BEAR HARBOR & EEL RIVER RAILROAD

By Stanley T. Borden

The Western Railroader
Booklet 292
Southern Humboldt Lumber Company engine number 2
heading a train of tanbark prior to 1906.

BEAR HARBOR & EEL RIVER RAILROAD

BEAR HARBOR LUMBER COMPANY
SOUTHERN HUMBOLT LUMBER COMPANY

VOL. 27, NO. 5  MAY, 1964  ISSUE NO. 292
Bear Harbor, a small indentation along the northern part of the rugged Mendocino coast, some 158 miles north of San Francisco and 29 miles north of Fort Bragg, hardly worthy of being called a harbor, was first put to commercial use about 1882. It was this year that C. C. Milton commenced the erection of a wharf for the shipping of tanbark and railroad ties; but as a consequence to his accidental drowning at Rockport not long after, nothing further was done at that time.

In late 1884 Dr. W. A. McCormack, of Mendocino City, commenced construction of a wharf and chute at Bear Harbor, which was completed by July, 1885, from which schooners were loaded. By 1890 Messrs. Weller and Stewart had taken over the tie and bark business.

In 1892 Messrs. Calvin Stewart, James Hunter, A. B. Cooper, Thomas Pollard and Edward J. Dodge joined together, acquiring the wharf and about 12,000 acres of timberland. They made preparations for constructing a railroad from the wharf into the woods, and a locomotive, No. 1, was ordered from Marschutz & Cantrell of San Francisco. Stewart and Hunter had been partners in the predecessor company, the Union Lumber Co., and Pollard and Dodge were partners in the Eel River Valley Lumber Co. in Humboldt County.

On July 26, 1893 they incorporated the Bear Harbor Lumber Company with a capital stock of $200,000 and about two miles of railroad was constructed. In September, 1894 the enginehouse burned but the locomotive was not damaged to much extent. The company extended the wharf 100 feet during April, 1895 and also began building the railroad further inland.

At the end of the first two miles of track an incline 1900 feet long was constructed to obtain a rise of 600 feet. Three rails were run from the bottom to the top, separating midway for a short distance to allow cars to pass each other, and a gravity system was used with a loaded car going down pulling an empty car up. From the top of this incline the railroad was built to Indian Creek with a terminal ten miles from the Bear Harbor wharf. An enginehouse, shops and a warehouse were constructed at this point; one Lew Moody built a hotel and saloon nearby, and the settlement became known as Moody. Horses were used to move the cars between the wharf and the incline, and the steam locomotive was used between the incline and Moody.
On September 8, 1896 the company incorporated the Bear Harbor & Eel River Railroad, with a capital stock of $200,000, to take over the operation of the railroad and to extend it in a northerly direction to terminate at a point to be decided on at a later date. Its early existence was to be devoted to hauling lumber, but later it was to engage in general freight and passenger traffic.

In 1898 locomotive No. 2 was purchased from Baldwin and construction was commenced to extend the railroad to the Eel River and on to Garberville in Humboldt County. Plans were to extend the wharf another 100 feet, but in 1899 a tidal wave destroyed it and railroad construction apparently came to a halt. Later the Bear Harbor Lumber Co. announced that they were going to build a sawmill at the proposed railroad terminus on Indian Creek.

Outside interests now moved into the area. Henry Neff Anderson, A. W. Middleton and John A. McPherson of the Anderson & Middleton Lumber Company of Aberdeen, Washington joined Pollard, Dodge and Stewart in incorporating the Southern Humboldt Lumber Company on November 6, 1902 with a capital stock of $500,000.

In June, 1903 this new company announced that they had absorbed the interest of the Bear Harbor Lumber Co. and contemplated building a large sawmill. Pollard, Dodge and Stewart sold their interests in this new firm to the Washington men, and H. N. Anderson became President.

By September, 1903 a force of 160 men was at work extending the railroad from Moody toward the Eel River, following the course of Indian Creek. By September of the following year work on the sawmill at Camp 10, now named Andersonia, was progressing with the framework of the lower story about completed and the upper story, which had been framed at Aberdeen, waiting at Bear Harbor for the completion of the railroad. The tunnel, which had required several months labor, was completed.

