

IRON HORSE QUARTERLY

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

Permanent Barbecues at BJWRR

Afternoon Los Gatos Rotary Club donates barbecues to railroad.

Francesca B. Alexander
Chief Executive Officer

If you have visited us in the last few months, you may have noticed two shiny new additions to our buildings. Right next to our snack shack you will find a new barbecue structure with two brand new barbecues.



The railroad added a full barbecue menu to the snack shack back in 2007. The set up was fairly simple, there was a portable propane powered barbecue and a counter area for condiments. At the end of each shift the barbecue would be stowed away in the carousel over-night. The popularity of the barbecue was almost instant, and added a nice variety to the snacks that were already served in the snack shack. Due to the popularity it became increasingly harder to maintain a

portable barbecue without having to replace it every year; but a permanent structure was not yet on the horizon for the railroad.

Enter the afternoon Los Gatos Rotary Club. The railroad hosted a few events for the Rotary club, and saw what a benefit it would be to add a permanent barbecue structure. Plans were made within the group and then presented to the railroad. We were excited to say the least.

Rotary member Rodger Griffin recounts how the project began: "Charles [Erickson] and Tina [Orsi-Hartigan] first made contact with the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad during her term as President. The drive up to Saratoga Springs, our regular location for the BBQ, was getting a bit arduous for some of our members, especially on the ride back down the hill in the dark. The idea was to have the BBQ local and it turned out to be an opportunity to re-establish a relationship with the RR. Many years ago Bill Cilker, Sr. and Bill Mason helped secure the carousel and have it moved to its current location. In the process we found that the RR uses portable BBQ's that have to be replaced annually and there was an opportunity for a Rotary project."

The early stages of the project began in 2015. Tina Orsi-Hartigan was acting president for Rotary and during her term the club was able to raise funds to purchase the barbecues and all necessary accessories. The project continued well into Rodger Griffin's term, and the physical work was completed in 2016.

Roger Griffin recounts: "We ran into a problem when the new natural gas line was delayed and we had to switch to propane and convert back when the line is installed.

The framework for the BBQ was not delivered to the site until June 15th and then the work of installing began. Colin Duerson, Tom Dodge and Ron Cassel really stepped up to the plate to provide their construction expertise. Colin and Tom did the heavy lifting and the installation of doors, electrical, etc., while I painted the cabinet. Ron fabricated the stainless steel counter tops and we all helped with the installation.

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Progress Through Change The Final Chapter

Elizabeth Johnson
Team Member

I had heard about the woes of track work before. “You’ll be so sore that it’ll hurt to move,” the tales went. While the pain of repetitious tamping did prove some of these complaints true, I grew to love track work mainly for the time spent with friends, but also for the satisfaction and appreciation of what it takes to build and maintain a railroad. It takes serious physical labor and time just to maintain it, but even more to make major changes. Before looking through old pictures with my dad recently, I never knew that the mainline switch was moved in 1983, involving intensive track work.



The mainline switch before the big move.

Before the move, the switch was at the bottom of Squirrel Hill by the road, where the lawnmower crossing is now. While in this location, kids would often put rocks in the switch, causing regular derailments, so much so that the railroad had to hire switch tenders to specifically switch the track by hand to avoid these derailments. But Randy Jones, the track foreman at the time, had the idea to move the switch to a more public and visible location at the top of Squirrel Hill, across from a picnic table. This change involved much work, as Randy Jones custom fabricated the new switch, and volunteers and employees took several

As of August 1st, we made a final push and I’m pleased to say that the BBQ’s are in operation today.”

Once all the structures and barbecues were installed, next were safety measures to protect customers and to protect the barbecues themselves. In order to ensure customers would not touch the hot surfaces - a heat shield was constructed by railroad volunteers George Shannon and Tom Waterfall.

The heat shield is as noted a big shield that goes through the whole length of the barbecues. With this heat shield it would be very difficult for children and adults to put their hands through to touch the hot surface. The heat shield was placed with logos commemorating the collaboration between the Los Gatos Rotary and the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad.

In order to protect the barbecues themselves, Tom Waterfall fabricated two stainless steel shields to go over the barbecue knobs. The placement of the shield goes over the barbecues cover bar and below the knobs. This ensures that the barbecues cannot be opened when we are not in operation, as well as it protects the knobs from being vandalized.



