

SAGEBRUSH HEADLIGHT

VOL. 25, NO. 1, 86th Edit.

NEWSLETTER OF THE NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM

SPRING 2004

Gordon Sampson and *The End of Days*



**G o r d o n
S a m p s o n a n d
V i r g i n i a
& T r u c k e e s e c -
r e t a r y M r s .
E n g l i s h a t t h e
C a r s o n C i t y
G e n e r a l M a n -
a g e r s o f f i c e .
1 9 4 0 s .**

*Photo: Sampson
Collection
NSRM.*

By Bryan K. Berry, Collections Volunteer

The following is the first of two parts of a letter written by Gordon A. Sampson to Leslie H. Moore, President of the Virginia & Truckee Railway. Sampson was Vice-President, Director, and General Manager of Operations for the Virginia & Truckee Railway during the railroad's final years. Sampson refers to Duncan A. McLeod, Director and Secretary for the Virginia & Truckee Railway, and Roy C. Gasser, Chief Counsel, for the Mills Estate.

*The letter discusses the condition of the railway and the attempts to abandon or sell the railway. This letter is part of the **Sampson Collection** purchased for the Nevada State Railroad Museum by the Friends of the Nevada State Railroad Museum in 2003. The second part of this letter will appear in the next issue of the **Sagebrush Headlight**.*

Sept. 22, 1948

Mr. Leslie H. Moore, President
Virginia & Truckee Railway

Mills Building
San Francisco, California.

Dear Mr. Moore:

As you no doubt are aware, I have just received instructions from Mr. Duncan A. McLeod to report at San Francisco. I presume that my presence in San Francisco is desired for the purpose of discussions pertaining to the sale of this Railway's properties, the necessary applications for abandonment, and the method under which

- Continued on page 4

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The Nevada State Railroad Museum is an agency of the Nevada Department of Cultural Affairs

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Symposium 2004 Yerington to Wurm: Building and Preserving the Past

The Friends of the Nevada State Railroad Museum invites you to attend the 33rd Annual Virginia and Truckee Railroad Symposium held at the Carson Nugget, October 14-17, 2004. Symposium topics will include Nevada and regional narrow gauge railroads, an update on the V&T re-build project, and a tribute to Ted Wurm. This year's special event on Thursday, October 14, is a night time photography session featuring the V&T No. 27.

For an application please contact Weldon Hill at 775/246-0914; welbethyl@aol.com or John Frink at 775/687-6953; jfrink@clan.lib.nv.us.

Plan to attend Symposium 2004!

NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM 2004 OPERATING SCHEDULE

STEAM UPS

May 15-16 (Saturday & Sunday) Armed Forces Day
May 29-30-31 (Saturday, Sunday & Monday) Memorial Day
June 12-13 (Saturday & Sunday) Steam Up
June 19-20, (Saturday & Sunday).....Fathers Day
July 3-4-5, (Saturday, Sunday & Monday).....Independence Day

Steam Train operates 10:00 am - 4:00 pm
Fares: Adults, \$4.00, Children 6-11, \$2.00, 5 and under FREE
SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Past Issues of *Sagebrush Headlight* Now Available Copies are limited

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Also available for \$1.00:
1st Edition V & T Restoration Co. News 1972

If you are interested in purchasing a back issue, please call Melissa Hogue at 687-6953 or email mahogue@clan.lib.nv.us.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends-

The year 2003 was a busy one at the Museum with new acquisitions, new exhibits, and numerous new programs, which were initiated by the staff and volunteers.

The new platform around the Wabuska Depot is a real asset. It has been a long time coming and is well worth the wait. The first real test, upon its completion, was during Santa Train and it proved to be a big success with the public and the volunteers. The decking was donated by the manufacturer Trex, Meeks, a local building supply company and ORE-PAC. In addition, the Friends contributed the necessary funds for its completion. The staff, with the assistance of volunteers, constructed the deck, creating a large savings.

