

# WALKING TOUR GUIDE



## RAILTOWN 1897

Historic Sierra Railroad Shops • Jamestown, California

"The Movie Railroad"

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Effective  
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### About Railtown 1897 - Historic Sierra Railroad Shops

Railtown 1897 - Historic Sierra Railroad Shops - preserves the headquarters and general shops of the Sierra Railway, and its successor, the Sierra Railroad. The Sierra Railway was incorporated in February, 1897, and a 41-mile right-of-way was completed between Oakdale and Jamestown in November, 1897. The line was extended four miles to Sonora in 1899 and another 12 miles to Tuolumne City in 1900. A 19-mile branch to Angels Camp was completed in 1902 and served neighboring Calaveras County until 1935. Other temporary branches were built to haul construction materials for dams on the Stanislaus and Tuolumne rivers.

Upon its arrival in Jamestown, the Sierra established its headquarters and maintenance shops which today comprise Railtown 1897 - Historic Sierra Railroad Shops. Most of the structures here were built between 1897 and 1922 when the last major additions and improvements were made. When the Sierra converted to diesel locomotives in 1955, a modern shop was built in Oakdale. However, the Jamestown shops remained intact serving the growing needs of the motion picture and television industries. In 1982, the 26-acre site and collection of historic rolling stock was purchased by the State of California for inclusion in the State Park System, thus preserving one of North America's last operating steam era railroad facilities.

#### Railtown Historic Equipment Highlights

**Locomotive No. 3.** Built in 1891 for the Prescott & Arizona Central and purchased by the Sierra in 1897, No. 3 was retired in 1932 and returned to service in 1948. It has appeared in nearly 50 motion pictures and more than 20 television series, and is still used for movie work and special occasions. No. 3's recent film credits include *Back to the Future III*, *Unforgiven*, and *Bad Girls*.

**Locomotive No. 28.** Built for the Sierra Railway in 1922. When the Sierra dieselized in

1955, No. 28 was retired. It was restored to service in 1971 when the Sierra began operating steam-powered tourist trains.

**Locomotive No. 34.** Purchased new by the Sierra in 1924. Like the 28, No. 34 was retired in 1955 and returned to service in the 1970s. It is privately owned and is no longer in service.

**Locomotive No. 2.** Though not an original Sierra locomotive, No. 2 is nevertheless representative of the geared locomotives used by the Sierra during its first two decades of operation.

**Passenger Coach No. 5 and Combine No. 6.** These unique cars were built in 1902 specifically for the Sierra's Angels Branch, which had unusually sharp curves for a standard-gauge railroad, thus necessitating the need for short passenger cars.

**Passenger Coach No. 2.** This car is Railtown's oldest piece of rolling stock. It was built in 1869 for the Central Pacific Railroad, and the Sierra acquired it in the mid-1930s for movie work.

**Combine/Caboose No. 9.** This distinctive car is one of the few cars built from scratch in the Jamestown car shops, and is the only such car to survive. Presently undergoing restoration.

**Caboose No. 7.** Former Elgin, Joliet & Eastern car, built circa 1920. It was acquired by the Sierra circa 1956 and is now privately owned.

**Track Car No. 8.** A circa 1920 Model T that was converted to rail operation by the Jamestown shop crews. It is still operational.

**Heavyweight Passenger Cars.** The steel passenger cars used by Railtown's excursion trains mostly date from the 1920s, and were acquired by the Sierra in the 1970s when it inaugurated tourist trains.

In addition to the equipment list above, there are many pieces of freight equipment at Railtown, some of which date to the turn-of-the century.

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## Railtown 1897 Walking Tour Guide

**A. Site of the Sierra Railway General Office and Depot Building.** The original general office building was built circa 1897 and destroyed by fire in 1913. A second building was constructed in 1913 and lasted until 1978 when it too was destroyed by fire.

**B. Freight House.** Originally built in 1897, and expanded and modified over the years. An ice house was added circa 1899, and a portion of the freight house was burned in the 1978 passenger depot fire.

**C. Radio Shack.** Built circa 1956 when the railroad installed radio communications between its general office and trains.

**D. Roundhouse.** Built in 1910 to replace the first roundhouse that burned. The roundhouse originally had four engine stalls, and two additional stalls were added in 1922 when the Sierra upgraded its locomotive fleet – in part to accommodate a surge in traffic brought about by the construction of the Don Pedro and Melones Dams.

