



SWANTON PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY

Number 45

Nov. 1996

Reminder

Our workday for November are Wednesday evening, November, 6th. at Cal Poly, starting @ 6:00 P. M. and at the Swanton Ranch, Saturday morning, November 9th. starting @ 9:00 A. M.

On Track

with your Director,
Ed Carnegie

Ed and Mary Ann have returned from their vacation. They just got back on Monday the 29th and since they haven't had time to unpack we didn't expect any stories about their trip in this newsletter. Make sure you come to the work day this Saturday to hear all about their adventures. We understand that their trip went on with out much incident, it was just getting started that was the problem.

Behind the Throttle

with your President,
Bill McNab

It is election time again. With Ed Carnegie, our Director, gone for 3 months (September, October, November) parts thereof, we will have nominations in November and elections in December. Offices open will be President, First vice-president, Second vice-president and Secretary. Eligibility requires one year active membership. Voters are all the paid up members. New officers take over in January. Think over whom you would like to lead and then nominate them in November.

Electing officers each year gives more chances for everyone to be in leadership roles. It's a good experience and reminds you of how important to the railroad society each person is, because without input, consensus and teamwork, the job wouldn't get done.

September workday we tried out 4 gas powered rotary lawn mowers and after much adjustment, got 2 to work. **Mowing the meadow** has become an 8 to 10 hour task for 1 mower, 4 to 5 hours for 2 mowers. Serious consideration needs to be given to a quality riding mower for the approximate 2 acre area. Since the field is now under irrigation, it needs mowing about twice a month.

The rail motorcar group that came down to Swanton in September for a picnic and train run has over 200 members and around 70 motorcar owners. They have runs all over the west (with Railroad permission ahead of time). Their longest run is about 300 miles from Willits to Eureka round-trip overnight. The tales they tell!

Riding and working along our rail, it is easy to spot the workings of wild pigs in the area. They are creating wide trails up the hillsides which could lead to an erosion problem in heavy rains. Also they have rooted and romped through the Alligator pond created a long time ago, to where it is a devastated mud hole. This year there seems to be much more damage than noticed in prior years. The ranch is also having wild pig problems of growing proportions. When the pigs wallow in an area, it basically tears up all the vegetation. I know the ranch is working on the problem but the problem seems to be escalating faster than control measures.

The redwood tree seedling project is going great. Besides the trees, you are caring for at home, we have about 12 potted seedlings in the meadow that range from 1 to 3 feet tall. We should end up next spring with 30 tree seedlings planted on the hillside near the south end of the track, on our way to the 100 mark. South Railroad Redwood Grove or Century Railroad Redwood Grove (100 trees and new century combined) - name be appropriate?

On a spontaneous workday in September, we were treated to a Mary Ann Carnegie Dutch oven pineapple upside down cake. Turned out good and lots of fun. Perhaps we could get those in the group that have Dutch ovens together and plan a meal at Swanton some workday evening. Those without Dutch ovens could chip in to cover the ingredient costs. I know one person that is putting a Dutch oven on his Christmas wish list. I can taste it now - on a cool evening, a pot roast with all the vegetables, corn bread in another oven, cake or deep dish berry pie in another - accompanied by Marty Campbell's zinfandel (hopefully well aged) wine!

The Saturday, October 12 workday was very sparse in attendance. With the short crew, work accomplished was also sparse. There is a lot of tie replacing to do to keep the (so to speak) "train on the track". It takes a big group effort, hope November shows a lot of eager beavers and others ready to go.

Sunday, October 13, the 2472 steam engine group put on a BBQ of fine proportions. Weather cooperated and enjoyment was prevalent. Both steam engines ran and the diesel was also used. For a couple of runs, the train was backed from the station, north to the end of the track in the cow pasture. The cows looked the train over but no red shirts, so no bull charges.

Meanwhile, have a nice day. We will hopefully have a productive workday, Saturday morning, November 9 and in the afternoon we plan on going up the road and see Ken McCrary's old-time equipment collection.

In the Caboose

with your Historian,
Lou Haughney

ENGINE 1913 and CHARLIE HOYLE

A few months ago, Elmer Stone gave me copies of two brief accounts of Engine 1913 that were written in the 1980's. The first is by Charlie Hoyle, who took #1913 under his care after the Overfair equipment was moved to Campbell-Los Gatos area in the mid 1940's. The second account continues Charlie's brief history after the latter's death. (The author of the second account is not identified.) Both reports were then posted on the 1913 when it was exhibited at the Railroad Fair in San Francisco in 1987.

ENGINE 1913 (by Charlie Hoyle)

The 1913 is one of 4 1/3 scale Pacific type 4-6-2 steam locomotives built to 18-7/8" (commonly referred to as 19") gauge specifications.

The enterprising Mr. Louis Main MacDermot, grandson of the late Charles Main, after whom "Main" Street in San Francisco was named, built the 1913 and three other similar units, the 1912, 1914 and 1915, at his shops at 740 Center Street in Oakland, California in a period of 18 months in 1913 and 1914.

Mr. MacDermot built the locomotives specifically for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition held in San Francisco in 1915 in commemoration of the opening of the Panama Canal. His investment in the project was in excess of \$70,000, a sum he borrowed from his mother.

The Overfair Railway ran daily on a 6 mile track MacDermot had laid at the Exposition grounds. Although the fair ran a total of 272 days and the fare was a dime a ride, the people's interest in rail ride had apparently shifted, and now they seemed to prefer the rubber tired "elephant trains". As a result, the venture yielded a mere \$39,000 in gross revenues, less 30% of \$11,700 which went to the fair as had been agreed upon by contract.

At this time, MacDermot had met with a succession of incidents which affected his life; his mother's death, the Exposition fiasco, and related misunderstandings with members of his immediate family.

