



The TURNTABLE

April 2013

NEWSLETTER FOR THE PAID & VOLUNTEER STAFF OF RAILTOWN 1897 STATE HISTORIC PARK

Upcoming Events

April 2
Railtown Ladies Luncheon @ Hong Kong Restaurant in Sonora. Call Marge @ 533-4595

April 2, 9, 16, 23, 30
Behind The Scenes Special shop tours with Leroy Bushart

April 6 & 7
Excursion season begins Trains at 11, 12, 1, 2 and 3pm. Mark Twain joins us plus a train fiddler

April 13
Fire Patrol Training in the Carriage Room

April 13
Wildflower Train 4:30pm

April 20
Wildflower Train 4:30pm

April 25
Belt Shop, Track Car & Turntable Operator Training 1-2:30pm @Tri Dam

May 7
Railtown Ladies Luncheon @ Covers Apple Ranch. Call Marge at 533-4595 for information

May 11
National Train Day Celebration at Railtown

May 12
Mother's Day Trains

May 25, 26 & 27
Memorial Day Trains

July 20
Spotlight on Railtown Rotary Club Fundraiser

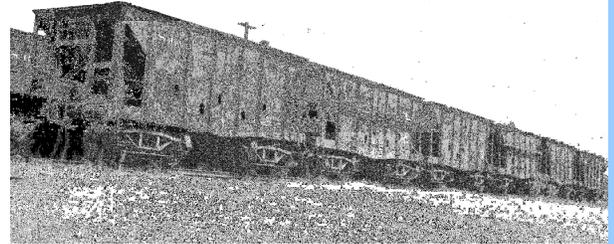
For the Sierra Railroad, some construction has been Dam good!

by Dave Connery

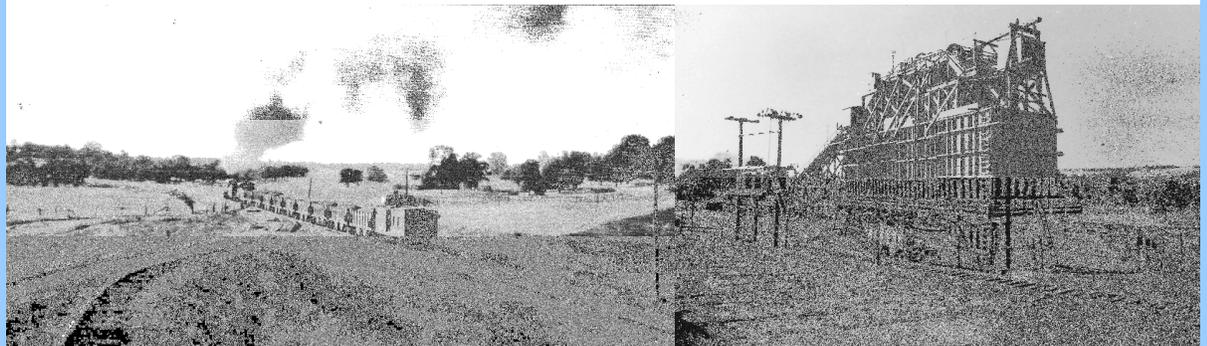
Tuolumne County has the good fortune of containing the headwaters of two large river systems, the Tuolumne and Stanislaus. Traversing the land midway between these two waterways is the Sierra Railroad. This happenstance of geography has played to the advantage of the Sierra several different times. Let's quickly recount the times when the Sierra has been blessed by development of these two river systems.

Development of the water resources of Tuolumne County date back to the Summer of 1851 when the Tuolumne County Water Company was organized to Support early gold mining operations. By August 1852 the company has a system of Ditches and flumes transporting water from the South Fork of the Stanislaus River. Much expanded over the years, this system formed the nucleus for a large hydro-electric system with a series of dams, flumes and power houses on the South and Middle Forks of the Stanislaus River under the Stanislaus Electric Company. Stanislaus Electric was formed in 1905, and reorganized in 1909 as the Sierra and San Francisco Power Company, ultimately passing to Pacific Gas & Electric, and Still operating today. Supplies for the construction and maintenance of this system of dams, flumes and power houses were hauled over the Sierra Railway. This system was a modest beginning, but was followed by far larger projects.

