

IRON HORSE QUARTERLY

Volume 8, Issue 2

April 2017

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

Carousel Up and Down

It not just the horses going up and down this year.

Francesca B. Alexander
Chief Executive Officer

The W.E. "Bill" Mason Carousel made its debut at the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad on July 4th 1991. The carousel added another fun attraction to the railroad, and since its debut it has attracted over 1 million riders.



Carousel pins given out on opening day!

Much like engine #2, the carousel has a rich history that dates back to the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition, which it was specifically built for. After the exposition, the carousel became part of a traveling

circus, until it ended up collecting dust in a warehouse in San Francisco in the 80's. Bill Mason was one of the BJWRR board members who found the carousel and purchased it for the railroad. The rest is, as they say, history.

The railroad, including the carousel, has grown tremendously in the last twenty or so years. When the carousel debuted in 1991, the offices to the side of the building did not exist nor did the current ticket booth. Those additions came a few years later. Fast forward 25 years, and now two more rooms are in the process of being added to the ever growing carousel building.



The new ticket booth and carousel workshop being added to the carousel building January 2017.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1/2 Carousel Update
- 3 Volunteer Spotlight
- 4 In Memoriam
- 5 Did You Know? Carousel Edition
- 6 Calendar of Events/Contact

The addition of the two new rooms began in the fall of 2015. The carousel was fortunate enough to find volunteers interested in refurbishing the horses, but did not have enough room for more than one person to work at a time. The plans were drawn up to add two more rooms, so all the volunteers interested would have their own space to work in tandem. Unfortunately, the permitting process took much longer than anticipated, and then finally 1 year and a half later construction finally began on the new addition.

Continued on page 2

The winter of 2017 was a rough one as the inclement weather forced construction to go longer. The weather also slowed down the railroad tremendously which caused our funds to dry up, but with the support of great friends and neighbors the project continued. Donors contributed to the carousel expansion, and saw exactly what their donation contributed to. Things were looking great, and the railroad was on pace to open up a brand new ticket booth by summer. But like the horses on the carousel go, what goes up must come down.

On March 20th, 2017 after a routine inspection a major malfunction was found in the carousel structure which shut down the ride immediately. The carousel will remain closed until further notice, as we work through this issue. Hours have been spent researching companies that specialize in antique carousels, but as you can imagine there are few and far between. The railroad is working diligently in fixing this problem, and hopes that it will not take long for the carousel to run again. We do ask for your patience through this time, and there are also ways you can get involved.

Donate! The BJWRR is a 501(c) 3 certified non-profit organization and receives no outside funding. All donations are tax deductible. There are many easy ways to donate. You may send a check to the railroad at PO Box 234 Los Gatos, CA 95031. You may also drop off a check at the railroad during our normal hours of operation. Donations can also be made on the website bjwrr.org. Click on the right hand corner labeled Fundraisers and make your donation through PayPal. Any donation, big or small, helps our organization tremendously. After all, we are here because of all the wonderful donors and visitors that have supported us through the years.



Visit bjwrr.org to donate or to get involved!

If you have time but not the resources, then volunteer! The railroad is always looking for volunteers to help us on big projects. We are looking for able bodied

individuals who can push, pull, and carry up to 50 pounds who don't mind climbing ladders. Get involved today by either calling the shop at 408-395-2800 or by visiting bjwrr.org. Any help is seriously appreciated!

So here is the plan moving forward. The building addition will continue to move forward, and we do hope to unveil the new ticket booth by summer. This next month though, work will be concentrated on making sure the carousel is fixed. We are being optimistic and giving ourselves a month to fix the problem, however we ask that you check in on our progress at the beginning of May. If a month is not long enough, then we hope by the start of summer everything will be up and running.



Progress made on the carousel building expansion. The exterior needs a coat of paint, and should be completed.

Send us some positive vibes as we weather through this storm, and start thinking of the horse you want to ride when the W.E. "Bill" Mason Carousel runs again.



Volunteer Spotlight

Volunteer and Board Member Bob Poli

Francesca B. Alexander
Chief Executive Officer

The lifeline of the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad is the staff of volunteers who donate their time and talents. Our Tuesday crew comes in every week, and always ensures that all engines, passenger cars, etc. are in working order for operations. Bob Poli joined our staff five years ago, and in that time has accomplished quite a bit as a BJWRR volunteer. A year into his work at the railroad he became a member of the Board of Directors, and two years after that he was one of the volunteers responsible for building the new passenger car Live Oak. Let's hear from Bob how his experience has been so far.



IHQ: How did you learn about the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad?

