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## **Guide to the Railtown 1897 State Historic Park Collection**

### **Railtown 1879 SHP Collection**

Processed by Megan Lohnash

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## **Descriptive Summary**

**Title:** Railtown 1897 State Historic Park Collection

**Date (inclusive):** 1897-2011

**Date (bulk):** (bulk dates 1982-1989)

**Collection number:** CSPA-335

**Creator:** Railtown 1897 State Historic Park

**Extent:** 2.5 linear feet, including 1 map folder.

**Repository:** California State Parks

McClellan, California 95652

**Abstract:** Railtown 1897 State Historic Park is a functional steam-powered locomotive passenger attraction and railyard and is located in Jamestown, Tuolumne County. The Railtown 1897 State Historic Park Collection is arranged in twelve series: 1. Correspondence, 2. Meeting Minutes, 3. Financial Documents, 4. Interpretative Material, 5. Histories, 6. Subject Files, 7. Ephemera, 8. Cartographic Material, 9. Photographic Material, 10. Publications, 11. Media, and 12. Reports. Items span the years 1897 to 2011, with the bulk of the collection dating from 1982 to 1989.

**Physical Location:** California State Parks Archives

**Languages:** Languages represented in this collection: English

### **Access**

The collection is open for research. Cultural and archaeological site maps are restricted. Reports with sensitive data may be restricted. Consult repository for details.

### **Publication Rights**

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### **Preferred Citation**

[Identification of item], Railtown 1897 State Historic Park Collection, CSPA-335: [box: folder number], California State Parks Archives, McClellan, California.

### **Acquisition Information**

Railtown 1897 SHP donated this collection in 2001.

### **Processing Information**

Megan Lohnash processed this collection and created and encoded its finding aid in 2015.

### **Administrative History**

Railtown 1897 State Historic Park is a functional steam-powered locomotive passenger attraction and railyard and is located in Jamestown, Tuolumne County. There are thirty-two historic structures and rail cars on the Railtown 1897 SHP property. The State of California acquired the Jamestown railyard property and rolling stock from Sierra Railway in 1982 by legislative mandate.

The Sierra Railway Company of California was founded by Thomas S. Bullock, Andre Poniatowski, and William H. Crocker in 1897. The original line running from Oakdale to Jamestown was completed during that year. The Sierra Railway Company of California ran both freight and passenger services to the communities along its rail line. The rail line eventually grew to include Angels Camp, Tuolumne City, Arnold, and Sonora. The park has been used as scenery for films and television series' since the 1920s. However, this did not prevent the Sierra Railway from economic hardship during the Great Depression when the company went into receivership in the 1930s. In 1935, Sierra Railway underwent reorganization and became the Sierra Railroad Company. In 1939, routine passenger services were discontinued.

Sierra Railroad purchased its first diesel locomotives in 1955, prompting the retirement of the Jamestown Depot as a working facility. Steam enthusiasts were able to charter steam excursion trains from 1957-1963, but this service was discontinued due to a derailment in 1963. Motion picture companies continued to utilize the facilities and equipment as scenery during the 1960s, as operational steam-powered engines became increasingly rare. Public interest continued to grow during this period. Sierra Railroad Management decided in the late 1960s to use the Jamestown Depot and rolling-stock to enter into the tourism business. Railtown 1897, a historically themed tourist attraction on the Jamestown Depot property featuring steam powered train rides, opened for business in 1971. Unfortunately, this venture was not profitable and the Sierra Railroad discontinued passenger services January 1, 1980.

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The State acquired the property in 1982. It later transferred ownership of the Railtown 1897 property to the California Department of Parks and Recreation in 1983. Soon after, Parks sought out a concessionaire to handle the day to day operations, maintenance of the property, and rolling-stock. Over the course of operations there have been four concessionaires: the Pacific Locomotive Association, Western Railroad Service, Inc., the Sierra Railway Company of California, and the California State Railroad Museum and Foundation. The California State Railroad Museum and Foundation has operated the concessions at Railtown 1897 SHP since 1992.

