

The Petaluma & Santa Rosa Electric Railway – Electric Railway Pioneer

By Allen Tacy

Prologue

The Petaluma & Santa Rosa Railroad was the creation of Petalumans. They conceived it. They lead its board of directors. They provided much of its finance from the new local prosperity generated by the rise of the chicken and egg business, which boomed into prominence at the turn of the Twentieth Century. Its headquarters lay there.

The idea for its inception grew out of an intense political and commercial rivalry between Petaluma and Santa Rosa. Political because Petaluma was staunchly Republican. Santa Rosa a stronghold of Democratic persuasion and seen by Petalumans as the thief which had stolen the county seat. Petaluma was talking secession at the time.

Although Petaluma in 1900 was one of the busiest ports in California, she was losing ground because of the steam railroad, the San Francisco & North Pacific. That line's Tiburon route was faster by far than sternwheel steamboats could passage the multiple twists and turns of Petaluma Creek. Now in 1903, to make matters worse, the SF&NP had fallen into the hands of The Octopus, the universally hated Southern Pacific. Californian widely believed its rates and charges were prejudicial to the great commercial development they felt could be theirs if only the road's charges were less. Petaluma had an ace in the hole: cheap waterborne transportation, which SP could not hope to control. The new P&SR would lever that advantage and open up the apple country around Sebastopol as well.

Petaluma's "past can be seen as a microcosm of California as a whole", writes Adair Haig in her History of Petaluma. "Certain intriguing traits, however, belong to Petaluma alone. The first of these is a remarkable tendency to assume control of her own destiny. While most towns seem content simply to roll along with the tides of fortune, accepting what fate dishes out in the way of railroads, a county seat, or suburban sprawl, Petaluma makes decisions - even difficult ones - about its future."

That Petaluma created its own railroad was not unusual among California communities. But it is almost unique that a town of its size should have been so successful in the endeavor. Most such lines quickly failed and were gobbled up by big fellows like SP. P&SR managed to develop an intense loyalty among its shipping public and hung on for two generations. When Southern Pacific finally managed to acquire its nuisance competitor, the big road intelligently kept the road managerially independent - and its shippers stayed loyal.

This is its story.

Conception

At the turn of the Twentieth Century, two north-south railroads served Sonoma County. The standard gauge San Francisco & North Pacific linked Petaluma, Santa Rosa, and Sebastopol on its path north. About 15 miles to the west the narrow gauge North Pacific Coast reached communities near the coast and the redwoods.

Between the steam roads lay a rich agricultural belt. The great horticulturist Luther Burbank, already world renown, called it "the most perfect spot in all the world as far as nature is concerned." During the Nineteenth Century large crops of grain and potatoes grew here. The many dairies produced fine butter and cheese. Yet Petaluma, then the largest city in the county and market center for much of this area, stagnated with a population of about 3,800 little changed from 1880 to 1895.

For those with eyes to see, however, change was coming and coming soon. Burbank pioneered ideas for adapting imported plant stocks to local temperatures and soil. French grapevine growers call the combination of

temperature and soil 'terroir'. The wine world acknowledges their mastery of the combination. In Sonoma County Burbank showed the way, but others supplied the specific applications which created the P&SR.

Chicken City

Petaluman Lyman Byce perfected the egg incubator in 1879. Until then there was no such thing as a chicken ranch, where only chickens were raised. There was no such thing as a poultry industry. Anywhere. Demand for fresh eggs in San Francisco exceeded anything that all the existing farms in Northern California could supply. Even in Petaluma eggs sold for \$1.00 the dozen. 1875 prices!

Petaluma historian Adair Heig writes, "The reason for the scarcity of eggs was that the hen was so pokey about her business. She took three or four weeks to accumulate a clutch of eggs, lolled about on them for three or four more weeks until they hatched, then frittered away five to ten weeks more raising chicks to the point where they could fend for themselves. And meanwhile the hen was eating her head off, whether she was producing eggs or not. The key to making money was to get the eggs away from the hen and hatching them artificially while the hen, freed of her maternal cares, laid more and more."

Ancient Egyptians record efforts to artificially incubate eggs. Inventive Yankees tried mechanical experiments. Canadian born Byce finally succeeded in a blacksmith shop, whose main line of business was selling "Petaluma" wagons, on the west side of North Petaluma Boulevard. Just a block from the Petaluma Trolley line. The key was to use an oilcloth or felt covering to diffuse heat supplied by a coal oil lamp, and an electric regulator to keep the temperature constant at 103° F. Farmers bought the redwood box incubators Byce sold, but they were slow to give up the plow or their dairy cows to devote themselves to chickens. "I never liked working with chickens", said veteran poultryman Joe Rapoport, "I don't like the smell of the animal!"

Chicks and eggs began to enlarge the freight manifests of outbound Petaluma steamboats. Christopher Nisson, a Danish Farmer on a 100 acre farm out Two Rock way, built the world's first commercial hatchery there on his farm. His neighbors brought him their eggs to hatch and before long he was selling them chicks to lay more eggs. He invented a brooder stove to heat the sand the chickens lay on. 1898 may be said to toll the real birth of Petaluma's poultry industry. That year Nisson built the Pioneer Hatchery on Sixth Street in Petaluma. And A. E. Bourke opened his Must Hatch hatchery after he perfected the ventilated corrugated carton by which live chicks could be shipped for two days without feeding. Both chicks and eggs began to enlarge the freight manifests of outbound Petaluma River steamboats. Today chicken houses still populate the neighborhoods around Petaluma.

Apple Town

Sebastopol is aptly named. The Russians of Fort Ross introduced the Gravenstein apple to Sonoma County. William J. Hunt, who farmed in Blucher Valley south of town and Nathaniel Griffith on his Vine Hill ranch to the north pioneered the Gravenstein as a commercial variety.

The Gravenstein apple has proven to be the moneymaker of the county- Luther Burbank

Their pioneering work began about 1880. The early maturing Gravenstein enjoyed premium prices by virtue of its being first on the market each season. Griffith holds honors as the first to ship a carload to San Francisco. As a result the newspaper Analy Standard coined the phrase "Gold Ridge" to describe the north-south spine which earned such rich returns. To expand beyond markets available to fresh fruit in the days before refrigerator cars, William Hunt perfected the apple dryer. Son Joseph Hunt built the first of many apple canneries and founded the Hunt & Wesson Corporation.

Steam powered trains arrived in Sebastopol in 1890 via a branch line from Santa Rosa which eventually became part of today's Northwestern Pacific Railway. Rail service stimulated construction of canneries, dryers, and fruit packing plants. Gold Ridge growers made the Gravenstein into juice, cider, and even dairy feed. They pioneered the development of applesauce. The Gold Ridge grew a plenty of blackberries, raspberries, blueberries, prunes, and it became the nation's second largest producer of Royal Anne cherries. Here and there a few acres were in wine grapes; today the latter ranks them all.

The apple dryer, many remain near old apple orchards, did not just dry whole apples. It generally dried apple slices. Grandma preferred the tart Gravenstein dried apple slices to make her delicious apple pies. The classic dryer was a gabled wooden frame building one and one-half stories high. A brick and concrete drying kiln was located at the south end next to a packing room. Fresh apples arrived via a loading ramp on the north end. Six to eight people ran a dryer. They peeled, cored, and sliced using traditional hand equipment. The apple slices were cured with sulfur by dipping them in a curing vat. Cured slices then went onto trays and inserted in the kiln. Kilns were oil heated. Oil demanded inbound tank carloads, and large propeller fans drew the heated air up through the apple trays. Dried slices then were packed in sacks for delivery to the railroad.

The McNears of Petaluma

The money I lent on a handshake was always repaid. - G. P. McNear

For more than 80 years the First Family of Petaluma was the McNears. Patriarch John A. McNear planted his family tree here in 1856 on the invitation of his hotel-keeping father-in-law. John laid the foundation of the family fortune by going into the grain warehousing and shipping business in 1860. With his younger brother G. W. McNear as partner, in 1864 John built the biggest warehouse in the state on East Washington Street near the present Northwestern Pacific Railroad depot. The brick building had a concrete floor and a 24-foot high vaulted ceiling. Huge loads of wheat, potatoes, and other produce passed through its doors and on to scow schooners.

McNear headed the group that founded the Sonoma County Bank in 1866, for many years the county's largest. But on August 27, 1866, he nearly died. That day, business called John to San Francisco. McNear boarded an open-air coach of the Petaluma & Haystack Railroad at Second and B Streets, right across from today's Great Petaluma Mill. At that time the only way to go down to the City was by steamer on Petaluma Creek. (It took an Act of Congress in 1959 to make it Petaluma River.)

Imprisoned steam exploded the boiler.

The steamers however could only come up as far as Haystack Landing, which was opposite the point where Petaluma Blvd. South joins Highway 101 today, before siltation made the creek too shallow for steamboat passage.

Petaluma & Haystack Railroad bridged this 2 1/2 mile gap powered by a tiny San Francisco built four wheeled teapot locomotive. On this particular day, the locomotive engineer grew tired of the shrill whistle popping off as the teapot hit high boiler pressure while steaming at rest at the depot. Decision: tie that whistle down.

For a few gratifying minutes the shriek ceased. John, seated on a chicken coop, bent to tie his shoelace. At that moment imprisoned steam exploded the boiler. A flying chunk whizzed directly over where John's head had been. Two passengers were killed by the blast, the engineer's body lay bloody and broken, and McNear was slightly injured. From that moment real horsepower replaced steam on the P&H.

John McNear married a second time, his first wife having died, in May 1867. He and his new bride Hattie moved into a spacious home at 4th and D Streets. Years later, after the mansion on McNear Hill was built, the site was donated to the United States Post Office.

McNear's Sonoma County Bank followed the practice of the times, lending money on an unsecured basis. Nevertheless the bank prospered. Through wise choice in its loans to farms and small businesses and public works Petaluma grew, and farmers rode out bad harvest years to further improve their lands. The bank located on the northwest corner of Petaluma Blvd. and Washington, now the site of Bank of America, and in 1926 built the imposing Renaissance Revival building at the southwest corner. To allow steamboat access to Petaluma's feed and grain businesses in 1893 McNear dredged the McNear Canal. Its terminus became the Steamer Gold landing when P&SR was built.

Know your business, like your business, and attend to your business. - G. P. McNear

The 1860's saw the emergence of wheat as California's premier cash crop. The McNears exported wheat around the Horn to New York and Liverpool. From warehousing McNear ventured into milling. That was in 1870 and it did not do well. In 1876 John's son George P., two weeks away from high school graduation, agreed to take over as manager.

The G. P. McNear Company, dealers in feed and seed, soon began to show a profit. G. P. moved to new quarters which are the site of today's Great Petaluma Mill, but profits were still slim and Petaluma's economy stagnant. "Don't say that your town is as dead as a doornail!" moaned the Petaluma Argus.

For \$3,600 you started chicken farming

Until Lyman Byce made his incubator and Petaluma farmers began going into the egg business. G.P. helped Byce start his incubator factory. To his existing feed line he added McNear Egg Food, Broiler Mash, Spring Laying Mash, and Ground Screenings. Byce spread the word far and wide about chicken farming. For \$3,600 you could get started. Folks began moving to Petaluma to start their own chicken ranches. They came from the east, from northern Europe, from Russia, Italy, Romania, and the Philippines. Still they came, to take up chicken ranches in Chickaluma. A lot of that \$3,600 the McNears stood ready to finance. GP said that most of his foreclosures were on secured loans. Loans made on a handshake and a promise were almost always repaid, he said. Still they came.

Birth

Stretching northwest from Petaluma through Sebastopol and beyond to Forestville lies some of nature's best terroir for chicken farming and apple orchards. Cool marine breezes keep chicks and hens from sweltering in the noonday sun, or from shriveling young apples. Winters cool enough to allow apples a period of dormancy. Soil, the second half of the terroir equation, is important too. West Petaluma and the country northwest of it are Cotate soils in the lexicon of the United States Soil Conservation Service. Cotate describes soils that are well drained, undulating sandy loams decomposed from old marine terraces - excellent for dairy grasslands and poultry yards. At Roblar the soil begins to change, and by the time you reach Orchard it has become Goldridge soils. Sandy loams, on a long north-south ridge, derived from decomposed sandstone and shale - also laid down by ancient seas - fruit tree builders all the way to Forestville.

A new rail line between Petaluma and Sebastopol would develop new farms and orchards

John McNear did not know those terms. They had not been invented. But Luther Burbank told him the same thing in words of their time. John believed that a new rail line directly between Petaluma and Sebastopol would develop new farms and orchards. Ten cars of apples went out on the SF&NP the year before. John felt that more convenient transportation would develop the business. It would also draw apple traffic to Petaluma. A. W.

Foster, President of the San Francisco & North Pacific Railroad, knew the principles of finance as well as did McNear. They met to discuss John's idea, McNear offering some financial backing if Foster would undertake the project. Foster, however, was at that time trying to extend his railroad from Ukiah over Ridge hill to Willits. There he planned to start up his own lumber company. It would replace the profitable lumber traffic that had almost disappeared from his Guerneville Branch. Foster said he lacked the funds to spare on another project.

Undaunted, McNear merely expanded his conception to include a steamer between Petaluma and San Francisco. When linked with his proposed railroad, they could make an end run on the SF&NP. Together with sugar mogul Rudolph Spreckels, Santa Rosa banker Frank A. Brush, Burke Corbett and W. A. Cattwell he incorporated the Petaluma & Santa Rosa Electric Railway with a capital stock of \$1,000,000 on June 30, 1903. Spreckels money ensured financing.

Electric cars were quiet, belched no sooty smoke

Why electric? Electric railways offered many advantages over steam. They were relatively quiet, belched no clouds of sooty smoke. Even in those days folks appreciated those qualities; New York City and Baltimore had even gone so far as to ban steam locomotion. So electric lines could be built in urbanized areas, even on public streets, without arousing public ire. Electric traction motors could take a car easily over tracks that undulated up and down, closely following a natural grade. Steam required a more regular, finished roadbed. Electric roads were therefore cheaper to build. And cheaper to operate, with just two or even one man crews. Taken together these advantages meant that finding financing for an electric road was easier than for one powered by steam. Steam still enjoyed a horsepower advantage; it would be years before the trunk lines even considered electric for mainline service. For light density traffic, however, the new traction technology appealed to McNear and his associates.

The local horsecar lines in Petaluma and Santa Rosa faced near death at that time, their patronage a pittance. For pennies on the dollar P&SR bought them up, which brought P&SR political capital for its efforts to establish new trolley right of way concessions from the city fathers. Once those rights of way and street running franchises were secured and the interurban running, the car lines were abandoned. No one really seemed to care. The one line not abandoned was that on Santa Rosa's Fourth Street running out to trendy MacDonald Avenue. P&SR ran its cars out Fourth to the crossing with Southern Pacific's Valley of the Moon branch. The hoped for passenger and freight interchange business never developed, however. By the time P&SR reached the SP track Ed Harriman firmly controlled the San Francisco & North Pacific, and that road became the rail connection for P&SR freight and passenger traffic. P&SR also secured a franchise on First Street in Petaluma to reach the feed dealers there, but failed to develop it at that time, and the franchise expired.

Joseph Gossage gave the railroad swampland

Residents along the proposed electric route knew well that the P&SR would break the monopolistic grip San Francisco & North Pacific held on transport for their produce. Hatred of the octopus-like hold Southern Pacific then held on California politics sparked everyday conversation around the cracker barrel. The homegrown juice line masterfully played upon these sentiments. It managed to secure free easements across many a farmer's lands; subject only to the farmer's reversionary interest should the railroad fail, and a free lifetime pass on the interurban cars. Joseph Gossage held hundreds of prime acres just north of Petaluma. The railroad wanted its track to run close to Petaluma Boulevard, splitting his ranch in two and taking some of his best crop acreage. As a compromise, Gossage gave the railroad full title to a right of way down in the swamp lands on the eastern side of Petaluma Creek and did not request a free pass. The railroad named a station for him, but Gossage lived so close to town that he rarely used it.

First Growth

First order of business became, in November of 1903, acquisition of the Steamer Gold, first P&SR sternwheeler of that name. The Gold was neither the first nor the last of her name to frequent Petaluma Creek. Steamers bearing that name date back to the 1860's. Among her cargo manifests there soon included shipments marked for delivery to the Petaluma & Santa Rosa. Rails, ties, and other construction materials to be stacked awaiting track gangs. The company also acquired the Gold's landing, wharf and warehouse on Adams (D) Street as well as the McNear Canal approaching it. A tract between Adams and East Washington along Copeland Street would provide space for depot, shops, and yards. Like the storied railroad promoters of old, only a fraction of the authorized stock was actually subscribed. On March 4, 1904 P&SR secured a \$698,000 loan by means of 5% 20-year first mortgage bonds.

The C. A. Warren Construction Company's pile driver began pounding piles into the short crossing of Petaluma Creek at the north end of Copeland Street, and then the 150-foot crossing at Cinnabar. In a month they were ready for rails. Then came a bedraggled steam locomotive, 0-4-0t saddle tank named Bully Boy from the weeds surrounding former lumber mill tracks at Guerneville. Bully Boy served P&SR as construction locomotive. It chuffed busily along with its two flatcars loaded with materials whenever a gang needed rail, ties, or ballast.

First business - acquire the Steamer Gold

Spike driving on P&SR commenced with a small ceremony April 5, 1904. At the foot of Copeland Street several directors swung mauls in the general direction of ceremonial spikes. The original depot, on the southwest corner of Copeland and East Washington, still stands although it has been moved south down the Copeland block.

Tracklaying continued for the rest of the year. The line paralleled the steam road, today's NWP, until it crossed Petaluma Creek north of town, then swung northwest. Its path lay to the west of Stony Point Road as far as Roblar Road. New chicken ranches welcomed the rails as they rose on a gentle grade into the hills. At Stony Point Station near the historic Washoe House the tracks swung west along Roblar Road to Petersen Road. Here, at Roblar Station, they swung sharply right beside Petersen. Half a mile beyond Roblar, at Quarry, the railroad erected a ballast crushing plant for stone quarried from the hillside there. With a train of five dump cars, Bully Boy provided ballast to finish the roadbed following the tracklayers. She and her work train would remain on the roster until sold in 1910. The quarry offered crushed stone for sale to the building and paving industries.

North of Quarry, tracklayers swung left across Petersen Road and began the climb to Orchard Station, elevation 200 feet. Packing sheds at Turner sat on the summit of the line. To this point, grades had never exceeded 2%. However crossing Turner Road, tracks dived down a short 2.8% grade to Hessel where they crossed Hessel Road after passing the village store. Well into apple country now, the line also passed prune orchards, berry farms, and still the occasional chicken ranch. Sonoma County's population was now 22,000. Her rapid growth centered on Petaluma, Sebastopol, and the Gold Ridge country, also the most thickly populated outside of towns. Petaluma alone had 5,000 people and. E each month she shipped \$100,000 worth of eggs and poultry to San Francisco and points beyond. Santa Rosa's population was then 10,000 souls.

