

## SWANTON PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY

Number 209

Cal Poly

Aug./Sept. 2011

### ON TRACK with your Director

Ed Carnegie:

Now that the summer is almost over we can all have a sigh of relief and look back on a job well done. During the Swanton Camp-Work Week our concentration was on the OSH Caboose. Over the years we had some undetected leaks that caused a lot of dry rot and fungus growth. We decided it needed to be stopped. Over fifteen members took part at one time on another in this task. The first task was to remove, clean and store all the memorabilia that was stored in the caboose. Then the demo work progressed. A 20-yard dumpster was brought in; the caboose was completely gutted down to the floor timbers. Once gutted, interior renovating commenced. By the end of the July, the sub-floor, insulation, and most of the electrical was installed. In August, we worked on finish work of dry walling and paneling. At times, as Fitz said, "It was like working in a phone booth."

When the caboose was too crowded for all to participate, Randy led the effort on the 1913 tender, and Fitz, led the work on the fork lift. So much was going on, it was hard to keep track of the progress on each project. Even so, we did have some time for training and some train rides, using the motor car and one or two cars. As Fitz discusses below we are not going to use any of our heavy equipment until the bridge work is finished.

As usual the machine shop was busy making repairs, the car shop and the garden crew always had a lot of activity. The Christmas trees were trimmed and irrigated, and all in all a lot was accomplished.

My sincere thanks goes out to all our volunteers who came out to help.

### Down Behind the Railway

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

Reynold 'Fitz' FitzPatrick

RGBFitz@aol.com 650.737.9584

My Fellow Swantoons:

Here we are at the end of summer and do not know if we will be able to have Cal Poly Day this year as we are awaiting permission to complete repairs to the bridge revetment. If we are able to complete the repairs before the middle of September we may have the celebration in October. Time will tell.

Brian Diatterick, the Swanton Pacific Ranch Director, has worked tirelessly on our behalf and would that we could gift him Excalibur that he may, in Shakespeare's words, "Turn him to any cause of policy, The Gordian Knot of it he will unloose." It may take magic.

Not being able to operate the railway has caused a noticeable lack of participation down at the railroad. While the resolution of the situation is above my pay-grade, I accept it as an opportunity to complete some niggling projects that never rise above irritation as they are infrastructure rather than working on the railway. The OSH restoration is progressing nicely, we are finally getting the forklift back in operation, and Geoff, Bill, and Molly performed some needed maintenance on the tractor.

The 1913 will be back home soon, and Randy has been working on the tender. We will have a stainless steel tank insert for water while keeping the appearance of the original.

So, my friends overcome that lethargy and come on over, we have lots of little projects that need a champion, it could be you.

Fitz

NEW SOCIETY SUPPORTER

David Woodrell                  Bothell, WA

On behalf of the entire organization, we welcome 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.



Installing the floor in the OSH caboose

## UPCOMING EVENTS/PUBLICITY

Mary Ann Carnegie

Sept. 10/11 Work weekend  
 Sept. 25 Cal Poly Day POSTPONED  
 Oct. 8/9 Work Weekend

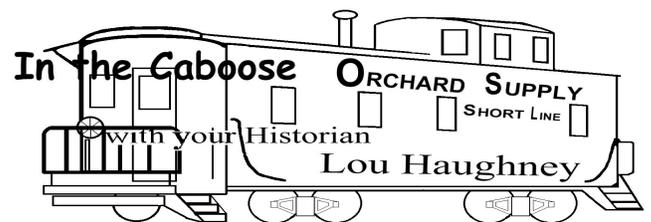
Please note above that we are now back to only one work weekend/month—the second Sat. followed by Sunday. We should also have access to the Redhouse for work weekends. Saturday night dinners are always welcome chefs to exhibit their culinary skills. All volunteers really appreciate being the tasters to test the chef's skills. Complaints are never allowed as it is "always oh but good". I wish to thank all that helped with meal prep throughout family camp and the summer when facilities were limited to outdoors. The BBQing and Dutch-oven delights were great. A special thanks to Swanton's very own Mr. Organizer—Pete McFall. He makes things happen! August's last work weekend was a special treat in that Molly and Bill Engleman, from Colorado now, were out for a few days—it was nice to see each of them again. Though we are still unsure of having a Cal Poly Day, we do know New Year's will be here sooner

than we think. A theme is still being sought, so put your thinking caps on and submit suggestions.

