

IRON HORSE QUARTERLY

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The Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad & W.E. "Bill" Mason Carousel

July 4th Celebration a Big Hit

Town of Los Gatos Celebrates America's Birthday in Oak Meadow Park

Peter G. Panacy
Chief Executive Officer

July 4, 2014 marked a significant moment in the Town of Los Gatos. For years, the town's annual July 4th celebration and gala was held in downtown Los Gatos, close to the civic center and near most of the local shops and attractions.

But a decision was made to shift this fun-filled Americana event to Oak Meadow Park, where partygoers could take advantage of the wide-open spaces, various attractions, wide open spaces and, of course, the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad.

There were a number of significant obstacles that needed to be overcome. While there was much more room to set up various food tents and vendors, parking would be a significant issue. Fortunately, the Town of Los Gatos arranged for a shuttle service, taking guests to and from Oak Meadow Park.

Crowds were larger than expected, partially due to July 4 falling on a Friday. Many persons were able to take advantage of the three-day weekend, kicking off their

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2-Spot's Repairs Nearly Complete

No. 2 steam locomotive almost ready to be back in service

Peter G. Panacy
Chief Executive Officer



BJWRR volunteers putting the finishing touches on the No. 2.

When the No. 2 went down for repair at the conclusion of the 2013 operating season, no one expected that it would take well over six months to complete a restoration job necessary to keeping the locomotive operating for years to come.

The 2-spot needed a reboring of its main steam cylinders—a task that had not been completed since before the railroad opened in Oak Meadow Park back in 1970. Work was outsourced to Hillcrest Shops in Reedley, California, and a group of railroad personnel shipped the No. 2 down to their facility earlier this year.

The arduous task of boring out the cylinders could only have been performed by a contractor with a horizontal boring machine—a tool the BJWRR does not possess. In addition, Hillcrest Shops was able to fabricate brand-new pistons and rings that would correctly fit into the rebored cylinders.

This process was not without delay. Ensuring the boring was lined up correctly was a tough task, even for the most skilled machinists. Fortunately, the work completed was in excess

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extended holiday with a trip to Oak Meadow.

The train and carousel ran as per usual, and riders enjoyed the thrill of riding behind BJWRR's newest steam locomotive—the No. 5. Traditional American bandstand music was heard on both the train and carousel, but that was not the only tunes park guests enjoyed. Also partaking in the July 4th celebration was the San Jose Wind Symphony as well as various other entertainment groups.

The event was also assisted by a number of local service clubs, including the Los Gatos Lions, Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs, as well as the Daughters of the American Revolution. The Los Gatos Community Foundation and Los Gatos Recreation Department also played significant roles.

Perhaps this wonderful event has found a new home in Oak Meadow Park. It was a great celebration and prompts many more of its kind in future years. ♠

Derailments Plague the Railroad

Old equipment begs new upgrades and changes

Peter G. Panacy
Chief Executive Officer

Like it or not, derailments on a railroad are bound to happen. It is not a matter of if, but when.

The BJWRR is no different. Unfortunately, a number of these derailments began occurring in alarming frequency towards the end of the 2014 spring schedule and at the start of summer.

The culprit of these derailments seemed to be one lone passenger car and, more specifically, just one side of this car. The derailments were handled quickly and efficiently by BJWRR staff on occurrence and given the nature of the railroad's operation and slow speeds, no one suffered any injury.

Still, derailments are not particularly enjoyable to our patrons, nor are they good for business. Derailments can often take two, or more, hours to address.

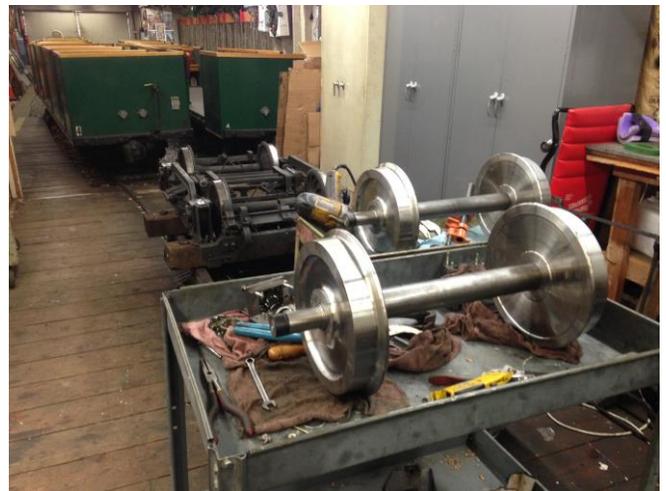
So why did these derailments take place for just one car in such a short timespan?

