The M&ET had its humble beginnings in 1911 as a four mile passenger trip to bring people from several points in Modesto to the A.T. & S.F. depot in Empire. It was originally called the Modesto Interurban Railroad. Its first motive power was a battery powered "street car" type vehicle. By the end of 1911 the railroad had been incorporated as the Modesto & Empire Traction Co.

The first locomotive was a Hall Scott gasoline powered unit that looked like a flat car with a cab in the middle. In the early 20’s, they began buying steam locomotives. These ranged from 0-4-0’s to 4-6-0’s. Most were purchased second hand from the Santa Fe. In 1947 the line bought its first General Electric 70 ton switcher. These nimble little workhorses developed 600 horsepower and were ideally suited for the sharp curves and 40 ft. boxcars of the day. These locos became the mainstay of the railroad, eventually becoming the largest fleet of 70 tonners in the country. After the GE’s arrived, the steam engines were used as auxiliary steam generators for some of the canneries on the line before they were scrapped or sold.

In the early 2000’s the company began looking for more powerful locos. The increasingly heavier loads and bigger railcars were taxing the little GE’s and spare parts were getting extremely hard to find. They tested several types of power including battery powered “green kids” before settling on Railpower’s 2000 horsepower “genset” locos. These engines are...
From the Superintendent

The days are getting longer and the rain still continues to chase the sun, but we are gradually entering into glorious spring here in northern California. After a wonderful meet in Modesto, I am excited about our next meeting on Saturday, May 24th, in Ione, CA. I have been working with Larry Beardsley, Dan Evans, and Grant Vogel to put together a day of fun for you and your families. We will be holding a 1-2 hour meeting in Ione in conjunction with the annual Ione Railcar and Motorfest. If you would like to take a ride on the rails of the Amador Central Railroad between Ione and Martell, please plan to come early and purchase your tickets for a memorable experience. (Ticket sales begin at 7:00 and sell out quickly so be there early if you plan on riding; 3 runs including a twilight run —ed.) Speeder rides begin around 9:00-9:30 Saturday morning and cost only $25.00 for over a two hour ride from Ione and return. Many activities will be available for you in addition to the Speeder Rides and the meeting: Antique Cars, Craft and Railroiana Vendors, California Department of Forestry, Live Music, and Operating Model Railroads. The address is 426 S Mill St, Ione, CA. Parking is Free. Sierra Division is organizing a BBQ lunch from Dickies BBQ. If you are interested, please drop me an email at scooter923@att.net, or leave me a message on my cell at 916-812-8767 no later than May 17th so that we can get a proper headcount. The cost for a fabulous BBQ lunch with water or a soda will be only $5.00 per head. Please bring cash. Lunch will be served between Noon and 12:30, with our Meeting beginning around 1:30 PM in the Gymnasium. If ordering lunch, come to the gym at 12:00 and see Bob Warner or myself. Don’t be Left Out! Please contact me by May 17th.

Our meeting will include a presentation on the history of the newly formed railroad and the status of the restoration of the old depot in Ione. My hope is to also have a “How to Clinic” along with our Door Prize Drawing and our contests (see page 8). The Sacramento Modular Railroaders will also be operating their layout and they have invited any of you to participate in operations after the meeting.

As we look towards the rest of the year, we plan to visit a couple of great layouts in the Chico area in August, and have our annual business meeting on the docket for October. I hope to see a few of you in San Luis Obispo (see page 9) at the end of the month.

Until next time……..Happy Railroad-ing! Your Humble Servant,

Scott McAllister

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SHORT LINE is published quarterly by the Sierra Division of the Pacific Coast Region of the National Association. Material may be reprinted with permission.

Articles, photos, tips, or ideas are heartily encouraged and will be enthusiastically accepted! The preferred format would be in Rich Text Format (RTF), with photos as JPEGs, but we will accept any format (from a PC or Mac; MS Word, Simple Text, typed, or handwritten). Send it to your editor by regular mail to SHORT LINE, 6601 Ray Family Lane, Magalia, CA 95954 or by email to gerber1926@gmail.com.