A few weeks after tracklaying began in Petaluma a second force started work south from Sebastopol, the construction materials having been brought there via the SF&NP. P&SR put a second steam engine and another five dumps on the job. Bully Boy brought the first through train to Sebastopol July 27, 1904, with carloads filled with crushed stone and cement to floor the stone walled Sebastopol substation. California Gas & Electric, a PG&E predecessor, supplied AC to the interurban's two substations, at Petaluma and Sebastopol. Step-down transformers and motor-generators to convert the 55,000-volt AC power to 600-volt DC arrived September 19. The first electric cars made their inaugural revenue Petaluma - Sebastopol trips October 25.

Windsplitter Cars

P&SR entered the traction railroad field at the height of national enthusiasm for interurban lines. News items ran frequently announcing some new innovation, or new interurban service. Many of these innovations appeared on display at the St. Louis Louisiana Purchase Exposition, and P&SR directors naturally attended to see what wonders might appeal to their new road. A star of the show, and a blue ribbon winner for design innovation and workmanship, was a car produced by the American Car Company, the St. Louis subsidiary of the J. G. Brill Company. Brill, at the time the largest carbuilder in America, enjoyed a well-founded reputation in traction railroad circles.

Blue ribbon winner for design innovation

The Windsplitter got its name from the dramatic rounded ends on each car, emphasized by three large, curved picture windows. The car design featured single ended operation. The rear end enclosed a special compartment with plush seats set up to take full advantage of the picture windows there. A miniature observation end. The windows could be lowered to provide a fresh air experience, or raised during cool weather. Behind the motorman's end were two wide sliding doors on each side. They provided either quick entry and exit for passengers, or an express/LCL compartment as desired. The coach interior offered rattan walkover seats with rich curved window posts; multicolored glazed clerestory roof windows that opened on hinges, and bright electric overhead lighting.

Newspaper calls Windsplitter a "palace car"

The display Windsplitter captured the director's hearts. Checkbook in hand, they ordered four on the spot. Each \$5,686.41 car came with Brill 27E trucks, four 40 h.p. GE-70 motors and K-28 controllers. They weighed 38,815 lbs., measured 47' - 9" long, and carried 50 passengers. On arrival at Petaluma the Operating Department called attention to one salient fact. Directors had forgotten that single ended cars need to be turned at each terminal, for which P&SR made no provision whatever. Red faced, the brass authorized additional K controllers and removal of the fine observation end seats, to be replaced with motorman positions. Full benefit of the fine windows would accrue not to passengers, but motormen. Especially during summer, when the lowered windows provided airflow not only for motormen but also for passengers. When service began October 25, 1904, the first car was Windsplitter Santa Rosa. She remained at Sebastopol throughout the day, open for inspection, then returned to Petaluma that evening. The Analy Standard enthused over her appointments. She was a "palace car" in the Standard's opinion. Lack of an observation end went unnoticed. Meanwhile, tracklaying proceeded eastward toward Santa Rosa.

St. George Electric Jousts Steam Dragon

December 1, 1904. Interurban service opens on Santa Rosa's Sebastopol Avenue, as far as the SF&NP railroad crossing of same. Stage set for the "Battle of Sebastopol Avenue". One of the most dramatic and violent clashes in Sonoma County history, played to a cast of thousands. Preliminaries: Santa Rosa merchants, nearly united, petitioned SF&NP's A. W. Foster to let the traction in, or they'd boycott SF&NP, giving all their business to P&SR for a year. Foster's instruction to his mouthpiece: tell the judge this Sebastopol Avenue grade crossing will be a menace to public safety; get an injunction. Injunction secured. And slash fares on SF&NP's Sebastopol Branch trains from 30¢ to 10¢. The interurban charged fifteen. Foster's trains stayed empty; this was war.

Foster outfitted two steam 4-4-0's with hoses and nozzles capable of shooting high pressure, scalding hot steam at injunction busters. These he stationed in the Santa Rosa yards awaiting developments. McNear's men, with friends in every roundhouse, kept tabs on the enemy and planned their offensive. In an overt first move, they spiked in track right up to the SF&NP, on both sides of the double track steam road. Then, in the dark of the night, they strung traction overhead across the gap. Foster's foreman next day found the site deserted, saw that his rail was intact, then scowled at the wire. Slung his steel tape on the wire to check clearances. Pulled tight.

And leaped about dancing the latest hot jazz jump step. Which he didn't even know he knew. The tape fell off unread, the foreman dropped to the ground panting. He'd just got an education in electricity. Well, that wire did look like it cleared OK.

An education in electricity

Electric men marked time the next two weeks. Called a truce for the holiday season, allowing themselves to spend Christmas with family. Early dawn on January 3, 1905, General Manager Alfred Bowen had a ready-made crossing loaded up on a flatcar, and crept up to the crossing site. Foreman Murphy jumped down from the construction train and strode forward to look over the situation. "Now, we'll stay as we're goin', along Sebastopol Avenue, an' we'll cut the steam road tracks over just about there," he mused. His arm pointed toward the spot where the avenue crossed the twin SF&NP tracks. Along with his construction crew, Murphy had a gang of guards armed with clubs expecting trouble. Men started hacksawing at steam rails and digging a pit for crossing ties. The steamers were waiting for them. Out charged the iron dragons, spraying scalding hot steam and boiling hot water for twenty feet on either side. Murphy's force had to retreat, Murphy loudly swearing some choice Irish oaths. Townsfolk out to see the action scattered too. But a nickelodeon man thinking to earn extra money making music for the crowd got badly scalded in the fray when a stray jet blasted him.

No one paid attention

Bowen's men played their roles to perfection, trudging off dejectedly and dragging away their track crossing, for the entire world in total defeat. The steam boys gloated, whooping in jubilation. Then sent their dragons to the roundhouse to refuel. No one paid much attention when the regular car from, Windsplitter Forestville, came sparking up to the end of track on her regular passenger time. No one thought that unusual.

Out poured Murphy and his gandydancers, hefting railway ties, racing to the site. At the same time extras, spotted nearby, grabbed more ties stacked beside the road in readiness. Flew away with them up the steam tracks. Piled ties across tracks, spiked chains holding ties securely on the rails. Meanwhile Murphy's crew feverishly laid a track of parallel ties over the two steam tracks.

Dragged a trolley car across the gap

By this time Foster's crew woke up. But their iron steeds needed time to build high pressure. Time to clear the succession of chained ties upon their rails before the hot pressure nozzles could be brought into range against the crossing. When they finally made it, Murphy had already dragged a trolley car across the gap. Three thousand voices cheered, and now the steam boys tasted dejection and defeat. P&SR had its entry into downtown Santa Rosa.

Court enjoins P&SR crossing

There still remained another crossing, the steam spur to Grace Brothers Brewery in downtown Santa Rosa. Foster went to court in San Francisco the very next day. Judge Seawell enjoined the cutting of that spur and the SF&NP main at Sebastopol Avenue as well. It endangered public safety, Foster argued. McNear welcomed a court fight. If he could win there, there might be no reprisal of the near brawl on January 3rd. Meanwhile passengers had to walk across the Sebastopol Avenue crossing or board the free omnibus city merchants provided for them to reach the downtown area.

Welcome as a court order might be, it took two months to get it. Judge Seawell dissolved his injunction against P&SR after hearing all arguments. McNear brought in Santa Rosa merchants to support his side, but Seawell failed to enjoin SF&NP. Battle resumed March 1, 1905, with desperate fury on the Foster road's part. Now three

steam engines sported steam hoses: engines 9, 12, and 13. Early that morning knots of railroad men, and townsmen by the thousand, gathered once more at Sebastopol Avenue.

Three steam engines sported steam hoses

A P&SR freight rolled up with prepared rail crossing diamonds and ties aboard, as well as a large crew. Foster had roustabouts lining his tracks and two of the steamers parading across Sebastopol Avenue, jetting steam. The third engine waited in reserve to provide relief whenever one needed to retire for refreshment. Electric men ranging the steam rails to place tie blocks found themselves engaged in fistfights with Foster adherents. P&SR Superintendent Fairchild ordered pick and shovel crews to the crossing site. But steam engines pushed flatcars loaded with dirt and gravel up to the crossing. As fast as juice men dug under the steam rails, shovelers on the flats filled the holes. Steam turned the ground into mud.

Steam artillery scattered electric track workers

Tempers boiled as the "steam artillery" scattered electric track workers. Tempers turned to more fights; epithets and rocks flew. The trolley wire came unstrung, dropped sparking to the ground, but fortunately no one got shocked. Two wagons placed across Foster's track by Fairchild got smashed to splinters by charging iron dragons. Battle raged into the afternoon with all engaged growing weary from exhaustion. Two more SF&NP engines brought up the Petaluma section gang as reinforcements. The steam dragons charged now desperate juice men once again, when P&SR Director Frank Bush dramatically threw himself upon the crossing site, clutching rails, forcing the steam engineer to halt literally inches from his steam soaked prostrate form.

Bush threw himself upon the crossing

Steam workers rushed to pry Bush from the rails; Fairchild's forces protected him, hauled him back whenever Fosterites got to him. Bush tried desperately to keep his hold on rails. The brawl reached passionate proportions. A steam jet finally blew him off the rails. Then Santa Rosa Police Chief Severson whistled for his paddy wagon, loaded with his finest. They came on at a gallop, restored some semblance of order. Carted off Foster's Chief Engineer Zook and Fairchild to jail. The brawl, of course, resumed without them. Severson's paddy wagon shuttled back and forth with more disturbers of the peace. Made no difference. Mutual exhaustion finally forced a truce between the warriors late afternoon with an electric crossing still uneffected.

Mutual exhaustion finally forced a truce

Drama rekindled about five o'clock when Foster himself pulled up with 150 more brawlers engaged from San Rafael. As he swung down to superintend, full of fire, the Sonoma County sheriff served him with a new court order. San Francisco's State Court finally had enough. The electric shall pass, ordered Judge Hunt. Foster grimly called off his boys, but Fairchild took no chances. Well into the night and aided by hastily strung electric lamps, he kept the men at it. His first through car clanged triumphantly up to Fourth Street shortly after the witching hour struck. The press had a field day. The Petaluma Argus, March 1, 1905:

There is a hot time on in Santa Rosa. It is the greatest day in the history of the county seat. Since early morning, Santa Rosa has deserted the work bench, forge, counter, desk and even the family fireside and its population of 10,017 souls is congregated at the railroad track watching a red hot fight... Everybody connected with the road has gone to Santa Rosa to take part...

Let 'em scrap, says Petaluma. Sic 'em.

Even while battle raged, Bowen pushed P&SR onward. He reached Graton January 26 and Forestville July 15, 1906. There were 35.82 main line miles now in service, at a cost of \$1,077,396.10 counting pennies. Bowen's railroad building had come in on the advertised.

Chicken & Cow Line

Seventy pound steel rails laid upon heart redwood 6"x 8"x 8 foot ties made P&SR tracks. Traction overhead used simple span construction with No. 0000 grooved copper wire. There were two trolley wires, spaced six inches apart, one wire for each direction. Every 600 feet copper jumpers connected the two wires. The intent was both to save wear on the wire and to provide sufficient current for freight operations. Experience and growing traffic within a year demanded a heavy bus feeder be strung upon the poles for extra energy.

The right of way was 60 feet wide and the maximum curve 10 degrees. Freight and passenger depots graced Petaluma, Sebastopol, Santa Rosa (foot of Fourth Street) and Forestville. The main line from Petaluma to Forestville was stone ballasted, as mentioned above. Riverbed gravels ballasted the Sebastopol to Santa Rosa section. All roadbeds had ample drainage ditches installed as precaution against washouts. The district recorded rainfalls up to 8 or 9 inches in 24 hours. Steel cattle guards protected road crossings. American field fencing, with barbed wire strung across the top and on the opposite sides of the posts, kept livestock off the tracks.

Rainfalls up to 8 or 9 inches in 24 hours

Thirty foot Washington cedar poles supported the traction overhead. Poles were 100 feet apart, set 6 feet into the ground and 20 feet from the track centerline. Although the poles were untreated, the butts set into ground were dipped in crude oil as a preservative. Sebastopol acted as the main substation. Here three 250-kilowatt transformers stepped down the AC to 2,300 volts. This operated a 400 kW General Electric motor generator set. It consisted of a 2,300-volt synchronous motor driving a DC 575-volt generator at 450 rpm. A storage battery drove a separate 500-volt motor for a 15 kW exciter connected to the synchronous motor.

Mounted on a block of blue Vermont marble to provide maximum insulation between the parts, a switchboard controlled the DC power output. To this were also mounted exciter, feeder, and storage battery panels. The storage battery itself floated on the feeder system. Two hundred sixty four G-type cells formed the storage battery. Their tanks each had a 21-plate capacity, with 13 plates installed. The plant was designed so that output could be doubled if desired at a later date. As installed the battery could supply 480 amps for one hour. A GE booster in connection with a carbon regulator acted as a surge protector against momentary fluctuations in the load on the battery. Special P. and B. paint coated the battery room floor. Battery tanks were doubly insulated from the floor by porcelain and glass. The Electric Storage Battery Company installed the battery. The Petaluma substation supplied additional current through its own motor-generator set. This consisted of a 440 h.p. Stanley synchronous motor driving a 350 kW Bullock generator at 360 rpm.

Mounted on a block of blue Vermont marble

Flushed with first growth enthusiasm, McNear's men bubbled about extensions to Two Rock and Dillon Beach, to Guerneville for the vacation crowd, to Healdsburg, even to Lake County. Serious consideration was given a route to McNear's Point, east of San Rafael, where the family owned a brickyard. It would considerably shorten the steamer haul and speed up service to San Francisco. Mother Nature squelched those dreams April 18, 1906. That and the financial panic of 1907 ensured that no funds could be obtained for expansion projects.

The earthquake gave P&SR an opportunity. Its Fourth Street line was convenient to the massive devastation, which leveled Santa Rosa's business district. P&SR hauled debris away for free. And recovered its cost by selling the broken brick and rubble to Gold Ridge apple growers. A new surge in apple drying construction was

encouraged by the low cost of hard surface flooring and kiln material thus provided. The railway profited from the additional tonnage in apple products outbound, heating oil in.

Cars by Holman of San Francisco

The four Windsplitters made an inadequate number of cars for the road's customers. An order for six more went to W. F. Holman Car Company of San Francisco in 1904. The California firm promised identical mechanical appliances but without the fancy woodwork. These six measured 44 feet long and carried 50. They featured a combination baggage and coach carbody with motor controls on each end. Brill MCB 14B trucks mounted four GE 70 40-hp motors with K28 controllers. Single express door on the baggage end, whereas the Windsplitters had two, but then the Holmans had regular platforms and doors on the other end, which the Windsplitter lacked. Passengers entered the Windsplitters through an express style door, boarded Holmans at the other end. Passengers learned this little detail by experience, of course.

The Holmans could not compete with the Windsplitters when it came to style. Paul Trimble, in his book *Interurban Railways of the Bay Area*, said, "Their pilots, in reaching around their dashes, gave the illusion of giant walrus mustaches under the nose of an extended headlight."

The illusion of giant walrus mustaches

On the other hand the Holmans cost \$3,595 each or about \$2,000 less than a Windsplitter. And gave equivalent service. Not surprising given the similar mechanical equipment. Any one of the 10 would rumble along at 35 mph. They all had Westinghouse straight air brakes, Nichols-Lintern pneumatic sanders, Wagenhals arc headlights, and telephones. Train dispatching was by telephone from the Sebastopol office.

Cars departed every half-hour. From Petaluma to Santa Rosa, you could spend a jolly hour on the trolley for a fare of 50¢. P&SR set 2¢ a mile as their standard for charging fares. Cheap transportation indeed. Too cheap. The cars never turned a profit on passengers. There were too few riders; too few as yet weaned from an age-old habit of staying home. The road hadn't really expected otherwise, relying instead on freight and express revenues until, inevitably, the area grew enough to support trolley service. A noble dream, except that Henry Ford refused to wait. Meanwhile, P&SR became the "Cows and Chickens" line. Renown for its habit of stopping cars at every farmer's crossing to pick up a crate of eggs, a can of milk, or boxed live chicks. For example, there were eight stations between Petaluma and Stony Point (near the Washoe House): Dunn (now Lakeville Blvd.), Cinnabar, Corona, Denman, Liberty (the Pepper Road crossing), Dangers, divide and Live Oak.

Express Motor No. 8

Included in the 1904 Holman order was a car designed expressly to handle package freight. P&SR engaged the Sonoma Express Company to act as its exclusive agent in soliciting this high rated traffic. Sonoma Express built its own freight depot right next to the Steamer Gold wharf. By law Sonoma could not own its own express vehicles. With its own assigned P&SR car in the service, Sonoma Express could guarantee the fastest delivery after P&SR steamers docked, and adequate space aboard its car to ensure no package got left behind had one of the combination passenger cars handled this business. Which was making a virtue of necessity.

No. 8 was a resounding success

Motor No. 8 was considerably smaller and lighter than her passenger motor sisters. She had a center express door, four windows spaced evenly along her sides. Mechanical equipment such as motors, air brakes, controllers

the same as the others. And motorman controls at each end with the same flat faced three-window end configuration seen on the Holman passenger motors. Unlike them, she was a resounding success. In fact she was retired in 1917 because she had become too small for the traffic offered.

Delivery first thing in the morning

The success of Car No. 8 had as much to do with P&SR as it did with effective marketing by Sonoma Express. The Gold left San Francisco at 6:00 PM each evening, after the SF&NP/NWP had closed shop. She would accept consignments delivered almost up to sailing time. Although the Gold made a long, slow passage up the twisting, shifting, shallow channel of Petaluma Creek, while she did so clerks sorted, weighed, rated, manifested, and tagged her packages enroute. By the time she docked at Petaluma about midnight, her hold could be efficiently, quickly emptied and reloaded in to Car No. 8 ready to leave as soon as loaded. The steam road could not match this, not even close. Nor could it compare with the smooth, water level transport aboard steamers. Wherever the farmer wanted his goods, they would be delivered first thing in the morning. P&SR took the lion's share of the business away from steam. The same expeditious service applied in reverse for eggs, milk, chicks that needed next morning delivery in the City.

Cheeseboxes on a raft

Four freight motors arrived from Holman in the same purchase order. They looked like cheeseboxes on a raft, ugly ducklings. The box, centered on the flatcar-like body, was large enough to house motorman, controller, air brake stand, head end brakeman, and little else. Four GE 70 motors just like the passenger Holmans. Length 34 feet, weight 32,500 lbs. compared to 35,035 lbs. for the passenger motors. Tractive effort 13,720 lbs., about the same pulling power as an 1880's era 4-4-0 steam locomotive. Certainly a light duty machine for the Twentieth Century. And no multiple unit capability. Yet they served capably. Sebastopol's first Apple Blossom Fair, 1910, starred a float in the shape of Steamer Gold formed entirely of apples. The Holman freight motors could hardly receive a finer compliment. At each end of these flatcar motors P&SR mounted a swinging jib crane to aid loading and unloading farm machinery. One motor, No. 1008, was equipped as a line car. The 1008 helped erect the initial overhead, as well as maintained it. Most of the freight work was handled by the remaining three motors, although 1008 would pitch in as relief.