“There are a number of reasons,” noted Chief Engineer Bill Church. “Some of the passenger car trucks have wheels that have worn out. Kinks have developed on our tracks and other areas have been damaged by wear and tear. If you get

the right combination of speed, direction and weight [from passengers], a derailment can occur.”

Solving these derailments became the primary mission of the BJWRR's operations committee. One group set out to address any flaws in the mainline track, while another got to work on addressing the wheels on the railroad's passenger cars.

To solve the latter problem, BJWRR purchased brand-new wheels and axles from Merrick Light Railway Equipment Co.—the same manufacturer that had constructed the Nos. 5 and 3502. These new wheels were built to standard—replacing the old wheels that had, in some cases, been in service since Billy Jones' ranch days.



New wheel and axle sets ready for installment on the BJWRR passenger cars.

The combination of track repair and new wheels on passenger car No. 1 has proven successful. There has not been a single derailment since both tasks were undertaken.

The next step for the maintenance crew is the ongoing installation of new wheels and axles on the remaining passenger cars. This process will take a number of weeks—volunteers first must remove each individual car truck, remove the old wheel sets and their respective bearings, fit the bearings to the completed sets of wheels and axles and then reinstall the upgraded sets.

It is a time-consuming process, but one that shall benefit the railroad for many years.

Derailments are an unfortunate and inconvenient aspect behind running a railroad. Fortunately, there are plenty of measures that have been put into place. ♠

Call for Volunteers!

Without volunteer help, BJWRR would not exist

Peter G. Panacy
Chief Executive Officer

The BJWRR is a volunteer-based organization. Anyone who has spent a minimal amount of time here knows that.

Without volunteers, the railroad and caoursel would have faded into history years ago. Fortunately, due to the incredible efforts of countless do-gooders, this organization has been perpetuated long beyond anyone's wildest dreams.

This is all nice and dandy, but the reality is that without a continuous infusion of new volunteers and their talents, the railroad and carousel would be in danger of disappearing.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of this organization. From the board of directors to the engineers and maintenance crew, volunteers are who keep this place going. But like any volunteer organization, contributors come and go. It's the nature of many non-profits like ours. To stay afloat, new bodies are always needed.

This author had the recent luxury of speaking to some of the various service groups within the Town of Los Gatos—events hosted by the Los Gatos Youth Park. During this appearance, I gave attendees a rundown of where the BJWRR came from, who we were and where we are going. We have a mission statement, not unlike those of the various charitable clubs and organizations that take interest in bettering the surrounding community.

The biggest aspect of my appearance was to pitch the need for new volunteers. While the railroad is in constant need of skilled labor—machinists, fabricators, welders, woodworkers, etc.—persons with any skills are always in demand. Even people who can simply “spread the word” about what we do are considered assets to the organization.

Thus, I put out the same call to you—the reader. There are so many different aspects and pieces that make up the BJWRR and the growing nature of the organization requires more work and effort.

This is where your efforts can come in handy. Whatever your skills may be and whatever your skill levels are, the BJWRR needs you. Get involved, give back to the community and help us spread the work. It is what we do that makes us who we are. ♠

of the BJWRR's expectations and the No. 2 returned home just before the start of the 2014 summer season.

With the No. 2 back in Oak Meadow Park, work commenced on reassembling all the various components that make up the running gear and timing of the locomotive.

The new pistons—which had been outsourced by Hillcrest for completed assembly—arrived later. In the meantime, railroad volunteers began the time-consuming task of putting the rest of the 2-spot back together.

“It's a complicated task,” noted volunteer engineer CJ Vargas. “Parts have to go back in the correct order with careful attention paid to the locomotive's timing mechanisms. It's not like assembling a model.”

After countless hours of work, the No. 2 is close to being complete. All that remains are the final touches in putting the running gear and valve assemblies back in place. Once this is finished, the staff at BJWRR will perform a various number of tests to ensure that everything is back correctly.

But this is not the end of the story. Even after this is complete, the No. 2 will have to undergo a rigorous test from the California State Department of Occupational Safety and Health—one of the many regulatory agencies that ensure BJWRR's standards are up to par.