The railroad began using the barbecues as soon as they were ready, and have been very productive these last few months. To put their use in perspective, in the month of September the barbecues handled the cooking of over twelve hundred hot dogs and polish, and over four hundred burgers. The railroad is also considering serving barbecue year round since we have the equipment that can withstand the demand.

On behalf of the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad, I would like to extend a big thank you for all the support the Los Gatos Rotary has shown our railroad. Not only in their tremendously generous donation of these barbecues, but as well as all of the support they have provided us and the community of Los Gatos. ♠

days to install the new track and switch. But the hard work paid off, since we have significantly fewer problems with people putting rocks in the switch at the current location.

It also took significant work to move the ticket booth when the BJWRR acquired the carousel and constructed the carousel building. Volunteers and employees transferred the ticket booth from the clock tower, which is currently a broom closet, to its present location by the carousel and carousel workshop. The current location provides much more space for the ticket seller and for retail storage, a vast improvement from the "box," as my dad called the old location. It also provides more room for customers to line up for the train. Despite the significant work involved, these two relocations improved conditions for both employees and customers.



. All photos courtesy of Dave and Elizabeth Johnson.

The changes that I have explored throughout this series demonstrate the BJWRR's constant focus on improving the experience for employees, volunteers, and customers. Yet, despite these numerous changes, the heart of the railroad has always remained the same, remaining committed to Billy Jones' vision of bringing joy to members of the community. I have been immensely blessed with the opportunity to share this experience at the railroad with my dad. When I first saw the picture below of my dad as a teenager wearing the same work uniform that I currently wear, I was reminded that thanks to Billy Jones and the faithfulness of all of the volunteers and employees throughout the years, the legacy of the railroad can still be enjoyed today. Hopefully those of us currently involved will continue this legacy for many years to come. ♠

New Passenger Car Update

Progress continues on the new passenger car built in house.

Francesca B. Alexander
Chief Executive Officer

It has been one whole year since the passenger car project began. In that year, the BJWRR volunteers have accomplished a great deal. As it stands today, the passenger car is physically completed. Since the last update, a lot has been accomplished. The car has been painted green on the outside to match with the rest of the passenger cars. The inside was painted a chocolate color- this color will eventually find its way to the other passenger cars as well. The flooring has also been installed. All air breaks are connected and the wiring for sound and lights have been completed as well.



The car also received a stamp of approval from a license engineer per DOSH requirements. Next we have DOSH themselves come out to inspect and test the car. Once DOSH has given us their stamp of approval, the car will be placed in service for all to ride.

Pasta, Movies & Pumpkins! Special Events Recap at the Railroad

Francesca B. Alexander
Chief Executive Officer

Special events at the railroad are an extra kind of fun. These events are put on as fundraisers to raise extra funds as we move into the slow season, but also as a means to introduce something different and fun to our patrons.

As we have done for the last 10 years, the summer season ended with a pasta dinner. The End of Summer Night Ride and Pasta Dinner closes out our summer season, and welcomes us into fall- just in time for pumpkins! This year the pasta dinner introduced a souvenir wine glass and sold beer and wine from the dining area. The wine glasses were a big hit, and something that we will continue to have available for future events. We had a great turn out for pasta dinner, and would like to extend a special thank you for all who support the railroad.



The railroad has its own wine glasses. Enjoy a drink of your choice in these awesome BJWRR official wine glasses!

After Pasta Dinner, the railroad collaborates with the Town of Los Gatos and presents Screen on the Green. Screen on the Green is a family movie night event, where we run the train and carousel, the town hosts a variety of children's activities, and caps the evening off with a children's movie. This year's feature presentation was Disney's Inside Out. Families from all over the city bring their blankets and

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Couplers and breaks have been installed. The two small plugs you see are for the sound system. The larger plug is for the electric. Photos courtesy of BJWRR.

The passenger car benefactor Phil Reader along with BJWRR will plan an unveiling ceremony to dedicate the car to Reader's grandparents. In true railroad fashion we will plan a fun event to welcome the car to our fleet. Stay tuned for this event as it will be announced once all certifications have been completed. ♠

Winter Schedule at BJWRR

Please note all the scheduling changes coming to the BJWRR.

