

## SWANTON PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY

Number 138

Cal Poly

Jan. 2005

### **ON TRACK with your Director**

Ed Carnegie:

Well, here it is 2005 already. Another year has come and gone and our volunteers are more active than ever. The only years that we had more hours of participation was during the bridge and washout construction projects. This year our volunteer hours will be over 5,800 hours. During the last ten years our volunteers have donated over 32,000 hours and over \$62,000 in contributions. My hat goes off to every one of you that contribute toward Cal Poly's Swanton Pacific Railroad. It is only through the continuing effort from our many volunteers that the Swanton Pacific Railroad is maintained and operational. My sincere thanks goes out to all of you.

For the Dec. work weekend a few "stout-hearted" volunteers showed up and worked on the 1915 under the leadership of Randy Jones and Mark Cooper. On Sat. the track crew cut side track for a while and poured a concrete foundation for the water tower across the tracks from the tank. Our next job was to build a foundation for the McNab Grove Station, but there were so many limbs and trees down along the track that we spent most of the day in a clean-up operation. By late afternoon the leaves were drying up and we were able to operate the leaf blower along the track. Our engine crews concentrated on tuning up the 1912 and 1914 for the New Year's Eve Run. We have been plagued with steam leaks around the piston rods so new packing has been obtained and installed. This should greatly improve the efficiency in operating the steam engines and we should use less fuel. While the track crew was clearing a path through the track, Bill, Martha, and Mary Ann gathered redwood

foliage for the afternoon wreath making class. After lunch we had seven wreath makers that produced 18 wreaths! The workshop was held in the roundhouse with the warmth of the pot-bellied stove and the Christmas aroma of pines, holly and smoke, offset with hot cider/chocolate, cookies and candy. We had hoped that more would have participated, but it is so hard to pull our dedicated volunteers to leave their railroad interests. However, next year we will do a better job of getting more of you to make wreaths. It was a lot of fun.

The car barn crew concentrated on putting the Chinese tractor/diesel back together again, and hopefully in a couple of more work days we MAY have it running.

Sunday morning started off with the board meeting with fifteen officers, committee heads and guests present. A few of the "die-hards" stayed around for the afternoon to clear up any pending details and to do some minor cleanups in order to get ready for New Year's Eve and to button things up for any upcoming storms.

It has been a busy, yet productive year and we hope that you and your families had a joyous holiday season. We look forward to sharing many of the work weekends in 2005 with each of you and that we will all be blessed with good health and safe travel journeys.

### **Down Behind the Railway**

With your President, air monkey, & carbarnist.

Reynold 'Fitz' FitzPatrick  
 RGBFitz@aol.com 650.737.9584

April 9/10 work day/Al Smith Day

My fellow Swantoons:

And here it is January, the gateway to the new year. In a historical vein, January was added to the Roman calendar about 700 BCE by King Numa Pompilius and named after Janus – the god of doors, gateways, and beginnings and endings. Janus is often depicted as having two faces, one looking forward and the other back. Capricorn and Aquarius are the astrological signs. For those of the Celtic persuasion the month is **Eanáir**.

With Janus looking forward over our shoulder we have some projects as well as the usual housekeeping.

- ◆ Pete has four searchlight signals to be installed.
- ◆ Randy and Pete have the materials to install the electric braking and public address systems in the passenger cars.
- ◆ The Cal Barn, once permits are approved, may need some of our skills in restoration.
- ◆ Al Smith Day is scheduled for April 10<sup>th</sup> and the grounds and track usually require some spring cleaning.
- ◆ Contributions to the Society are gratefully accepted this time of year.
- ◆ Aaron is preparing a schedule to replace the engine in the white boom truck.
- ◆ Mark and Clinton are working on the 1500.
- ◆ Randy, and anyone he can lasso, is working on the 1913.
- ◆ Lou is cataloging and scanning our historical pictures and documents.

We also need more members in the training process, conductors, firemen, and engineers.

Come on over to the railway, we'll have fun.  
 Fitz

### UPCOMING EVENTS/PUBLICITY

Mary Ann Carnegie

Jan. 8/9 Work weekend  
 Feb. 12/13 Work weekend  
 Mar. 12/13 Work weekend

We certainly hope that all of you had some wonderful holidays this past month and are now ready to begin the New Year with renewed vim and vigor. I, for one, wish to thank each and every one of you for all your assistance this past year, and look forward to an even better 2005. Plans for 2005 are to hopefully reduce the cooking/dinner load on the constant few that cook, and to give any one of the rest of you the opportunity to express your gourmet delights. We don't mind dining on "tried and true", but we are also willing to be guinea pigs for new recipes. We will have a sign up sheet for which month/s you may wish to bless us with your culinary talents. This sign-up sheet will be found in the machine shop by the telephone. Be sure to check it out, and more importantly to pick a Saturday night that fits your schedule best.

Our next big run of the New Year will be Al Smith Day, Sunday, April 10. We are currently looking at new ways to better showcase our facilities for the crowds, etc. Any suggestions from any of you would be greatly appreciated. April is not that far off to start pre-planning.

Reservations for wanting to stay overnight for the work weekends should be called or emailed in ASAP. Facilities are limited & we want to make sure we can accommodate everyone. Call (805) 995-3659 or email [ecarnegi@calpoly.edu](mailto:ecarnegi@calpoly.edu).

