



The TURNTABLE



October 2011

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

Upcoming Events

October 6

Ladies Luncheon at the Black Oak Café. For info call Marge @532-1960

October 8

Membership Day!
Special Moonlight rides at 5:30, 7 and 8pm w/ Sierra #3 & 2901 Cactus Bob & Prairie Flower entertain from Noon to 3pm.

October 8 thru 30th

Harvest Haunt Trains #3 on Saturdays and #1265 on Sundays

November 3

Ladies Luncheon 11:30 At Morelia's Mexican Restaurant in Jamestown

November 21 & 22

Volunteers needed to help decorate the Santa's Starlight and Christmas trains

November 24

Park Closed for Thanksgiving

November 25 & 26

Santa's Starlight Express trains @ 5:30 and 7pm

November 25, 26 & 27

Santa trains

December 17 & 18

Santa trains

December 18

Annual volunteer Christmas party 5:30pm at the Senior Center on Greenley Road



Branches of The Sierra Part 2 by Dave Connery

In 1913, Congress approved the Raker Act, authorizing the City and County of San Francisco to use public lands to build a dam, a reservoir and necessary conduits and other structures in the Hetch Hetchy Valley. This act, allowing The City to develop facilities within Yosemite National Park, remains controversial to this day. It had taken nearly 13 years of lobbying by San Francisco to obtain this approval. To facilitate the dam construction and even more impressive tunnel/pipe system to bring Tuolumne River waters to the San Francisco area, it was determined a railroad would be needed. Construction on the railroad began in early 1916 with William Newell (the Sierra's Chief Engineer) serving as Engineer in Charge.

The Hetch Hetchy Railroad was built from a point on the Sierra Railway near Rosasco (MP 26) first to the future site of the Moccasin Power plant (using some of the Right of Way Newell had graded for the defunct Yosemite Short Line), from here it continued up Priest Grade, through Groveland then on to Hog Ranch (later named Mather) and finally to the dam site itself, a total distance of 68 tortuous miles. The railroad was completed in November 1917 and began operating as a Common Carrier in July 1918. The dam was completed and dedicated in July 1923 and the railroad ceased Common Carrier service in February 1925 while continuing to be used for city purposes. In August 1925 this part of the project was done with the completion of the Moccasin Power Plant. From Mather a short (1 ½ mile) line was built for the California Peach & Fig Growers to connect their lumber mill with the Hetch Hetchy and thus the Sierra. This line employed a Shay and two Climax type geared locomotives.

Due to the steep grades, the Hetch Hetchy itself employed two Heislors and a Shay among its six locomotives. For this operation, gravel did not have to be hauled up from Atlas in Oakdale. In fact, the tunneling operations produced a surplus of gravel at the several faces along the railroad and much of the old ballast on the Sierra today was obtained as waste from the tunneling operation. Instead, in addition to hauling workers and their families to the dam site, aqueduct adits and other City facilities, all the construction material, camp supplies and especially boxcar loads of sacked cement for use in construction of the dam were all hauled on the railroad.

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Built with the intention of someday raising the height of the dam, the Depression and subsequent availability of federal funds for infrastructure work enabled the City to make this increase in height during the mid 1930's. To do this, the railroad first needed to be reconditioned and then beginning in May 1935 the Sierra Railway began operating the Hetch Hetchy as a branch. During the three years it took to raise the O'Shaughnessy Dam the Sierra employed up to five locomotives manned by Sierra Crews operating out of Hetch Hetchy Junction. Locomotives 18, 20, 32, 34 and 36 were all regularly used on this run. This turned out to be a fortuitous event for the Sierra, as it helped the railroad return to profitability following bankruptcy in 1932 and provided work for Sierra crews who otherwise would have had little to do - with the two lumber mills shut down during the Depression.

At Railtown we still have several pieces of equipment associated with the Hetch Hetchy. Foremost of course is Hetch Hetchy track car #19. Locomotive #34 was a regular source of power on the Hetch Hetchy, short coach #6 (of Angels Branch fame) was sold to the Hetch Hetchy during the raising of the dam and Central Pacific coach #2 was used on the Hetch Hetchy during the initial building of the dam to haul workers and their families to various work camps.



