

## SWANTON PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY

Number 44

Oct. 1996

### Reminder

Our workday for October will be at the Swanton Ranch, Saturday morning, **October 12th**, starting @ 9:00 A. M. Please note that there will be no work night at Cal Poly this month.

### On Track

with your Director,  
Ed Carnegie

9-26-96

Hi, we are in Russel Ka, the home of Dole. Having a good time.

### Behind the Throttle

with your President,  
Bill McNab

Friday and Saturday, September 27-28, were preparation days prior to the Santa Cruz Island Trust Event. We had the scheduled work group plus quite a few extras showed up on their own. Actually about as many people were available as a typical work day. Cars were laboriously cleaned, engines polished, switches oiled and all sorts of miscellaneous in-between.

We had a crane car out for a while and then the truck crane as the situation needed a second crane. Jim Scott did a good operating job on the truck crane. After awhile all was completed and the cranes put away.

Sunday the cars were divided into 2 trains. Both of the steam engines and the diesel engine were used. Two trains could be running while the engine turned around the roundhouse. Trains passed each other at the Cosgrove switch. The train operation with a few exceptions for glitches ran smoothly. Approximately 19 trips were made. The line waiting to ride was always longer than train capacity until after 4 P.M. Not one of the engineers or conductors said they hadn't run

enough runs. (Side notes: If each train had one more car available (there were no more cars) we could have kept the waiting line from stretching clear to the BBQ area. Also the radios at places along the track have static or not heard at all. Our hand signals and time in the station can be worked on.)

THE BIG DAY SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 29, 1996.

Santa Cruz Land Trust had sold at least 900 tickets. How many showed up they are still trying to figure out. All agreed, capacity of the area had been reached.

There were dolled up cars on display mostly from the 1900 - 1920 era, with occupants in respective attire. Booths included model trains, Land Trust info, small single cylinder gas engines.

The ranch had pictures, pumpkins for sale and all surrounded by hay bales. The railroad had shirts, caps, and jam for sale and a history display. The California Forestry truck was in attendance. Hugh BBQ with both pits going. Musical groups performed, etc. It was a Party of Magnitude!

One of the attractions was the early day horse powered tread mill used to power a small threshing machine. That was truly a 1 or 2 H.P. engine. Ken McCrary brought it down from his old time machinery collection. He said it was very efficient as a horse power and fertilizer machine combined. Ken lined up people for aerobic work outs and they did pretty good running the tread mill.

There were lots of complements to our group for the trains, engines, and area. Many questions, inquiries about Al Smith's life, trains, ranch. Everyone liked the grass meadow instead of the dust as in past years. Several inquiries on membership. Good to see some of our group that haven't been able to make the work days for awhile.

For the November work day we will work to about 1 o'clock, lunch, etc., and then Ken McCrary has invited us to walk through his old time machinery collection with him which will take place around 2 P.M. Details Nov. Newsletter.

## In the Caboose

with your Historian,  
Lou Haughney

LOUIS M. MacDERMOT 1916-1941

Only a few isolated items have been found about Louis M. MacDermot's life after the close in 1915 of the Panama Pacific International Exposition. This information has been taken from news articles in the *Oakland Tribune*, especially those written by Harre Demoro, a few brief accounts in railroading books, and by recollections of persons who met MacDermot during his final years in the 1940's in the Los Gatos area.

Louis MacDermot married; but, nothing is known about his wife other than what appears in the 1920 U. S. Census archives; namely, that her name was Hortense, a native of Massachusetts. An article in The *Oakland Tribune* makes a passing reference to "MacDermot and his wife", that's all. The only other information about her that I have heard is the story that MacDermot and his wife used to go regularly to San Francisco for plays, opera and symphony concerts. Sometimes, if the performance was long, they would stay overnight at a Nob Hill hotel; then, they would return to their home in Oakland the next day by the ferry boat. That must have been in the 1920's before the Bay Bridge was built.

The MacDermot family estate occupied the full block in Oakland on Center Street between 7th and 8th Streets. According to the AAA street map, this site is across the street from the West Oakland BART Station. Later on, probably during the 1930's, Louis MacDermot became more and more of a recluse. The house and the grounds were not maintained and began to deteriorate. The Overfair passenger cars were place helter-skelter through the grounds, some of them right next to the house. The house was not repainted; a few windows and shutters were in disarray; and, the rain gutters were broken and hanging awry. According to one of Harre Demoro's articles, MacDermot then lived in only a few rooms of the big house. Visitors had to make to make their way into the yard through overgrown, untrimmed bushes and trees to the house, then throw pebbles

against the windows of MacDermot's rooms. [Harre Demoro quotes Ralph W. Demoro (Harre's father?), who was one of the few to visit MacDermot at that time.]

One writer, Federic Shaw, states that, about 1939 or 1940, the estate was taken over by the City of Oakland for redevelopment. This report and the condition of the estate suggest that MacDermot's financial condition had also deteriorated. Shaw mentions this demise of the estate in his text for the Railroadian's 1954 calendar featuring the Overfair Railroad. None of Demoro's articles, however, tell of such a fate for the estate.

