

Railtown 1897

State Historic Park

Interpretive Prospectus

August 2004

Prepared by
Robert Mistchenko
Interpreter II
California State Railroad Museum

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Declaration of Purpose	2
Introduction	3
Interpretive Resources	
Physical Features	4
Biological Features	5
Historic Features	6
Recreational Resources	6
Interpretive Considerations	
Environmental Influences	7
Visitor Needs and Expectations	8
Existing Methods and Interpretive Media	9
Interpretive Period(s)	10
Interpretive Themes	11-12
Proposed Interpretation	
Visitor Activities	13-14
Interpretive Matrix	15
Interpretive Collections	
Artifacts	16
Historic Structures and Sites	16-19
Recommendations	
Interpretive Priorities	20
Future Acquisitions	21-23
Bibliography	24
Maps & Graphs	

DECLARATION OF PURPOSE

The purpose of Railtown 1897 State Historic Park is to perpetuate for the enjoyment, inspiration and enlightenment of the people the site of the operating center of the Sierra Railroad: historic structures, equipment and environs as an accurate portrayal of the steam railroading era in the region from 1897 through 1955.

The function of the Department and Railtown 1897 State Historic Park is to prescribe and execute a program to manage, maintain and protect, and interpret the site and its setting; to preserve and protect and interpret the remaining historical structures, equipment and evidences which are pertinent to the declared purpose; to interpret the significance of railroading and its relationship to California's heritage, and to provide such facilities as are necessary for the full realization of the declared purpose.

INTRODUCTION

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The Sierra Railway was conceived as a means of connecting the timber and mineral resources of the Central Sierra foothills with a national rail transportation network. The railroad would provide both freight and passenger service to the industries and communities along its route, proving to be the only all-weather means of transportation available to the mines, mills, towns and construction projects at that time. The Sierra Railway was incorporated in February 1897 and a 41 mile right-of-way between Oakdale and Jamestown was completed by November of that same year. The Sierra established its headquarters and maintenance shops on approximately 50 acres in Jamestown. By connecting with the Southern Pacific in Oakdale, the Sierra had access to the national rail network. Having weathered the changing fortunes of the railroading industry, the Sierra Railroad to this day continues to transport timber products from mills to the national rail network.

To meet the needs of a resurgent gold mining industry, a branch line across the deep Stanislaus River Canyon to Angels Camp was completed in 1902. This branch followed the Mother Lode vein, serving numerous gold mines and neighboring Calaveras county until 1935. As business increased, additional equipment was purchased and the Jamestown facilities expanded.

Responding to ambitious water projects in the region, the Sierra Railway increased track mileage in the 1920's with temporary spurs built to haul construction equipment and materials during the construction of Don Pedro and New Melones dams on the Stanislaus and Tuolumne Rivers. The City of San Francisco found a solution to its power and water needs with the Hetch Hetchy project and the associated Hetch Hetchy Railroad (later under the control of the Sierra Railway) served a system of __ dams and hydroelectric plants. The Stanislaus Electric Power Company (later Pacific Gas & Electric) used narrow gauge rail lines on its projects higher in the mountains.

During the first three decades of the 20th century, the Sierra Railway was a profitable and reliable mechanism for transporting goods between the San Joaquin Valley and the foothill communities of Tuolumne County. By late 1935 improved highways had reduced passenger traffic on railroads. The Depression forced the Sierra Railway into bankruptcy and receivership. Sold at public auction, it emerged as the Sierra Railroad in 1937. The last scheduled passenger train was in 1939. But the freight transportation opportunities that accompanied the postwar housing boom provided the company a well needed economic boost.

In 1955, the Sierra Railroad's transition from steam to diesel service was marked by the purchase of two locomotives. That year, diesel electric locomotives took over freight service operating from a newly built modern diesel shop in Oakdale. With this shift in technology, the Jamestown shops were quite suddenly obsolete.

The 1920's marked the emergence of the motion picture industry as a promising, robust new economic force in the state. The Old West and railroading were popular subject material for the motion pictures of the time, and as a sidelight the Sierra served the motion picture industry by offering authentic equipment set in an undeveloped natural setting. As a result of this unforeseen relationship, the Sierra Railway has become known as The Movie Railroad, one of the most recognizable railroads in the world. Over the years more than 250 motion pictures, television productions and commercials have been produced using its historic steam locomotives, cars and facilities. It continues to serve television and motion picture industry needs today.

Beginning in the late 1940's, demand by the public and railroading clubs led the Sierra Railroad to begin offering excursion train rides. This continued with mixed success until the California Department of Parks and Recreation acquired the Jamestown yard in 1982. Railtown 1897 has been operated as a state historic park since that time, offering tours of the historic Jamestown facilities and excursion train rides.

