



# The TURNTABLE

May 2011

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

## Upcoming Events

### April 30

Fire Patrol class  
8:00am will be held in  
the Baggage Car  
(next to the Tri-Dam)  
For info contact:  
Rick Guantone  
209-763-2617

### May 5th

Ladies Luncheon  
Jamestown at the C &  
C Mexican Restaurant  
on Hwy 108. 11:30am  
Call Marge 533-4595

### May 8

Mother's Day  
#2 Shay

### May 14

Private Wedding  
#2901 Car @ 3pm

### May 18

School Train #2  
Shay  
Tour and Train rides  
9am—2pm  
Volunteers Needed!

### May 25

School Train #2 Shay  
Tour and Train rides  
9am—2pm  
Volunteers Needed!

### May 28, 29, 30

Memorial Day  
Weekend

### June 11 & 12

Small Engine Club  
Display in the Park

## **Railtown Receives The Gold Nugget Award**

The Tuolumne County Historical Society's Landmarks Committee is an advisory agency to the county and city planning departments on cultural resources and historical design review. On behalf of the Tuolumne County Historical Society and the Board of Directors, Jeff Dunham, our Congressional representative, provided the Certificate of Recognition and Joe Sparagna presented the award. The Gold Nugget Award is given annually to persons and/or institutions for their contribution in preserving Tuolumne County history. It was given to Railtown 1897 State Historic Park for the restoration and rehabilitation of the 1891 steam engine No. 3, "The Movie Queen." The Sierra Waldorf School was also honored for it's preservation of the old schoolhouse on Rawhide Road.



Trevor Sean Kevin Warren Jenny  
Our Junior Volunteer team!



Joe Sparagna, Kim Baker and George  
Sapp with the Gold Nugget Award

## **New Junior Volunteer Program Off To A Good Start**

We are very excited about our new Junior Volunteer program. This is a pilot program, which means we're still defining roles and rules, and we want to thank everyone for their patience, feedback and support, especially for our five new Junior Volunteers. We now have a junior volunteer board in the hallway outside Dave's office, with the daily schedule as well as a list of miscellaneous jobs. You may see Junior Volunteers in any number of tasks such as assisting visitors with velocipede rides, patrolling the park for vandalism or safety hazards, greeting park visitors, assisting in the depot store, stocking brochures, or working on the cars as car hosts or car attendants. Each day that a junior volunteer reports for duty, they will have a staff member assigned as supervisor. If you have any questions about the program or assignment suggestions, please check in with the Employee In Charge on duty. Please join us in welcoming Jenny, Kevin, Warren, Trevor and Sean. They are our future!

**Volunteer of The Month— Bob Davis**

Every now and then a new volunteer joins our community of railroad enthusiasts and practically adopts the place. Bob Davis and his wife Rebecca moved to Jamestown in 2009. Bob signed up as a volunteer and has been logging many hours of service as a Tour Guide, Greeter and more recently as Stationmaster. Whatever the greater need is, Bob is more than happy to help. His father was a career geophysicist with the US Geological Survey, which meant living in a new town every 2 or 3 years. Born in St. Louis, he's lived in Rolla, Missouri, Denver, Grand Junction, Cuba, and Mercury, Nevada to name a few. He calls Silver Springs, Maryland his home. His professional career has been as varied as the places he's lived. He's done seismic surveying for the USGS, retail sales for Woolworth's and retired as an insurance claims adjuster. He spent 25 years as a soccer referee, referee instructor and assessor for college and professional ball clubs. The good news is that he's now embraced railroading as his new hobby. "I've always loved the history and romance of the railroad. Maybe I'm hooked on that creosote smell!" He also has a background as a bass singer in barbershop quartets and choral groups and is an avid collector of folk songs and marches. What does he like most about Railtown? "Teaching our visitors our railroad history and listening to the many varied and interesting stories from all our volunteers." ***Thanks Bob, we appreciate it!***



We would like to give a special thanks to the contributors (and customers) of the Railtown Ladies Boutique over the years. Due to a number of factors, 2010 was the last year for the boutique. We want to give a special recognition and thanks to Natalie Stier, Joyce Presley, and all of the crafters who contributed their time and materials to create items for sale.