Pioneer electric railroad freight service

P&SR helped pioneer electric railroad freight service in California. The initial roster included fifty flat cars and ten boxcars. Soon after service began, the freight tonnage increased beyond the capacity of Gold, 300 tons, to handle it. The railroad leased steamer Leader and by 1905 both were making daily runs to the P&SR wharf at the foot of Market Street in San Francisco with full holds. Steamer Sonoma worked as the second boat after 1906. Work actually began on the planned railroad extension to McNear Point, but had to be abandoned after the earthquake dried up finance. The large number of flatcars proved inappropriate, so in 1907 many were scrapped and 32 larger capacity cars of various types acquired from the Atchison Topeka & Santa Fe. The company shops constructed two oil service tank cars. The freight car roster now totaled 55.

Refrigerator cars so that apples could travel east

With the formation of the Northwestern Pacific Railroad in 1907, the Santa Fe's active participation in NWP made the steam road a friendlier connection for freight service than it had been before. NWP naturally wanted a better crack at business moving via the Petaluma Creek steamboats. Joint line rates and revenue divisions were soon agreed upon. P&SR's lease of Sonoma ended in 1907.

Ed Maggard

Despite all that had been accomplished, by the end of 1907 revenues still had not exceeded costs. In December a stockholder assessment of \$10 a share was levied. That was the bad news. The good news: Ed Maggard joined P&SR as Traffic Manager, E. M. Van Frank becoming President. These two formed a team and Maggard was the driving force. Edward H. Maggard learned his railroading on the Missouri-Kansas-Texas and the El Paso & Southwestern Railroads. He developed an affection for the Petaluma & Santa Rosa Railroad, and the people of the North Bay that engendered a deep loyalty to them. The people of the railroad and the region fully reciprocated that affection. Maggard became a member of many civic organizations, and tirelessly promoted his electric railroad whenever and wherever he could. The testimonials to his public regard and effectiveness are legion.

Ed Maggard engendered a deep loyalty

Bright, catchy car cards began to appear on the walls above the seats of P&SR passenger cars. Attractive business cards and billboards advertised the freight services of the railroad. He was lucky too, joining the road just as the chicken boom in Petaluma and the apple boom in Sebastopol reached their height. It was not all beer and skittles. Joining the boom in 1908 was steamer Resolute, competing with Gold. P&SR resolved the matter by buying Resolute in 1911 in part to carry the line's own increasing traffic.

Scow Schooners

Gold and steamers like her carried eggs, chickens, dried fruit, incubators, wine and vinegar downstream. Up from San Francisco came beer, household goods, glass, paper, wagons, farm implements and hardware. Yet steamers were not the workhorses of Petaluma Creek. A swarm of flat bottomed scow schooners - two masted and about 60 feet in length - carried inbound lumber, chicken feed, oyster shells, sand. Outbound potatoes, grain, hay, more eggs, apples, berries, hops, more wine and vinegar. Bulk cargoes that needed not the speed steam offered. Today the Alma, restored by the San Francisco Maritime Museum, is the last of her kind. In 1908 she in her kind were very busy boats. Over 133,000 tons of freight moved on Petaluma Creek, making it the third busiest waterway in California. Much of that came or went on the cars of P&SR.

The third busiest waterway in California

In The Square-Toed Packets of San Francisco Bay Roger Olmstead described a typical scow schooner voyage: The crew might spend a day loading 1600 sacks of grain at McNear's Wharf in Petaluma, sail the next day down winding Petaluma Creek, beat across San Pablo Bay - and if the tide were running the wrong way in the channel into San Francisco Bay, round up and anchor. When the tide turned fair, they could beat on south to San Francisco in another three or four hours. Fickle winter breezes or occasional storms could make it a two day trip. But with good winds and tides, they might be snugged down at a San Francisco wharf by nightfall, the cook boiling up a merry stew that some sailor off Cape Horn would trade a month's wages for. A stroll across East Street to some favored hangout, a gallon of "steams," and it was time to turn in. Get an early start on those hundred pound bags during unloading. Then they might move over to Meigg's Wharf to load a thousand pieces of lumber for Cannon or Cavanaugh back in Petaluma. During much of the year they could count on a fair breeze to carry them to Petaluma Creek. Getting back up the creek required a flood tide above Donahue Landing, for the channel narrowed and the twists in the creek carried the scows again and again into the teeth of the prevailing winds.

To make the first few miles up to town, the crew might break out some 25 foot sticks and pole the heavy boat along fast enough to give steerage way. In the last stretch, where there were firm banks, two men would hop off and tow the schooner with a sling around their chests and a long line to the foremasthead ... Once alongside the lumber wharf the crew would take advantage of the high tide to start unloading right away. As the tide ran out, the scow would take the bottom, lying over at an angle that made unloading difficult. Thus the phases of the

moon as well as the heat of a summer's day might influence the trade in Dave England's saloon. With two days spent unloading, the round trip to San Francisco would represent on the average a good week's work.

Second Growth

The scow traffic outgrew Petaluma's wharfage facilities on the east bank of the creek, and McNear's Canal. The city filled in the west bank along First Street A barge bought in 1910 enabled P&SR to transfer goods between First Street warehouses and its freight house on D Street. That year P&SR reached a freight interchange agreement with the Western Pacific RR.

Petaluma and the Gold Ridge enjoyed booming growth in 1910. In Petaluma the iron fronts were going up on Kentucky Street, and brick replaced wooden structures on Main Street. P&SR turned a profit for the first time that year. Next year, 1911, the road plans announced for a branch line, 5 miles, to Two Rock. Construction was financed only as income permitted, so the easily graded route took 2 years to finish, July 28, 1913, at a cost of \$91,741.96. To meet the growing apple and fruit demand, P&SR in its own shops built a group of ventilated boxcars. These double door wooden cars had one door on each side built with iron bars so that fresh air freely circulated. The other door was a standard boxcar door.

The boom continued. Sebastopol bank deposits averaged the largest per family for any community in the United States. Petaluma's population nearly doubled from 1900 to 1915. It was shipping ten million eggs per year at an average 30¢ per dozen. Egg money continued to finance new commercial construction downtown and hundreds of new houses. Streets were paved, sewers laid, new schools. And new warehouses or rebuilt along First Street using corrugated iron construction.

Passenger operations continually lost money

Petaluma & Santa Rosa Electric Railroad failed to share in the general prosperity it did so much to bring about. Its officers regarded the railroad as a public utility. The passenger operations continually lost money. Yet the road ran 12 daily round trips from Petaluma to Sebastopol, 19 trips Sebastopol to Santa Rosa, and 16 trips from Sebastopol to Forestville. It managed to do this with five crews manning 5 interurbans on weekdays. Passenger volume, which was 620,219 in 1907, peaked at 757,759 in 1914, then dropped back to 619,729 in 1916.

Steamer Resolute, renamed Petaluma, burned to the water line early on the morning of March 22, 1914 while docked at the P&SR wharf. News reports laid the blame on spontaneous combustion among a pile of empty sacks. Fortunately the machinery survived as well as the hull. She was rebuilt for only \$19,083.91 and named the second Petaluma. Then in 1916 the riverboat stevedores struck for higher wages. For 50 days they stayed out during the best shipping season. The road rented three barges during the emergency. Although 1916 freight revenues paid for the boat and the passenger losses, they could not pay for the second mortgage bonds which came due in 1915, nor even the interest on the first mortgage bonds. A stockholders reorganization reincorporated the road by dropping the word "Electric" August 23, 1918 and assessed stockholders \$10 a share once again. Ed Maggard became General Manager. To cut costs the motors and motorman controls were removed from Car No. 8 and she became Express Trailer No. 01. At the same time Holman Car No. 69 was converted to an express trailer. A cut in the number of steamer sailings reduced trips from two to just one per day.

Car No. 8 became Express Trailer No. 01

During its first decade, P&SR could not supply ice reefers to fruit growers. For long distance shipments, especially to eastern markets, even apples required refrigeration in order to arrive fresh. Private line reefers were expensive. In 1916, Ed Maggard reached agreement with Pacific Fruit Express whereby PFE would supply cars and Sebastopol growers would enjoy freight rates to the east the same as growers elsewhere in California.

Union Pacific and Southern Pacific jointly owned PFE. PFE now had sufficient cars to supply short lines like P&SR. It built an ice supply station in Santa Rosa where the SP line from Glen Ellen joined the NWP. Where NWP's Sebastopol branch paralleled P&SR at Gravenstein, the two lines built an interchange for the reefer cars.

A Trolley for First Street

Reorganization of finances permitted the 'new' Petaluma & Santa Rosa Railroad to undertake several improvements. It opened in July 1918 the mission style depot which still stands in Sebastopol. For 1919 P&SR purchased eight boxcars from Central California Railroad and equipped Windsplitters 53, 55, and 57 with couplers for the express trailers that now operated between Sebastopol and Santa Rosa. All cars received electric headlamps in place of the arc lamps originally equipped. Then on September 23 the steamer crews went out on strike. They stayed out until December 31, 1919.

Petaluma approved a franchise on First Street

G. W. McNear built a new home for McNear Feed and Seed Co. in 1920. This brick commercial building replaced the old rambling structure at the foot of B Street between Main Street (Petaluma Blvd. North) and Water Street, on the riverfront. It was the largest and nearly the last of the brick commercial structures erected downtown, and was designed by architect Brainard Jones. Most of the buildings on this block were built during the first two decades of the 20th Century, during the heyday of the poultry boom in Petaluma. As the largest P&SR stockholder, McNear wanted a rail line directly serving his building. The City of Petaluma approved a new franchise for the West Petaluma Branch, running down Water Street to First Street. However, the branch line delayed its opening until May 1, 1922. It eliminated the slow, costly barge transfer to McNear's Wharf and directly served the brick G. P. McNear feed mill as well as the corrugated iron warehouses on First street, the Petaluma Box Company and the Corliss gas engine plant on H Street (today's Foundry Wharf). Together these firms added substantially to P&SR carloadings.

Newer, heavier freight motors

Another efficiency move started in 1920 when newer, heavier freight motors began to replace the cheeseboxes. First, from Kansas City's Kaw Valley electric, came a 300 h.p. steeple cab May 1, 1920. Numbered 502 on P&SR, and costing \$16,745.49, the company proudly photographed her on the Petaluma Creek trestle at the end of Petaluma's Copeland Street. Nearly twice the horsepower and 2.5 times the weight of the cheeseboxes, the company soon found it necessary to install a new 300 kW substation at Stony Point. In 1921 the Ocean Shore Railroad sold P&SR a 500 h.p. steeplecab together with electric equipment for another. The Ocean Shore unit became No. 504 and cost just \$6,000. P&SR's own shops turned out No. 506, using the bought electrical equipment, in 1923. Another 500 h.p. motor, the 506 cost \$11,284.58 altogether and became the crew favorite. The new motors proved their worth. In 1924 the apple rush produced two thousand carloads of apples. For the whole year 18,000 tons of dried apples moved over the line. Good business! The electric road fully justified the hopes of her builders to develop the fruit industry of Sebastopol's Gold Ridge.

Flagship Gold burned while fully loaded

While this was going on, November 8, 1920 the flagship Gold burned while fully loaded early that morning. Strong winds held her against the steamer wharf. Dock, freight house, and 12 boxcars went up in flames with the steamer despite all efforts of the firefighters. A messboy aboard Gold leapt in to the water to escape, but drowned because he could not swim. The railroad bought another steamer for \$10,000 and she assumed the name Gold. Wharf, freight house, and 10 of the boxcars were rebuilt. Rising freight business led to purchase of the tug Golden Eagle and a barge.

Passenger Operations

Originally the passenger motors wore brown liveries with gold lettering. About 1908 management decided to paint them white so that cars became more visible at road crossings. The road of the "The Big White Cars" was how locals often referred to their electric interurban. Its cars increasingly, in the early years, carried them about. Whenever there was a parade or a baseball game - popular diversions in those days - Big White Cars would be on hand with especially attractive fares to the doings. The Fourth of July parades, Petaluma's Butter and Egg Days, Sebastopol's Apple Fair, Santa Rosa's Rose Parade, Boy Scout encampments and summer picnic events at Forestville each created special excursion opportunities eagerly snapped up. A man could meet his girl at the depot, swing aboard with her, and enjoy a leisurely ride to see the latest movie together. Yes, they spent a jolly hour on the trolley. That is, until "autoists" became a growing nuisance. A driver glancing down the track at road and rail crossings near Petaluma too often confused the Big White Cars with chicken houses. With damaging results. When P&SR repainted its cars yellow with red trim the accident rate dropped. During the last years of passenger operation the company returned to brown paint but with white lettering.

Confused the Big White Cars with chicken houses

By the 1920's operations settled into a well-rehearsed pattern. The cars were two-man run, motorman and conductor. In 1920 there were still 652, 540 passengers and that was an increase over traffic during the war years just ended. Trains were made up of single cars, except for once a day express trailers in each direction between Sebastopol and Santa Rosa. Or the occasional excursion, which brought out trailer coaches 69, 71, or 73. In 1921 Cars 51, 53, and 55 received new trucks. Sonoma County completed paving the highways paralleling the interurban tracks, and passenger volume dived. The late Petaluma historian Ed Fratini described his trips to Sweet's Business College in Santa Rosa, 1918, this way:

I increase my pace to be sure that I get to the P&SR depot in time for the 8:00 AM trip to Santa Rosa. The depot is located at East Washington and Copeland Streets, a long block from the NWP depot. The P&SR yards, shops and steamer landing are just south of here.

The sharp bang of the steel wheels

I hear a rumble and know that the electric car is coming. The sharp bang of the steel wheels tells me that it is crossing the NWP siding to the Golden Eagle Feed Mills. Before crossing it, it is necessary that the conductor gets out, looks up and down the siding, and wave at the motorman to proceed. Something about the NWP siding has the right of way because it was there first.

The passengers climb on. Half a dozen of us are students at the Santa Rosa Business College, a number work in Santa Rosa and the rest are transient passengers, totaling 15 or 20 in all.

Jocko Williams is the conductor and Bill Parks the motorman. Jocko pulls the signal cord and the car is in motion. Jocko is a favorite with the passengers, always telling jokes or stories or trying to play tricks on someone.

A constant toot on the air whistle

There is a constant toot on the air whistle as there are many road crossings. We usually start picking up a few passengers at Corona, Denman Station, Liberty, Stony Point and other waypoints until we get to Roblar Station.

This is where we start to pick up the high school students who go to Analy high in Sebastopol. We pass Woodworth, Orchard, Turner, Hessel, Cunningham, Alten, Bassett and the stations in between and we arrive in Sebastopol with many passengers standing in the aisles. About the same time a car from Forestville comes into the depot.

Many passengers standing in the aisles

At Sebastopol many of the passengers from both cars get off. The ones going on to Santa Rosa from the Forestville car transfer to our car, which will continue on. If there is an unusually large group, a trailer is added on. On the way to Santa Rosa from Sebastopol, we pick up many passengers. Some of the stations are Llano, Oaks, Leddy, Willow Grove, and several numbered stops.

Before arriving at Santa Rosa station, we must again cross the NWP tracks. Conductor Williams gets off, then looks up and down the NWP tracks, and signals the motorman to proceed. And so we arrive at the Santa Rosa depot. Quite a number get off and the light freight from the smoking and baggage sections of the car is taken off. Most of the passengers continue to Fourth Street to stop in front of the Court House.

The car then continues along Fourth Street to its terminus on that street which is a short distance beyond Montgomery Drive and at that time was the right of way for the Southern Pacific Railroad which came up from Glen Ellen.

Bill Soberanes, the Petaluma Argus-Courier columnist, collected memories of 1930's student commuters. The trip from Petaluma to Santa Rosa took one hour and fifteen minutes, so the young folks named it the Toonerville Trolley. It often arrived late, to the joy of students.

Students would run to catch the early car, 6:45 AM. If it had already started, a yell from the breathless runner would bring the car to a screeching stop, and the accommodating conductor would smilingly help him on. Some of the conductors remembered were Virgil Mudd, Tom Wright and Al Smith.

There was always the thrill of anticipation - what would the little trolley think up today? Lots of things could make it late. (When you were young, this was fun.)

Oh, but it was on rainy days that the fun really began. It seemed some of the trolley's roofs hadn't been repaired in some time and you would slosh yourself in from the rain, seat yourself, and decide that in order to keep dry you had better keep your umbrella open. What a sight, sitting there, umbrella open over your head, getting ticket books punched, doing some last minute studying for the first period class.

Then the little trolley would go lickety split between the stations which seemed very short distances apart for no sooner would we "merrily roll along" than the whistle heralded another station.

It was on circus days that I'm sure the little car was happiest of all for it was brim full of passengers -men, women and many, many little children - who were chatting, laughing and eagerly looking forward to their big day in the big tent.

4 cars and 4 crews would be out on the line

Generally four cars and four crews would be out on the line at any time. One car and crew would start at Petaluma, go out to Two Rock, return, run Petaluma to Santa Rosa, then go to Forestville and back to Petaluma. A second car and crew ran between Petaluma and Santa Rosa. Two more crews worked out of Sebastopol. Two Rock passenger revenues declined to \$27 per month, so on September 20, 1925, they quit running passenger there. The crews cut back to three, running 8 - 10 hour shifts. A Sebastopol crew went to Santa Rosa in the morning, then to Forestville, then back to Santa Rosa and down to Petaluma. Their final run would be Petaluma to Sebastopol. A Petaluma crew now ran up to Santa Rosa, out to Forestville, back to Santa Rosa and then finally returned to Petaluma. In addition to the school kids Ed Fratini describes there would be kids going to Petaluma

High picked up by the morning car out of Sebastopol at 6:20 AM beginning at Vestal, just south of Roblar, and on into Petaluma. During the middle of the day, traffic would fall off to the general public - people going shopping and farmers - until late afternoon when the school kids went home.

The street was not really wide enough for both

Running speeds generally averaged between 25 and 30 mph. Crossing signals were set at 28 mph. Between Petaluma and Sebastopol running times usually took about 40 minutes, and from 20 to 25 minutes between Sebastopol and Santa Rosa. On Fourth Street in Santa Rosa the street running caused quite a bit of trouble. With diagonal parking the street was not really wide enough for both trolley and auto. Lots of times motorists got too close to the trolleys. Quite a few steps on the trolleys got broken that way, especially with the Holman cars because they had steps on each end. Drivers could not seem to see the steps. Motorman Roy Shaw remembers his first day on the passengers when he was called for an Armistice Day special:

It scared the life out of me!

The first run I ever made on the passenger, it scared the life out of me! We started out on the 11th of November in 1925 from Petaluma to Santa Rosa for the veteran's parade that day. We got out to Liberty Station. Around the curve just above Liberty there is a big eucalyptus grove and you could not see through the trees. One of the freights - engineer was Bill Parks; Herb Vale and Jocko Williams were the freight crew - had been called out on a holiday special to take some tank cars of oil up to the dryers around Sebastopol and Graton. They were coming back and they had two or three cars with them. They knew that I was called and they figured that since it was my first run, and a parade special at that, I'd be late. But I was about a minute and a half ahead of time out of Liberty. We had just started around that curve when I looked up and here was that freight coming! I tell you, my hair went up on end!