With or without train rides being offered we still have many guests visit the facilities and much thanks goes to all of you that host and encourage them to come back and share in all our fun. Talk Swanton up and bring a friend or two to our work weekends. See ya'll soon.

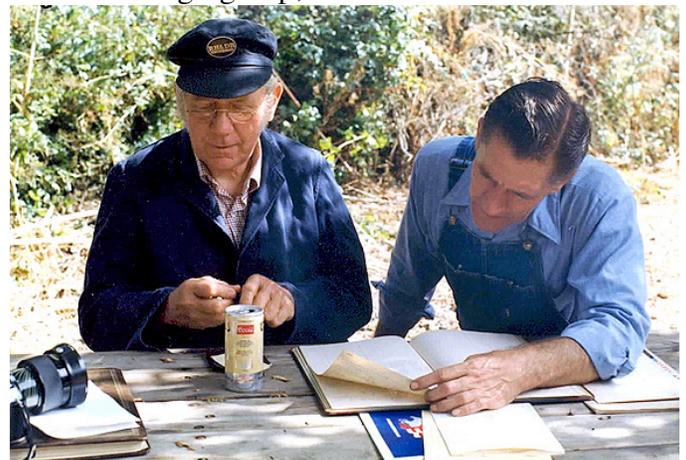
Reminder:

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



MacDermot's Scale Model of the  
 "Precursor" 4-4-0 Locomotive

Louis MacDermot built a 3/4" scale model of the 4-4-0 British Locomotive "Precursor". George Barlow describes it briefly in his article about his 1983 visit to the Swanton Pacific Railroad. Then, an article found in Al Smith's memorabilia also describes the model more fully, and a few photos from Al's snapshot collections probably picture the model. Charlie Hoyle, one of the Swanton Pacific RR's founding's group, was its last known owner.

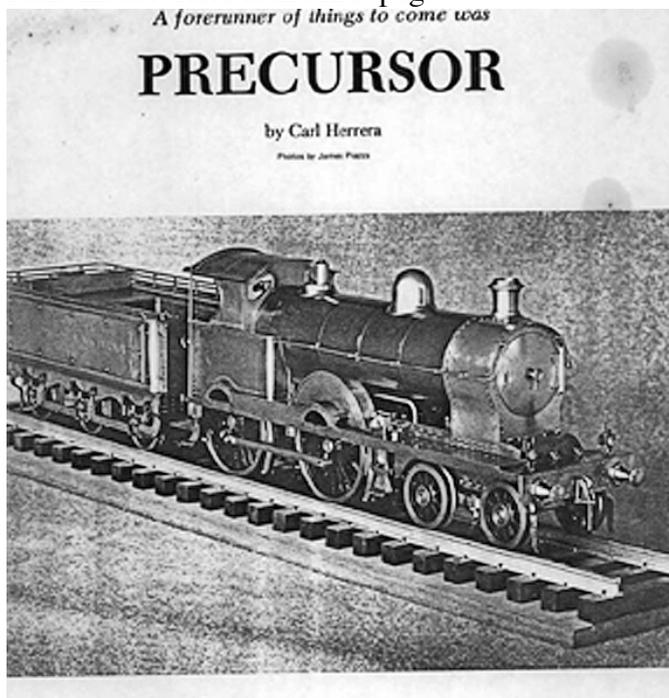


George Barlow and Charlie Hoyle looking thru MacDermot's records, "which were kept in meticulous detail", 20 Aug. 1983; SPRS No. 1978-1991 AS-0251

Barlow's note:

"... I learned from Charlie [Hoyle] that day, that before embarking on the Overfair project, Mac[Dermot] had built a 3-1/2 in. gauge London & North Western Whale 'Precursor'. A few days later, when I gave a slideshow in Pleasanton, this engine, a magnificent job still unpainted, was brought along for me to see and run on air for my benefit. ..."

