



SWANTON PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY

Number 46

Dec 1996

Reminder

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

On Track

with your Director,
Ed Carnegie

After traveling a littler over 9,200 miles with our 5th wheel and trusty Ford truck, Mary Ann and I are safely back home and are happy to report that we had a wonderful trip. It was a trip filled with many interesting and memorable experiences. Initially, we weren't so sure that we should even go with all the bad omens that seemed to be thrust upon us before we even started—i.e., our dog was skunked, an irrigation pipe burst in our backyard, and within the first 45 minutes of our journey we lost two tires off of our 5th wheel. Regardless though, we kept on going. The experiences kept accumulating on our journey, but we just laughed and took them all in stride as great "Kodak moments" to remember them as incidents that made this trip most memorable. We did however experience some of the "typical" tourist attractions along the way in that we visited quite a few railroads, museums (RR and others—missing out on a workday, and several Swanton train events—I had to get my train fixes somehow!). We also visited Amish country, historical landmarks, civil war battlefields, presidential libraries, and saw lots of fall foliage. It was spectacular, as "leaf peepers" we saw it all—from the Aspens in Colorado, to the maples up in the New England states and on down through the Blue Ridge/Shenandoah Valley—colors of all variations were everywhere. The red, yellow, and orange carpet was laid out for us wherever we went.

One of the most interesting train rides was the Mt. Washington Cog Railroad in New Hampshire. They claim that they are the first cog railroad in the world and are still operating today as they did originally. The day

we were there they were operating 6 of their 8 steam engines, each engine had just one car that was pushed against gravity. The engines burn soft coal and really produce a lot of black smoke—the mountain they climb is at a 37.5% grade and is 6,000 plus ft. high. Winds at the top of the Mt. have been measured at 241 mph and the icicles are horizontal! Sometime when some of you have nothing else to do come and watch 6 hours of home video of our trip! That's the unedited version—maybe we'll try to edit it some! Anyway there are many more adventures to tell of, but we won't bore you with them here as we saw and did lots but most importantly—we survived our first experience of 5th wheeling. In fact, Barney (our dog) is ready to go again, he enjoyed it so much!

The November work day was very busy and quite productive. The bulk of the work force was involved in track repair. Almost 500 feet of track was worked over and at least every fourth tie was replaced, as well as any tie in between that was rotten.

The next work day (Dec.) we should be able to get past Cosgrove. Randy and some of the Round House Hounds put together a spike puller that should make the tie replacement go much faster. In addition, a small crew worked in and around the Car Shop. New doors were built for part of the Car Barn, so in the near future we will be able to lock up all of our cars.

Some discussion has been going on the last few months about having two work days a month. Andy McLean, Greg Duff, plus a few others have been showing up on weekends other than the regular work day weekends to work on ongoing projects. We need some more input to decide whether enough members would like to participate in this. Let me or any officer know what you think. Should it be every month? The first and second weekends, the second and third, or the second and fourth? Give us your input.

Elections: In the back of the Newsletter you will find a ballot. The nominating committee has come up with the following slate of nominees:

CANDIDATES:

Marty Campbell	President
Andy McLean	1st Vice President
Greg Duff, or Geoffrey Tobin	2nd Vice President
Jim Matheny	Secretary
Ed Carnegie	Treasurer

Please vote for the person of your choice, write-ins are welcomed, as long as the person whom you write-in is agreeable to perhaps holding that office.

New memberships received over the last few months were as follows:

Raymond Austin	Hayward
Paul Ecke	Encinitas
Gregory Kohmescher	Santa Cruz
William Wright	San Jose
James Scott	Old Station

On behalf of the entire organization we welcome each of 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 yourselves so that we can get to better know you and vice versa.

Reminder too that dues for the new year are due and payable. We hope that you will pay these by the workday in February so that you can be included in the new directory. We have the binders in stock now and will be distributing the new membership directories for each paid member in 1997. So pay your dues and be included this next year.