By February, 1905 the railroad was all graded from Moody to Andersonia and most of it in operation, except for a few bridges that had to be completed. It was 171/2 miles long from the wharf to the mill and had two steam locomotives and 16 flatcars. A dam had been built at Andersonia for storing 20,000,000 feet of logs. The company now owned about 17,000 acres of timberland. The mill, to have a cutting capacity of 120,000 board feet per day, was well situated, as the proposed railroad of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway was to be built through Andersonia. A new wharf was also being constructed at Bear Harbor.

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Southern Humboldt Lumber Company Number One in the woods near Piercy after being abandoned for 40 years. Railfans had to clear away heavy underbrush and shoot flash photographs to get their picture. From the collection of Douglas S. Richter.

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By fall the railroad had been completed and the final work was being done on the mill when it was discovered that certain framing had insufficient clearance for the log carriage. Steps were being taken to correct this when tragedy struck on October 28. A timber brace, which was being pulled on by a steam donkey engine, hit Neff Anderson on the back of the head. Doctors were rushed to him, but he refused to be taken to San Francisco and died on November 6.

Work continued on readying the mill for operation, but without the former enthusiasm. The Southern Humboldt Lumber Co. failed to pay the franchise tax on the Bear Harbor Lumber Co. and the Bear Harbor & Eel River Railroad, so therefore forfeited, on December 14, their right to transact business in the names of these companies.

In March, 1906 the start of sawing logs by the mill's two Allis-Chalmers band saws was again delayed while waiting for some additional machinery from San Francisco; the winter storms had damaged the wharf and new timbers were being hewn in the woods. Another complication came up in a dispute over a portion of the railroad right-of-way. The last straw to break the camel's back was the great earthquake of April 18, 1906 which caused numerous slides on the railroad and did several hundred dollars damage to the mill; but the most damage was done to the log pond dam, which ran into the thousands. This ended all work in trying to get the mill into operation.

After Neff Anderson's death, litigation developed between his young widow and his children by a former marriage. The mill became known as "The Million Dollar Mill That Never Milled". It was reported that two prospective buyers for the mill appeared but that some unfortunate circumstances interfered with the sale. The caretakers, Mr. & Mrs. Lilley, lived quietly in the ghost town. The ghosts were temporarily evicted in 1916 when the Redwood Highway was built by convict labor, and Andersonia became a construction camp. Later the town of Piercy developed on the highway across the Eel River from Andersonia. In 1921, the mill machinery and equipment was dismantled and stored. The heavy rains in the winter of 1925-26 caused high water on Indian Creek to break through the dam, sending logs which had been stored these twenty years hurtling down the Eel River.

In the late 1930's railfans discovered the rusting locomotives and the tree-grown railroad and the story of Neff Anderson became known as "The Tragedy of the North Woods". A feature article in RAILROAD STORIES magazine resulted in several trips to Piercy by staff members of The Western Railroader, Jack Gibson and John Carrick, which resulted in the fine photos used in this issue.

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Baldwin's Builders Photo of Bear Harbor Lumber Company Number 2 from the collection of Stanley T. Borden.

Southern Humboldt Lumber Company Number 2 abandoned in the woods near Piercy for 40 years after railfans had cleared away underbrush to take flash photographs. From the collection of Bert Ward.
Southern Humbold Lumber Company saw mill at Andersonia in abandoned condition in the early 1940's from the Forestry Department Collection of the University of California.

With World War II ending the depression and bringing a demand for lumber, the sons and grandsons of Anderson moved in to take over the property in 1939 and by August the old mill had been dismantled. Sam, Reginald and Harold Anderson had a delay in litigation involving legality of the sale of the property which had been attached by Wells Fargo Bank & Union Trust Co. as executors of the Wills of Ida M. Anderson and Thomas Pollard. A new sawmill was built in 1941 but the 17 1/2 mile railroad was not needed and so was torn up and locomotive No. 2 scrapped; but No. 1 has been preserved and sits near the office giving mute evidence of a lonely railroad and its tragic ending.

