

SWANTON PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY

Number 170

Cal Poly

Dec. 2007

ON TRACK with your Director

Ed Carnegie:

Hope all survived the over indulgence of the usual Thanksgiving Dinner and are now eager to come workout at the Swanton Rec. Center. Pete and I are eager to move ahead with the signal lights and control system. Help could be used in burying the cables. Winter always brings the need to keep the track in good condition and free of leaves, and to finish up many of the existing projects.

The outstanding accomplishment of last month is that two code problems were signed off by the County inspector: the water tower and fuel storage system! This now leaves only a few more to take care, but one [carbarn storage] will have to wait until the rainy season is over, provided it ever comes. The Friday, prior to the work weekend, brought some rainfall but those present concentrated on house cleaning activities. On Sat. the sun was out and several volunteers arrived. Pete and track crew installed the last of the signal lights for the station area. The track was blown by Edski, while I disked the train field. Being able to transport the tractor via the train vs. driving down Swanton Rd. is convenient. Bob and crew worked on re-wiring the electrical system on the motor grader. Bruce and Geoff installed shelves to continue organizing the machine shop, while Randy, Marty and engine crew cleaned and worked on the 1914.

As this year draws to an end, I would again like to thank one and all for the accomplishments that have taken place this year, but still what is most important to me are the bonds of friendship that develop and continue to grow with our many Swanton Pacific Railroad volunteers. Holiday greetings are wished to all of you and your families.

Down Behind the Railway

With your President, air monkey, & car-barnist.

Reynold 'Fitz' FitzPatrick

RGBFitz@aol.com 650.737.9584

My Fellow Swantoons:

The results are in. You elected Geoff First Vice-president, Bruce Third Vice-president, and Ed Treasurer at our General Meeting in November.

On Sunday we held our last Executive Board meeting of the year and in scheduling our calendar for next year, and set April 13th as Al Smith Day.

This year's Summer Camp was held in August, which is an inconvenient month for some of our younger members as school is starting so early these days. So, for 2008, we will have the Summer Camp following the fourth Saturday in July, July 26th through August 3rd, and hope to certify some more conductors, operators, and firemen.

Randy, in his report, noted that we are having trouble with some of the boiler feed water injectors and we do not have accurate specifications on how the National #4 Monitor injectors were built. If one of you, in your collection of books and miscellany about steam locomotives, has any information regarding these injectors, please contact Randy.

It is the slow season at Swanton, but still lots of projects:

-  EdSki's Keystone car sides to be installed.
-  Rick's Keystone truck brake foundation.
-  Flat cars to have air brake angle cocks raised.
-  Some ties need replacement.
-  Improve hillside clearance near Windy Point.
-  Permanently mount the speakers in the BBQ area.

- 🚂 Repair the sink at the BBQ.
- 🚂 Replace the BBQ grills.
- 🚂 Design and build a signal block detector system.

As you can see, mostly housekeeping, but that's what it takes to run a railroad.

May you all have a joyous holiday season, may the most you wish for be the least you receive.

Fitz

UPCOMING EVENTS/PUBLICITY

Mary Ann Carnegie

Dec. 08/09 volunteer work week-end

Dec. 31 New Year's Eve Run

Jan. 12/13 first work week end of 2008

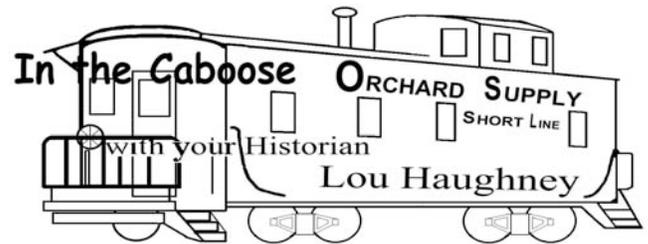
PLEASE: anyone staying overnight for work weekends, call or e-mail reservations in ASAP. Call (805) 995-3659 or e-mail ecarnegi@calpoly.edu. Facilities are limited & we want to make sure we can accommodate all. **This also helps in successfully planning our Sat. night dinner.**

Well maybe the few, the proud and some Swantonians may have all their Christmas shopping, food prep, and greeting cards written, but certainly not I. Only a few more shopping days are left along with only one more Swanton work weekend, and then it's New Years! Does time ever stand still for just a moment? Dec. will be used to mostly get ready for the New Years Eve run. Anyone wanting to make wreaths as done in years past evergreens, & other wreath making supplies will be provided. However, the unfortunate news is again all wreaths made will have to stay on Swanton premises. They will not be allowed to be transported out of the county. The good news is that the Swanton facilities will look most festive for all to admire.

