

# The **TURNTABLE**

April 2009

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

## **Important Dates**

### **April 4 th & 5th**

Opening Weekend  
Early Bird Program-7am  
on Saturday

### **April 11th**

Easter Bunny Visits!

### **April Saturdays- 11th, 18th, 25th 9am**

Fire Chase OJT training,  
RSVP to Joe Bispo

### **April 12th**

Easter Trains operate, but  
the Easter Bunny is busy  
elsewhere

### **April 13th 9am**

Special Events Commit-  
tee. Meets 2nd Mondays-  
Baggage Car

### **April 15th-11 am**

Sierra #3 Shop Tour

### **April 18th-4:30**

First Wildflower Train

### **May 2nd-4:30**

2nd Wildflower Train

### **May 7, 14, 21 & 28**

School Days Programs

### **May 10th**

Mother's Day

### **May 13th-11am**

Sierra #3 Shop Tour

### **July 18th**

Volunteer Potluck BBQ,  
music and outdoor movie  
night. Mark your calen-  
dar, more to come later!

## **Season's Greetings!**

Opening day is upon us! Great things are happening around Railtown. Lots of new activities, events and opportunities, for volunteers and visitors.

On opening day we are starting with our first-ever "Early Bird" program. At 7am we'll have guides here, as well as the engine crew, to narrate the process of bringing the locomotive up to steam for the day. Then we'll have the usual festivities to mark opening day (pomp and circumstance!) followed by a weekend full of fun and educational offerings in the roundhouse, yard, machine shops and depot.

We've had a great new group of volunteers start their Docent career this spring, so this weekend will provide them with their first look at the best we can offer.

Also new this year is the snack bar in the Carriage Room, operated by Tony and Elfie Taylor. Please be sure to stop by and say 'Hi'. They are very friendly and conscientious and really want to do a good job for our visitors. They generously fed our volunteers at this past Tuesday's Work Day, Yum!

Don't forget to plan your schedule around the new ongoing training sessions throughout the year. Bob Gibson, Dave Connery and crew have cooked up some great offerings.

As of this writing, it looks like the #2 Shay locomotive will be our season opening locomotive, which may bring some extra excitement as well. Hope to see you out at the park!



# Back Track– Railtown in History

**Railroad Accident —A Runaway Train on the Sierra Railway Track Kills Two Women**  
*The Daily Union Democrat, July 2, 1904-submitted by Craig Konklin*

The first fatalities on the Sierra Railroad happened last Saturday shortly after 5 o'clock on the Angels Branch line at the switchback near McArdle's place. It was caused by a runaway work train crashing into the rear of the regular passenger train bound for Angels. Two women – Mrs. Pauline DeMartini and Mrs. F. Valenti of Stockton – were killed and several other were more or less injured.

The accident was either due to the failure of the brakes to work or the incompetency of the engineer on the work train. The work train which is designated as No. 9 reached the switch near the top of the grade with five carloads of gravel at 4:48 p.m. The regular passenger train had the right of way and was soon due at that point. The work train was ran on to the siding and at 5:15 the passenger train passed. It proceeded down the grade about 1000' to the first switchback. Then the work train backed out onto the main track to go in the opposite direction from the passenger train. When the last car had left the siding the engineer noted that the train was moving rapidly down grade and he failed in several attempts to stop it, finally whistling "Train running away!" The shrieking whistle spread terror among the 40 odd people in the passenger coach which stood imprisoned on the switchback. The runaway train came thundering down the steep grade into plain view of the passengers who were making frantic efforts to escape from the coach. Some emerged through the windows not caring to wait until the human congestion at the doors was relieved. Mrs. DeMartini and Mrs. Valenti, who were large women, had reached the platform between the passenger and the combination coaches when the crash came. The cars were driven together and between them the unfortunate ladies were crushed to death. Teddy Melone, a Stockton baseball player, was badly bruised and lacerated and Assessor William Noner of Calaveras County suffered similar injuries and many more were severely jolted and rendered sick.

The bodies of the two women were not released from the wreck for an hour. They had to be chopped out. Mrs. Valenti was not killed outright. She lived for half an hour, her groans completely unnerving those who had been rendered highly nervous by the disaster.

