



SWANTON PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY

Number 56

Nov. 1997

All Aboard !!

Our workdays for November are Wednesday evening, **November 5**, at Cal Poly, starting @ 6:00 P. M. and at the Swanton Ranch, Saturday morning, **November 15**, and Saturday morning, **November 27**, starting @ 9:00 A. M.

On Track

with your Director,
Ed Carnegie

The ghosts and goblins have come and gone just like most of our events, but don't forget that our next great outing is New Year's eve where you can ride the last train of 1997 and the first train of 1998, so mark your calendar. We're planning a New Year's day potluck, and we would like to have some input from you, our members, as to what you would really like to do and have in the way of a meal. We're planning for it now so get your input to any of the Board Members. We will ask for some feedback at our next workday in November.

As for a run down of what took place in the busy month of October. . .

It started out on Oct. 5, hosting a company party for LoneStar, the local concrete plant in Davenport, as well as a neighbor. Over 350 people attended. Train rides were provided by a proficient crew of Cosmo De Francisco, Bill Engleman, Andrew Martin, Andy Mc Lean, Tom Vertel, and myself. Train handling and signals were fine tuned, fun was had by all, and a wonderful meal was served.

The following week, Tom, Bill McNab, and myself, graded and laid new track to the S-curve between Scott Creek Bridge and the San Vincente Junction. For a break from gandy dancing, Bill cleaned up and edged the lawn and surrounding areas, and tended to the McNab Grove.

Also, during that week the ceiling was finished in the roundhouse. It is now ready for US to paint. Two of our members, Bill McNab and Hart Fairclough, took up the challenge by lifting the paint brush and roller and started the job.

Our youngest member (Tony) had a big 6.0 birthday party. Approximately 16 children, and a large contingency of parents came to celebrate the event. Everyone had a wonderful time with two train rides, cake and ice cream, and opening of presents.

The following day was our regularly scheduled workday. The track crew, consisting of Elmer, Bob Morehouse, Tom Vertel, myself, and with some encouragement and assistance from Anthony, Tony, and Marlene, approximately 220 ties were spiked down, and aligned on the S-curve. Believe it or not it was done before it got darkish.

In the morning, McNab and Hart planted some additional redwoods and provided some TLC to the rest of the established grove.

Some of you may have noticed a new addition at the crossing to the carbarn, a wigwag. Jim Sutherland, Bob Morehouse, Tom Vertel, and myself installed the mechanism, checked the wigwag out and lo and behold it actually worked and was used the next day for the 2472's run.

Andy and Randy adjusted brakes and worked on the passenger cars, and did they ever work out dandy! Marty and crew cleaned up the roundhouse and spit and polished the engines so that all would look good for the next day's run.

2472 Event-Sunday, October 12:

Excellent weather provided an outstanding background for the video crew from San Francisco's channel 7 KGO crew for the Paul Justy Show. The program should show sometime in Nov. We have not been given an exact date as of yet. Approximately 300 people attended the event and we have never heard so many

compliments about the grounds and equipment. Many of the attendees have been coming to Swanton for many years and were very pleased to see all of the improvements that have been made. Events of the day included a double head run with the 1912 and 1914, some runs into the north meadow, and outstanding movies, taken by Randy Jones of the 2472 run to SLO, being shown in the roundhouse. Popcorn, balloons, and good solid stock market advice were handed out by a brightly attired Fred Vertel.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, and two weeks later-another workday commenced. Twelve stout hearted individuals showed up to finish the S-curve between San Vincente and Scott Creek Bridge. The carbarn was completely cleaned out and all the cars are now under cover. Randy worked on the turntable, while John Tomlin and Bill Engleman washed down the boilers in the steam engines. For the amount of iron oxide that came out I would guess that the engines are 20 lb. lighter! The grounds crew had a garden party consisting of planting naked ladies, daffodils and other plants, as well as weeding, mowing the lawn, watering and constructing a giant belt buckle. Seeing it is believing. A fine steak and chicken dinner, with ambiance, was provided by Fred Vertel. A big THANK YOU for a wonderful meal.

A reminder that October was the last month for two work weekends until after the attack of El Niño.