New Years will start out with a train ride prior to darkish-thirty. The potluck will be held in the Cal Barn under the reincarnation of a 1950's diner, sock hop theme. So get out those rolled sleeved tees, Dippidity-do duck tails, poodle skirts and get ready to rock the night away. New Year's Eve dining will start around 7:00PM and will continue on with train rides, our annual bonfire, hot mulled cider, finding Martha's flashing hat, and our infamous countdown to bring in 2008. Just be sure to dress warm, prepare for rain, and you'll be guaranteed to have a grand time with Swanton family, friends and neighbors. We would also like to wish everyone a safe, joyous and blessed

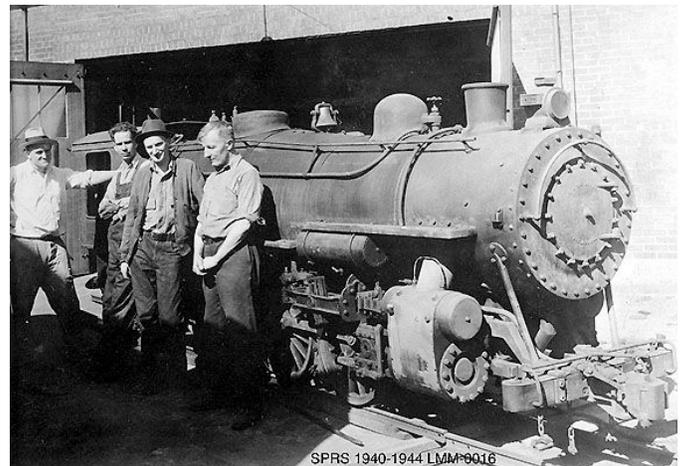
Christmas. This past year has been a year filled with wonderful memories, many spent at Swanton with all of you as our Swanton family. We shall look forward to sharing another great year in '08.

Ed and Mary Ann



More on MacDermot & the Oakland Zoo, Part 1

Louis MacDermot and his wife moved all of their belongings, including the Overfair Railway rolling stock and support equipment, to the Oakland Zoo in late November and early December of 1940. This change was forced by their declining financial state and by the tax sale of their deteriorating mansion and estate. Once at the Zoo, several months were needed to reestablish themselves and to build a one-mile track at the Zoo's grounds at Durant Park.



Louis M. MacDermot and friends preparing to move the 1913 locomotive to the Oakland Zoo in Nov. 1940. Note the missing front pilot truck, but the boiler's jacket plates are on the locomotive. Left to right: unidentified, Bill Pennington WP RR engineer, unidentified, L. M. MacDermot. Photo from the Al Smith collection.

These activities attracted the attention of the young neighbor boys who were accustomed to roaming through the Park's grounds as one of their daily haunts. One lad, Jim Anderson, about 10 or 11 years old, was especially interested in the

railroading construction. Jim's father owned a machine shop, and Jim had become quite familiar with the tools and the machinists in that shop. So, Jim started to hang around MacDermot to find out what that reserved man was planning to do with that steam locomotive and those passenger cars. MacDermot has set up a makeshift hut with a canvas covering over the few shop tools that he had salvaged from his West Oakland estate. Jim was very persistent with his watching what was going on. Finally, the taciturn MacDermot gave in and accepted Jim as a helper in late 1941 and 1942.



Overfair train coming up the grade at the Oakland Zoo, about 1941+, Note the exterior boiler plate is missing on the left side of the 1913 locomotive. The house in the background is that of Sid Snow, Director of the Zoological Gardens. It was formerly the Servants' housing when the property was the Durant Estate. Photo from Al Smith's snapshot collection.

One assignment is well recalled by Jim. MacDermot had removed the sand dome from the 1913 locomotive. One section of the track loop involved a grade from the station near the Park entrance up to the main station and "yard" by the monkey cages. Many a day, Jim, often helped by his buddies, had to run ahead of the locomotive on the grade to sprinkle sand on the rails.

Jim described many other aspects of the Overfair Railway's operations at the Oakland Zoo as well as some details of the MacDermot's life at the Zoo. Mrs. MacDermot walked out of the Park every morning to a nearby grocery store for their daily food requirements. (In those days, iceboxes, if you had one, were the only means of refrigeration.) She would be dressed in good clothes, but in clothes of the fashionable styles of the 1920's, which she had and wore in their more comfortable years. She, too, was then somewhat aloof and reserved towards other persons.