Items that will be coming **up for the December workday** are as follows:

- Track crew will continue to work on replacing ties. If enough people show up we will have more than one crew working on the track. A good size crew would be about 6 people—4 to remove and clean out the ballast, and 2 to place ties and spike.
- Car Barn—build and paint new doors. for the remaining sections.
- Don't forget **our next run is New Year's Eve**. The lucky ones **that participate have a great time**. Hope to see you on the last train ride in '96 and the first for '97.

See ya soon and thanks again for all your help these last few months while we were on the road.

Behind the Throttle

with your President,
Bill McNab

The November work day was probably the most productive track work days in a long time. Even some of the roundhouse contingent jumped in and participated in the physical effort to replace worn ties along the track. It was great. Over 400 feet replaced with every 4th tie or less. Some mechanization was **implemented and other innovations** are in the **development and testing stage**. anything to ease the physical labor is most welcome.

In fact the work day was so long that coming back up to the car barn it was dark thirty and lights needed to be on to find the place.

We weren't able to go through Ken McCrarys old time equipment collection as Ken had to be elsewhere. We'll reschedule for another time.

The gardeners in the group were out in force. All areas weeded, soil loosened, even areas raked and general spruce up all around. Wow! It's ready for winter.

Garage or car barn doors are in the works for the **car storage barn**. I understand that close inspection of the **project is not allowed** as design work was a work in progress as construction went forwards. For the door paint job I wonder if it will feature Thomas train engine faces or a silhouette of a caboose or engine or some other whimsical creation. **Stay tuned anything can happen**.

Elections - it was felt that more time was needed to put up **nominations** so we have delayed the nominations until **the December work day**. Again the qualifications are **membership** for at least one year. We are **establishing a** nominations committee to help coordinate the situation. Thoughts you might have or want to run yourself please contact Ed Carnegie for details.

We have lots of track work and other projects ahead of us. Hope we have a good turnout for the December work day and unless it is raining torrents we also have **inside work that** could be done on rainy days. A good work day can also take away all the stress of that Christmas shopping list.

In the Caboose

with your Historian,
Lou Haughney

MacDermot, the Mechanical Designer, 1908-1912

Louis M. MacDermot's period of mechanical design and fabrication occurred between 1908 and 1918, according to sets of drawings and a ledger in Al Smith's memorabilia and in the Library of the California State Railroad Museum (CSRM). The latter has a collection of about 350 MacDermot engineering drawings, and the SPRS has copies of about 1/3 to 1/2 of the former. (Was the CSRM set obtained from Al Smith?)

The drawings are meticulously executed, just like textbook examples. Practically all were drawn by others than MacDermot, but all are signed off by him. Only the three last ones in 1917 and 1918 appear to have been prepared by MacDermot himself. So he must have had a staff of draftsmen in the early years. Was MacDermot the only designer, however?

These drawings and the accounting ledger book give clues as to MacDermot's early work in mechanical engineering. Apparently, he built a machine and design shop in his estate yard in 1909 or 1910. A drawing (A1) for a "New shop for Louis M. MacDermot" is dated Mar. 1909. (It is not evident whether this refers to the first and original shop, to a replacement shop, or to an additional one.) The earliest drawing in the CSRM catalog is dated Aug. 1908, for a "40-horsepower water heater for steam power plant". The second earliest drawing (C2), dated Feb. 1909, is for a "Universal cam cutter for cutting cams with milling machine". The next drawing is the one for the "New shop...". These early drawings show wide-ranging fields of interest. In 1910 and 1911, the drawings become more directed towards various engines; e.g., 2-cycle and 4-cycle gasoline engines, 7-cylinder rotary engine, 8-cylinder "V" engine, air compressors, pumps, condensers. The drawings indicate that his interests at that time were in various contemporary forms of transportation; such as, his Fiat car (B1 and B2, detail of steering gear and rear reach rods), aeroplane (D28, a 12-gallon gasoline tank), automobile air brakes (D41 and D42), and a 20-horsepower boat engine. The first drawings for locomotives and train cars appear in 1911.

