

SWANTON PACIFIC RAILROAD

Number 75

Cal Poly

August 1999

On Track

With your director,

Ed Carnegie



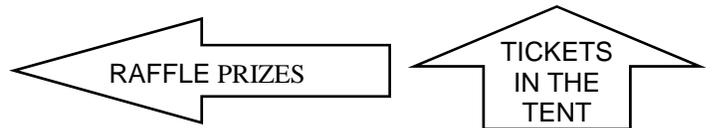
After the smoke from everyone celebrating July 4 fireworks Swanton Pacific hosted a very successful fundraiser held the weekend of July 10th. As many of you know the Swanton Pacific Railroad Society, under the leadership of Publicity and Events Co-chair Fred Vertel, hosted this event by primarily inviting members of the Bay Area Garden Railroaders to visit the Swanton Pacific Railroad.



Over 400 attended. A BBQ, train rides, raffle, and donations towards the construction of a handicap car were the agenda for the day. Jim Matheny and his crew prepared a fabulous meal.

Plans are under way to have Cal Poly students design and construct an apparatus to pick up and load a wheel-chaired person on to a railroad car. Volunteers of the Swanton Pacific Railroad then will construct the car. This car will be able to pick up and transport 3 wheelchair people, plus up to 4 attendants.

This will be a great addition to the Swanton Pacific Railroad, and will allow us to accommodate people that we presently can not.



In addition to being a successful fundraiser, the railroad society gained about 30 new members. Once again this event reinforces what the potential is of having the Railroad and Ranch having fundraisers. With this event and other membership activities that Fred Vertel has taken on we are now up to 225 members. This is twice the amount we have ever had.

Another event for the day was a safety class offered under the leadership of Randy Jones. Two classes were offered, one before the run and the other just before the engines were put away for the day. These classes offered new and existing members the opportunity to become familiar with safety operations and signals used on the Swanton Pacific Railroad.

At the end of June many of our members attended and participated in Railfair 99. The two days that we were there we had the opportunity of visiting with many of our members. In fact, at one time, a group of us just happened to be in front of the Vertel display for what became a Kodak moment.



During our wanderings at Railfair, we were looking for some good entertainment. Lo and behold, there was Elmer Stone supplying “Free and Alive Entertainment.” It was great to see Elmer out and about and enjoying Railfair.

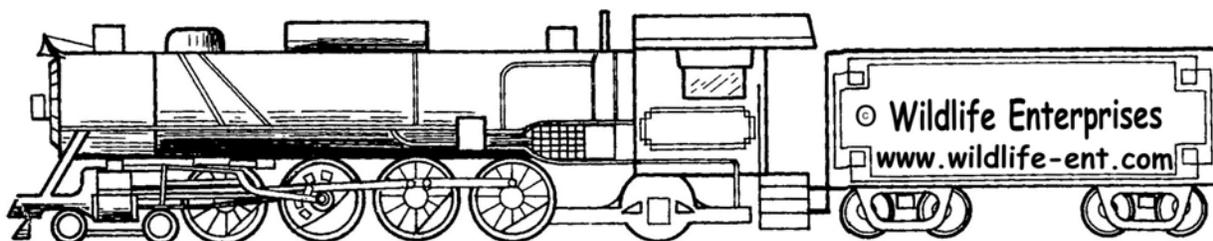


Sunday, the day the after BAGRS event, we had a small group of Gandy Dancers that spent the day having fun working on the track. Approximately 60 ties were replaced, ballasted and aligned.

On Friday, July 23, a special class for the Cal Poly Swanton Pacific Ranch interns was provided by Tony Pratkansis with assistance from his father Anthony. Eleven of the ranch interns participated in a practical lecture/lab class featuring the history of the Ocean Shore, as well as the Swanton Pacific RR. In the afternoon, they had a ‘hand-on’ experience in track maintenance where each intern participated in replacing old ties with new ties and in spiking these ties in. A good time was had by all, old pros and novices alike.



