

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **The Old Narrow Gauge**

The history of the Monterey and Salinas Valley Railroad has been an interesting topic to pursue these past few days. The little handbook of Monterey, which has been the source of so much material and the inspiration for further investigation into past history of Monterey, has much to say of this little railroad which "commenced running October 28, 1874, too late to carry much of the grain of the Valley."

In "Bonanza Railroads," by Gilbert H. Kneiss, published by the Stanford Press, there is a world of information for those who would be interested in this topic, but most of all it tells what happened to some of the old engines which were used on the Monterey-Salinas narrow gauge railroad.

The railroad will always be memorable in the commercial history of California as the first narrow gauge railroad built in the state; and also as a road built by the people for the people, to contend with a great and powerful monopoly, and to save the grain-growers of the district at that time no less than \$200,000 a year.

The railroad was begun in April, and finished in October 1874. All interested in it devoted their time and means without stint, especially C.S. Abbott, the president; David Jacks, the treasurer; and John Markley, the secretary. Mr. J.F. Kidder, later engaged on the Nevada narrow-gauge, was the chief engineer and superintendent of construction. The iron came from the Pacific Rolling Mills in San Francisco, and Falkner, Bell & Company. The locomotives, "C.S. Abbott," and "Monterey," from the Baldwin Locomotive Company in Pennsylvania. The cars which were superior in every respect," were built in Monterey by Thomas Carter.

Although the road was a narrow gauge only three feet between the rails, "the cars were so designed that the passengers hardly realize any difference from those of a broad-gauge, and have ample room and accommodation."

For the reason that the railroad was late in starting, the officials were forced to make a reduction from \$5.50 per ton of grain to \$4.25 freight to San Francisco. The Monterey-Salinas Valley Railroad carried about 6,000

tons in 1874; loaded the H.L. Richardson at Monterey (2400 long tons).

The number of stockholders in the M.S.V.R.R. was 72, principally landowners or farmers.

A partial list of the prominent landowners of the community who were interested in this first narrow-gauge railroad and whose descendants still reside here, were: David Jacks, 30,000 acres; C.S. Abbott, 10,000 acres; A. & M. Gonzales, 13,000 acres; Francis Doud, 1,000 acres; P. Zabala, 5,000 acres; Jessie D. Carr, 45,000; James Bardin, 5,000; J.B.H. Cooper, 5,000; Malarin, 5,000; J.M. Soto, 3,500; B.V. Sargent, 13,000; Charles Underwood, 400.

The road, warehouses, wharves, cars, engines, etc., and everything included had cost the stockholders \$357,000, according to the records filed at that time.