

IRON HORSE QUARTERLY

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January 2016

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

Year End Review

Francesca B. Alexander
Chief Executive Officer

2015 marked a transition period for the BJWRR. Long time CEO, Peter Panacy, stepped down to usher in a new management team. In the mist of the transition, BJWRR long time bookkeeper, Jane Kennedy retired as well. 2015 was going to be a year of rebuilding, to say the least.

The railroad has grown tremendously in the last decade; from new engines to building expansions. The little railroad grew into a full-fledged business, a destination, and for many of our esteemed guests, a family tradition. It's important to know that the railroad is able to sustain itself based on the generosity of benefactors who simply want this gem to continue, but also with every ticket sold each time we operate. The support we get is quite remarkable; it's very important for us that operations keep chugging along, pun intended!

Apart from the growing pains, the BJWRR had a great year. Our seasonal schedule changed for the year meaning some seasons were cut shorter due to school going back into session much earlier, and some seasons remained the same. The change had little effect on our guests, and we were able to continue operations seamlessly.

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From the President's Caboose

Doug Sporleder
President, Board of Directors



I begin 2016 with some thoughts about the year just finished. Our Railroad continues to be operating at a very high level as seen by our ridership numbers. I have many people to thank for this. Our Chief Executive Officer, Francesca Alexander, and our Chief Operating Officer, Rosie Balistreri, completed their first year as our executive team and have done a wonderful job. The daily operation of the railroad has been flawless. The staff they hired have learned their jobs well and are a pleasure to watch as they interact with our riders. The staff of volunteers, who come to the railroad every Tuesday rain or shine, have kept our rolling stock and facilities well maintained and in top operating order. They have many projects currently underway including the construction of a new passenger car. It has been wonderful seeing our Chief Engineer, Bill Church, slowly coming back from major surgery. A big thank you to Bill Ulleseit for filling during Bill Church's absence.

We have spent time nurturing our relationship with the County of Santa Clara and the Town of Los Gatos. As staff for those two agencies have changed due to retirements etc. we need to meet and discuss our railroad and its operation so they understand how we work. The Los Gatos Town Manager, Laurel Prevetti, and Public Works Director, Matt Morley, came down and looked at our operation. They chose a Tuesday so they could see our volunteers at work. Thank you to John Lochner for setting that meeting up. I felt very good after the meeting and felt we covered a lot of

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Ridership was up for the year, attracting an astounding 187,669 riders on the train and carousel. We also broke a sales record in our concession stand for the year. Overall 2015 was a great year for the railroad.

The railroad once again hosted our traditional events with amazing turnouts. Flapjacks and Railroad Tracks Pancake Breakfast is our “kicks off to summer” event as well as our special event season opener. This year’s event broke a record for most breakfasts sold since the event began in 2009. We also had customers paying it forward by leaving their change so that the next patron’s breakfast could be paid for. This was something that reminded us of why we put on events in the first place; we put on these events to thank our community not only for their continued support, but to provide them with a fun and inexpensive experience for their family. July was rider appreciation month with Carousel Day providing free rides on the carousel at the beginning of the month, and Billy Jones Day closing out the month with free rides on the train. We also were able to hold a double header on Billy Jones Day with both steam engines fired up. In August, we hosted our annual End of Summer Night Ride Pasta Dinner, and again we had a record turnout. The Pumpkin Train and the Holiday Train also came back this year, but turnout was down for various reasons.



The Langs were our cooks for the End of Summer Night Ride, Pasta Dinner. They have have been volunteering for special events since the events began, and we couldn't do these events without them! Photo from BJWRR library.

Special events have become a tradition at the railroad, and have always yielded a great turnout and response from our patrons. Special events are also a labor of love as they take a

necessary topics which should smooth out our relationship with the Town and their new employees.

I also wish to thank the Afternoon Rotary Club for their donation of a new barbeque for our snack shack. We expect a huge improvement to our snack shack operation due to their generosity. Coming soon will be Carousel Building improvements to create more office space and more space for maintaining the Carousel’s horses and equipment.

The board of directors and I are enthusiastic about 2016 and look forward to the year ahead. Our hope is that our Railroad will continue to be one of the very best regional community assets, and I thank all of you for your continued work and support. ♠

Chief Engineer’s Corner

Highlighting the railroad’s accomplishments in 2015



Chief Engineer Bill Church

Bill Church
Chief Engineer

2015 was a very good year as far as the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad is concerned. All our engines have had no major problems. A lot of track work was done in order to smooth out our runs. The passenger cars had some renovations performed so as to make them more attractive and easier to maintain. The Carousel is being well managed with only a few repairs. Hopefully 2016 will prove to be a successful trouble free year.