Photo courtesy of Recreational Railroad Coalition Historical Society—Amador Central Railroad
THANKS TO THOSE WHO SHARE

An editor’s job is made easier by those who volunteer to contribute articles. The past year Jim Petro, Dan Carlin, Jeff Leonard, Russ Wood, Robert Pethoud, Mary Moore-Campagna, Mike McReynolds, David Mussatti, Dick Karnes, Len Raley, Norm Morris, Ryan Dora, Klaus Keil and Ben Cantu have generously shared with us. I’m always looking for material, whether modeling or prototype. Never written before, no problem. I can help with your article to get it ready for publication. Just email be with your idea. Gary Ray at gerber1926@gmail.com

FEBRUARY MEET

Our February 8 meeting in Modesto began with a tour of the Modesto and Empire Traction Company shop facilities. Mike McReynolds was our guide. M&ET employee Harley Rice was there to answer questions. Most members took advantage of being allowed to climb into the cab of two of their eight Railpower GenSets. M&ET was one of the first railroads in the nation to operate with 100% Eco-Motive GenSets thereby meeting current and future emissions standards. Members appreciated the M&ET patch, notebook, and pen souvenirs.

We had a short business meeting. The Sierra Division has a new, updated logo thanks to the helpful assistance of Russ Clover. The 23 members present voted and approved the new logo which has already been applied to name badges and contest ribbons. If wish to order a name tag, bring $10 to the next meet (or any meet) and you will receive it in less than 3 weeks.

While the division made money with their one fund raiser, the International Rail Fair (IRF) in Roseville, we did pay out $200 to another group because there were no volunteers to do our share of the clean-up. There was no banquet following IRF because it was changed to a no-host event and not enough people signed up. Dick Witzens is stepping down as IRF treasurer and the Sierra Division needs a replacement. There are six meetings per year in Roseville plus the event itself.

Klaus Keil presented a very interesting look at 100 year old American steam used on Cuban sugar plantations from his 2001 visit. Ben Cantu presented PowerPoint presentation that looked back at the history of the Tidewater Southern Railway.

Many door prizes were given away. They were provided as a gracious gift from Reno member Roger Johnson. The date of the Ione meet was moved from May 8 to May 24 to take advantage of the Ione Rail Fair and Vintage Motorfest.

Superintendent Scott McAllister is looking for hosts for 2015 in February, May, and August. All one needs to do is secure a locations, plan lunch, and contact members in your local area for activities. He’ll be happy to assist you. If you can help with meets or would volunteer to be IRF treasurer, please email Scott at scooter923@att.net.

Ticket Sales start at 7 a.m. and sell out fast. 9 a.m. or twilight run is best so you can attend meeting.

May 2014
much more environmentally friendly than the old diesels. The engine has 3 small diesel generator sets that are computer controlled to operate as the load demands on the loco increase so there is no big prime mover running all the time. The railroad is looking into new technology that will make these units even easier on air quality. The fleet is treated with TLC by the shop crews. They are washed by hand every week and kept showroom clean. The shop is clean enough to hold company gatherings in and is a good indicator of the care taken of all the company’s equipment.

From its simple 4 mile beginnings, the line has grown to about 40 miles of yards, sidings and industrial trackage. At one time the customer base included the world’s largest winery and cannery. There are currently about 30 industries being served with products including cattle feed, paper products, lumber, and syrup for the canneries. The line handles in excess of 2000 carloads a month and today connects with the Union Pacific and Burlington Northern Santa Fe in Modesto and Empire. There are usually 6 crews per day working around the clock to keep this volume of freight moving.

It has been said that M&ET stands for “Modern Efficient Transportation” and this certainly describes this thriving railroad. One other attribute I can attest to after 28 years of employment with the company, is the “family” feel to the operation. Employees are made to feel like an integral part of the company and are treated like family by the management, making for a friendly and loyal workplace environment.