BP: By visiting the park and seeing the RR in operation. When a friend wanted to attend the Tuesday volunteer group, I decided to also give it a try.

IHQ: What made you want to get involved with this organization?

BP: I have always been involved in railroads, both model and prototype. Billy Jones is a combination of both.

IHQ: How has your experience been so far?

BP: It's been about five years since I started volunteering. I enjoy working on the equipment and helping to keep these great pieces of history operational. Also, building new rolling stock, like the passenger car we recently constructed,

is very satisfying. But, mainly getting together with a bunch of likeminded individuals has been an interesting adventure. We have a bunch of very talented individuals that somehow seem to work well together.

IHQ: What made you want to join the Board of Directors?

BP: I thought my interest in railroads and mechanical construction could be an asset to the board. Actually, it was for the free breakfast once a month!

IHQ: What do you hope to accomplish at the BJWRR?

BP: I think most of the volunteers enjoy seeing the Railroad move forward with additions they are directly responsible for. I just hope what contributions we make keep the trains running and encourage new riders and visitors to come to the park. The other attraction at the park is the carousel. We have a fine group that provides much needed upkeep and restoration to the beautiful horses and complex mechanism that animates their movement.

IHQ: Could you give some background on yourself?

BP: I retired several years ago. My main work involved designing electro-mechanical medical devices. These included I.V. pumps, blood oxygen analyzers, catheters, and various disposable accessories. I was fortunate enough to have my career span a time when opportunities to participate in new technologies were plentiful. It was very satisfying to see the advancements made in the industry.

Bob has been a wonderful asset to this organization, donating his time and his talents. The railroad is fortunate to have someone as passionate as Bob overseeing that this historical gem continued to operate for years and years to come. ♠

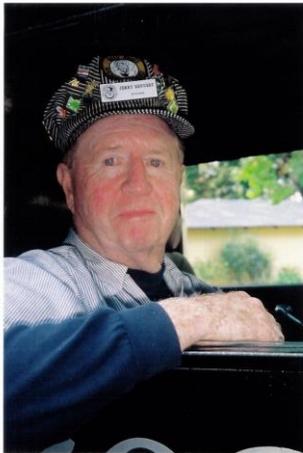


Bob Poli on the left testing out the structure of Live Oak. Photo courtesy of CJ Vargas.

In Memoriam
BJWRR Volunteer & Board Member
Gerald "Jerry" Kennedy

Francesca B. Alexander
Chief Executive Officer

Gerald "Jerry" Kennedy was one of the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad forefathers as the organization began in 1968. Jerry was involved at the railroad for a very long time, and held many positions within the organization. He retired from the organization in the early 2000's. Sadly, he passed away on March 5th at the age of 84.



Jerry Kennedy engineering 2502

Jerry Kennedy through his career at the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad held a variety of positions. On the board of directors, he served as secretary and treasurer, until he stepped down to take on the executive director position. As executive director he was in charge of daily operations of the railroad. He is also talked about as a legend among the managers for not only engineering but managing during busy operating days. This is not an easy task; I can assure you from experience. But Jerry did it, and he did it well and often.

Perhaps one of the biggest things Jerry accomplished at the railroad, you know aside from everything, was the carousel project. Jerry was one of many who had a hand it putting the carousel back together. A project that spanned 10 years, Jerry was involved from the groundbreaking for the building to tightening the very last bolt.



Jerry Kennedy (second from the left) pictured with some board members including Bill Ulleseit, Bill Mason, and Mike Kotowski at the ground breaking for the carousel building.

And is all those accomplishments were not enough; Jerry even found love at the railroad. In the late 80's the railroad was in search of a bookkeeper, and Jerry helped the quest in finding one. As fate would have it, the woman who became the bookkeeper for the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad would also become Jerry's wife. Jerry and Jane Kennedy met and fell in love at the railroad, and were married for 26 years.

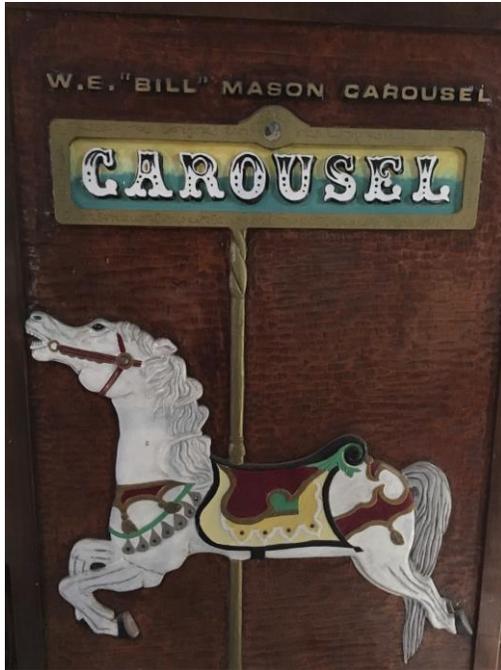


Jerry and Jane Kennedy sitting along side Jim Sugai at the carousel 100th birthday celebration.