I threw it into reverse. My conductor was there, I forget who it was - we had about 20 or 30 passengers - and he said, "Oh, that whole freight crew out there on the line has forgotten about us." They had to go all the way back up hill to Stony Point Station and we followed them there. We never did report it. If we had that crew would have been fired. We were more like a family outfit. Everybody knew everybody, wives, family. We just didn't want to cause any trouble. So my conductor and I talked it over and said, "Nobody got hurt. Let's forget about it." So we forgot about it. My conductor told the passengers they were a work crew so they wouldn't understand. And of course work crews, we were always running into work crews all along the line. At that time they were rebuilding the trolley wire, changing from double wire two pole single span to single wire, single pole catenary and raising the wire from 16 feet overhead to 23 feet. This was an Armistice Day special. Normally we were running passenger every hour, practically every hour in the 1920's and late 1920's Then just before 1932 when the passenger trains stopped they were running every two hours.

Tore the whole side right off

I remember one trip with Car 61. It was fresh out of the shop. They had repainted it - yellow with red stripes around the windows, yellow letterboard and black roof. Put all new siding on it. We were going along by Turner Station. There used to be a packinghouse there. But in between the apple packing seasons they were using it to store potatoes. A big old truck was in there with a trailer behind it, and they were unloading potatoes. I came around the curve there wheeling 61 - Mr. John Winding, he never had the brakes set up right - and I couldn't stop. They'd just got the 61 out of the shop, all new siding put on it, really painted up, and the truck tore the whole side right off. We went into Sebastopol and changed cars. The 61 went back into the shop. I got bawled out on that, but of course it wasn't my fault because the truck driver heard me coming around the corner. He started backing up. If he'd just sat still, why I would have had clearance. But as it was he just started to back up and I just slipped by, only just, by his whole trailer. But it scraped the whole side right off the old 61.

The last car arrived at Petaluma 7:00 PM.

Santa Rosa got a new depot in 1927. Interurban cars were then making 11 round trips daily between Petaluma and Sebastopol, 18 between Sebastopol and Santa Rosa, and 15 between Sebastopol and Forestville. Passenger volume had dropped to 220,599. In 1929 two cars were converted to one-man operation for Sebastopol - Forestville service. NWP acquired the railroad in February 1932 and its petition to abandon passenger service on P&SR received approval June 28, 1932. Few appeared to voice opposition. The last car left Petaluma at 5:15 PM., arriving Santa Rosa at 6:36. The last car from Santa Rosa arrived at Petaluma 7:00 PM. Twenty-eight years of service retired that night. Cars that ended in Santa Rosa or Sebastopol deadheaded in to the Petaluma Shops. Windsplitters 55 and 57 became inspection cars; the rest of the passenger fleet awaited disposal. Their bodies sold to become homes, offices, or restaurants.

Freight Operations

Sonoma County farmers made P&SR a busy freight hauler for generations. By 1925 the railroad was grossing over \$500,000 a year and 80% of that income was freight. The road employed 200 men. Its payroll was \$275,000 annually. Freight traffic continued its growth pattern and it demanded hard work. Work days started at 3:30 AM. At that early hour a crew reported at Petaluma, fired up a motor, and rumbled down to the Steamer Wharf. By this time crews had reloaded - by hand truck - the freight brought upriver by the steamer and barges into waiting boxcars. They'd pull these, then go down to the NWP interchange on Hopper Street for whatever awaited them there. These had to be sorted into cars for the Petaluma switcher, cars for the early freight, and cars for the 10:00 AM wayfreight.

The busiest little railroad in America

Operations divided into two seasons: apple season and the rest of the year. Year 'round there were two switch jobs, one at Petaluma and one at Sebastopol, and two daily freights. Apple season ran a third freight, mostly serving the Forestville Branch. Motorman Roy Shaw boasted that with 37 miles of track P&SR was the busiest little railroad in America. And he boasted that boomers hired on for the apple season, soon quit, because they griped that they had to work harder for P&SR than they ever did for any other road!

Boomers hired for the apple season soon quit

The Sebastopol dispatcher issued train orders to control trains over the entire railroad. This practice continued after NWP took over. Roy Shaw recalls (quoted from *The Northwesterner*):

He had his main office in Sebastopol and all train orders came from him. I went to work at 3:30 in the morning on what they called the early freight to pick up the Overnight Service merchandise cars from the wharf in Petaluma to deliver to Santa Rosa, Sebastopol, Graton, Forestville. All the groceries and merchandise that used to come up on the steamers. The dispatcher would send the orders down at night, and then in the morning we'd have to go in the shop and get our sealed orders, which were in an envelope for the crew that morning, at three o'clock. They were always sent out at night with the last passenger that came down at night. When the passengers quit running, then we were given the orders the day before, when we were ending our run in Petaluma. We'd get our orders and we'd hold them for the next morning."

Early Overnight Freight Service

"We went to work at 3 30 AM We'd go down the wharf, get a train, and pick up the merchandise cars there, then get anything off the interchange. If there's anything on the interchange that has to go up to Sebastopol or around there, we'd pick them up and leave Petaluma, say in about an hour or an hour and a half if we could get the merchandise cars. If the boat was in and finished unloading so we could get them.

"We'd go right straight through to Sebastopol. We'd set out stuff for Sebastopol, Forestville and Graton. At Sebastopol, we'd set those cars out. We'd take the remainder of the train and head for Santa Rosa. We'd go over to Santa Rosa and switch those merchandise cars into our depot and freight warehouse over there at Santa Rosa.

"When we finished with that, we'd go back down to L45. We'd come back, pick up our caboos and if they had empty cars there at the freight house, we'd get those, and back to L45. There might be some cars there to go to Sebastopol. And there's a big warehouse there at L45 where they used to store prunes. They had apples in there during apple season and stored a lot of stuff. If there was anything there we had to switch that in to there.

That L45 was quite a time

"That L45 was quite a time. Over there we used to have an apple warehouse and a cherry warehouse and the prune. There were three of them. The tracks come around there like this, and here was the apple house, and the cherry house was here and the prune house was over here. The Indians used to get under the prune house and the hoboos, and they took all the braces out. They used to have their fires under there. At the prune house, they got so many prunes in there one time it settled down, and there were six or seven Indians in there at the time and it killed them all. They took the braces off and had fires under there in the winter time."

The loading dock became a sheltered bunkhouse

Historian Gaye Lebaron writes that the fruit warehouses at L45 were used for storage when fruit was out of season. According to Gaye, "The loading dock became a sheltered bunkhouse for transients. When the tramps persisted in ripping the crossbracing off to use for firewood then the police began making regular patrols. To avoid the cops the men abandoned the loading dock and crawled under the warehouse, out of sight, to sleep. That's where they were in the wet of winter when the building, short of bracing and filled to the ceiling with sacks of dried prunes, collapsed. Eleven men died there that night."

Set out loads of empty cans and crates

Roy: "Then we would come back to Sebastopol, pick up the cars that were set out there for Graton and Forestville, go out to Graton and Forestville and set out whatever there was. Switch any of the packing houses or dryers out there, set out loads of empty cans and crates, and then pick up empties or loads of anything that was coming out of there, gravel-there was always some gravel coming out of Mirabel on the Russian River-and their dryers.

Sometimes they shipped oil in tank cars to the dryers. Sometimes we'd put one of our own little ventilated boxcars in there and they would load that with dried apples or something else to go to Petaluma to go down to San Francisco on the steamer.

Then we would start picking up eggs

"We'd come back to Sebastopol, pick up at Sebastopol whatever there was, and then head for Petaluma. We would go through to Homestead Station, just west of Roblar on the way between Sebastopol and Petaluma. Then we would start picking up eggs and all that sort of stuff that there was, berries, they had big crates of berries that they'd ship into San Francisco. Eggs we'd pick up, and unload the empty egg crates for the farmers. And that would be Homestead, Vestal, Stony Point, Liberty.

Twelve, 13, 14 hours, would be nothing

"Liberty-a crew out of Petaluma used to come and sometimes go to Two Rock, and they'd bring stuff back there, and we'd pick that up and then from Liberty we'd come down to Denman, then Corona. We'd pick up egg cartons there and berries and so forth and bring them into Petaluma. And that was the end of our run. Twelve, 13, 14 hours, would be nothing for that at the time."

LCL Business

"Eggs were shipped less-than carload lot in crates-the farmers would bring them in. The farmers would bring them and put them there on the station platforms. It was nothing for us to pick up in our little boxcars a full carload of eggs. Some of them had 30 dozen crates and some had 36 dozen crates."

Berry cartons were what we used to hate

"But the berry cartons were what we used to hate. They had those little trays, about so big, and they had this big crate, and you had to keep that on a certain level. Otherwise the berries would fall out, and you'd have to pick those up, and they were heavy; it would take two of you to carry those in. Not only that, but while they were doing them, if you had to stop and pick these up at these stations, you had to watch for your passenger cars."

"The passenger cars were running between Sebastopol and Santa Rosa about every hour, and out of Forestville every two hours, and between Petaluma and Sebastopol you had your passengers coming back and forth every hour and a half or two hours there. You had to send a flagman out to flag down the passenger car while the rest of you, the motorman, conductor and brakeman were loading or unloading. You also had to have your flagman out too. Put the passengers in the hole, and back up or pull ahead, and let them go. That's what we had to do."

Phooey on this, it's too much

"We had boomers come over, always we had to hire boomers during the apple season. Boomers came out here who had worked on other roads, would say 'phooey on this, it's too much'. They wouldn't do it. They wouldn't work to load those egg cartons and the berry cartons and so forth, and crates of chickens. They were all right for flagging, but they wouldn't do that."

Berries and cherries and apples

What kind of berries? "Blackberries. And yes, we got cherries, too, but they were out at Cherry Station on the Two Rock branch. They had the cherry house at Santa Rosa at L45. The farmers used to bring the cherries there, and they were shipped from there."

"Berries and cherries and apples, they were seasonal, but the prunes, no. They used to dry the prunes in the field. They'd put them in big trays, about that wide and about six-foot long, spread them out and let them dry, right there in the fields. And then they would stack them in this prune house, and they'd be liable to load them anytime during the season. The eggs, of course they were every day. And hens and chickens with their crates - every day."

Morning Way Freight

The second freight job was the daily way freight. "The way freight would go to work at 9 45 in the morning, What they did, they'd have maybe one or two of our little boxcars full of empty egg crates, crates for chickens and crates for berries. They would unload all the way into Sebastopol, unload those. Our early freight would pick up the full ones. Coming back, and they'd pick up the full ones from Roblar into Sebastopol and put them in the

car, and when they'd come back to Petaluma after they'd gone over to Santa Rosa to pick up any merchandise from Santa Rosa in the afternoon going down to San Francisco. They would also bring that egg and chick and berry car to Petaluma and switch it into the wharf.

Cars and cars of chicken feed

"They switched the packing plants and dryers at Roblar, Turner, Cadwell, Cunningham, and Alten. Also the company gravel at Quarry."

The way freight handled many cars of feed. "Feed was one of the big everyday things we hauled. Feed to the different ranchers at the different stations. Chicken feed, cow feed. The crew had to unload them. They'd have to unload the feed sacks. And of course they'd have to put the empties out, too, for the ranchers to load the eggs in. All of the stations up and down the line would have feed - we'd unload feed. It came up in barges to the warehouses on Petaluma Creek." Feed would go out to ranchers between Corona and Homestead, and out to Two Rock, as well as to the feed merchants in Sebastopol and Santa Rosa.

A grocery store at Hessel

"There was a store at Hessel, there was a grocery there, and if he had something special he wanted, why he'd come out and flag us down and we'd pick that up on the passenger. Otherwise the freight would pick it up. We'd switch into there. There was a side track into the store."

Apple Juice (Apples Under Wire)

"In 1924 and 1925, the NWP went out to Gravenstein. That's where the NWP comes from Santa Rosa into Gravenstein. NWP brought our empty reefers to Gravenstein; that was our interchange before they made this L45 up there. We'd put all the cars there. And the NWP would come there with the refrigerated (iced) cars. That's where the NWP comes from Santa Rosa into Gravenstein. We'd put all the cars there. And the NWP would come there with the refrigerated cars."

NWP iced its reefers at the PFE ice plant, and at National Ice. PFE's ice station was at the wye north of Santa Rosa where Southern Pacific's Valley of the Moon branch joined the NWP main. National Ice's Santa Rosa plant was on Sebastopol Avenue, where the P&SR crossed NWP. Also, in 1923 P&SR built a spur into the Petaluma National Ice facility, thus making a second interchange track with NWP in that city. Roy seems to be saying that his job set out loaded reefers at Gravenstein, but didn't pick up empties there. Apparently the Sebastopol switch crew performed that chore whenever NWP's Santa Rosa depot clerks phoned P&SR's Sebastopol office that the iced empties were waiting at Gravenstein.

Miniature reefer blocks

During apple season hundreds of reefers clogged P&SR, miniature reefer blocks of 10 or 15 cars. Sebastopol and Forestville Branch packinghouses originated most of the loads.

Roy: "That Forestville branch, the year we had all those apples, we had passengers running out to Forestville every hour or hour and a half. We had three crews. We had a crew out of Sebastopol that was going from Sebastopol up here to Molino, not really to Molino (Hurlbut passing siding?), but up the hill. And we had one crew that was working to Graton, from there (Molino?) to Graton. And the other crew was working from Graton to Forestville. It would come back there and bring those cars up to here, and the Sebastopol crew would go out and pick those up and bring them into Sebastopol, and then the other crew would take them over to Santa Rosa. That's working four crews and flagging passengers at the same time."

All that a single motor could do

Roy recalls seasons where the train out of Sebastopol, loaded with cars from the Forestville Branch as well as Sebastopol, would be 26, 27, even 28 cars full of apples and gravel and wine. And it would be all that a single motor could do to crawl with that tonnage up to five miles an hour.

Roy Shaw's P&SR was a busy railroad!

I Ran the P&SR Motors

Proud as P&SR was of the 502's 300 h.p., the 504 and 506 at 500 h.p., and about 80,000 lbs., easily outpulled it. However, the bigger motors got into trouble on the Forestville Branch during apple season whenever both were on the branch at the same time, which was frequent due to the traffic generated there. They pulled too much juice. In 1926 P&SR put up a portable electric substation at Forestville, solving that problem.

Then in 1928 the shop made its first venture into multiple units. Old Nos. 1002 and 1004 entered a new stage of life with MU controls, the cab removed from 1002, and they were semi-permanently coupled together. Renumbered 1004A and 1004B, and operated as one motor, they outperformed 502. Next year, 1929, Nos. 1006 and 1008 got shopped the same way, emerging as 1008A and 1008B. No. 502 saw a lot of weed time after that.

Roy: "As motorman I ran both the motors and the Diesels over the years. There wasn't too much difference between the electric motors and the Diesel-electrics, except you would have to be very careful with your electric motors.

Be very careful on pulling the hills

"You would have to watch your tonnage on a drag or going up a hill. They had what you'd call low gear. It wasn't a low gear, but you'd put 'em back so when your juice went into your motors, it went direct into each set of wheels. And then you'd put it up to the next phase, and that'd be the phase of these two motors and those two motors. Then the third phase would be running, like on the level, and so forth, when you had the speed of your train up, the four motors would be in parallel.

You watched your electric gauge, the ammeter

"The diesels, though, went direct. You didn't have that phase at all. You had to be very careful on pulling the hills with your electrics, because if you kept it in high gear you could burn out your motor. Because the first motor would get too much juice and the last one wouldn't get any.

So you had to be very careful of where you were. You watched your electric gauge, the ammeter, for how much juice you were pulling.

"You also had your air pressure gauge. The pressure on the passengers was always 70 pounds. Of course when you put it into emergency, you'd get the full pressure, but then you also had your brake for what we called straight air. That's what we used all the time for slowing down for stations. And of when you needed an emergency application you threw it wide open. We only had the one gauge, and it showed 70 pounds.

"Some of the freights, they had up to 75 pounds, but most of them were 70. The 204 and 1008, they were 70; and the 506 and 504 were 75. And then it got so some of the motormen, when they'd want to stop the motor, they'd throw it into emergency and they were sliding the wheels at 75 pounds pressure.

On the hill from Petri Wine we couldn't stop!

"The 100 was an exception. One year when we had all the apples going out we had motor 100 from the Southern Pacific. Master Mechanic John Winding put the pressure down to 40 pounds. When we were switching in some of those places like Forestville, on the hill to Petri Wine, going down, we couldn't stop!

I couldn't stop 'em!

"One day I was coming out one of the packing houses in Sebastopol with the 100 and one of the other freights was coming up the main line. There was only 40 pounds of pressure on that old 100. We had two or three cars of apples and 4 or 5 empties. We were coming down the hill in Sebastopol, bringing the loaded cars out and putting the empties back in, and I couldn't stop 'em. So I threw it into emergency and all these apples piled up in the cars that weren't full, and they had to load them all over again. I got some demerits for doing that! But I either had to do that or run into the other train that was coming down the main line. Either that or cause a wreck.

Flat wheels or a wreck

"Mr. Graham was there and got after me about it. I told him, "Look, Harry, what are you going to do? I've only got 40 pounds of pressure on the 100, and you can't switch out of there with two or three loaded cars and three or four empties and stop it with 40 pounds pressure on the head-end." And he said, well, John Winding says if he put it up any more you'll slide the wheels and it will cost the company more for flat wheels. Well, I said, you're either going to have flat wheels or a wreck! That didn't bother me. Next time I got the 100 I just opened the pressure up. When I got finished with it, I turned it down again. All John Winding was thinking about was saving the company money on flat wheels. He wasn't thinking about us.

"At Forestville, there was a two-and-a-half percent grade up to the Petri winery. You had to build your air up in your cars, and when you came out of there you didn't go a car length before you started using your air to come down that two and a half percent grade, and you came right down to a real sharp curve. We have a picture here of a couple of tank cars turned over there. That was out of the Petri winery.

Didn't have his air built up

"Going to Forestville now you'll see that sharp curve just coming into town, where the highway makes a sharp curve. Well, the Petri winery was right up there and that's where Bill Parks came out and didn't have his air built up enough. You're just going to slide your wheels all the way down there. You come out of there with two or three tank cars and you have quite a bit of weight behind you.

You take old 100. When we went through Sebastopol to Santa Rosa during that year we took 27 cars. There were 26 loads and one empty, and there were a lot of apples and gravel and wine in there, and the old 100 used to go along about 4 to 5 miles an hour-that's about as fast as you could go. When you got to Santa Rosa you used to have to go around a packinghouse (L45). You'd come to Sebastopol Avenue and run in there and down the NWP and you used to have to go around that curve; you'd generally get stuck if you had too many cars-just wouldn't make it. I told Hank Travis who was my brakeman there, "We have 28 behind us. I guess we'll have to split them and take them over in two parts."

"There were two different kinds of electric motors. There were the 1004, 1008, 1010, and there were the 504 and the 506 they had more horsepower than the others had. The others were just little motors - they didn't have the power that the 504 and the 506 did. And then they had their trailer units. We used to have the 1004, 1006, 1008 and the 1010, and the company took two of those and made trailers out of them, what they called "cow and calf units."

Click along at 25 to 30

"With the electrics, freight and passenger, you could get along at pretty good speed on the level. You could click along at 25 to 30 miles an hour. The signals were set at 28, but you could make more than that.

