



# The TURNTABLE

July 2011

NEWSLETTER FOR THE PAID & VOLUNTEER STAFF OF RAILTOWN 1897 STATE HISTORIC PARK

## Upcoming Events

### July 2, 3, & 4th

Special rides, games, and demonstrations on Monday. Over 200 visitors from the National Model Railroaders will join us.

### July 7

Ladies Luncheon  
11:30am Papa's Roost  
Call Marge 533-4595

### July 16

Modesto Jr. College  
Western Movie Shoot  
6:30am—2pm (need  
costumed greeters)

### July 23

Mark Twain Program  
*"The trouble starts under  
the tulip tree at 4pm"*  
Mark Twain Train  
@5pm

### July 27

Volunteer Picnic at  
Pinecrest, 3pm and after  
Call Dottie, for info @  
533-8483

### August 4

Ladies Luncheon  
11:30am at the C & C  
Restaurant in James-  
town. Call Marge @  
533-4595

### August 6

2nd Annual Singing  
Rails Festival  
(gates open at 4pm)  
Coyote Hill @ 5:30  
Laurie Lewis @ 7pm

### August 27

Meals On Wheels  
Benefit Event

## Velocipede Hand-Cars

Many varieties of hand-powered railcars exist, and it cannot be determined who first invented this style of equipment. The railroad velocipede on display at Railtown was invented by George S. Sheffield, of Three Rivers, Michigan and patented in 1879. Sheffield, who was a cabinetmaker, lived on the rail line 7 miles from town; invented it to use as a scooter to get to town. The velocipede is made of wood and iron and weights about 140 lbs., which is light enough for one man to turn alone. Powered by both hand and foot levers, they were used in the USA and Europe for railroad signal inspection and maintenance. Additionally, other uses included mail delivery in some areas and telegraph delivery. It was particularly helpful for inspecting track as it was faster than walking, but allowed the inspector a good view of the track.

A description of how track inspectors used velocipedes is included in the 1897 book *The American Railway*:

*One of the habitués of every station is the **section-master**, who looks after three, five, or ten miles of track and a gang of from five to twenty-five men who keep it in repair. He is not much seen, because he is out on the road most of the time; and his duties are not of a kind that the reader could study, on paper, to much advantage; but he deserves mention because his place is a really important one. Railroad tracks . . . must be constantly watched to see that they do not fall even a little below their highest standard. This care-taking can be entrusted only to one who has had long experience at the work. In violent rain-storms the trackman must be on duty night and day and **patrol the whole length of his division** to see that gravel is not washed over the track or out from under it. Though roughly dressed and sun burnt, he is an important personage in the eye of the engineer of a fast ex-*



**GEO. S. SHEFFIELD & CO.,**  
THREE RIVERS, MICH.  
MANUFACTURERS OF  
**Velocipede Hand-Cars.**

The lightest and easiest-running hand-car made. Every car warranted to give satisfaction, or no sale. Send for particulars and prices.

## The Pelton Water Wheel - Dave Connery

In looking for something else completely unrelated in the Sierra Railway Valuation papers at the California State Archives, I happened to notice in the Listing of Shop Machinery and Tools in the Jamestown Machine Shop, the following entry:

*Water Wheel, Pelton, 18" Wheel, Masonry base (with a note "replaced by motor"). The line above the Pelton Wheel entry is the following: Electric Motor, General Electric 20 H.P. 900 RPM 440 Volt, 3 Phase, 60 Cycle AC, induction motor, starting compressor, Ammeter, switch board, etc., masonry base.*

The Valuation was part of the California Railroad Commission effort to Place a value on every railroad in California to be used for the setting of appropriate rates for rail shipments in the state. This sheet is dated December 1912 and signed by William Newell.

I think this is rather conclusive evidence that indeed, a water wheel was used to power the Machine Shop overhead belt system prior to the acquisition of the current motor. Just where the Water Wheel was mounted and how the water was supplied for it, remains uncertain. This slightly changes the information shown in our current Interpreters Pocket Guidebook.

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**The Pelton wheel** was invented by Lester Allan Pelton in the 1870's. It was considered one of the more efficient types of water turbines. The wheel extracts energy from the impulse or momentum of moving water, as opposed to using its weight like the traditional overshot water wheel. The water leaving these traditional wheels typically had a high speed and carried much of the energy. Pelton's paddle geometry was designed so that when the rim runs at 1/2 speed of the water jet, the water leaves the wheel with very little speed, extracting almost all of its energy, and allowing for a very efficient turbine.

(Wikipedia)

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### Railtown News

#### Volunteer Picnic at Pinecrest

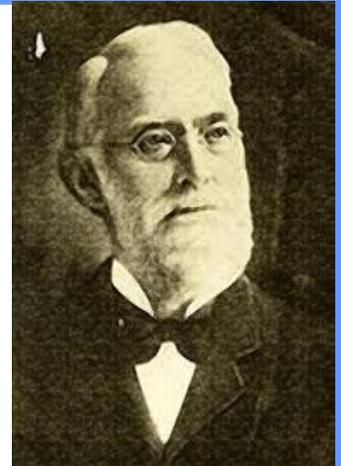
All volunteers are welcome to our annual picnic under the pines at Pinecrest Lake. Come anytime at 3pm or after, bring your own meat, drinks and a side dish to share (also eating utensils and lawn chairs). Picnic will be on the left hand side by the second bathroom. Call Dottie for more information at 533-8483.