### Locomotives

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* Marschutz & Cantrell
S. F. MUNICIPAL RAILWAY ASKS $17.5 MILLION BOND ISSUE

The Municipal Railway of San Francisco has asked for submission of a $17,500,000 bond issue on the November ballot for capital improvements. Principal item will be $12 million for replacement of diesel buses now under lease, but a number of rail items are included. $360,000 is asked for an electric stop tripper system for streetcars in Twin Peaks Tunnel, $130,000 for automatic elevators in Forest Hill depot, $845,000 for rebuilding 2.3 miles of track in Twin Peaks Tunnel, $800,000 for tunnel lining and ventilating duct in Twin Peaks Tunnel, $1,054,000 for cable car track rebuilding and $600,000 for cable car rebuilding.

S. P. DONNER PASS NOTES

Union Pacific power is now operating over the "Hill" due to a pooling of S.P. and U.P. diesel units on fast freights between Roseville and North Platte, Neb. K-N diesel unit 9021, only recently acquired from the D & RGW, was damaged by fire near Blue Canyon, but is expected to be back in service this summer.

WEST BAY TRANSIT DISTRICT

A bill has passed the California State Legislature and is expected to be signed by the Governor setting up a West Bay Transit District in San Mateo County with the possible addition of Santa Clara County to draft a master plan for rapid transit for the area south of San Francisco. Provisions in the bill require cooperation and compatibility with the existing Bay Area Rapid Transit District. A similar bill is pending in the legislature for transit in Marin and Sonoma counties.

NEW W.P. CARS

The Western Pacific has ordered 25 bulk-material-handling cars of 4,650-cu-ft capacity from American Car & Foundry at a cost of $375,000.

STOLEN

The Adlake kerosene marker lamps, one foot stool and a spot light seal-beam lamp from observation "FERROEOQUINOLOGIST" about April 13 in S.P. Oakland yard. Vandal entered car with a coach key to steal items and vandalize car. If you can supply information contact: Thomas N. Harvey, Central Coast Railway Club, P.O. Box 783, San Jose, Calif.

ADDITIONAL NEWS AND EXCURSION ITEMS ON REVERSE SIDE OF SUPPLEMENT
JULY 19 - Annual Joint Railfan Picnic and Excursion to Big Trees via Southern Pacific special train.
AUG. 9 - Special Southern Pacific train to Monterey with bus tours to Carmel...Nor-Cal R.R. Club
AUG. 30 - Special Southern Pacific train to Sacramento to visit State Fair...Joint Nor-Cal, Bay Area Electric and Pacific Locomotive.
SEPT 4-7 - Santa Fe Excursion train to Carlsbad Caves and Grand Canyon over Labor Day...Central Coast
SEPT 20 - Special Southern Pacific-NWP train to Sonoma for Vintage Festival...R&LHS
SEPT 26-27 - Special Northwestern Pacific train from Bay Area to Eureka to celebrate 50th Anniversary of NWP through service to Eureka...R&LHS
OCT 11 - Special Sacramento Northern train from Sacramento to Chico...Bay Area Electric
OCT 24 - San Joaquin River trip to Stockton on "Harbor Prince, return by bus...Central Coast
OCT 25 - Special train to Stockton, return on "Harbor Prince" down San Joaquin River...R&LHS
NOV 8 - Municipal Railway trolley tour by Nor-Cal.
DEC 30-JAN 1 - Western Pacific to Elko over New Year's weekend...Cal-Nevada
Nor-Cal: Paul von Haf ten, 112 Arguello, San Francisco Central Coast Ry Club: P.O. Box 783, San Jose, Cal.
R&LHS: Don Thrall, 610 Arlington, Berkeley, Cal.
Bay Area Electric; Addison Laflin, Jr., 2119 Marin Ave., Berkeley 7, Calif.
Cal-Nevada: Art Lloyd, 974 Pleasant Hill, Redwood City, Calif.