In 2004, the Friends need to work on increasing our membership, so that we can continue and increase our support to the Museum. Our membership dues are the single largest producer of our yearly income. If every member would contact and bring in one new member, we would be able to double our financial commitment and quite possibly double our volunteer participation. Remember, the Museum relies heavily on our involvement. Therefore, we all need to contribute as much as possible to make sure that the goals of the Friends are met. As members, we all have that ability. So let's resolve to bring in one new member this year. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Here's hoping to see you soon at one of the many great activities at the Museum. So long for now, see you soon.

- Ron Allen, President.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Steam Ups

May 15-16
May 29-31
June 12-13
June 19-20
July 3-5

Wed. Evening Programs

April 14:

The Divorce Seekers

May 12:

*The Oregon-American Lumber Co.
Ain't No More*

Motor Car Training

April 30, May 1-2

Friends Board Meetings

April 1
June 3

Symposium

October 14-17

*For information about any of the events,
please call 775/687-6953*

Volunteer Reception

A reception to honor and thank the Museum's volunteers was held on Friday evening, March 5, at the Nevada State Library and Archives. One hundred and two people attended the reception and enjoyed good food and conversation. The highlight of the evening was the awarding of certificates and badges by Department of Cultural Affairs Interim Director Scott Sisco,

Acting Museum Director Dan Thielen, and Program Coordinator John Frink.

In 2003, 111 volunteers donated a grand total of 18,231 hours of their time to the Museum. This was 2,302 hours more than were donated in 2002, and is the equivalent of nine full-time employees! Twenty-seven volunteers have contributed 250 to 1750 hours and fourteen have contributed 2000 to

3750 hours.

Although it is often said in the museum business, in the case of the Nevada State Railroad Museum it really is true, we could not keep our doors open without the work of all of our volunteers. The Museum staff is very grateful for the volunteers' help, their willingness to take on even the most daunting projects, and their ability to be cheerful while doing it!

we shall continue to operate during the abandonment proceedings.

The time has now come for me to go on record with you, as President of this Railway, as to certain matters of which I have the better knowledge at the present time. I desire to do this as a protection to all concerned. I have special reference to the remaining months of our operations during which we will be faced with winter conditions. What I wish to report to you is given under three classifications.

1. Our roadbed and motive power.
2. The sale of our properties to outside parties and the resultant application on our part for abandonment.
3. The true value of our properties in the event of a liquidation.

1. Our roadbed and motive power

Roadbed - On February 14, 1948 I wrote Mr. McLeod as to two derailments in our Carson City yards due to crystallized broken rails. I took this opportunity to state and I quote, "Our entire mileage of rail is worn out and obsolete and thus subject to breakage at any moment."

On March 6th, 1948 I enclosed in a letter to Mr. McLeod the minutes of a special meeting of department heads held on February 18, when the condition of the roadbed and motive power was discussed. This letter also outlined a program of extra reconditioning to be placed into effect during the first six months of the current year, in order to produce some reasonable safety factor.

Under the same date a second letter was written to Mr. McLeod which dealt with the increased tare weight in the modern rolling stock and what effect this additional weight had on our inadequate roadbed.

Under the same date a third letter was written to Mr. McLeod reporting additional derailments due to broken rail and a progress report covering what reconditioning had been accomplished to date.

On April 14, 1948 I enclosed in a letter to Mr. McLeod the minutes of a meeting of

department heads held on March 17, 1948. These minutes referred to the reconditioning of the track and roadbed, and also our master mechanic's report on replacement power.

On May 14, 1948 I wrote Mr. McLeod as to the progress in reconditioning the roadbed, stating that the additional M. & S. crew would continue to be employed until June 15, 1948.



