and Dennis later in the day, cleared away more debris from around Cosgrove in preparation for relocation of the north switch. Track work to be done, bring your gloves.

The ever industrious Ernie cleaned up the vegetation between the main line and the OSH caboos and had a hand in repairing the watering system in the Garden Of Weedin'.

Martha and Marti were busy attacking weeds of various sorts and then whipped up a very fine dinner Saturday.

After lunch Frank whipped out his hedge trimmer and gave haircuts to those shrubs in need. Thanks Frank. You're the Tops in landscaping

considering you joined a railroad, not a horticultural, society.

Our own Mr. 'T' kept up with the housekeeping we otherwise miss between giving nickel tours to a few folks who stopped by while on a weekend drive.

Stan, Pete, and Randy continued working on the electrical system for engines and railcars; finalized the design location for connectors, performed a practicality test, and installed some equipment. This system will provide electric over air braking for trains, decent public address to passengers while traversing our railway, and lights for night operation. As you know we now employ a straight air brake system; this new system will bring our braking system into the modern age and skip a couple of generations of systems used in the industry while keeping the appearance of our historic railway. Wiring, soldering, screwing, and drilling skills are needed. Anyone have a tinning pot?

Geoff located an outfit in Tennessee that has parts for the Chinese crawler and Bob W. contacted them to order the things we need. Bob also worked on the crawlers wiring, just generally having a fine time as a break from working on the 1913.

EdSki finished welding the gussets in the Keystone car, and that was an all day job. Now we have to get Bob's crawler off the trailer so we can put the railcar on it and then off to Dwight's to be cleaned, primed and painted. Never can we do one thing without having to do two other things first.

That was then, June 12th is next. Lots of fun at the Lazy SP. See you then. Fitz



Richard into the Crane Car



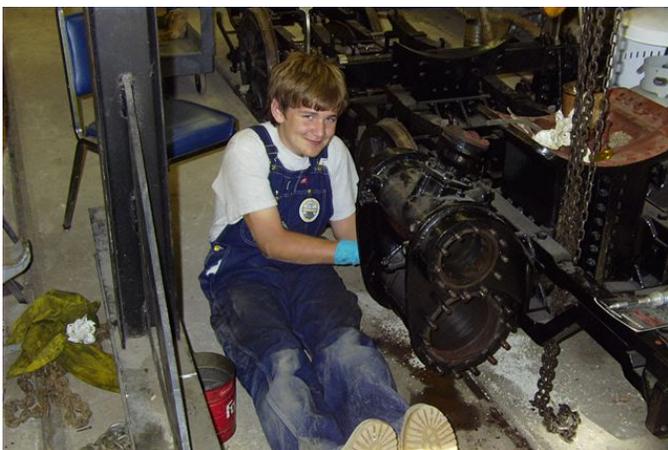
A master at work

UPCOMING EVENTS/PUBLICITY

Mary Ann Carnegie

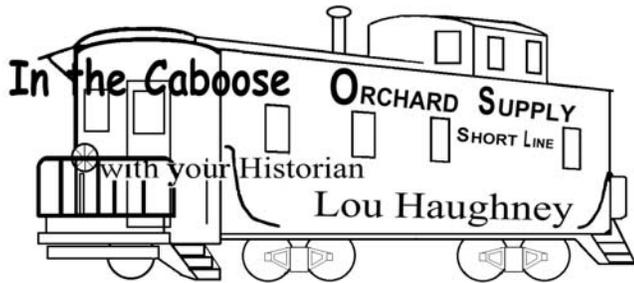
June 12/13	work day—
June 26/27-	workday
July 10/11	workday & Family Fun Run Day stay tuned
July 11	Sunday am—board meeting

Coming back from a hiatus I'm not too sure what we may have planned on the upcoming workday dinners, entertainment etc. but know we will do something and don't worry, I will spare all of you from doing the hula! The first workday of June will be fairly spontaneous planning—in that I haven't thought of something yet, but will—I'm long overdue. The second work weekend would like to plan on a Mexican fiesta/siesta!-olé! For the Family Run Day a Dutch oven cooking menu is being thought of but will try and get your input



A young man at work

between now and then on what you might prefer. Any ideas are appreciated.



A CONTEMPORARY NEWSPAPER REPORT OF MOVING THE OVERFAIR RAILWAY TO THE OAKLAND ZOO

In the January and February 2004 articles on moving the Overfair equipment to the Oakland Zoo, we mentioned a report in the November 10, 1940 issue of the *Oakland Tribune* that describes the move. The newspaper story is quite informative as it quotes directly from Louis MacDermot or attributes statements to him. Particularly interesting are his recollections made 25 years after the operations at the Panama Pacific International Exposition. This is the only source I have found so far that directly quotes MacDermot. The complete article is reprinted below; and, a few notes and comments follow the article.

DO YOU REMEMBER ELEPHANT TRAINS OF 1915? GOING BACK INTO SERVICE AT LOCAL GARDENS

Locomotives, Cars Will Be Put Into Use

From the *Oakland Tribune* Sunday, November 10, 1940, page A-11

(Writer was not identified.)