On the fourth Saturday of July and a workday, the Swanton Pacific RR hosted the annual Golden Spikes get together. Approximately 60 guests attended and helped in celebrating Frances and Elmer Stone’s 53rd wedding anniversary. Train rides were provided by Marty Campbell, with crew consisting of Mac Gaddis, Bob Morehouse, Pete



McFall, and myself. On Sunday, Pete and I worked on the engine inspection pit. We laid out a garden and inspection rail, and excavated for the inspection pit. Forms were put in place and on the upcoming workday rebar and final preparation for a concrete pour will be completed. So your assistance will be needed. In addition, a slab will be poured for an oil inflammable storage material.



New Members

Ric & Susan Beeson	Santa Cruz
Jim Chrysler	Mountain View
Hans Coufal	San Jose
Ira Dearing	San Jose
Douglas Delong	Sunnyvale
Leonard Evans	Los Angeles
Fred Feltner	San Jose
Shirleen Gudmunson	Daly City
Thure Gustafson	Oakland
David & Maureen Hagberg	Sebastopol
Steve Harper	Redwood City
Dennis Johnson	Pittsburg
Chuck Jordan	Concord
Fred & Vicky Koch	Santa Clara
Michael Land	San Francisco
Anthony Madieros	Sunnyvale
Richard Mehr	San Mateo
Craig Miller	Santa Cruz
Pros Neumann	Los Altos
Randy Ochs	Pleasanton
Lisa Park	Sunnyvale
Ken Peterson	San Jose
Charles Schouw	Pleasanton
Ray Secara	Camarillo
Steven Secara	Hollister
Bill Spangler	Palo Alto
John Swanton	Temple City
Danilo & Ann Viazzo	Dublin
Arlie Warley	San Mateo
Conrad Welling	Atherton
Sue Ann Woy	Hillsborough



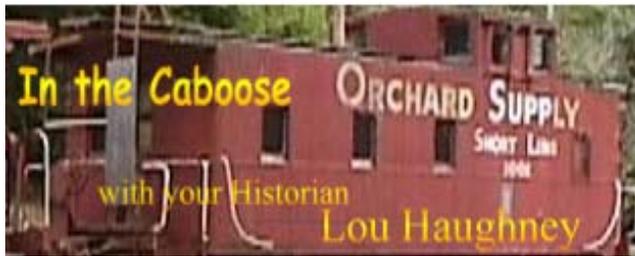
**PUBLICITY
and
EVENT COORDINATION**

Mary Ann Carnegie and Fred Vertel

Calendar of events

Saturda	August	14	Work weekend
Sunday	August	15	Continuation of work
Saturda	August	28	Work weekend
Sunday	August	29	Host Cal Poly Alumni/train
Saturda	Septemb	11	Work weekend
Sunday	Septemb	12	Continuation of work
Saturda	Septemb	25	Workday/prep for Land Trust Event
y	er		
Sunday	Septemb	26	Land Trust/train run

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



MacDermot's Motivation

“Who or what motivated Louis MacDermot to build the Overfair Railway?” That question was asked by a visitor at the Al Smith Day in April. It is a question that has occurred to many of us. So far, no records have been found that explain his motivation. An answer has to be surmised from the few MacDermot records we have and, indirectly, from books of two English railroad writers.

First, the list of existing MacDermot designs and the few ledger pages kept by him indicate that he built a machine shop on the family estate about 1910. This was a fully equipped shop powered by a steam boiler with the pulley and belt system. The early machining jobs are mostly parts and systems for methods of transportation, boats, airplanes, automobiles, and gradually trains. He owned and operated a steam-powered boat, the Petrel, about 30 ft or more long. Whether he designed and built that boat is not known. He had definitely had mechanical engineering skills, as the quality and the breath of his drawings indicate.