Crystallized rail from the Virginia and Truckee Railroad. Note the lamination and separation. NSRM Collection

On April 14, 1948 a second letter was written to Mr. McLeod having further reference to the roadbed, the necessity of replacing at least 10,000 ties in the current year; the replacement of worn out 56 pound rail between switches; the installation of point switches; and much leveling and resurfacing.

On May 12, 1948 I wrote Mr. McLeod enclosing road master Yahning's report dated May 10, 1948 as to rail replacement requirements. Special reference was made to worn out crystallized 1874 - 56 pound rail. This letter stated that I had placed an order for 150 tons of 62 pound rail with the General Manager of the S.P. Co. for the purpose of replacing the 1874 rail located in the main line between switches.

On June 23, 1948 I wrote Mr. McLeod asking for definite instructions as to under what conditions the Railway would operate in the future. I requested his presence in Carson City in order that he could make a personal examination. I referred to Mr. McLeod's having canceled our order with the S.P. Co. for 150 tons of badly needed 62 pound rail.

On July 7, 1948 I wrote Mr. McLeod reporting two additional derailments. A second letter of July 7, 1948 stated the necessity of a definite decision as to future operations by not later than July 31, because of the necessity of allowing a 90 day period for any abandonment application. I definitely stated we should avoid further operations during the winter months unless we were prepared to expend a considerable sum on the roadbed, with particular reference to the

replacement of stub switches and worn out 56 pound rail. I again suggested Mr. McLeod's coming to Carson City or for me to report at his office within the next two weeks in order that I could receive definite instructions.

On July 14, 1948 I acknowledged Mr. McLeod's letter of the 8th, in which he indicated a visit to Carson City within the next two weeks or thereabouts. I welcomed his visit stating that it became more apparent daily that a decision as to the future operations should be reached and could not be deferred.

On July 16, 1948 I wrote Mr. McLeod that Messrs. Allen, Helgate and Stoutenberg held a conference with me concerning a proposed survey as to the present condition of our roadbed. As a result of such survey, they were to report as to the cost per mile to recondition our roadbed to a safety factor operating with 60 pound rail.

On July 22, 1948 I wrote Mr. McLeod enclosing copy of my instructions to Messrs. Allen, Helgate, and Stoutenberg.

None of these letters were acknowledged by Mr. McLeod.

During Mr. McLeod's visit to Reno on Wednesday, August 18th, and Carson City Thursday, August 19th, there was no reference made to any of the above letters nor did we discuss any operating problems as to the roadbed or motive power. The entire time was taken up with my being informed as to Bennett and Blitz [*sic*] proposal to purchase the properties of this Railway. When Mr. McLeod was taking his departure from my office Thursday noon, I specifically requested a further appointment with him to which he agreed and gave me his word would take place on Friday, August 20th. I purposely asked for this appointment in order that I could discuss the various conditions that we would be faced with by operating in the winter months. There was also the matter of motive power with particular reference to the possibility of No. 26 being retired next February. There were other important matters such as personnel reaction to any abandonment[,], severance [*sic*] pay for the employees, and those which

concerned me personally. Mr. McLeod left Reno failing to keep his appointment and no explanation was offered by him on his return to San Francisco.

On October 6, 1948 Mr. McLeod called me long distance from San Francisco to Carson City. Towards the conclusion of our conversation I again stated the difficult conditions under which we are operating.

On October 6, 1948 I confirmed in writing the long distance telephone conversation, referred to in the preceding [*sic*] paragraph and again went on record as to motive power, ties in stock, and rail in stock. I again stated we would be in operation until February 15, 1949 involving three months of winter conditions and concluded with the remark that "The result of operating our roadbed and equipment under the conditions that exist remains to be seen." No acknowledgment has been received to this letter.

1. Our roadbed and motive power

Locomotive power - In anticipation of the retirement of locomotive No. 27 either in the months of August or September, 1948[,], unless we expended the excessive cost of \$10,000.00 for a major overhaul, I commenced October 17, 1947 investigating the matter of replacement power. From that date and well into the early part of the current year, I, through much correspondence, endeavored to develop some lead for satisfactory replacement power. The question of using diesel power was thoroughly examined.