An *Oakland Tribune* article of Nov. 10, 1940 describes the plan to run the Overfair equipment at the Alameda County Zoological Gardens (now called the Oakland Zoo). The writer had visited the MacDermot estate the previous day to obtain information for the story. So, the house and shops must have been still standing then. This article stated that "two of the locomotives and 12 of the tourist cars already have been moved to the zoological gardens. The third engine started there yesterday.....Over in the corner (of the old machine shop where the engines had been stored) stood a Renault automobile he (Louis) used to drive around the Oakland streets - what few there were in 1912."

Unfortunately, the "Mountain Lion Railroad" operated only a "few months" at the zoological gardens. Harre Demoro's article (1/5/69) says:"... the owner had by now become eccentric, and the zoo finally asked him to take his equipment away". MacDermot had operated the zoo railroad by himself. The boiler jacket was missing on #1913 locomotive; its leading truck had been removed because of the sharp curves on the one-mile track. After that brief run in 1941, the equipment was put "in storage". (Where?)

Within the next year or so, MacDermot, now in declining health, moved to the South Bay area where "Louis was taken in by the Charlie Hoyle family of Los Gatos", (taken from a brief account of "Engine 1913" by Charlie Hoyle). This final period of MacDermot's life will be described in a future issue of the SPRS newsletter.

This account of MacDermot's life in the period of 1915-1941 has many intriguing gaps. I would like to learn more about his wife and his two sisters and brother. Are there any family members or descendants still in the Bay Area? Recently, Elmer Stone met a man who said he was a son of MacDermot's sister; but, that man moved out of the area before we could obtain more information. Any information or clues about MacDermot's life and

family members will be appreciated. Wouldn't it be nice if we could find descendants of the MacDermot family and invite them to take a ride on the Overfair/Swanton Pacific Railroad?

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## Observation Car

The year is quickly coming to an end. Just the other day plans were discussed about the New Years Eve run. Talk is also going around about who will be on the Board of Directors for next year. We need to start thinking about who will be assisting in setting the direction of the railroad. Are you interested in what will be happening to the railroad in the future? Are you interested in helping to set that direction next year? If so, we need to talk to you now. Please let our President, Bill McNab, know what position you are interested in.

Another "obsevation" that is being made is that only about 4 people are contributing to this newsletter. It's well known that there is a wealth of information out there among our membership. There are people who have worked on railroads in the past and some of you are working on them today. What did you do then and what are you doing now? There has to be some stories out there. Did you go on a trip this summer? Someplace that was interesting. What did you do at last months workday? Did you learn anything or have a comment. Do you have an interesting job that we'd like to hear about? Too many newsletters are full of what "we did last month". I know what we did last month, I was there. I want to hear something new! Lou Haughney has been sending in a wealth of information and I think we can all agree that it's all very interesting. Can you imagine what this newletter would be with out Lou's contribution? (by the way, Ed and Bill, your articles are also important since there are members who aren't able to attend our workdays and it is also a place to recognize the hard workers.) I want to hear from other members. All 120 of you. Please contact your secretary, he's lonely and wants to talk to someone.

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## For Sale

Recently I came across some articles regarding the railroad and I thought I would pass on the information. I know of someone who has some items from the Panama Pacific Exposition. 1. A daily schedule, listing

the days activities. 2. A set of "Ribbon threaders" or "bodkins" that was handed out at the Singer exhibition at the fair. 3. A hotel towel with the words "Panama Exposition" stitched across the top. I don't recall the individual costs but I remember that all 3 items could have been bought for around \$100.00. Also in a book store is the book, Little Railroads of the World, by Frederic Shaw. I do know that price is \$50.00. If you are interested in any of these items let Jim Matheny know and you will be set you up with the right person.

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## Calendar

Oct. 12 .....	SPRS workday
Oct. 13 .....	"2472" (steam run)
Nov. 6 .....	Cal Poly work evening
Nov. 9 .....	SPRS workday
Dec. 11 .....	Cal Poly work evening
Dec. 14 .....	SPRS workday
Dec. 31 .....	New Years Eve run

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## 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:

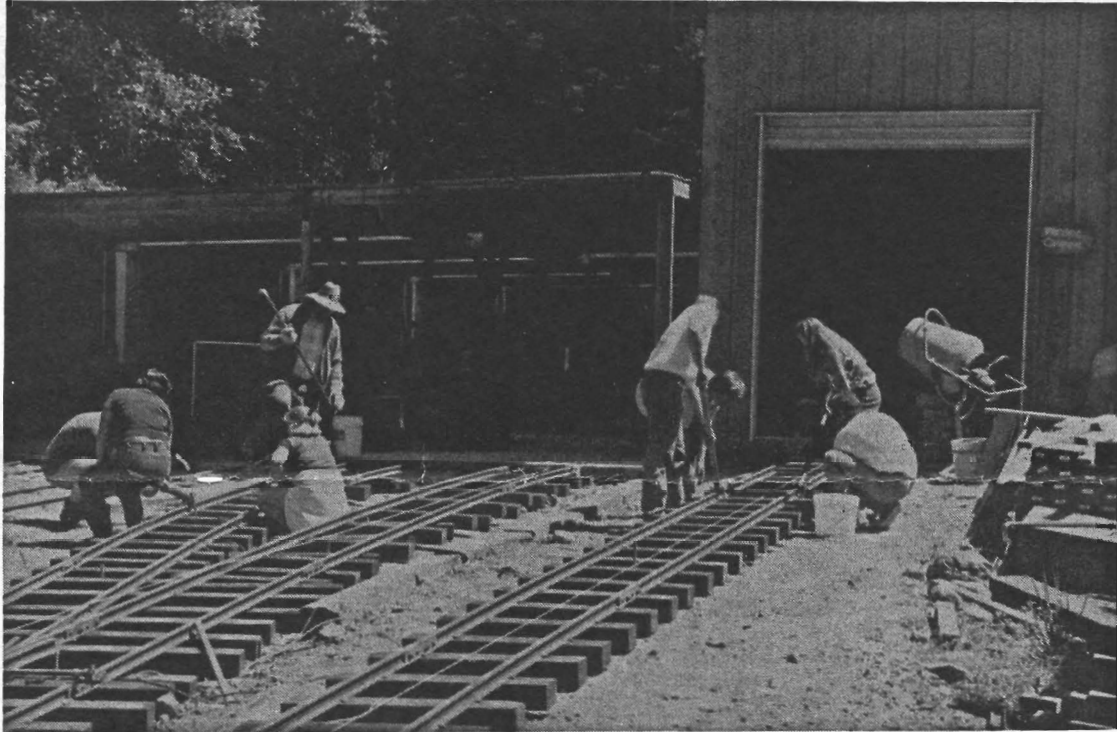
Swanton Pacific Railroad Society  
 BioResource and Agricultural Engineering Department  
 Cal Poly State University  
 San Luis Obispo, CA 93407

(805) 756-2620

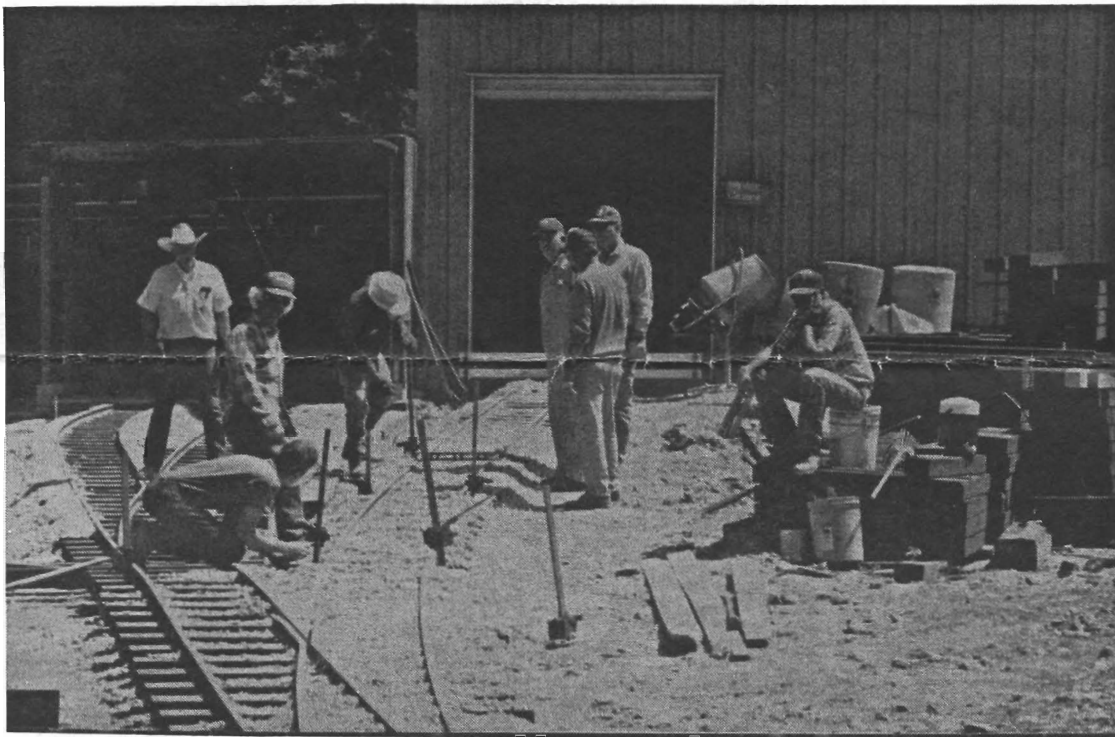
(805) 756-2626 FAX

<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



"Gandy Dancing" to the car barn



Who's in charge ?