



SWANTON PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY

Number 54

Sept. 1997

All Aboard !!

Our workdays for September are Wednesday evening, September 10 at Cal Poly, starting @ 6:00 P. M. and at the Swanton Ranch, Saturday morning, September 13, and Saturday morning, September 27, starting @ 9:00 A. M.

On Track

with your Director,
Ed Carnegie

Summer will soon be ending and the feel of autumn air and the wet winter rains will then be upon us, especially if El Niño kicks in. This year sure has been strange. The trees think it is already fall and have dropped their leaves. They must think it is Oct. because we had no rain after Jan. I can't ever remember cleaning up leaves in Aug. So far we have had to blow the track off twice-one good thing though has been that they have not been wet! We did get this last week over an inch of rain at Swanton and all it did was keep a little dust down. It also allowed the ground to be a little softer for digging holes to plant seven more redwoods in the McNab Grove. These were planted between the bunches of poison oak by Bill McNab, Tom Vertel and myself. The redwood grove is now up to almost forty trees.

During the first workday weekend in August we had over twenty hearty souls come out to put in a full day's work. The track crew replaced over 300 feet of ties and ballast, aligned and leveled about 600 feet which included the Cosgrove siding, and the mainline past Windy Point. The roundhouse crew worked on the turn-table and got the rolling stock ready for the fish hatchery run. The car-barn crew made sure all the cars were ready for the run and started working on the brake lines for the covered cars. The story got back to me that Bill McNab walked in to the car-barn to observe what Fitz was doing. One of the covered cars had been rolled over and placed on its side to expose the underside for

ease of access. McNab asked, "What is this?" To which Fitz replied, "A sidecar!" A bit of "Rail humor" is good to keep you on track...

Sunday, the following day, a fund raiser for the Big Creek Fish Hatchery was a great success. Approximately 90 visitors attended the event in which Swanton Pacific Railroad provided the BBQ and train rides. All who attended said it was a wonderful day and a special thanks to our BBQ crew who as always provides a fine meal. I would especially like to thank all the Swanton volunteers who just jumped in to help make it all so successful. In addition to the wonderful day, our train crews had a tremendous opportunity for a "hands-on" learning experience.

At the end of the first work weekend while putting the cars away, a heavy ballast car derailed and then re-railed because the rail gauge opened up. As the ballast car moved forward and reached stronger gauged track the wheel moved back up on the rail. A problem that work need immediate attention for the next workday.

So on the second workday of Aug. approximately 120 ties were replaced along the curve between the siding to the car-barn and the station. Tom Vertel worked Thursday and Friday prior to the workday getting the area prepped and ready to go for the work crew on Saturday. He also was able to spike in quite a few ties by himself. Thanks Tom for all the work, which made it easier for all of us.

The 1912 locomotive had some bearing-shim problems which appeared at the end of the fish hatchery run. The roundhouse crew analyzed the problem, and devised a solution to a loose thrust washer. They will implement their solution during the next work weekend.

Labor day weekend a few hearty souls attended a fireman's class under the watchful eye and leadership of John Tomlin.

September is going to be a busy month as always. We will need to concentrate on the main line to make sure

we are ready for the upcoming social events in Sept. and Oct. (i.e. , A wedding (9/20), Santa Cruz land conservancy day-the last weekend in Sept. (9/28); and the 2472 group is on the Sunday of our October weekend (10/12)). So we will need to

- Work on some of the curves, align and level the rail
- Do brush work--cutback overgrowth
- Do general track clean up--we have a lot junk along the track
- Work on the 1912, the 1913, and the 502
- Check all the cars to make sure they are ready

Other News events: Swanton Water System:

Progress is being made on a domestic water system to serve the ranch, the railroad and picnic area. A contractor has been selected and preliminary work, such as tank locations, and water and electrical supply are being installed. A 33 x 16 foot slab was poured by a combination of SPRR volunteers (McNab, Vertel, & Carnegie) and ranch crew. Pretty soon you'll "wonder where the yellow went?" . . .and the shower water will sure smell a lot better!

