

# SAGEBRUSH HEADLIGHT

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NEWSLETTER OF THE NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM

SUMMER 2003

## The *Esmeralda* Goes South



A rare photograph of Virginia and Truckee Locomotive 14, *Esmeralda*. NSRM Collection

By Dale Darney

**The Virginia and Truckee** Railroad (V&T) often responded to economic downturns by selling surplus equipment. The sale of V&T No. 14 *Esmeralda* provides a great example.

The two-decade depression that plagued Nevada at the end of the 19th century was a severe period for the V&T. Traffic on the railroad was greatly reduced and caused revenues to fall well below those enjoyed during the boom years of the Comstock. Henry M. Yerington, the general manager of the railroad, fought hard to protect the interests of the stockholders. He was involved at every level in the operations

of the railroad, lumber, and transportation companies. Yerington even strong-armed Nevada politicians to protect and strengthen those interests.

After 1880, less freight and ore were being shipped and, the V&T had much more motive power than was required. Locomotives that needed heavy maintenance or repair were stored in the Carson or Virginia City engine house and the necessary work was deferred indefinitely. By 1900, a number of locomotives and other rolling stock were stored as unserviceable. Yerington offered these pieces of equipment for sale at every opportunity.

While the rolling stock ledger only states "sold to..." the story behind the comment is much more complicated. Yerington worked doggedly through many setbacks to complete those sales. The sale of the *Esmeralda* was no exception.

The V&T purchased the Locomotive *Esmeralda* in 1873, for \$15,250, from the Baldwin Locomotive Works. The 35-ton Mogul hauled freight for the railroad and was retired in 1897. The locomotive was stored until a buyer could be found. On May 15, 1901, a buyer in Mexico was found and Edger

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# *SYMPOSIUM 2003*

## *The Railroads of the Region*

The Friends of the Nevada State Railroad Museum announce the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Virginia and Truckee Railroad Symposium held at the Carson Nugget October 17-19, 2003. Each presentation will discuss the railroads that connected or served the V&T. Dr Sue Fawn Chung, keynote speaker, will address her latest research findings on the Chinese on the Comstock.

Other activities include the Modelers Workshop, Quilting Trip, a tour of Virginia City, and the Glenbrook Trail Hike.

For an application, please contact Stan Cronwell at 849-7850 [stlaine@charter.net](mailto:stlaine@charter.net) or John Frink at 687-6953 [jfrink@clan.lib.nv.us](mailto:jfrink@clan.lib.nv.us).

*Plan to attend Symposium 2003!*

### NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM OPERATING SCHEDULE

July 19-20.....Saturday-Sunday  
 August 2-3.....Saturday-Sunday  
 August 16-17.....Saturday-Sunday  
 August 31-September 1.....Labor Day  
 October 19.....Symposium  
 November 1.....Nevada Day  
 November 28-29.....Thanksgiving Weekend  
 December 13-14.....Santa Train

Steam Train operates 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
 Fares: Adults, \$2.50 Children 6-11, \$1.00, 5 and under FREE

**SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE**

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

32 <sup>nd</sup> Edition, Vol. 7, No. 1	February 1986	40 <sup>th</sup> Edition, Vol. 8, No. 3 June-August 1987
33 <sup>rd</sup> Edition, Vol. 7, No. 2	April 1986	41 <sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 8, No. 4 Sept-Nov 1987
34 <sup>th</sup> Edition, Vol. 7, No. 4	September 1986	42 <sup>nd</sup> Edition, Vol. 9, No. 1 January 1988
36 <sup>th</sup> Edition, Vol. 7, No. 5	October 1986	44 <sup>th</sup> Edition, Vol. 9, No. 3 June 1988
39 <sup>th</sup> Edition, Vol. 8, No. 2	April 1987	47 <sup>th</sup> Edition, Vol. 10, No. 1 April 1989

Also available for \$1.00:  
 1<sup>st</sup> Edition V & T Restoration Co. News 1972  
 If you are interested in purchasing a back issue, please call Melissa Clark at 687-6953 or email [maclark@clan.lib.nv.us](mailto:maclark@clan.lib.nv.us).

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### There is a lot going

on around the museum these days. The new locomotive exhibit is officially open and the recent reception was well attended. What a great affair. The collection of locomotives by George Richardson has never been so well exhibited. Each one has its own story to tell and each one can be appreciated for its own unique appearance and detail. If you have not toured the exhibit, be sure to do so.

The summer train operating schedule is in full swing and is doing very well. As the schedule attests, it will be a busy season. If anyone wants to get involved in the operations, please contact the museum and you will be given all the details. We can always use volunteers for the trains the motorcar. It is a great way to have lots of fun and also experience the sights and sounds of the museum. So please get involved.

The Board of Directors has raised the dues for membership. As with everything, the cost of doing business has risen. In order for us to continue to support the museum, we needed to raise the dues. You should have already received the new dues schedule in the mail. We have also made some important changes to the benefits package.