"We ran the passenger car from Sebastopol to Petaluma and made two stops. It used to take 48 minutes to make the run from Sebastopol to Petaluma. We once made it with two stops in 28-1/2 minutes from the depot in Petaluma to the depot in Sebastopol. So you can figure we were making more than 28 miles an hour we were running around 50 miles an hour coming down the hill.

We were running around 50 miles an hour

"The 506 was all iron; the 504 was wood, but the 506 seemed like it was more steady and it felt more like you were at home when you were running it. You knew what it could do and what it couldn't do. The 504 was sort of-well, you didn't feel as good running it as you did with the 506. I don't know why, but you felt more at home and felt you could do more with the 506 than you could with the 504. But they were the same powered motors, except one was iron and the other was wood.

The same with the 1004 and 1008. Now you take the 1010 - it seemed that for some reason or other you were always having trouble with it, while the 1004 ran along fine. (P&SR sold No. 1010 to San Francisco Municipal Railway in 1920. By 1930 they needed another relief motor, so they bought 1010 back. Ed)

We ran by more stations with old 57

The same thing with the passenger cars. We had a lot of trouble with old 57. We ran by more stations with old 57, couldn't get stopped to pick up the kids at the station because John Winding, when he was Master Mechanic, set the piston travel too long. I worked on the Canadian Pacific Railway for two years on nothing but brakes. Your piston should not come out over 4 to 6 inches. John Winding would have it from 8 to 10 inches. I had quite a time with Winding about that 57; I told him I'd get a letter from a fellow I'd worked with in Canada but it didn't make any difference to John Winding.

So we got the Master Mechanic and Mr. Graham, who was the manager at the time, and we got old 55 and went out. I had to show them where they made the mistake.

A sort of hump over East Washington Street

When you go over Washington St. there is sort of a hump there. Colson's warehouse was down there. You'd come around Colson's warehouse to go over there and down. They had a warehouse on each side of the track. They used to unload barges into one of them. There was a bridge going across the tracks between the warehouses, which they just lifted up. If they had their bridge down, you'd have to stop for them to get their bridge up. We didn't have the 506 or 504, the biggest motors; all we had was the little 1004 and 1010, without the trailer units on, and to get up that hill, the best you could do if you had bulk cars was to take two of those bulk cars of grain. That was about the best you could do to get up there if you couldn't get a little run for it, or you could take three of the other cars, sacks, or like that. So we used to have to push, maybe two cars up the hill and over Washington St. and park them down there and then go back and get a couple of cars behind us and go up and over and around to McNear's there and down through Hunt & Behrens. We'd go down and get rid of those and take any empties and come back, bring more, go down and get some more cars off the interchange, and go at it again.

The next day we always put in the extra time

And there were the feed houses: Poultry Producers, Vonsen's, Hunt and Behrens and McNear's. All their stuff in those days was coming on by rail cars; it wasn't in trucks like it is now, and cars would come in that got held up by the NWP for two or three days. They had them all that day; we were just going back and forth, go over with two or three cars for each feed house, pick up the empties, go back get some more loads and by the time we came back they'd have those cars empty. So we'd put another one in and take the empties out. That's what we'd do for 16 hours. Actually, it was 15 hours and 55 minutes. You couldn't work 16 hours, because if you did then they had to give you 10 hours rest. We handled that, although there were some times we went over that, but didn't put our time in. We'd put in for 15 hours and 55 minutes. But the next day we always put in the extra time and made it up. But that was all right, because what's-his-name didn't get hold of it. We weren't unionized then either. That made a difference, too.

West Petaluma Branch

Substantial new business came P&SR's way when West Petaluma Branch opened in mid-1922. And it hastened the decline of scow schooner traffic on Petaluma Creek. For example, at the foot of First Street Petaluma Box Company previously brought in lumber by scow schooner. The lumber had been transshipped from a lumber schooner operating from one of the West Coast's doghole ports. During its sea voyage the lumber soaked up plenty of water. It arrived green and likely somewhat damaged by its voyage. Petaluma Box stacked the green lumber to dry in its yard, then cut out the damaged sections prior to making fruit boxes and chicken crates. Chicken farmers lived close enough to journey into town for crates, but fruit boxes or and prune flats had to be barged around to the steamer landing. West Petaluma Branch changed all that.

Now lumber arrived direct by rail from the mill, dry and whole, and only in smaller carload lots rather than entire scow loads. P&SR offered attractive less than carload lot rates on boxes outbound to sidings closer to chicken ranch and fruit orchard. Petaluma Box in 1929 acquired the old box factory of the former Northwestern Lumber Company in Willits, across the NWP tracks from the joint NWP - California Western passenger depot. Pine and spruce box shook now traveled by rail from Willits to Petaluma.

Buicks, Fords, Dodges, Pontiacs.

Inbound grain and hay and feed to mills operated by G. P, McNear, Vonsen's, Hunt & Behrens, Bar-Ale and Colson's. Outbound from them in small lots as well. Inbound furnace castings and iron or steel for Kresky Brooder Stoves, on First between G and H Streets, created frequent carloadings. Castings and metal fittings for Dow-Herriman Pumps on H Street. Inbound oil and gas for Shell, empty sacks for McNears.

Egg crates and chicken boxes

Inbound egg crates and chicken boxes for poultry dealers on Poultry (North Water) Street. Boxcar loads of Buicks, Fords, Dodges, Pontiacs for the Auto Dock. Inbound furniture and dry goods and appliances for J. C. Penny and (later) Montgomery Wards.

To say nothing of the big feed mills operated, as they are today, by Hunt & Behrens and Poultry Producers (now Dairymans). It was "quite a time", as Roy Shaw says, and all of it taking place just behind the brick downtown Main Street storefronts, right beside the banks of Petaluma Creek. The most picturesque locale imaginable.

Easily the most attractive feature of the West Petaluma Branch is 507 foot long Water Street Wharf. This wharf acts as a trestle, for it carries the tracks from Water Street to First Street. It was also a wharf for the docking and unloading of riverborne vessels opposite the Turning Basin, and the railroad referred to it as a wharf. In fact, this unusual combination trestle/wharf was one of only two in the entire nation according to Gustafson Research.

The Age of the Auto

Prosperity during the 1920's for poultrymen and fruit growers meant purchases of new cars. P&SR passenger revenues dropped from \$117,921.71 in 1922 to \$57,960.84 during 1924. Revenues barely covered direct operating costs, with nothing left to pay for maintenance. Partial relief came in 1928 when the California Railroad Commission (later California Public Utilities Commission) allowed P&SR to convert its cars to one-man operation. And in 1928 P&SR replaced its original two-wire overhead system with single wire catenary. For 1925 total gross operating revenues for the entire system came to \$557,313.12, on which the company realized a net income of \$93,891.41. Satisfactory, except that after taxes, dividends and miscellaneous non-operating expenses were deducted the result was a deficit at the end of the year of \$5,481.14.

By 1931 riverboat traffic dwindled to next to nothing. Some scows, such as the Alma, added motors to speed transit. Still the trucks took away grain and feed business that used to move inbound to Petaluma by water or rail. Local trucking began to take away P&SR's local hauls. The railroad's sternwheelers still handled thousands of eggs and live chicks. They accounted for satisfactory volumes of Overnight parcel express traffic. But only one boat a day sailed where there once had been two. That boat was usually Petaluma with her greater capacity than the second Gold.

NWP: the White Knight

Ed Maggard succeeded E. M. Van Frank to P&SR's presidency in 1926. Maggard knew that the electric road had to form an alliance to survive. There had always been rivalry with Northwestern Pacific, but Western Pacific had been a friendly connection. WP itself in 1928 acquired Sacramento Northern, the long interurban operating from Oakland to Chico. Now Maggard secured willingness to sell from the road's aging board, which controlled most of the stock. He acquired additional stock options from other holders. And directed a feeler toward officials he knew at WP about possibly selling P&SR to that line. They could link up by connecting with another electric, the Napa Valley. He received polite refusals, however. The feelers reached ears at NWP, which reacted differently. From head to head dealings, its officials knew how effective and well regarded Maggard was, and how valuably P&SR operations could be dovetailed with their own. Knew that it could make Maggard an even better offer: presidency of the Northwestern Pacific Railroad itself. And P&SR's freight business would make a profitable addition to NWP. On November 28, 1928, NWP and P&SR jointly announced they would seek Interstate Commerce Commission approval for P&SR's sale to NWP.

At the time, AT&SF was still a full partner with SP in the NWP. The two transcontinentals worked out a joint plan for the P&SR purchase. But in 1929 AT&SF soured on the entire Redwood Empire. NWP itself had lost money during most of the 1920's, and little of its traffic followed the Tiburon - Richmond transbay connection to AT&SF rails. So SP elected to assume the full burden of both NWP and P&SR. To SP the two roads represented good traffic opportunities. We will see why a bit later.

WP argued and objected

Legal warfare erupted in the boardrooms. Crocodile tears dripped from Western Pacific President M. M. Adams; he had not been consulted about prior feelers from P&SR. WP would intervene in the ICC application. On February 2, 1929, ICC authorized WP to intervene and to seek to become a partner in any P&SR sale. Naturally Southern Pacific, as the now exclusive owner of NWP, objected to that. WP then filed its own application April 5 to buy P&SR all by itself. Meanwhile SP had bought out the P&SR stockholders, cash on the barrelhead. WP could not match that, let alone better it, so it argued and objected and put out full-page advertisements bemoaning the pernicious octopus of Market Street in San Francisco. To no avail. ICC approved the P&SR sale to NWP January 22, 1932. Provided that WP could maintain its interchange with P&SR at San Francisco. Which amounted to zilch.

Completion of the merger left Ed Maggard free to eliminate passenger services, as he was doing elsewhere on NWP. To improve freight service efficiency, P&SR took a long-term lease from Southern Pacific on P&SR freight Motor 100. At 1,000 h.p. No. 100 had twice the pulling power of No. 506 and was especially useful during the fruit rush. She came equipped with pantographs rather than trolley poles. In 1934 all the freight power converted from pole to pantograph collection from the trolley wire. The road now operated six freight motors, one windsplitter for inspection (No. 55), 43 boxcars, 21 flatcars, 3 cabooses, 3 oil tank cars, and one ballast dump car together with Gold and Petaluma.

The Steamer Goeth

A longtime key to Petaluma & Santa Rosa's success as a freight hauler lay with their riverboat steamers, the various Golds and Petalumas. Typical of the California river steamboat, they were each sternwheelers. The willow-strewn banks of narrow and twisty Petaluma Creek snagged any side-wheeler that attempted its waters above Donahue Landing near Lakeville. Although steam railroads could reach San Francisco much faster than the five or six hours it took steamers from Petaluma, river travel offered P&SR several advantages.

Low operating costs was one. Freedom from bone-rattling jolts was another. Petaluma's eggs and poultry traveled securely and safely aboard the steamer. Aboard the steam cars they needed extra cushioning, especially when travelling on long freights whose coupling slack ran in and out farther and farther as freight trains grew longer and longer. And, finally, during the long boat ride freight clerks could sort, weigh, rate, bill, mark, and tag. Upon arrival shipments were ready for quick transfer, something the steam roads could never do.

They were also highly reliable. One night, as Petaluma was plugging across San Pablo Bay bound for Petaluma, the port crank of her paddle wheel cracked and broke off. The casting had crystallized and failed. Fortunately this happened when the crank was at the bottom of its revolution. It merely tore the connecting rod, or "pitman", off as it sailed in an arc directly astern and sank in the Bay. Of course they shut off steam immediately, and marked the spot of the accident. Then, with just one engine side turning the stern wheel, slowly negotiated the entire creek to town, turned and reloaded, and proceeded back to San Francisco. Divers pulled up the broken crank and pitman. They patched her up and a few days later you never have known anything had happened. Only one other serious accident is recorded. On October 16, 1947 Petaluma struck a submerged piling. She stove in her hull and had to be beached. Two weeks later she had been repaired and returned to uneventful, faithful service.

A rich tradition of river navigation.

Steamers Gold and Petaluma represented the California riverboats common to the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers when these boats were built. Yet Petaluma survived to become the very last of her breed. At about 150 feet long between the beam-ends each was about average in size. They inherited a rich tradition of river navigation. Primarily freight boats, their passenger accommodations were strictly of the "accommodation" class: utilitarian.

Sternwheelers like Gold and Petaluma differed greatly from the sidewheel Bay ferry boats. Instead of a single massive vertical walking beam engine connected to twin wheels, sternwheelers had two single-cylinder engines, mounted horizontally, and directly connected to the sternwheel by long connecting rods. A single boiler could feed steam to both engines; controls were placed amidships between them so that one man could handle them. Boiler pressures exceeded 150 pounds per square inch.

The first Gold started life in 1883. She was built for Captain N. Gould by Marucci of San Francisco for the Petaluma - San Francisco run where she spent here first 20 years. Acquired in December, 1903 *sumed, a priori*, that existi **(MISSING TEXT HERE)**

A lot to ask on a railroad which at the time still ran its early morning Petaluma - Santa Rosa freight and its mid-morning Petaluma - Forestville wayfreight, with each averaging 3 cars per train in each direction. Except during apple season, when an average 8 - 10 cars traveled between Forestville and Santa Rosa each day. Motor 506 had a 15-car maximum on the grade north from Sebastopol, yet sometimes had to leave cars behind to double this grade. (Today it is a delightful bike and hike trail.) Naturally enough, SP's thoughts soon turned to Diesel switchers as an alternative to all that capital investment for replacing the electric overhead wire and poles. In fact, the numbers boys estimated that operation with small Diesel switcher locomotives would be no more expensive than operation with the existing P&SR electrics.

An Authority for Expenditure

Southern Pacific already had three of General Electric's 44-tonner center-cab Diesels on its property. Two on Pacific Electric and one on Visalia Electric. Designed for one-man operation, they fit perfectly in with Espee's scheme for a small locomotive. As an electric road, P&SR already had one-man operation, so no union issues arose to cloud the question of changeover to Diesel. This was the locomotive San Francisco had in mind, but NWP San Rafael had never seen a Diesel. The idea that a Diesel could run as cheap as an electric raised eyebrows in Mr. Veale's office. A "test" was agreed to. P&SR supplied cost data for one month's operation of its best electric, No. 506. San Francisco supplied like figures for Visalia Electric's new 44-tonner. Electric cost of operation 15.58¢ per mile. GE unit 7.53¢ per mile. And the 44-tonner could operate over P&SR's light track and bridges. Case closed? Not quite. There were several inspections and numerous details to work out before SP's President A. T. Mercier was presented with a formal request September 3, 1946 to approve an Authority for Expenditure, the formal authorization for a capital expenditure. It would:

1. Dieselize P&SR, with exception of Petaluma Yard.
2. Abandon all electrical facilities except for Petaluma Yard. Power for the overhead there would be purchased from PG&E's substation there at First and D Streets adjacent to the West Petaluma Branch track there.
3. Purchase two GE 44-ton, 380 h.p. Diesel locomotives and retain Motor No. 506. Retire the remaining 5 electric motors.
4. Abandon P&SR trackage alongside Sebastopol Road from Olive Street in Santa Rosa west to Wright Road. Construct new non-electrified trackage on old NWP Sebastopol Branch right of way west to Wright Road, and then make connection there with P&SR private right of way. The U. S. Navy asked Sonoma County to widen Sebastopol Avenue from Santa Rosa out to the naval airport training base.
5. Balancing project costs with salvage proceeds the net cash outlay came to \$115,580, of which the two 44-tonners cost \$90,460.

A brand new 44-tonner

A brand new 44-tonner came from GE, P&SR No. 1. P&SR No. 2 had worked for 5 years on the Rio Grande & Eagle Pass before joining P&SR in 1946. The trolley overhead came down in stages, first the Two Rock Branch in October. Sebastopol to Santa Rosa in November. Forestville dropped its wire in December, and then crews began working their way to Petaluma from Sebastopol. The last regular electric train ran December 24, 1946. The last electric trip outside Petaluma took a carload of horses to Liberty January 24, 1947 behind Motor No. 1008. Petaluma kept its wire up until March 22, using No. 506 as the switcher. After that the Diesels ruled. They carried blue and yellow liveries and each was wired for single unit operation only.

Street running on Sebastopol Avenue in Santa Rosa also ended in 1946. To accommodate this, P&SR abandoned its track between Olive Street in Santa Rosa and Stop 45, where it made a 90 degree turn and hooked up with NWP's Sebastopol Branch line, passing a number of fruit storage sheds there. The date was May 20, 1946. On October 20, 1947, P&SR switched over to the NWP track between Stop 45 and Leddy, opposite the airport, abandoning the rest of Sebastopol Avenue trackage.

In love with new 44-tonners

P&SR soon fell in love with its new 44-tonners. Being brand new, they did not need constant maintenance. When they did, the Caterpillar twin Diesel engines were very accessible and parts easily available. Any problems the road's own mechanics could not handle could be quickly called in to the local Caterpillar dealer for repair. Because the onboard power plants delivered full power without voltage drops through an overhead wire system, they were found to haul 65% more under load than could the old electrics, or travel 16% faster with the same load. There was no more overhead to maintain. About the only drawback was lack of multiple unit capability. Since the large electric motors lacked that too, it was not missed. They were so capable that within a year they took over all switching in Petaluma, Motor 506 was retired, and the last P&SR wire came down. NWP caught 44-tonner fever too. In 1947 they took delivery of a single unit, SP 1902, for switching duties at Tiburon Yard. During that season's apple rush the 1902 came over to help P&SR get through the season.

A lot to ask on a railroad which at the time still ran its early morning Petaluma - Santa Rosa freight and its mid-morning Petaluma - Forestville wayfreight, with each averaging 3 cars per train in each direction. Except during apple season, when an average 8 - 10 cars traveled between Forestville and Santa Rosa each day. Motor 506 had a 15-car maximum on the grade north from Sebastopol, yet sometimes had to leave cars behind to double this grade. (Today it is a delightful bike and hike trail.) Naturally enough, SP's thoughts soon turned to Diesel switchers as an alternative to all that capital investment for replacing the electric overhead wire and poles. In fact, the numbers boys estimated that operation with small Diesel switcher locomotives would be no more expensive than operation with the existing P&SR electrics.

Behrens and Dairyman's are both grain dealers of Lakeville Blvd. in Petaluma. They received grain hoppers as long as rail service continued.

As P&SR's first steamer, she quickly became well known and well loved. Together with the railroad she brought reduced freight rates and, in conjunction with a second boat, more reliable as well as frequent steamer service. It is no accident that even today the phrase "Steamer Gold" evokes enthusiastic memories in Petaluma. She remains a symbol of the great days when Petaluma was "The Poultry Capital of the World". Her coming to P&SR and the railroad's successful invasion of the Gold Ridge fruit business led to a competitive service being inaugurated in 1908 using the steamer Resolute. But the combination of the P&SR's own steamer with its railroad starved the Resolute. By 1911 P&SR could buy the Resolute cheap to eliminate the competition, and the railroad did so.