In the Caboose

with your Historian,
Lou Haughney

**THE CALISTOGA STEAM RR
ROBERT C. MAXFIELD ERA
1969-1979**

The Oakland Tribune of Sunday January 5, 1969 featured a lengthy article about the approaching sale of the Overfair Railroad equipment that remained at the Billy Jones ranch after the latter's death. The reporter, Harre Demoro, wrote that two of the Overfair locomotives, #1912 and #1913, were for sale by Jones' estate. The extensive article included photographs showing the engines as they were run in 1915 at the San Francisco Panama Pacific International Exposition and then as they were stored in December 1968 at Jones' Wildcat Railroad yard. (Harre Demoro was a writer, an historian, and a collector of railroad lore in the San Francisco Bay area. He inherited his interest in railroading from his father, Ralph Demoro, who was one of the few remaining friends of MacDermot in the latter's declining years in Oakland.)

The article caught the attention of Robert C. Maxfield, a real estate appraiser and developer in the East Bay. Although he had not been active in railroading before that, he was attracted by the opportunity to own and

operate two live, steam locomotives. Within a few months, he bought the two locomotives and three of the original Overfair passenger cars.

Now came the intriguing and exciting, but practical, questions of how and where he would set up his railroad. First, he had to move the equipment out of the Billy Jones ranch. In early November, 1969, two long, low-bed trailers of a heavy equipment hauler transported the engines and the cars over Highway 17 (now I-880) from Los Gatos to Oakland, where they were put in storage in an East Oakland yard. Early in 1974, they were again moved to the Redwood Valley Shop, located in the Western Pacific's Oakland yard, where overhaul of the #1913 locomotive would start. This was a facility for building and overhauling narrow gauge railroad equipment; it was owned by Eric Thomsen, who built and operated the miniature railroad in Tilden Regional Park, in the hills of Oakland and Berkeley.

Maxfield considered several plans for his railroad. His primary objective was to operate it for public rides both as a memento of live steam locomotives and as an historical relic of the 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition. Therefore, he looked for a site large enough to hold a few miles of track and convenient enough for the public. One proposal was to operate a passenger railroad along the northern shore line of San Francisco, from Van Ness Avenue to Fort Point underneath the south tower of the Golden Gate Bridge. The route would utilize the roadbed of the San Francisco Belt Railroad, which had little traffic on that stretch of its route along the waterfront. A third rail would be laid between the standard gauge rails to accommodate the 19-inch gauge of the locomotives. This route would also follow rather closely that of the Overfair Railroad as it went through the Marina district, which was built on the site of the Panama Pacific International Exposition. Maxfield proposed this plan as a means of transporting the public through that section of the Golden Gate National Recreation Park, which had just been established. His proposal, however, was not accepted.

After much searching, Maxfield selected in late 1974 a site in Calistoga in the northern part of the Napa Valley. Although a small town, Calistoga attracted many tourists. It was close to some of the older and noted wineries of Napa County. Its therapeutic hot springs and mud baths had been drawing people for many years; and, the Calistoga Airport was a center for glider enthusiasts.

Maxfield bought the Dunn property, some 53 acres, fronting on the Silverado Trail, a highway traversing the foothills and the vineyards on the east side of the Napa Valley. Devoting practically full time to development of the railroad, Maxfield and his family moved to Calistoga

in March 1975. He drew up plans for building the Calistoga Steam Railroad. Most of the acreage was relatively flat with a small creek winding through vineyards. At the southern end of the area was "Mount Washington", a rounded hill about 210 feet high. A layout was designed for a 2 to 3 mile track loop with a depot, a roundtable, a roundhouse, and replicas of old time shops such as soda fountain. During the start-up phases, Rick Mugele and Ron Weber assisted Maxfield. Mugele, who had a civil engineering background, had helped Billy Jones build the Wildcat Railroad; he stayed on with Maxfield as the only full-time employee of the C.S.R.R. The depot was designed by Bob Stadelman and constructed by Al Cabral. The turntable was built by Randy Jones, who followed the Overfair locomotives from the Wildcat Railroad. (Randy reinstalled the turntable at the Swanton Pacific yard and has just completed an overhaul of its circular track.) Eric Thomsen drew up plans for a roundhouse, but it was never built at Calistoga. These same plans were later utilized by Al Smith to build the roundhouse at Swanton.