### **Scope and Content**

The Railtown 1897 State Historic Park Collection is arranged in twelve series: 1. Correspondence, 2. Meeting Minutes, 3. Financial Documents, 4. Interpretative Material, 5. Histories, 6. Subject files, 7. Ephemera, 8. Cartographic Material, 9. Photographic Material, 10. Publications, 11. Media, and 12. Reports. Items span the years 1897 to 2011, with the bulk of the collection dating from 1982 to 1989.

Series one, Correspondence, consists of correspondence and memorandum related to the opening of the park and the start of operations between Railtown employees, regional Parks employees, and other state government officials spanning the years of 1982-1984. Series two, Meeting Minutes, consists of records from one meeting dated January, 7 1983. Series three, Financial Documents, consists of documents, correspondence and memorandum dated 1982-1987 related to financial planning, allocation of funds, settlement distribution, project scope and budget estimate.

Series four, Interpretative Material, consists of one interpretive document summarizing the history of Railtown 1897 SHP.

Series five, Histories, consists of an application to become a historical point of interest, Action Synopsis, drafts of cultural reports, and excerpts and indexes from various historical publications. Series six, Subject files, is subdivided into nine subseries: 1995 Historic Restoration, Centennial Celebration, Concessions-Pacific Locomotive Association, Concessions-Western Railroad Service Inc., Sierra Railway Company of California, National Register of Historic Places, Roundhouse Drainage System, and Train Rides California State Railroad Museum. Series seven, Ephemera, contains press releases, pamphlets, and a Kids Fun Book. Series eight, Cartographic Material, contains maps and diagrams.

Series nine, Photographic Material, consists of photographs, negatives and slides of Railtown 1897 facilities. Series ten, Publications, consists of two magazines and news clippings relating to Railtown and the Sierra Railroad at Jamestown. Series eleven, Media, consists of three digital video discs. Series twelve, Reports, consists of inventories, evaluations, closure study, and historic structure reports dating from 1981 to the present.

### **Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

California--History

California, Northern

Sierra Railroad

Historic warehouses

Freight cars

Jamestown (Calif.)

Locomotives

Motion pictures-- Setting and scenery

Museums and motion pictures

Railroad

Railroad cabooses

Railroad cars

Railroad dining cars

Railroad passenger cars

Railroad rails

Railroad repair shops

Railroad shops & yards

Railroad stations

Railroad trains

Railroad travel

Railroad yards

Railroads--Freight

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Railroads-- Rolling stock  
Roundhouse (Railroads)  
Railroads--Freight--United States  
Railroads-- Rolling stock--United States  
Steam-engines  
Steam-engines--History

**Related Collections**

California State Railroad Museum Collection CSPA-372  
Old Sacramento State Historic Park Collection CSPA-372