#### California State Fair Volunteers Needed

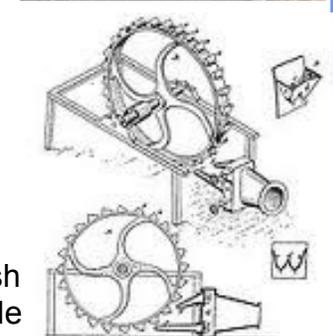
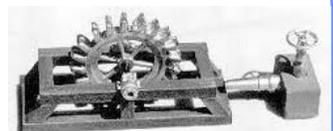
The Tuolumne County Visitors Bureau is seeking volunteers to work the Tuolumne County booth at this year's State Fair which will be held July 14th through the 31st. If interested call Sandy Gordon at 533-4420. Get into the fair for free.

#### Modesto Junior College Western Movie Shoot

Costumed greeters are needed July 16 from 6:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. as background 'extras'. If interested email or call the volunteer office, 984-4408.



Lester Allan Pelton



### Dan Maher—Volunteer of The Month

Working in a historical roundhouse is a special opportunity these days, especially since ours is one of only two continuously operating in the nation. Dan is with us almost every Tuesday working amidst the ancient dirt and grease. “Our roundhouse is original and authentic. When you’re there you become mesmerized and immersed in the history, smell, taste and feeling of the old days.”

When Dan Maher was a kid growing up in Portland, Oregon, his family lived only a half mile from the tracks. He said it was an “irresistible natural calling” and he would ride his bike often down to the local train depot and hang out. He loved to watch the trains go by and was even treated to a cab ride now and then. At 19 he moved to San Francisco and worked as a dispatcher for the Southern Pacific for seven years and also in various supervisory positions in the trucking industry, including management, sales and dispatching. For 15 years he was in a rail fan club while living in San Francisco (the California Nevada Railway Historical Society). He first encountered the Sierra Railway in 1961. His group, along with the Central Coast Railway Club, sponsored a special excursion ride from Oakdale to Tuolumne City. The trip featured four steam engines, the #3, #28, the Pickering Lumber Company’s Shay #11 and a standard gauge Heisler locomotive, (West Side Lumber #3).



Tired of living in the Bay Area, he moved to a cabin up in the tall pines with his wife Pat, in 1982. Reading articles in the local newspapers about volunteer opportunities in the Mother Lode brought him to Railtown in 2002 and he’s been here working on our engines ever since. Dan also volunteers on weekends at Big Trees State Park on the Trail Patrol, encouraging visitors to stay on the pathways and watching out for anyone defacing the park. For the last 7 years he has fallen into the routine of working in the roundhouse and is often seen with his fellow workers Ron Sloan, David Tadlock, David Ethier and others I like everybody and getting to know the management, the volunteers and the visitors. It’s a very special place!” Thanks Dan!



### The Railtown Mailbag:

“I had a great experience at your museum on 6/14/2011 ! Your tour guide, Leroy, made our tour an incredible experience! You are very lucky to have him as a volunteer. Just a great tour and museum! Thank you for preserving the history!  
(from Daniel, Santa Rosa)



“It was my first time to ride the train with my 13 month old daughter and husband on Father’s Day. It was wonderful!!! We loved it. It was very nostalgic, and informative. It was beautiful scenery, weather, and the crew had the most positive attitude.”

Everybody was an absolute pleasure to be around and I would recommend this adventure to anyone. We loved the gift shop. We hope to come back for more train rides, and when we get our car oil changed, we will think of this State Park!! Thank you for a great Father’s Day.  
(from Candice, Sonora)



**RAILTOWN 1897**  
State Historic Park

**PO Box 1250**

**Jamestown, CA 95327**

**Return Service Requested**



**TO:**



**Depot Store-** (209) 984-3953

**Docent Hotline-** (209) 984-4408

**Docent Site-** <http://railtown.team.parks.ca.gov/volunteers>

**Railtown Blog-** [www.railtown1897.wordpress.com](http://www.railtown1897.wordpress.com)



**Railtown Paid and Volunteer Staff Contact Information**

*Newsletter submissions: [RailtownNews@parks.ca.gov](mailto:RailtownNews@parks.ca.gov)*

*(all area codes are 209)*

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<b>Kevin Zimmerman</b> , Asst. Railroad Operations Manager	557-0294	<a href="mailto:kzimmerman@parks.ca.gov">kzimmerman@parks.ca.gov</a>
<b>Lisa Smithson</b> , State Park Curator I (DER)	984-3119	<a href="mailto:lsmithson@parks.ca.gov">lsmithson@parks.ca.gov</a>
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<b>Kevin Zimmerman</b> , Engine Crew Caller	557-0294	<a href="mailto:kzimmerman@parks.ca.gov">kzimmerman@parks.ca.gov</a>
<b>Ron White</b> , Stationmaster and Asst. Crew Caller for Car Hosts	551-7087	<a href="mailto:rbarryw@att.net">rbarryw@att.net</a>
<b>Carl Rudolph</b> , Crew Caller Fire Patrol	586-9905	<a href="mailto:cakr@sonnet.com">cakr@sonnet.com</a>
<b>Laverne Coon</b> , Special Decorations and Ticket Agent Caller	984-4408	

*Newsletter Available in Alternative Format on Request*