



## SWANTON PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY

Number 43

Sept. 1996

### Reminder

Our workdays for September are Wednesday evening, **September 11th.** at Cal Poly, starting @ 6:00 P. M. and at the Swanton Ranch, Saturday morning, **September 14th.** starting @ 9:00A. M.

### On Track

with your Director,  
Ed Carnegie

The 105 days of summer will soon be ending and the feel of autumn air and the wet winter rains will then be upon us. As a result we have been trying to get the driveway for the ranch leveled, oiled, and thus made ready for the elements. Unfortunately, if anyone would have stopped by the ranch on Sunday, August 25 they would have thought that Bob Nichols and I would have been carrying on our own "war games". The entire driveway (all 15,000 sq. feet) looked as if a demolition team had laid out land mines and we hit everyone of them! Bob volunteered to come over and help with the grading and what we both thought would be a simple job, turned into a total comedy of errors. One disaster just kept leading to another and six hours later the major task of leveling had not begun!! Instead the driveway was exposed to the elements a bit earlier than anticipated. Within the first hour of moving dirt around, a swimming pool existed next to the roundtable and the ranch's water tank had been completely emptied on various points on the driveway. Bob and I found out that some of the main water lines were only six inches below the surface!! The task of leveling from the top of the driveway to the RR crossing involved some four hundred feet of leveling! Fortunately though no sewer lines were touched or rusted through-- so maybe there was a saving grace after all.

After spending all day Sunday doing "plumbing" repairs, the job of leveling the road finally did begin on Monday. This job should be fully completed (barring any further surprises) the weekend prior to the next workday so bring all your fancy clean cars/trucks/vans

on down to Swanton. The dust should be greatly reduced by then. No skateboards or rollerblading though!

A special thanks goes out to Bud McCrary and Big Creek Lumber for the use of a road grader and expert advice. This equipment made the job of leveling the driveway much easier—at least when we got to it. Also, a special thanks goes out to the Santa Maria FFA chapter. Ten student leaders and their adviser all became Gandy Dancers learning how to drive spikes and gauge track.

Now, on to the business-at-hand for the workday on Saturday, Sept. 7— it is our hope to work on the following tasks:

We will need to concentrate on the main rail to make sure we are ready for the upcoming social events of Sept. and Oct. (i.e. Santa Cruz land conservancy day—the last weekend in Sept.; and the 2472 group is on the Sunday of our October weekend) so we will need to

- Work on some of the curves/rust spots, and replace their ties
- Do brush work—cutback overgrowth
- Do general track clean up

Since our last workday, Swanton hosted on Saturday, August 24 "The Motorcar Operators West". This group of "speedsters" had about 80 people come to Swanton. Early in the morning they held their executive board meeting down in the meadow area. During the meeting and throughout the rest of the morning other members and families kept strolling in to ride the trains. Later they had a very nice barbecue with a potluck buffet of other delicious dishes. After lunch, train rides continued, but many others participated in a horse shoeing contest, a raw egg throwing contest, gunny sack races, etc. Other guests obtained their aerobic train exercise by pushing and pulling to get the hand car to move up or down the track. It seemed like a good time was had by all. We certainly appreciated hosting the group and finding them so appreciative of all the facilities here at Swanton.

We had 8 SPRR members hosting the Motorcar Operators, doing a range of tasks from engineer to sales person. My thanks and appreciation go out to: Mary Ann Carnegie, Marty Campbell, Lou Haughney, Bill McNab, Andy McLean, Geof Toben, and John Tomlin. I overheard many positive comments about the operation and attitude of our members.

**New membership(s) received in August:**

Lawrence Leckband                                  Oakley

On behalf of the entire organization we welcome you into our "train family" and we certainly look forward to seeing you at some of our next events. Many of our members may not recognize you right away so please introduce yourself so that we can get to better know you and vice versa.

Next month, and maybe even for the November newsletter Mary Ann and I will be on vacation! Yes, there are other places to go and things to do besides Swanton—or so MAC informs me. So you will not be having any official notes from me in the newsletter. You will notice upon your trips down to the meadow those months that our fifth wheel will not be there as we are pulling out sometime in Sept. after the work weekend to drive cross the USA to get back to the east coast to see the fall foilage. In route, we will definitely see and/or ride a few of the trainrails.

See ya soon and thanks again for all your support and help.

---

**Behind the Throttle**

with your President,  
Bill McNab

---

The August workday saw many hands working on the car barn track approach, switches, frogs, track ballasting, straightening, raising and all the other jobs associated with a major six track adventure into the carbarns. Many eager hands made the final touches move smoothly. there was much work and consultations over the past several months with Ed Carnegie putting in literally weeks of work on the project. Take a look at it the next time you come to Swanton. If you participated in the project — take a bow and thank Director Ed Carnegie for all the many days he spent working the project through.

