

Owens Valley Railway Company Newsletter

Volume II No. 1

BRILL CAR RESTORATION

Through the winter, some of the crew worked on cleaning and dismantling the trucks, and hanging the corner pieces, as well as continuing to clean the rust and dirt accumulation from the inside of the car body. In the past few weeks we have finished priming the car body, the rear truck, and many miscellaneous parts. The riveting is completed on the front of the car, and almost finished on the rear. We have also placed the sub floor inside the car. Soon we will hang the air lines and the air tanks, and after putting the final coat of black on the rear truck and reassembling it, we will be able to put it back under the car. We have started work on cleaning and dismantling the front (drive) truck, and should have it ready to re-install in a few weeks. Now we are getting ready to start on replacing much of the wood in the window and doorframes, and the roof. The interior woodwork will be like a giant puzzle to put back together, but we have photos, drawings and most of the old pieces to use in reproducing the interior to the original factory finish.

There are many small parts missing and we will need to find replacements for those. Many of the parts needed are located in the Midwest or farther east where most of the Brill Company's cars operated. We have found parts in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Iowa. Luckily Jim Pittman found two kerosene marker lamps in mint condition on e-Bay, and was successful at getting them. They will be converted to electricity and used on the car. Some of the smaller missing parts may have to be custom made by a local machinist or craftsman. If anyone reading this newsletter knows of where we can find any Brill car parts please let us know!

We can always use more volunteer help, so if you can come out to the train barn on any Monday or Saturday, we can use your help for what ever time you can spare. Some of us are usually there at about 9:00 or 9:30. You don't need to be an expert mechanic or skilled craftsman of any sort. None of the volunteer crew is! We did not know we would become proficient at riveting and metal work, nor professionals at disassembly of railroad equipment, but the crew has encountered many new and exciting demands on our talents, and we are learning all we can to do the job right

THE DEATH VALLEY RAILROAD

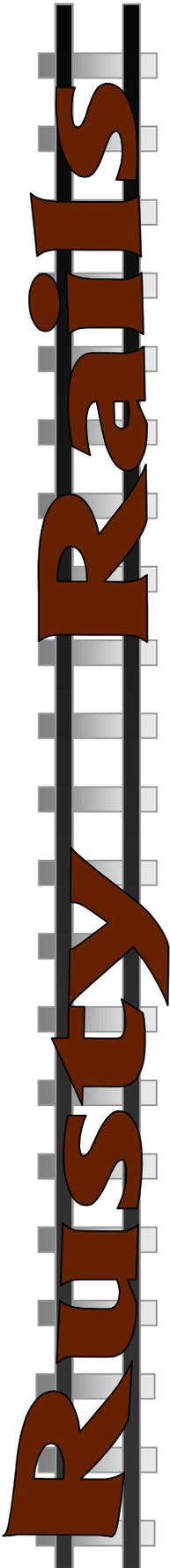
In spite of what you may have recently read in the Inyo Register, the Brill car never ran on the Carson and Colorado Railroad. It did, however, run on the Death Valley Railroad from 1927 to 1930. The Death Valley Railroad was incorporated in 1914. It ran from Death Valley Junction, Nevada, where it interchanged with the standard gauge Tonopah and Tidewater RR, to Ryan, CA in Death Valley, a distance of a little over 20 miles. The Borax Consolidated Ltd., company of London, England owned the railroad.

At first the Death Valley RR was used to transport only borax down to Death Valley Junction. With growing public interest in the Death Valley area, Pacific Coast Borax Co. set out in 1925 to explore ways to promote tourism in the valley. The company concluded a new hotel would be a good investment. A newly formed Death Valley Hotel Co. built the now famous Furnace Creek Inn in 1927 and it aggressively promoted tourist business. Both the Union Pacific and Santa Fe railroads agreed to promote packaged tours from November 1st to May 1st to the valley, with newspaper and magazine advertising.

The Santa Fe Ry. would drop off their Pullman cars at Ludlow, CA, and the Union Pacific RR would set their cars off at Crucero, CA. The Tonopah and Tidewater RR would then pick up the Pullman cars and proceed to Death Valley Junction. After arrival at Death Valley Junction, passengers were escorted to a restaurant for breakfast, and then they would board the narrow gauge Death Valley RR Brill car #5. This was a 38-passenger gas powered car manufactured by the J. G. Brill Company, and was put into service on February 16, 1927.