In the numerous letters written to Mr. McLeod concerning the condition of our roadbed, constant reference was also made to necessary motor power. Separate letters dealing entirely with motive power were written such as my letters of January 13, and February 6, 1948. In these letters and our several conferences at San Francisco and on the long distance phone, I made reference to this important subject. I stated what the effect would be on our operations when No.27 would be retired and what the effect would be if No. 26 was retired during the month of February, 1949. As already stated, no acknowledgement of any of my letters has been received and I was unable

to discuss this power situation with Mr. McLeod during his visit to Nevada August 18, and 19, 1948.

To summarize the part of this letter dealing with roadbed and motive power, I, as the operating official, have been left to my own devices. I have been the one who had to make the decision as to the purchase of the Copperbelt [*sic*] locomotive No. 5, ties, bridge timbers, M. & S. crew, etc. Since this Railway was restored to a corporate status there have been no annual meetings of shareholders and not a single monthly meeting of the Board of Directors. The only other official of this Railway I have had contact with is Mr. McLeod. While it is true Mr. McLeod is the attorney for the Mills Estates, Inc., his corporate status in this Railway is that of a fellow Director and Secretary. You, as President and I, as Vice-President, are the two senior officials of this Corporation.

Realizing during the early part of this year that extensive repairs and renewals would be necessary for us to continue operating with a reasonable safety factor, I have pressed Mr. McLeod for a definite decision as to whether we would abandon. More than once I stated that if our principals were not prepared to advance funds for repairs and maintenance, we should institute abandonment proceedings not later than August 1st, 1948. By so doing and being successful in our application for abandonment, we would avoid the many hazards of winter operations. Due to the various negotiations, commencing April, 1948, which have been conducted with outside parties relative to the purchase of our properties, we now are faced with winter operations extending well into the month of February, 1949. As a result, we may be faced with a serious derailment involving the loss of life and loss of cargo. I must therefore, go on record as to not accepting any responsibility for what may take place. I will not accept any future charge that I have been operating this Railway under unsafe conditions through having not reported the true state of affairs to the President of the Railway.

To be continued . . .

A Summary of Symposium 2003

by Charlie Siebenthal

The 32nd Virginia and Truckee Workshop began on Thursday evening with a new event, the model railroader's workshop. Presenters were: Eric Bracher of Rio Grande Models, Heather Clark of the Paint Shop, Dale Darney of V & T Shops and Doug MacLeod of MacLeod Western. Forty-two people attended this event.

The Symposium program began on Friday with a short introduction of the history of the V & T and its interactions with connecting railroads during the Comstock bonanza period of 1870 to 1880 by Charlie Siebenthal.

Wendell Huffman discussed why the Central Pacific Railroad Company chose to cross the Sierra Nevada via the difficult ascent to Donner Pass rather than easier routes to the north. Larry Hersh followed with a presentation illustrating the original Central Pacific right-of-way east from Reno to Utah.

Leland Lee presented results of his study of early Central Pacific passenger and freight equipment. Charlie Siebenthal's "The Uneasy Alliance" reflected the ups and downs of a business relationship which was both beneficial and frustrating to the V & T and the Central Pacific.

Guy Rocha presented a general talk on the Carson and Tahoe Lumber and Fluming Company (C&T, L&F Co). Guy very clearly demonstrated that the C&T, L&F Co.'s railroad was only one component business enterprise which included every step in the process of converting trees into wood products. In the final session of the day, Stephen Drew summarized the many different railroad proposals which failed to materialize.

Saturday morning began with a series of presentations on the V & T's home-built feeder line, the Carson & Colorado. Charlie Siebenthal presented his research into the reasons the C&C was built, why it was constructed as narrow gauge, and why it never realized the commercial potential. Brian Norden spoke about the C&C rolling stock. Dale Darney presented his research

on the role of the Nevada & California during the Tonopah boom.