INTERPRETIVE RESOURCES

PHYSICAL FEATURES

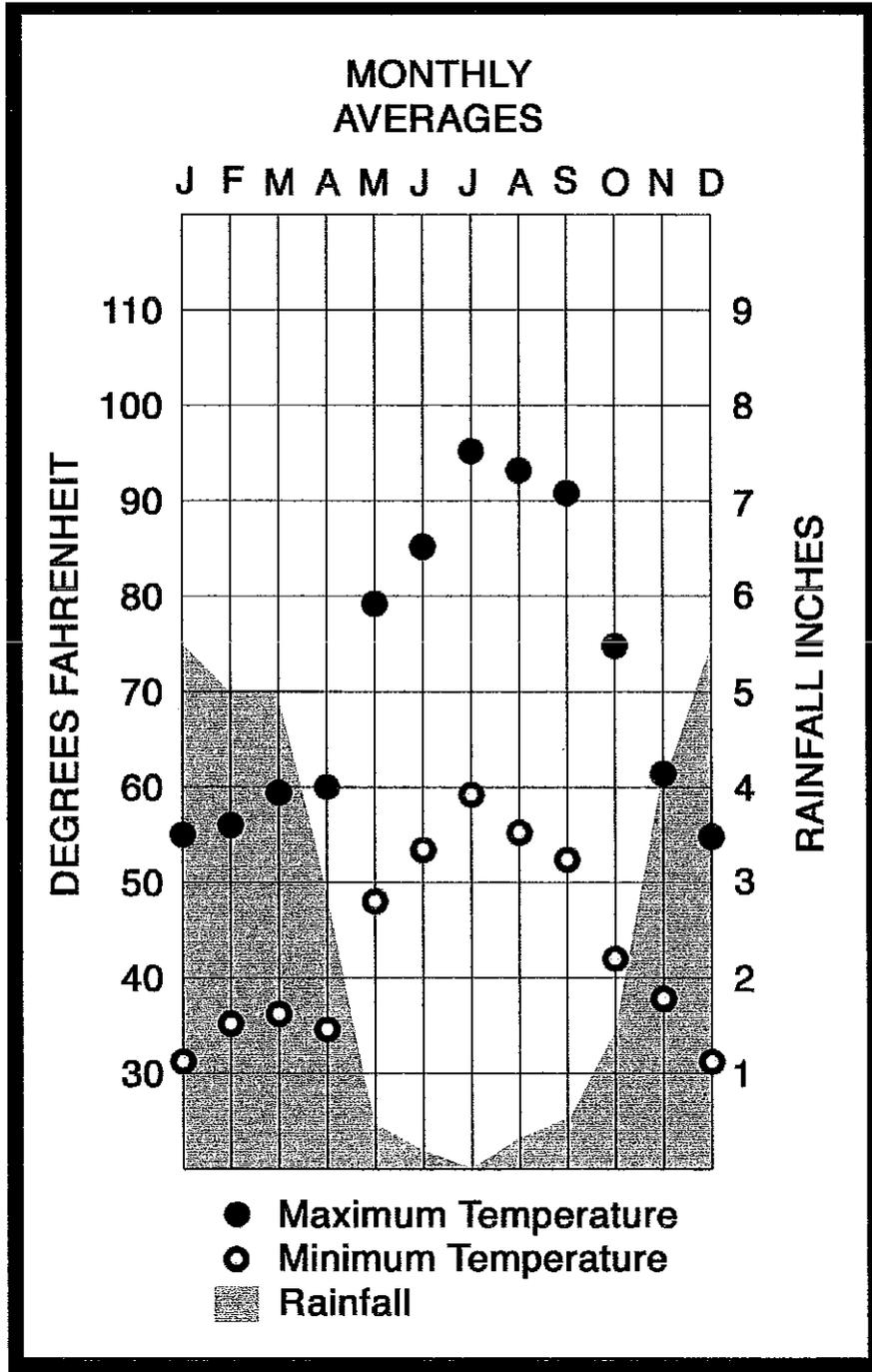
GEOLOGY

Railtown 1897 State Historic Park is located in Jamestown, approximately 4 miles southwest of Sonora, the county seat of Tuolumne County, and 8 miles south of Columbia State Historic Park. Highway 108 is an undivided road for much of its length and the main route of access to Jamestown. At an elevation of 1475 feet the park (excluding track and right-of-way) is roughly 26 acres in size and includes the surviving structures of the Sierra Railways maintenance yard. Its setting is the western foothills of the south central Sierra Nevada mountain range. While Railtown and the community of Jamestown are situated on relatively flat terrain, the surrounding terrain is dominated by 300 to 600 foot moderately steep hills. The park is located in the center of a modest community and bordered on three sides by residential housing. Other than a small area located in the southeast corner of the park, intense industrial modification and contamination with imported materials leaves little visual evidence of the original geologic state of the area the park now occupies.

CLIMATE

The climate at Jamestown is typical of interior California and can be divided into two seasons. Between May and October is a hot dry season of daytime temperatures averaging 85 degrees and nighttime temperatures averaging 65 degrees. Summer storms occur occasionally with some localized heavy rain showers. Between November and April the weather is wet and cool with daytime temperatures averaging 45 degrees and nighttime temperatures averaging 35 degrees. Precipitation averages 39 inches annually and occurs mostly in the form of rain during the winter season. Railtown is below the Sierra snow line so snow depth rarely reaches more than 4 inches.

Railtown 1897 State Historic Park Climate Chart



BIOLOGICAL FEATURES

ANIMALS

Most large mammals that once inhabited the area have migrated to more remote areas. No rare or endangered wildlife is known to inhabit the area. The animal life is limited to the urbanized habitats the park affords so visitors observances of wildlife is limited primarily to squirrel, birds and lizards.

PLANTS

Local plant communities are part of a foothill-woodland plant association. They include isolated pockets of ponderosa pine and chaparral among a mixed oak and conifer grassland. The most common native species are bull pine, interior live oak and black oak, with scattered specimens of ponderosa pine to be found on north facing slopes. Shrub species include manzanita, coffeeberry, toyon, and deerbrush. Exotic grasses have largely replaced natives, but despite the decades of grazing that have modified the grassland setting, native wildflowers still abound in the spring. These include lupine and California poppy. No rare or endangered plant species have been found within the present unit boundaries.

The construction of the facilities required a dramatic alteration of the native vegetation of the We area: pine and oak trees as well as shrubs were removed. The urban/industrial nature of the shops/offices/hotel complex that composed the unit suppressed natural revegetation. Although a small number of oak and pine trees have re-established themselves, the majority of vegetation that currently inhabits the unit is non-native and serves as functional landscaping. Examples of this are: Fruitless Mulberry (*Morus alba*) trees used as sources of shade for one of the parking areas, non-native turf type grass maintained as a large picnic/activity area on the north side of the roundhouse complex, and Wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*) used for shade and esthetics near the passenger depot.