The progress of Maxfield's efforts to reestablish the Overfair Railroad was recounted by Harre Demoro's stories in the Oakland Tribune, which took pride in the return of these locomotives to Oakland for restoration. (Many of Demoro's newspaper articles were reprinted in The Western Railroader.) In an Oakland Tribune article of June 2, 1974, Demoro wrote that work was proceeding slowly at the Redwood Valley shop on the overhaul of locomotive #1913 and that, at that time, a location for the railroad had not yet been chosen. Then in late 1974 with the selection of an operating site, the overhaul of the engine proceeded at full speed. Eric Thomsen, Steven Rives, and others worked on the complete restoration of #1913. No work was ever done on #1912. The restoration of Engine #1913 to like-new condition was finished in September 1975. After a successful test firing of the boiler, the locomotive and tender were trucked to Calistoga.

Meanwhile during the spring and summer of 1975, work at Calistoga was underway on the first phase of the track plan and of the depot area. About 1.7 miles of track were laid on the level part of the property; this was called the Prairie Division. Two small, wooden trestles and one land fill were built to carry the track across the creek. The depot area and visitors' entrance fronted on The Silverado Trail. The road bed was graded, and a substantial base of ballast stone was laid for the track. Almost 30 tons of 20-lb rails were obtained from Belgium. The engineering of the road bed was made by Eric Thomsen; the grading by Harold Smith & Sons; and, laying the rails by Rick Mugele, Ron Weber, Jeff Smith, and Bob Maxfield. Clear heart redwood ties were placed over 3/4 inch crushed rock.

All was ready for the Opening Day on Sunday, October 4, 1975. Mrs. Barbara Maxfield launched the operation by breaking a bottle of Hanns Kornell champagne across the cowcatcher of #1913 in the presence of many local officials and citizens. Maxfield was the engineer, and Jerry Hansford of the Redwood Valley Shop was the fireman. Milt Petersen was the C.S.R.R. agent. The C.S.R.R. ran on weekends through the winter months. In June 1976, the Lake Loop was completed; and, on Oct. 21, 1976, the Mountain Division was opened with a Golden Spike Ceremony to mark the completion of the planned line. The Mountain Division cut through a low shoulder of the hill and then climbed around "Mount Washington" to near its flat summit. On its descent along the other side of the hill, it went over a wooden trestle crossing the track where it had started its climb. The maximum grade on this section was 3%. The 20 minute trip took passengers in open cars through varied landscapes and picturesque vistas, vineyards, groves of trees along the creek, a small lake formed by damming the creek, a climb through trees on the sides of Mount Washington, a panoramic view from the top, then the exciting descent and crossing over the lower track.

In the first months of operation, fares were \$1.00 per adult and \$0.75 for children between 5 and 12 years. With the completion of the Lake and the Mountain Divisions, fares were raised to \$1.50 and \$1.00 respectively. During the summer months, the C.S.R.R. operated daily except Monday on a 1/2 hourly schedule between 11 AM and 5 PM. In the winter months, as the weather permitted, it ran on weekends and certain holidays between noon and 5 PM. The train ran even with only 2 or 3 passengers. "Extra" runs were made for groups, "Wine Country Specials", and charitable fundraising events.

Regular and careful maintenance was performed to support the daily schedule. They used treated boiler water and diesel fuel. The boiler flues were punched through about once a month. The top speed of #1913 was 24.5 mph as measured by radar.

