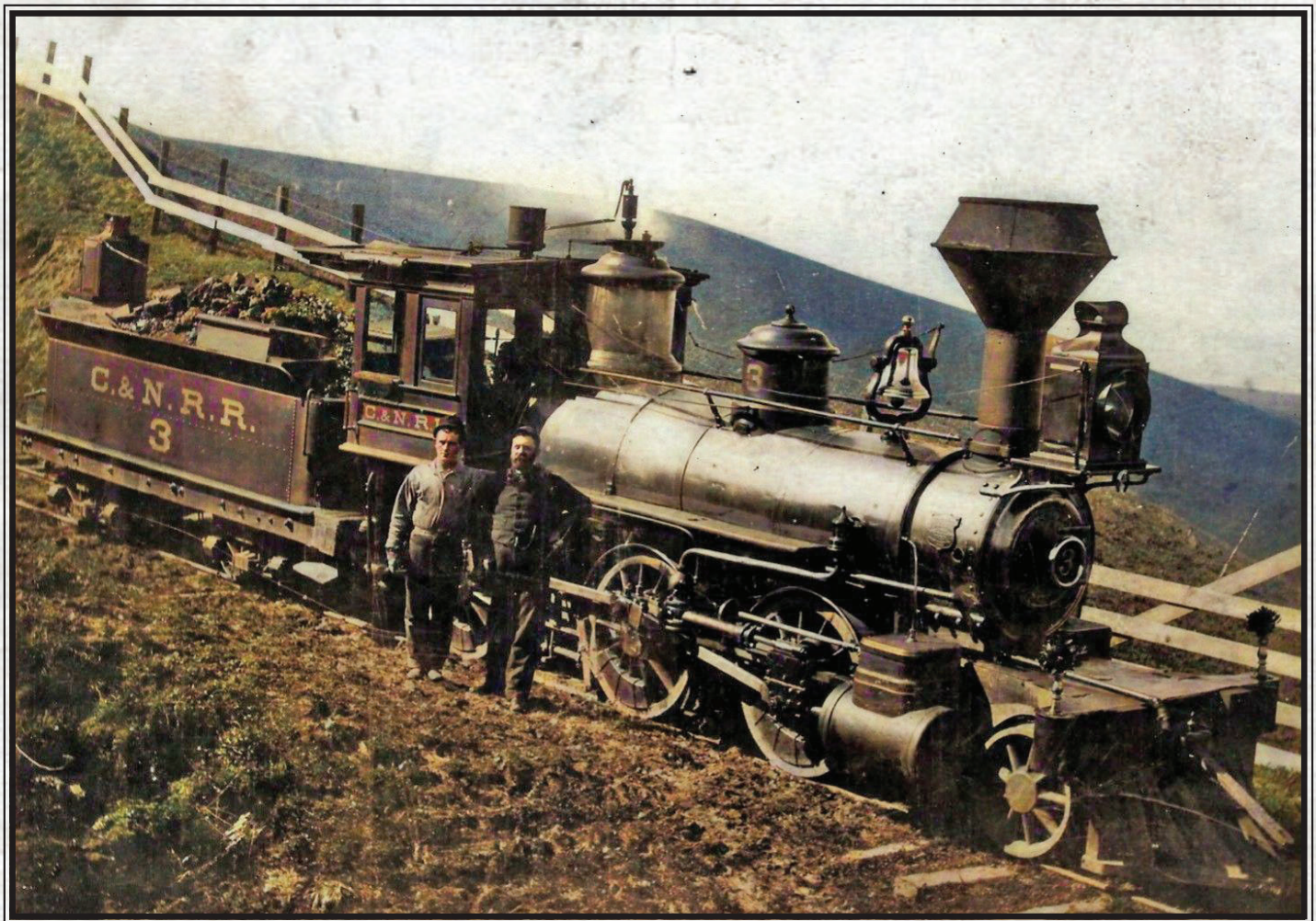


CALIFORNIA & NEVADA RR: THE TRAIN TO NOWHERE

PART 2



C & N R. R. builder John W. "Denver" Smith (right) stands besides a rheumatic locomotive along the narrow gauge line he helped usher along (Photo: pacifieng.org).

By Donald Hausler

Planning for the construction of the California & Nevada Railroad began in 1880, when Joseph Emery and others worked behind the scene to raise the necessary capital to make the project a success.¹ The C & N Railroad was incorporated on March 25, 1881. According to the original concept, the narrow gauge line would start at Emeryville, run

north through Berkeley to the town of San Pablo, and then curve around the Oakland-Berkeley Hills to Bryant (Orinda), continue east to Walnut Creek, through the Livermore Valley, over Corral Hollow Pass, across San Joaquin Valley to Modesto, climb the Sierras through Sonora and terminate at a point near Bodie, California not far from the Nevada

border, a total distance of about 250 miles.²

From Bodie it was hoped a railroad line would be built to reach Candelaria, a prosperous mining town in Mineral County, Nevada. Another line was expected to run from Candelaria east to connect with the Denver & Rio Grande, another narrow gauge railroad in Colorado.³

For Emeryville to be the western terminus for the C & N Railroad did not make a lot of sense. At the time (1881) Emeryville was a tiny unincorporated community with a sparse population of only 200, whereas nearby Oakland, with a much larger population of 35,000, seemed to be the more logical choice.⁴ However, the C & N railroad builders recognized that having Emeryville as the terminus had one big advantage. Since Emeryville had no government, the only jurisdiction that could address the problems caused by construction was the feeble Alameda County Board of Supervisors.

Tremendous Optimism

There was tremendous optimism that the C & N RR would prosper when completed. The line

would serve a cannery in Oakland, transport produce and fruit from farms and orchards in Contra Costa County, haul timber cut in the Sierras, and carry ore from various mines along the route. The eastern terminus, Bodie, California, elevation 8,379 feet, was a gold mining settlement with a population of about 10,000 people, at the time one of the largest cities in California.