HISTORIC FEATURES

The facilities and equipment that make up Railtown 1897 are a fine example of one of North America's last operating steam era railroad facilities, one of only two or three such facilities remaining intact and original in North America. Representative of industrial construction of the period, most of the structures consist of corrugated iron roof and siding applied over wood framing. Most of Railtown's buildings were built between 1897 and 1922, with the freight warehouse and carpenter shop dating to the earliest years of the facilities existence. As Railtown is a functional steam era shop complex, the shops contain an impressive collection of functional machinery and tools necessary to fulfill these duties. As is the case with most industrial facilities, supplies, scrap, works in progress and parts are located in the shops and track areas adding to the park's industrial ambiance.

The collection of locomotives and rolling stock is an eclectic mix of original Sierra Railway equipment and later acquisitions from a variety of sources. At different locations within the park, visitors can observe engines and cars in various states of restoration, repair or in need of repair. All of the railroad track within the park is functional, more than half of it being located in areas restricted from public access yet still quite visible to visitors.

The Freight Depot is the oldest building at Railtown and is used as: the loading and unloading point for the train rides, initial visitor contact/orientation, sales, and administrative office space.

RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

Railtown 1897 is a historic park and recreation facilities are at a minimum. There is a large, grass covered open area designated for picnic use. This area is also used for various activities during special or seasonal events hosted by the park. An asphalt paved walkway accesses the locations that are interpreted on the docent guided and self guided interpretive walking tours.

INTERPRETIVE CONSIDERATIONS

ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES

On their trip to Railtown 1897, visitors travel along well maintained roadways through the picturesque rolling foothills of the western Sierra Nevada. Most visitors reach the park by traveling east from the Stockton/Modesto area via Highway 108. This is the most direct route for travelers coming from the Central Valley and Bay Area. Visitors who have traveled along Highway 49 to reach the park have passed through towns whose Gold Rush period origins are obvious and preserved by homeowners and shopkeepers.

Railtown 1897 is located within the small town of Jamestown. Visitors follow signage off Highway 108 and either travel down Jamestown's main street, which is lined with period commercial retail shops, or down a residential street. Both routes lead to the park. The park itself is surrounded by single level residential structures on two sides, an athletic park complex fronts the rear side, and open land borders a large restricted access area of the park.

While both wooden and cyclone fences run the perimeter of the park, the public can easily enter the park through several pass-through points, walking along the railroad track where it enters and leaves the park or by simply jumping the chest-high cyclone fence.

There are two main visitor parking areas, one located east of and adjacent to the passenger depot and the other bordering the tracks where visitors board the Park's excursion trains. With no single entry point into the park, orientation, visitor monitoring, fee collection, site security or even the opportunity for public contact is not guaranteed every visitor.

When built over a century ago, this facility was designed to accommodate and facilitate easy access to a train and discourage access to the shop complex. Unfortunately this design concept still works very well today. Visitors who come to ride the train do not have to enter the park proper; instead they can park their vehicle, purchase a ticket in the Depot Store and wait on the platform for the train. After the ride they may exit the train and return to their vehicles all without ever entering or experiencing the other 90% of the park.

Once inside the park, the surrounding neighborhood doesn't impact negatively on the visual or aural experience of the visitor. The area accessible and interpreted to visitors is relatively small, made up of a roundhouse, series of shop buildings and a freight depot. The length of a visitors stay is based more on their interest in the subject matter than the length of time it takes to get to different parts of the park.

For the visitors the message is clear that the Roundhouse, shops and yard are a functioning industrial complex. Locomotives and rolling stock are in various states of repair, when staff and volunteers are not actually working on an object, their tools and supplies are left on-site and it often appears they are simply on break and will return momentarily. Much like any industrial site, mysterious and often large mechanical objects and supplies are scattered around the shop building complex in an informal manner. The sounds and smells associated with trains and machinery offer some interesting interpretive possibilities.

VISITORS AND THEIR NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

The vast majority of visitors to Railtown 1897 come to ride the Sierra Railway excursion trains. The trains operate weekends April through October in addition to holidays, seasonal and special event rides. Visitors are drawn by the historic nature of the equipment and many are quite informed regarding the history and technology of train travel. Because the train ride is so often the primary reason for a visit, many visitors are surprised to discover there is more to the facility than the ride.

To the local population the large shaded, grass covered area of the park is a meeting place for family picnics, special community events and holiday celebrations. School sponsored field trips often lunch in this area.

The Freight Depot is home to a book and gift store, restrooms and a small interpretive display area. The gifts are railroad themed with attention paid to items for youngsters and those interested in motion picture history. The books deal with general and local railroading history and represent a good source of information for both the casual shopper and academic researcher.

EXISTING INTERPRETIVE MEDIA

The Freight Depot: The freight house is the northernmost of a series of rooms that make up the Depot building. It functions as a visitor orientation center and is the initial point of interpretation for the park. By pushing a button located on a wall, visitors can activate a slide program that has been transferred to videotape and appears on a TV monitor recessed into the wall. Interpretive text panels and copies of historic photos are mounted on walls. Two glass cases house artifacts on a rotating basis. A wooden bench is available for seating approximately 8 people and a period scale for weighing freight is located in the center of the room but no interpretation regarding its history or function is presented.

Sierra Railway: Visually the train is impressive as it approaches and leaves the depot. One or more docents are stationed in each train car to offer information and answer passenger's questions as well as passenger safety. Interpretive training and interpretive content are not standardized so the interpretive experience can vary greatly from car to car and ride to ride. Along with the standard train ride, many seasonal and special event train rides are offered throughout the year.

Guided Tour: In the Freight Depot visitors can purchase a guided tour of the park led by a docent. Knowledge of visitation trends determines the staffing level for the guided tours. Each tour lasts approximately 45 minutes. On weekends, tours begin at 10 minutes past the hour and must conclude in time for visitors to make the next train (on the hour). Schools and special groups can schedule a guided tour.

