

SWANTON PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY

Number 205

Cal Poly

April 2011

ON TRACK with your Director

Ed Carnegie:

Al Smith Day is cancelled this year.

I am happy to report that emergency repair on the Carnegie Bridge abutment has withstood the heavy rains that took place over the last month. However, the project was not completed as a void still exists under the footing and needs to be filled. We have requested a development permit from the county to stabilize the crib wall to the West of the abutment, to finish the abutment footing, and the creek bank. Work will not begin until the creek flow is low and all designs are approved. This will not occur until this summer. Until then, only light traffic will be allowed to take place over the Carnegie Bridge. Without access across the bridge, we will not have Al Smith Day this year.

We did have a design meeting this week with the Civil Engineering firm, the Swanton Ranch personal, and us to set goals and objectives for the next phase.

We also received an extensive report from John Rimmasch of Wasatch Railroad Contractors, Cheyenne WY. He is the contractor building the new boiler for the 1913. The boiler is moving toward completion with the following items done:

- Smoke box is on the boiler
- The entire boiler shell and sheets are complete
- Front tube sheet is ready for the dry pipe
- The final mechanicals are being made
- Two welding inspections, then heat treatment
- Stay bolts are near complete
- The new boiler does have a sloped back like the original

Down Behind the Railway

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

Reynold 'Fitz' FitzPatrick

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My Fellow Swantoons:

The Friday before our March workday we were to provide a tour of our railroad engines, equipment, and facilities for some AmeriCorps folk. Bill, Bruce, Andy, Vera, Bob, Pete and I all were on hand. Due to the unfortunate event in Japan and the resulting tsunami, the AmeriCorps folk moved to higher ground overnight and the tour was canceled. Never being ones to let an opportunity slip away we worked on various de minimus projects that have been cluttering our project list.

Saturday saw: Stan work with Pete getting the motor car back on track as it were; Kyle repairing the 8 hp chipper with Scott's assistance; Amy cleaning yet more parts for the pilot truck; and Ray deciphering the electromechanical operation of the semaphore operating mechanism – an especially challenging task, as the prints do not match the equipment.

Art, Laura, and the wee folk took on the task of repainting the "35" passenger car, while Nancy, Theo, and Eleanor worked in the Garden of Weed in'. David continued installing windows he made for the cupola of the OSH caboose.

Unfortunately, we will not have an Al Smith Day celebration this year as we need to complete repairs to the bridge after the creek level falls, sometime in June we hope.

Come on over, we'll have fun.



Milburn family working on one of the passenger cars

UPCOMING EVENTS/PUBLICITY

Mary Ann Carnegie

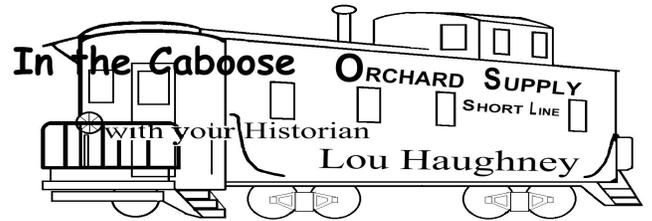
- April 9/10 work weekend
- May 14/15 work weekend
- May 28/29 work weekend/Memorial Day

As previously stated, the annual Al Smith Day for 2011 has been cancelled—but don't fret there is still plenty to do to get things in rail shape for SPRR's upcoming Spring, Summer and Fall months of activities being planned. So come on over and join in all the fun projects, or take one on of your very own interest. Reminder too that May starts us having the two work weekends a month—the 2nd and 4th Saturdays so there will be lots of opportunity to take on and finish a project. Plus with all the extra daylight hours we can and will be enjoying staying outdoors longer to enjoy what all Swanton has to offer.

With these two work weekends a month several Saturday night dinner possibilities likewise exist for any one to host and showcase their culinary specialties. BBQing, Dutch oven, ethnic nights, you name it we'll be game for it!

Reminder:

Membership for Swanton Pacific is being accepted. See attached membership form .



IMPRESSIONS OF A FAMOUS BRITISH DRIVER AFTER HIS VISITS TO THE EARLY SWANTON PACIFIC RAILROAD

In 1982 and again in 1983, George Barlow, the retired Chief Driver at the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway (RH&DR) in England, visited California's narrow-gauge railroads, including the early Swanton Pacific Railroad.

After each visit, he wrote lengthy descriptions of his visits that were published in a British railroad organization's newsletter, *The Heywood Society Journal*. In the mid 1990's, a typewritten copy of his 1982 manuscript was found in the Al Smith/Swanton Pacific RR files at the California State Railroad Museum. Then, a hand-written draft of the article was discovered in Al Smith's memorabilia here at Swanton. The excerpts below are taken from the latter manuscript.