Joseph Emery played a major role in building of the C & N RR. Not only was he involved in the planning phase, but he later became a principal stock holder and a member of the board. He also served as president of the corporation for

several years. Emery owned 185 acres in the unincorporated area north of Oakland that he had purchased in 1859 for \$8,000. A shrewd businessman, he made sure that the section of the line that passed through Emeryville crossed his property, realizing that the railroad would increase the value of his tract.

The C & N RR was incorporated on March 25, 1881.⁵ A ground-breaking ceremony was held in Emeryville on September 14, 1881.⁶ Construction



A landmark in the Eastern Sierras silver mining ghost town of Bodie, CA (photo: noehill.com).

began in October 1881, when Chinese workers began grading the route.⁷

C & N Problems

Unfortunately, problems emerged from the beginning of the project, impeding progress for several years. There was an ongoing problem of securing the right of way through residential and rural districts. Berkeley residents did not like the idea of their streets being torn up for a railroad line.⁸ Many land owners refused to sell their property, forcing C & N officers to go to court in an effort to seize the land through eminent domain.

Also, the Central Pacific Railroad made several attempts to obstruct the building of the C & N line by constructing a line parallel to the proposed C & N route, refusing permission for the C & N track to cross Central Pacific tracks, spreading rumors that the C & N RR would not pay their workers, contacting New York banks in an effort to discourage them from issuing bonds to C & N, and organizing Oakland property owners in the path of the C & N

line to sue the company.⁹ None of these efforts were successful, but they slowed down the progress of construction.

The C & N line began near the Northern Railroad (later Southern Pacific) main line tracks at the west end of

Yerba Buena Avenue in Emeryville. The line followed Yerba Buena going east, which was in the Emery tract, to Adeline Street, where it turned north and continued for about seven blocks, and then swerved off left onto Lowell Street, following Lowell into Berkeley.¹⁰ From Berkeley the road continued north to the town of San Pablo. At this time San Pablo existed as a small, unincorporated town with a population of only 250, including adjacent El Sobrante Valley. In fact the total population of Contra Costa County in 1880 was only 12,525.¹¹



John W. "Denver" Smith (Photo: Erle C. Hanson, California and Nevada Railroad).

John W. "Denver" Smith

In March 1884, three years after construction began, John W. "Denver" Smith was hired to rescue the C & N line from failure. He had previously been involved in building narrow gauge railroads in Colorado and had acquired a reputation as a master builder. Because of construction delays on laying tracks through Berkeley and beyond, he decided to turn his attention to building a pier one mile in length out into the bay that would provide ferry service from San Francisco to Emeryville with a direct connection to the C & N line.¹²

Locomotives, Freight and Passenger Cars

Early in 1884 C & N officials ordered three steam engines from H. K. Porter Locomotive Works located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. However, company officers decided to build their own rolling stock, both freight and passenger cars, in Emeryville. Car shops were constructed on Joseph Emery's property for that

purpose near Yerba Buena Ave. southwest of Judson Iron Works. In August 1884 two locomotives, "Oakland" and "Mt. Diablo" arrived from Pittsburgh, but the order for the third engine was canceled.¹³ In March 1885 a tiny C & N train depot was erected on San Pablo Avenue at the 40th Street intersection.

First Passenger Trains

The first C & N passenger car journey occurred on March 29, 1885, a trip that began at the Emeryville Depot at 40th Street and San Pablo Avenue, a one car train pulled by a diminutive steam engine, north through Berkeley to the town of San Pablo, a distance of 13 miles. It had required four years to complete this short section of track.¹⁴

Beyond San Pablo, the road continued north for a short distance, and then turned east circling the north end of the Berkeley Hills, and then headed southeast following the San Pablo Creek which flowed through the San Pablo Canyon.

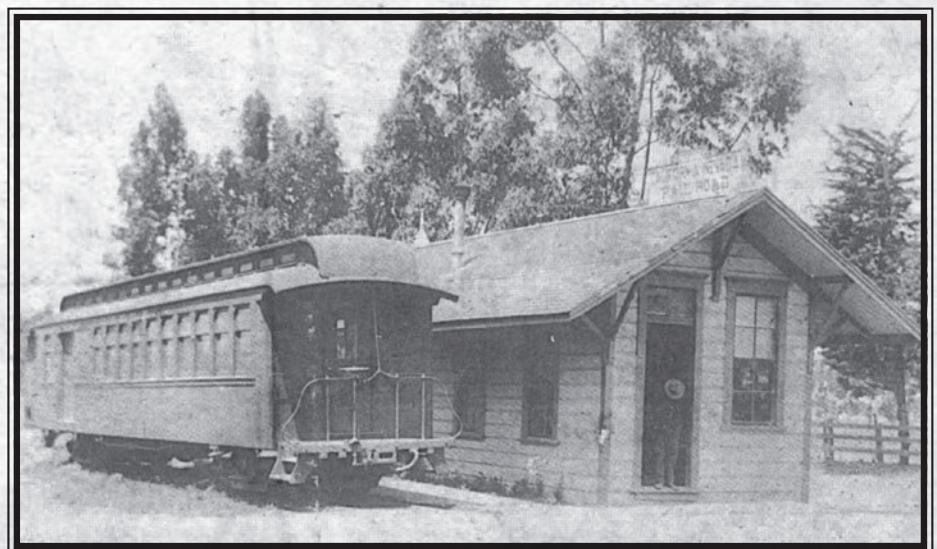
Thode's Ranch

In April 1886 the C & N RR began to schedule regular trips for

passengers from Emeryville to San Pablo.¹⁵ In June 1886 the C & N line began transporting excursion parties to picnic grounds at Thode's Ranch in Contra Costa County. Nicolas Thode, a German immigrant, opened a resort on his property, a picnic ground in a grove of trees consisting of benches and tables and a large platform for dancing. He provided his guests with unlimited supplies of fresh milk, home-made bread and fresh dairy butter.¹⁶