Second, the MacDermot family may have traveled to Europe and, particularly, to England, according to oral lore handed down from the original Wildcat Railroad members who knew MacDermot when the latter was cared for in his last years by Billy Jones and Charlie Hoyle. One such report says that Louis was educated in England. If he did spend extended time in England in the period of 1900-1910, then he may well have been influenced by the prevalent trends in "miniature railways" that are described in the writings of two English railroad historians.

In J. E. Minns' book; "Model Railway Engines", the opening sentence of Chapter Four, "Large-Scale Commercial Models and Miniature Railroads"

provides a definition directly applicable to Louis MacDermot.

"The period between 1870 and 1910, more than any other, bred men with the time, money and superb capacity for carrying through their fantasies in all fields to a degree inevitably to be capped emotionally, economically and socially by the war years [WW I]."

Well, that definition certainly does describe Louis MacDermot. As the son of wealthy parents, he had the time and the money to pursue his talents in mechanical engineering.

Minns' book describes the miniature railways, mostly of 5-1/2 to 15 in. gauge, built by wealthy English gentleman for amusement and for operations, such as logging, on their large, landed estates. Later in Chapter Four while describing the spread of miniature railways, the author devotes a long paragraph to MacDermot's steam locomotives.

"In 1915, outstanding work was being done by a single individual, Louis MacDermot, who, rather like Heywood [an English pioneer and advocate of estate railways], did a great deal of the work himself. ... There were five locomotives in 19-inch gauge ... all of which, including rolling stock, were built in his work-shops at his home in Oakland, California, where he employed about twenty men. ..."

An accompanying photograph shows "Shaw and MacDermot's 19 inch gauge 0-6-0 'switcher' tank-locomotive No. 1500 in San Francisco." The "Shaw" in the picture is probably Frederic Shaw, the American author, and one of the trio that bought the Nos. 1500, 1914, and 1915 engines from Billy Jones. The picture was likely taken either at Billy Jones' ranch or in Southern California where Shaw and his partners moved the 1500. Another photograph in this same chapter shows "Billy Jones's 19-inch [sic] locomotive and tender No. 2 'Wildcat', with a full train". Oddly enough, no mention nor description of Billy Jones and his railroad is given by Minns in the text, which is otherwise quite detailed.

Another prolific English writer, O. S. Nock,

discusses "model" engines in the volume of his series "Railways of the World in Colour" that covers the period of 1905-1919.

While main-line locomotives were getting ever larger, and some picturesque smaller units were being introduced for railways operating on substandard gauges in many parts of the world, the art of railway modeling was born.

"...In its earliest days this development was almost entirely with steam locomotives, in many cases with wealthy patrons who could afford to have miniature locomotives running on lengthy tracks in large gardens. The cult spread to having still more extensive systems for conveyance of materials on large country estates.", "...The development of miniature steam locomotives reached its zenith in the years before the First World War in the passenger-carrying lines erected at various international expositions. ..." (*Emphasis added by the present writer.*)

So, to answer the question of how MacDermot was inspired to build the 1/3-scale Overfair Railroad, I offer this conjecture. Louis MacDermot may have learned through his family's travels about the miniature railways on the large English estates and at the international expositions of the 1890's and the early 1900's. Because of his family's wealth, he had the time and the money to pursue his natural talents of mechanical engineering in his own machine shop. Thus, when the Panama Pacific International Exposition was being planned, he proposed to construct and operate a miniature railroad to transport passengers around that exposition's grounds, after the example already established for other world fairs of that period.

[It will be valuable to learn definitely whether or not these suppositions are correct, and, especially, to learn about Louis' formal education.]

References:

1. J. E. Minns, *Model Railway Engines* . 1969. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, pp. 106-108. (Available in the Redwood City Library of the San Mateo County Library System.)

2. O. S. Nock, *Railways of the World in Colour* / *Railways in the*



Tools, Tools, Tools

By
Mark Cooper



Tool Safety Keeps Ourselves and Swanton Pacific Alive

Do you know what one serious personal injury accident could do to our railroad? Well I leave that to your imagination. What I won't leave to your imagination is how to help prevent personal injury when using some of the tools we have at hand. So PAY ATTENTION class, because this is a genuine Safety Lecture!