A story connected with the Gold may be apocryphal but bears repeating. Her stern wheel had no splashguard over it. While spinning through the water, the wheel would catch any fish in its path and fling them up onto the Texas deck. There was a particular spot or two on Petaluma Creek where fish tended to school. Here the boat's cook would come out on deck, fry pan in hand, and catch the day's meal fresh in his pan! Since that particular cook had a way with skinning and preparing fresh fish, he was a more valued crewman than the captain was! Or so the story goes.

Symbol of the great days

As mentioned previously, the first Gold burned while fully loaded at the Steamer Gold wharf early on the morning of November 8, 1920. Reports later laid the blame on spontaneous combustion among a consignment of 400 used grain sacks being returned downriver for reloading. Fire aboard steamboats while tied up at wharves was the most common catastrophic fate among riverboats. Due to the many openings on Gold and her all wooden construction, she went up like a tinderbox. Many crewmen slept aboard her. They literally had to run

for their lives, the fire spread so fast. Within 10 minutes the entire superstructure caught fire. Although a powerful Knott pump, stationed nearby at the end of McNear Canal, was quickly brought into play, it could do little but save the P&SR freight house beside the pier, the Sonoma Express warehouse, and other structures from destruction. Twelve P&SR boxcars did not escape. They too were a total loss.

Her cargo consisted of 170 bales of hops from Graton, two carloads of potatoes, 90 cases of eggs from Poultry Producers, 3000 sacks of barley, and a consignment of newsprint for the Petaluma Daily Courier, also fruits and mixed cargoes.

The mess boy jumped

During the first excitement the boat's mess boy jumped into the water to escape the flames. Unfortunately he drowned, the sole fatality. Everyone else aboard lost all clothing and valuables to the fire, but managed to escape safely. The boat burned right down to the waterline. A total loss, even the machinery just molten slag. She was immediately replaced for \$10,000 by another second hand boat, which became the second Gold.

At that time, the Gold regularly left Petaluma at 6:00 AM daily except Sunday, arriving San Francisco 11:00 AM. She began the return journey at 5:00 PM., docking at Petaluma 11:00 PM. Sister Petaluma left her namesake city daily at 9:00 PM., arriving San Francisco 3:00 AM and returning 11:00 AM for a Petaluma arrival 5:00 PM

Last Sternwheeler on the Bay

P&SR enjoyed considerable success with its combined steamer and rail service from the first. Soon the seasonal apple rush compelled the electric to temporarily lease an additional boat. This boat often was the Sonoma, previously a regular on the Sonoma Creek run between Sonoma Landing near Sears Point and San Francisco. Then in 1908 steamer Resolute commenced a rival, competitive service to Gold. The P&SR allowed its lease on a second boat to lapse, but Resolute found little freight to carry outside of apple season that did not come out P&SR way cars. She was forced into her competitor's hands, which by now did enjoy sufficient traffic to warrant two full time boats. In 1911 the electric renamed its new acquisition Petaluma, the second vessel to carry that name, but first for P&SR. The vessel originally came from the famous yard of Mathew Turner at Benicia in 1884.

Petaluma had a short career. In an incident almost identical to Gold's fate, she took fire from a stack of empty grain sacks, as part of her full cargo, early in the morning of March 22, 1914. Again the fire occurred while the boat was tied up at Steamer Gold Landing, and again everyone aboard had to flee for their lives with only the clothes on their backs. No one was hurt however. This time they managed to cut the burning vessel loose and she drifted away from the wharf, saving it from any serious harm. Also, the machinery emerged salvageable. Which was done and a new, larger superstructure erected over the old hull for \$19,083.91.

Petaluma II

Thus was born Petaluma II, destined to become the last sternwheeler on the Bay. Part of the relatively high cost of her birth was due to the large freight elevators installed. The James Robertson yard at Benicia did the work, at the same time raising her tonnage from 264 tons to 448, and her beam from 29 to 35 feet. She could just barely squeeze past the Northwestern Pacific Railroad swing bridge just south of Petaluma. Her greater tonnage and faster elevator made her the favorite boat when Gold burned in 1920. In fact the second Gold was out of service by 1935, scrapped in 1940. That left Petaluma. Historian Jerry MacMullen bought a ticket on Petaluma in the early 1940's. Here is his report, recounted in Paddle-wheel Days in California:

“This is going to be a big job.”

P&SR retained home road operations

P&SR retained its own operations, its own employee callboard, and its own corporate structure under NWP's umbrella. San Francisco took over such functions as accounting, engineering, legal, stores, and top management. H. S. Graham and the sales team stayed on to actually run the show. The road's prior success courting its shippers was one reason. Ed Maggard, who had done so much to cement good public relations, had no intention of abandoning the home road approach, which had proved so successful. Another reason was the interchange with Western Pacific. Had P&SR merged with NWP, WP could have argued for better access to NWP customers in P&SR territory. On the other hand, Maggard could and did promote P&SR+NWP+SP all rail routing. By 1935 steamer Gold was in mothballs for good. P&SR became a most valuable feeder for the Southern Pacific system.

Gold was in mothballs for good

The Great Depression affected P&SR and Sonoma County less than it did most sections of America. Prices for poultry and apple and berry products dropped, but demand - while reduced - remained strong. During the 1930's P&SR actually increased its share of the total traffic handled by P&SR + NWP as a whole. The season of 1938, as Roy Shaw relates above, produced a bumper apple crop. Historian Stanley Borden, from interviews with P&SR General Manager H. S. Graham, reported that P&SR always made a profit after its sale to NWP, although this varied with the size of the season's apple crop. Graham's statement was based on the fact that P&SR was a piece of Southern Pacific, and that the SP system as a whole profited from P&SR.

The Depression chopped rail traffic down to unheard of lows. NWP business in 1933 amounted to 50% of pre-crash levels. P&SR had 65%. SP cut expenses everywhere it could. Its efficiency experts did more work than ever before. P&SR seemed a natural for complete absorption by NWP. That year the slide rule set came down on the cows and chicken line in force doing an extensive study whose report ran 35 pages with 12 exhibits. It assumed, a priori, that existing NWP forces could handle P&SR's work, that the steamers would be scrapped, and that everything south from Sebastopol to Petaluma - which section generated just 2.2% of P&SR business - would be abandoned. Having counted all the savings, then they began to look at what doing this would cost in the way of business. The consequences appalled them.

To begin with, WP wrangled a clause in the ICC report approving NWP purchase of P&SR. Competitive rates and the new P&SR must maintain routes via WP. If NWP absorbed P&SR then keeping NWP's own customers in P&SR territory separated from old P&SR folks boggled the imagination. Let WP get a crack at NWP folks? Horrors. Second, P&SR's sales force maintained some of the best customer relations in the industry. Even slide rule boys knew that you could not bring in a new group without losing goodwill and good business.

The secret of interline revenue divisions

Third, and this clinched it, P&SR business created more profit for SP than almost any other, but only as long as the electric maintained its own operations. The reason has to do how railroads divide revenues among themselves. P&SR gets its share of the revenue and NWP gets its share. A fruit shipment from Forestville on P&SR to Kansas City at that time carried a rate of \$1.00 per 100 pounds. The rate from Sebastopol on NWP to Kansas City would also be \$1.00, and from San Jose on SP \$1.00. Distances are almost the same, and each shipper competes with the other. So they enjoy the same rate. If each car goes via Ogden, SP gets 46.5¢ of the dollar when from Santa Clara. From Sebastopol, NWP+SP earn 52.6¢. And from Forestville the revenue accruing to P&SR+NWP+SP is 58.6¢. Were P&SR to be merged with NWP, that 6¢ extra revenue would disappear.

Fourth, the P&SR steamers turned out to be cheaper than any alternative.

Fewer chicks or eggs left by rail

The business of chicken ranching and apple shipping changed during these years. Petaluma area chicken farmers by now lined the hills with red roofed hen houses. But no longer did chickens produce bountiful cases of eggs for the market. Instead the farmer became a specialist hatching day-old chicks and shipping them all over the West. He might be a "pullet grower" buying day-old chicks, raising them for three months, then shipping to the fresh meat market. Or he might sell chicks to the "commercial egg man" - somewhere else - who specialized in eggs. Or maybe sell chicks to the "breeder" who produced eggs for the local hatcheries. Poultry Producers was the only egg shipper left, operating the largest egg handling plant in the United States. Its market area covered 28 states. Fewer chicks or eggs left by rail however. Trucks were faster, suffered less damage enroute, and carried smaller lots than rail cars. More and more it was just inbound feed that moved rail.

Apple marketing changed with the times as well. By 1936 15,000 acres grew Sonoma County apples. Whereas packers previously concentrated their efforts on the East Coast fresh fruit markets, now increasing tonnages were being shipped dried. Fewer reefer loads meant loss of high rated traffic to P&SR, but traffic still moved rail and it was not as seasonal. For 1936 Sonoma County shipped 56,000 tons of dried apple products and 659,254 boxes of fresh apples. Almost 7,000 tons of fresh apples, or 400 refrigerator cars, flowed over the P&SR. Dried product value forged ahead of that for fresh shipments. Out of total market value \$1,223,552, dried apples accounted for \$738,500.

Apple growers formed marketing cooperatives

Apple growers followed the model set by Petaluma Poultry Producers. They formed marketing cooperatives so that they themselves enjoyed profits as middlemen. Sebastopol Apple Growers Union handled about 50% of the entire crop; Gravenstein Apple Growers Union controlled most of the rest. Processors found ways to use more of the apple. Peelings and cores became the basis for vinegar, applejack (brandy), and even a dairy feed when dried and compressed. Speas in Sebastopol operated the largest of these plants, shipping out vinegar in tank cars. Western Vinegar in Petaluma, across Weller from the P&SR car barn, was another.

Alongside Pier 3 on San Francisco's Embarcadero lies a little sternwheeler, the last of the commercial steamboats in the state. She has a boxlike superstructure, and an odd-looking elevator capable of accommodating a sizable lift truck is located just forward of her pilothouse. Unlike other inland steamers, her small, thin stack is located far aft, like that of the single-end coastwise steam schooners of the early days. She could do with a bit of paint; but everyone is too busy for such things these days; besides, she probably can do her work just as well without it. She is the Petaluma and Santa Rosa Railroad's steamer Petaluma, third to bear the name.

A resonant "Bong! Bong!"

At about 5:30 in the afternoon the last of her cargo is aboard - an assortment of plunder and poultry feed consigned to the merchants of Petaluma or, by transshipment on trains of the Northwestern Pacific, to Santa Rosa or Sebastopol or Healdsburg, or perhaps even as far as Eureka. Her lines are let go; a resonant "Bong! Bong!" comes from her engine-room gong-she is innocent of such modern refinements as the engine telegraph-and her big wheel begins to turn. A prolonged, quavering blast comes from her whistle, and she backs out into the Bay.

Is the little steamer merely whistling in accordance with the U.S. Pilot Rules? Or is she whistling to keep up her courage as she goes on, alone, in the gathering darkness? The Captains Fouratt are gone from the rivers grandfather, father, and sons. So are Captain John Leale and his scarcely less famous brother-and Van Pelt, Chadwick, Baxter, and the rest. The Petaluma won't meet the slim Antelope coming down from Donahue Landing tonight, or the Gold, or the Clinton. They're gone, now, all gone-but can we be sure she won't meet their ghosts,

especially if it comes on a bit foggy? We can hardly blame the little Petaluma for the slight quaver in the note of her whistle.

Navigation by the compass

Bravely, albeit slowly, she plods along past Angel Island, and up beyond Red Rock and The Brothers and into San Pablo Bay. Here she swings off to port as the pilot lays his course through the narrow dredged channel across that shallow sheet of water, toward Black Point, at the mouth of Petaluma Creek. One by one the channel marks are checked off in the logbook, for even on the clearest night she is navigated by the compass course steered and the number of minutes and seconds on each heading. The pilot admits that this may look a bit odd, but maintains that it would be bad practice to do it any other way.

"Suppose it's foggy tomorrow night?" he says. There is the answer: he must keep an accurate record of each night's work, so that if on the following night nothing is visible but a wall of gray, he will know how to reach his destination.

Now the red lights on the drawbridges across the entrance to the creek are close at hand, and again the Petaluma sounds a long blast. There is an answering signal from ashore, and the string of lights begins to move; the span is opening. Now the lights turn to green-the channel is clear, and the little steamboat paddles through. The bridges swing shut behind her, and she heads on, up the winding slough.

Alter course fifty times

From the creek's mouth to the head of navigation she will alter her course approximately fifty times, and the pilot will be a busy man; he must remember all of those courses, by points and quarterpoints, and how long he has to remain on each heading. Over the steering-compass is mounted a watch with an oversize secondhand, and with the aid of these two the pilot goes on. Some courses will be as long as seven minutes. The shortest one is thirty seconds! Twin House, Haystack, Cloudy Bend - he checks them off on his log, and the Petaluma plods on, through a channel so narrow that at times you can all but touch each bank with an oar. Motionless and silent in the night, cows peer at the maritime intruder in the midst of their pastures.

Now the lights of Petaluma loom up ahead, and the crew, most of whom have been sleeping below, begin to appear. The steamer deftly executes a go-degree turn in the tiny basin at the head of the creek, and swings in alongside the pier. If the tide is out there will be lots of work for the elevator in the forward part of the vessel as she unloads. The pilot yawns, and guesses that he'll catch a few winks while they are tied up; the crew, now fully aroused, are busying themselves with the job of trundling cargo out on the wharf or directly into waiting railway cars. It is about midnight, the run of some thirty-six miles up from San Francisco taking anywhere from six to eight hours, depending upon the stage of the tide.

Eggs-eggs-more eggs

With startling rapidity, the Petaluma is cleared of her cargo. And now the job of loading begins. Eggs-eggs-more eggs. It is an agricultural community, and the chicken farms of Petaluma are famous for their output; not for nothing is the city known as "The Egg-Basket of the West."

The Petaluma & Santa Rosa Railroad is connected with the Northwestern Pacific-and the Northwestern Pacific is a part of Southern Pacific's family. This, in a way, makes the Petaluma an SP. steamer, and with no small pride her people claim that she is the fastest division of the huge system, in the point of cargo handling. Truly, the Petaluma is a marvel of speed. Up goes the elevator-out goes the lift truck to a waiting car-on goes another truck-and down goes the elevator. Roaring steam from the engine, which runs the lift, is heard above the rumble of trucks and the infrequent voices of those who handle the cargo. Meanwhile, Petaluma sleeps, secure in the

knowledge that there will be grain on hand for feeding the poultry and that today's eggs will promptly reach the markets of San Francisco and beyond.

And now there comes a hush; the last of the San Francisco bound cargo is on board, and the pilot is climbing up the ladder at the after end of the Texas, to take over again; already the wheel is revolving slowly, as the engineer warms up his machinery. The Petaluma backs down against a spring-line, to swing her bow out into the turning basin, which is not much larger than she is. It's a neat bit of seamanship, and one which the pilot has been practicing successfully for a long time. The spring-line drops into the water as she gets into position to make the opening from the basin into the creek. It is about three o'clock in the morning, and the Petaluma is on her own again. Once more the voice of her whistle is raised, and the banks of the creek again echo back the "Chung, chung, chung, chung! Chung, chung, chung, chung!" of her paddles. Sleepy freight clerks give her a farewell glance as she heads away from town, down the creek. One by one, lights on the loading platform go out, and the Petaluma vanishes around the first bend.

The last steamboat on a California stream is going home.

Last Voyage of Petaluma

Another writer, Robert O'Brien, rode the last trip August 24, 1950:

There was a long silence in the dark wheel immediately replaced much **(text missing here)**

of the relatively high cost of her birth was due to the large freight elevators installed. The James Robertson yard at Benicia did the work, at the same time raising her tonnage from 264 tons to 448, and her beam from 29 to 35 feet. She could just barely squeeze past the Northwestern Pacific Railroad swing bridge just south of Petaluma. Her greater tonnage and faster elevator made her the favorite boat when Gold burned in 1920. In fact the second Gold was out of service by 1935, scrapped in 1940. That left Petaluma. Historian Jerry MacMullen bought a ticket on Petaluma in the early 1940's. Here is his report, recounted in Paddle-wheel Days in California:

yard of Sebastopol, now served by P&SR, the Sebastopol Cooperative Cannery turned out 135,000 cases of applesauce its first year. Outbound applesauce and inbound cans moved by rail. By 1954 production had reached 590,000 cases. The AppleTime brand was a success. That year the coop built a second cannery, at Molino on P&SR. For 1956 750,000 cases of applesauce were sold, providing an outlet for 10,000 tons of Gravenstein apples.

The Diesel Cometh

It was a busy time during the World War II years. Egg and poultry production soared to feed the troops overseas. Poultry Producers itself employed 400 men and women, a record. Dried apples became a staple in soldiers' rations. Farmers planted new orchards to meet wartime demand. With gasoline rationing the railroad was very busy. With ample money coming in the railroad renewed its ties and trestles, including a 1942 rebuilding of the 507 Water Street wharf on the West Petaluma Branch with new piles, new stringers, new caps and ties.

The War brought new developments: economical air conditioning and wire cages. The wire cages, housing chickens and suspended above the hen house floor, allowed the chicken manure to be mucked out by machine. That meant Petaluma's sandy soil no longer enjoyed the advantage of soaking up chicken droppings. Anywhere could do it. Air conditioning neutralized Petaluma's advantageous foggy climate. Poultry production began to move to the Central Valley and Southern California where natural gas for air conditioning was cheap, and land for huge chicken ranches was also cheap. Traffic on both rail and river slumped.

Deferred wire maintenance plagued the motors

The war also called up all the road's electricians. By 1945 maintenance on the overhead wire and the electrical bonds between rail joints had been completely deferred for two years. Breakage of the rail bonds alone was causing numerous fires after trains passed. 85% of the trolley poles housed busy termite colonies eating out the hearts of poles so that only shells remained. No wire maintenance led to chronic current leakage, reducing effective voltage from the nominal 605 volts to less than 300 volts in places on the Forestville Branch. That in turn damaged traction motors struggling to move tonnage with a full redline 300 amps showing on the needle. The motors themselves were so old that replacements could not be had. Shop Foreman John Winding had five machinists burning the overtime oil keeping them running, and he was crying to Superintendent Harry S. Graham for new electric locomotives because the old ones were not going to hold together much longer. Winding wrote up a formal report in January 1946. Here is what he said:

P&SR No. 502 - 4 75 h.p. motors, K64 controller, steel cab and frame but couplers fastened to wooden sills, E23 trucks. Built in 1917 by American Car Co. and purchased from Kansas City & Kaw Valley by P&SR in 1920. Weight 77,000 lbs. This locomotive used very little, only 10 - 12 times a year, on account of limited air compressor capacity and motor horsepower not up to pulling today's heavy freight cars. Cab, frame, electrical equipment in fair condition. Trucks good. Air compressor needs reboring. Held serviceable for standby duty.

P&SR No. 504 - 4 125 h.p. motors, C101 controller, wooden cab, wood frame steel reinforced, Baldwin trucks. Built by Ocean Shore RR in 1917 and purchased from them by P&SR in 1921. Weight 91,000 lbs. Couplers fastened to wooden sills. Cab very poor condition, needs rebuilding. Wood sills badly decayed and very poor. Controller and reversers need repairs. Trucks badly worn after 40 years of service. Journal boxes and pedestals need to be built up and machined to size. Armature bearing housing and motor axle bearing housing need building up and rebored, with new bearings all around. Locomotive used in daily service, but will no longer be safe for service in one year's time.