Reporter's Description of Ride

On a gloomy day in May 1887 an Oakland Enquirer reporter took a ride on the C & N train from Emeryville to the end of the line. He wrote a detailed account of the experience, which appeared in the paper on May 16, 1887, p. 4. This article is interesting because the locomotive at one point had difficulty finding traction, having been stalled by a recently cut crop of grain that lay scattered along the tracks. Also, the reporter provides a vivid description of the countryside in Contra Costa County at a time when there were open fields under



A depot was erected at 40th & San Pablo Avenue (Photo: Louis L. Stein collection, c. 1890).

cultivation, orchards of fruit trees, green meadows, creeks teeming with fish, dense groves of oak trees, rolling foothills, an unspoiled Eden that has since been lost to development and covered over with asphalt and concrete. Here is the description of the trip:

“Yesterday an Enquirer reporter, finding the day likely to hang heavily upon his hands, conceived the idea that the day would not be misspent in taking a ride over the road and writing up a description of it. So made a bee-line for the depot on Fortieth street and San Pablo avenue and boarded the train which would start thence at 9:45 o'clock.

The day was not a very pleasant one. It was cloudy and somewhat cold, and a 'wet wind' blew clouds of mist in from the sea, and made things as unpleasant as it possibly could...

The train, consisting of a couple of cars and engine, made a start at about 10 o'clock with about a hundred or so people on board. Fathers and mothers with their children, lovers with their sweethearts, bound for a quiet day at Oak Grove (now El Sobrante), which lies at the present terminus of the road. At yet there are only about fifteen miles of road built at this end, although the road has been graded ready for the rails beyond Walnut Creek.

The track is narrow gauge and fairly well built. It lies principally upon level ground, although here and there, there are bridged creeks and embankments, and cuttings through hills, all of which tend to break the monotony of the ride. The road passes through a beautiful and fertile country. Rich meadow lands stretch but to the right and left, reaching out to the foothills beyond, and as the country is clothed in its beautiful spring dress it is a fair picture to look upon.

Thousands of acres are under cultivation on either side. Here the run is made through fields upon which the newly cut is lying in cocks ready to be hauled off or baled: then the train passes through orchards the trees in which are laden with young fruit. In turn fields promising rich harvests of grain

are passed through, and cozy farmhouses are passed nestling amid trees of primeval growth, with their roofs and chimney-pots gleaming through the branches. In spite of the clouds and the damp mists which lay close upon the tops of the hills, the picture of rural contentment and prosperity which lay below was one which made the heart glad to gaze upon.

The only thing which broke the calm restfulness of the sylvan scene was the shrill shriek of the engine whistle as it gave forth its warning note to the well-fed kine (cows), which ever and anon wandered upon the track in search of the juicy thistles which grew between the ties, and gave a reproachful 'moo' as the train dashed by them, leaving in its wake a dense cloud of sulfurous smoke.

The train crew consisted of Engineer H. A. Robertson, Acting Fireman Miles Davis, foreman of the tracks, Brakeman T. Martins and the engineer's dog 'Irish,' whose one aim in life seemed to be to attack the train in the rear, when it was standing still, and chew off one of the hind wheels.

Grain on Track Stops Train

On the train sped and everything went smoothly until about three miles from the end of the road. Here the track is laid upon the level ground, and the farmers along each side of it have been so generous in sowing their grain, that they scattered it all over the track, and the crop now stands as thickly on the track as it does in the fields beyond. When the train struck the track at this place, it felt it. Gradually the train began to slacken, the great driving wheels began to swing around with a lively hum, sliding along the track without biting it, until the train came to a standstill, so slippery had the rails become from the juices of the barley and wheat crushed upon them. After several frantic efforts to get the engine to move, in despair the engineer yelled 'all hands shovel sand.'

And in a few moments there was a busy throng beside the track digging up the soil alongside and pitching it upon the rails. That being done for about a quarter of a mile, 'All aboard' was called and the engineer reversing

his engine ran back a space for a starter, and opening the throttle put her through in fine shape, just clearing the encumbrances as she began to stick again, and getting her beyond the long grasses...

Picnic Ground in Oak Grove

In due course the end of the road is reached. The most striking feature of the landscape is the dense growth of oaks and buckeyes. The land dips down into a deep valley and for hundreds of acres it looks like a huge park. It is known as Oak Grove (now El Sobrante).

The great trees spread their immense branches in every direction and form one of the most delightful places imaginable on a hot day. When the sun shines the effects of light and shade are marvelously fine, and in some parts so dense is the growth of the trees one might easily imagine oneself in the midst of a primeval forest, miles and miles away from the haunts of man. Here no other sound can be heard save the sighing of the wind in the branches over head, and the murmuring of the creek below, as its waters run by in their shallow bed, rippling over the stones and rocks which break their even flow and form miniature cataracts.

This beautiful spot is owned by Nicolas Thode, who also owns a flourishing farm close by. Recognizing its capabilities, he has arranged part of the grove as a picnic ground, and it makes a most delightful resort. Under the huge trees benches and tables have been erected, and in a clearing a large platform has been built for dancing.

At the farmhouse, only a few hundred yards distant, unlimited supplies of fresh milk, buttermilk, home-made bread and fresh dairy butter can be had, and almost everything else a reasonable being could require.

Arriving at this delightful grove the families upon the train disembarked and were soon busy spreading out their lunches upon the broad clean tables. In the natural course of events, many of the younger members drifted off to the dance platform, and it was while they were away that a very amusing incident occurred-amusing only to those who were not the sufferers.

Horsemen Devour Lunch

A family numbering some dozen or more, had spread a huge lunch upon one of the tables and had wandered away. While absent a small army of horsemen from Walnut Creek, with bridles gleaming and spurs jingling, rode up, and seeing this deserted lunch table with the tempting lunch upon it, proceeded without further ado to dispose of it. While so engaged a junior member of the family to whom the lunch belonged, saw the raid and ran off to give the alarm.