Eye Protection – This is not just for the guys in the shops who are drilling, grinding, hammering, and sawing. You Gandy Dancers should remember that when swinging a hammer at a spike, rail, tie, you can end up with a piece of that or some ballast in your eye at high velocity very easily. If ANY of you need a pair of safety glasses, please leave me a message at mcooper@calpoly.edu or 805-756-2571 and I'll get you some for your very own for free!

Hearing Protection – Banging on something? Grinding? Listening at the front of the 502 horn to see how perfect the sound is? Well, it is a shorter road to nerve deafness, brother. Appearing soon in the Roundhouse, Machine Shop, Car Barn, and Track Crew tool car will be boxes of disposable ear plugs, so PLEASE use 'em.

Chisels and Punches – If you think you are treated like a mushroom, then you can probably relate to some of the mushroomed-over heads on chisels and punches. These work-hardened materials like to fly off in little pieces at high speed, which can send someone screaming to the hospital who isn't wearing any safety glasses 20 feet away. It isn't worth it. Take a few minutes on the grinder to get rid of the mushrooms!

Dull Tools are Dangerous Tools – Especially saws and chisels. Please look around and see if you are on your last blade, and add it to the tools order list. We'll get some more, or get them sharpened!

Get Checked Out – preferably by a member of the opposite sex, but if not, by someone who knows how to use the tool you are intent on using (going no further with this). What I have in mind specifically are air, electric, and gasoline-powered tools that can kill and maim. You may THINK you can walk up and run that chain saw safely, but one good kick-back can ruin your whole day.

First Aid Kits – the goal is to have one in each of the four major areas, at least. Again, if you notice the supply of Band-Aids getting low, please put them on the list!

Injury reporting – The Director needs to be advised of any injuries right away. 'Nuff said.

OK, QUIZ TIME! How many of you remember the color code? No hints this time:

- Blue = _____
- Green = _____
- Yellow = _____
- Red = _____



Randy pleads the press of gainful employment and will return next month. *Editor*

Safety Simon Says:

**Don't be a fool,
Use the right tool!**

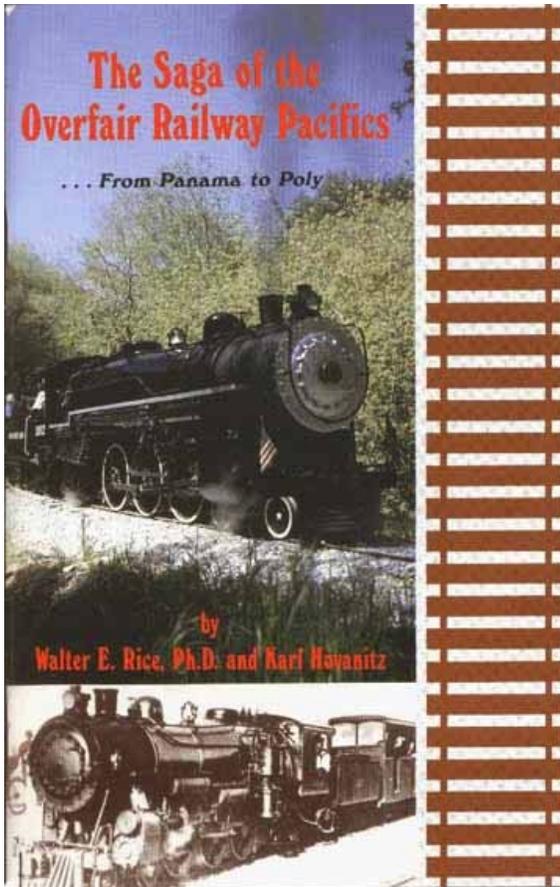
Redhouse Reservations

The Ranch Director has been working with the Railroad to ensure that we have some space available at the Redhouse for our workdays. However, I do need to know at least one week in advance whether room reservations are needed or not. That way I can better coordinate with Wally Mark to make sure that things move smoothly. If you do not call in to reserve a room you may not have a place to stay.