Stories about the revival of the Overfair's steam locomotive were featured frequently and widely in regional newspapers, particularly in the travel sections of Bay Area newspapers, railroading magazines, and popular magazines such as Sunset. Promotional signs were posted and brochures distributed throughout Napa Valley. For example, visitors to Calistoga restaurants found small folded placards on the dining tables that announced the C.S.R.R. and displayed the outline drawing of #1913 made by Frederic Shaw.

A most unique adaptation of a #1913 photograph was featured in a full-page advertisement by Macy's in the San Francisco Chronicle of May 12, 1978. The ad is entitled "almost nothing can stop Macy's oriental express from bringing you dramatic values in one-of-a-kind rugs". In the full-page montage, arranged as a parody upon early 1900's silent movies, oriental rugs are spread over a railroad track. In the foreground on the rugs is a young, pretty, frightened damsel, tied in ropes. Standing above her is the evil, menacing scoundrel who is trying to ward off with his left arm the onrushing, puffing "Orient Express" locomotive, the #1913 Overfair engine! The ad does not give any credits to MacDermot, Maxfield, or the C.S.R.R.

During these years of operation in 1975 to 1978, Maxfield was developing additional plans for the Calistoga site and was floating the suggestion of extending the line beyond Calistoga. He wished to enlarge the depot area with additional shops and buildings; and, he hoped to prepare a picnic area out near Mt. Washington, maybe even a small wine-tasting shop. However, zoning and building restrictions kept delaying realization of such plans. A more ambitious idea was to extend the 19-inch track through Calistoga and down the Napa Valley to Saint Helena, where the SP's Napa branch ended, a distance of about eight miles. Such an extension would allow the passengers to take a "Wine Tasting" Tour of several wineries, like the Hanns Kornell Champagne Cellars, the Sterling Vineyards, the Freemark Abbey Wines, and the Krug Winery. This proposal, however, did not pass beyond exploratory talks with local civic groups and political units.

Despite all the promotion and the favorable reports about it, the C.S.R.R. did not draw, particularly in the summer, the projected passenger count needed to make it profitable. The lack of sufficient patronage was attributed in part to the decline in automotive travel in the mid and latter 1970's when the periodic gasoline shortages with their abrupt increases in price adversely affected pleasure and tourist driving. Thus, the last run was made on Saturday, August 4, 1979, three years and ten months after its start.

That last day of operation was a festive one. The C.S.R.R. made nine runs. The final run was for the local Lion's Club "Ladies Night" with an array of food and refreshments. A flat car was decorated to recall the wedding day 31 years ago of a couple attending the event. After the run, Bob Maxfield served champagne and distributed "gold C.S.R.R. railroad spikes" to all present.

Next came the dismantlement of the C.S.R.R. and its transfer to Al Smith's Swanton Pacific Ranch. In the 1970's Al had been an active participant with the Wildcat

Railroad group. So, he and other Wildcat RR associates, particularly Randy Jones who helped at Calistoga, were familiar with the status of the operation at Calistoga. Al visited the C.S.R.R. on two occasions and expressed an interest in obtaining the stock and equipment. Negotiations for the sale started in the spring of 1979 and were concluded that summer.

Bob Maxfield describes how all the equipment was transferred to Swanton. "A ramp was excavated at the end of the Calistoga engine house to a depth permitting a level equal to that of the enginehouse and of a flat bed trailer-truck in the excavated ramp. Track was constructed on the trailer bed, and the engines were pulled out of the engine house onto the truck bed. The flatbed trailer made many trips back and forth to Calistoga and delivered, in addition to the engines, passenger cars, and one gondola car, all track, ties, trestle timbers, and the turntable to the Swanton Pacific Ranch." So started the construction of the Swanton Pacific Railroad in late 1979.

