

The next meeting of the Southwest Chapter will be at Avila's Restaurant, 6232 N. Mesa, El Paso at 6 pm on Wed. May 14, 2014. Visitors welcome.

Special points of interest:

- Nevada Northern
- Chapter News
- Museum News

Keep in mind the National R&LHS meeting



this year at Ely, Nevada, home of the Nevada Northern, June 5-8, 2014. (rlhs.org)

So You are Going to Ely

By Robby Peartree

I first heard of the NN in the 1980s from Southwest Chapter member the late David Scruggs. Mr. Scruggs before moving to the El Paso area grew up the son of an SP conductor on the Overland route. His father served in passenger service and I believe that when the State of Nevada's centennial came in 1964 he rode the excursion behind the NN 4-6-0 number 40 to Currie. David really liked the 40 and when discussions were about building a tourist railroad in El Paso he thought the 40 would be the perfect back up locomotive. Based upon David's description and things I had read I had tried to visit the NN in 1996 after the convention in Reno but the doors seemed closed. While working for GCR one of my fellow employees was Bob Verkyle. When working at the Nevada State Railroad Museum and he and Chris DeWitt would go from Carson the Ely to work on the NN. He told me some things about the NN. In 2004 I attended their volunteer training. After attending the training I received an employment opportunity. I made the leap and spent the next two years working for the NN. The Nevada Northern is a step back in time and now that many within the R&LHS are going to see the RR for their first time I want to take this opportunity to tell you about one of America's treasures while I was there.

Ely, Nevada and the Nevada Northern (NN) is a place where one has to be determined to get there if one is going to see the railroad. The NN was a short line owned by what we know as Kennecott to move the copper from the mine sites near Ruth to the Smelter at McGill and the blister copper out of the smelter to the SP collection at Cobre, NV, and later connection with the WP at Shafter, NV, to be sent to a refinery (similar to where the equipment in El Paso is stored today) and out to market. Coal and other supplies were hauled down to keep the mines, smelter and the town going. The railroad started construction in 1905 and reached Ely in 1906. The yards were built in East Ely and for years East Ely was a separate community from Ely and is an interesting study of companies wanting to control the towns they operate in. Railroad construction continued westward reaching the mine site in 1907 via a line thru Ely and the smelter in McGill was completed in 1908 along with the highline to the mill above the smelter. The reason for putting the Mill and Smelter in McGill was that they were able to bring water over from the neighboring valley of Duck Creek. This resulted in a 22 mile trip to deliver ore to the mill and smelter.

Over the years, the railroad went thru changes. One issue for Ely residents with the original mainline was the 55 ore trains per day passing thru town. This resulted in the construction of the ore line on the north side of Ely to get the trains out of the town of Ely even with this line change the original mainline stayed in place for many years. Today the Ely depot today is the Senior Citizen Center and the line beyond the warehouse to the White Pine Museum is the last piece of that mainline. The ore line is slightly longer than the original mainline and the distance between mile post 141 and 142 is approximately 1.3 miles. If you look carefully just east of the old tunnel you can see where the old mainline curved into the route of today's excursion train headed toward New Ruth.

On the passenger side of things the NN showed it was a company railroad It had a commuter train between Ely and



East Ely and shift trains between the mine and mill and smelter that ended in 1931. It also had school trains that lasted until 1938. This was the railroad equivalent of a school bus service between the communities of Ruth and McGill and the schools in Ely. The other passenger service was between Ely and the SP interchange at Cobre where the NB train ran in the morning and the SB run was the return of the morning train. Three 4-6-0's were used for this service the 10, 11 and 40. The 10 and 40 were regular locomotives and the 11 was the "spare". However the spare was used often enough that their mileages were close to one another. Passenger service ended in August 1, 1941 with a bus run to Wells, Nevada. The bus barn still stands today.

Freight trains ran one direction each day. The primary road locomotive after April 1917 until the end of steam was 2-8-0 81 which still lives today in the enginehouse. Timetable 70 shows two freight trains per week. It was standing practice

to have near tonnage trains for a helper/road locomotive combination before the run was made. This led to the freight trains being about 6000 tons or about 100 cars in size with SB ruling grades $\frac{1}{2}$ percent. Most loads were South Bound with traffic interchanged about equally between the SP and WP.