In 1913 the US Congress passed the Raker Act, which authorized the City and County of San Francisco to erect a dam in the Hetch Hetchy Valley, impounding the upper reaches of the Tuolumne river as a source of water for The City and surrounding communities. Work began in 1916 on a railroad to serve this huge construction project, connecting with the Sierra Railway near Rosasco, about half way from Oakdale to Jamestown. The Hetch-Hetchy Railroad began operating in 1917, hauling men and supplies for the dam building, tunneling and power project. The railroad continued to operate until 1925. During this time over 5,000 (next page)



*Black Jack Hoppers in Jamestown 1937
CSRM, Paul Darrell Collection*



Gravel Train leaving Cooperstown

Oakdale Atlas Rock Crusher and hopper

boxcar loads of cement, among many other loads, were hauled to Hetch-Hetchy Junction by the Sierra. Again in 1935, to facilitate the raising of O'Shaughnessy Dam to its current height, the line was reopened and operated under contract by the Sierra until this second phase was completed in 1938.

In 1920 the Modesto and the Turlock Irrigation Districts began work on the Don Pedro Dam on the lower section of the Tuolumne River. For this project the Sierra built an 8 mile branch from near Rosasco to the dam site and operated it until 1923. As a part of this project, a 3 mile branch was built from east of Oakdale to a site on the Stanislaus River where the Atlas gravel quarry was developed. The irrigations districts purchased 40 hopper cars (formerly on the Nevada Copper Belt), which were turned over to the Sierra at the end of the project, and later resold to Mexico. In addition to other supplies, up to two - 20 car trains of gravel were hauled from the quarry to Cooperstown each day. Here the train was broken in half, each half hauled separately over the steeper route from Cooperstown to the dam site, making for an interesting and busy schedule.

In 1925 the Oakdale and the South San Joaquin Irrigation Districts began construction on Melones Dam on the Stanislaus River. To serve this project the Sierra built a-- 7 mile branch from a location on the railroad called Jack's Siding to the dam site and again hauled carloads of gravel from the Atlas quarry to the dam. For this project the irrigation districts purchased 80 used ore cars (formerly on the Great Northern), which became known as "Black Jack's. At the end of the project the districts gave these cars to the railroad in partial payment for the work they performed and we still have about a half dozen of these remaining at Railtown. This project was finished in 1929.

A look at the Sierra Railways finances makes it clear these three projects in the 1920's produced the best economic time the railroad was ever to see and provided the impetus for upgrades to the equipment and track that continued to benefit the railroad's operation for many years. To handle this increase in traffic the railroad acquired locomotives 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32 and 34-- all between 1920 and 1925. But the railroad was not yet quite finished with this Dam business.

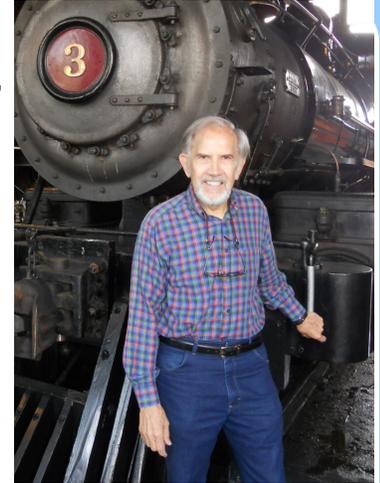
In 1955 a joint effort was undertaken by Pacific Gas & Electric and the Oakdale and South San Joaquin Irrigation Districts to further upgrade the water use and power development on the Stanislaus watershed. This involved three different dams and was called the Tri-dam project. The lowest dam was an increase to the Melones Dam, but this part of the project had little or no direct impact on the Sierra. The other two dams, Beardsley and Donnells and the associated power plants and tunnels produced considerable Sierra railroad traffic. Donnells is a 500 foot-high concrete dam which required 207,000 cubic yards of concrete. Cement for this and other parts of the project were hauled by rail to Jamestown, where a cement silo was constructed on a rail siding to store the cement, which was then trucked to the site. All the heavy equipment also came as far as Jamestown by rail, eliminating the need for these heavy and large loads traveling the highways to the Mother Lode. The project built a truck and equipment servicing facility on railroad property in Jamestown, which reverted to the railroad at the project's completion. This is our Tri-Dam building, and today is the center for many restoration projects at Railtown 1897. As you can see, the Sierra has benefited several times during its history from this dam business.