***Kimberly M. Baker***

Kim

Many thanks to you, your staff and volunteers for hosting our visit to Rail town. It is in so many ways the highlight of our speeder run on the Sierra. I have given directions for our treasurer to mail you a check for \$400—and hope that this can in a small way aid in the preservation efforts at Rail town. What a treasure! Thanks again,

**Chris Ogilvie**



## Memoirs of An Old Time “Door slammer”

(The following is excerpted from SP Pages [http://www.wx4.org/to/foam/sp/a\\_sp.html](http://www.wx4.org/to/foam/sp/a_sp.html))

**Editor’s note:** *The 1920’s Suburban Cars we run at Rail town (No. 12, 14 & 15) previously had long careers as commute cars on the SP in the San Francisco Bay Area. The following recollection is from a brakeman who worked with these cars, and shares many of the same experiences of our crew today.*

“Unlike working more modern vestibule trap doors, where the footplate fold up against the door simultaneously as the door is opened, with Subs it was a two-step process. First, you opened the rather flimsy wooden vestibule door (the windows were plastic for good reason). Then you stomped on the footplate latch, hopefully causing the spring loaded footplate to pop-up enough to catch the underside with the toe of your shoe and lift it high enough to grab it with your hand. I still own a pair of black oxfords with worn out toes.

Each brakeman (or “door slammer” as switchmen called him, for obvious reasons) was responsible for three cars. Excepting express runs, where all of the doors usually were kept closed until the first stop, trains ran with the traps open. By rule, the traps were to be open on one side only, lest the passengers exit the train on the wrong side, which was often quite a drop.

Now, if you were working a westbound train, opening and closing traps could be quite a workout. For instance, California Avenue’s station was on the left side; Palo Alto’s on the right; Menlo Park’s on the left, again. Only two to two-and-one-half minutes running time separated the stations, so if the aisles were crowded and you also had a reluctant trap, or two, it was pretty much impossible to open all of the doors all of the time.

Sometimes a friendly helper conductor would lend a hand, but rarely the head conductor. Passengers, who tended to ride the same trains each day knew the routine, and would usually open traps themselves, a big no-no (they weren’t even supposed to be in the vestibule until the train stopped-HA !), but we brakeman turned a blind eye to this at busy times.

Another big no-no (but some of the senior brakeman did it anyway) was to “stagger the traps”, whereby at adjoining ends you opened the trap on the left side of one car and the right side of another. But even the laziest brakeman considered it dangerous to the traps on both sides of a vestibule (this formed a pretty narrow peninsula between cars for passengers to negotiate as the train rocked along at 70 mph).

At either end of the line, brakeman had to know which side of the cars that the passengers would de-train, so my timetable was full of little “L’s” and “R’s”. There was this dam operator at Fourth Street Tower that was forever putting my train down the wrong track.....

Also, in the vestibule was a pull handle to dump the steam (visible in the vestibule of the car next to #2139 in page middle, above). For example, going westbound, you signaled the engineer to shut off the steam (to his look of “Don’t you think that I know that?”) at San Bruno, then you dumped the steam west of Butler Road someplace. If you didn’t, the poor car man in the City could be scalded to death by steam and hot water, if he made a cut in an un-drained steam line.

One vestibule also contained a retainer valve, which you would crack open at eight o’clock to hear the “putt” of the brakes setting up and the “sigh” of them releasing during (continued on next page ⇨)

a running air test. To give the engineer a “highball the running air”, you’d reach inside the car’s end door and give a good yank on the pneumatic signal line. Actually, despite the signals proscribed in the rule book, all signal line communications on the Commutes were generally on yank, because the whistle in the cab would continue sounding for a considerable time after the signal cord was released. How the engineer would react was situational: start, stop, stop at the next station (for flag stops), or running air.