You have been receiving the *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* publication as a benefit. A majority of the membership questioned why we were including it instead of some publication on railroads. We have now made that welcome change and you will be receiving a copy of *Railroad History* published by the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society Inc. This is a very fine semi-annual publication. *Railroad History* is considered to be one of the finest railroad historical journals being published in the country today. We believe that it will be of more interest to you and that you will enjoy it far more than the "Quarterly".

In addition to the above, you will be receiving the "Sagebrush Headlight" on a quarterly basis. This will allow you to keep abreast of all of the happenings going on at the museum. You will also be receiving additional mailings as important functions occur. Your membership in the Friends of the Nevada State Railroad Museum also enables you to gain free access to all museums under the State of Nevada Department of Museums and History control. So enjoy the history of the State of Nevada.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### Upcoming Events

#### Steam up

July 19-20  
August 2-3

#### Friends Board Meetings

August 7  
October 17  
December 11

#### Symposium

The Railroads of the Region  
October 17-19

**Santa Train**  
December 13-14

The Symposium is set for October 17-19, 2003. If you attended in 2002, you will automatically receive an application. If you need another Symposium application (for a friend perhaps) contact Stan Cronwell at 849-7850 [stlaine@charter.net](mailto:stlaine@charter.net) or John Frink at 687-6953 [jfrink@clan.lib.nv.us](mailto:jfrink@clan.lib.nv.us).

Finally, thank you to all of the volunteers at the museum for their continued support and for their many hours of volunteerism. The Board of Directors appreciates each and every one of you, so keep up the good work.

Here's hoping to see you at the museum this summer.

(Continued from page 1)

K. Smoot acted as agent.

The locomotive was to be delivered at Reno for the price of \$2000 with a 2.5% commission going to Smoot. *Esmeralda* would be prepared for the trip by "...taking down the side rods, gauge cocks and all brass fixtures liable to be stolen, boxed and placed...in tender all securely fastened and nailed up." In accordance with the Southern Pacific Railroad's (SP) requirements, the locomotive was piped for air so the train brakes would stop the engine when necessary. This tidy package would arrive in Reno and be taken to San Francisco by the SP.

*Esmeralda* arrived in Reno on May 22. The same day, the SP tells the V&T it will not take shipment without a bank draft to cover transportation. Yerington complies.

The next day, May 23, Yerington receives "...unexpected and unpleasant trouble." The SP will not ship the No.14 without automatic couplers. While the V&T had complied with the SP's shipping requirements, at the last minute they received this additional and potentially costly demand. The

V&T did not have the couplers and would have to procure them from the SP. Finally, Yerington informs Smoot the locomotive needs to return to Carson City to have the work done.

By May 25, the couplers arrived from Sacramento on the express. Yerington tells Smoot, "This has been an unfortunate piece of business, for which we cannot hold ourselves responsible: we shall endeavor to be just in our charges, but we can't tell what they will be until we know whether the S.P.Co. proposes to loan or charge for couplers."

Yerington has his answer on May 26. The SP will loan the couplers for the move. Yerington also states his "just" charges, "In view of hauling her three times over the road between here and Reno...and twice to equip her with the Couplers for which we were not responsible, I hope our transportation charges for the two trips of \$26 will meet with your approval."

By June 7, another problem develops. The SP will not ship the locomotive because the flanges on the drivers are sharp, "...necessitating the complete dismantling of it and loading it on cars at Reno." The V&T charged Smoot

"...\$75...this being the actual cost to us of machinist's time and expenses, no charge being made for transportation of men, Carson to Reno and return and use of tools."

The locomotive was in the possession of Smoot on June 15. Yerington closes the account by saying, "...like yourself [I] regretted the unnecessary trouble and expense given us over "Esmeralda" shipment-but its done and ended...I can but hope that the extra good work of the engine will more than repay you. I suppose you are going to Mexico, if so I heartily wish you every possible success."

Smoot was apparently satisfied with the V&T. He continues to purchase parts (pony trucks, journals, and tires) from the railroad for years thereafter.

*Esmeralda* served for many years in the construction industry in Mexico. Its final demise is unknown.

The difficulty of building and operating a railroad cannot be overstated. However, it seems that liquidating a railroad was nearly as challenging.



The Restoration Shop staff moves the 40:8 Car onto a flatbed for transport to the Nevada State Museum in Carson City. NSRM staff photo.

## Merci Boxcar on Display

The French 40:8, *Merci Car*, will be displayed at the Nevada State Museum in Carson City until autumn. The car will be shown at the Woodrow W. Loftin Park. The *Merci Car* was a gift from the citizens of France to the citizens of Nevada for their assistance during World War II. The car went through a refurbishment in the Restoration Shop for stabilization preparatory for its display in the Gibson Park. Stop by and see the beautiful car.