Thank you.



Tree removal crew



Building foundations for new train station



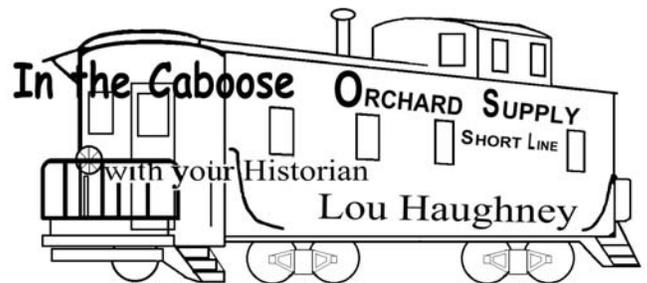
Round ready for Christmas

NEW SOCIETY SUPPORTERS received over the last month were as follows:

David Ford  
Sidney Madden

Los Gatos  
Portola Valley

On behalf of the entire organization, we welcome each of you into our "train family" & we certainly look forward to seeing you at some of our next events. Many of our supporters may not recognize you right away so please introduce yourselves so that we can get to better know you & vice versa. Also be sure to introduce yourself to both Pete McFall, Secretary to obtain your membership book with bylaws, etc. & then to Bob Wilkinson so that he can make up your very own "gold", laminated nametag with all pertinent information.



## THE SAGA OF THE OVERFAIR RAILWAY'S RETURN TO OAKLAND - PART 2

The *Oakland Tribune* followed with much civic pride the return of MacDermot's Overfair Railway locomotive Nos. 1912 and 1913 to the city where they were built. Harre Demoro, a *Tribune* writer, told the story in at least four articles between 1969 and 1975. His first article on the impending sale by the Billy Jones estate appeared in last month's SPRS Newsletter. His next article, of those we have found, appeared in early November, 1969. It is reprinted here.



1913 before it was taken out of service

## Rail History Re-Lived as 1915 Train Comes Home

By Harre W. Demoro  
Tribune Staff Writer

*Oakland Tribune* edition of Sunday, Nov. 9, 1969

Two of the miniature steam locomotives the late Mr. MacDermot designed and built in Oakland more than 50 years ago for operation at the 1915 World's Fair in San Francisco are back in the Eastbay.

They arrived on truck-trailers, not rails. Their new owner, Piedmont real estate appraiser Robert C. Maxfield, put them in an Oakland warehouse. When he finds a place to lay rail, the engines will be steamed up and run again.

Maxfield bought the locomotives and an assortment of other equipment after he read a Tribune story [January 5, 1969] about the equipment being for sale.

MacDermot was a shy but skilled craftsman. Member of a pioneer and wealthy Oakland family, MacDermot dreamed of constructing a railroad as modern and efficient as the ones running in 1915. MacDermot's railroad was to be exactly one-third the size of the real ones. It would run on rails spaced 19 inches apart instead of the standard four feet, eight and a half inches.

He designed and had built 60 passenger cars, five freight cars, four passenger locomotives and one switch engine. The entire railroad was installed at the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Expedition, hence the name, "Overfair Railway".

MacDermot lost money and when the fair closed, his railroad came home to Oakland. The equipment was stored in the yard and in buildings on the grounds of his home at 7th and Cypress streets.

One of the locomotives and a few cars were used during World War II at the Alameda Zoological Gardens, now Knowland Park. But most of the equipment never ran after the fair closed.

MacDermot died in 1948 and his equipment was acquired by a friend, "Billy" Jones, a SP locomotive engineer who had a smaller railroad in his prune orchard in Los Gatos.

Jones was unable to adapt the locomotives to his railroad. He sold two passenger engines [Nos. 1914 and 1915] and the switcher [No. 1500] to a group in southern California. They have never been placed in operation.

Jones died last year and Maxfield bought what remained at Los Gatos of MacDermot's equipment earlier this year.

The equipment is in excellent condition and operable, Maxfield said. All it needs is a railroad on which to operate.

The type of railroad MacDermot admired - powerful steam engines with shrill, mournful whistles - has disappeared from modern America. But MacDermot's dream is in the custody of Maxfield. He now dreams of MacDermot's dream.

NOTES: We have found four *Oakland Tribune* articles by Harre Demoro dated from 1969 to 1975 that describe the progress of Maxfield and his Calistoga Steam Railroad. There may have been more, probably one in early 1969 that tells of Maxfield's decision to buy the equipment. The later two articles we have date from 1974 and 1975 and tell about the overhaul of No. 1913 locomotive at the Redwood Valley Shop and of Maxfield's starting construction at the Calistoga Steam Railroad site in Napa Valley. These will be reprinted in future issues. Many of Demoro's articles were reprinted in issues of the *Western Railroader*; such as this one which appeared in abridged form in the December 1969, Vol. 32, No. 12, issue No., 358 of the *W. R.*



Overfair locomotive No. 1913 awaiting overhaul at the Redwood Valley Railroad (RVRR) shop in Oakland after its purchase by Robert C. Maxfield. Left, Maxfield; right, Steve Reeves of the RVRR. Photo by Russ Reed of the *Oakland Tribune*, in the 6/2/1974 edition.

SPRS Archives No. 1969-1978-0002Rj.