



The TURNTABLE



**December-January
2013-2014**

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

Upcoming Events

December 3

Railtown Ladies Luncheon at Applebee's, Sonora
Call Marge @ 533-4595

December 8

Annual volunteer potluck Christmas party and 'white elephant' gift exchange 3pm at Senior Center, Greenley Road, Sonora

December 12

11:30am Railtown Ladies Annual Christmas Potluck and Ornament Exchange
*RSVP to Carol Mabe by December 5th, 984-1210

December 13

Special Christmas train to Sonora, Rotary Club Sponsored event with our No. 3 engine and 2901 car with Santa (5-8pm)

December 14 & 15

Daytime Santa trains

December 25

Christmas Day

January 7

Railtown Ladies Luncheon At the B Wok & Sushi, Sonora, Call Marge @ 533-4595

January 18

Volunteer Recognition Dinner at the Black Oak Casino (special Luau Buffett, 5-8 pm)

February 8

New Volunteer Open House 10am—1pm in the Carriage Room. Please invite anyone in volunteering to join us!

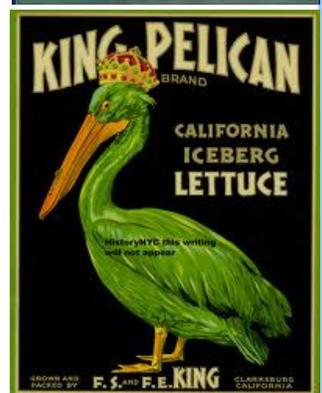
Railtown and The Perishable Rush

By Dave Connery

One of the icons of railroading in the United States are great trains of yellow or orange refrigerator cars (reefers) dashing across the country to provide fresh fruits and vegetables to the masses of people living in the mid-west and eastern seaboard states. The produce filling these cars originated in the farms, orchards and ranches of California's San Joaquin, Sacramento, Salinas and Imperial Valleys, and the vast citrus belt in the southern section of the state. This movement was a massive organization of materials and manpower that gave this country's industrial heartland access to the richest diet of healthy, nutritious, and tasty foodstuffs in the world.

At the center of this movement were the four major western railroads, the Southern Pacific, Union Pacific, Santa Fe, and Western Pacific. To provide this service required considerable coordination of several key elements. First, the clean cars had to be available at the multitude of packing houses located throughout the growing regions on the day the produce was ready to be shipped. Then the cars had to be cooled by ice (often this required the pre-cooling of the car interiors prior to loading and then re-icing them at the start of their journey). Cars were then re-iced at regular intervals as they crossed the country in order to maintain the internal temperature in the optimum range for the product being carried. Train movements needed to be optimized to get the car from the field in California to a specific siding over 2,000 miles to the east in the most expeditious time possible, allowing for these regular icing stops.

All this required the coordinated effort of packers, freight clerks, switching and line train crews, icing facility personnel, and train dispatchers. A team effort spread over the breath of the country and began operating year-round. Many parts of this operation are easily forgotten, but all were critical to the success. In the early years, prior to about 1910 most ice was obtained from natural sources; ponds, lakes and rivers were harvested in late winter for ice, which was then stored in specially built insulated facilities for use throughout the year. Eventually, mechanically manufactured ice plants were built to service nearby icing facilities. At the icing docks, personnel were available and ready to rapidly add ice to the cars (different produce required different icing techniques, some using block ice ⇒

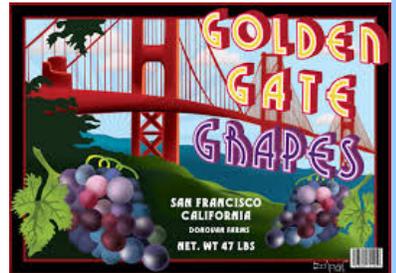


.....in the reefer ice compartments generally located in the cars ends and accessed through hatches in the roof, some needed added cooling by adding salt to the ice, while other produce used crushed ice sprayed over the top of the load in the car). Once the car was unloaded it needed to be cleaned, inspected, and any needed repairs made to the car and then it was rushed back to the west coast for a new load.

The cars (reefers) used in this service were well maintained. They needed to meet the highest cleanliness standards for they were carrying fresh food that needed to be kept wholesome throughout its journey. This traffic reached a peak on the railroads in the early 1950's, when the average reefer was making 10 round trips a year between the fields of California and the grocery stores in the east. Most western produce was shipped in wood crates, which were packed and loaded in the cars at the packing house and delivered to the end-user food market, where the produce was removed and the crates were trashed. Many boys Soap Box Derby cars were made from these crates, and many more became book cases in college student dorm rooms. It is these crates that tie Railtown and the Sierra Railway to the perishable food business. The packing houses need enormous numbers of crates to ship their produce, and Tuolumne County had the trees to provide the wood for these crates.