Coroner Burdan was not notified of the accident until nearly 8 o'clock but reached the scene before 9 o'clock, empanelled a jury and held an inquisition that night. The witness examined were men employed by the railroad company. Arthur Decker was the conductor on the passenger train and he declared he was powerless to prevent the collision. J. F. Goler was the conductor on the work train and he never noticed any defect in the brakes. Engineer Quackenbush said that the passenger train had added an oil car of 8000 gallons capacity to the work train making six cars with engine, and being the heaviest load he had alone working on that grade. He also testified that the engine had a good steam brake, which worked perfectly but they failed to hold. R. L. Ford, a brakeman on the work train stated that he had been working on the line since the 7<sup>th</sup> last and the train never had more than five cars until the day of the accident, when it consisted of six and that the brakes had never failed to hold before. The jury rendered a verdict that Mrs. DeMartini and Mrs. Valenti came to their death in a railroad accident and found that the work train was too heavily loaded for the brakes on a down grade. The following gentlemen comprised the jury: W. A. Pierce, J. B. Gross, M. H. Kilgore H. B. Thianes, F. McArdle, Wm. Hiakleman, F. J. Kabre.

The bodies of Mrs. DeMartini and Mrs. Valenti were taken to Calaveras County for burial. Both ladies were members of highly respected families living in that town. Their homes were in Stockton and the trip was being taken to Calaveras to visit a dying relative of Mrs. Valenti in Murphys.

# Railtown 1897 SHP Float in Murphys Parade

The Railtown 1897 SHP float, representing the likeness of locomotive #3, was present when the parade kicked off for the annual Murphys Irish Days event on Saturday March 21, 2009. The locomotive and tender were decorated in Irish regalia for the event and the thousands of people that lined the parade route were treated to the locomotive with smoke spewing from the stack and the sounds of a train emanating from under the boiler.

The float was driven by Gary Hosman with copilot Melissa Hughes, the engineer was Cliff Hughes and our own John Rand acting as a wild west conductor.

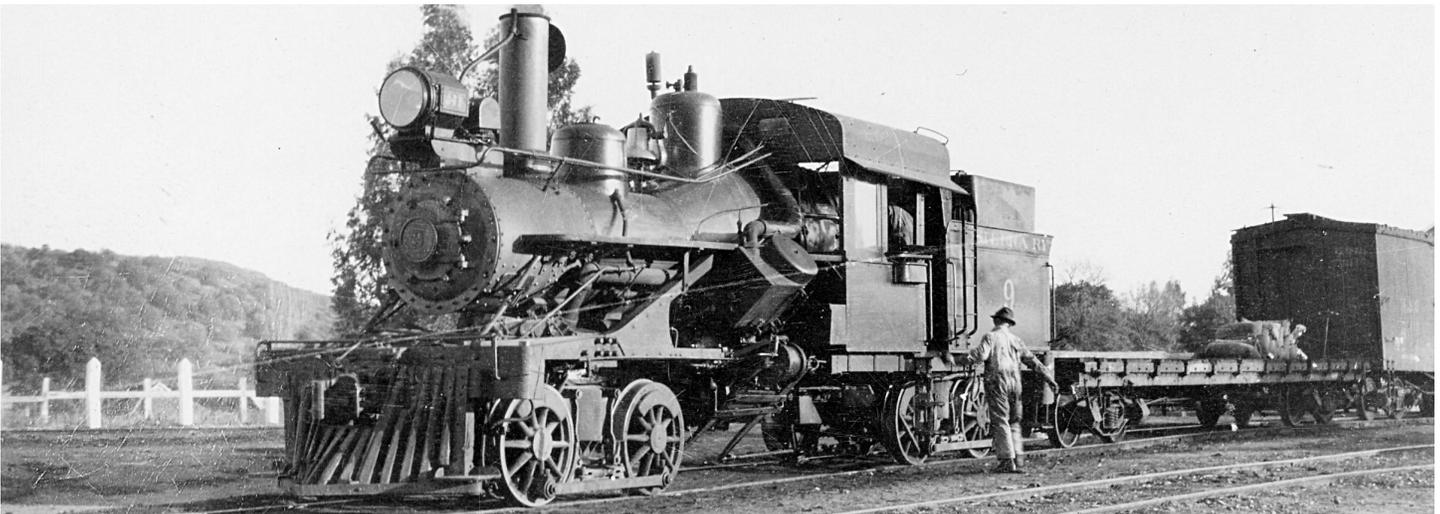
Al Lehr, a Railtown volunteer, had his calliope in the parade. The calliope (which was featured as the last float) was also a big hit as, Roger Kirby, the keyboard player, played some old favorites during the trip down Main Street.