Jerry was a very kind man who was always willing to help. He never hesitated to help me with the big boxes every time I was at the Kennedy household working with Jane on the finances. He even helped me jump start my car when it wouldn't start in their driveway. He will surely be missed. ♠

"May the road rise to meet you, may the wind always be at your back, may the sun shine warm upon your face, the rain fall soft upon your fields, and until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of his hands". Irish Blessing

Did You Know? W.E. "Bill" Mason Carousel Edition



This machine was manufactured in 1910 by Savage, an English roundabout manufacturer and turns clockwise, which was the custom in Europe.

The roundabout was manufactured for use at the Panama-Pacific Exposition which was to be held in San Francisco in 1915. The machine was shipped around the horn of South America before the Panama Canal opened. Offloaded in Los Angeles, California, it moved via rail to San Francisco in time for the exposition's opening.

After the exposition, the roundabout became part of an unknown traveling circus. In the early 1930's, Foley & Burke Shows purchased the machine. It was then called a "merry-go-round" as a part of an American traveling carnival show. Foley & Burke Shows retired the machine to a warehouse in 1967.

When Savage had many roundabout orders to fill and found his own horse inventory too low, horses were purchased from G&J Lines, C.J. Spooner (an English toy manufacturer), and a French horse carver named Bajol. The Bajol horses had double faceted jewels mounted in the bezels. Some of the jewels were installed with mirrors behind them. English roundabout manufacturers never mounted jewels in their horse carvings.

The inside row of horses were manufactured by G&J Lines. The outside row consists of the larger hand

carved horses by Bajol.

Foley & Burke Shows replaced the complete middle row of horses due to deterioration beyond repair. The row is now composed of five C.W. Parkers, two Dares, and two Armitage-Herschel horses.

Originally, the machine was hung from the top of a tall steel center pole that had to be hoisted upright by many people and an elephant. An "A" frame type of structure had to first be constructed and then, through the use of block and tackle, the center post could be hoisted up on end. Four outriggers were attached to the post above the midpoint, extended outwardly at the bottom to keep the post upright. Each of the outriggers was attached to one of four spokes that extended out parallel with the ground from the base of the center pole.

Due to the hours spent on assembly and disassembly as well as handling problems of a heavy one-piece center post, the Savage was converted to a hinged post mounted on a GMC circus wagon in 1937.

Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad purchased the merry-go-round in late 1980 and instead referred to it as a "carousel" because of its stationary installation. Restoration began in 1981 starting with the horses. There are twenty-eight hand carved wooden horses along with two fiberglass resin replica horses as well as two chariots.



When Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad acquired the carousel, the horses were in such bad shape that each volunteer spent over 200 hours refurbishing one horse.

The carousel found its forever home at the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad in Oak Meadow Park, Los Gatos, California. ♠

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

APRIL -- STEAM SEASON RESUMES

Engine #2 and Engine #5 take on the bulk of weekend operations. Check on our Facebook for daily updates of what engines will run.

MAY 29th – MEMORIAL DAY

The train and carousel will be open Monday, May 29 from 10:30am to 4:30pm in observance of Memorial Day. Honor those who have given their lives in service of this country and spend a warm day with your friends and family at the park.

JUNE 7th – START OF SUMMER SEASON

The train and carousel will be open daily from 10:30am to 4:30pm until mid-August.

JUNE 10th – FLAPJACKS & RAILROAD TRACKS PANCAKE BREAKFAST

Help us kick off summer with early morning rides on the train & carousel, and a delicious pancake breakfast. Our 11th Annual Flapjacks & Railroad Tracks Pancake Breakfast is set for June 10th from 8:00am to 10:15am.

JULY - RIDER APPRECIATION MONTH!

We take the whole month of July to thank you! Carousel day and Billy Jones day will serve as bookends to our rider appreciation month, with T-shirts Friday right in between.

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

Office line: (408) 395-RIDE Shop line: (408)395-2800

EMAIL: info@bjwrr.org

Persons interested in volunteering in the machine shop may also call (408) 395-2800 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. All contributions are tax deductible.