When you approach on the old railroad property at East Ely you are going to be studying a short line railroad mining company. The grand avenue that approaches the railroad depot is wider than many in town. The General Manager and assistant GM houses are the two large homes near the depot. When things went wrong they were expected to be there. Once on the property pay attention to the layout. There were two types of business on the railroad, one was the ore haul from the mine sites to the Smelter that was internal to the mining company, and the other was the freight/passenger business where the railroad connected to the outside world. Because of the mainline situation the with the ore line bypass what you see at East Ely today is actually two yards at East Ely. The Yard beside the freight house and passenger depot is the yard where the freight business and engine servicing took place. The yard to your right there the excursion train will back to get to the ore line is the ore yard where ore trains from the mine were inspected and worked before heading to the mill at McGill. The East Ely Depot, Freight house and the Vault collection are state of Nevada property. The rest of the property is owned by the White Pine Historical Foundation. The lower section of the depot held the two waiting rooms one for men and one for women. The upper offices were accounting and other administrative offices that can be accessed from a central stairwell facing the yard. In the Transportation building were the dispatcher and superintendent of the NN upstairs and today the welcome center is down stairs. The main buildings in the Yard are the engine house RIP building (built 1945), coaling and water towers but the little buildings like the carpenter shop or the air shop hold some real treasures of old time engineering. Air brakes have been a study of mine and the K triple valves along the railroad are an early air brake valve. K triple valves do not have modern features like an emergency reserve and were a true test of an engineer's skills. The carpenter shop is another interesting study of equipment access. The saws and doors are strategically placed so that the piece length or size is not a problem they simply fit thru. Also note how the buildings are placed. The carpenter shop, air brake building, and blacksmith shop feed the RIP building where over 150 cars were worked on per month with a fleet consisting of over 600 ore cars. The engine house/ machine shop, warehouse, electrical shop and pipe shop were close together to facilitate Locomotive work. There is not much left in the pipe shop but the electrical shop is interesting including the mercury ach tubes. The warehouse was a treasure trove of many things and the enginehouse/ machine shop is very unique. The belt drives were a way to save on electric motor expense and the NN has many belt driven machines. The foundry and acetylene generator station survive and you really take a step back walking thru these facilities. Several diesel locomotives are at the NN including the following active locomotives RS-2 105 and RS-3 109, and SD-9 204 former BHP 204 and SP 4426. On the inactive roster is a Baldwin V0-1000 and S-12 which was purchased used. It originally was NYC 9313. There is the 25 ton GE that was used at the smelter. RS-3, 13 from San Miguel today is used for parts and two, MRS-1 survive. There are also two steeple cabs electric in Ely numbered 80 and 81, one at the White Pine Museum and the other is on the property.

The NN rosters 4 steam locomotives; 4-6-0, 40 built in July 1910 of a 1905 Katy design, 2-8-0 93 built in January 1909, 2-8-0 81 built in April 1917 and a 0-4-0 that was a dinky switcher at the smelter. Parts of locomotive 80 survive including its leading and trailing wheels from being a tank locomotive to its tender after conversion for road work which is the weed spraying car. The 81 was built for the freight service on the mainline. What is interesting with the 81 is it was ordered smaller than the ore hauling locomotives. In September 1939 the 81 was converted to a stoker fired locomotive due to GM Mr. Hickey's wanting to ease the work load of the road fireman. Due to the stoker needing smaller coal the wood section of the coaling tower was constructed. You can see where the wood structure stands on the concrete footing of the concrete tower. As stated earlier 40 was primarily a passenger locomotive. The 0-4-0 was a Smelter locomotive and worked in McGill 2-8-0. 93 was primarily an ore hauling locomotive but as diesels got into ore haul 93 finished out its time on the NN as the freight helper on the mainline north. 93 was returned to operation in the early 90s. 93 holds a bit of tourist railroad resiliency. In June 1995, 93 was pulling an excursion train to Keystone when a flat car with ties hit it near the Renaissance Village platform. Significant damage was done to the train and the last time I checked coach 2 had yet to be repaired. . Also in the round house is Crane A with its arch bar roller bearing trucks from service on the Western Pacific. There is also the rotary snowplow B.