# Heisler Number 9 - Was it a Jinxed Locomotive?

By Dave Tadlock

Sierra Railway # 9 was possibly the unluckiest locomotive ever to run in the central Sierras. A two-truck geared locomotive, the Heisler #1036 was built in 1899 for the Sierra Railway. It had its first recorded mishap in 1904. While working the Angels Camp passenger run, two cars of another train got away near Gee Whiz point and crashed into the rear of the # 9 train killing two female passengers who failed to jump clear (see article this newsletter). In 1906, # 9 was again at work on the Angels branch, this time pulling a freight train, when a boxcar full of dynamite exploded killing two brakemen. Later that same year while working on the Sugar Pine Railroad (Standard Lumber Company), the crew lost control resulting in the deaths of three members of that crew. In 1925, while on the Sugar Pine Railroad, Number 9 was involved in a head on collision, resulting again in injury, thus adding to its legend as the unluckiest locomotive to ride the rails in the Central Sierra.

(References- [Sierra Railway](#), Deane 1960, [Short Line Junction](#), Wagner 1956)



# 2009 Training Schedule

As part of our continuing training program, we are offering the following “mini-training” opportunities for our paid and volunteer staff.

Of course, donuts will be provided!

Please, take advantage of these opportunities! New insights, information and inspiration to impart to visitors— It’s a good thing.

All training conducted from 8:30– 9:45, at the Freight shed unless posted otherwise.

|            |   |                                    |
|------------|---|------------------------------------|
| April 18th | <b>Steam Engine Mechanics, Brakes &amp; More!</b> | Dave Tadlock, John Stier & Al Lehr |
| May 9th    | <b>History of Railtown’s Rolling Stock</b>        | Curator Kyle Wyatt                 |
| June 13th  | <b>Geology, Gold &amp; Lumber Interpretation</b>  | Dave Connery                       |
| July 11th  | <b>Movies at Railtown</b>                         | Jerry Day and John Brunskill       |
| August 8th | <b>History of Jamestown</b>                       | Joe Sparagna                       |
| Sept 12    | <b>Jamestown Jail &amp; Lumber Companies</b>      | Joe Sparagna                       |

If you have suggestions for future training opportunities, please contact Bob Gibson at [Gibsonbj@charter.net](mailto:Gibsonbj@charter.net).

## Historic Motorcars Visit Railtown– April 19th



On Sunday, April 19th, Motorcar Operator’s West will be sponsoring their annual trek on the Sierra Railway from Oakdale to Jamestown. We hope to be able to share our own motorcars that day, and operate the turntable for our visitors as well. It’s a great opportunity to interpret this unique aspect of railroading for our visitors. If you’d like to be involved, please contact Dave Rainwater to sign up.



# Bits and Pieces

## Library

The docent library has been moved to the curator's office. Please return any overdue materials you may have at home. Likewise, if you have any relevant books you know longer want, consider donating!



## Nametags

We will be ordering nametags for our new volunteers. If you are in need of a new nametag, please let Dave know.

## School Days

We are now scheduling volunteers for School Days. If you are interested in participating, please call Joyce at 532-2931 or email joyce\_presley@yahoo.com.

## Sierra Railway Historical and Modeller's Seminar-(eligible for training hours!)

On May 2nd. Contact Dave Connery for more details. deconnery@aol.com 925-735-0134

## Railtown Polo Shirts

Would you like to look as sharp and happy as Ken? Order your own Railtown polo shirt (but in blue) from Virginia. May be worn by tour guides, and for informal Railtown events in hot weather. (Not for use on trains).



## Derby Hats and Costumes

Fancy Dry Goods on Main Street in Columbia is stocking Derby hats, Bowler hats and a variety of pre-made Railtown-appropriate costumes, patterns and supplies.

## Why is this Man Smiling?

Because he knows our radio communications will be much improved this operating season! With funds provided by the foundation, new volunteer Jerry Tannhauser has installed a new mobile radio in the speeder, a new base station and antenna in the crew caboose, and purchased all new portable radios!

## 2009 Edition of the Interpretive Pocket Guidebooks are now available!

Thanks to Dave Connery for his hard work on this project, and Marge & Karen for stapling!

## Kudos

Special thanks this month to: John S. for putting his electrifying skills to work on the copy machine, John R, Cliff, Linda and Gary for wowing the crowds in the Murphy's Irish Days Parade, Jerry and Anna Lewis, Jessica & Ron Davila, Dave Deutch, Laverne Coon and others for staffing the booth at the Sonora Home and Garden Show, Dave C., Tommy, Erik, Laverne, Robert, John R., Janet, Marge, Natalie, Dave C., Joe, and the many others who helped with docent training!

**This newsletter is emailed, and distributed at the first Tuesday each month. It is mailed out later in the week to everyone else. Let us know if you are not on our email list!**





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State Historic Park

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**Return Service Requested**

**TO:**



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*Newsletter Available in Alternative Format on Request*