

IRON HORSE QUARTERLY

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

Return of the Iron Horse Quarterly

BJWRR has a newsletter again after nearly 17 years

Peter G. Panacy
Chief Executive Officer

For years, the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad reached out to its supporters and enthusiasts with newsletters. These newsletters shared various stories about the railroad, upcoming events, and general news kept interested persons informed about all the news about BJWRR. Unfortunately, the last issue of "The Iron Horse" was published during the summer of 1996.

As the railroad has grown in recent years, the necessity of having some means to communicate news to those who take a keen interest in the railroad became apparent. At the conclusion of the 2012 calendar year, BJWRR decided to once again issue its renowned Iron Horse newsletter. With so much happening in and around the railroad over the course of the past year, it is necessary and exciting to pass on this information as far and wide as possible. Ongoing issues of Iron Horse shall carry on the same message and information that was so well portrayed during the newsletter's previous editions. Directors of the Board, volunteers, guests, and even employees are excited to

continued on page 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Return of the Iron Horse Quarterly
- 1 Pending Arrival of the 4-6-2 "Pacific" BJWRR #5
- 2 Chief Engineer's Corner
- 3 From the President's Caboose
- 4 The 2012 Holiday Train Lights up the Community
- 4 Volunteers On Track for Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad
- 5 2012 Benefactors of the BJWRR & WEMC
- 6 Calendar of Events

BJWRR Gets a New Steam Engine

The long-awaited 4-6-2 "Pacific" arriving soon

Peter G. Panacy
Chief Executive Officer



A 1919 "Pacific" style locomotive similar to the new BJWRR #5. Photo by Darrell Klompaker

The BJWRR #2, or 2 spot as it is commonly referred to, has long since been the headlining act of the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad. Having received backup from two additional diesel locomotives, steam operation is still the predominant feature of the railroad, with visitors both young and old, frequenting the park every weekend. Yet the #2, which recently celebrated its 107th birthday, still needed some more help, especially if BJWRR wanted to retain its saga of steam.

Some years ago, the railroad decided to purchase a brand new steam locomotive, custom built to meet the specific needs for operation in Oak Meadow and Vasona Parks. The 4-6-2 "Pacific" style locomotive would be constructed by Merrick Light Railway Equipment Company in Marshall, Wisconsin; the same company which built the BJWRR #3502 diesel locomotive.

Construction began in 2008 and BJWRR slowly began making its own preparations for the locomotive's use. Efforts included a repair of the entire mainline track as well as the expansion of the engine house and car barn.

Finally, after over three years, the new locomotive will be arriving soon at its new home in Oak Meadow Park. Christened the BJWRR #5, it will join its sister locomotives in pulling happy passengers through neighboring Vasona

continued on page 3

contribute to this wonderful means of communication. In the past, stories about railroad legends, such as Billy Jones, Bill Mason, and Al Smith, made Iron Horse headlines. The reader can expect to read many more stories in future editions. One advantage that future readers of Iron Horse will enjoy is the ability to read the newsletter online. As technology has expanded, BJWRR has also been able to expand, reaching many new audiences in locations never before reached. In the near future, these newsletters shall be available to the reader via email as well as the postal service.

As the railroad moves into the future, it is this writer's hope that the stories and tales of the BJWRR are also passed on. The Iron Horse Quarterly shall hopefully do a tremendous job of that. ♠

Chief Engineer's Corner

Highlighting the railroad's accomplishments in 2012



Chief Engineer Bill Church

Bill Church
Chief Engineer

Welcome from the Chief Engineer of the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad. Just a quick history of myself, as of June 2012, I volunteered to become Chief Engineer. I was very proud to be accepted into this position of responsibility and help maintain the engines and passenger cars. I just recently retired from 42 years with the Postal Service, spending twenty of those years as a mechanic, working on the mail processing machinery. I hope to bring that talent to the BJWRR and continue to maintain the excellent standards set for our engines and rolling stock for the public's enjoyment.

Our very own 2 Spot continues to bring pleasure to both old and new fans alike. With the help of our talented volunteers, we have managed to keep up on our monthly

maintenance and perform all our minor repairs successfully. We have just finished our summer runs and had a very good year. The 2 Spot performed well over the summer runs and is deserving of a good rest. During the season, we experienced some plumbing failures and corrosion at a few steam supply lines. This winter, we plan to re-pipe the lines using schedule 80 black iron piping. We will also be inspecting the drive cylinders for any noticeable wear in response to some reports of power loss during operation. This work will ensure that the locomotive will continue to perform its duties.