Fortunately, this is a routine task for the experienced personnel at the BJWRR. While it has taken a while, there is the proverbial “light at the end of the tunnel” and the No. 2 will be back in very short order. ♠



The No. 2's rebored cylinder with brand-new piston assembly inserted.

“Flapjacks and Railroad Tracks” Annual Breakfast

Summer schedule starts with pancakes



Kirk Lang helps prepare a delicious pancake meal for guests of the BJWRR.

Francesca Balistreri
Chief Operating Officer

It has become a tradition that summer at the railroad starts with a delicious stack of pancakes.

The BJWRR hosted its eighth-annual “Flapjacks and Railroad Tracks” pancake breakfast on June 14—kicking off the summer season. After that date, the train and carousel open daily for the duration of summer, and what better way to kick off the season with some flapjacks and railroad tracks?

The day started bright and early with local Boy Scouts setting up and serving. Three wonderful volunteers were paramount to making this event work—brothers Cliff and Kirk Lang on the grill and George Shannon with the preparatory work. It is their pancake expertise that makes this event as wonderful as it is.

Additionally, we got a special treat as BJWRR board president Doug Sporleder gave a helping hand for the busier portion of the breakfast. Overall, it is because of our wonderful volunteers and staff that we are able to host such events.

Flapjacks and Railroad Tracks is a great family event that stands for a wonderful cause. As a non-profit organization, the railroad does not receive public funding of any kind. With events like these, we are not only able to raise a few more dollars, but are also able to provide our patrons with a fun and inexpensive, unique experience.

It is worth mentioning that we don’t plan on stopping this pancake breakfast any time soon. Like the BJWRR, it is here to stay. ♠

Volunteer Spotlight: Kathy Murphy

Art teacher takes up the brush to help restore carousel horses



Kathy Murphy works to restore “Clip-Clop”—one of the many W.E. Mason Carousel horses.

Peter G. Panacy
Chief Executive Officer

The W.E. Mason Carousel got some reinforcements last spring with Kathy Murphy decided it was time to get involved. Murphy—a retired art teacher—was referred to the railroad and carousel by her son-in-law who loved bringing his family to Oak Meadow Park.

Murphy still teaches art classes in Palo Alto, but spends much of her free time at the carousel where she can be seen working diligently on some of the many wooden horses that make up this unique piece of history.

“I started my work here on ‘Clip-Clop,’ the name I gave the first horse I started restoring,” Murphy said. “I was also able to develop a rapport with the merry-go-round over at the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk and learn a lot from the people there. There is so much to know.”

Murphy continues her work on one of the 30-plus horses the carousel has in its collection. While many of the horses have been restored thanks to the efforts of fellow-carousel volunteer Jim Sugai, there remains plenty of work to be done.

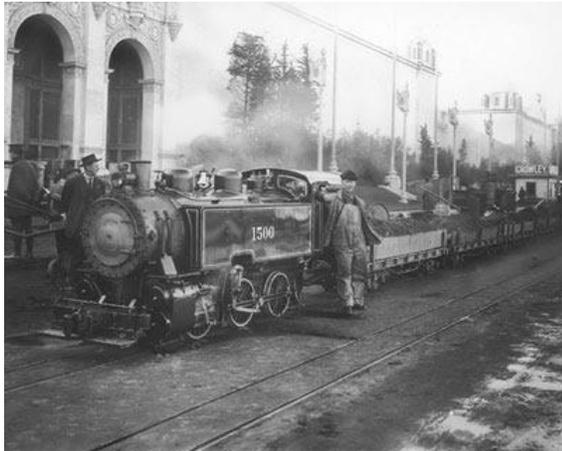
“I do what I can and when I can,” noted Murphy. “Summer gives me much more time since I’m not teaching. This place is just so fun. You hear that music and you can’t help but smile. I’ve met so many nice people.”

Murphy’s efforts, along with the countless contributions of others, ensure the W.E. “Bill” Mason Carousel will remain one of the beautiful attractions that make this community so special. ♠

BJWRR's Unique Ties to Overfair Railway

1915 Pan-Pacific Expo's train directly linked to our own railroad

Peter G. Panacy
Chief Executive Officer



No. 1500 of the Overfair Railway, along with various flatcars in tow. BJWRR retains two of these cars. Photo courtesy of BJWRR collection.

The casual history buff of the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad would probably be able to link the connection of BJWRR back to the Venice Miniature Railroad without much difficulty. The connection between these two railroads centers almost entirely around the 2-spot—the locomotive that helped transform Venice Beach into a tourist destination long before Billy Jones got his hands on it in 1939.