The article found in Al's collection is a photocopy of pages apparently from the November 1976 issue of *Live Steam*. The author, Daniel Herrera, is not further identified. Herrera's account is very informative about MacDermot's building the scale model. Here is the first page:



*A forerunner of things to come was*  
**PRECURSOR**  
By Carl Herrera

"Some time ago, I offered to restore a tender for a friend's 3/4 inch scale locomotive. The engine belongs to Charlie Hoyle of Los Gatos, California, and was given to him back in 1946 by the late Louis M. MacDermot. Included with the engine were the original receipts and catalog from Bassett-Lowke, which are reproduced on these pages. [not yet found in Al's papers].

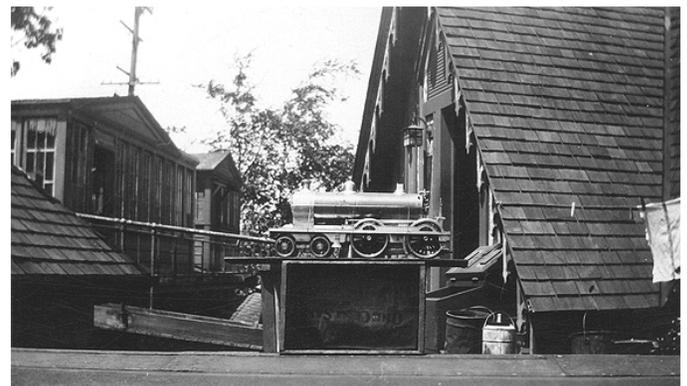
In the July 1976, issue of *Live Steam*, in a mail stop item headlined 'Live Steam and Bush Pilots', Mr. W. Morgan Davies mentioned seeing a

miniature locomotive that Louis M. MacDermot was building in his hobby workshop. More that likely this is the very engine he referred to.

MacDermot had started to build the engine from Bassett-Lowke's plans and castings back in 1911. It is a 4-4-0, number 513 of the London and North Western Railroad, named *Precursor*. The dictionary defines a precursor as a forerunner of things to come and *Precursor* certainly lived up to her name, even though she was never completed. She readily demonstrated the fine craftsmanship in her construction that MacDermot was soon to put into the building of the 19" gauge Overfair Railway equipment. In fact, it was the Overfair Railway project that took MacDermot's time away from *Precursor* and he never did get the finishing touches on her.

Still, *Precursor* is built like a Swiss watch. She has working sanders, try cocks, hundreds of rivets and is fully sprung and equalized. She has never had a fire in her firebox, but does run on air. Her brakes are steam operated on the engine and hand operated...."

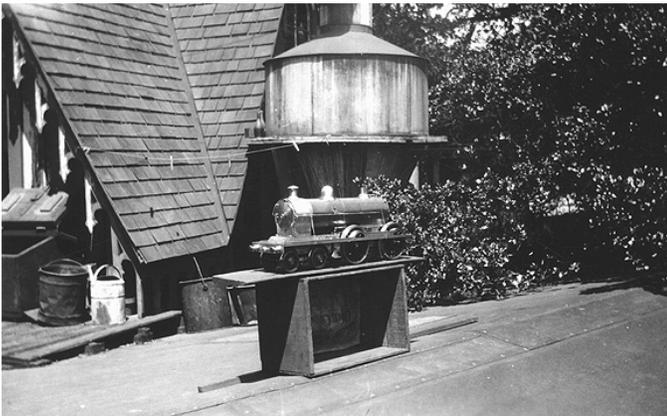
Unfortunately, the page continuing Herrera's article is missing as well as the pages containing "the original receipts and catalog...".