Self Guided Tour: Visitors can obtain a tri-fold brochure at the Freight Depot. The self-guided tour offers a brief description of 23 buildings and 10 pieces of equipment (locomotives, cars, vehicles) scattered throughout the park that can be visited in random order. The brochure also offers a brief 2 paragraph history of the park.

Movie History: A building adjacent to the machine shop has been converted into an exhibit area that interprets the Sierra Railway's long and significant role in Hollywood's motion picture and television industries. There are several interpretive panels, enlarged stills from motion pictures, movie advertising posters and special effect artifacts from various motion pictures.

Interpretive Signage: Brief and visually unappealing interpretive signs and/or panels appear throughout the park. A visitor relying solely on these would gain very little understanding of the park, its history and its contents.

INTERPRETIVE PERIOD

The interpretive period for Railtown 1897 is the period from the creation and incorporation of the Sierra Railway in 1897 until 1955 when it converted from steam to diesel-electric locomotives. Most of the structures in the park were built between 1897 and 1928 when the last major additions and improvements were made.

An additional interpretive period would cover the Hollywood years from the early 1920's to present. Over the years more than 250 motion pictures, television productions and commercials have been made using its historic steam locomotives, cars and facilities.

INTERPRETIVE THEMES

UNIFYING THEME

Railtown 1897 State Historic Park preserves and presents a hard-working piece of California history.

PRIMARY THEME

The introduction of steam power unlocked the vast resources of the Sierra Nevada and linked small mountain communities to the state and the nation.

SECONDARY THEMES

-Industries such as hard rock mining, logging and the harnessing of

Sierra streams for irrigation and electricity relied on the muscle of the Sierra Railroad.

-Often hauling both passengers and freight over challenging terrain, short line railroads provided the first reliable transportation system on the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada.

-The Sierra RR survived by adapting to the needs of a rapidly changing California.

PRIMARY THEME

For more than a century, the railroad has been central to life of this community: getting local products to market, bringing necessities, delicacies and tourist trade up from the valley and providing employment and passenger service to the area.

SECONDARY THEMES

-The short line Sierra Railway had its own Big 4: Prince Poniatowski and William Crocker, S. D. Freshman, and T.S. Bullock.

-Sierra engineer and surveyor, William H. Newell, made a career of building track through tough terrain.

-When more efficient diesel technology was sweeping the U.S. railroad industry, Jamestown's master mechanic, Bill Tremewan just said no.

PRIMARY THEME

Complete steam era maintenance and repair shops survive intact at the Jamestown yards, as in only one or two places in North America. The yard and shops were self-contained world, where almost any work need could be carried out on-site.

SECONDARY THEMES

-The roundhouse served as a busy nerve center, with the master mechanic in charge, directing activity over the whole network.

-Rugged Sierra topography demanded both power and agility from a fleet of rolling stock.

PROPOSED INTERPRETATION

VISITOR ACTIVITIES

A variety of personalized and self guided services are appropriate at this historic park and should be offered on a formal and informal basis.

-Docent and staff-led guided walks and tours.

Based on an analysis of visitor interests and needs, a variety of general and specific tours should be created, such as walks that cover grade appropriate material for school groups or technical tours for railroad and mechanical enthusiasts.

-Docent talks onboard the train rides.

Docents are stationed on board each train car during a train ride and provide interpretive commentary and safety information. This is an excellent opportunity for the docent to respond to the specific interpretive needs and interests of the visitors. A standardized information reference document should be compiled to serve as a definitive source of information for docents to utilize during presentations

-Self Guided interpretive opportunities.

Make available at the bookstore an updated self guided tour brochure. The brochure will introduce visitors to various interpretive themes, and suggest avenues for further investigation. Included will be a map of the park identifying and briefly describing various structures and objects as well as identifying the sections of park that are not accessible to visitors. The brochure will allow visitors to explore the park in no particular sequence and at their own pace. Additional brochures that appeal to visitors interested in a more technically oriented self guided tour could be developed in the future.

-Audio Tour.

An audio self guided tour would allow visitors the opportunity to visit the same locations identified on the self guided and guided tours, but the information will be available on a portable self-contained audio playback unit that the visitor obtains from the bookstore. Future audio tours may offer visitors more in-depth, technical or interpretively varied information. Based on analysis of gathered visitation data the tour could be offered in languages other than English to accommodate visitor needs.

-Interpretive panels.

Using color schemes and similar materials, visually non-intrusive interpretive panels should be located near permanent structures and sites throughout the park. While appearing permanently installed, these panels should be easily removable to accommodate filming, photography or special event needs. Additional portable panels should accompany all wheeled or tracked objects (locomotives, cars, vehicles) that often change their location in the park.

PRIMARY THEME

The Sierra Railway and Jamestown shops have enjoyed a mutually profitable symbiotic relationship with the motion picture and television industry since 1919.

SECONDARY THEMES

-The "Movie Star" locomotive of the Jamestown yards, Sierra #3, is now the most recognized locomotive in the United States, perhaps the world. It is an international symbol of the American West, and a beloved character of the motion picture western.

-The motion picture industry provided the Sierra Railway with much needed income throughout the years.

-Income from film and television projects provided incentive and funds to maintain the facility and equipment.

-Observation opportunities.

There are several operations associated with railroading that offer visitors a unique opportunity at a "behind the scenes" experience. Pre-arranged operations such as preparing and "putting to bed" a steam engine can be scheduled for visitors to observe, or activities that occur at random times such as operating the turntable can be announced shortly before they occur. In either case, the persons performing the operation or having a docent on hand to describe the procedure would greatly enhance the interpretive experience.

-Hands-on opportunities.

