

IRON HORSE QUARTERLY

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

Ghouls and Goblins Come to Haunt the Railroad and Carousel

October means it is time for Halloween

Peter G. Panacy
Chief Executive Officer

The railroad and carousel are typically a place for smiling faces and bright, sunny days.

All of that changes in October when ghosts and vampires come out of the shadows to haunt the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad and W.E. Mason Carousel.

Halloween has always been a special time at the railroad. Combining the changing of the seasons and the culmination of autumn, October is a special month. Ever since 1995, the railroad has played host to a Halloween event which has entertained children and adults alike.

In years past, the train would feature a number of stops along the route for riders to enjoy haunting displays and dressed-up actors entertaining patrons. Now, visitors to the park can enjoy a variety of activities which include train and carousel rides along with a walk-through tour of a spooky haunted house and maze.

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The Railroad Has its Own Wine Train

BJWRR and CB Hannegan's come together to create a special evening of wine and rails

Peter G. Panacy
Chief Executive Officer

When one thinks of a wine train, he or she may immediately think of the Napa Valley Wine Train. That drive may be too far for residents of the South Bay who are looking for a nice evening combining fine wines and the rails.

Instead, why not visit Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad?

While the railroad and carousel are typically intended to entertain children, the Wine Train provides an opportunity for adults to go out and enjoy an evening with a glass of wine in hand.

The idea was first broached by John Hannegan, co-owner of the Los Gatos-based CB Hannegan's restaurant who saw an opportunity for both businesses to come together and create a unique experience for wine lovers. The first Wine Train was held back in May of 2013 and it turned out to be a great success.

After the May event generated so much interest, both parties realized that this should be a reoccurring thing and committed to hosting another in September.

CB Hannegan's lined up all the wineries who would offer tastings at the event. Most of the wineries are based in the area and offer a variety of high-quality wines for guests to sample. The restaurant also handled the sale of tickets with the railroad both promoting the September 26 event and supplying the venue.

Unlike most of the railroad's events, which are designed to attract as many people as possible, the Wine Train is an exclusive event. Only a limited number of tickets were available for purchase keeping a cap of roughly 50 guests who were able to take part.

Visitors made their way to the station area where they

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The railroad works alongside Skeleton Coast, a group that specializes in hosting Halloween events, to provide a fun-filled family activity that draws attendees from all over the Bay Area.



Chief Engineer Bill Church plays the role of a ghoulish engineer. Photo by Francesca Balistreri.

For younger children, a trick-or-treating venue called Goblyn's Glen has been set up thanks to the work of Skeleton Coast. Once children are finished riding the train and carousel, they can wander over and collect their treats. Older visitors may be interested in the scarier haunt called Shadow Hills.

In addition, treats and snacks will be available throughout the night. Days and hours of operation are each Friday through Sunday in October from 6:00 until 9:00pm, weather permitting. Tickets are available for purchase from the railroad ticket booth. For more information, call (408) 395-7433 or email info@bjwrr.org. ♠

The Holiday Train: Tis the Season for Train Rides

Magical lights illuminate the train each December

Peter G. Panacy
Chief Executive Officer

It's the most wonderful time of the year.

So goes the famous song that is heard each and every December across the world. The same tune could be sung for the Wildcat Railroad.

Yes, it is only October and thoughts of the holidays are well over a month away. Yet the planning and anticipation of one of BJWRR's most special events has already taken place and fans of the railroad can rest assured that this year's Holiday Train will be one of the best yet.

For those who have not taken the time to ride the Holiday Train, the train dons a set of Christmas lights and plays cheery holiday tunes throughout the ride. That ride itself features a trip through neighboring Vasona Park which is also enjoying the festive atmosphere with its own Fantasy of Lights.

Passengers ride amidst lighted trees and displays throughout the park while sipping on a cup of hot cocoa or cider. Then, they can take free rides on the carousel while listening to some classic holiday tunes.



The Holiday Train running through Vasona Parks's Fantasy of Lights. Photo by Jim Koski.

What started off as an experiment in 1998 has turned into a festive tradition that grows each and every year.