Our diesel engines have also had a good season with #2502 and #3502 running most of our weekdays during summer and weekends during winter. Both locomotives have given us little problems with only minor repairs necessary. Our crew has been on top of the routine maintenance necessary as well. These two engines shall continue to operate weekends until the commencement of steam operation this upcoming spring. The #4 occasionally makes an appearance during track maintenance and switching around the yard. We continue to be proud of this locomotive, it having been built in house by one of our volunteers, Tom Waterfall.

The passenger cars have also given us relatively few problems. During routine inspections, we observed some of the truck pedestals having cracks in their castings. Given our low inventory of backup pedestals, we are currently looking into having more of these made. With much discussion among our volunteers, it has been decided to fabricate them out of steel instead of cast iron. We have found a vendor who is now in the process of fabricating enough of these to last us for a very long time.

BJWRR is also pleased and excited to announce the arrival of the new steam engine, which shall be numbered the BJWRR #5. It is a Pacific-style 4-6-2 and is being constructed by Merrick Light Railway Equipment Company in Marshall Wisconsin. We expect to receive the engine at some point in January or February 2013. The arrival shall be announced throughout and plans for its christening will soon follow. We hope that the #5 will serve us as well as the 2 Spot and we are very proud to have it join our steam inventory. ♠

From the President's Caboose

How the Railroad and Carousel are Moving Forward

Doug Sporleder
President, Board of Directors

Hello everyone and Happy New Year. There is much excitement rising at the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad with the eagerly anticipated arrival of our new steam engine. Our Chief Executive Officer Peter Panacy and Safety Program Administrator Brandon McCracken will be driving back to Wisconsin during January to bring it home. Orientation and training of our steam certified engineers will then take place as we ready the engine for its inaugural run when our season opens. It has been a long process of planning and fund raising, but this project is nearing completion.

Our 2012 season was extremely successful due to the efforts of many individuals. Peter Panacy and Chief Operating Officer Francesca Balistreri have grown into their expanded assignments very nicely and our railroad and carousel are running quite smoothly. Our dedicated volunteers are keeping up with the maintenance required to keep our facilities and rolling stock in top shape. These people are a marvel to watch.

Interagency cooperation with the Town of Los Gatos, The Santa Clara County Parks Department, and our railroad has never been better. It is a great help to have all our partners on the same page with us.

Lastly I need to give a huge thank you to all of the businesses and individuals who donate time and materials to keep the Billy Jones Railroad and W. E. Mason Carousel running as well as it does. The railroad is a huge community-wide asset and the continued funds and help we get from these folks will keep it so for generations to come.

♠

Park.

The 4-6-2 is a "Pacific" style steam locomotive, similar to those used at the nearby Swanton Pacific Railroad north of Santa Cruz, California. It measures 28 feet from front coupler to back and weighs approximately 15,000 lbs. including its tender. While designed to operate at 200psi, the #5 will most likely operate at pressures no higher than 150psi. The added weight shall also provide additional traction on the steeper grades of the BJWRR mainline.

BJWRR Advisory Board member and project manager Bruce Jagow has been the liaison between the railroad and Merrick, constantly talking over the phone and submitting specifications so that the locomotive could properly operate at its new home. "It's been a hell of a ride" noted Jagow when asked about the project.

While similar in operation to the #2, the new locomotive will have a number of differences that steam engineers shall be made aware of during training. "The most important element of the new locomotive is the proper firing," Jagow stated. "Use of the throttle, brakes, and injectors is pretty standard and similar to the #2, but establishing a healthy fire and maintaining it to provide adequate steam pressure is going to be the biggest challenge."

When the #5 does arrive within the next month or so, there will be countless hours of tests and training. Regardless, the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad will certainly enjoy its new asset as the locomotive becomes the newest member of the BJWRR fleet. ♠



The #5 nearing completion at the Merrick Light Railway Equipment Works in Marshall, Wisconsin.

Bright Lights and Cold Nights

The Holiday Train Came to Town



The Holiday Train pulls passengers through Vasona's Fantasy of Lights each December. Photo by Jim Koski.

Francesca Balistreri
Chief Operating Officer

When December rolls around on this side of the tracks, it means one thing: The Holiday Train is coming! The Holiday Train is a festive ride through the Fantasy of Lights in Vasona Park. Each year, #2502 is decorated with lights pulling illuminated passenger cars filled with children of all ages. The ride lasts twelve minutes, and runs through the the Fantasy of Lights. The railroad transforms our sections of the park with our own light displays. Thanks in part to the Los Gatos Community Foundation for a generous grant, this was the most lit year in railroad history. Moving along the bright tunnel above the trestle, the train has finally arrived at the Fantasy of Lights. The train itself becomes part of the display as the passing automobiles take in the beautiful blue, red, and white lights that frame each passenger car. This event is a favorite among staff as we get to enjoy the smiling faces, and it does not disappoint.