Saturday, April 20 is the 7th Annual Lamplight Dinner

Held at the Mother Lode Fairgrounds, Manzanita Building. \$35.00 per person. Early reservations recommended. Everyone is welcome 5:30pm Social Hour, 6:30pm Dinner. Mail in deadline - April 9th to the Tuolumne County Historical Society, Attn: Lamplight Dinner, 158 W. Bradford Ave. Sonora, Ca. 95370
Guest Speaker: Dave Connery-**The Unique Angels Branch of the Sierra Railway**-Our speaker, Dave Connery, has worked as a docent at Railtown 1897 SHP for the past twenty-one years and finds the colorful Angels Branch one of the most historically intriguing rail lines he has studied. Learn how this line came into being, what made it so special, and what eventually happened to it. A two part article on the Angels Branch will appear in the Historical Journal "CHISPA" in the Jan-Mar and Apr-June issues.

Volunteer of The Month—Joe Sparagna

This month we'd like you to say hello to Joe Sparagna. An avid local historian, he has been giving tours at Railtown ever since signing up in 1997. He also supports us annually by giving training sessions on the local history of Jamestown and the lumber companies. Originally from Chicago, he obtained an engineering degree from Christian Brothers University in 1959. He moved to California in 1961 and worked in Silicon Valley for several electronic and aerospace companies. As a project engineer he worked on a number of army and air force systems, which included the RU21 Beech Aircraft and electronics on the U-2. Joe retired in 1996 and moved to Sonora with his wife Betty. He was part of the rescue the Jamestown Jail effort in 2007 and oversaw its historical design, seeing it to completion in 2009 when it was re-installed in Jamestown. His hobbies include snowshoeing and his O-gauge model railroad with replicas of our roundhouse, the No. 28, No. 3 and the #5 & 6 cars. Joe says he really enjoys his work as a Tour Guide and meeting visitors from other countries. Thank you Joe!



Railtown News

Belt Shop, Track Car & Turntable Training April 25

Special training session at 1pm for those interested in learning interpret the belt shop, track cars and turntable

Behind The Scenes Shop Tours

will be given each Tuesday with Leroy Bushart as guide. Tours are open to the public with park admission.

Volunteer Field Trip Scheduled

Anyone interested in joining us for our first volunteer field trip in 2013? I've arranged a free field trip to the Castle Air Museum in Atwater on Tuesday, May 21. Call Dave at the volunteer desk if interested.

Photographer Needed

Lisa DeLacy our Curator is asking for a skilled photographer to help with documenting Railtown's buildings and artifacts. Call Lisa at 209-373-6881 or email her at Lisa.DeLacy@parks.ca.gov if interested.

Spotlight On Railtown July 20

Our area Rotary Clubs are planning another fund raising event for Railtown! This year's theme will be 'Bound For Glory' from the movie filmed at Railtown in 1976 with David Carradine and Ronny Cox

Welcome New Staff Members

We'd like everyone to meet and say hello to two new members of our Railtown staff. Maintenance Park Aid Susan Warkentin assisting Ryan, Rob and Danny and Park Aid Diana Fisher who will be assisting the office in Public Relations and Social Media.

Thank You's

To all the presenters for this year's 'Telling The Railtown Story' series. They were: Tour Guide Leroy Bushart, Museum Curator Kyle Wyatt, Tour Guide & historian Dave Connery, Curator Lisa DeLacy, Restoration Worker & Engineer George Sapp, Tour Guide John Stier, Tour Guide & Historian Joe Sparagna, Roundhouse Guide Al Lehr and Tour Guide and Historian Monty Youngborg. This year's presentations were very excellent and we'd also like to thank all the new and returning volunteers who attended!



Diana Fisher



Susan Warkentin



Boeing WB-50 Super Fortress at the Castle Air Museum



RAILTOWN 1897
State Historic Park

PO Box 1250

Jamestown, CA 95327

Return Service Requested

TO:



Depot Store- (209) 984-3953
Volunteer Desk- (209) 984-4408
Docent Site- <http://railtown.team.parks.ca.gov/volunteers>
Railtown Blog- www.railtown1897.wordpress.com
Crew Caboose- (209) 984-0352



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Newsletter submissions: darainwater@parks.ca.gov

(all area codes are 209)

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Lisa DeLacy , State Park Curator I (DER)	984-3119	Lisa.DeLacy@parks.ca.gov
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Newsletter Available in Alternative Format on Request