In short order and in breathless haste the family rushed up to behold their lunch disappearing down the gullets of the Contra Costa yahoos. Speechless from amusement at the coolness of the act they stood around and witnessed the demolition of the choicest viands, the marauders paying no more attention to them than if they had not been there. Having demolished everything in sight, they moved off, and the owner suddenly finding his tongue demanded an explanation.

It then appeared the riders had been the victim of a joke put upon them by some wag, who, seeing them ride up, took possession of the table and invited them to help themselves, slipping away as soon as they got well started. A very earnest hunt was made for him, but it was unsuccessful, for he had made good his escape, and it was just as well that he had, for a madder lot of fellows than his victims it would have been hard to find, and so he would have thought if they had found him.

Shortly before 5 o'clock the engine whistle sounded the recall, the pleasure-seekers boarded the train and home was reached at about an hour of so afterwards.))¹⁷

Clayton

The prospect of the C & N line reaching Walnut Creek encouraged farmers in Clayton, a community about 10 miles east of Walnut Creek, to request that the road be extended to that town. J. T. Ayres owned 1319 acres in Country Costa County in the vicinity of Clayton. He approached C & N officials and asked

them to continue the road "twelve miles beyond Walnut Creek", extending the track east to the town of Clayton and beyond. Mr. Ayres was convinced that the farmers in the area would be willing to provide the necessary funds for this project. Mr. Ayres realized that the farmers in Clayton would prosper if they had access to a reliable means of transportation to ship their produce.¹⁸

C & N for Sale

In the summer of 1887 rumors were floating around that the C & N RR was for sale. An Oakland Enquirer article, June 20, 1887, p. 3, verified that the C & N line was for sale.¹⁹ However, the principal stockholders, Joseph Emery and J. H. Smith, wanted to sell the company to a responsible party that would finish the project.

The Oakland Enquirer reads:

“The present owners of the road, the California and Nevada Railroad Company, of which J. S. Emery and J. H. Smith are the leading stockholders, are willing to sell the road. They have had offers for the road, but desire to see it pass into the hands of owners who will complete it and make it a competing line.”

This story created even more speculation about the sale of the C & N. A reporter from the Oakland Tribune tried to interview J. W. Smith, who at the time was President of the railroad, about the status of the narrow gauge line. Mr. Smith was reluctant to reveal any information about a pending sale. When the reporter asked Captain Smith if there was any truth to the rumor, he responded:

“You are a married man? No? Well, if I were to ask you who the young lady was upon whom your affections were

centered, you might object. That is, there are some things that we don't care to talk about.”

According to the article, the reporter blushed at this comment and placed “a certain locket on his watch chain in his pocket...”²⁰ The reporter surmised that Captain Smith might be holding back information so as “not to spoil a bargain.”

There were critics who wondered why the C & N line, after six years of construction, had completed only 15 miles of tracks. If the eastern terminus was Bodie, California, high in the Sierra Nevada mountains, a distance of 225 miles from Oak Grove, how long would it take for the road to reach this destination? At the rate of 2.5 miles of track laid per year, it would require 90 more years for the railroad to reach Bodie.

Skepticism on the viability of the road is revealed in an Oakland Tribune article, August 9, 1887, p. 3.



“The California and Nevada Railroad has always been looked at by the people of Oakland as a name without a road, and few know where the rails that lead from the depot at Fortieth street go to. But there is more to the road than is imagined. In fact, there is a fully equipped road as far as it goes. The company has rails laid from the water front near the Judson Iron Works, through Alameda county and around by San Pablo into Contra Costa county, to Oak Grove.

The distance is about 15 miles.

Oak Grove is little more than a pleasant picnic ground with some few houses around. At present no regular trains are run, but on Sundays C. K. King, the lessee of the road, runs an excursion train to Oak Grove and return.))

This article also provides information about C & N rolling stock, infrastructure, and railroad yards.

“For rolling stock the company has two light engines, one passenger coach complete, and one nearly so. There are several flat cars complete, and six framed so that they only need to be put together. At the end of the road at Fortieth street and San Pablo avenue, the company has small railroad yards with buildings and sidetracks. A depot is built in Oakland, and also one is built at San Pablo. Sidetracks are at West Berkeley, San Pablo and Oak Grove, in addition to the Oakland sidetracks.

The road required little grading until after leaving the San Pablo station, when considerable cutting and filling was required. The road has never been ballasted, except for a few yards in Oakland, and consequently is a little rough, but not uncomfortably so. Such is the California and Nevada Railroad.))”²¹

Absence of Ballast

The fact that the C & N tracks had no ballast is surprising. Ballast is the gravel or crushed stone that is placed between the wooden ties to strengthen them and prevent movement. Ballast also allows for the drainage of water from the rails. Without ballast the rails have no support base and tend to go out of alignment. The lack of ballast explains why the C & N RR experienced so many train derailments in the 1890s. One may assume that Captain Smith and C & N officers planned to rectify this problem at some future date.

Captain Smith

In December 1887, Captain Smith,

the builder of the C & N RR, was interviewed by an Oakland Tribune reporter. Mr. Smith admitted to the reporter that progress on the line had stalled and “that nothing had been done on his road for some time past.” He also claimed that he knew nothing about a pending sale of the line, in response to numerous rumors that the C & N was for sale. At this time, it appears the line was dormant, and Mr. Smith revealed that he “knows nothing of the proposition to run a daily train between Oakland and Oak Grove” in Contra Costa County.²²

C & N Developments in 1888

In 1888 the C & N RR experienced several developments. In January 1888 Captain Smith in a search for capital devised a plan to extend the road. He proposed that a company be formed “with a capital stock of \$500,000 or \$1,000,000, divided into shares of the par value of \$100 each. These shares are to be paid for in installments of \$5 per month, and with the proceeds the California and Nevada Railroad is to be extended through Contra Costa county.”²³

The same month Captain Smith bought a coal mine near the C & N route, presumably in Contra Costa County, hoping it would prove to be a “mine of wealth” and contribute to the success of the line. Unfortunately, the mine did not contain a sufficient amount of coal to make its extraction profitable. This acquisition proved to be worthless.²⁴

In March, 1888 a syndicate controlled by M. B. Curtis, C. K. King and others filed articles of incorporation and proposed to operate the C & N RR, running trains on a daily basis from Emeryville

to San Pablo. The train would carry both freight and passenger cars. If business proved successful, the hope was that the train would add “baggage, express and mail cars.”