"We plan on putting up even more lights and displays in 2013 than we did last year," noted BJWRR CEO Peter Panacy. "Last year we had more lights than ever before and I want to beat that again."

"This SHOULD happen each holiday," commented BJWRR board member George Shannon.

The train shall also feature a revamped audio system which should hopefully add to the festive atmosphere. Preparations for the Holiday Train take months with most of the time being dedicated to the setting up of lights in both Oak Meadow and Vasona Parks.

"It is at least a month-long process," Panacy said. "It's not something that happens quickly, but when it's finished, the displays and lights are certainly pretty."

Tentative plans for the Holiday Train call for it to be open Thursday through Friday this December, starting on the 5th and ending on the 29th. Hours are from 6:00 until 9:00pm, weather permitting. Tickets can be purchased at the railroad ticket booth during the event.

Stay posted for further news and updates. ♠

The End of Summer Night Ride Has Turned Into a Great Tradition

Pasta dinners, twilight train rides, and romantic music highlight the annual event

Francesca Balistreri
Chief Operating Officer

Summer ends with Sinatra, great food and great company.

A small tradition has started towards the end of summer that includes a delicious spaghetti dinner, made entirely at the railroad, paired with great beverages, along with a romantic ride on the train as daylight turns to dusk. On August 24th, the railroad hosted the eighth annual End of Summer Night Ride at Oak Meadow Park. The event symbolizes the end of the railroad's summer schedule and for many, including children who are going back to school, the night ride and dinner is a great way to close out the season.



Fans of the railroad enjoy dinner before taking a dusk ride on the railroad. Photo by Francesca Balistreri.

After Labor Day, the train and carousel resume weekends-only operation while the carousel opens additionally Wednesday through Friday. The event is a great way to celebrate each summer season and help the transition into milder operations.

What better way to celebrate than to enjoy spaghetti dinners with friends and family, topped off by an evening train ride highlighted by music? There are few better options.

Dinner started at 5:30pm and was served until 8:00. The train and carousel were open the entire time, ensuring that each guest was able to take a ride as daylight began to fade. In addition, the carousel provided complimentary rides to

received their own wrist band and wine glass. Then, they enjoyed tastings from a variety of wineries that were pouring samples. Various snacks and hors d' oeuvres were also available for consumption and added to the pleasant nature of the event.

CB Hannegan's also supplied a piper to serenade guests with various tunes on the bagpipes. The music was extremely pleasant and enriched the atmosphere.

As guests sampled their wines, they were also able to take in a number of train rides as daylight turned to dusk. Once the ride was over, they could return to the samplers for another taste or take in complimentary rides on the carousel.

The interest generated from both events thus far has resulted in the desire for both the Wildcat Railroad and CB Hannegan's to host more wine trains in the future.

"It is a great community event and the fact that there is a limited amount of tickets makes patrons feel as if they are a part of something really exclusive," noted BJWRR board member George Shannon.

Given the success of the Wine Train, fans of CB Hannegan's, the Wildcat Railroad and wine in general can look forward to having more events like this in the future.

"We hope to make this a bi-annual event each year," said BJWRR Chief Operating Officer Francesca Balistreri. "Look for us to rotate different wines from around the area each time we host this so that people can get a variety of tastes."

In the future, both parties are also looking to streamline the way patrons purchase tickets for the event.

"We will examine what it takes to sell a limited amount of tickets online," noted BJWRR Chief Executive Officer Peter Panacy. "People will be directed to a website, perhaps our own, where they can purchase and print out tickets. Then, all they will need to do is show up and enjoy."

Enjoying the Wine Train is something that has happened twice already. Given the success of this event, patrons can look forward to continued wine trains each May and September of the year.

From all the talk surrounding wine trains elsewhere in the country, the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad and CB Hannegan's can counter with their own unique and memorable experience. ♠

BJWRR Gets Long-Awaited Renovations

Board of directors approves funds for upgrading the facilities

Peter G. Panacy
Chief Executive Officer

Following the purchase of the railroad's new 5-Spot, the BJWRR decided that it was time to invest funds in all the things that continue to make this railroad operate.

George Shannon, board member and one of the project chairpersons, stated, "After many years of directing our financial intentions elsewhere, we needed to invest in the infrastructure that allows us to continue what we do."