Out of Los Angeles A summer Holiday Excursion to Alaska by Golden West Rail Tours from July 4 to 16 includes the Pacific Great Eastern and White Pass & Yukon narrow gauge. Fare: $595.00. Address: 2210 S. Sepulveda, Los Angeles
Out of Portland escorted tour to Mexico October 9 to 30 $515 single $960 for couple. Pacific Northwest Electric Railway Ass'n; 7905 SW Cedar, Apt 38, Portland 25, Ore.
Out of Ely, Nevada Nevada Northern Ry will operate trips in connection with Nevada Centennial weekend of July 11, 12 and 13, leaving Ely at 10 a.m. each day for Currie arriving back in Ely at 4:00 p.m....150 mile roundtrip. Train will be headed by steam engine 40 and excursion fare of $2.00 roundtrip. Reservations from Nevada Northern Ry, East Ely, Nevada, 89315.

KLAMATH LAKE RAILROAD

Following publication of our issue on the Klamath Lake Railroad we received two sets of pictures from W. E. Waste and Louis Stein, Jr., and we have decided to publish a supplement of photos and data. If any of our readers have additional photos or material we would be happy to include them and give proper credits.
COMMENTS FROM THE EDITOR

Now pending in petition form and probably soon to qualify for the ballot in California is the self-styled "RAILROAD ANTI-FEATHERBEDDING INITIATIVE" designed to repeal the California "Full Crew" laws which set the number of men required to operate engines and trains.

While your editor agrees that the California statutes have become outmoded and are outright erroneous where they require a "fireman" for a diesel engine, may I enter my objection to a complete removal of all controls on freight trains while leaving on the books all of the present restrictions on passenger, mail and express train crews.

May I suggest that we remove all of the statutes spelling-out the consist of train crews, but give the Public Utilities Commission the power, after hearing, to require railroads within the State of California to operate its trains with such number of crew as are necessary to promote the safety of its employees, passengers and the public.

As the matter is tendered to the voter under this Initiative written by railroad management, California would be left at the mercy of union-management bargaining as to the consist of crews. This is not necessarily always in the public interest as current bargaining proves...the unions tend to want excessive crews and management too few (and most concessions are at the expense of passenger service). Neither side seem to want a public body to determine the matter of safety on a factual basis.

Francis A. Guido, Editor

TRANSIT PROJECT

The San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District has announced adoption of a track gauge of five feet, six inches, wider than the 4 feet, 8 1/2 inches used by U.S. railroads. The wider gauge was selected because of light weight equipment and high speed operation, district engineers state. This would also prevent use of transit district tracks by non-conforming railroads or transit districts in the future---such as a possible San Mateo-Santa Clara district using S.P. standard gauge tracks or even a new Sacramento interurban service on existing standard gauge tracks.

Bids were opened May 5 for earthwork and structures on BART’s test track in central Contra Costa County. A contract has been let to Budd Company for three laboratory test cars for use on the new test trackage. The three cars will be fabricated by Budd and assembled at the Western Pacific Railroad shops at Sacramento with delivery scheduled for March 1, 1965. The cars with necessary instrumentation to monitor performance of vehicle components will cost $390,000.

Meanwhile two 1,000-foot exploratory tunnels have been started on the site of the twin 3 1/2 mile rapid transit tunnels through the Berkeley Hills. The test tunnels are near the planned portals of the permanent tunnels which will be bored about 300 feet blow and slightly to the north of the present Broadway highway tunnels, but will be about five times longer than the highway tubes.

WHITE PASS & YUKON RAILWAY

Railfan Carl E. Mulvihill of Skagway, Alaska, has rescued steam engine 52 of the White Pass & Yukon Railway from oblivion and has had it towed to Skagway to be restored at the shops and placed on permanent display. He is selling 8x10 photos of it at $1.50 each to help with the restoration fund. C. E. Mulvihill, Box 191, Skagway, Alaska, 99840.

CAMINO & CABLE RAILWAY

This is our name for Hal Wilmunder's newest project to restore the three-foot railroad that once ran from Camino to the American River. He is now grading and will move some of his equipment from Roseville for limited operation this summer.