It was also proposed that on Sunday a special excursion train would run to the picnic site in Oak Grove. Another plan was to run a stage from Oak Grove to Walnut Creek and return after two hours. This arrangement was accepted by Captain Smith and it went into effect on April 1, 1888. The corporation, named the Coast Range Development Co., opened an office at 1010 Broadway in Oakland.²⁵

A year later C. K. King was appointed Superintendent of the C & N line with the authority to “make all arrangements for the running of special or picnic trains.” Mr. King renamed the C & N line the “Red, White and Blue” line.²⁶

C & N Line Resumes Operation

The C & N line resumed operation between Emeryville and Oak Grove on April 1, 1888 on a temporary schedule. The plan was to run one train a day, consisting of a passenger car and a freight car. The passenger car would transport picnickers to Oak Grove. The freight car would haul produce from Contra Costa County to Oakland.

The farmers in Contra Costa County had been carrying their produce by wagon over the Oakland hills, a long, arduous trip up a steep road. It was hoped that the C & N line would provide CCC farmers with a reliable method of transporting their vegetables and fruit to Oakland. Also, the farmers and their wives could board the train and conduct business and purchase items in

Oakland.

The Oakland Enquirer newspaper on March 31, 1888, p. 11 published the new schedule and listed all of the stations along the route. On the first day of operation on, the C & N train left the station

at 40th and San Pablo at 10:00 am and arrived at Oak Grove at 11:25 am. The train continued another mile to Olinda (located a few miles north of modern day Orinda), the eastern terminus, arriving at 11:30. The train stopped at 10 stations along the route, a 20 mile trip that took an hour and 30 minutes while clocking speeds averaging about 15 mph.

On the opening day of this new schedule C & N officials boarded the train along with the passengers, and a brass band joined them to play music along the way, and, perhaps, at the picnic grounds.²⁷



"The end of the line" Bryant Station in Orinda (Photo: orindahistory.org).

and on this occasion, Mr. Smith was willing to share information about the status of the line. He admitted that work on the road had stalled for the last two years, suggesting that a new infusion of capital was necessary to continue the project.

An anonymous critic had contemptuously stated that the C & N RR was "two streaks of rust on a right of way" from Emeryville to San Pablo. The captain refuted the idea that the tracks were rusting away and laughingly commented that "the idea of a road rusting out in that time (1881-1888). Those rails are just as good as they ever were."

The reporter was aware that Captain Smith was negotiating with a mysterious person in an effort to raise money to continue work on the road. At the same time Mr. Smith was ready to sell the C & N line for the right price. Here is part of the interview:

No. 1	STATIONS.	Rts. Fare	No. 2.
10.00	A. M. lv. Oakland. ar. P. M. Fortieth st and San Pablo av.		4.30
10.03	*Femescal Creek	.05	4.27
10.05	Berkeley Crossing, C P R R	.05	4.25
10.07	*Alcatraz.	.05	4.23
10.10	*Matthews tract.	.10	4.19
10.15	*Dwight way, Berkeley.	.10	4.17
10.18	University ave., Berkeley.	.10	4.12
10.23	*Peralta Park.	.10	4.07
10.33	*Red House.	.25	3.57
10.49	*Gills.	.50	3.47
10.55	San Pablo.	.40	3.30
11.20	*Lynch's.	.50	3.10
11.25	Oak Grove.	.50	3.05
11.30	A. M. ar Olinda. lv. P. M.	.50	3.00

Clipping: Oakland Inquirer, Mar 15, 1888, p. 11

Interview with Captain Smith

Captain Smith did not like to talk to reporters, especially when work on the C & N line slowed down, and also when there were rumors that the C & N railroad was up for sale. In September 1888 a reporter interviewed the captain in his house,

Reporter: Has any other road purchased the California and Nevada Railroad?"

Smith: No.

Reporter: Well, who is this mysterious individual with whom you are negotiating for this money to extend the road?

Smith: "That I can't tell. He may back

out," and again the captain smiled.

Reporter: Has the Southern Pacific Company anything to do with it?

Smith: No.

Reporter: Have you ever had any negotiations with any of those roads named for the sale of the California and Nevada Railroad?

Smith: Well, I don't mind telling you something as that is past. Of course, you know that there is a large number of Eastern roads wanting to get to this coast. There are lots of them, and perhaps when they get here, they will find that there are too many here. The original line of this road was to run to the Nevada State line, and the charter so provides. A line was surveyed to that point, but that was before I came here. Then I got here, and I took the contract for the road. Now, the road was bonded at \$20,000 per mile and I agreed to take the bonds and half of the stock in payment for my work.

Then work was commenced, and from time to time we carried the work through until the road reached the point where it now is and there it has stayed for a couple of years. Of course, my stock has made me a member of the company and I was President of it for a few weeks, but, as an officer in the company, I could not contract with myself to build the road and so I got out.

In regard to negotiations for the sale of the road. Of course, we would sell it if we got our price. We have had negotiations from several parties, but when it came to the point of making a payment, or an option, they

never came to time. There are lots of people who would like to have that road, but they want us to wait for them and have them take it when they want it and let them pay for it just when and how they please. The Union Pacific folks would like this road and so would the Denver and Rio Grande road and several others, but the only roads that ever had any dealings with us were the two roads mentioned.

Reporter: Did the Southern Pacific Company ever open any negotiations with you?

