

AMADOR SAWMILL AND MINING ASSOCIATION

STEAM DISPLAY WINS EDUCATION AWARD

The association's 15 ton "steam exhibit on wheels" was a great hit at the first "BSOT" a spectacular four day living history exhibit put on by the Hedrick Agricultural Museum in Woodland, California. BSOT stands for BEST SHOW ON TRACKS, a global gathering of 350 plus antique Caterpillar tractor owners who operated their rare machines for over 16,000 event goers. Many of the machines were steam powered and designed to haul logs in the forest so our presentation fit right in. We hauled three heavy logs back and forth a distance of about 200 feet demonstrating the power and speed of the drum winches. In the old days the "whistle punk" kid set the choker chain and then signaled the engineer by pulling on a wire connected to the whistle. Engineer Bill Braun manned the hand throttle, foot break and clutches to spin the winches that positioned the load. Fireman Tom Innes kept the pressure up to 125 lbs., checked the water level and carried on long conversations with interested steam hobbyist all in 106 degree weather. The three logs were hauled a distance of 200 feet in about 6 seconds! The report of the steam exhaust along with the sound of the massive winch gears was music. The team used a 1928 Cat 15 as a dead man to attach the cable return snatch block. Many, many man hours were spent restoring this authentic Steam Donkey into a safe and true representation of how logging was done in the age of steam.



Richard Hansen and the cable fairlead



Spotting the rig at 6 AM



Setting the stack



Getting up steam, 10AM



Chug, chug, chug, chug...



The "Whistle Punk" hooks up the choker cable

The award we won was presented by the Hedrick Museum.



Bill Braun explains the history of the "Steam Donkey Engine" with both historic photos and a photo collage of the repair and restoration work done to their Donkey Engines. His team won an award at the "Best Show On Tracks" for "Best Educational Working Display".

Chris Hedberg/Democrat



(From left to right) Bill Braun, Richard L. Hansen, Tom Innes and Kevin Jarrett of the Amador Sawmill mining association stand next to their restored logging machine "No. 2 Donkey".

Chris Hedberg/Democrat



Sawmill crew at the Amador County Fair July 2008



Fiddletown Restoration Society restoration project

MEMORIES

A while back our esteemed editor, Alan Langmuir, suggested that I write an article on the early history of the Sawmill - how it came into existence and so on. As a source he suggested talking to Roland Matson and who better as it was Roland who found the abandoned mill and moved it to the fairgrounds circa 1970. And so I spent an enjoyable 2 hours or so talking to Roland in his "office" surrounded by various plaques, awards and numerous pictures. Pictures of his father, huge logs on old trucks and of course pictures of the Sawmill from its earliest days at the fairgrounds.

The mill was originally located at the Bateman ranch and was used to meet all of the lumber needs of the ranch operation. This included structural lumber, fence posts and boards for fruit boxes. The boxes were assembled at a factory and returned to the ranch for use. It was Roland's father who told him the approximate location of the abandoned mill and the resting place was given away by a rusting fender from a Ford Model T. All of the machinery was there, having collapsed through the rotting wood foundation. The only missing piece was the saw blade.

As we talked, Roland recounted the numerous problems encountered once the mill was erected and started operating at the fair. These included theft and petty vandalism. But the biggest challenge was to rediscover the secrets of operating a sawmill and producing useable lumber. As time went on it became apparent to Roland that he could not continue operating the mill indefinitely and he was not confident that the mill would

survive. Fortunately a new crew appeared from the flatlands of the antique engine exhibits... the folks that are now the "Amador Sawmill and Mining Association. ". At the end of our interview Roland said that he felt the Sawmill "was in good hands" and that he could comfortably " let go ". He agreed to meet again with me and talk some more.....

This is # 1 in a series.....

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

The Amador Sawmill and Mining Association held a fall board meeting on Sunday, November 9, 2008. Since the last meeting in April, the board added the final member to bring the total to five. The board welcomed Jim Headd. Jim has been an active participant in sawmill activities. In attendance were Bill Braun, John Tower, Jerry Virtue, Jim Headd, and Tom Innes. The board also elected Tom Innes secretary of the Association. The board would like thank Jerry Virtue for his service during the early days of the Association.

The board reviewed several on going projects. The engine room, i.e. the building occupied by the Corliss, will be enclosed. This will bring added security to the sawmill along with a necessary storage area of Corliss tools and maintenance materials. This will let us leave the engine set up and in running order when the saw mill is not in use and also reduce setup time when it is needed. Tools and support equipment will be able to be left in the engine room.

The roof of the sawmill building was replaced during the last year. This gave us a fire safe roof and it also does a good job of keeping us dry. We are planning a building extension in the area where the cut lumber is off-loaded. We will have a better place to work during the hot days of summer and a useful area to store cut lumber.