Finally, a few months ago, a copy of his second article about the 1983 visit was found in Al Smith's collections, which continue to surface from nooks and crannies. This copy is from *The Heywood Society Journal*, No. 16, May 1984. Together, these two narratives offer much valuable information about the very early, formative years of the Swanton Pacific RR and about the personalities involved at that time thirty years ago.

To provide continuity between Barlow's stories, the first SPRS article about Barlow's 1982 visit is reprinted here with a few additional excerpted paragraphs. Also, included in this version of the article are four photographs that Barlow sent to Al Smith in 1982 as a memento of his visit. Our earlier story about Barlow's 1982 article follows:

AN ENGLISH DRIVER VISITS THE SWANTON PACIFIC RAILROAD

(Published in SPRS Newsletter No. 042, August 1996)

Early in 1982, a retired English driver, George A. Barlow, visited the Swanton Pacific Railroad in order to see the MacDermot Pacific locomotives. Barlow had just completed almost 35 years of service as the senior engineer, or driver, on the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway

(RH&DR) in Kent, England. His interest in the MacDermot locomotives was due to their similarity to the locomotives he had been driving on the RH&DR. Those locomotives were also 1/3 scale Pacifics. Five of them were reproductions of the Pacifics designed by H. N. Gresley in the early 1920's for the London and North Eastern Railway, and two were based on the Canadian Pacific Railway's version introduced in 1919. Although 1/3 scale, they ran on the RH&DR's 15-inch gauge track whereas MacDermot maintained the 1/3 scale for his track, namely a 19-inch gauge.

Barlow first learned of the MacDermot locomotives in the late 20's through pictures of one of the engines in Henry Greenly's Model Steam Locomotives. (Has anyone seen or heard of this early English book?) Later, he heard much more about them when he was corresponding with Frederic Shaw in the early 50's. The first chapter of Shaw's book, *Little Railways of the World*, describes the RH&DR with photos of Barlow.

Upon his retirement in 1980 or 1981, a Retirement Fund was set up on Barlow's behalf to finance a trip to America by him and his wife. High on his list was "to see these California one third scale machines", the MacDermot engines at Swanton and the Venice engines at the Wildcat Railroad in Los Gatos. After his trip, Barlow wrote out by hand a seven page (legal size pages) account of his visit; it is entitled "In Search of the Venice and Overfair Engines". A copy of the hand-written version and photographs of his visit to Swanton have been found in Al Smith's collection of memorabilia. A typewritten version of the account is in the Al Smith files at the California State Railroad Museum. Here are a few interesting excerpts from Barlow's report.

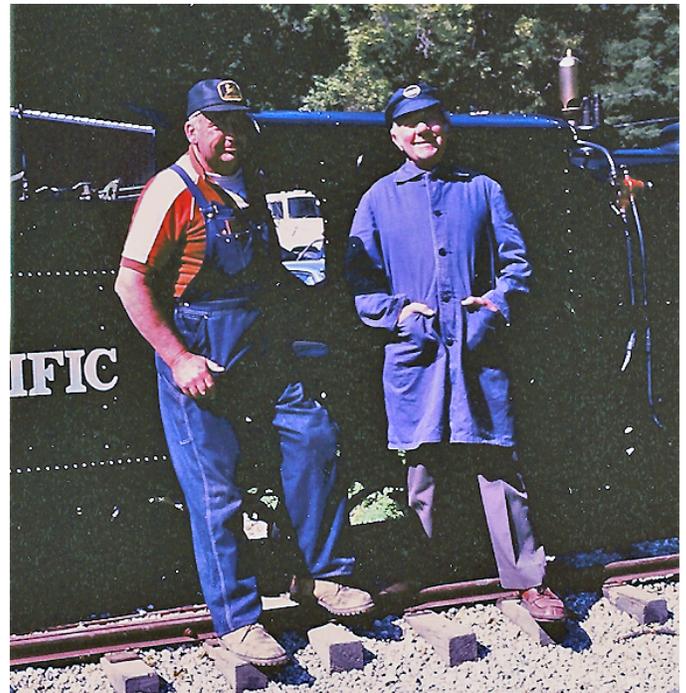
In Search of the Venice and Overfair Engines

The Heywood Society Journal, No. 14, May 1983

"...There was a good deal I liked about the Overfair engines, such as the man-sized four bolt flanges on the steam pipes and the general robustness of the design but, on the other hand, the bogie taken out of 1913, when she was given 1912's bogie recently, looked a comparatively flimsy affair with small axles and bearings and I was very surprised to see that

there was so little provision in the bogie for side play and understood why MacDermot had trouble at the Oakland Zoo. ... One thing I did not like was the driver's position, which means sitting sideways in the side window. ... It was a great experience to examine this machine (No. 1913) which was well cared for, had half a glass of water and was ready for the match. ... I hope that one day I will hear her puff!