Smith: No. They couldn't get the road. (Joseph) Emery has a lot of land out there at Emeryville, and he wants a ferry there. If he sells to the Southern Pacific Company, of course he wouldn't get his ferry. If he was to have a ferry there, he would make a cool million of dollars, as his land would just double in value. Of course the ferry company will be a separate company, and he will have the controlling interest in it, but if the road ever gets in paying operation there will be a ferry there, and Emery's land will be worth double what it is now.²⁸

Interview with Captain Smith, Feb. 1889

An Oakland Tribune reporter interviewed Captain Smith in February, 1889. At this time Mr. Smith considered widening the track and converting it to broad gauge, which in his opinion would enhance the value of the line. Mr. Smith expressed a desire to extend the road to Walnut Creek; however, this plan was stalled because C & N did not own the right of way to this destination. Also, Mr. Smith lamented the fact that there were no wealthy supporters willing to step in and finance the extension, an admission that the project had run out of money.

Reporter: Would the road pay if operated from Oak Grove, where it is now, or do you expect to extend it?

Smith: If it was extended five miles further it would pay without fail, and Walnut Creek would be a bonanza. We might extend it the five miles, but we lack the right of way to Walnut Creek. Now why don't the people out there do as they do in other places? If they would donate me the right of way and would raise by subscription \$50,000, I would guarantee to run the road to Walnut Creek and broaden the gauge, ballast the track, fully equip the road, and operate it. I would also give those who donated the money certificates that would be good for freight to the amount they donated.

Reporter: What would it cost to extend the road and put it in operation?

Smith: It would cost \$200,000 more and would make the road worth a million and a half.

Reporter: Now, is there any possibility of this work being done inside of a year?

Smith: I can't tell what Mr. Emery will do, and a year is a good while....Now, a man came up to me the other day. He was rich and had lots of money. Said he: 'Smith, that road of yours is a big thing. It is a big thing for the country. Why don't you build it out further and operate it? It would be a big thing for you.' "I asked him why he didn't help me. I told him I would give him the same chances I had. I would give him a chance to make just as much on a dollar as I would. But somehow he couldn't stay so long."²⁹

Emeryville Pier

Captain John Smith was hired by the C & N RR in March 1884 to build the road. Instead of working on the C & N line north to San Pablo, Captain Smith turned his attention to building a pier out into the bay that would provide ferry service from San Francisco to Emeryville with a direct connection to the C & N line. This connection would enable passengers and freight from across the bay to have access to the C & N road. The wharf had to be one mile in length in order to reach water deep enough to

accommodate a ferry. By the summer of 1884 over 160 feet of the pier had been completed.³⁰

In order for the C & N line in Emeryville to connect with the tracks going onto the pier, it was necessary to cross Southern Pacific tracks that ran north and south next to the bay. Mr. Smith approached Mr. Towne, an S. P. official, to ask permission for the C & N line to cross the S.P. tracks. Mr. Towne disapproved of the crossing, but Captain Smith went ahead and installed the cross track despite this objection.

Captain Smith was aware that a C & N train heading west over the crossing track created a dangerous situation; because of the heavy railroad traffic on the S.P. line, the possibility of a collision was on Mr. Smith's mind. He remarked: "Why one disaster might occur there and cost \$100,000, and disasters are liable to occur there every little while."³¹

To solve this problem, Captain Smith entertained a plan to build an overpass over the S.P. line. It would be necessary to construct a grade of solid fill several hundred feet east of the S.P. road, in order to reach the desired elevation of twenty feet, and then install an iron trestle across the S.P. tracks, and next construct a grade on the west side that would incline down to the pier. This plan never materialized. Work on the pier was discontinued, and the proposal to implement ferry service from San Francisco to Emeryville was also suspended. It may be that the construction of the pier ceased because C & N "did not own the water front land where the uncompleted wharf was constructed."³²

Over the years the C & N pier

deteriorated and slowly rotted away, having never been maintained. By this time the Southern Pacific Railroad expressed an interest in obtaining the C & N line, with the idea of extending it to Walnut Creek.³³

After the decision was made to stop construction on the pier in March 1889, the track was removed from the wharf and the cross track over the Northern Railway was also removed.³⁴

Enhanced Property Values

Farms and properties that were in adjacent to the C & N route increased in value. If the line ever reached Walnut Creek, the area would benefit financially because farmers and orchard growers would have a reliable means of transporting their produce. This prospect held the possibility of enhancing the value of all of the land in the Walnut Creek area. When property near the C & N line was up for sale, a local newspaper ad would mention its proximity to the C & N tracks, which served to increase the property's value.³⁵

TO BE EXTENDED.
 California and Nevada Road
 to Be Operated.
 Significant Deeds Formally
 Placed on Record.
 A Traffic Agreement With the Southern
 Pacific Company—Tapping
 Contra Costa.

Clipping: Oakland Tribune Mar 28, 1889, p. 1

Interview with Captain Smith

An Oakland Tribune reporter interviewed Captain Smith and asked him about extending the road

to Walnut Creek, the time frame involved, and the possibility of ferry service from San Francisco to the C & N Emeryville pier. This interview appeared in the Oakland Tribune on March 28, 1889, p. 1.

Reporter: As you have remarked heretofore, you need to extend your road further east in order to get freight and passengers in paying quantities. Do you intend building more road, and how soon?

Smith: Yes, I will, or I expect to extend the road, and I have arrangements made to obtain funds to do so, provided, however, that parties along the first thirty miles of the line of the road, who have not been settled with for their rights of way, will donate to the company such rights.

Reporter: How soon do you expect to commence extending the road?

Smith: Just as soon as the right of way is

secured on the first thirty miles of road," was the answer.

Reporter: How soon do you expect to get the track to Walnut Creek?

Smith: Ah, there is another of your leading questions. When I was a young man I was always anxious to go fast, but of late I have learned that there is luck in leisure, so I am not in much of a hurry. I would like to get the track to Charles Hill within a year. There we have a long tunnel to construct. That is it is a large tunnel for a small company to build. It is 750 feet in length. To build it with the greatest economy is to build it slowly, say about four feet per day. I have learned since getting into this enterprise to be patient.

Reporter: But how about a ferry at the western end of your road? I have heard that Mr. Emery wants a ferry there, and now you intend to make a connection with the Southern Pacific Railroad. Will he agree to that?