For more information go to www.metrr.com.
A record bridge replacement took place in early January 1955 with the replacement of the Tidewater Southern Railway mainline bridge crossing at Meyers, located on the mainline approximately 2.5 miles south of Escalon. The record setting project (for even a major railroad) involved removal of the two steel Warren type bridges and installation of two box-girder replacement bridges in one day at the Stanislaus River crossing.

The old wooden truss and Warren bridge crossing (originally built in 1889 by the Union Bridge Company for another railroad) was installed on the Tidewater Southern in 1912, several months before the October 8 opening of the main line between Stockton and Modesto. Members of the American Bridge Technicians determined in 1954 that the two 125-foot steel through-truss spans of the old bridge structure were stressed and would not permit a greater load limit than 169,000 pounds per car. Tidewater car loading requirements of the day called for a minimum load capacity of 220,000 pounds. This meant increasing the load capacity by approximately 30 percent with minimum disruption to train operations.

The replacement bridge sections were constructed from turntable girders from the Western Pacific roundhouse at Elko and Winnemucca, Nevada. The girders were modified by the Moore Ship Building Company of Oakland into one 30-foot and two 110-foot sections, with a combined weight of approximately 98 tons.

Groundwork began in November of 1955 with the changing of the course of the Stanislaus River by the Ben C. Gerwick Company of San Francisco, so that the river-bottom work could be accomplished without the use of coffer dams. Thousands of yards of fill were brought to the project site from various nearby areas with the intent of returning the fill to its original locations after the high water receded. Once the river had been diverted the task of placing pilings for new piers proceeded. The setting of the pilings was in itself a rather unique engineering fete because the exiting bridge structure was not disturbed and train operations continued. Twenty-six steel “H”-beams 100 feet long were driven in approximately 80 feet for the four new concrete piers, which measured six feet by thirty-one feet in size. Since the new piers were to be offset from the existing piers, it was possible for the steel beam pilings to be driven into place through openings in the existing bridge structure. The forms and concrete followed, again working around and through the existing bridge structure. A record bridge replacement took place in early January, 1955, with the replacement of the Tidewater Southern Railway mainline bridge crossing at Meyers, located on the mainline approximately 2.5 miles south of Escalon. The record setting project (for even a major railroad) involved removal of the two steel Warren type bridges and installation of two box-girder replacement bridges in one day at the Stanislaus River crossing.
In order to accomplish the removal and replacement of the bridge with minimal disruption to trains, temporary wooden piers were constructed along the west side of the existing bridge structure to support the old truss spans when lifted from the old piers. Additionally, the new concrete piers were constructed slightly wider than required for the new bridge structure, to allow for temporary placement of the new girder spans adjacent the east edge of the old bridge structure. Once all the preparatory work was completed the actual bridge movement was rather simple. As illustrated by the accompanying photographs, utilizing three large cranes the old truss spans were lifted onto the adjacent temporary wooden piers, followed by the moving of the new girder spans onto the new concrete piers.

The $150,000.00 engineering fete was accomplished with only a 30-hour delay to trains. Such a well-planned and executed accomplishment can only be attributed to the men involved: Project engineer Arthur W. Carlson, Engineer of Bridges and Structures, Western Pacific Railroad; Norman McPherson, retired Western Pacific Railroad bridge and building superintendent (resident engineer); and C.B. Rushmer, designing engineer (preparer of all plans and drawings.)

Today, the bridge remains in exceptional condition as evidenced by the following photograph. Although the Union Pacific Railroad has removed trackage from McHenry station through Modesto to the Tuolumne River basin, the old mainline trackage is still operational from Ortega to the Stanislaus River crossing bridge.
February 8th Modesto Meet

Klaus Keil presented a video he took on his 2001 trip to Cuba to document the many 100 year old steam locos still in use on sugar plantations. We hope to see Part 2 in the near future. (Jim Collins photo of screen converted to black and white—video was in color.)