It is noteworthy that Bob Maxfield's Calistoga Steam Railroad was the most successful and longest running of all the commercial attempts to revive MacDermot's Overfair Railroad equipment after the Panama Pacific International Exposition. He had the #1913 locomotive thoroughly overhauled and refurbished, and he kept it running daily in summers and on winter weekends for almost four years. Then, fortunately for us, he passed it on to Al Smith and the Swanton Pacific Railroad Society, who ultimately recovered all of the MacDermot locomotives.

(Thanks to Bob Maxfield for opening his files, memorabilia, and photographs to us.)

Observation Car

Smith, Swanton and Bygone Days - #6
by Hart Fairclough

As the war years continued, the Santa Clara Boy Scout Council decided to unload the Swanton Scout camp site and acreage. The flood was such that it would involve too much work and capital. Besides, some considered it too far, others didn't like the occasional fog. There were no satisfactory bidders for the site. Meanwhile, back in 1939 Ken Robison went to the Scout's National Training School in the East, and returned as a "Professional Scouter." In 1940 he became Field Director for the Santa Clara Scout Council. Knowing of the Council's desire to sell the old Swanton Campsite, and knowing Al Smith had come into some money as a result of compensation

from the Southern Pacific accident, he told Al of the Swanton situation. It ended up the Council was glad to sell it to Robison and Smith at a very reasonable amount of about \$5,000.00 The Council sold it knowing it was going to two people who had a fondness for the place and had served time there since its beginning. As the 40's progressed and Ken Robison moved in other directions, it was agreed that Al would buy him out and became sole owner.

Throughout the late 40's and 50's, as time permitted from his responsibilities as an Ag teacher and counselor at Campbell high School, Al was making gradual changes at the Swanton 480 acres. He spruced up the area around the cabin and pool. A small waterfall was created to fall down the embankment at one end of the pool. At the other end, he cleared space for a barbeque and picnic area where he hosted groups such as his Faculty from Campbell High School. The cabin became his Swanton house whenever he could get away during his 17 year stint as a teacher and counselor at the high school.

In late spring of 1961, Al set up a 3 day weekend for myself and one of the many Campbell High boys who worked and helped him in some of his projects around his Swanton property. This particular young man happened to be the top quarterback in Northern California during the football season of 1960. He was selected for the North-South All-Star game in LA. By coincidence, I happened to be the offensive coach for the North squad that year. When Al heard about it, he arranged the secluded weekend for the 3 of us. While there at Al's cabin, the player learned the play that won the Game for us. Craig Morton went on to Cal, became an All-American, was a QB starter with the Dallas Cowboys, and led the Denver Broncos to the Super Bowl in 1978. Morton has returned to Swanton on a number of occasions, and Al traveled to watch him in action during his football career.

-- to be continued

Buckles

A chance to own a piece of SPRR history is still available. The Swanton Pacific Railroad now has their very own brass belt buckles. These buckles are all individually cast and each has its own serial number. Each buckle shows the words Swanton Pacific Railroad with the lazy SP in the center on a textured background. They are oval in shape and measure approximately 2-1/4 inches by 3 inches. Each buckle is only \$10.75 to SPRS members and \$16.00 to non-members. There were

only 150 made so get your belt buckles with your special number now. More than half have already been sold. These will be available at the workday in September and the following work days. For those not able to attend a workday and would like one mailed to them, there will be an additional \$3.50 for shipping.

Calendar

Sept. 10..... Cal Poly work evening
 Sept. 13 SPRS workday
 Sept. 20 **Wedding**
 Sept. 27 **SPRS workday**
 Sept. 28 Land Trust (run)
 Oct. 8 Cal Poly work evening
 Oct. 11 SPRS workday
 Oct. 12 2472 (run)
 Oct. 25 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 and fourth Saturdays of the month and the Wednesday evening, prior to the second Saturday at the BioResource and Agricultural Engineering Department, Cal Poly State University. Anyone and everyone is welcome at these workdays.