1901 vintage map of Oakland, Berkeley & Emeryville showing the proposed wharf for the C & N RR.

Smith: *I would rather you would ask me no more questions at this time, or there will be nothing left for me to tell you hereafter if you keep on questioning me. However, I will answer that query if will agree to ask me no more at this time.*

Reporter: *Agreed*

Smith: *I have no objection to a ferry there and Mr. Emery may attend to getting one if he wants it.*³⁶

Right of Way to Walnut Creek Secured

In April 1889 the Oakland Tribune reported that the C & N line, after an inspection, was found to be in good shape. The article reads:

*“An inspection trip was made over the road on Sunday, and it was found to be in good condition, and as they have stood for three years there is very little work to be done on the road. For the past week, however, a construction train has been ballasting the road wherever it required any care, and the road is now ready for any amount of travel through to the terminus. It is probable that the road will do a good excursion business this summer, as there is a very pretty picnic ground at the end of the road, and it is very probable that before the summer is over that the road will have been extended to some point near Mount Diablo. In that case the business will be very good.”*³⁷

- GRAND -
EXCURSION
 -TO THE-
- Hills and Groves -
 -OF-
CONTRA COSTA,
 Sunday, May 19th, 1889.
CALIFORNIA AND NEVADA RAILROAD
 Red, White and Blue Line.

TRAIN LEAVES STATION AT THE junction of Fortieth street and San Pablo avenue, at 9:30 A. M., returning at 7 P. M. Fine scenery. Fine music. Improved dancing platform. Running water Dining facilities. No poison oak. Come one, come all and bring your families. Round trip, Adults 75 cts, children 50 cts.

Clipping: Oakland Tribune. May 15, 1889, p. 8.

By April 1889 the C & N line had

secured the right of way from Oak Grove to Walnut Creek, with the exception of one piece of property. C & N officers went to court to condemn the land of the hold out property owner in order to complete the route to Walnut Creek. Once the line reached Walnut Creek there was an expectation on the part of C & N officers and owners that the railroad would be a successful enterprise.³⁸

On April 28, 1889, the first C & N train for the season ran from Emeryville to Oak Grove in Contra Costa County.³⁹ A few days later Captain Smith predicted that the C & N line “will ultimately be built to Walnut Creek, but not this season, on account of some delay in obtaining rights of way and trouble about the tunnels.”⁴⁰ On May 15, 1889 an ad appeared in the Oakland Tribune promoting the C & N excursion train. The ad read: “Grand Excursion to the Hills and Groves of Contra Costa, Sunday May 19th 1889. California and Nevada Railroad, Red, White and Blue Line. TRAIN LEAVES STATION AT THE junction of Fortieth street and San Pablo avenue, at 9:30, returning at 7 P. M. Fine scenery. Fine music. Improved dancing platform. Running water. Dining facilities. No poison oak. Come one, come all and bring your families. Round trip, Adults 75 cts, children 50 cts.”⁴¹

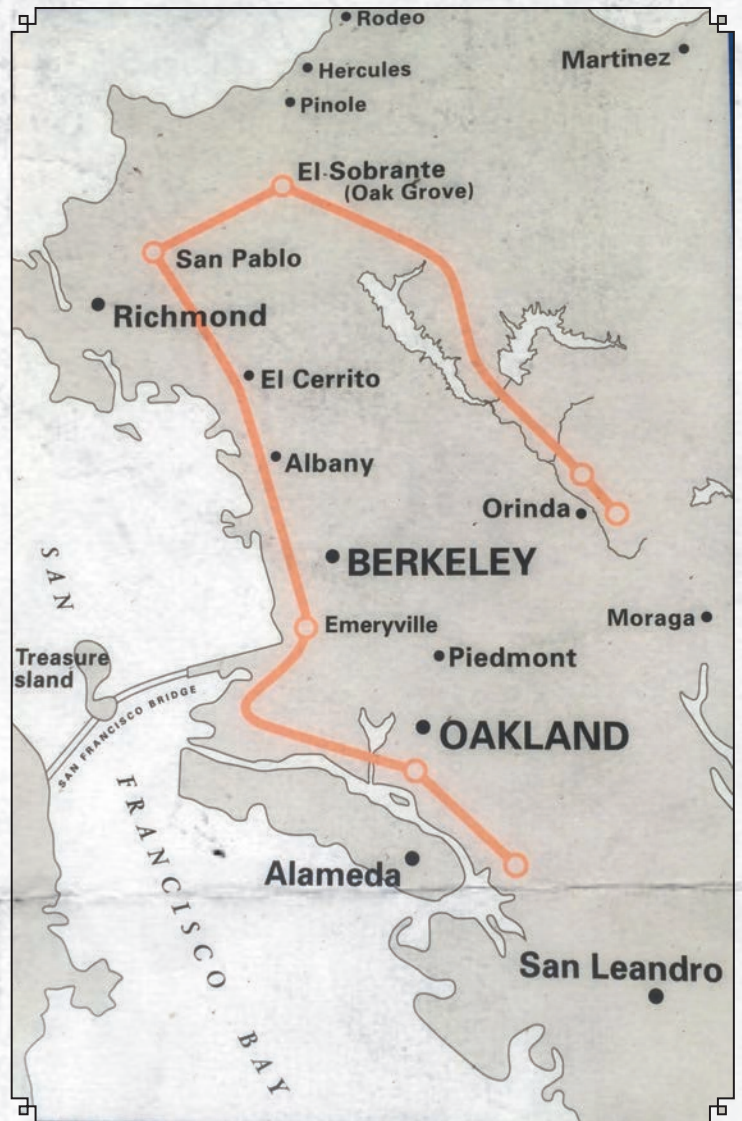
The excursion trains ran on Sundays. On weekdays C & N freight trains hauled ties and rails to the end of the line so work could proceed on the extension of the road through San Pablo Canyon. Progress was slow because of the many bridges that had to be built across San Pablo Creek and its many tributaries.⁴²

NEXT ISSUE:

California and Nevada Railroad, Part III.