The world of railroading is populated with many mysterious, odd-sized and unique pieces of equipment. Add to this a visitor's desire to touch an object to help them better understand it, and the need for hands-on opportunities in the park is clear. Each trade should have representative or unique objects available for visitors to safely touch or handle. Examples: Install an operating track switch for visitors to operate; each shop should have tools available for visitors to handle, supervised operation of a hand-car.

-Orientation/interpretation area.

The space at the north end of the Freight House will be designated as a visitor orientation and interpretation area. Interpretive panels, maps, display cases, images and an audiovisual presentation will tell the story of Railtown. The display cases will be available as a rotating exhibit space to accommodate future exhibits. The audio visual program will be presented on a video monitor. Initially, the program will play from a DVD player and be viewed on a large (32 inch or larger) flat panel display. Equipment will be updated as technology and budget allow. The program will be activated by the visitor manually or by motion sensor. A short (5 minute or less) video program dealing with the primary interpretive theme will be the first program produced. Additional programs covering secondary interpretive themes will be produced as time and budget allow.

-Working on the Railroad.

Signage or personal contact would inform visitors when any restoration or maintenance projects relating to the engines, cars or track is being performed in a location where it can be safely observed. The nature of the task would dictate whether the staff involved in the procedure could offer any interpretation; even if the staff were not able to communicate verbally with the visitor, the visitor would still benefit from the opportunity of observing unique activities.

-Rail Yard Interpretive walk.

Signage identifies the rail yard located to the south of the turntable as closed to visitors. But this area is home to an almost irresistible source of historic material of interest to the casual as well as avid rail fan, so many visitors disregard the signage and enter the area regardless. A well marked, paved path with accompanying interpretive signage would serve both the visitor's need for discovery and the park's need for visitor safety.

-School visitation days.

Upgrade / develop grade specific educational opportunities. Produce a teacher's guide that includes pre-visit orientation information and suggested lesson plans.

-Carriage Room.

This large space located at the south end of the Freight Depot is often used for public activities. The interior walls could function as an interpretive gallery displaying: historic photos, movie stills or graphic material. The space could also function as a gallery for special showings by relevant local artists or school groups.

INTERPRETIVE FACILITIES MATRIX

FEATURE	INTERPRETIVE THEMES					INTERPRETIVE OPPORTUNITY					
	Movie RR	RR nerve center	Unlocking natural resources	Importance to community	Self-contained world	Self-guided tour stop	Guided tour stop	audio-visual	Observation opportunity	Hands-on	Interpretive panel
Freight Depot	●			●		●	●	●	●		●
Roundhouse	●				●	●	●	●	●		●
Turntable						●	●		●		●
Machine Shop					●	●	●		●	●	●
Carpenter Shop					●	●					●
Blacksmith Shop					●	●			●	●	●
Sand House											
Water Tank											
Materials Shed					●						
Fuel Oil Reservoir											
Lumber Shed	●	●									
Oil Storage Room											
Gas Vehicle Shop			●		●	●	●		●		●
Car Repair Shop and Shed					●	●	●	●			●
Track Automobile House			●		●	●	●		●	●	●
Oil Storage Tank, Pump/Heater House											
Storehouse & Lumber Shed	●				●						
Water and Fuel Oil Standpipes											
Site of Sierra Railway Office and Depot Building		●		●							●

INTERPRETIVE COLLECTIONS

The facilities of Railtown 1897 make up an authentic, fully equipped, operating shop developed to satisfy the various requirements of a steam powered short line railroad. The roundhouse and shops are remarkably complete in their inventory of equipment, material and tools. These original tools, equipment and processes are still in use today offering visitors a valuable interpretive opportunity to observe one of only two or three existing facilities of its kind in its original condition in the United States.

ARTIFACTS

A complete inventory of artifacts does not exist, this makes it difficult to recommend future acquisitions, prioritize conservation efforts or identify any collection shortcomings. A full-time Collections Manager position is needed at the unit with a complete inventory being their first goal. Maintenance of the locomotives and cars involved with the excursion trains is an ongoing process. There are interpretively valuable pieces of rolling stock not used by the excursion trains that have succumbed to time and the elements, and efforts should be taken to eliminate or at least minimize further deterioration.

HISTORIC STRUCTURES AND SITES:

The strength of Railtown is the Railtown facility itself. Emphasis should be on documenting and restoring (not just stabilizing) the structures. A prime example is the Blacksmith Shop, where the interior "temporary" framework blocks the use of historic facilities, and has actually been used to mount part of the fire suppression

(See Facilities Map)

1. Sierra Railway. General Offices, Passenger Depot and Freight Office Site: First General Office structure was a two story wood frame structure built in 1898 with architectural embellishments in a Japanese style (used on several Sierra Railway structures, including the adjacent Hotel Nevills) and expanded in succeeding years. It was destroyed by a fire in 1913 and replaced quickly with a second two story wood frame structure of a plain vernacular style. Passenger Depot facilities added in 1915 after the Hotel Nevills burned. The 1913 structure burned in 1978. A 2 story brick vault was torn down and the site was then occupied by two cabooses serving as ticket office and general office for Railtown concessionaire cabooses removed about 1996. Plans underway to eventually build a historically accurate reconstruction of one of the two original structures.

2. Hotel Nevills Passenger Train Platform and Site: The Hotel Nevills, a grand multistory structure built by the promoters of the Sierra Railway, was completed in 1898 and included the Passenger Depot and Wells Fargo Express Office for the railway company. The hotel burned to the ground in 1915. The hotel structure site itself is presently partly private property. The location of the passenger loading platform for the hotel, a concrete portion of which still remains, is on State of California property.

3. Freight House, Ice House Site and Platform: Wood frame structure originally built in 1897, expanded and modified periodically through the 1980s. In general character and form, it has changed little since it was first built, the additions and modifications being generally in-kind. The ice house addition, built ca. 1899 probably in a portion of the existing structure, and a small portion of the freight house were burned in the 1978 passenger depot fire. Plans are underway to reconstruct this portion as it was before the fire.