The locomotives and cars that carried visitors around the grounds of the Panama Pacific International Exposition a quarter of a century ago are going back into service, at the Alameda County Zoological Gardens.

And the same man who designed them, built and then operated them, L. M. MacDermot, will be at the throttle when the first run is made over the new course at Durant Park sometime next spring.

It has been 25 years since MacDermot shoveled coal from the tender into the firebox and sent the little locomotives puffing down their 18-gauge tracks. A quarter of a century has passed by since the last passenger paid his fare and rode through the grounds at the Fair.

And yet, MacDermot is positive that he could have steam up in at least one of the engines and set off with a 15-car train in two weeks. That kind of workmanship went into the building.

It was like a glimpse back into history to stand in the old machine shop at Eighth and Center Streets yesterday and watch MacDermot and Sid Snow, director of the zoological gardens, prepare to recommission the trains. Out in front was the huge mansion where MacDermot himself was born close to 60 years ago. It and the carriage shed and other buildings stand in aging silence under huge trees of the block-square estate.

One almost expected a horde of bewhiskered men in top hats and women with bustles and parasols to come trooping in. MacDermot paused in his loading of the trains onto heavy trailers to look back at pictures taken on the last day he piloted those locomotives in 1915. And there were those men and women of the other day waiting for the train with the Panama Pavilion as a background.

And there was a picture of MacDermot, a dark-haired young man, at the throttle of No. 1500, his switch engine. His hair was gray as he slipped into the cab yesterday to show Snow the mechanism. Over in a corner stood a Renault automobile he used to drive around Oakland streets--what few there were, in 1912.

MacDermot kept three crews working 18 months to build these trains, and they were a financial success at the fair, just as their modern successors, the Elephant Trains, were on Treasure Island in 1940. Every one of the five engines and 60 passenger cars were built in the brick machine shop on the MacDermot estate.

After the fair, MacDermot hauled them back to Oakland, and the cars have been a familiar sight in the big yard for years. He turned down hundreds of offers to sell them, he said, and even now he won't part with them. He and Snow decided only a month ago to recommission the trains.

A one-mile track will be laid out for them on the grounds of the zoological gardens. The first station will be at the entrance to the grounds, near

the bridge over the creek. The tracks will run from there to the social hall, which will be Station No. 2, then to the monkey houses, the bear pits and back to the gate.

Every phase of a real railroad will be copied, just as the rolling stock itself is an exact reduced model of real trains. There will be three old fashioned depots in the style originated by the Southern Pacific. And there will be water towers, a roundhouse, switches and spur tracks, eventually even trestles and bridges.

The only cost to the zoological gardens will be that of moving and installing the line. MacDermot himself is repairing the cars and locomotives, though there is surprisingly little work to be done. Snow said he hoped to be able to pick up the 20-pound rails he needs from some abandoned mountain railroad, perhaps some old mining line.

Two of the locomotives and 12 of the tourist cars have already been moved to the zoological gardens. The third engine was started there yesterday.

Leaning a hand affectionately on the boiler of No. 1915, MacDermot said:

"Well, this will be a lot better than scrapping them to make bullets for the Japanese."

COMMENTS by LCH:

1. Another *Oakland Tribune* article, dated July 15, 1941, reports that the first train will run "around August 1". That article will be reprinted in a future issue. Thanks to SPRS member Bob Parkinson for help in retrieving these articles.
2. This article was accompanied by a photo of MacDermot seated in the 1500's cab with Snow standing beside the switcher engine. That photo was reprinted in the March 2004 SPRS newsletter.
3. I haven't seen the phrase "elephant trains" applied to the Overfair Railway except in this article. As the story says, the phrase was used to describe the "auto-trains" used at the 1939 World's Fair on Treasure Island; but, the headlines of the story imply that

MacDermot's trains were also called by the same designation. The 1939 "auto-trains", however, were updated models of the Fadgl Auto-Train operated at the P.P.I.E. A 1915 photograph clearly shows that the legend "Fadgl Auto Train" on the side of the automotive vehicle pulling a trackless "train" of open passenger cars. The Fadgl operation was much more successful financially than was the Overfair Railway concession because it was allowed to move its "trains" through all the streets of the Exposition.

4. Although he was quite impoverished by 1940, MacDermot remained optimistic about a successful operation at the Zoological Gardens, as his elaborate plans indicate. His statement that the Overfair Railway operation at the P.P.I.E. was a financial success contrasts with published reports to the contrary.
5. This article answers my question in the previous article as to who paid for the move of the equipment. According to the reporter, the Zoological Gardens paid for the move and also for obtaining the track rails. The P.P.I.E. management had claimed ownership of the Overfair track because it was embedded in their property; so, they did not permit MacDermot to recycle the rails.
6. MacDermot's final statement, "Well, this [recommissioning] will be a lot better than scrapping them [the locomotives] to make bullets for the Japanese", may be puzzling to the post-WW II generations. MacDermot was speaking a year before the Pearl Harbor attack. In 1939, 1940, and early 1941, Japanese companies were big buyers of American scrap iron and steel which was intended for armaments to pursue their ongoing war with China.