On the ride towards Ruth, pay attention to the landscape and the community. The ore line gives you a good view of the older sections of Ely. Of Nevada character is the Hotel Nevada and the Brothels near the Renaissance Village. The area known as Lane City had several areas of ore load out and spurs. Just before the last turn to the wye at Keystone there is an abandoned right of way that comes off the main that went to the Deep Ruth Shaft. While grades were 2 to 3% to Copper Flat, pay attention to the fact that the loads were down hill here. The railroad then engineered the highline as ¼% grade to make lifting the loads easier.

The Nevada Northern is an incredible place. It is a lot of history that a short article does not do justice. The NN would have been lost to history if a few local residences wanting to do something for the town decided to get together and ask the railroad if it would run excursions. When the answer was no they were not deterred they simply considered the response and options and they eventually got an invaluable piece of history that you can now enjoy. Both Ely and the railroad struggle to survive. Passionate people with differences of opinion have been and continue to shape the place. Whether you go to the convention or not I hope this article paints a picture of there is to see. A word of caution be prepared for any weather that can come up. Yes I have seen it snow in the summer months in Ely and the nights in June can still get cold. If you want more railroad history I suggest you see Mr. Albrandt's old web site that is the history section of the NN web site at www.nnry.com. I hope you enjoy your time on the NN.

SOUTHWEST CHAPTER OF RAILWAY LOCOMOTIVE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

April 9, 2014 6 – 8 p.m.

Avila's Restaurant, 6232 N. Mesa, El Paso, Texas

Present: Steve Heetland, Phil Weborg, Mark Steele, Roy Sinclair, Tom and Toni Sinclair, visitors Woody Bare, Patricia Kidney.

Steve Heetland called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Minutes were read as reported by acting secretary Patricia Kidney, and approved. Treasurer's report was unavailable. Following discussion, it was decided to postpone election of officers until the May 14, 2014 meeting.

There was no Old Business discussed. Under New Business, S. Heetland announced the National Convention will be held in El Paso in 2017. Discussion was held regarding the need for planning of Advertising, Events, Hospitality , etc.

Announcements:

Phil Weborg shared newsletter ideas. Increasing membership in the local chapter ideas were discussed, including inviting the local NARVE members, placing info ads in the El Paso Scene, etc.

Patricia Kidney reported Harvey Girls of El Paso have been booked for several programs in the Las Cruces area in May. Harvey Girls of El Paso will be at Las Cruces Railroad Days on April 26, 2014. Locally, Harvey Girls will be at Mission Trails Association's First Thanksgiving Celebration in San Elizario on April 26, 2014, and at Spirit of Amigo at Convention Center on May 8, 2014, and at the National Train Day on May 10, 2014.

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Southwest Chapter
 Railway & Locomotive Historical Society

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**EP&SW Flyer
 May 2014**



(Continued)

Woody Bare announced May 10, 2014 is National Train Day; Prince McKenzie is the responsible party for making arrangements with AMTRAK.

Woody Bare reported the Transportation Museum has moved totally from the T&P Building, and is now at 500 South Hill (old Alamo School).

Following adjournment at 7:15 p.m., Phil Weborg presented program about his experiences working on a Steam Engine in the 1960's during County Fair Days near San Bernardino, Cal. Tom Seward shared his experiences of family history in San Marcial, NM. and the family's railroad connection. Due to the interest of railroad history in San Marcial, there was discussion about contacting the family of author Lenore Dils book "Horny Toad Man" to see about republishing the book.

Next Meeting: Avila's Restaurant , 6232 N. Mesa. 6-8 p.m. Program: Ric Brightman "Civil War Railroads".

Respectfully Submitted by Acting Secretary Patricia Kiddney