Starting with our #2 Steam locomotive the success of our drive cylinder overhaul last year has proven to provide a much more powerful engine that is able to handle our loads and grades. There have been some minor repairs such as valve replacements and leaks but nothing out of the ordinary for a 111 year old steam locomotive. During the winter maintenance window a new set of drive crank bushing will be fabricated and installed along with some

lot of work and dedication to make sure all goes smoothly. This year, special events became a bit harder to accomplish as the town required a lot more permitting for all aspects of the event including banner permits. For the Holiday Train, permitting became a bit expensive which forced us to raise our prices. The railroad is looking for ways to offset these costs so our patrons don't get affected; however, if there is nothing we can do, special event pricing will more than likely see an increase.

The railroad will continue to provide a great day out on the rails and will always strive to keep pricing affordable, as we are a community based organization. We would like to extend a very warm thank you to all our benefactors for their continued support, as well as all of the families who come and visit us throughout the year. We are here because of all of you! We look forward to another wonderful year filled with a lot of fun and events. Happy Rails! ♠

Progress Through Change

Father & Daughter recount their experiences working for the BJWRR. Part I of a multi part installment.

Elizabeth Johnson
Team Leader



Elizabeth Johnson has been a part of the BJWRR since she was a child. Photo Courtesy of Elizabeth Johnson.

“Progress is impossible without change,” expressed the renowned Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw. These wise words ring true for the BJWRR, which has witnessed a wide variety of changes since its inception. My father, David Johnson, has witnessed many of these developments as an

new valves and steam supply lines. There will also be some cleaning and general routine maintenance performed so as to be prepared for our 2016 steam season.



The first double header in BJWRR history was during Billy Jones Day and Engine #5's debut in 2013. Photo from BJWRR Library.

The #5 Steam Locomotive has proven to have been very reliable for the 2015 steam season. There have been some issues with our steam compressor, so a new compressor was installed. There was blockage that was caused by overheated oil from the air supply side of the compressor. To fix this issue it was decided to use less oil during runs, and to switch to a synthetic oil which can withstand much higher temperatures without breaking down. We also found some severe scouring of our engineers side drive cylinder shaft. We increased our oiling procedures so as to stop any further damage. Two new shafts were ordered and will be installed during the winter maintenance window. A new modification will be installed this winter, it includes the installation of a second oiler for the drive cylinder; this will allow the separation of cylinders oil and the machine oil used for the running gear assemblies.

Our two Diesels, #2502 and #3502, have been performing well with only minor issues. #2502 has had a chronic problem with surging. A loose connection caused some of the problem and a new wire was installed. This solved some of the problem but was not a complete fix; trouble shooting is ongoing. This year, we're planning on overhauling the complete dash panel after years of circuits being bypassed, removed, and poorly repaired. #3502 has been our more reliable engine and has only required minor repairs to its exhaust system and electrical systems.

employee from 1976 to 1985, and as a volunteer engineer in the present. Since I have also witnessed many modifications during my time as an employee, my father and I recently sat down to compare the myriad changes that have occurred from 1976 to the present. Thankfully, most of these have been for the better, and have allowed for the continued improvement of the BJWRR.

One major difference was the lack of any diesel engines during my father's time, as the railroad completely relied on the #2 for its operations. This led to some problems because if the steam engine had a mechanical issue during the summer, the railroad was forced to shut down until it was fixed. This total dependence on the #2 also forced the railroad to shut down completely during the winter season, when the steam engine received maintenance work. With the addition of the first diesel engine, 2502, in 1992, the railroad now had a back-up for its steam engine, which allowed for operations to continue through the winter. With the additions of the diesel 3502 in 2005, the railroad has a variety of back-ups, which prevents overuse and allows for variety. Thankfully, the railroad has remained true to its heart for steam, which was proven with the addition of the #5 steam engine in 2013. With five engines at present, the BJWRR is blessed with many resources in order to keep chugging along for many more years.



Dave Johnson running #2 in 1981. Dave was an employee of the BJWRR for a long time, and currently serves as a volunteer engineer, and is certified on all of BJWRR locomotives.

Photo Courtesy of Elizabeth Johnson

Another notable change is the railroad's hours of operation. During my father's time as an employee, the railroad opened at 11:00 a.m. on Saturdays and at noon on Sundays, while closing at 5:37 p.m. on both days. The railroad's old information pamphlet explains this remarkably exact closing time, noting, "5:37 p.m. was the last scheduled train to



Engine's 2502 & 3502 take the brunt of the work when the steam engines are down for maintenance. Photo from BJWRR Library.