The vestibule’s most confounding device was the old fashioned vertical staff hand brake. No gear reduction power brakes, these (the brake chain merely wrapped around the bottom of the staff). Rather than a wheel, these brakes were applied by pulling with all of your might upon a cantankerous arm, which theoretically worked like a ratchet wrench and folded down when not in use. The ratchets were often in ill repair, and/or the arms were loose and wobbly. Compounding things was that you had to hold the side of your foot up against another ratchet’s “dog” at floor level to keep the brake staff from unwinding, not always successful proposition, and certainly awkward at the least. No wonder so many brakeman fell off of boxcar roofs trying to tie these things.

One more thing: the Subs had excellent cast iron brakes. When throwing a train into emergency from the rear end using the conductor’s valve, the correct method was to first pull it out enough to set up the brakes, then yank on it the rest of the way to big hole the train. If you did it all at once, there was a good chance that you’d break the train in two, even if the slack was stretched.”

**(Our Pullman cars #12, 14 and 15 were built for the Southern Pacific as commuter cars in 1923. Following is some additional information about Pullman cars)**



The Pullman Palace Car Company was founded by George Pullman in 1862, manufacturing railroad cars from then and into the early decades of the 20th century. Pullman was also famous for the sleeping car he developed which carried his name into the 1980’s.

**Photo’s going clockwise:**

- (left) George Pullman**
- (top left) late 19th Century car**
- (top center) the first sleeper car**
- (top right) factory in Chicago**
- (right) advertisement**

**PUT YOURSELF AT EASE**



**in the comfort and privacy of a Pullman!**

It’s so easy to make yourself comfortably at home on a Pullman! If you wish, you can have your own *completely private* quarters, with individually controlled air conditioning . . . complete toilet facilities. Roomy, king-size beds assure a good night’s sleep! No weather worries or highway jitters. Arrive at your destination on time—rested and refreshed, looking and feeling at your best. Next trip, treat your whole family to *travel by Pullman!*



# Scenes From Our Opening Season 2011



Alex Sharp  
Opened our ceremony  
with his bagpipes

Jim Sutherland brought his beautiful flag display and sang our national anthem. Our Car Hosts presented the flag in ceremony (*from left to right*: Jim Sutherland, John Trahey, Jeanette Foster, Bill Ulrey, Craig Peterson, Darryl Bramlette, "Buck" Bandy, Eugene Merritt, Hal Montano and John Stier

Engineer Joe Bispo joined us  
again with his sons  
Michael (left) and Tom (center)



Trevor Chung helping  
visitors enjoy our  
velocipede



Well dressed  
new volunteers  
Hal & Janet Montano



Who is this  
mysterious fix it  
man?



It was good to see  
Roger Kirby back again!  
On Al Lehr's Calliope



Sam Cook helped  
demonstrate our belt driven  
machine shop



Ron Konklin, Ken Rattene and James Judnich  
helped give speeder rides to our visitors



Nancy Bull combined our  
membership table with an  
interpretive presentation



Larry Miller helped to interpret the turntable as they  
were putting the #2 away for the day



**RAILTOWN 1897**  
State Historic Park

**PO Box 1250**

**Jamestown, CA 95327**

**Return Service Requested**



**TO:**



**Depot Store-** (209) 984-3953

**Docent Hotline-** (209) 984-4408

**Docent Site-** <http://railtown.team.parks.ca.gov/volunteers>

**Railtown Blog-** [www.railtown1897.wordpress.com](http://www.railtown1897.wordpress.com)



**Railtown Paid and Volunteer Staff Contact Information**

*Newsletter submissions: [RailtownNews@parks.ca.gov](mailto:RailtownNews@parks.ca.gov)*

*(all area codes are 209)*

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