But the BJWRR has a much deeper, involved history with a railroad of years ago, but one that is much closer. In fact, one could make the argument that BJWRR is much more closely linked with the Overfair Railway, which was an integral part of the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco.

For those who don't know, the Pan-Pacific Expo was a celebration of two things—the opening of the Panama Canal and the rebirth of the City of San Francisco following the devastating 1906 earthquake and fire that destroyed much of the city.

The exposition featured a number of various attractions and events, including amusement rides, a large pipe organ, cultural attractions, a newly built English carousel (we'll get to that shortly) and a scale railroad.

That railroad was the brainchild of Louis MacDermot who got to work designing and building the locomotives and equipment that would make up the one-third scale railroad.

MacDermot's railroad became known as the Overfair Railway and his fleet featured four Pacific-style steam locomotives and one 0-6-0 switcher engine. Three of his Pacifics—Nos. 1912, 1913 and 1914—along with a number of passenger cars, are now a part of the Swanton-Pacific Railroad Society in California along with the No. 1500 switcher. The No. 1915 is a featured locomotive in the California Railroad Museum in Sacramento.

It should be known however that Billy Jones had gotten his hands on the vast majority of MacDermot's equipment long after the exposition closed. MacDermot had fallen on tough times and died in 1948. Shortly thereafter, Jones had purchased all of the locomotives as well as some passenger cars, converting them to Jones' 18-inch specs on the Wildcat Railroad.

Overfair's locomotives eventually found their way towards Swanton Pacific and the California State Railroad Museum, but Jones held onto a number of the passenger cars.

The cars currently in service at the BJWRR are the beautifully restored versions of the ones MacDermot used in San Francisco back in 1915. Riders are literally "sitting" on history.



One of Overfair Railway's Pacifics towing passenger cars—some of which are still in use at BJWRR today. Photo courtesy of BJWRR collection.

The history doesn't end there. In addition to the passenger cars—and two flatcars—BJWRR eventually obtained the English "Savage" carousel, which was another prominent piece of the 1915 exposition. After the expo, the carousel became a part of a traveling circus before winding up in Oak Meadow Park as the W.E. "Bill" Mason Carousel. Take a look—history is all around you. ♠

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JULY 27TH - - "BILLY JONES" DAY

In honor of the man who founded our railroad, the BJWRR will host open donations for the train all day. Guests can "pay what they want" to ride the train. All proceeds benefit the BJWRR.

JULY 31ST - - "FIGHT FOR THE TRAIN" FAMILY EVENT

BJWRR and Los Gatos Shakespeare Festival present "Fight for the Train"—a fun-filled evening of stage combat and demonstrations. Train and carousel open from 5:30 to 7:30pm and the show starts at 8:00pm. As the weather improves, both the BJWRR #2 and brand new BJWRR #5 shall be doing the majority of weekend operations.

AUGUST 23RD - - "END OF SUMMER NIGHT RIDE" PASTA DINNER

Bring summer to a close with a delicious spaghetti dinner and evening train ride, all provided by the BJWRR. Dinner is \$8.00 and starts at 6:00pm. No reservation required. Ride tickets extra.

SEPTEMBER 1ST - - LABOR DAY

BJWRR will be open Monday, September 1st from 10:30am until 4:30pm in observance of Labor Day.

SEPTEMBER 2ND - - START OF FALL SCHEDULE

Beginning on Tuesday, September 2nd, the train and carousel will be open Saturdays and Sundays from 10:30am until 4:30pm. The carousel will additionally be open Wednesday through Friday from 10:30am until 3:00pm. All times are weather permitting.

For further information on events, visit our website at www.bjwrr.org, or call 408-395-7433.

Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad
P.O. Box 234
Los Gatos, CA 95031-0234

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

The Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad & W.E. "Bill" Mason Carousel, Inc.

General inquiries and correspondence to the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad & W.E. "Bill" Mason Carousel, this newsletter, or its Board of Directors should be addressed to:

BJWRR
P.O. Box 234
Los Gatos, CA 95031-0234

(408) 395-RIDE office (408) 354-2841 fax
EMAIL: info@bjwrr.org

Persons interested in volunteering in the machine shop may also call (408) 395-6269.

Visit our website at www.bjwrr.org for further updates and information.

The Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization working with the cooperation of the Town of Los Gatos and the Santa Clara County Parks Office. Contributions are tax deductible.

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