P&SR No. 506 - Electric equipment, trucks and couplers identical with No. 504. Built by P&SR in 1923 by combining cab and frame purchased from Sacramento Northern with motors and electrical equipment purchased from Ocean Shore. Weight 93,000 lbs. Cab and underframe all steel construction. Cab and underframe in fair condition. Trucks need same repair as stated for No. 504. Locomotive used in daily service.

P&SR Nos. 1004A & B, - No. 1004A equipped with 4 40 h.p. motors, C169 controllers, cab and frame constructed of wood, MCB 14B trucks, couplers fastened to wooden sills. No. 1004B - Wood underframe with concrete ballast deck and 4 40 h.p. motors arranged for multiple-unit operation. Built by Holman, San Francisco, 1904, rebuilt by P&SR 1927. Weight of each 51,000 lbs. All trucks badly in need of new brake shoes and hangers. Work requires that new patterns and castings be made to order. Couplers are poor and should be replaced. All brake draft gear badly worn after 40 years of service. Air compressors will not pass ICC orifice test, are in very bad condition, and repair parts unavailable. Motor armatures badly worn and unreplaceable. Cab and underframe of No. 1004A are poor and will have to be rebuilt inside of two years. Locomotives have very low h.p. rating and cannot justify repair estimates. Used frequently in track maintenance.

P&SR Nos. 1008A & B same construction, equipment, and condition as Nos. 1004 A & B except that cab and underframes in fair condition. Used daily as Petaluma switcher.

P&SR Nos. 1010 same construction, equipment, and condition as No. 1004A. Stored serviceable.

Both Graham and Winding knew that the trolley wire, now nearly 20 years old, needed replacement too. Graham passed the word to C. A. Veale, NWP's VP&GM in San Rafael. Veal informed SP's headquarters in San Francisco. This was going to be a big job. Adding to the problems, the city of Santa Rosa wanted to widen Sebastopol Avenue but not have any tracks in the roadway, and the railroad's three automatic crossing wigwags were actuated through the overhead. Those wigwags protected P&SR's crossings at Denman, where Redwood

Highway met Stony Point Road; Alten where the line crossed Gravenstein Highway south of Sebastopol; and Mill Station, where it crossed Gravenstein again north of Sebastopol.

(MISSING TEXT HERE) 0 and \$80,000 each year on maintenance, except for 1947 and 1952 when unusually heavy tie and ballast renewal expenditures occurred running the bill up to \$125,000 each of those two years.

Gravel business soaring

The old Green Valley gravel pit on the Russian River, near Mirabel, lost its direct rail service when NWP abandoned the Guerneville Branch in 1935. The operator then built a truck reload transfer at Forestville on P&SR. Depression and war kept this business at low levels. Postwar housing and highway construction sent it soaring. From around 20,000 tons each year, it leaped to 37,000 in 1946, then ranged between 40,000 and 50,000 tons annually through 1956. P&SR brought the hopper carloads all the way to Petaluma, then turned them over to NWP. From there they went either to a barge reload at Haystack just south of town, which took the gravel to Napa, or by NWP to concrete batch plants in San Rafael. Some of the gravel stopped at the Basic, Inc. batch plant in Petaluma beside the NWP's Hopper Street yard.

fruit originated on P&SR. house of the sternwheeler Petaluma as she slowly pushed her way across the San Pablo Bay flats on her final trip from San Francisco to Petaluma. The hands of Captain Jack Urton's chronometer, on Standard Time, had moved to 8 PM. and past it. The full white moon rode high, and cast shimmering silver of light upon the bay astern.

Captain Jack sat perched upon his stool in the steering bar; eyes fixed on the steady gleam of the Petaluma Point light. Joe Bussman and I, passengers on the Petaluma's farewell passage, sat upon the wheelhouse bench, looking back at the moonlight and the dim hills of Richmond.

At length Captain Jack spoke, "It's been 35 years, eight months and ten days."

"What's that?" Bussman asked.

"Since the Petaluma made her maiden run. And now this is her last one." Captain Jack had been on her almost that long, as watchman, then pilot, then master. Except for a year or so on the sternwheeler Gold he'd been with her the whole time.

"Time to blow her open"

Beyond the Petaluma Point light, marking the mouth of Petaluma Creek, we could see the red lights of the Black Point railroad bridge glowing low on the water in the darkness. "Time to blow her open," Captain Jack said. The whistle blew three long, sad blasts. Petaluma moved steadily closer. Bussman and I each had a chance to blow the whistle as we approached the bridge. It is a thrilling thing to give voice to a boat, to pull the cord and let her speak with steam and her iron throat, and to hear the note of warning and command fill the night, and die away, and echo back in the dark land.

The red lights ahead changed to green. "She's open," Captain Jack said, and took her through. We left that bridge behind and the highway bridge. For the last time, Petaluma moved up the winding slough and past the levees.

Eighty changes of course in sixteen miles. Captain Jack had taken her up there on nights so thick with fog he couldn't see the bow, steering her with his chronometer and compass, and the echoes of her whistle.

"The way I blow her in."

"Everybody blows a whistle differently," Captain Jack said. "The folks in Petaluma all know when I'm in the wheelhouse. They can tell by the way I blow her in." The Petaluma, quietly and without vibration, forged slowly up the channel. The banks were close and white in the moonlight. Through the open wheelhouse window drifted the smell of dry grass.

"Sometimes cows graze along the levees and stare at us as we go by," the skipper said. "Jerry MacMullen, the writer, took a trip with me once. When we passed the cows, he said, 'Jack, I've looked out of many a wheelhouse in my life, but this is the first time I've ever looked out of one and had a cow look back at me.'"

The Northwestern Pacific drawbridge swung and let us through. The clearance on each side of the boat was five feet. "If she had another coat of paint on, you'd never have made it through," Bussman said in admiration. "With the wind blowing and the tide giving her a sideset, it can be pretty close," said Captain Jack.

Petaluma reached her last mile

Up ahead, beyond Haystack landing, appeared the cold blue lights of Highway 101 leaving Petaluma. (South Petaluma Blvd. today.) We could see the dim outline of the Poultry Producers' grain elevator. The Petaluma had reached her last mile. Up the narrow channel she steamed, past the dark barges at their moorings and toward the row of shaded lights along her wharf.

"Well, might as well blow for the landing." Two long, mournful blasts sounded across the water and over the sleeping town. The sternwheeler gently touched the pier. Her engine room telegraph struck one mellow chiming note. The revolution of her paddlewheel slowly diminished. Then, dripping, it came to a stop.

"This ends 103 years"

As the dock crew hurried aboard to unload her cargo, Captain Jack snapped on his overhead light. He took down his log book and pencil and slowly wrote his last entry: "Arr. Petaluma 10:47 PM. ... After 35 years, 3 months and 10 days we tie up for good. This ends 103 years of sternwheel navigation on S. F. Bay and her tributaries. John H. Urton, Master."

To replace the familiar, time-honored steamer Petaluma & Santa Rosa substituted the tugboat Golden Eagle pulling a barge. Not as romantic, but Golden Eagle promised faster, more economical service than the old sternwheeler. The newer, more powerful Coos Bay replaced her in 1952. Nothing could stop the decline of Petaluma's poultry industry during the 1950's, however. P&SR Petaluma Creek service ended entirely in 1959 when Coos Bay was sold on March 20, 1959.

The Postwar Decade

Freight revenues for the 10 years 1946 - 1955 fluctuated annually between \$400,000 and \$350,000. About the same as 1925. Each year the railroad generated over 2,000,000 ton-miles of revenue freight and the old standys, the apples and the eggs, no longer supported the railroad. In fact the egg and live chick business was almost nonexistent. Less than Carload Lot traffic dwindled to a fraction of prewar levels. During most of this period the new canned goods traffic was a small part of the total. Major sustenance came from two new items loaded at Forestville. Under traditional accounting methods as reported to the Interstate Commerce Commission, P&SR lost upwards of \$100,000 in most of these years. However, SP's Market Street headquarters kept books their

own way, a way that kept track of that extra inter-line divisional revenue P&SR earned over and above what SP alone would have earned on a similar shipment for a similar distance. SP's books showed P&SR earning profits.

SP's books showed P&SR earning profits

The two 44-tonners P&SR Nos. 1 and 2 hauled the road's traffic throughout the decade. There were still two trains a day, each way. P&SR employed around 63 people to handle its business. It had its own employee roster, its own shop and maintenance crews. The equipment roster listed 16 boxcars, 6 flatcars, 2 cabooses, and 1 speeder. Plus the marine vessels mentioned above. The line spent between \$50,000 and \$80,000 each year on maintenance, except for 1947 and 1952 when unusually heavy tie and ballast renewal expenditures occurred running the bill up to \$125,000 each of those two years. Three-car trains, personnel, and maintenance expenditures like these are made only on enterprises turning their owners a profit.

Apples and Applesauce

1947 turned out to be a whopping big year for fresh apples on P&SR. 23,000 tons of apples moved out over the railroad from on line packing houses. Folks wished to forget the dried fruits they had been forced to eat during the war. They demanded fresh, and Sonoma County's apple country was ready for them. Then in 1948 disaster hit Sebastopol's Gravenstein varieties. Growers planted for another big season, but Washington's Yakima Valley producers invaded the market with huge volumes of their popular Red Delicious apples, kept fresh for months longer in cold storage houses fed by cheap Columbia River electric power. The eating public switched. Thousands of tons of local Gravensteins could not find a buyer. Only 6,600 tons went out on the P&SR in 360 carload lots. The next several years saw some improvement, back to prewar levels, but not much. There was no help from the dried fruit market either. From a prewar level of 5,300 tons or 200 cars, in 1947 just 60 tons, two cars of dried fruit originated on P&SR.

singly switched to trucks. The railroad that 50 years earlier generated up to 10,000 freight car loads of business annually now was reduced to volume in the hundreds declining even further. Trains ran three to six days a week depending on demand. Sebastopol publicly pleaded with San Francisco Bay Area grocers and consumers to buy their local area apples. It helped, but clearly a radical solution had to be found.

In 1949 a group of 23 apple growers decided to form a new cooperative. This coop would can apples; make applesauce. With a plant located in the old NWP yard of Sebastopol, now served by P&SR, the Sebastopol Cooperative Cannery turned out 135,000 cases of applesauce its first year. Outbound applesauce and inbound cans moved by rail. By 1954 production had reached 590,000 cases. The AppleTime brand was a success. That year the coop built a second cannery, at Molino on P&SR. For 1956 750,000 cases of applesauce were sold, providing an outlet for 10,000 tons of Gravenstein apples.

Gravel business soaring

The old Green Valley gravel pit on the Russian River, near Mirabel, lost its direct rail service when NWP abandoned the Guerneville Branch in 1935. The operator then built a truck reload transfer at Forestville on P&SR. Depression and war kept this business at low levels. Postwar housing and highway construction sent it soaring. From around 20,000 tons each year, it leaped to 37,000 in 1946, then ranged between 40,000 and 50,000 tons annually through 1956. P&SR brought the hopper carloads all the way to Petaluma, then turned them over to NWP. From there they went either to a barge reload at Haystack just south of town, which took the gravel to Napa, or by NWP to concrete batch plants in San Rafael. Some of the gravel stopped at the Basic, Inc. batch plant in Petaluma beside the NWP's Hopper Street yard.

The pulpwood loggers

When railroads first came to Sonoma County, they soon reached out to the redwood country of the lower Russian River valley. For forty years the logger's axe cut in to the cinnamon clad giants. Then fell silent because the great trees were no more. Second growth drew vacationers to the green forests, as it still does today, but the loggers cared not for such slender timber. Rails in the redwoods retreated from the area when the automobile drew vacationers away from the trains.

Then came the war and new technological developments such as plywood, fiberboard, and cardboard boxes. These products of the forest could easily be made from fir. Sonoma County's forests were not a monoculture, far from it. A large part of the timberlands grew fir. The redwood loggers considered fir to be a weed tree; they passed it by. Now came the Fibreboard Corporation with a new plant at Antioch. Their crews began cutting in the old timberlands, cutting the tall gray evergreens, which had become monarchs of the forest by default.

And the nearest rail loading point was Forestville on P&SR. About an eighth of a mile south of Forestville, beside P&SR's mainline, Fibreboard leased land that had been an apple orchard. It now became a cold deck for storing logs. The railroad laid in a spur and began spotting some of Espee's Enterprise type gondola cars for log loading. Fibreboard began shipping in 1949 with 10,600 tons, jumped to 75,000 tons in 1950. Then cutting on NWP's Eel River Canyon territory started and P&SR's traffic leveled off to about 30,000 tons a year.

On the downside of the forest products ledger, Petaluma Box Company closed its plant in 1950 due to paperboard box competition. Box material traffic fell to nothing, as did the inbound lumber business. Overall, the forest products business jumped from 12,900 tons in 1946 to 32,300 tons in 1955. The new log business was a winner, but obviously it was nearly the whole timber products show by 1955.

Creatures Great and Small

The postwar decade marked a huge increase in milk production from Sonoma County's dairy herds as new applications of veterinary science made their way onto the farms. Most amazing about this is the fact that it was accomplished with very little change in the number of cows. Daisy the contented cow simply gave more milk, gallons and gallons more than she ever had before. She needed more feed to do so, and that counteracted the decline in chicken feed, since Petaluma is the market center for a vast dairy industry. Milk was the number one county agricultural producer in dollar sales until finally in the late 1980's wine grapes managed to top it. Sonoma County milk found ready sales as southern Marin converted its dairylands into pastel colored housing tracts.

Traffic volume measured 106,000 tons of whole grains (corn, barley, wheat, etc.) and 87,000 tons of manufactured feeds as the decade began. Whole grains for cows, manufactured feed for chicken. During 1952, 120,000 tons in whole grains, 71,000 tons of manufactured feeds moved on P&SR. Then decline set in so that the year 1955 produced rail volumes of 87,000 tons whole grains and 47,000 tons manufactured feed. Trucks moving more whole grains, fewer chickens to feed.

Things Made by Man Move by Rail

Postwar decade traffic levels in manufactured goods grew during the postwar decade. Most of the growth was directly attributable to the new applesauce business, and in fact canned or preserved foodstuffs led any two other commodities by the end of the decade. From around 2,000 tons to begin with, this traffic steadily grew to 11,200 tons in 1955. And for every car of applesauce outbound, a car of empty cans traveled inbound to the canneries. Its growth measured from 1,800 tons to 6,100 tons. Naturally, empty cans weigh less than cans full of fruit. Canneries need fuel to operate. Tank cars loaded with fuel oil grew from 2,100 tons in 1946 to 3,500 tons in 1955. Taken altogether the cannery business had become mighty important to P&SR. During the fall canning season, a crew could and often did spend an entire day working between Sebastopol and Forestville shuffling freight cars.

The postwar boom brought prosperity to many in P&SR country. So it was that automobile traffic, moving in boxcars, grew mightily. From 170 tons to 560 tons in 1955. Quite impressive for a country shortline. Harbinger for a distant future greatness, the business in wine shipments originated on-line grew steadily. Beginning with 1,500 tons, by 1955 the volume reached 3,200 tons. A line of business that did not prosper was traffic in castings for brooder stoves. It shrank from 3,500 tons in 1946 to 700 tons in 1955 and the poultry industry sank into oblivion. The decade ended with a flourish. 1955 was the year California built the Highway 101 freeway. P&SR handled thousands of tons of cement and construction materials for its building. It showed an operating profit even by ICC accounting standards for the only time in the decade.

P&SR abandoned its Liberty - Two Rock Branch September 29, 1952 after just two revenue carloads moved over it that year. Its traffic had gone to trucks. The Santa Rosa depot became a beer distributor's warehouse in 1948. No one could have predicted 1956.

Black '56

Freight revenues plummeted during 1956. Income dropped about \$80,000, to \$266,570 from \$348,183 the year previous. A 24 percent decline. The 1957 recession brought another decline, and by 1960 revenues had fallen to just 42 percent of 1955 levels. Most of the 1956 decline came in the whole feed grain sector as trucks invaded rail volume with a vengeance. The last 17 P&SR boxcars and flats went to a scrapper because local traffic that originated and terminated on P&SR had gone to the trucks. In 1957 the morning wayfreight got annulled, leaving just one train a day. To further reduce expenses, in 1958 P&SR swapped 44-tonners Nos. 1 and 2 for a pair of like GE's from Southern Pacific that had multiple-unit connections. These became P&SR Nos. 3 and 4. Espee gray and scarlet on the second pair replaced the colorful blue and yellow of the first pair. The trade reduced P&SR's reliance on leased units for the apple season rush. That same year the road's two wooden cabooses were sold off. Leased NWP crummies replaced them. 41 41414141

Just south of the city limits, the Vacu-Dry Company's apple drying plant had a spur at what would become the end of track in August 1978. A third of a mile later, the road crossed Gravenstein Highway at Alten, swung into open fields behind an open air antique sales lot, and then left the highway to run over hill and dale for about four miles to the station of Turner, near the hamlet of Hessel.

Here a pencil factory received and then shipped about one car a week. The rails south of Turner toward Petaluma were abandoned in 1973, but had not been operated since 1964. The pencil factory went out of business in 1976 and the line was cut back to Vacu-Dry in 1978. Vacu-dry turned out to be one of the P&SR's last customers before abandonment.

West Petaluma Branch

On the now disconnected Petaluma area trackage, P&SR operations were combined with those of NWP. Service was provided as needed to serve a bulk feed unloading facility along Stony Point road at Denman. When the feed dealer moved out, covered hoppers no longer came this way, so that portion of the old main line from the NWP switch north of Cinnabar trestle to Denman, 2.38 miles, was abandoned in 1979.

The West Petaluma Branch wanders for a mile along the west bank of its namesake river to serve feed mills. Operations on these lines always seemed to be nocturnal.

Finis

Lakeville Growers took 54 hopper cars of grain in 1978. The little pit had become too small, so in 1979 they moved to a new facility on the NWP off Ely Road north of Petaluma. The move was symptomatic of huge losses in

traffic P&SR endured that year. Most of the cause was the deregulation of trucking bill passed by Congress. The railroad that handled 437 cars in 1978 got just 239 the next year. By 1982, Korbel Winery in Graton was the last P&SR customer on the Sebastopol area line, shipping one car a week. Not enough to justify keeping open 12 miles of track. On June 18, 1984, this trackage was finally abandoned, and the spurs in Petaluma became property of the Northwestern Pacific. About 1994 the railroad embargoed service across the Water Street Trestle due to unsafe, deteriorating piling. Bar-Ale made a painful shift to trucks.

Artifacts

Western Railway Museum at Rio Vista, CA, restored P&SR's Holman built No. 63 interurban car and operates her regularly for tourist riders. After P&SR abandoned passenger service in 1932, her carbody was sold in 1933 for use as a shed in an apple orchard. Rescued some 20 years ago, equivalent electrical trucks and gear were fitted at WRM. The carbody was completely restored and finished in the cream body color with red trim used by P&SR during the 1920's. Her years at Rio Vista provided great pleasure for many thousands of riders. She remains a favorite car on the WRM roster, frequently given shop renewals as time and travel wear out mechanical devices.