"Al Smith ... was rather reserved with us at first but soon warmed and we had a long talk in his shed, where he had most of the MacDermot drawings, some priceless pictures of the Overfair Railway, a refrigerator full of beer, and a lavatory in a dark corner, where music played automatically when the light was switched on! Al is obviously a great character who has retired from his business and is doing his best to preserve his share of the Overfair engines."



Al Smith and George Barlow, Swanton Pacific RR, May 1982. Photo by Arthur P. Skellet

{Additional paragraphs added in March 2011 as follows}

By a strange coincidence, a few days before we left England Anthony Crowhurst received a letter from John G. Sprung of San Pedro, regarding a footplate pass on the R.H.&D.R. for a date in June and Sprung

concluded his letter by mentioning that Howard Jervis had died and that there were three Overfair engines for sale. Getting the exact location of these machines was very fortunate and, in fact, we were able to give Al Smith up to date information, which was really quite funny. Ten days after our Los Gatos trip, when we were staying in Burbank, our host Chester Peterson, who runs the Railroad Supply Corporation which produces 1-1/2" scale locomotives and rolling stock, arranged for us to be taken to San Pedro so that we could meet John Sprung and see 1500, 1914 and 1915. Sprung, a real enthusiast with a 7-1/2" gauge line around his house, took us to see the engines and they were a sad sight. The 0-6-0T was complete, standing in a yard and the two Pacifics stood between two buildings, stripped of all non-ferrous fittings, which were stored separately and completely unprotected from the weather.

One vivid memory I have is of a little, quick moving, bright eyed man with an American accent turning up at New Romney one winter day, about 25 years ago {about 1957} and asking if he could see the Romney engines. Doctor Syn stood near the shed door and, as the American stepped into the shed and saw the Syn, his face lit up and he exclaimed, "Gee, I've locomotives just like that back home!" to which I declared "Then you must be Billy Jones" and it was! But for that little man it is unlikely these locomotives would have still been in existence.

The story of the Overfair engines is a very sad one. While Greenly's third scale machines have been cared for at Ravengloss and Romney, running thousands and thousands of miles, giving pleasure to innumerable people, MacDermot's grand locomotives have spent most of their lives standing about deteriorating. It is a sobering thought that 1912 and 1914 have not been steamed since late 1915 and that [the] 1915, never really completed, has not been steamed at all. Let us hope that their future will be brighter than their past.

A copy of Barlow's hand-written report and a few photographs of his visit to Swanton will be posted in Al's caboose. One of the photos shows Barlow and Neil Vodden seated in the cab of No.

1913 and looking out the back at the camera. If any of you remember his visit here in 1982 and have more information about it, please let me know. Did Barlow return a year or two later "to hear No. 1913 puff"? (Yes, to appear in a future SPRS Newsletter, as mentioned above.)

A brief account of the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway is appropriate. It was still operating in 1995 on a daily basis from Easter to the end of September. It is a 14-mile long, single 15-inch gauge track with a turn around loop at the southern end at the Dungeness Lighthouse on the south east coast of Kent, England. Two racing car enthusiasts, Captain Howey and Count Zabrowski, built it in 1927-1929. "Captain Howey saw his line thrive for thirty-six years before he died; his partner, Count Zabrowski, was unfortunately killed when racing soon after the line opened. Incidentally, he really had a racing car called 'Chitty Bang Bang'." The railway was an operating narrow-gauge railway with heavy, daily traffic along the Kent coastline for passengers and freight until the early 1960's, after which it decreased its schedule to operate from spring to early fall when it became dependent upon the holiday and tourist clientele vacationing on the Kent coast. As mentioned earlier, it had, in 1980, a roster of seven 4-6-2 Pacifics, two 4-8-2 Moguls, a squat 0-4-0, and two petrol locomotives. (The material for this last paragraph is taken from a small book from England, *Discovering Preserved Railways*, (1980) by F. G. Cockman

and from an article in the Travel Section of the *New York Times*, Sunday July 9, 1995.) {March 2011, The RH&DR is still operating; see their website @ <http://rhcr.org.uk>}
{End of SPRS newsletter article}

Continue next month