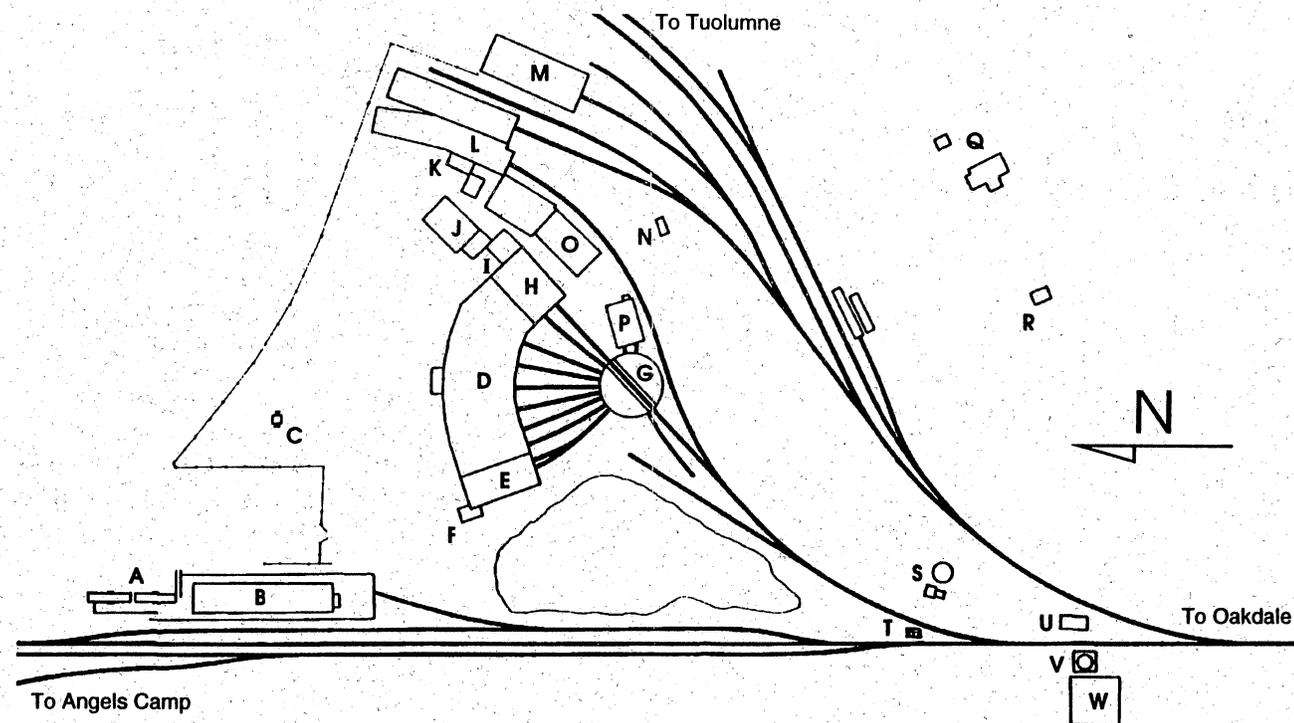
**E. Gasoline Vehicle Shop.** Completed in 1922 as an addition to the expanded roundhouse. Used to service the railroad's motorcar and highway trucks.

**F. Oil Storage Room.** Another addition, circa 1922, to the expanded roundhouse.

**G. Turntable.** This air-operated 60-foot turntable was acquired second-hand and installed in 1922, replacing an earlier wood-frame structure of 1897 vintage.

**H. Machine Shop.** Built circa 1897. This was the original enginehouse, and was converted to a machine shop circa 1900 when the first roundhouse was constructed. It is equipped with overhead belt-driven tools which are still operable. The belt drive was originally powered by a Pelton water wheel with back-up steam engine. This was replaced by the current electric motor system in 1912.

**I. Carpenter Shop.** The open air carpenter shop shares the machine shop's overhead belt drive.



**J. Blacksmith and Tin Shop.** Built in 1899. Railroads like the Sierra often fabricated their own tools and parts, and many of these items are still in use at Railtown.

**K. Materials Shed.** A small storage building for supplies constructed in 1906.

**L. Car Repair Sheds and Shop.** Built in 1906 to the contour of existing track, with a fully enclosed shop for repairing and constructing railroad cars. The attached lumber shed is currently used to store old movie props.

**M. Tri-Dam Building.** Built circa 1956 in conjunction with the Tri-Dam Project on the Stanislaus River. It is presently used by State Parks personnel for shop and office space.

**N. Employee Restroom.** Built in 1927 and no longer in use.

**O. Storehouse and Lumber Shed.** Built in 1904. The storehouse contains the master mechanic's office, a warehouse of locomotive and car parts, the master carbuilder's office, and the former joiner and pattern maker's shop.

**P. Track Automobile House.** Built in 1910 to house the railway's track autos and motor cars.

**Q. Section Foreman House and Detached Garage.** The section foreman house was built in 1906, and the garage was built at an unknown date. Presently rented as living quarters.

**R. Transformer House.** Built in 1912, the transformer house served the early electrification of the Sierra Railway shops. The transformers and other machinery were removed long ago.

**S. Oil Storage Tank, and Pump and Heater House.** Built circa 1920 and no longer in use.

**T. Water and Fuel Oil Standpipes.** Installed circa 1920, perhaps as early as 1911.

**U. Sand House.** Built at an unknown date on the site of the original oil heater house.

**V. Water Tank.** The concrete tank base was built in 1938, while the present wooden tank and its base are a 1980s reconstruction of the original.

**W. Fuel Oil Reservoir.** An oil storage tank built in 1904 on a raised wood trestlework.