The Passenger Cars have had all new linoleum flooring installed. Besides looking great it, has made the maintenance on the car a lot easier. One of our volunteers, Phil Reader, has donated money in order to have a new passenger car made; the project is going well. All the work is being done in house by our dedicated volunteers.

Track Work has been an ongoing task with many hours being consumed by straightening, gauging, and leveling the rails. The south end of the trestle was reinforced with a retaining wall and back filled with ballast material. With the prospects of a very wet season we'll continue to monitor our rails.

The Carousel has had a professional tuning, and only one drive gear will need to be replaced. The fabrication of a new gear plus spares has been ordered. A drive shaft did break, but a new fabricated shaft was installed. We are fortunate to have a few new volunteers that are planning on restoring all our horses.

In closing, I would like to thank all our volunteers that put in many hours of hard work. Without their dedication to the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad there would be no railroad dedicated to perpetuating the enjoyment and education of a small scale railroad.

If any of our readers would like to bring their talents to BJWRR please contact the railroad at 408-395-7433 or visit our website: bjwrr.org or better yet come down on volunteer day Tuesday to see what's happening in our shop. ♠

The BJWRR is always looking for dedicated volunteers for a variety of work. There is maintenance work, locomotive engineering, gardening, and firing up the barbecue during the high season. Visit BJWRR.org for more information!

arrive at the Los Gatos station on the Southern Pacific run from San Jose and San Francisco.” Today, the railroad’s hours change according to the season, but closing is a more rounded time: 3:00 p.m. during the winter and 4:30 p.m. during the summer. While the old 5:37 p.m. closing time commemorated the Bay Area’s railroad history, today’s closing times are likely easier to remember for most customers.

Despite many changes, the railroad’s vision has remained the same: to allow “children of all ages” to enjoy the train. In the next issue, I will describe more changes that contributed to the railroad’s progress. ♠

Check back on the next issue of the Iron Horse Quarterly for the next installment of *Progress Through Change*.

New Passenger Car Update

Progress continues on passenger car built in house at the BJWRR.

Francesca B. Alexander
Chief Executive Officer

In the last Iron Horse Quarterly we debuted the work on our new passenger car. 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. Excited with the idea of building a new passenger car in house, volunteers took on the task and began work on the passenger car. Work began back in September, and has been ongoing ever since.

Work continues on the car with the car being turned “upside down”. This way volunteers can build all components of the car from the bottom without having to be on the floor for 8 hours in a day. Most of the bottom portion of the car has been completed, and volunteer and board member Bob Poli estimates finishing the bottom portion in about a month.

Once the bottom portion is completed the car will then be flipped over so work on the body can begin. Timber for the seat portion of the car is already in the works being cut and measured accordingly. There is still a ways to go on this project, but so far we are making great progress.

We will keep you posted on the progress in the next issue

of the Iron Horse Quarterly. ♠



*Progress has been made every Tuesdays when our volunteers work on the passenger car.
Photo courtesy of Bob Poli.*



*The latest picture of the passenger car. Much progress has been made in four month.
Photo courtesy of Francesca Alexander.*

Notable Contributions from 2015

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

A Tool Shed Rentals

Jerry Clouse and Kimball Midwest

Kay Mason Duff

Paul Gardner

John Hannegan & C.B. Hannegan's

Los Gatos Community Foundation

Los Gatos Lions Club

Los Gatos Meats & Smokehouse

Los Gatos Rotary Club

Ed Newman and Newman Steel

Olander Family Foundation

Geraldine Peters

Virginia Peters

Phil Reader

Without your continued generosity we could not do what we do!

Thank you!

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 - - STEAM OPERATIONS RESUME

As the weather improves, the BJWRR No. 2 and BJWRR No. 5 shall be doing the majority of weekend operations.

JUNE—FLAPJACKS & RAILROAD TRACKS

Help us kick off summer with a morning ride on the train & carousel, and a delicious pancake breakfast. Our Annual Flapjacks & Railroad Tracks will take place on the second Saturday in June.

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

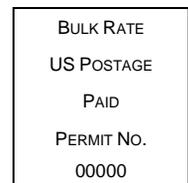
(408) 395-RIDE office EMAIL: info@bjwrr.org

Persons interested in volunteering in the machine shop may also call (408) 395-7433 or by visiting 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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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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