

Owens Valley Railway Company Newsletter

Volume I No. 4

BRILL CAR RESTORATION

We started back to work on the car in August, and have nearly finished the riveting of the new sheet metal to the skeleton of the car. The riveting of the new sheet metal has been completed on the sides of the car and both sides and the frame has been painted with primer.

We have the ends of the car partly riveted. We have had problems with the snaps breaking, and as soon as we get some new snap tools made for the rivet guns, and the corner pieces for the car body formed, we can finish the riveting phase. The corner pieces need to be roll formed and we finally found a shop in San Diego that has the equipment to properly form these corner pieces. The new air tanks have been ordered, and some of the crew is working on cleaning up and repairing the radiator.

On Saturday December 8 we were able to jack up the car body and roll/slide the trucks out from under it. The brakes are frozen with rust and dirt, but now we can work on them, and getting the trucks generally cleaned up and repainted. Work is progressing along, although we will be taking a break for the Christmas and New Years holiday period.

PROPOSED RAIL LINE TO BISHOP PARK

Our goal of eventually running a rail line to the Bishop City Park and running the Brill Car between Laws museum and the park as a tourist attraction is still progressing, however slowly, it is still chugging along. It might be referred to as "Bureaucracy in Action". Between working with Cal Trans and Inyo County, things are going forward, but of course, not at our desired pace. We were hoping to have this built by now, and we are still in the beginning phases. Working with all the government entities has become quite the challenge. It is very frustrating, but we continue to go forward.

In the recent update to both the City of Bishop and the Local Transportation Commission's 20 year Master Plan, our rail line was included! However, the Inyo County Airport Master Plan failed to include our rail line. All of our input was ignored. We were promised however, that the County could amend the Master Plan at a later date. We could not understand at the time, why would you have to amend a Master Plan that, even to this date, has not been approved yet?

It turns out that the old Owens Valley Electric Railway right of way runs too close to one of the runways and may be within the required FAA safety zone. This is our preferred route, but we continue to explore alternate routes. We will keep you all posted on our progress.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE LAWS MUSEUM

The Laws Railroad Museum is located at the site of the former Laws Station and Yard on the old Southern Pacific Railroad narrow gauge Laws-Keeler Branch. This 70 mile -long branch line was all that remained of the Carson & Colorado Railroad, which originally ran from Mound House Nevada (near Carson City) To Keeler California on the shore of Owens Lake. The Southern Pacific took over the line in the early 20th century and operated the line until April 29, 1960, when the line was finally abandoned. The S.P. gave Inyo County 12 acres of land containing most of the Laws railroad yard and buildings. The S.P. also donated the steam engine and several cars you see at the museum.

Soon after the line was abandoned, local resident Lois Clemons and several others formed the Bishop Museum and Historical Society with the goal of preserving and protecting local history for future generations. The Society worked with Inyo County and the City of Bishop to form the Railroad Museum at Laws. The museum opened in 1966 with the old railroad buildings and the old donated S.P. rolling stock on display. Over the years the Museum has relocated many local historic buildings and other historic artifacts to the museum grounds, and these are now on display daily all year long.

MORE HISTORY ITEMS NEEDED

If any of you out there have any information about the history of the Death Valley Railroad, its equipment, customers, owners, etc., we would appreciate hearing from you. We know the line ran between Death Valley Junction and Ryan, and we know the car we are restoring ran on the line from 1927 to 1931, but not much else. Please contact Jim Morrow with any information you may have.

DUES ARE DUE

Some members have not yet sent in their dues for 2001/2002 (our fiscal year ends June 30). We have included an application form for those that have not sent in their dues. If you do not get an application form it means you have paid your dues and we thank you very much for your continued support of our efforts to bring a tourist railroad to Bishop.