Our September 22 group at the Sierra Nevada Logging Museum



Bob, Marge & Jeanette enjoying the view at the New Melones Dam



Ranger Andy Smalden gave us a personal talk on the history of the Hetch Hetchy Dam

New Melones & Sierra Nevada Logging Museum Field Trips

This year we were fortunate to go on two volunteer field trips, both providing us with in depth history and breathtaking views. The first on August 17 took us through the town of Moccasin and then to our ultimate destination, the Hetch Hetchy dam. Joe Sparagna provided in depth narration on the background and history of this incredible project while on route. Ranger Andy Smalden (top right photo) gave us a great interpretive tour while at the dam. On our second trip September 22, Ranger Tracy Neilson took us to the New Melones Dam overlook and then back to the visitors center on Highway 49. We traveled on to the Sierra Nevada Logging Museum and enjoyed our bag lunch on their outside deck overlooking White Pines Lake. Our thanks to John Hofstetter, the Executive Director of the Friends of The Logging Museum, who gave us a personal tour. Their archival footage of an actual logging operation using trains is spectacular and well worth the visit.

News

Our friend and volunteer Darryl Bramlette recently suffered a stroke and is convalescing at a skilled nursing facility in San Jose. Linda says he's responding to therapy and is hopeful he will recover fully. She has also asked that those who would like to be updated or stay in touch may call her on her cell phone 408-476-8760. You can also send cards to Darryl Bramlette c/o Rail town 1897, Box 1250, Jamestown, Ca. 95327

We'd like to send our condolences to John and Linda Scott and Family. Her mother and former volunteer Carol Smales passed away quietly two weeks ago. Cards may be sent to: John and Linda Scott 13575 Joshua Way, Sonora, Ca. 95370



Volunteer of The Month—James Kennard

We're all aware that most of us here at Railtown are in the over 50, or senior category. That's why it's refreshing to see younger folks involved in working with the trains and helping to preserve our history. This month we'd like everyone to say hello to James Kennard, our 24-year-old volunteer from Manteca. When he was in the 4th grade, his elementary school class came to Railtown on a field trip. He says, *"I was born liking trains. There's just something about em' I can't explain."*

He finished high school in 2005 and has worked at various odd jobs including retail, waiting tables and bookkeeping. But it was in 2010 when he heard about the #3 engine returning he decided to show up at Railtown and become a volunteer. *"I always wanted to work in, on and around the trains. There are very few places that provide an opportunity to work on the steam engines. I always dreamed of being a steam locomotive engineer. It's a once in a lifetime experience!"*

James is often found on Tuesdays working wherever needed, cleaning cars or working on or around the steam engines. He is also an active member of our train crew on weekends. When asked whether he likes working with older volunteers he says, *"I love to hear the old stories and about the days gone by."* Thanks James!

The Quest for Accuracy

On our field trip to the New Melones Reservoir, September 22, the question came up "which dams were involved in the Tri Dam project?" Was it Hetch Hetchy? Don Pedro? Well, some of us knew, but others weren't sure. While these historical details have been presented in our March training series in the past, I felt it would be good to refresh all our memories. What better way, than to consult our district's State Curator II, Kyle Wyatt. He submitted the following information:

The Tri-Dam Project

The Tri-Dam Building at Railtown 1897 SHP was built in 1955 as a part of the Tri-Dam Project, the construction of the Donnell's, Beardsley and Tulloch Dams and powerhouses on the Stanislaus River by a partnership between the Oakdale Irrigation District and the South San Joaquin Irrigation District. In an arrangement similar to earlier cooperative agreements between the Sierra and the irrigation districts, the Sierra RR provided space in Jamestown for the Tri-Dam Project to construct a warehouse for staging materials to support the dam construction projects. At the end of the project in 1957, title to the Tri-Dam Building was turned over to the Sierra. It was converted into shop facilities by the State of California in the 1980s, and has been expanded several times since then.



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



Railtown Paid and Volunteer Staff Contact Information

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(all area codes are 209)

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