

IRON HORSE QUARTERLY

Volume 6, Issue 4

November 2015

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

October was too crazy, so here's the November issue!

Francesca B. Alexander
Chief Executive Officer

Where did October go? One day, I'm setting up pumpkins for our Pumpkin Train event, and in the next Christmas lights are coming up?!

October was a busy month here at the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad. We held our second annual Pumpkin Train which once again, had a good turnout.

Preparations for the Pumpkin Train went underway back in September when we placed our order for pumpkins. The drought had an effect on our crop this year. The pumpkins still looked great, but they were not as big as they had been in previous years.

The week prior to opening weekend is spent picking up pumpkins and setting them up. Board member Brandon McCracken was able to assist by trailering the five pallets of pumpkins followed by a few days setting up our "patch".

This year Halloween was a bit different for Oak Meadow Park. Due to unforeseen circumstances, Goblins Glen did not return for their haunted house, which left quite an

absence for us at the park. Hopefully, the Goblins Glen crew will be back in Oak Meadow Park in the future.



Board Member Brandon McCracken securing the pumpkins for the trip back to the railroad.

Overall, The Pumpkin Train was another great event, and one we hope we can continue for many years to come. Even though it takes a lot of work in setting up the 'pumpkin patch', in the end it is worth it to see those smiling faces.

So apologies for the delay in getting the Iron Horse Quarterly out in time, but we had a really good excuse! ♠



The Pumpkin Train's Pumpkin Patch. October 16, 2015

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Employee Spotlight:

Elizabeth Johnson

Francesca B. Alexander
Chief Executive Officer



If you come around on any given weekend day, you'll see or interact with our many young employees. Here at Iron Horse Quarterly we have decided to spotlight those employees who strive to provide a great experience for everyone who comes and rides our rails. This month's spotlight follows one of our longest employed team member Elizabeth Johnson. Elizabeth has been working at the railroad for almost eight years, and has become our most seasoned employee and a great leader and trainer. Elizabeth took some time to answer some questions, and to give insight on working at the railroad.

IHQ: How did you learn about the railroad, and what made you apply for a position?

EJ: My dad, David Johnson, worked at the railroad as a teenager and has volunteered as an engineer for decades, so I grew up riding the train and carousel regularly. In addition, my brother, Matthew Johnson, worked at the BJWRR as well and really enjoyed it, so he recommended that I apply for the job. Several things made the job appealing: first, I love working outdoors; second, I love interacting with children; third, I love the history of the railroad. It's an honor to continue the legacy of Billy Jones in serving the community of Los Gatos and the Bay Area.

IHQ: What have you taken away from your employment so far?

EJ: The most significant lesson that I've learned through working is responsibility. I began working here when I was 15, and since this was my first job, I learned how to prioritize my commitment to work. I also learned the satisfaction of working hard in order to save money. I bought my Mac for college with money that I had saved up for a long time, and it made me proud of my discipline and effort.

IHQ: What is your favorite job?

EJ: My favorite job is working the concession stand. I love the cashier-type jobs, so I enjoy both tickets and concession. In the concession stand, I get to interact with customers and with my coworkers as we work together to fulfill a food order. I also find joy in the little things, like giving a pink snow cone straw to a little girl dressed in pink.

IHQ: What do you hope to achieve at the railroad?

EJ: I hope to be a leader for other employees, modeling a positive and friendly attitude. As a trainer, I do my best to equip new employees with knowledge of operations so that they can become effective employees and assets to the BJWRR.

IHQ: What kind of advice would you give to someone who is thinking of turning in an application?

EJ: I highly recommend this job because it will help you to grow as an individual. It also looks great on a resume because the job entails so many different tasks, like retail sales, ride operations, food service, etc. Plus, the hours are flexible and you will make lifelong friends.

I graduated from California Baptist University in Riverside, California this past May with a Bachelor's Degree in English and a minor in History. I am currently in San Jose State's teaching credential program, hoping to become a high school English teacher so that I can pass on a passion for literature and writing. ♠

Join our team!

The railroad is always looking for enthusiastic, motivated hard workers!

Learn the ins and outs of a real railroad operation!

Visit www.bjwrr.org

And click on *Join Our Team*

New Passenger Coach in the works at the BJWRR!

Thanks to a generous donation from one of our volunteers, the BJWRR will add another passenger coach to its rolling stock.

Francesca B. Alexander
Chief Executive Officer



The frame for the BJWRR brand new passenger coach. Photo by Bob Poli.