Brothers Don and Jeff Millerick discovered the body of Express Car No. 8 about 1998 being used as a chicken shed in Cotate. They moved the old shell to their boat works at Cunningham beside the old P&SR right of way. Then commenced a tremendous labor of love. Practically all of the wood required replacing to restore the old car. Generous coats of yellow paint, with green window sash and red roof, completed the work. Towed as a float in Petaluma's 2001 Butter and Egg Days parade, she won best in show honors delighting the home crowd. Petaluma Trolley, Inc. has acquired trolley trucks to place under the car. The group plans to complete a full operational restoration as soon as it can come up with the remaining electrical gear.

The most extensive and easily the most attractive remaining feature of P&SR is the West Petaluma Branch, which featured street running and for which those rails in the street still remain. On its north end, the branch would still be alive if Northwestern Pacific Railroad Authority, successor to NWP, were still running. Hunt & Behrens and Dairyman's are both grain dealers off north Lakeville Blvd. in Petaluma. They received grain hoppers as long as rail service endured.

Riverwalk: Go Back to the Chickens and Eggs

Return with us now back to the 1920's, to the days when scows crowded wharves north and south of East Washington Street Bridge along Petaluma Creek's busy waterfront. The great days stand forth in imagination as you walk north from the bridge, following the tracks, along unmarked Water Street. What you see is much as it was all those years ago. Still there to your right is the lazy waterway, furthest reach of a tidal slough, which brought the sailing scows and the schooners, the sternwheel steamers and the gasoline skunks up to receive eggs, eggs, and more eggs, chickens and chicks, butter boxes, berry boxes, and the apples from up-country. Brought upstream sacks of feed, deckloads of lumber, and all the provisions needed for a bustling, prosperous town.

An Untouched Historic District

Return now to those same days when the Italianate brick commercial buildings on your left housed Dickson Express, Golden Eagle Junk, Main Natural Grocery, Shlocker Hardware, the Original Petaluma Incubator Company factory, Casini Poultry, Milani Poultry, Petaluma Furniture Exchange. Cross the little Mary Street alley and find Van Berber's Hill Plaza Garage, then the big Colson Company Poultry Foods office on Main (now Petaluma Blvd.) and Colson's corrugated iron feed mill in back which reaches out almost to the tracks. At that time, directly across the tracks to the right, Colson's had a corrugated iron storage warehouse and a riverfront dock where it received scows loaded with feed bags. Today this area has been reserved for a city park, as yet undeveloped. Many carloads would have been loaded and unloaded on spurs beside the still existing P&SR tracks.

Continue north across the Martha Street alley and you would find McCulloch Poultry Storage. Beyond that was a graveled auto storage lot and a long spur track called the Auto Dock where boxcars of new automobiles were unloaded. The buildings stand untouched unchanged with time. Imagination about scenes frantic with egg business, with chicken business, with everyday market goings on from past days comes very easily. A romantic past associated intimately with the railroad; this walk surely is a gem. Yet turn south at the East Washington Bridge and you will find its topper.

Romantic Water Street and its Trestle

Seventy years ago, Water Street was paved with wood planks as well as tracks. Schooners warped and moored against its pilings to transfer cargo, just as they did on the opposite bank of the stream. The brick commercial buildings then as now housed a variety of retail stores. Skaggs Cash Grocery, Stone Furniture, J. C. Penny, a wallpaper store, Page's Tire all received carload shipments. The Argus got regular newsprint loads. On the far corner Shell Oil got tanks cars. A spur into George P. McNear's rambling brick feed and grain mill, now The Great Petaluma Mill shopping mall, received empty sacks. The street was as busy then as it is today, and again structure and stream are still there to fire the imagination into past patterns of industry.

Most romantic of all is P&SR's Water Street Trestle. 504 feet long, its piling now so deteriorated that the city closed it off to pedestrian traffic. A unique structure, because it was used as a wharf as well as a railroad trestle bridging the gap to the tracks running down First Street. The community used the trestle as both a delightful riverwalk and as the site for innumerable cultural events celebrating the city's riverfront past. A switch branched off from the trestle's middle to reach a track spur plunging inside a corrugated iron grain warehouse, still standing, which belonged to G. P. McNear.

Unto the End

As the Petaluma & Santa Rosa entered the 1970's, the apple canneries, dryers, and packing sheds that by now were its main support began to disappear in favor of upscale suburban housing. What food products business remained increasingly switched to trucks. The railroad that 50 years earlier generated up to 2,000 freight car loads of business annually now was reduced to volume in the hundreds declining even further. Trains ran three to six days a week depending on demand. With exception of switching grain in to Petaluma elevators, Sebastopol centered the railroad's activities. There was not enough business to keep its depot open, however. In 1966 the attractive mission style structure was leased to Clarmark Florists. The City of Petaluma insisted in 1973 that rails be removed from Weller Street to enable resurfacing. All tracks on Copeland Street and the old mainline crossing of Washington Street were pulled at the same time. P&SR's depot sold to the Chamber of Commerce and they moved it one block south on Weller Street.

"The Train Down Main"

People in Sebastopol held the railroad in their hearts. The tracks ran right down the length and middle of Main Street, a small inconvenience as far as they were concerned. For its August 5, 1971 front page, the Sebastopol Times headlined, "Wouldn't be Sebastopol Without Her Train." When Analy High School students had their annual photos taken the P&SR parked an engine and caboose at the school to provide the photo background. In 1978, a gaily festooned SW 1500 locomotive led the Annual Apple Blossom parade down Main Street, that year's parade theme being "The Train Down Main". It is a phrase recalled fondly to this day.

P&SR lost its operating independence September 1970. The short line's employment roster merged that day with NWP's board. The previous year, 1969, the 161-foot trestle across Petaluma Creek near Cinnabar burned down. Because the NWP's parallel trestle is right beside the P&SR structure, P&SR abandoned its main line trackage from Park Street north to its trestle site. The road cut in a new switch north of the creek on the NWP

main, and simply used the NWP rather than rebuild its own trestle. It already had a track connection with NWP at Park Siding in Petaluma.

A Trip on the P&SR

Ed MacKinson wrote this tale of a typical 1970's trip on the Petaluma & Santa Rosa:

A hypothetical trip over the line circa 1974 will illustrate the traffic the P&SR handled during this period. Since business fluctuated from season to season and year to year, this trip is a composite of work, which might be done on a typical day.

Our train leaves Santa Rosa on right of way that once was part of NWP's own Sebastopol Branch. At Leddy (just west of Wright Road), a short S curve brings us onto the original P&SR alignment - the alignment along Sebastopol Road. There are two industries at Leddy: a roofing supply and a Coors beer warehouse. These are facing-point spurs so are usually worked on the return trip. Continuing on, we cross the 128-foot Laguna de Santa Rosa trestle and enter the eastern outskirts of Sebastopol. Here a lead track diverges to serve the Sebastopol Cooperative Cannery, a major shipper.

Old NWP Sebastopol yard

The yard trackage here, north of Highway 12, is the old NWP Sebastopol yard, which P&SR acquired and now operates. The cannery produced military rations during the Vietnam era, when as many as ten cars might be spotted for loading. In quieter times, one or two cars might be the norm.

Returning to the main track, we approach Petaluma Avenue and find another spur, which leads to a Purina Feeds warehouse. Crossing Petaluma Avenue, we pass the old stone P&SR substation on the right and at left the attractive old P&SR depot, now a florist shop. With a clanging of the locomotive bell, and the protection of a flag-waving brakeman walking alongside, the train enters Main Street, a four-lane state highway and Sebastopol's principal thoroughfare.

Tank cars of apple cider vinegar

Our train's transit of downtown could be described as picturesque by a bystander and maybe something else by a motorist trying to contend with a freight train in his lane! Residents, however, seem more charmed than chagrined, and train-vehicle collisions on street trackage are quite rare. As the line heads north on Main, a switch in the street curves off to the right. This is the lead for the Speas Company distillery. It ships one or two tank cars of apple vinegar a week.

At the north end of town, across from Analy High School, street trackage ends and the right of way enters the rural countryside of farms and orchards. (This section held the steepest grade on P&SR and is quite picturesque.) At Mill Station Road, the track crosses Highway 116 protected by the only gated signals on the north part P&SR, and then runs alongside the highway to Molino, where another Sebastopol Coop Cannery is a steady shipper in season.

Wine and ashes

Tracks curve west at Molino. The line parallels Occidental Road to Barlow, where the Silveria and O'Connell apple dryer ships several cars each year. Swinging north again, our train crosses Occidental Road and traverses open country to enter Graton. Here, the new joint wine warehouse operated by Chateau St. Jean and Korbel, which occupies an old apple packing plant, is a steady shipper. On the north side of town, the Perlite Corporation has installed a bulk receiving hopper right under the main line, where an occasional carload of volcanic ash gets unloaded.

Dutch drops are often employed

Beyond Graton, two more industries are served - an apple dryer at Manzana and Ross Road Lumber. The lumberyard receives loads right at the end of track. These last two customers are located on either side of Green Valley Road, 0.1 mile apart. Because of a lack of runaround tracks beyond Sebastopol, Dutch drops are often employed to spot cars at facing point spurs. Speed limits are 10 - 15 M.P.H. yet derailments very rare despite the deteriorated track.

Grade crossing protection originally consisted of crossbucks, supplemented by wigwags at a few major roads. During the mid-1970's, government funds paid for the installation of crossing gates and flashers at the Mill Station Road crossing. These, of course, saw relatively little use.

Green Valley Railway

A little known adjunct to the P&SR's history in the 1970's is the brief existence of a narrow gauge tourist railway which was built on the abandoned grade in Forestville. A group of railfans known as the North Bay Railroad Association formed the Green Valley Railway and built a quarter mile of three-foot gauge track at the former depot site. Motive power consisted of a small Plymouth gasoline locomotive from Hercules Powder Company and a Model A Ford speeder from the West Side Lumber Company. Construction began in 1969 and the line opened on July 4, 1970. Although further expansion was planned, the line was forced to close about a year later because of neighbors' complaints about the noise.

South to the Pencil Factory

Upon returning to Sebastopol, a trip south on the former mainline toward Petaluma might be in order. The crew usually pulled its train off Main at the depot to set out excess cars on the Santa Rosa line, and then backed out onto Main Street again, before heading south. (The third leg of the wye that once surrounded the depot was long gone.)

At the southern edge of downtown, trackage swung out of the center of Main Street and crossed Petaluma Ave. where it intersects Main. The line then made a long stretch of classic interurban-style side of the road running. Before it did so, however, a spur swung off to the east which served the Furusho Brothers packing house. By the early 1970's it was making its last few reefer shipments.

Over hill and dale

Water Street Trestle is a vital transportation connector between Petaluma's historic, popular Central District and the Riverfront Warehouse District on First Street. P&SR rails traverse the entire length of First Street, from the Trestle south for six city blocks from B to H Streets, the core of Riverfront Warehouse District. Although lying next door to the lively Central district, much of the Warehouse District is dead or dying economically despite its prime riverfront location. The swarms of river boatmen, teamsters, electric trains, warehousemen, poultry and feed dealers have largely gone. The rails and warehouses they used remain, silent sentinels of the great days.

City Hall knows what it has in the potential for Riverfront Warehouse District. Its Central Petaluma Specific Plan, adopted in 2000, states, "The Riverfront Warehouse District is widely recognized as a unique vestige of the city's past. It is the only surviving area where Petaluma's history as a river town can be felt at a district scale. The simple repeating warehouse gables along the river and the large amount of railroad rail in First Street are silent sentries of the town's past."

At the foot of First Street lies H Street. Here the Petaluma Box Company and the Dow-Herriman Pump Company left their mark. Here today Foundry Wharf is often cited as a development to be emulated elsewhere in the city.

This is a mixed-use office and light industrial complex that coexists with a small colony of residential bungalows and homes. The office and light industrial complex fronts on the river. It provides the setting for many musical and artistic cultural events open to the public.

Joe Rodota Trail

The P&SR grade from Santa Rosa to Forestville has been placed in the Rails-to-Trails system, becoming a public bike and hike path. Three segments are open now. Stony Point Road to Sebastopol Depot, Analy High School to the Mill Station Road crossing, and the Occidental Road Crossing to Forestville. The section between Mill station Road and the Occidental Road Crossing, where the line paralleled Gravenstein Highway and Occidental Road, has yet to open. The others, however, feature delightful open country and have become extremely popular.

The Sebastopol depot is now home to the Western Sonoma County Museum. The depot was designed by Brainard Jones of Petaluma and placed in the National Historic Register in 1996. Contact www.wschs-grf.pon.net/wcm for museum hours and information. The adjacent substation building is now a brewpub called "The Powerhouse". The Santa Rosa depot, directly across Fourth Street from the NWP depot, currently houses a Chevy's Restaurant. A small substation standing on private property still exists at Stony Point Station near the intersection of Stony Point and Meacham Roads. Two restored P&SR boxcars can be visited in Duncan Mills at the Thousand Trails campground, next to the restored Duncan Mills Depot. Caboose Number One has been rescued from a San Mateo location and is stored awaiting restoration by the Golden Gate Railroad Museum located at Hunter's Point in San Francisco. The hulk of GE 44-tonner Number One, heavily cannibalized, sits in a scrap yard in Mojave, California. transportation connector as yet undeveloped.

Continue north across the Martha Street alley and you find McCulloch Poultry Storage. Beyond that was a graveled auto storage lot and a long spur track called the Auto Dock where boxcars of new automobiles were unloaded. The buildings stand untouched, unchanged with time. Imagination about scenes frantic with egg business, with chicken business, with everyday market goings on from past days comes very easily. A romantic past associated intimately with the railroad; this walk surely is a gem. Yet turn south at the East Washington Bridge and you'll find its topper.

Also in 1960 the gravel quarry at Mirabel finally became exhausted and closed down. Fibreboard brought its last load of logs into the Forestville reload. By the end of the year, rust colored the rails from Ross Station to Forestville. Two of the road's biggest shippers were gone. Together they had originated 75,000 tons of freight each year. Their loss was another heavy blow.

P&SR cut expenses to the bone during the dismal 1956 - 1960 period. The payroll shrank from 63 to 14 men. A guillotine effort cut total operating expenses from \$326,700 in 1955 to \$171,400 in 1960. Maintenance of Way from \$84,500 to \$58,400, equipment repair costs from \$27,700 to \$19,300. It was not a happy time.

The Last Hurrah

Revenue turned the corner upward in 1961. Much of the increase was due to a new shipper, Loma Products, which that year took over an old fruit packing shed at Turner, just south of Hessel. Woodworking machinery went into the old shed, a teepee sawdust burner grew outside, the railroad spiked down two new spurs, and Loma began to turn out pencil slats. These slats traveled an interesting journey. Their cedar cores came by rail from a mill at Mt. Shasta, California, on the McCloud River Railroad. The McCloud turned them over to Espee at the Mt. Shasta interchange, and the cedar cores then rolled to Schellville on NWP and finally Petaluma where the P&SR got them.

The Pencil Factory's Transit Magic

For several years P&SR had made no traffic stops between Petaluma and Sebastopol, just ran right through, and was getting rather tired of such nonproductive work. Loma's pencil business provided a reason for mainline. Once made into pencil slats, the cars were reloaded outbound for Loma's factory at Stockton where the addition of pencil lead and erasers created finished pencils. And then moved out again in boxcars. Railroads call these stops at Turner and Stockton "milling in transit".

The final freight billing on such transit shipments makes it look like finished pencils originated at McCloud, wound their way through Turner and Stockton, then moved on to their final destination. All on one freight bill, all at the same rate as if the pencils came from McCloud and went directly to their final destination. Loma paid a couple of "transit charges" of just a few dollars per car for the privilege of milling in transit and of course the NWP and the P&SR enjoyed revenue divisions the SP system would not have got otherwise. All due to a fiction called transit, which held that there was only just one single movement from Mt. Shasta to destination, when actually there were three.

1961 Engineering Survey

Rising revenues gave P&SR a chance to survey its needs for engineering work. Tracks had been kept in good repair, but trestles and culverts held deferred maintenance of the last few years which required attention. In May a team traveled the entire road, noting conditions. Track work remained in good shape, but trestles and culverts drew scrutinizing inspection. First on their list, and the first inspected, was the largest structure on the road - 504 foot long Water Street trestle on the West Petaluma Branch. It served several First Street industries. Mid-trestle, a spur branched off to the east over its own 106-foot trestle. Piles driven into the Petaluma River bed supporting the trestle had been replaced in 1942. Their condition was good enough to require no comment by the inspection team. The rest of the trestle needed only minor repairs and the team breathed a sigh of relief.

The 120-foot trestle on the P&SR mainline over Petaluma River did not fare quite so well. Seven of its ten pile bents required additional strengthening piles be driven due to damage by limnoria. The 161-foot trestle at Cinnabar, which paralleled the NWP mainline, needed one bent shimmed and helper posts installed to keep the bent upright, as well as six stringers replaced. The most work occurred on the 128-foot trestle over the Laguna de Santa Rosa east of Sebastopol where six piles required repair or replacement. Of the balance, a number of culverts were repaired, replaced, or simply cleaned out. A good report, testimony to a generally high level of maintenance over the years.

Good-bye Old Forestville

One more item, the biggest actually, catches the eye in the 1961 engineering survey. "G.M.O. #83512 - Ross, M.P. 22.765 (east) to MP 23.845. Retire and remove 1.08 mile, end portion of Forestville Branch." Regulatory approval came October 15, 1961 and work began in November. Completed in 1962, pulling up the rails, ties, and bridge timbers added \$13,000 to the Maintenance of Way expenses for that year. The concrete pad on which the old depot rested became the new home of Forestville's volunteer fire department. In 1968, a railfan group called the North Bay Railroad Association would leased the right of way and build a 3 foot gauge weekend train operation that offered rides to all and sundry. But after three years the neighbors objected to having passenger trains run past their back yards and this little hobbyist venture pulled out too.

A Sunburst of Good News

For 1962, freight revenues rose \$75,000 above the low of 1960, and with expenses contained P&SR recorded an operating profit under ICC accounting rules. Over the next three years there was black ink on the books rather than red, although the level of revenues and profit declined. By 1964 the trestles had been upgraded so that heavier SP owned SW-8 road switchers could operate on P&SR. The GE 44-tonners Nos. 3 and 4 were retired in

favor of switchers regularly assigned to NWP at Petaluma and Santa Rosa. Because active shippers no longer resided between Petaluma and the pencil factory at Turner, and because there are some grades on the line between those points, the Petaluma switcher now handled P&SR grain business exclusively within Petaluma. It did not venture out of town, except to service a bulk grain distributor at Denman. The Santa Rosa switcher took over all traffic between Turner and Ross on the P&SR main line. P&SR annulled daily freight service in favor of an as needed call. The call typically came during late afternoons. Quite a change from the historic 3:30AM starts at Petaluma, which had continued since the electric days. As a result railfans photographed the road's final years frequently. The railroad closed its corrugated iron shop building at Weller and D Streets in Petaluma; all work henceforth switched to Tiburon.