

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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More About Railroads

"In reference to your recent articles on the Monterey and Salinas Valley Railroad," writes Jeff Wetmore of Oakland, a frequent visitor to Monterey, "I might add a bit to that fascinating subject.

"In 1937 the late Gilbert Kneiss, while on a vacation to Nevada, stumbled upon the Nevada Central preparing to abandon. He persuaded the company to donate an engine and car to the Railroad Historical Society.

"The scrapper also agreed to donate another engine and car. These four pieces of rolling stock were used on Treasure Island in the delightful historic pageant in 1939-40.

"The late Gilbert Kneiss was the founder of the Pacific Coast Chapter, Railroad and Locomotive Historical Society, a graduate of Harvard University and assistant to president of the Western Pacific Railroad and author of 'Bonanza Railroads.' One of those cars was the combination car of the Monterey & Salinas Valley Railroad. Yes, the only piece of equipment left."

Mr. Wetmore sent along a photograph of this car riding piggyback on a flat car; half ; the car was for passengers and the other half for freight, mail, etc. The name "Monterey and Salinas Valley R.R." is still visible on the side.

Today that car is stored in the Western Pacific yards in Oakland and is slated for preservation in the Maritime Museum complex in San Francisco (Hazlat's Warehouse). The "Combine" was built by the famed western car builders, The Carter Brothers, in 1876 in the Pacific House in Monterey.

Recently a civic-minded resident of Salinas asked how Salinas could acquire the car which he had seen in Oakland. Apparently, the gentleman from Salinas had organized a committee and was subscribing for funds to have the car brought to Salinas to place in a park.

Mr. Stindt told him he was about 25 years too late to save the car, as it was already the property of the Railroad & Locomotive Society and awaiting a museum berth. Sadly enough one of the M&SV engines, the "Monterey," a classic 4-4-0, was still in existence in 1937. It is too bad the Salinas folks did not get excited about 25 years earlier before the scrapper took his toll.

The only other artifact Mr. Wetmore has come across is a ledger in the Monterey Public Library. After a search of railroad histories and communications with the late Gilbert Kneiss and the historian of M&SV, Edward T. Planer, nothing else has turned up.

"An interesting figure, as you noted," wrote Mr. Wetmore, "was John F. Kidder, superintendent and chief engineer of the Monterey & Salinas Valley Railroad.

"He later went on to survey, build and become president, of the Nevada County Narrow Gauge Railroad from Colfax, 21 miles through Grass Valley to Nevada City, Calif.

"He was a state senator and a really controversial man. His wife, Sarah, succeeded him upon his death as president in 1901 and for 13 years ran the 'Never Come, Never Go Railroad' in a first class manner."