The winter season at the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad is going to be a busy one. Typically, come winter, the railroad sets up a few projects as it is the perfect time to complete them. Operations tend to be quiet around this time of year, and the steam engines are no longer in operation.

This year, the BJWRR crew has taken on probably one of the biggest projects in recent history, the building of a brand new passenger coach. Volunteer and Advisory Board Member Phil Reader made a generous donation to the railroad and asked that the money be used to build a brand new passenger coach.

The railroad currently has five passenger coaches in operation. Four standard coaches, and one wheelchair accessible coach. The sixth coach will be built in the same style as our standard coaches.

The BJWRR passenger coaches have a very rich history. The coaches themselves were built for the 1915 Panama Pan Pacific Exposition much like our 1905 Carousel. When Billy Jones acquired the coaches, he had to make changes to the gauge. The coaches were at 19" and that was shrunk down an inch to 18 for the track on Billy's orchard. After Billy's death, and the railroad was moved to Oak Meadow Park, other modifications had to be done to the coaches. On the orchard, the coaches all had roofs. At

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Season Recap: Mechanical Update

CJ Vargas
Shop Assistant/Track Foreman



Sadly the time is here for steam season to come to an end at the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad. As winter approaches, both steam engines will go into the shop to receive routine maintenance and upgrades. Since the winter season is a long one, this is the perfect time for the locomotives to receive a lot of attention so that they may be ready for the next steam season. The main upgrade we have planned for the locomotives this off season is adding a second oil reservoir on the engineer's side of #5 to ensure appropriate oiling to each side of the locomotive's steam chest and pistons. In this edition of the mechanical update, we will briefly cover how the steam season went, as well as projects taking place in the shop currently, and those that were completed.

The steam season at the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad in 2015 was a strong one. We operated with very minimal issues overall. Every steam season we set a goal to run as smoothly as possible with very few issues that come up. A lot of work goes into these locomotives during the winter, so we can expect everything to run reliably. This season a lot of our focus was placed on the water treatment for the boilers and the quality of water we were injecting into them.

Throughout the season we experienced a lot of priming, which is a result of incorrect balance of water treatment, and/ or high level of water in the boiler. Now, as many of you know, our railroad is not flat. We have some grades and when the locomotive leans back ever so slightly to climb the hill with the throttle being opened more, it can have the potential to create a sort of vacuum that sucks the wetter steam into the piping. This isn't ideal because you cannot compress a liquid so having said that, when this wet steam

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Oak Meadow Park, the tall platform in the station made it difficult for passengers to board the coaches without bumping their heads. The roofs were removed, and other small modifications took place over the years. Just a few months back the four standard coaches all received new flooring.

The new coach will be built exactly as the other four. Our volunteers are working off of drawings of the existing coaches, and using those coaches as reference. The project had somewhat of a slow start, as acquiring the right lumber proved to be a difficult and lengthy task. Once the correct lumber was attained, work began on the coach. In the last month, the frame has been nearly completed. Once the frame is done it will be painted then flipped over for the rest of the work to take place. The bulk of the work has been completed by our Tuesday crew, with Bob Poli, George Shannon, Larry Poff, and Paul Croisetiere are taking on the bulk of the work.



The railroad is very grateful to Phil Reader and his generous donation. A new passenger car will add a great value to our operations. This coach although won't be rich in history like the others, but it will have the distinction of being the only passenger coach built in-house at the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad. This coach is a big project and one that will take some time. There is no clear time line yet on when it will join operations, but we will make sure to keep the updates coming. And rest assured, we will have a great debut planned for when it does finally join our rolling

is being admitted to the cylinders, the pistons have nothing to push back on to create power. We tackled this issue of boiler chemistry by the testing the water after each operational weekend. There were a lot of variables to consider. Some of our engineers have reason to believe that the issues we were experiencing were tied to the quality of water we were receiving. This is subsequently related to being in a drought; the water table is much lower, therefore our water contained exponentially more minerals than before so we had to adjust the water treatment accordingly. This mainly affected the 2 spot. The 5 operates at a higher boiler pressure so the steam at the top of the boiler was still drier than the driest steam of the 2.

Aside from the water issues, most everything ran smoothly on the locomotives. The only other issue we encountered was a cylinder gasket on the #5 was replaced before the next operating day so the engine remained operable.

The diesel locomotives ran just fine for the summer, and are in good shape as they take on the brunt of the work for the winter season. 2502 had some overheating issues that were a result of 90+ degree days and an older, rebuilt radiator. As some of you may have seen, the #4 was frequently out and about over the summer. As we tackled more track work, #4 was able to handle the bulk of the work as we completed the necessary track work.