Louis was taken in by the Charlie Hoyle family of 134 Wilder Avenue in Los Gatos, California, who arranged to have him move in to a converted playhouse-cottage in their backyard. He lived there in poverty until his death on February 22, 1948.

In 1940 the locomotives were taken to the Alameda County Zoological Gardens, now named Knowland Park, in Oakland, California. In 1945 they were dismantled, transported to Campbell, California and placed in storage.

In 1948, Billy Jones, former SP Engineer, acquired the locomotives and moved them to his Davis Avenue Ranch in Los Gatos where he reassembled them and converted them from coal to oil. In 1950 Billy Jones displayed the 1913, the tender and the three cars at the Santa Clara County Fair.

By the time Billy Jones died in 1968, he had sold the 1914 and 1915 to a syndicate in Southern California where there they were used at an amusement park. Several years later Mr. Robert C. Maxfield of Calistoga, California purchased the 1912 and 1913 from the Jones Estate. He had them restored at the Erich Thomsen's Redwood Valley Shops in Oakland, then moved them to his Calistoga Steam Railroad from 1975 to 1979, with little success. {Note by LCH: Bob Maxfield says only the 1913 was overhauled and operated.}

In 1979, Mr. Albert B. Smith, a former SP Brakeman who founded and once owned Orchard Supply Hardware, purchased the 1912 and 1913 from Robert Mayfield (sic) and moved them to his Swanton Ranch. He then acquired the 1914 and 1915 from Southern California in the early 1980's.

The 1912 is presently undergoing restoration. The 1914 and the 1915 may soon be fully restored and operational. The 1913 is the only one in running condition at this time.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THE 1913 (author not identified)

The information on "Engine 1913" was compiled by the late Charles Hoyle to accompany a lithograph of the locomotive by railroad artist Ned Reed. Charlie had extra copies run in case the locomotive was ever put on exhibit. {Does anyone have a copy of that lithograph?}

Charlie Hoyle, who died Christmas Day 1986, was a life-long fan of Louis MacDermot and his engines. He was the self-appointed guardian of the 1913, and regardless of who owned, it was Charlie's engine. He purchased Lemon Pledge polish, Brasso metal polish, new cotton T-shirts, and Barbecue Black spray paint out of his own pocket and spent endless hours polishing and touching up the locomotive. Woe be to anyone who put a fingerprint on it!

Charlie was a main-line hostler for the Southern Pacific and a locomotive engineer on the **Roaring Camp** and Big Trees in Felton on his time off. He was acknowledged as one of the few experts on both steam and diesel locomotive repairs and operation.

Unfortunately, Charlie never lived to see his "1913" at a Railroad Fair but he would be proud to see it here, near the Panama-Pacific Exposition Grounds where his hero, Louis MacDermot first ran it seventy-two years ago.

Some statistics on the locomotive:

Length - - 28' 0" Height - - 6' 1" Weight, with tender - - 12 tons

Boiler Pressure, when built - - 200# p.s.i. Tractive effort - 1765#

Cylinders - - 8" x 9" Drivers 26"

These engines were closely modeled after the latest passenger engines of the time. The Southern Pacific class P-6, Nos. 2453 to 2458, as originally built with extended smoke boxes, served as prototypes, except for modifications to the size of the cab. {Note by LCH: Norman W. Holmes in his 1985 book, *Prune Country Railroading*, p. 176, says SP No. 2458 was the model.}

To update the sheet by Charles Hoyle, the repairs to the 1912 have been completed and the engine was run for the first time in 72 years just shortly before his death.

A minor correction is also in order. Al Smith was not the founder of Orchard Supply Hardware. He served as president of the company, which had over 1000 stockholders, for seventeen years until its merger with the W. R. Grace Co. in 1979. A crew of volunteers has been responsible for the track work and the repair and maintenance of the equipment of the Swanton Pacific Railroad.

Observation Car

Submitted by Andy McMeans

Here's something you might want to incorporate in our newsletter. I don't know for sure whether this is "the truth" or not, but it sure makes a plausible and interesting story. It's the kind of story engineers thrive on.

The US Standard railroad gauge (distance between the rails) is 4 feet, 8.5 inches. That's an exceedingly odd number.

Why was that gauge used? Because that's the way they built them in England, and the US railroads were built by English expatriates.

Why did the English people build them like that? Because the first rail lines were built by the same people who built the pre-railroad tramways, and that's the gauge they used.

Why did "they" use that gauge then? Because the people who built the tramways used the same jigs and tools that they used for building wagons, which used that wheel spacing.

Okay! Why did the wagons use that odd wheel spacing? Well, if they tried to use any other spacing the wagons would break on some of the old, long distance roads, because that's the spacing of the old wheel ruts.

So who built these old rutted roads? The first long distance roads in Europe were built by Imperial Rome for the benefit of their legions. The roads have been used ever since. And the ruts? The initial ruts, which everyone else had to match for fear of destroying their wagons, were first made by Roman war chariots. Since the chariots were made for or by Imperial Rome they were all alike in the matter of wheel spacing.

Thus, we have the answer to the original questions. The United States standard railroad gauge of 4 feet, 8.5 inches derives from the original specification (Military Spec) for an Imperial Roman army war chariot.

MilSpecs and Bureaucracies live forever.

So, the next time you are handed a specification and wonder what horse's ass came up with it, you may be exactly right. Because the Imperial Roman chariots were made to be just wide enough to accommodate the back-ends of two war horses.

Pictures

The enclosed pictures are of the 1914 and the 1500 at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition held in San Francisco in 1915. They are from the collection of the Swanton Pacific Railroad Society.

Calendar

- 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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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.

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