## Recent Acquisitions

*Jane O'Cain*

The Nevada State Railroad Museum received many historic and notable donations to the permanent collections from January to May 2003. The following is a partial list:

A Virginia and Truckee Railroad speeder, circa 1926, purchased for the museum by the Friends of the Nevada State Railroad Museum (on display in the Interpretive Center).

Plans, materials, and spare parts (on display in the exhibit *Locomotive Stories of the V&T*) used by George L. Richardson. Also included in the donation were four V&TRR signal flags and a V&T oilcan among other objects.

A V&TRR bookkeepers' desk from the Carson City Station, purchased by the donors in Carson City in 1961-62.

A whistle used in a Pershing County tungsten mine.

Forty-four V&TRR freight receipts from 1904, primarily for freight costs to ship liquor and spirits to a local hot-spot.

A switchman/brakeman's lantern from the Southern Pacific Company dated to

the turn of the twentieth century.

Twenty-five Virginia and Truckee Railway balance sheets dated between December 1911 and February 1933.



Dr. Sue Faun Chung discusses the exhibit *Tireless and Unremitting: The Chinese and Nevada's Railroads* at the Museum.

A nineteenth-century Chinese pottery jar (on display in the exhibit *Tireless and Unremitting: The Chinese and Nevada's Railroad*) used to send preserved fruits and vegetables from China

to Chinese immigrant communities in the United States. It was found in a Chinese workers' camp in Humboldt County near the original Central Pacific grade.

An opium tin cover found near the Vivian mill site on the Carson River.

**During** this time period the museum also received several donations of equipment and materials to support museum programs and operations. A water control panel and 4X5 film holders for the photographic darkroom, a Canon copier, a tripod, and a color printer were given to the collection/archives program. A Rototiller was donated for use on museum grounds. A Stabila laser system, roller bearings, and a wigwag relay were donated to the restoration shop/railroad operations.

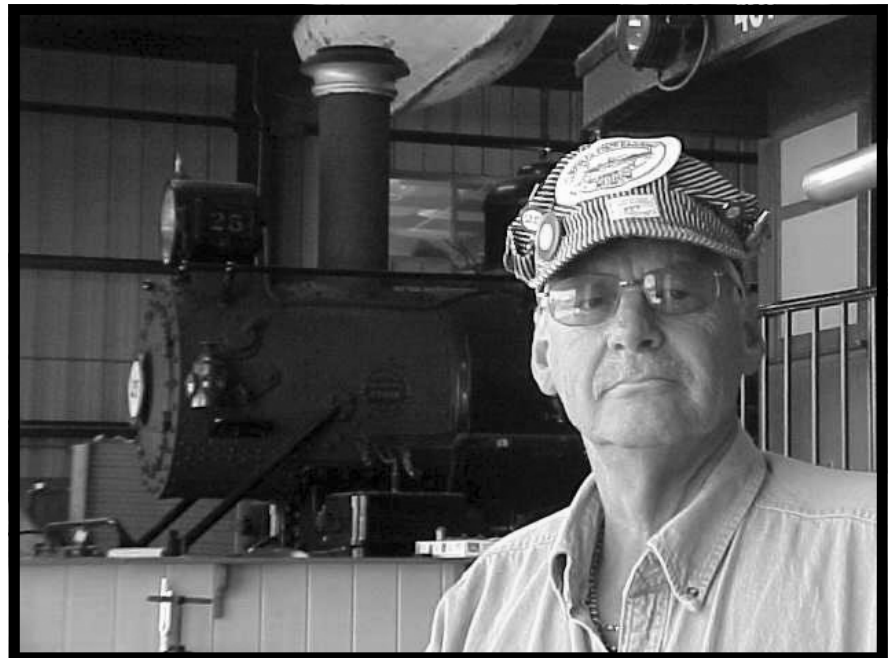
Some donors have chosen to donate objects, not appropriate for the permanent or education collections, for the Silent Auction to be held during the symposium in October. Proceeds from the Silent Auction are used to support museum programs.

## Meet Volunteer Randy Harris

### If you have visited the Nevada State Railroad Museum Annex

during the last few months, you have met Randy Harris. He is there on duty from Tuesday through Friday, and being available he might be there on his "days off." Randy personifies what a member of the Friends of the Nevada State Railroad Museum is for—to help the public enjoy everything about the museum and, especially, what is stored in the Annex. The equipment and artifacts out there are just what Randy prefers to talk about. There is more history out there than there is on display in the Jacobsen Interpretive Center. He is also available as a crew member on the motor car, steam train operations, and enjoys giving rides on the hand car.

Randy came to Carson City from Southern California. He spent his career down there as a banker, chiefly in



the building and loan business. Having lived here for a few years, he recently made a trip back south and said, "Now

I know why we moved out of there." And we are glad he did.

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Thank you for your membership. You will be receiving your membership packet in the mail. (Not included with renewals)

In addition to memberships, the FRIENDS accepts tax deductible donations towards the furthering of Museum goals and activities.