Notes:

- ¹ Oakland Trib., April 28, 1881, p. 3.
- ² Ibid., March 25, 1881, p. 3.
- ³ S.F. Exam., Oct. 23, 1881, p. 2.
- ⁴ Erle C. Hanson, California and Nevada Railroad (Northampton, PA, R & S Printers, 1888) p. 1.
- ⁵ Oakland Trib., March 25, 1881, p. 3. See also Internet, Oakland population, 1880.
- ⁶ Hanson, California and Nevada Railroad, pp. 1-2.
- ⁷ Oakland Trib., Oct. 8, 1881, p. 3.
- ⁸ Ibid., April 28, 1881, p. 3.
- ⁹ Livermore Herald, Dec. 22, 1881, p. 3, Alameda Weekly Argus, June 3, 1882, p. 2, Oakland Trib., Feb. 6, 1882, p. 7, Oakland Trib., March 5, 1884, p. 3.
- ¹⁰ Oakland Trib., Sept. 12, 1881, p. 4.
- ¹¹ Hanson, California and Nevada Railroad, p. 2
- ¹² S.F. Chron., Nov. 18, 1895, p. 7. See also Hanson, California and Nevada Railroad, p. 3 and Oakland Trib. Feb. 28, 1884, p. 3.
- ¹³ Oakland Trib., April 19, 1884, p. 1. See also Hanson, California and Nevada Railroad, p. 3.
- ¹⁴ Oakland Trib., March 30, 1885, p. 3.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., April 10, 1885, p. 3.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., June 14, 1886, p. 2.
- ¹⁷ Oakland Enquirer, May 16, 1887, p. 4.
- ¹⁸ Oakland Trib., May 4, 1887, p. 3.
- ¹⁹ Oakland Enquirer, June 20, 1887, p. 3.
- ²⁰ Oakland Trib., Aug. 9, 1887, p. 3.
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² Ibid., Dec. 13, 1887, p. 2.
- ²³ Ibid., Jan., 14, 1888, p. 4.
- ²⁴ S.F. Exam., Jan. 15, 1888, p. 3.
- ²⁵ Ibid., March 20, 1888, p. 6, Oakland Trib., March 21, 1888, p. 1, Oakland Enquirer, March 22, 1888, p. 2, Oakland Enquirer, March 31, 1888, p. 1.
- ²⁶ Oakland Trib., April 23, 1889, p. 6.
- ²⁷ Oakland Enquirer, March 31, 1888, p. 11.
- ²⁸ Oakland Trib., Sept. 28, 1888, p. 5.
- ²⁹ Ibid., Feb. 13, 1889, p. 5.
- ³⁰ Ibid., Feb. 28, 1884, p. 3.
- ³¹ Ibid., Feb. 22, 1889, p. 5.
- ³² Hanson, California and Nevada Railroad, p. 32 and Oakland Tribune, Feb. 22, 1889, p. 5.
- ³³ Daily Alta California, Feb. 23, 1889, p. 8.
- ³⁴ S.F. Chron., March 29, 1889, p. 5. See also John Hall, Pacific Coast Narrow Gauge, Internet article.
- ³⁵ S.F. Chron., March 20, 1889, p. 2. See also Hanson, California and Nevada Railroad, p. 17
- ³⁶ Oakland Trib., March 28, 1889, p. 1.
- ³⁷ Ibid., April 23, 1889, p. 6.
- ³⁸ Oakland Enq., April 26, 1889, p. 3.
- ³⁹ S.F. Chron., April 28, 1889, p. 16.
- ⁴⁰ S.F. Exam., May 10, 1889, p. 3.
- ⁴¹ Oakland Trib., May 15, 1889, p. 8.
- ⁴² Oakland Enq., July 22, 1889, p. 3 and Oakland Trib. Aug. 13, 1889, p. 1.



A marker with a map of completed sections of the rail line in Orinda, CA (Source: hmdb.org).



A historic landmark in Orinda indicates the location of the Bryant Station site (Photo: wikimedia commons).

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JOURNAL OF THE
Emeryville Historical Society

NEWS & UPDATES

**REST IN PEACE EHS CO-FOUNDER NANCY SMITH
— 1936-2022 —**

Emeryville Historical Society co-founder Nancy Smith passed away on December 1, 2022. She was 86 years old.

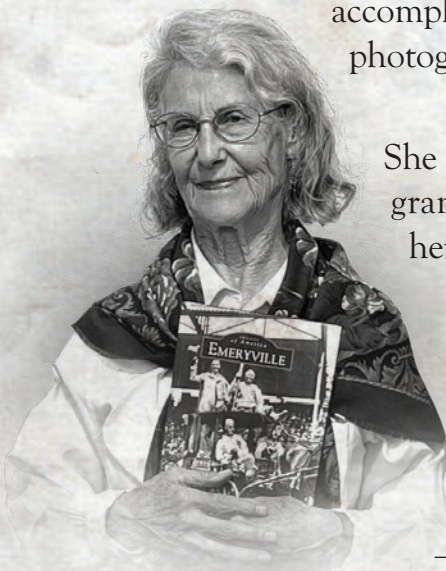
Over the past 33 years, she and fellow co-founder Don Hausler produced over 130 journals like this one chronicling historical events in Emeryville and North Oakland amassing a collection of hundreds of rare photos and books.

In addition to her historical preservation efforts, she was an accomplished musician, watercolor painter, photographer and volunteer at the Tilden Regional Botanic Garden.

She is survived by her six children, five grandchildren, one great grandchild and her three dogs (Lizzie, Abbie & Sophie).

Her family is planning a Spring ceremony at the Tilden Botanic Garden to celebrate her life.

Read our full tribute to her at:
emeryvillehistorical.org/nancy



ABOUT

The Emeryville Historical Society was founded in 1989 and has been publishing its quarterly journal since 1990.

We are a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization financially supported by our paid members.

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