The #3 Donkey boiler has been sent out for repair. It had been damaged by salt water during its life as a pile driver. We were able to fund this effort through the sales of cut lumber to the California Alpine Club and the Fiddletown Preservation Society. Generally, we have to sell to non-profit organizations or government agencies. The plan is to make the #3 Donkey boiler a wood fired boiler. Fabrication of a new foundation and ash pit will begin as soon as funds are available. The boiler can then be left in place at the fair grounds and we won't have to move the donkey.

Financially we are still on the edge with our cash reserves. Any contributions are welcomed.



**Bottom row: Jim Headd, John Tower, Alan Langmuir, Jerry Virtue
Second Row: Dave Bibby, Tom Innes, Bill Braun
Third Row: Steve Bishop, Frank Tower, Kevin Jarrett**

ANNUAL WORKDAY & POTLUCK NOVEMBER 1, 2008

This year the annual workday and potluck was a two day event because of the number of logs donated to be cut. It started Friday, October 31st, in the rain, with 12 volunteers who managed to accomplish the cutting of 10 logs with few problems. The logs were donated by Brian Oneto. The power supply was the Dodge Hemi. All of the lumber cut was going to the Fiddletown Preservation Society and Amador County Fairgrounds for their ongoing restoration and renovation projects.

On Saturday November 1st the volunteers again arrived, undaunted by the rain, with seven logs remaining to be cut. These were really nice cedar and redwood logs, also provided by Brian Oneto. Although most of this lumber was earmarked for Fiddletown and Amador County a portion was retained our Association to continue the Sawmill restoration as well as other upcoming projects.

At Two PM, Big Daddy Bill Braun blew the whistle to shut down and pack it in for the day. After shaking the sawdust out of their hair and brushing it off the clothes there was a rush to get to the hall where a terrific dinner had been laid out for everyone's enjoyment. Turkey and all the trimmings was the menu's main focus this year with lots of salads and great desserts. Jim Headd once again brought an array of wines for everyone to enjoy with their meal. Of course many whetted their palates and heightened their taste buds by sampling the "grape juice" while waiting for the finishing touches and serving of dinner. Once again the "Camp Cook" did an outstanding job and really set out a great dinner. Each one seems to be better than the last – and that's hard to do!!!

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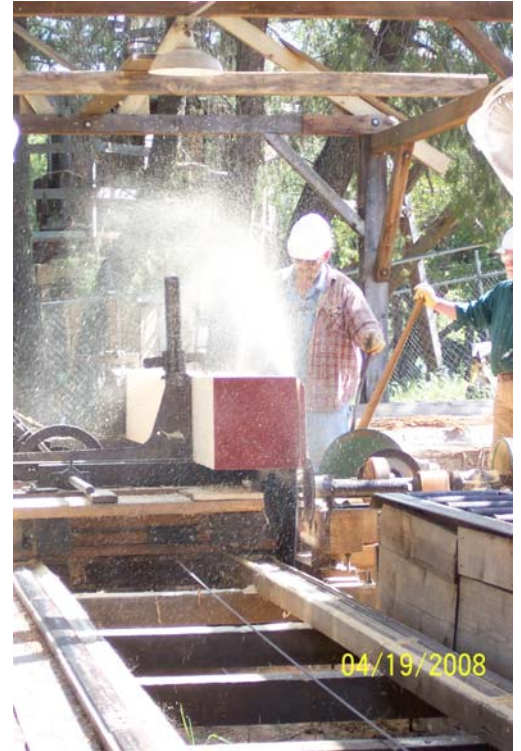
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A 501 (c) (3) tax exempt non-profit Ca. corporation

“The primary objectives and purposes of this corporation shall be for public purposes: acquiring, restoring, and preserving authentic historic working sawmill and hard rock mining equipment for Public education through display and demonstration, together with related activities.”



Centering a peeled log on the carriage



Making sawdust!

Little known statistics about the association:

43= the size of our mailing list to folks who donate time, money and ideas to further our mission statement

0= the number of members of the association. It was decided to keep the corporation paper work and administration as simple as possible by not accessing membership dues therefore – no members.

5= the number of Board of Directors who meet twice a year in April and November to plan and set our goals

Our very Special Volunteer= Cathy Braun who keeps the corporate tax books, runs the kiosk and puts up with Bill

\$6,580= the amount we had in the bank from selling authentic rough cut lumber for other museum's restorations

\$2,252= the amount we received in cash donations

\$8,000= estimate of the amount we will owe Bay City Boiler for repairs to #3 donkey boiler

\$2,500= estimate of funds needed to finish the boiler restoration

\$0= estimate of the amount we will have in the bank after we get the boiler back from Bay City

\$0= the amount of money for dues we assess from the members we don't have

24"= the maximum diameter of logs we can cut

16' 6"= the length of log that will fit on the carriage

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