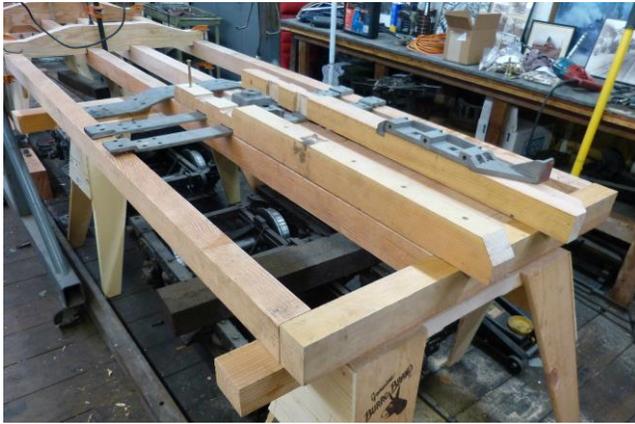
Our track crew was very active this summer and tackled a lot of areas needing improvement along the track. We began by bending rail for more consistent radii, as well as adding ballast to shallow areas throughout the railroad. Track work is ever changing so it must frequently be monitored and addressed, especially as the weather changes throughout the seasons.

The shop crew was busy making improvements to the equipment such as stirrups for the freight cars as well as keeping on top of routine and scheduled maintenance. A big project the shop is tackling this winter is the construction of a new passenger coach that is detailed in this issue on pages 3 and 4. That is all for now, be sure to look for updates regarding our new passenger coach and stop in on Tuesdays to take a peek at the progress! ♠

Join our team!

The railroad is always looking great volunteers! Want to get involved in a historical organization? Visit us on Tuesdays or contact us by calling 408-395-7433 or visit www.bjwrr.org And click on *Join Our Team*

stock and takes its first passenger out. ♠



Photos courtesy of Bob Poli, and the BJWRR library.

The Holiday Train & Other Special Events at the Railroad

Join us for 16th annual Holiday Train this December!

Francesca B. Alexander
Chief Executive Officer

Special events have always been a great tradition at the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad, and a great way to raise extra funds. The railroad has four staple events that have become a tradition to our customers. In keeping with tradition, our 16th annual The Holiday Train will commence in December. This year things are changing, and the railroad has very little control over these changes.

Special events take a bit more extra work to host than say a regular season operation. There have to be permits in place, staff and volunteers to make sure the work gets done, and then hopefully customers to come and enjoy the event. For some events we have to go through the Town of Los Gatos and the County of Santa Clara to obtain permits, but most of the events through the Town. Their rules and regulations are changing in obtaining said permits which will impact us in many ways including financially. This isn't a new thing per se, but with the town wanting to increase their transparency with all organizations holding special events it does make the process a bit longer, a bit frustrating, and overall more expensive.

Due to these changes, the special event ticket pricing will be increased. It will not be a huge change, but one that is necessary for us to continue to hold such events. As a non-profit organization, we rely heavily on these events to earn extra funds. Especially for an event like the Holiday Train, we raise these funds so that we may move into the slower winter months with minimal financial worry. The railroad receives no outside funding, and every penny goes back into preserving every aspect of the railroad including locomotives and structures. That is why it is so important for us to have these fundraising events to raise these extra funds so that we may save up for a rainy day- pun intended.

The price change will commence with the Holiday Train with tickets increasing to \$6.00 per ticket. We always try to make this pricing change worthwhile, this ticket will include 1 train ride through the Fantasy of Lights and unlimited carousel rides on the night of purchase. We appreciate your understanding as we navigate through these changes.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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.

NOVEMBER 27TH - - DAY AFTER THANKSGIVING

The train and carousel will be open the day after Thanksgiving from 11:00 – 3:00. All times are weather permitting.

DECEMBER 5TH - - LOS GATOS CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARADE

The railroad will participate in the annual Los Gatos Children's Christmas Parade in downtown Los Gatos which starts at 11:00.

The Railroad will remain closed for the day due to our participation in the parade.

DECEMBER 6TH THROUGH 23RD - - 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 opens Sunday, December 6th from 6:00 to 9:00pm. Then the event will run Thursdays through Sundays, Dec. 10th -20th. And closing week will take place Monday through Wednesday Dec. 21st to the 23rd. Hours of operation are 6:00pm until 9:00pm, all dates and times are weather permitting. Visit www.bjwrr.org for more information.

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 EMAIL: info@bjwrr.org

Persons interested in volunteering in the machine shop may also call our office line or email us at info@bjwrr.org

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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