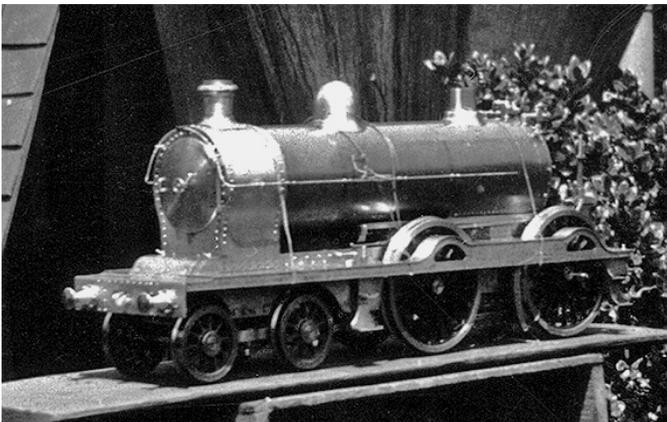
Side view of MacDermot's Precursor 3/4 inch scale model. SPRS Archives No. 1910-1989 LMM-0234, Al Smith collection

Our third source of information about MacDermot's Precursor is a set of four snapshots from Al Smith's collections. Chris Taylor found these photos when he was cataloging the hundreds of snapshots accumulated by Al. The only identification of these particular photos is the notation "Charlie Hoyle" on the envelope. The photos do depict an "unfinished" model, as Herrera described it. The model in these pictures has neither

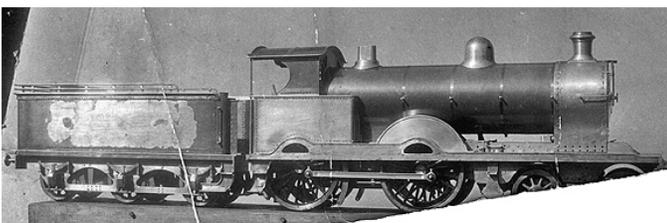
a cab nor fenders over the driving wheels. Nonetheless, it is very likely that this model is the MacDermot version. Another clue supporting this conclusion is that "MacDermot gave the model to Hoyle" (Herrera). That gift may have been MacDermot's expression of thanks to Hoyle, who provided housing and care for MacDermot in the latter's final year.



MacDermot's Precursor 3/4 inch scale Model. SPRS Archives No. 1910-1913 LMM-0262, Al Smith collection



Close-up view of MacDermot's Precursor Model



Side view of a completed Precursor scale model. Unkown origin. SPRS 1910-1913 LMM-0261, Al Smith collection

## Questions for the readers:

Just as the model is "unfinished", so too this story about it is not complete. Many questions remain. Perhaps readers of this article may have answers for these questions.

- \* Who knows more about Carl Herrera and Mr. W. Morgan Davies? Was Herrera the "friend" of Charlie Hoyle?
- \* Does anyone have a copy of *Live Steam's* issues of July and November 1976, so that we can see Herrera's complete article?
- \* Can anyone identify the background builds in figures 3 and 4?
- \* Finally, where is that *Precursor* model now?

Information about the "Precursor" class from:  
***Railways at the Turn of The Century / 1895-1905***

**by O.S. Nock and Illustrated by Clifford and Wendy Meadway**

From p. 132: London and North Western Railways: the "Precursor".

"...George Whale, [Chief Mechanical Engineer of the LNWR]], reverted to the simplest type of express passenger locomotive, the inside cylinder 4-4-0. One hundred and thirty of these compact, and very reliable, engines were turned out at Crewe Works in the years 1904-7, ... The 'Precursors' had cylinders 19 in. diameter by 26 in. stroke: coupled wheels 6 ft. 9 in. diameter, and a large boiler with a heating surface of 2009 sq. ft. ... the grate area of the firebox [was] 22½ sq. ft. ... [they] were fired with high-grade coal, Welsh or Yorkshire hards, and they steamed very freely. They hauled trains of 350 to 400 tons at average speeds of 55 m.p.h., taking such loads about 65 m.p.h. on level track. ..."

This book is one of seven in the series *Railways of the World in Color* written by O. S. Nock and published by the Macmillan Co. between 1969 and 1975. Now out of print, these may be still found in some public libraries and used book stores. Nock covers the eras of Railways from 1800 to 1975.