As a result, the facilities can now boast new rooftops on both the carousel and train depot buildings. The carousel building has been repaired and repainted and plans are in the works for repainting the rest of the structures.

In addition to renovating the building exteriors, plans and funds have been approved to make upgrades to other areas of the railroad and carousel.

The concession stand, long in need of an overhaul, is set to receive all-stainless steel cabinetry inside along with new equipment to continue selling the goods and snacks to visitors. In addition, the engine house and machine shop is receiving a much-needed makeover including new storage cabinets, tools and other miscellaneous equipment.



Initial remodeling of the concession stand took place in 2011. Photo by Francesca Balistreri.

While these changes, upgrades and improvements do not generate the same interest or receive as much attention as the purchase of a new locomotive, they are no less important. After all, these improvements are necessary to perpetuate the railroad and carousel for years to come. ♠

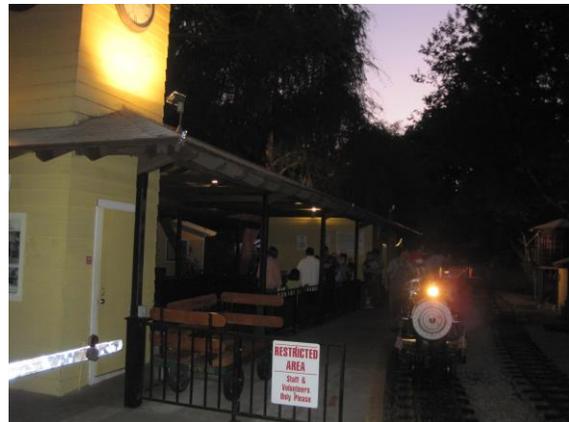
each patron that wanted one.

Timeless hits by greats like Frank Sinatra were played both on the train and in the carousel. The tunes gave an added special element to the evening and assisted with its ambience.

The End of Summer Night Ride has emerged as a great tradition, continuing in the spirit of Billy Jones and the railroad's mission. Where else can someone enjoy such a delicious meal along with nighttime train rides for such a low cost?

In addition, the event further continues the obligation the railroad and carousel have to the public: to provide a fun and entertaining atmosphere to families and children of all ages. Instead of just being open during standard operating hours, the dinner and night ride allow guests to experience something a little more unique and special.

Even more rewarding is the fact that all proceeds from the event go right back to the railroad and carousel's preservation. Given the fact that this organization is a non-profit group, events like these are of tremendous benefit. Not only do events like the night ride provide locals with a fun and relaxing destination-like activity, but they also help ensure that the railroad and carousel are perpetuated into the future.



There is something special about riding behind a steam engine at twilight. Photo by Francesca Balistreri.

Thanks to the patrons who support these events, it is a safe bet that the railroad and carousel will be around for many years to come. In addition, these events are a great way for the railroad to continue its legacy as a landmark in the community and as an asset for future generations.

Yet most importantly, the memories from evenings like the End of Summer Night Ride speak for themselves. It is remarkable how special the night was and will continue to be. ♠

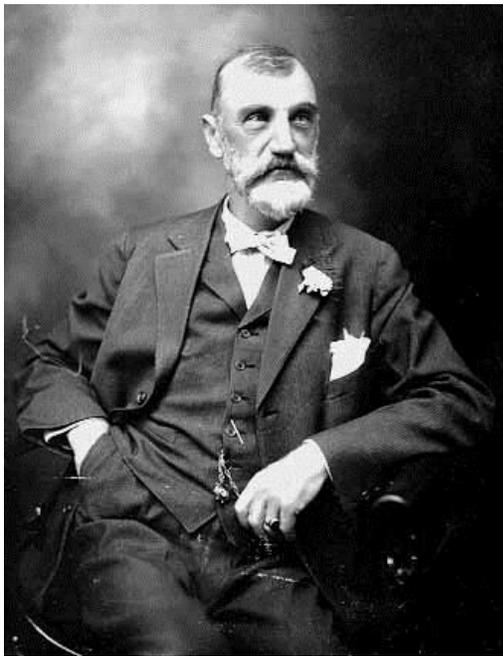
BJWRR Owes Its Existence to Bad Weather

A snowstorm, a detour, and the creation of a railroad

Peter G. Panacy
Chief Executive Officer

When you think of travel delays thanks to bad weather, you often groan and complain knowing full well that there are long waits ahead.