The ledger book shows the accounts for his shop during the months of August, September, and October, 1910. It is a large, hard bound book of about 150 11"x14" pages.

Two pages are used for each month; they are titled "Tied Up" and "Released". Each page gives the financial activities under one of four categories. For example, the Oct. 1910 "Tied Up" page lists these "balances";

Real Estate	\$ 4,000.00
Buildings	\$ 5,457.00
plus	\$ 500.00 "added to estimated cost of new shop"
Equipment	\$ 12,423.70
Working Fund	\$ 5,335.46

Presumably, these numbers represent the amounts that have been "tied up", i. e., put into or spent for each of these categories. The "Released" page has the same four columns. Note the amount, in 1910 dollars, invested in equipment for the shop.

MacDermot was very detailed, almost scrupulous, in making entries. On Oct. 1, 1910, he "tied up" in the equipment category \$70.00 to Berger Carter Co. (N.E.) for "one floor crane for new shop" and \$0.75 on Oct. 15 for "one office broom". The accounts list charges to various jobs; such as, "Job 51 -- 4-cycle engine now building, \$779.65" in the "Working Fund" column. The highest numbered "Job" is no. 79, but no description of that task is given. Nor is it obvious whether these jobs were being done on a commercial basis or for "experimental" purposes. Maybe for both reasons. Anyway, it looks like MacDermot had a busy design and machine shop going in these years of 1909 to 1912.

Unfortunately, the financial accounts end with the October 1910 entries; the remaining 100+ pages are blank. Also disconcerting is the absence of the pages before no. 14; they have been neatly cut out of the ledger. If the practice of two pages per month applies to those initial pages, then MacDermot must started this ledger in February or March, 1910. However, that is probably not the date of starting his machine shop since earlier drawings exist, as described previously.

Drawings for locomotives and train cars begin to appear among those of 1911. After early 1913, all the drawings pertain to them, an indication that he was turning all his attention to railroads and subsequently to the Overfair Railway. A future article will look into this period of MacDermot's work.

I have a listing of all the drawings in the CSRM's Library, and I am using it to sort the SPRS's set of drawings, which are, in most cases, copies obtained from the former. Hopefully, in the near future, someone can prepare a listing of our drawings so that they can be easily accessed and used.

Observation Car

It has been "observed" that a lot of people working for the railroad have been looking pretty sharp lately. We have noticed that they are wearing some very classy looking sweatshirts, t-shirts and some fantastic looking hats.

Did you know that the Swanton Pacific Railroad has these items for sale? Check out the following inventory list. These would make excellent Christmas gifts for that special person, being it you or someone else. (the pins make great stocking stuffers) These items will be available at our December workday at Swanton.

- Hats-green Youth & adult \$7.00 ea.
- Hats-embroidered Adult \$15.00 ea.
- T-shirt S-M-L-XL-XXL \$10.00 ea.
- Knit shirt S-M-L-XL-XXL \$25.00 ea.
- Sweatshirt M-L-XL-XXL \$35.00 ea.
- Jacket-embroidered M-L-XL-XXL \$90.00 ea.
- Pins with SPRS logo \$5.00 ea.
- Cal Poly Strawberry jam \$3.00 ea.
- Membership \$25.00/yr.

Card of Thanks

The following thank-you card was received from Dean, Joe Jen, from the College of Agriculture, following the train run on October, 29, 1996.

"THE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE WOULD LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING. WITH YOUR SUPPORT AND THE SUPPORT OF OTHERS, THE EVENT WAS A HUGE SUCCESS"

Note: This run was a success due to the hard work from Marty Campbell,-Engineer, Ken Fischer-Fireman, Jim Scott-Brakeman, and Randy Jones-Conductor. These four stayed over an additional day from the Land Trust run.

Calendar

- Dec. 11 Cal Poly work evening
- Dec. 14 SPRS workday
- Dec. 31 New Years Eve run
- Jan. 8 Cal Poly work evening
- Jan. 11 SPRS workday

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