

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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City Limit Moved for Railroad

The Monterey and Salinas Valley Railroad continued to run until the last months of 1879 when it was swallowed up by the Big Four. At about that time the officials of the Nevada Central were traveling over the country, looking for rolling stock. The Nevada Central, it appeared, was not able to afford the luxury of new equipment; everything would have to be second-hand.

For five years the Monterey and Salinas Valley Railroad had been running the little narrow-gauge trains. The local citizens had built it to break the monopoly of the Southern Pacific in their section. The Big Four planned to tear up the part of the road which they did not broad-gauge. So here was a whole narrow-gauge railroad for sale cheap and the Nevada Central officials hastened to make a deal with Charles Crocker to buy the lot: two locomotives, 54 cars, 38 miles of track, turntables, water tanks, and everything else.

The Nevada Central had secured a subsidy from Lander County to build a narrow-gauge railroad from Battle Mountain to Austin, but the train must be running by February 8, 1880. On Christmas Day, 1879, a locomotive arrived from the Monterey and Salinas Valley.

On February 5, ten miles of the track remained unbuilt, according to "Bonanza Railroads" by Gilbert H. Kneiss. The 8th was Sunday, and everyone in Austin who could wangle a ride or stand the walk in the bitter cold visited the end of the track, still four- and one-half miles away. There they saw the locomotive "Anson P. Stokes," formerly the "C.S. Abbott" of the Monterey-Salinas Valley, hauling a string of flatcars; and "for many it was their first sight of an engine."

C. S. Abbott was a pioneer resident of Salinas and one of the largest landowners in the county. He was the president of the group of stockholders who had built the M. & S. V., and in his honor the locomotive was named. The old "Monterey" had been renamed the "Daniel P. Hatch."

When the situation became desperate and the outlook for the completion of the road on the fatal day, February 8, seemed doubtful, the Austin common council met in special session behind locked doors. To claim the \$200,000 subsidy from Lander County the railroad had to be inside the city limits by midnight. The

railroad would benefit Austin so why not prepare for certain growth by extending the city limits? A half mile would be enough. The aldermen all voted "Aye," and the city limits were extended. Just ten minutes remained before midnight when the tracks crossed the new border line. The three last spikes were pure silver.

The charter of the Nevada Central Railroad expired on February 1, 1938. Ralls and equipment of that and the Eureka-Nevada, its companion railroad, were sold to a scrap dealer for \$17,500, and the wreckers moved in.