The Overfair Railway operation at the Oakland Zoo was predominantly a one-man affair, namely, Louis M. MacDermot. He ran the train; he maintained it. Jim was finally allowed once to sit in the cab and control the throttle for a 10 yard move along the track.



Jim Anderson, MacDermot's young assistant, is checking the controls in the 1913's cab, about 1941 or 1942.

Photo from Al Smith's snapshot collection.



Louis M. MacDermot in the cab of the 1500 0-4-0T locomotive and Sid Snow, Director of the Alameda County Zoological Gardens, (aka Oakland Zoo). They are discussing the impending move of MacDermot and the Overfair Railway equipment to the Zoological Gardens. Scene of photo is at the MacDermot estate in West Oakland.

Photo from the files of the *Oakland Tribune*, edition of Nov. 10, 1940.

Louis did have a few loyal and supporting friends from his previous years in West Oakland; namely, Bill Pennington and Ralph Demoro. Pennington was an engineer, based in Oakland, for the Western Pacific RR. Occasionally, he would relieve MacDermot as engineer for the Oakland Zoo train. Ralph Demoro, father of the *Oakland Tribune*

writer, was a long time and close friend of the MacDermot's; more on this friendship will be given in a succeeding chapter.

Jim Anderson says that the Zoo train's operation was a big success in the first several months. Sundays brought big crowds to the Zoo as many clubs and organizations gathered there for picnics and outings. Some of our SPRS photos show those people in their Sunday best clothing, again the custom of those times. Our pictures show the 1913 locomotive ran without the jacket plates over the boiler. Jim does not recall what caused that anomaly.



Jim Anderson, MacDermot's young helper, standing by the 1913 locomotive. The scene is at the top of the track loop, near the main station and MacDermot's "shop", at the Oakland Zoo. The buildings in the background are some of the Zoo's animal cages.

Photo is from Al Smith's snapshot collection.

With the onset of World War II for the USA in Dec. 1941, attendance at the Zoo and ridership on the train declined steadily as the people became immersed in the seven day a week work schedule in the East Bay's many heavy industries and at its bustling seaport facilities. Gasoline rationing and

crowded local transportation systems also affected easy mobility when one did have free time. Gradually, disagreements arose between MacDermot and Snow, the Zoo's Managing Director.

The second part of this article, in the next issue, will describe the closing down of the Oakland Zoo operation in 1945. The account will be based on information discovered by SPRS member Bob Parkinson.

Notes:

1. Many thanks to Jim Anderson, a retired professor of psychology at Foothill College in Los Gatos, Santa Clara County, for sharing his childhood memories with us. Jim was pleased to recognize himself as the young lad in some of our historical photos, which are reproduced with this article.

Fitz Fitzpatrick made the first contact with Jim. While sorting through Al Smith's numerous collection of snapshot photos, Chris Taylor found two envelopes with 100 photos from the Oakland Zoo era. The alertness of Fitz and Chris in recognizing the value of these contacts has increased significantly our information about this period in MacDermot's life.

2. The person who influenced MacDermot's move to the Oakland Zoo was Sid Snow, Director of the Alameda County Zoological Gardens, as the organization was then named in an *Oakland Tribune* article of November 10, 1940. The history of what is now called simply the Oakland Zoo has experienced many twists and turns in ownership, sponsorship, name, and location. The Oakland Zoo's web page has a capsule timeline of those changes and developments. (http://www.oaklandzoo.org/about_the_zoo/history)

Pertinent excerpts from that source follow.

Pre 1800's Ohlone land.

1770-1857 Knowland Park Property was once part of the 100,000 acre Rancho San Antonio, owned by Don Louie and Maria Peralta.....

1919 The title passed to automobile manufacturer Cliff Durant.

1921 The estate's mansion was destroyed by fire.

1922 Henry A. Snow [aka Sid Snow].

Recognized as a naturalist, collector, African big game hunter, film producer and museum advocate, established the Oakland Zoo in downtown Oakland. This first Zoo was located at 19th and Harrison in downtown Oakland and was later moved to Sequoia Park (Joaquin Miller Park)."

1939 The City Of Oakland Zoo was moved from Joaquin Miller Park to Durant Park. The City provided an annual budget of \$4800 to care for the Zoo.