The roundhouse crew was busy as usual.

Marty Campbell and wife Carol spent a week at Swanton on about everything. The 502 diesel engine has a real up and coming silver nose and red orange striping authenticated and applied by Marty. The Swanton 502 now has true "Black Widow" markings.

Several other members came down a day or two early so a lot got accomplished. A few people came over to Swanton just to cool off. Mark Cooper and family ventured from Atascadero where the temperature had been 111 degrees. Ladies in attendance were Carol Campbell, Vera McLean, Francis Stone, Martha Neilsen, Gloria McNab, and Robyn Jones. Much weeding and watering of the flower beds was accomplished. Not to be forgotten Lou Haughney attended the roses and other plants around the shop areas. It sure looks better when the TLC is applied liberally.

Our lunch time meeting was fairly short as unbeknownst to me a lot of discussion had been carried on over the last several weeks as to how to ease the rust problem in the roundhouse and also the tie spacing and curve situation on the track. Of course, I was on vacation at the July workday so my excuse was feeble.

We did have nine hardy souls take the walk up to the Big Creek Falls and the fish hatchery. It was much easier than when we went in April because there is only about one third the water flow now. We again thank the McCrary family for permission to hike across their land.

Although there are three lawnmowers, they have been having starting and timing problems due in most part to the excessive amount of stones in the meadow area. We either need a mechanical rock picker or get the gang together and make a concentrated "people pass" through the area tossing the rocks into the back of a couple of pickup trucks.

Had a great vacation to Oregon. On the way, there is a railroad park just south of Dunsmiur, sleep in cabooses, dinner in the diners, but closed Tuesday and Wednesday so all we could do was look around. Shakespeare at Ashland — way too long. Covered bridges at Eagle Point near Medford, Rogue River and around Cottage Grove. Looking at our Little Creek Bridge, it sure would be neat to make it a covered bridge, and when the steam engine goes through you could call it a Smoke House. Onto Pendleton, where we took in the underground tour, the Pendleton Roundup Cowboy hall-of-fame and the Pendleton Woolen Mills (bring money) if you appreciate quality in wool clothing or blankets. Onto La

Grande and highway 82 to Nez Perce Indian country in the Wallowa Mtns., stayed six days. Then the back way to Baker and the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center, back to Pendleton—bought another blanket, went to a thrift store and for \$4.80 bought different shapes/sizes of containers that might be usable for flowers on the Swanton picnic tables. Onto Bend and eventually home. Great trip — highly recommend.

We have some RR runs coming and also like to get further along on tie replacement prior to winter setting in so try to make the Sept. and Oct. workdays.

Thank you to Swanton Rd. strawberry farmer, Jim Cochran and young grandson who "straw" bossed the Saturday track work and presented a crate of fresh picked strawberries to our group at lunch time.

Bob Nichols also treated us at lunch to sample his first crop of flame seedless grapes he planted at home a few years ago. When Bob smiles, you know he is proud!

---

### In the Caboose

with your Historian,  
Lou Haughney

#### MORE ABOUT SAN VICENTE LOGGING RR AND GEORGE BARLOW

Recent articles about the San Vicente Logging Railroad and about George Barlow's visit from England have resulted in additional information from SPRS members about these two subjects.

Mac Gaddis sent a map that shows the routes of the Ocean Shore, Southern Pacific, and San Vicente Log Company Railroads in the northern part of Santa Cruz County. The Ocean Shore Railroad ran along the east, inland side of Scott Creek from the shoreline to Swanton. It veered off from the main line between the mouths of Molino and Scott Creeks, where the popular surfing beach is along Highway 1, about 1 mile north of the turn onto Swanton Road. The San Vicente Lumber Co. Railroad started at the Ocean Shore line on the north side of Little Creek, just beyond the entrance to the Swanton Pacific Ranch. The San Vicente ran along the north side of Little Creek up into the Santa Cruz Mountains. After two switch backs, it reached the head water of Little Creek where it divided into three lines going through the forests at elevations of 1,000 to 2,000 ft. Two Shay standard gauge locomotives were used in

the logging operations. Mac says that he hiked through much of that area as a high school student; but, most of the railroad vestiges had disappeared by then.

Several persons have remembered George Barlow's visit to Swanton about 1982. He did return for one or two more visits as he became friends with many railroad enthusiasts in the Bay Area. Bob Maxfield recalls meeting Barlow on one of the latter's visits, probably when Barlow was visiting with Eric Thomsen. When Bob was in London a couple months ago, he picked up the current brochure on the Romney, Hythe, and Dymchurch Railway. The timetable indicates three to eight daily runs over the 14 mile line from April through September with reduced schedules in March and October. Its current roster includes seven 4-6-2 Pacific's, two 4-8-2 Moguls, a German "Black Prince" express, and two diesels.