Leaving the Junction in the Brill car, tourists enjoyed the exciting 21-mile ride, crossing trestles, climbing and curving its way across the desert and through the Funeral Mountains. After a one hour and five minute ride they arrived at the town of Ryan, which was a mining camp at 3000 feet elevation, where they were treated to a spectacular view of the surrounding valley floor and mountain ranges.

The Brill car #5 was the second passenger car to operate on the Death Valley RR. The first car was #4, an old coach and baggage combination car, which was sold in 1920. The rest of the motive power on the Death Valley RR were two Baldwin 2-8-0 Consolidated Locomotives built in June 1914. One of those locomotives is on display at the Furnace Creek Museum.



THE DEATH VALLEY RAILROAD (continued)

In 1929 the Pacific Coast Borax Co. decided to discontinue the Death Valley RR operations. Trains #1 and #2 ran their last trips to Ryan on February 21, 1930. The entire railroad, equipment, and track was moved to Carlsbad, New Mexico where it was used at the U. S. potash operations. In 1968 Brill car #5 was moved to the Laws Railroad Museum, and is now being restored.

(Member Paul Thompson submitted the above historical information.)

PUBLICITY EFFORTS

President Jerry Core, and Secretary Jon Anderson have been working with Bob Tomko, and have developed a ten-minute slide show promoting our tourist railroad project. The program includes a pictorial view of Laws Museum, scenic views from our proposed route, and some of the progress on the restoration of the Brill car. The show also includes some of our past projects such as construction of the Train Barn and transportation of the four miles of rail we have acquired. The slide show presently is in a Power Point computer program format, but will soon be converted to video. To date, the program has been presented to the Bishop City Council, the Bishop Lions Club, the Bishop Rotary Club, and the Owens Valley Cruisers car club.

NEW PROJECTS

Down stream from the Tinnemaha Reservoir is an old bridge crossing the Owens River. The S.P. Narrow Gauge RR built the bridge when it re-routed its line around the reservoir in 1927. The bridge presently belongs to the Union Pacific RR, and that company has offered to sell it to the Owens Valley Railway Co. for one dollar. The catch is the OVRC has to remove it. We are presently working on the environmental clearances, and necessary permits and insurance. We plan to remove the bridge in the fall of 2002. The plan is to relocate this bridge to a site on the Owens River south of Highway 6 and just west of the museum. It will be another wonderful display of Owens Valley railroad history as part of the Laws Museum, and will be utilized by our future rail line to Bishop City Park. The Bishop Rotary Club has generously donated \$2000 for expenses related to the bridge removal.

COMING EVENTS

The OVRC is planning to have a booth at the Mule Days Craft Fair, and we will be looking for volunteers to take turns in the booth. Contact Jon Anderson or Jerry Core if you can help out.

This might almost be a new project, but as part of the environmental work for removal of the bridge, Research Biologist Patricia Berry will conduct a bat and swallow survey at the bridge. Members are invited to come and observe how it is done. Interested parties should contact Jerry Core for details.

Mark your calendars! The annual Good Old Days celebration will be taking place at the Laws Museum on July 27. Come visit us at the Train Barn, see the restoration progress first hand, and enjoy an afternoon of fun and frivolity at the museum.

The Owens Valley Railway Company, Inc., will be holding it's general membership meeting and election of two Board members in August. The exact date has not been set, but stay tuned, because the meeting is open to all members whose dues are paid up current. Jim Saylor and Jerry Core are the two Directors whose terms are up for re-election or replacement. If you are interested in running for election to the Board of Directors, please submit your name and a brief statement of your qualifications to Jon Anderson, the Secretary of the Board.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

2002-2003 dues will be due in June, just two months away. Some members have already paid their next years' dues, while some of you have not yet paid last year's dues. We will be dropping from our mailing list those of you that have not kept your membership current, by the time of the next newsletter. Secretary Jon Anderson will be contacting those of you that are past due.