Francesca B. Alexander
Chief Executive Officer

It's hard to believe that there are only 10 Fridays until Christmas! As the weather changes, and the days get shorter this will have an effect on the operating schedule at the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad.

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cuddle up to watch a movie on the Oak Meadow Lawn. This is another great and fun event for families.

Then as the leaves start to turn colors and crispness fills the air, we know it's time for pumpkins! The Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad proudly presents the third annual The Pumpkin Train. Join us for fun filled Halloween event for three weekends in October. Patrons can ride the train at dusk through spooky shadows while scary music plays in the background. Then ride in our spooky decorated carousel, once you have grabbed a sticky sweet treat from the snack shack- you can pick out your very own pumpkin to take home.

The Pumpkin Train will run Fridays through Sundays from October 7th to the 23rd 5:30 to 8:30pm. All times are weather permitting.



The BJWRR Pumpkin Patch. Pick a locally grown pumpkin at your locally grown railroad!

We are curious to see how patrons decorate their BJWRR pumpkins, and we want to see them. Upload a picture of your pumpkins to Facebook or Instagram using the hashtag #bjwrrpumpkins and who knows maybe the best entry will win a cool prize! ♠



Visit bjwrr.org for information on the Pumpkin Train! All photos courtesy of Francesca Alexander.

Starting November 1st the railroad will switch to its Winter season with the Train and Carousel open Saturdays and Sundays from 11:00am to 3:00pm. Apart from the schedule change, everything runs pretty standard in November. We do plan on extending steam season a few extra months, so as long as the weather cooperates the BJWRR will have steam in winter! Steam season was set to end at the end of October, but due to training purposes steam season will end at the end of December. The BJWRR will also be open one extra day in November- with Train and Carousel open the day after Thanksgiving November 25th from 11:00am to 3:00pm.



BJWRR WINTER CALENDAR

NOVEMBER SCHEDULE

M	T	W	TH	F	Sat	Sun
					5	6
				12	13	
				19	20	
				25	26	27

TRAIN & CAROUSEL OPEN
11:00am to 3:00pm

DECEMBER SCHEDULE

M	T	W	TH	F	Sat	Sun
			8	9	10	11
					17	18
			15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23		

TRAIN & CAROUSEL OPEN
11:00am to 3:00pm

The Holiday Train Event
6:00pm to 9:00pm

All times weather permitting

Please note BJWRR will resume regular operations on January 7th.
Open Saturdays and Sundays 11:00am to 3:00pm

In December, there will be lots of changes to the schedule. On December 3rd, the BJWRR will participate in the Los Gatos Children's Holiday Parade as well as the Campbell Carol of Lights event. Due to this participation, the railroad will remain closed for the day. On December 4th, due to a Fantasy of Lights Walk Through event in Vasona Park, the railroad will also remain closed.

The 16th Annual Holiday Train will kick off on Thursday, December 8th from 6:00 to 9:00pm. The event will run Thursdays through Sundays until the 18th, and closing week will be Monday, December 19th through Friday, December 23rd. All times 6:00 to 9:00pm, and all times weather permitting.

The Holidays this year fall on weekends so please note that the railroad will remain closed for the remainder of December, and will reopen on January 7th. As always please check bjwrr.org for all railroad updates. ♠

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

OCTOBER 7th -23rd -- THE PUMPKIN TRAIN

The Pumpkin Train will operate Fridays through Sundays starting October 7th and ending on the 23rd. Take home your very own pumpkin from our pumpkin patch open 5:30 to 8:30pm. The Train & Carousel open 5:30 to 8:30pm, as well as the snack shack open 5:30 to 8:00pm. All dates and times are weather permitting. Visit bjwrr.org for more information.

NOVEMBER 1st -- START OF WINTER SEASON

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

NOVEMBER 25th -- 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 3rd -- LOS GATOS 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 8th 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 opens Thursday, December 8th from 6:00 to 9:00pm. The event will run Thursdays through Sundays, Dec. 8th -18th. And closing week will take place Monday through Friday Dec. 19th 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.

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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Los Gatos, CA 95031-0234

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

Persons interested in volunteering in the machine shop may also call (408) 395-7433 ext. 5 or visit 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.