A point of business - next work day [Saturday, November 8] is election of officers. Ballots will be handed out at noon, during lunch for members to vote. If a quorum is present no further action is required. However, if a quorum is not present ballots will have to be mailed out to those not in attendance. Please attend and vote. We need thirty (30) paid members present to have a quorum.

REMINDERS

Workday & Elections: Saturday, November 8, 1997

**BOARD MEETING: NOVEMBER 9, 1997 0830--
Redhouse**

In the Caboose

with your Historian,
Lou Haughney

Following is the continuation of the article that was found, as told by Al Smith, July, 1990

Agriculture -

Starting in the '20's it was discovered that artichokes and Brussels sprouts grew well in the coastal area. Scott Creek was dammed and huge single cylinder gasoline engines were used to pump the water onto the upper terraces. There are the remnants of some twenty reservoirs and numerous gravity flow structures left on what is now rangeland. Some of the leading citizens of Santa Cruz spent **their childhood here** on windswept little farms with such nicknames as "Siberia" or "Poverty Flats". Some berries were also grown at this time.

In 1938 the Poletti and Morelli Families became the owners. World War II caused most of the tenant farmers to leave, and the ranch was divided into three phases. There was a Grade B dairy, a beef cattle operation, and row crops. Artichokes and brussels sprouts being labor-intensive, a labor camp was established with mostly Filipino workers.

John and Bob Musitelli took over the beef cattle at this time and, with a bulldozer, herbicide and fire, opened a lot of waste brush land. They had a cow-calf operation and used a jeep pickup with bale of hay very effectively as a saddle horse. The Grade B dairy left and the Musitelli's expanded their operation. With the use of chicken manure and an excellent water supply, the ranch produced excellent crops of sprouts year after year.

The Swanton Pacific Years -

When I bought the ranch in 1978, I left the current tenants in place. I tried a small cow-calf operation on the Little Creek side, enough to realize it was a lot different from prunes and apricots. Then the Musitelli's retired and I hired a cowboy to run the cattle. We ran stockers at first and then went cow-calf, at the wrong time.

My vegetable tenant left. Believing there must be something else in Davenport's world than Brussels sprouts, I leased the land to a flower grower, who grew cut flowers and market peas. Although he tried hard, worked hard, and was conscientious to a fault, he could not make it.

My cowboy got a better opportunity and left. A good friend in the Cal Poly administration and I had been talking, so we worked out a deal for a three-year lease.

We are now on the five-year extension of that lease, and I am very satisfied, and I hope they are also. I am a graduate of Cal Poly, and one of the phases I liked best was the opportunity for "hands-on" experience. Although the 178 mile distance is an obstacle, the Swanton Pacific Ranch offers a real opportunity for those who want or need the experience. It is also good for class demonstrations.

My first piece of land in this ranch is 412 acres of second-growth forest, which I bought in 1943. This past summer we logged about 65 acres of it very selectively. The interest of forestry students and faculty has been inspiring. This is almost the closest commercial forest to San Luis Obispo.

Concluding Statement -

I know I have wandered from a straight history of the Swanton Pacific Ranch. It got its name because, somehow, many of my tools were stamped S.P. The brand I selected was the lazy SP. It is by the Pacific, and it is in Swanton.

Swanton is an uncrowded, beautiful place. My goal in putting this acreage together is to preserve it as such and to share it now and in the future with people who will appreciate it and profit from the experience. Thanks for listening!

Observation Car

Smith, Swanton and Bygone Days - #8
by Hart Fairclough

In last month's article, Al Smith was kept busy with the expansion of the Orchard Supply Hardware chain of stores as well as gradually increasing his land holdings in Swanton. Ever since Al first came to this area with his family as a youth in the 1920's, his interest in the region continued to grow. An unexpected situation arose in the middle 70's where Al could learn more about his Swanton property from someone who knew it way back when. This event started to develop as an elderly neighbor walked by our Walnut Creek home on his daily one mile walk before breakfast. I was at the edge of the road one morning getting the morning paper. Conversation developed and he inquired about our plans for the weekend. I responded that they involved going to a place in the Santa Cruz Mountains to see a longtime friend that now owned the land where our old Scout camp used to be - - a place called Swanton. Imagine my surprise when he said he used to work there

at the San Vicente Lumber operation in his late teens. "If that's so," I told him, "There's someone special you've got to meet!" On the phone that night I told Al about our "unique" neighbor, Verne Clifford. As a result we agreed on a date for us to make a full day trip to Swanton.