4. Radio Shack site: Wood frame construction, built ca. 1956.

5. Roundhouse and Gasoline Vehicle Shop: Wood frame structure sheathed with corrugated metal, built in 1910 replacing an earlier structure burned in that year. Originally had four (4) engine stalls. Two (2) engine stalls and a two (2) stall gasoline vehicle shop (for track autos, motorcars, and later highway trucks and buses) with oil storage room all of similar construction added in 1922. A truck shop and gas house were added in 1928. The roundhouse is where steam locomotives are maintained, serviced and stored. Includes a drop pit, and tools necessary for work. There is also an outside concrete engine pit, built in 1910, on one lead from the turntable.

6. Turntable: Steel plate girder, air operated 65 foot turntable acquired second hand from the Great Northern Ry. and installed in 1922, replacing an earlier wood frame 56 foot structure of ca. 1897. Concrete pit and base.

7. Machine Shop, former original Engine house: (Note: a roundhouse is a type of engine house built in a crescent. The original engine house/machine shop is rectangular.) Wood frame structure sheathed with corrugated metal. The machine shop was the original engine house, built ca. 1897. It was converted to a machine shop ca. 1900 when a detached four (4) stall roundhouse was built (burned in 1910 and replaced, see above). The replacement roundhouse of 1910 was built attached to the machine shop. Dormer windows added sometime after 1916, possibly in 1922. The shop is equipped with original overhead belt drive tools in operable condition, originally powered by a Pelton water wheel (with backup steam engine), and replaced with present electric motor system in 1912.

8. Blacksmith and Tin Shop: Wood frame structure, built ca. 1899. Stabilized in the 1980s by State Parks. Interior contains some large tools but many tools and pieces of equipment moved to the roundhouse for use when the building was threatening to collapse. The building was used as an interpretive blacksmith shop in the 1970's. Interior could be restored to its original function.

9. Tube Rack Site: Wood construction, open-sided with corrugated metal roof, built ca. 1906. Collapsed in 1986, documented and removed in 1990. Candidate for accurate reconstruction. Used to store metal boiler tubes, pipes, rods and other material.

10. Materials Shed: Wood construction, built ca. 1906. A small storage building for supplies, except for a number of historic coach seats, it is largely empty.

11. Car Repair Sheds and Shop: Wood frame structure with corrugated metal roofing built 1906. Includes a fully enclosed shop and roofed open-sided sheds. Presently Sierra Coach-caboose #9, old coach seats, other parts stored inside shop. Cars stored in sheds.

12. Tri-Dam Building: Modern prefabricated metal building built ca. late 1950s in conjunction with the Tri-Dam Project on the Stanislaus River. Has been expanded in kind and converted into a modern shop space with offices by State Parks.

13. Employee Restroom: Concrete construction, built 1927, with septic system. No longer in use.

14. Storehouse and Lumber Shed: Wood frame structure built in 1904. Half of the lumber shed is home to a recently created sizable walk-thru exhibit interpreting Railtown's role in the production of numerous motion pictures and television programs. The storehouse contains master mechanic's office (largely stripped), warehouse of locomotive and car parts, master carbuilder's office (largely stripped), and former joiner and pattern maker's shop (now used for storage).

15. Track Automobile House: Wood frame structure built in 1910 (sometimes confused in written records with a motorcar or handcar house built in 1912 and now gone). Built to house the railway's track autos (different than motorcars) Presently used to store track working equipment such as motorcars. Reconstructed by Parks in 2003-04.

16. Stiff Leg Derrick. 10 ton Buell hand operated stiff leg, wood beam construction, built in 1907. Used for lifting heavy loads, including loading and unloading railroad cars and lifting locomotive parts. Structure removed ca. 1950s, but pivot for derrick remains in the ground adjacent to the track by the turntable.

17. Rock Crusher Site: Wood frame structure sheathed with corrugated metal, with a Blackjack hopper car body feeding a rock crusher, built ca. 1956. Machinery removed in late 1950s?, building removed ca. 1980. Only concrete footings and the hopper car body remain.

18. Coach House Site: Also referred to as Car Shed. Wood frame construction built in 1906. Provided protective storage for passenger cars. It is a candidate for a historic reconstruction, and would provide needed covered storage for cars in the collection. The site was later occupied by two (2) box car bodies placed on ground ca. 1950s. One was former Sierra Ry. box car #324. Only the sides, roof and one end remained, as it was converted to a speeder (motorcar) shed, entrance through an end and tracks on bare ground. Demolished in 2001. The other body is believed to be former Sierra Ry. box car #322. It is fairly complete and structurally intact, and could probably be placed back on trucks. It was removed from the Coach House site in 2001 and preserved.

19. Section Foreman House and Detached Garage: Wood frame structures. Section foreman house built in 1906, garage built unknown date (1930s?). Disused for some years, the section house has been rehabilitated for occupancy by the State Parks, and is presently in use.

20. Transformer House: Wood frame sheathed with corrugated metal, concrete foundations, built in 1912. Served the early electrification of the Sierra Railway shops. Transformers and other machinery long removed.

21. Oil Storage Tank, and Pump and Heater House: Metal, roofed circular tank; wood frame pump and heater house sheathed with corrugated metal. Built ca. early 1920s? Probably retired ca. 1960s. No longer in use.

22. Water and Fuel Oil Standpipes: Believed to be the second location for Sierra Railway water and fuel oil facilities in Jamestown. Installed ca. early 1920s?, perhaps as early as 1911 Water standpipe is operable, supplied by water district ditch water. Returned to service in 1970s, but use subsequently discontinued. Supply pipe replaced and greatly reduced in size in early 1980s, making it ineffective for filling tenders. Oil standpipe not connected to any serviceable oil supply, formerly used above ground oil storage facility.