Due to the uncooperative weather, we were only able to operate ten out of the fifteen days scheduled. Opening night was postponed due to the big storm the first weekend of December. As soon as the weather calmed and the railroad opened, we were flooded with great crowds. Smiling faces greeted us as they took their cup of hot cocoa on the chilly ride. The cold weather did not deter crowds from coming to us, as the railroad experience the busiest opening night ever.

The Holiday Train is an event that the railroad looks forward to participating year after year, and you can believe we are already thinking of ways to make the 2013 Holiday Train even better. The Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad would like to extend a big thanks to A-Tool Shed for their continued help and support, as well as all the patrons that come out year after year to support our organization. Until next year!! ♠

Volunteers On Track for Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad

Excerpt written in 1996 by the late Barbara Phinney from Vol.3, Issue 1

Yes, it has been VOLUNTEERS who saved the railroad after Billy Jones' death on January 10, 1968, and built it into today's popular and lively train and carousel project.

A letter from Bill Mason to the editor of the local newspaper, *Times-Observer*, suggested that Los Gatos and Monte Sereno work together with the local service clubs and citizens of all ages to establish a park for the relocation of the railroad, preserving it for the enjoyment of the communities. Mason was later the first President of the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad Corporation.

Dr. James Ratliff, representing the Los Gatos Jaycees, said his organization would buy all the equipment from the Billy Jones estate if Los Gatos would furnish a place to put it. Councilman Charles De Freitas said he thought railroad buffs would probably enjoy the involvement, thus keeping costs down. Town Manager Russ Cooney and Town Attorney David Adams lent their support in favor of the proposal. The already-existing Oak Meadow Park was selected as the site.

Jack Dair and Bill Ulleseit, long-time friends of Billy Jones, volunteered to operate the locomotive. Dair was chairman of a committee to study the removal and reinstallation of the equipment. Donations and fundraisers by the score raised the needed funds to set up the new operation. Mrs. Betty Ermert and Mrs. Geraldine Peters, daughters of Billy Jones, were enthusiastic and generous donors.

"Railroad Fever Hits Los Gatos" was a headline in the *Times-Observer* on March 21, 1968. The article continued, saying "The Los Gatos community has worked up a 'full head of steam' to keep the railroad in town." Organizations involved were all the service clubs: Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Campfire Girls, Jaycees, The Tuesday Club, Homeowners' Association, West Valley Live Steamers Club, and many others and individuals too.

Councilman Roland Perry said, "This is an affair of the heart as well as the head." To date, this is still what it is, otherwise how can one account for so many giving so much for so long, producing the establishment as we know it today: the happy, productive, progressive pride of our town.

♠

- Barbara Phinney, BJWRR/WEMC Historian

Notable Contributions from 2012

The Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad and W.E. "Bill" Mason Carousel would like to thank the following benefactors for their contributions to the railroad:

A Tool Shed Rentals

Brassfield Estate Winery

Robert and James Butterfield (*in memory of Betty Ermert, Billy Jones's daughter*)

Jerry Clouse

Henry De Guc

Kay Mason Duff (*in memory of Bill and Kamille Mason*)

Alexander and Marsha Eagle

Nicolae Erdei

Joseph Fletcher

Gary and Jane Goldbach

John Hannegan

Carl Herrera (*in memory of Neil Vodden*)

Diane and James Jefferson

Jeffrey W. Lochner

Los Gatos Community Foundation

Los Gatos Lions Club

Los Gatos Meats & Smokehouse (*in memory of Chelsea Chiala*)

Darrell L. Monda

Ed Newman

Geraldine Peters (*in memory of her father, Billy Jones and in honor of his grandchildren, Rob and Jim Butterfield, and Bill, Priscilla, and Virginia Peters*)

Arthur and Gwen Pinkston

Reed & Graham, Inc.

John and Rena Saunders (*in memory of Fred and Harriette Saunders*)

Janet Schultz

George Shannon Jr.

Doug and Susan Sporleder

Dennis Taylor

Jim Thrall

The Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization and contributions are tax deductible. If you are interested in making a contribution to the railroad, please contact us by writing to BJWRR, P.O. Box 234, Los Gatos, CA 95031-0234 or calling (408) 395-RIDE. You may also email us at info@bjwrr.org for donation information. Your contribution will help ensure that the railroad and carousel continue to serve the community for generations to come.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MARCH 15TH - - SPRING SCHEDULE STARTS

The train and carousel open Saturday and Sunday from 10:30am until 4:30pm. The carousel also is open Wednesday through Friday from 10:30am until 3:00pm. Times are weather permitting.

APRIL 1ST - - STEAM OPERATIONS RESUME

As the weather improves, both the BJWRR #2 and brand new BJWRR #5 shall be doing the majority of weekend operations.

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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