Paul Martineau's deftly guided the audience through the evolution of the N-C-O. Dale Darney shared his research on the lumbering industry which supported the Comstock.

Thanks go to Paul Martineau for coordinating vendor room activities again this year.

Saturday evening concluded with Dr. Sue Fawn Chung's lecture on the role of Chinese immigrants in the early history of railroads in the West.

The organizing committee for symposium 2003 included: Ron Allen, Bryan Berry, Darlene Berry, Elaine Cronwall, Stan Cronwall, Dale Darney, Jack Gibson, Bob Harmon, Paul Martineau, Jane O'Cain, Chuck Sheldon, Charlie Siebenthal, Merna Tanner, Russ Tanner, and Dan Thielen. Anyone wishing to volunteer for Symposium 2004 contact Elaine Cronwall (stlaine@aol.com) or Dan Thielen (dpthiele@clan.lib.nv.us).



John North inventorying a collection of periodicals. *NSRM Photo*

Friends' Fundraiser

Do you have piles of railroad magazines and/or books that you (or your spouse!) would like to get out of the house? The Friends are collecting used books and magazines to sell at the Symposium. All of the donated items are inventoried and a receipt is provided for tax purposes. If it is found that a donated book or periodical is needed for the Museum's library collection, that item will be donated to the Museum.

Ann and John North are spearheading this fundraising effort for the Friends. They can be contacted at 775/786-4303 or jsnorth@sbcglobal.net. Books and magazines can also be dropped off at the Museum, ask for John Frink or Jane O'Cain.



Thomson Smelter located north of Wabuska and serviced by the Nevada Copper Belt Railroad. 1920's. Berry Collection, NSRM

Recent Acquisitions

By Jane O’Cain

The Museum recently received two donations to the **education collection** that will be displayed in an exhibit being planned for the Wabuska Depot. A 1901 *Cheerful Oak* stove was donated by Francis Everett of Kailua-Kona, Hawaii. A wardrobe steamer trunk was given by Gavin Klein of Incline Village. Gavin, an ardent fan of the Museum, might be one of our youngest donors ever at the grand old age of six.

Donations to the **permanent collection** included:

- A chronometer lever clock donated to be used in the *Inyo* and a book published in 1855 on the transcontinental railroad survey donate by John North, Reno
- A 19th century Chinese brownware jar donated by Marge Gibson, Carson City
- A collection of lamps and lanterns donated by Diane Tandy Brown, Gardnerville
- A collection of V&T-related photographs donated by Kent Stephens, Chico, CA
- A collection of V&T-related photographs donated by Arthur J. Palmer, Reno
- A photograph of an unidentified locomotive donated by Jean Estrella, Wellington
- Wooden freight boxes donated by William Glenn, Carson City

Copy negatives of the Nevada Copper Belt RR donated by Bryan Berry, Carson City

Robertine Benson, Carson City
Ken Hopple, Reno
Lamont Bondesen, Reno

The following individuals donated **materials/equipment for railroad operations or the restoration program:**



Ted Wurm at Symposium 1997 with John Ballweber. Photo courtesy Bryan K. Berry.

Ted Wurm, 1919-2004

By Jane O’Cain

Noted V&T historian Ted Wurm died in Oakland on February 23, 2004, at the age of 85.

With family ties to Carson City and the V&T (his uncle, Jim Savage, was a V&T engineer), Mr. Wurm developed a passionate interest in the road early on in his life. He began photographing the V&T in 1935, and eventually wrote two books about the railroad, including the much praised *The Silver Short Line* with Harre W. Demoro.

Mr. Wurm was a supporter and friend of the Museum and generously donated his V&T-related photograph and document collection to benefit the Museum and the researchers who would come after him. He will be missed by the many people whose lives he touched.

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