23. Water Tank: Located next to site of (believed) original Sierra Railway water tank, which was probably used until installation of above water standpipe (item 22) in the early 1920s. The present tank foundation was built in 1938 (per 2 dates in the concrete). Tank was a recent (1970s) addition replacing an earlier (1938?) tank on the platform. Platform was built in early 1980s replacing an earlier (1938?) platform on the original foundations. Platform (1980s) and tank (1970s) were both replaced on original foundations in 2002. Current tank has a roof styled after the one that existed on the pre-1920s tank. This is the current water supply for the operating steam locomotives, and generally typical of smaller railroad water facilities.

24. Fuel Oil Reservoir: Large rectangular steel oil storage tank built on raised wood trestlework, originally with wood framed roof, built in 1904. Originally supplied by a long gravity-feed pipe from tank cars on a spur on the other side of the mainline. In 1912 an elevated trestle was built so tank cars could empty directly into the storage tank. This facility was replaced by above (item 21) facility (in early 1920s?). It was burned by a brush fire in the early 1970s, destroying the roof but leaving the tank and its supports largely intact.

25. Sand House: Wood frame structure originally sheathed with corrugated iron on the site of the original fuel oil boiler (heater) house that was built in 1904. The present structure is perhaps a reuse of the original boiler house. As a sand house, it replaced an earlier structure on a nearby site. It has not been used as a sand house for some time, perhaps since the diesel locomotives arrived in 1955. In more recent years it has been used as a movie prop, redecorated as a small station. It was restored or reconstructed with wood siding in 1986 by State Parks.

26. Carpenter Shop: Attached to the rear of the machine shop, open to the air but under a shed roof, is the carpenter shop. The shop is equipped with original overhead belt drive tools in operable condition, originally powered by a Pelton water wheel (with backup steam engine), and replaced with present electric motor system in 1912.

RECOMMENDATIONS

INTERPRETIVE PRIORITIES

STAFF

-A full-time Collections Manager is needed at the unit with a complete artifact inventory being their first goal.

VISITOR ACTIVITIES

-Formalize and standardize docent training. Establish a program of ongoing training classes for docents that cover subjects such as: improving interpretive techniques, interpretive theory, and creating interpretive presentations. Establish a standardized training program for all incoming docent candidates.

-Upgrade self guided interpretive walk brochure.

-Increase visitor observation opportunities by scheduling and/or advertising events or operations that take place during the day. (Examples: "putting an engine to bed" at the end of a day of operation, restoration work on engines, MOW operations.)

FACILITIES

-Upgrade interpretive signage in park. Install semi-permanent interpretive panels that address sites and structures and easily movable signage that accompanies locomotives and rolling stock in the event of change of location.

-Design "Hand's on" exhibits of tools and material for each shop discipline.

-Redesign current Waiting Room area of Passenger Depot to serve as major orientation and interpretation area. Produce new interpretive signage, graphics and exhibits.

-Upgrade "Movie Railroad" exhibit.

-Create rail yard interpretive walk. Install paved pathway with accompanying interpretive signage through the yard area that is currently off limits to visitors.

-Perform image search, reproduce and mount graphics and accompanying text on interior walls of Carriage Room.

FUTURE ACQUISITIONS

EQUIPMENT

Any future acquisition of equipment should be guided by relevance to the parks established interpretive themes. The following list offers examples of thematic sources for future equipment acquisition. The list is not compiled in any order of collection need or interpretive importance.

- Railroad Companies emphasis on California and the West
- Railtown Specific
- Tuolumne County and Sierra Regional Short Line Railroads
- Sierra Railway/Railroad
- Hetch Hetchy RR
- Yosemite Short Line
- Perhaps other Sierra regional short lines ⊕ Amador Central, Yosemite Valley, etc.
- Tuolumne County and Sierra Regional Industrial Railroads
- Pickering Lumber/Standard Lumber including Sugar Pine Railway; Empire City Ry.
- West Side Lumber
- Atlas-Olympia Rock
- Sierra & San Francisco Power Company dam construction railroads
- Perhaps other Sierra regional logging lines ⊕ Yosemite Lumber, etc.

PROPERTY

1. Property Acquisition Proposal

Proposal Name: 18115 - 5th Ave. property

Location Relative to SPS Unit: Contiguous

Description of Proposal:

It is proposed that DPR purchase this parcel for addition to Railtown 1897 SHP. Acquisition of the property and removal of the structure will greatly enhance the public entrance to Railtown 1897 SHP, as well as eliminating a public safety concern and augmenting parking.

Physical Description of Property:

The parcel was historically a part of the Sierra Railway property, occupied by a part of the historic Hotel Nevills. The property was sold by the railroad sometime subsequent to the burning of the hotel in 1915. The present wood and metal building appears to have been constructed sometime in the last 40 or so years.

Cultural Heritage Values: Rating: Medium

Present use and structure has low cultural heritage value. Parcel was originally part of the historic Sierra Railway (now Railtown 1897 SHP) property, and was part of the site of the large Hotel Nevills, an important local landmark owned by the railroad. The Jamestown complex which included the Hotel Nevills was the headquarters of the Sierra Railway, and some railroad officials had permanent rooms in the hotel. The hotel itself was built in 1898 the year after the Sierra Railway reached Jamestown. It burned to the ground in 1915.