Thanks to all of you for contributing these comments, clippings, photos, etc. A few more boxes of Al Smith's memorabilia have appeared in the OSH caboose and are waiting to be sorted. All that information has been very helpful and is much appreciated.

---

### Observation Car

We recently came across an envelope from Lou that was mailed to us this time a year ago. Although it is a year late the information is still very interesting.

Research into the history of Louis M. MacDermot and the Overfair Railroad has uncovered much interesting and often intriguing information; but it has also raised many questions about aspects and periods of his life. So far, I have visited the Public Libraries in San Francisco and Oakland, the library and photo archives of the Oakland Tribune, and the Library of the California State Railroad Museum (CSRM). The Oakland Library's "Local History Room" and its archives of local newspapers, and the photo morgue at the newspaper's office have provided many articles and photos about different stages of MacDermot's life, particularly about his later years and about the acquisition of the locomotives #1912 and #1913 by Robert C. Maxfield. The CSRM Library's material covers the span from the Overfair Railroad to Al Smith's collection of the equipment; it has valuable and unique information on Jervis' ownership and plans for using #1914, #1915, and #1500 in the 1950's and 1960's. (I didn't have enough time to study that file thoroughly on my first visit.)

Those articles, particularly those of Harre Demoro in the *Oakland Tribune*, shed some light on MacDermot's personality and life style; but, on the whole, much is unknown about MacDermot's personal history. For example, his father's obituary (died 1898) in the *Oakland Enquirer* states that the father was a "capitalist and a millionaire" and that he was survived by his widow and four sons; but, the names of his wife and sons are not given. In one of Demoro's articles in 1969, a passing mention is made to "Louis MacDermot and his wife"; however, I have not been able to find any other information nor reference to her. Sometime in the 1940's, MacDermot moved with his trains to Billy Jones ranch in Los Gatos, where he died in 1948. What had happened to his wife?

Other questions arise about him. How did he obtain such outstanding skills to design and build the Overfair Railroad? Did he go to an engineering school? If so, where? Did he later use the Overfair machine shop for commercial purposes? An interesting trivial fact is that the block-long MacDermot mansion and grounds at 7th and Center streets in Oakland, where he built and later stored the Overfair rolling stock, is now occupied by the West Oakland BART station.

Some of the leads for pursuing this research have resulted from old newspapers clippings that SPRS members have uncovered. Geoff Tobin's finding the Jan. 5, 1969 *Oakland Tribune's* story by Demore about the pending sale of the Overfair equipment by the Billy Jones estate led me to the researches in the Oakland libraries. Therefore, I will appreciate any newspapers clippings, photos, memorabilia, and anecdotes pertaining to the history of the Swanton Pacific Railroad.

**WHAT WAS THE MOUNTAIN LION RAILROAD?**

The Mountain Lion Railroad was the name given to MacDermot's operation in 1941 of #1913 locomotive and some Overfair passenger cars at the Alameda County Zoological Gardens, the Oakland Zoo. The locomotive ran without the leading truck because of the curves on the one mile loop and also without the exterior covering on the boiler. MacDermot was the engineer, the conductor, and the fare-collector. Unfortunately, the operation lasted only "a few months" because of personality clashes between MacDermot and the Zoo's management.

**Calendar**

- Sept. 11 ..... Cal Poly work evening
- Sept. 14 ..... SPRS workday
- Sept. 29 ..... "Land Trust Days" (steam run)
- Oct. 9 ..... Cal Poly work evening
- Oct. 12 ..... SPRS workday
- Oct. 13 ..... "2472" (steam run)
- Nov. 6 ..... Cal Poly work evening
- Nov. 9 ..... SPRS workday

**Ranch Update**

Another new change has taken place in the management at the Swanton Pacific ranch. After a long search and interviews with many strong candidates the ranch now has a new Ranch Superintendent - LaDonna Seeley. LaDonna, has been the interim ranch superintendent for this past year filling in after Kevin Piper left for Nevada, so some of you might have seen LaDonna around along with her husband, Tom Midgley. LaDonna and Tom have done a wonderful job this past year and we all look forward to working with them in the coming years.

**Membership**

Annual dues to the society is \$25.00 per person. Dues are collected during the first of each year. Any correspondence to this newsletter or change of address and/or phone number should be sent to:

Swanton Pacific Railroad Society  
 BioResource and Agricultural Engineering Department  
 Cal Poly State University  
 San Luis Obispo, CA 93407

(805) 756-2620  
 (805) 756-2626 FAX  
<http://www.calpoly.edu:80/~ae/swanton/sprs.html>

Workdays are held at the Swanton Pacific Ranch near Davenport, CA., the second Saturday of the month and the Wednesday evening, prior to that Saturday at the BioResource and Agricultural Engineering Department, Cal Poly State University. Anyone and everyone is welcome at these workdays. The phone number at the Swanton Pacific Railroad for messages is: (408) 423-8204