Members are always encouraged to share—whether it is something they are building or in this case; a new model of a Chinese DF4B.

(below) Good turnout on a rainy day. Rain stopped after shop tour and we were able to outside to the yard to view new and old equipment. See more photos in the Digital Edition of Short Line including many pages of Cuban Steam.

Walt Schleder receiving a M&ET notebook and patch from host Mike McReynolds.
Walt Schleder won first place for his weathered gondola. All contestants received our new award ribbons that will be presented at the end of each contest.

Dave Bayless won 2nd and 3rd place. Many thanks to Russ Clover who helped me design the new logo and award ribbons.

(Gary Ray ~ Editor & Contest Chair)

May 24, 2014 Contests

MODELING ~ Trees — any type from a single to a whole forest.

MODELING ~ Caboose — bring your favorites

PHOTOS ~ Prototype subject in black and white. 3 entries per person. Same rules as always. Pictures need to be at least 5” x 7” but not over 8” x 12”.

Future Contests for August 9

MODELING ~ Buildings — Enter one of your favorite buildings; can be kit, kit-bashed, or scratch-built.

PHOTOS ~ Prototype track and/or structure in color. 3 entries per person.

Future Photo Contest for Oct. 11

PHOTOS ~ Prototype trains in action.
For information on clinics and tours, go to website.
Walt Schedler won first place in Model Photos by using this prototype photo (left) to recreate the scene in Dunsmuir on his layout. It is accurate right down to the kneeling employee in a t-shirt. Seen at the front truck of the lead F-unit.

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**CUBAN STEAM 2001 OR 1901**

_by Klaus Keil_ (as shared with Gary Ray)

Klaus Keil went to Cuba in 2001 in a group of railway historians, operators and academicians that were given compete access to the 90 year old (or more) steam locomotives still being operated on sugar plantations today. His group was the very first ever to be licensed by the U.S. government to visit Cuba for that purpose.

Klaus shared less than a third of the video he took at our February meeting. I have taken clips from all the videos. They are not as sharp as we are used to because of older technology, Hi8 conversion; but are very interesting just the same. Great weathering ideas for hard working locomotives.

I really appreciate Klaus sharing these with us.
1920 Baldwin

The mill in the background was the staging area for Castro's troops to repel Bay of Pigs invasion.

Bay of Pigs Memorial

originally a 1915 steam engine built by Baldwin

1915 Baldwin frame now powered by diesel.
This plantation had over 40 miles of main line and another 20 of branches.
Farmer using old tire to transport plow to field.
Baldwin repair manual. Locomotives are kept in good running condition.

Sign at Australia Sugar plantation. One of many visited.

Many of the plantations have shops.
Incidents happen.....

There are no brakes on the sugar cane cars.

.... But no problem.

And the cattle are happy with the spilled sugar cane.

Another method of hauling sugar cane.

Hot box!
Platform tilts to unload cars.

Single hold-down clamp on far side.

Worker unlatches side.

No safety regulations....

Nor environmental regulations. Sometimes pools of bunker oil flowed 1/2 mile from track.
We block or chock cars. This is called “twigging”.

Wood for tie replacement is not available. New concrete ties have rebar anchors.

Mainline track.

This little piggy went to market.

Klaus Keil talks with Cuban children. Thanks for sharing with us.
PHOTO TOUR OF FEBRUARY MEET
MODESTO & EMPIRE TRACTION CO.

Photos by Gary Ray (unless otherwise noted)

Tour guide Mike McReynolds talks to group.

Inside shop. (upper and photo below by Jim Collins)

Jim Collins took this photo in the yard.
Superintendent Scott McAllister.
M&ET employee Harley Rice (in blue) gives technical details.
Hope to see you May 24 in Ione.  (Photo courtesy of Recreational Railroad Coalition Historical Society—Amador Central Railroad)

Scott McAllister draws numbers for door prizes.

Membership chair Jim Collins.

Short Line Editor & Contest Chair Gary Ray.

(Jim Collins photo)