What if I told you however that if it were not for bad weather, the BJWRR may have never come into existence? Yes, bad weather may have been the direct reason behind the formation of what would eventually become the Wildcat Railroad.



Developer Abbot Kinney is credited with creating what became Venice Beach. Photo courtesy of the BJWRR collection.

The story begins with Abbot Kinney, a wealthy land developer who was traveling the world in the late 1870s. Kinney, who was living in New York, wound up in San Francisco in late 1879. Wanting to get back home to New York, Kinney's travel plans were delayed thanks to heavy snowfall over the Sierra Nevada Mountains, halting any trains traveling east.

Rather than waiting out the winter in San Francisco, Kinney elected to take a detour south towards Los Angeles. While there, Kinney fell in love with the temperate and warm climate and decided that he would stay, electing to

build a number of resorts and destinations in and around Los Angeles.

One of those resorts began when Kinney purchased a parcel of marshy, undeveloped swamp-land near Santa Monica. Kinney envisioned a destination that would encompass both recreation and culture and wanted his venue to rival some of the tourist locations of the East Coast like Coney Island or Atlantic City.

Finally by 1905, "Venice of America" was born and was quickly hailed as the "Coney Island of the Pacific."

One of Kinney's business decisions was the installation of an 18" gauge, 1/3 scale railroad that would shuttle visitors and tourists in and around what would become Venice Beach. To do the job, Kinney contacted John J. Coit, a man who had successfully run his own 18" gauge railroad at Eastlake Park nearby.

Realizing that his own locomotive and cars would be too small for the demands of Kinney and Venice of America, Coit eventually ordered two 2-6-2 "Prairie" style locomotives from Johnson Machine Works in Los Angeles. One of those is well known and still operates at the BJWRR today.

The Venice Miniature Railway would operate into the 1920s before eventually shutting down. Venice Beach would continue to be a destination for tourists and travelers.

The 2-Spot would eventually find its way towards a scrap yard in San Francisco where a man named Billy Jones would lay eyes upon it for the first time in 1939. The rest of the story is pretty well known.

Had bad weather not delayed Kinney on his travels from San Francisco to New York, he never would have traveled to Los Angeles. The area now known as Venice may have eventually turned into suburban sprawl but never would have become "Venice of America." Kinney would have never contacted Coit regarding the construction of a railroad and Coit would have likely not ordered two larger locomotives and the 2-Spot may have never existed.

Billy Jones may still have made his trip to San Francisco and walked by the scrap yard where he eventually found the old Venice engine. If the weather had been different, Jones would have kept walking, not having noticed anything special. His Wildcat Railroad may have never existed.

Perhaps a little bad weather can go a long way. ♠

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

OCTOBER 4TH THROUGH 31ST - - HALLOWEEN TRAIN

Partnering with Wicked Woods, the railroad will host another exciting Halloween-themed October featuring night rides and trick-or-treating through Goblyn's Glen. The event runs Friday through Sunday nights in October. Visit www.bjwrr.org or www.wicked-woods.org for further information.

NOVEMBER 1ST - - START OF WINTER SCHEDULE

The train and carousel will be open Saturday and Sunday from 11:00 – 3:00. All times are weather permitting.

DECEMBER 5TH THROUGH 29TH - - THE HOLIDAY TRAIN

Partnering with Vasona County Park's Fantasy of Lights, the railroad will host the annual Holiday Train featuring music and light displays viewed from the train. The event runs Thursday through Sunday in December. Hours of operation are 6:00pm until 9:00pm, weather permitting. Visit www.bjwrr.org for more information.

DECEMBER 7TH - - LOS GATOS CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARADE/CAMPBELL CAROL OF LIGHTS

The railroad will participate in the annual Los Gatos Children's Christmas Parade in downtown Los Gatos which starts at 11:00. Then come visit our float in downtown Campbell for the annual Carol of Lights celebration which starts at 6:00.

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:

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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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