When the appointed day arrived, my wife Betty and I took our nearby neighbor "Clif" to meet Al. It was a success from the start. Clif and Al had quite an afternoon talking about the early logging days of the area. Al drove the four of us in his jeep up and around much of the old San Vicente roadbeds with Clif reliving out loud some of his recollections of those years. As we drove, Betty wrote down three pages of various remarks by this 80 year old who worked for the San Vicente Lumber and Mill Company prior to World War I before he was 20 years old. Here are excerpts from those notes:

"San Vicente Lumber Company hadn't been located in Swanton very long before Clif went to work there. He started out as a whistle punk, then moved on to fireman on a Donkey, then to a loader, then on to a fireman on a Shay. They had two Shays, using one while fixing up the other. His starting salary was \$30.00 a month plus feed for 6 days work a week. Mess Hall at the San Vicente camp used to be 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. with 1/2 hr. for lunch. Clif bunked and ate meals in the 1st camp. There was not much action at night. On Sundays, Clif would often just walk over the hills, about 8 miles, to his home in Boulder Creek and then back again."

"There were three switchbacks when Clif worked there. A switch back only provided room for 1 engine and 5 cars. It was on the first switchback that fireman Harry Delemeter lost both legs while working on one of the engines when the Shay went off the track. Harry was a very fine person who took his crippling situation well. **Engineer Frank Cook was also in the accident.** Later on, Clif was fireman for engineer George Bell."

"A logging exchange was located 1/2 mile down from the Post Office at Swanton. A spur from Oceanshore RR came to that point, and then took the logs to Santa Cruz. The end of the Oceanshore line was at Swanton. Spangler was the name of the San Vicente boss, or super intendent, when Clif went to work there. A fellow named Frank Humphrey who was raised in Boulder Creek and went to school with Clif, also worked at San Vicente. A tall guy named Verne Moore was a hook tender before he lost a leg in a train accident. However, Moore eventually became superintendent of the logging camp. They had no doctor in camp, but the mill in Santa Cruz had one. Dick Matai (Matay?) used to run the Post Office as well as the Swanton store, which Clif said, 'Wasn't much.'"

-- to be continued

NOMINATION COMMITTEE FOR 1998 Officers

President Marty Campbell appointed Bill McNab to form a nomination committee. Bill asked long time members Martha Neilsen and Lou Haughney to be on the committee also.

The committee criteria consisted of looking at active RR participation of members, what group they usually worked with so that we tried to get each area represented, and probably the most important was how they viewed the input of all members towards the RR and not just a narrow segment. We also wanted to nominate two candidates for each office if possible so the membership would have choices. Last but not least the membership can nominate candidates from the floor so that whomever wants to run may do so.

The committee nominates as follows:

For President: Bill Engleman (Mollys dad)

For first Vice President: Bob Morehouse

Andrew Martin

For second Vice President: Cosmo DiFrancesco

Steve Huffstetter

For Secretary We did not come up with any willing candidates. The job is vital to get the newsletter out, edit and write parts of it plus writing up the meeting minutes and keeping people informed of what's going on around the place.

Surely we have some one or two (maybe split the job) willing to help. The Secretary is also a voting member of the RR Board. Mary Ann Carnegie said that if no other person can be found that she would do the secretary job. She is already chief cook and bottle washer, errand runner, planting area midweek waterer, painter, rock picker, etc.,etc.,etc., So someone please step up to either be a secretary candidate or at least help with all the other chores.

Respectively Submitted,

Bill McNab
Martha Neilsen
Lou Haughney

Calendar

- Nov. 5 Cal Poly work evening
- Nov. 8 SPRR workday
- Nov. 22 SPRR workday
- Dec. 10 Cal Poly work evening
- Dec. 13 SPRR workday
- Dec. 27 SPRR workday
- Dec. 31 New Years Eve Run

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.