Immaculately restored Overfair Railway engine No. 1912 operating on the Swanton Pacific Lines during Al Smith Day, April 15, 1996. KARL HOVANITZ

From "The Saga of the Overfair Pacifics" by members Walter Rice and Karl Hovanitz, used with permission.



**The Saga of the Overfair Railway Pacifics
From Panama to Poly**

By Walter Rice Ph.D. and Karl Hovanitz

The Saga of the Overfair Railway Pacifics traces the history of the Swanton Pacific's locomotives from their inception as the creation of the eccentric Louis MacDermot for San Francisco's Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915 to their current operation at Cal Poly's Swanton ranch. Their use at the Panama Exposition, the years of neglect by MacDermot, Alameda County Zoological Gardens (today's Oakland Zoo) "The Mountain Lion Railway" experiment, the failed use on Billy Jones' "Wildcat Railroad," Robert Maxfield's "Calistoga Steam Railroad," and lastly Al Smith's role in providing the Overfair Pacifics new and secure permanent homes at the Swanton ranch and the State Railway Museum are all comprehensively covered. The booklet is illustrated with a blending of historic photos and the current Swanton Pacific operation.

It is available for an all-inclusive price of \$8.00 each or two for \$15.00.

Payment maybe made by check or Visa/Master Card. Credit card orders must include a credit number and expiration date.

Silverado Publishing
P.O. Box 15636
San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

Credit Card orders can be faxed to: 805.544.7675

Blue: Roundhouse Green: Machine shop Yellow: Car barn Red: Track crew/car

A note from Grand Scales Quarterly

We have been receiving your newsletter and enjoying it very much. Since we haven't been able to get to your neck of the woods for photos and stories, we were wondering if someone in your group would like to write up an article for publication in The Grand Scales Quarterly? I'm sure there must be some interesting history there and our readers would be interested. Please let us know if there is anyone willing to write such an article for us.

Susan Robinson

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Check out Pete McFall's pictures at
<http://pages.prodigy.net/pmcfall/pete.html>

Swanton Pacific Railroad Society
Executive Board June 13, 1999 meeting summary.

The meeting was called to order by President Engelman at 9:30 AM.

Officers and committee Chairs present or absent with excuse.

Reports:

The treasurer's report was approved.

Director Ed Carnegie reported;

- we now have 183 members, thanks in large to Membership Chair Fred Vertel,
- the status of meetings with the University regarding the Memo of Understanding,
- status of projects,
 - storage containers
 - the difficulty in getting permission to repair the washout damage,
 - purchase of a Marvel #8 band saw,
 - delivery of a brake press made by Cal Poly students,
 - concrete work around the roundhouse and machine shop.

Committee reports were accepted by the Board

Old Business: Fred Vertel reported meeting with California State Railroad Museum regarding Railfair 99 and the display of the 1915 in the lobby of the museum.

New Business: President Engelman appointed Randy Jones Chair of the Education Committee, appointed Mary Ann Carnegie and Fred Vertel to the Nominating Committee, and re-established the By-Law Committee.

FitzPatrick, representing the Education Committee, moved... "The daylight hand signals be changed to reflect the common practice of traditional gestures." Seconded by Ed Carnegie. Approved by unanimous consent. (Signals affected: 'Come to me', 'Go away', 'Stop', 'Apply air brakes', & 'going between cars'. A new book of signals will be distributed.)

Good of the Society: Bill McNab opined we need greater representation of the membership on the board by having 'at-large' board members.

Adjournment: the meeting was adjourned at 12:40 PM. The next meeting will be Sunday, August 15, 1999 at the Red house.

Full copies of the minutes are available to members in the Machine shop or from the Secretary.