Recreation Values: Rating: Medium

The property is presently used for heavy equipment repair. It is located right in front of the main

entrance to Railtown 1897 SHP. Access to the facility is over State Park property via a road customarily used as a public street. A parking and work area used by the facility is actually on State Park property. Acquisition of the property by State Parks and the removal of the maintenance facility would greatly enhance the public appearance at the entrance to Railtown 1897 SHP. It would also eliminate a potential public hazard caused by maintenance work being carried on in an area easily accessible to part visitors. Finally, the property could enhance parking facilities at the entrance to the park, perhaps providing suitable bus parking.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that DPR acquire this property for addition to Railtown 1897 SHP. The property is historically associated with the Railtown property. Acquisition would remove an eyesore from the entrance area of the park, and would eliminate a potential public safety hazard. The property would improve park facilities for handling tour bus traffic. It is proposed that this would be the first of four acquisition of the four small contiguous parcels that originally constituted the Hotel Nevills site, historically associated with the Sierra Railway and the Railtown 1897 site. The additional three parcels, presently occupied by mobile homes, would be acquired in the future as opportunity presents itself. Completion of this larger acquisition would allow the park to realign the one block entrance road serving the park to improve access and provide more separation for visitors from the flow of traffic. Acquisition of the present parcel is the most important, bringing many advantages of its own to the park, as described in the above document, beyond those described in this paragraph for the four parcel acquisition.

2. Property Acquisition Proposal

Proposal Name: Other - 5th Ave. property and adjoining 6th Ave. property

Location Relative to SPS Unit: Contiguous

Description of Proposal:

It is proposed that DPR purchase these parcels for addition to Railtown 1897 SHP. Acquisition of the property and removal of the structures will greatly enhance the public entrance to Railtown 1897 SHP, as well as eliminating a public safety concern and augmenting public access and parking. It will also reunite a key piece of the original Sierra Railway (Railtown 1897) complex with the present park, including the site of the historically significant Hotel Nevills.

Physical Description of Property:

The parcels were historically a part of the Sierra Railway complex, occupied by the historic Hotel Nevills. The parcels were owned by the Jamestown Improvement Company, a related company owned by the Sierra Railway interests. The properties were sold by the railroad sometime subsequent to the burning of the hotel in 1915. The present mobile homes on 5th Ave. appear to have been constructed sometime in the last 40 or so years; the houses on 6th Ave. 10 to 20 years before that.

Cultural Heritage Values: Rating: Medium

Present use and structures, of relatively recent construction, have low cultural heritage value. Parcels were originally part of the historic Sierra Railway (now Railtown 1897 SHP) complex, and were part of the site of the large Hotel Nevills, an important local landmark owned by the railroad interests. The Jamestown complex, including the Hotel Nevills, was the headquarters of the Sierra Railway. The railroad's passenger depot and Wells Fargo's express office were located in the Nevills, and some railroad officials had permanent residence in the hotel. The hotel itself was built in 1898, the year after the Sierra Railway reached Jamestown. It burned to the ground in 1915. Acquisition of the property would also open the possibility of reconstructing the historic Hotel Nevills at a future date, an outstanding asset to the integrity of the Sierra Railway shop and headquarters complex.

Recreation Values: Rating: Medium

The properties are presently used for residences. They are located in front of the main entrance

of Railtown 1897 SHP. Access to the 5th Ave. residences is over State Park property via a road customarily used as a public street. Acquisition of the properties by State Parks and the removal of the homes would greatly enhance the public appearance at the entrance to Railtown 1897 SHP. It would also enhance access to the Park and provide improved parking facilities at the entrance to the park, including providing suitable bus parking. The entrance street alignment could also be altered to improve access and traffic flow._

Recommendation:

It is recommended that DPR acquire these properties for addition to Railtown 1897 SHP. The properties historically had a significant association with the Railtown 1897 SHP property. Acquisition would improve park access and provide facilities for handling tour bus traffic. It is proposed that this would be part of the acquisition of all of the small contiguous parcels that originally constituted the Hotel Nevills site, historically associated with the Sierra Railway and the Railtown 1897 site. The additional parcel (covered in a separate Property Acquisition Proposal), is presently occupied by heavy equipment maintenance facility. Completion of this larger acquisition would allow the park to realign the one block entrance road serving the park to improve access and provide more separation for visitors from the flow of traffic.

3. Property Acquisition Proposal

Proposal Name: Sierra Railway Roadmaster's House

Location Relative to SPS Unit: Contiguous

Description of Proposal:

It is proposed that DPR purchase these parcels for addition to Railtown 1897 SHP. Acquisition of the property will reunite a key piece of the original Sierra Railway (Railtown 1897) complex with the present park, the former Roadmaster's House.

Physical Description of Property:

The parcels were historically a part of the Sierra Railway. The properties were sold by the railroad at an unknown date, probably in the 1930s or later.

Cultural Heritage Values: Rating: Medium

Present use and structure have medium cultural heritage value. Parcels were originally part of the historic Sierra Railway (now Railtown 1897 SHP) complex, and served as railroad provided housing for the roadmaster.

Recreation Values: Rating: Medium

The property is presently used as a residence, also its original use while owned by the railroad. It is located to the west across the street from Railtown 1897 SHP. Acquisition of the property by State Parks will add to the interpretive story being told at Railtown.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that DPR acquire these properties for addition to Railtown 1897 SHP. The properties historically had a significant association with the Railtown 1897 SHP property.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

California Department of Parks and Recreation.
Columbia State Historic Park General Development Plan. January 1979

California Department of Parks and Recreation.
The Sierra Railroad An Economic Analysis. May 1981

Davis, Kathleen E.
Railtown 1897 State Historic Park, Jamestown Railroad Shops Rehabilitation Project Historic Study Report and Historic Architectural Survey Report. California Department of Parks and Recreation, Sacramento, CA. 1998

Deane, Dorothy Newell
Sierra Railway. Howell-North, Berkeley, CA. 1960

Jensen, Larry and Kyle W. Wyatt
Sierra Railway Jamestown Depot Reconstruction Report. Jensen/Wyatt Company, Carson City, NV. 1991

Stammerjohan, George, Paul Nesbitt and John Kelly
Sierra Railtown Project Inventory of Features. California Department of Parks and Recreation, Sacramento, CA. 1983