Passing through Railtown on the Sierra's mainline were hundreds of boxcars a year, loaded with box "shook" from the Standard and West Side Lumber Company mills. The Marketing Department of Standard Lumber aggressively sought contracts with a number of growers in the state, including the Fruit Growers Supply Company (Sunkist) for this business. The boxes were pre-manufactured at the plant in Sonora and then shipped as shook. Box shook were the ends, sides, top and bottom of the crate, which was shipped flat and then erected at the packing house or in the field. The contract between the Standard Lumber Company and Fruit Growers Supply Company called for between 1 and 1 1/2 million boxes a year for many years, and all of those boxes passed over the tracks that we now run our tourist trains on.

An excellent display of a reefer is included in the California State Railroad Museum in Sacramento. Further reading about fruit shipments can be found in The Great Yellow Fleet by John H. White (1986); Pacific Fruit Express by Anthony W. Thompson, Robert J. Church and Bruce H. Jones (2000) and Empire by Mark S. Francis (2013).



Annual Volunteer Christmas Party

Our annual Volunteer Christmas Party get together (and white elephant gift exchange) is going to be held Sunday, December 8th at 3pm, at the Senior Center on Greenley Road in Sonora. Join us for a fun time and pot luck. Volunteers with last names from A to M are asked to bring appetizers. Those from N to Z are asked to bring a side dish or a dessert. Bring a goofy gift (in the \$10- \$20 range) to exchange.

No Thursday Lunches in December

Lunch service will resume Thursday, January 9th. Our next issue of the Turntable will be on the 1st of February.



2013 Snapshots





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Volunteer Profiles: **Sandy Guitelli**

Sandy and her husband Lenny have been living near Pinecrest in the wee small community of Strawberry since 1999. We featured Lenny in the July 2012 issue of the Turntable, now it's time to say hello to Sandy. She's been doing a great job as a part of our Stationmaster crew and we're glad to feature her in this issue. She had seen our ad for volunteers in the Union Democrat and thought that it might be fun to join us at Railtown. After a brief time on Fire Patrol (which she absolutely loved), back problem issues forced her to stay away for a few years. Now that she's back she says "I love the close knit community of volunteers. Everybody is a character!" She was born in Michigan, but raised since she was three in San Antonio, Texas. She moved to Walnut Creek,

California when she was 25 and there she met Lenny. She worked for the Postal Service for 11 years, but after obtaining a degree, worked 16 years in the nursing profession and then retired. She loves gardening, studying piano and also sings in the Sonora Hills Chorus, performing two concerts a year, one for Christmas and the other in the spring. She's happy to be back at Railtown and grateful to Ron White and Hal Montano for their patience as she learns the in's and out's of Stationmaster position. We're all grateful too, to have you back Sandy. Thanks!



Here's A Schedule of Upcoming 2014 Training Dates:

- Saturday, January 4: Brakeman's Academy (Carpenter's Shop, all dates)
 - Sunday, January 5: Brakeman's Academy
 - Friday, January 10: Brakeman's Academy
 - Saturday, January 11: Brakeman's Academy
 - Sunday, January 12: Brakeman's Academy
 - Saturday, January 18: Annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner (at the Black Oak Casino)
 - Friday, January 24: Brakeman's Academy
 - Saturday, January 25: Brakeman's Academy
 - Sunday, January 26: Brakeman's Academy
 - Saturday, February 8: New Volunteer Open House (Carriage Room) 9am-1pm
 - Saturday, February 15: Roundhouse Day, 10am-2pm, (Open to the public)
 - Saturday, February 22: **All Hands Meeting** , 9am-1pm (Carpenter's Shop at the Tri-Dam))
 - Saturday, March 1: 'Telling The Railtown Story' series, 9am-3pm (Carriage Room)
 - Thursday, March 6: Maintenance & Shop Safety **All Hands Meeting 1pm** (Carpenter's Shop)
 - Saturday, March 8: 'Telling The Railtown Story' series, 9am-3pm (Carriage Room)
 - Saturday, March 15: 'Telling The Railtown Story' series, 9am-3pm (Carriage Room)
 - Saturday, March 22: GCOR Class (8:30am-5pm Carpenter's Shop) (required for engine crew)
 - Sunday, March 23: GCOR Class (8:30am-5pm Carpenter's Shop) (required for engine crew)
 - Saturday, March 29: Car Host Training & Pre Season Practice Day 9am-3pm (Carriage Room)
 - Saturday, April 5: Excursion Train season begins
 - Saturday, April 12: Fire Patrol Class (Carpenter's Shop in the Tri-Dam Building)
 - Saturday, April 19: Fire Patrol Class (repeat)
- (for those who didn't make the first one. Carpenter's Shop)

Never miss an opportunity to make others happy, even if you have to leave them alone in order to do it.

~Author Unknown



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Jamestown, CA 95327
Return Service Requested

TO:



Depot Store- (209) 984-3953
Volunteer Desk- (209) 984-4408
Volunteer Website- <http://railtown.team.parks.ca.gov/volunteers>
Railtown Blog- www.railtown1897.wordpress.com
Newsletter Editor— Dave.Rainwater@parks.ca.gov
Crew Caboose- (209) 984-0352



Railtown Paid and Volunteer Staff Contact Information

(all area codes are 209)

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