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- Box 1 : 1                      Series 1. **Correspondence 1982-1984**  
   **Physical Description:** 1 file folder  
   **Series Scope and Content Summary**  
   Arranged chronologically by most recent installment.
- Box 1 : 2                      Series 2. **Meeting Minutes 1983**  
   **Physical Description:** 1 file folder  
   **Series Scope and Content Summary**  
   Arranged chronologically.
- Box 1 : 3                      Series 3. **Financial Documents 1982-1987**  
   **Physical Description:** 1 file folder  
   **Series Scope and Content Summary**  
   Arranged chronologically. Includes draft budgets and concession bids.
- Box 1 : 4                      Series 4. **Interpretative Material undated**  
   **Physical Description:** 1 file folder  
   **Series Scope and Content Summary**  
   Arranged alphabetically.
- Box 1 : 5 - 1 : 10            Series 5. **Histories 1968, 1983, 1995, undated**  
   **Physical Description:** 6 file folders  
   **Series Scope and Content Summary**  
   Arranged chronologically by publication with undated materials arranged alphabetically at the end.
- Box 1 : 5                      **Point of Historical Interest Application June 7, 1968**  
Box 1 : 6                      **Cultural Resource Portion of the Jamestown Project January 1983-February 1983**  
Box 1 : 7                      **Euro-American History of the Sierra Railway Company/Sierra Railroad Company, Draft February 1983**
- Box 1 : 8                      **Action Synopsis: State Park and Recreation Commission April 8, 1983**  
Box 1 : 9                      **Sierra Railtown Project Inventory of Features for Classification, Draft undated**  
Box 1 : 10                     **Excerpts and Indexes 1985, 1995, undated**
- Box 1 : 11 - 3 : 4            Series 6. **Subject Files 1982-1997, 2009**  
   **Physical Description:** 13 file folders  
   **Series Scope and Content Summary**  
   Arranged alphabetically, internal structure left intact.
- Box 1 : 11                     **1995 Historic Restoration, Stabilization and Fire Suppression Transportation Enhancement Activities Application and Instructions October 1995**
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Box 1 : 12                    **Centennial Celebration 1994-1997**  
Box 1 : 13 - 2 : 1        **Concessions: Pacific Locomotive Association 1982-1988**  
Box 2 : 2 - 3               **Concessions: Western Railroad Service Inc. 1987-1990**  
Box 2 : 4 - 6               **Concessions: Sierra Railway Company of California LTD. 1990**  
Box 3 : 1 - 2               **National Register of Historic Places 1985-1987**  
Box 3 : 3                    **Roundhouse Drainage System Repair May 15, 2009-November 10,2009**  
Box 3 : 4                    **Train rides-California State Railroad Museum 1995-1996**  
Box 3 : 5                    **Series 7. Ephemera 1979-2000**

**Physical Description:** 1 file folder  
**Series Scope and Content Summary**  
Arranged chronologically.

Box 3 : 6                    **Series 8. Cartographic Material 1962, 1968, 1980, 1982, 1987**

**Physical Description:** 1 file folder  
**Series Scope and Content Summary**  
Maps arranged chronologically within size. See archivist for a complete list.

Box 3 : 7 - 3 : 9            **Series 9. Photographic Material 1987-1990**

**Physical Description:** 3 file folders  
**Series Scope and Content Summary**  
Arranged chronologically within type. See archivist for a complete list.

Box 3 : 7                    **Slides 1987-1989**  
Box 3 : 8                    **Negatives 1987-1990**  
Box 3 : 9                    **Photographs 1987-1990**

Box 3 : 10 - 3 : 12        **Series 10. Publications 1897-2005 2011**

**Physical Description:** 3 file folders  
**Series Scope and Content Summary**  
Arranged alphabetically by type. News clippings arranged chronologically.

Box 3 : 10                   **Railroad Model Craftsman July 2011**  
Box 3 : 11                   **Sierra Railroad: A Centennial Tribute 1897-1997 April 12, 1997**  
Box 3 : 12                   **News Clippings 1897-2005, undated**  
Box 3 : 13                   **Series 11. Media 1992-2006**

**Physical Description:** 1 file folder  
**Series Scope and Content Summary**  
Arranged by type chronologically.

Box 3 : 13                   **DVDs 1992-2006**  
Box 4 : 1 - 15               **Series 12. Reports 1981-2008**

**Physical Description:** 15 file folders  
**Series Scope and Content Summary**  
Arranged alphabetically by first letter of the report to coincide with the Department Unit Data File System.

Box 4 : 1                    **Archaeological Excavation Report February 6, 2004**  
Box 4 : 2                    **Cultural Resource Evaluations 1984-1986**  
Box 4 : 3                    **Historic Resource Inventories May 1983-July 1983**  
Box 4 : 4 - 5               **Historic Structures Report for the Warehouse and Handcar Shed June 28, 2002**  
Box 4 : 6                    **Park Closure Study Issue Paper, Draft February 15, 2008**  
Box 4 : 7                    **Railtown 1897 Preliminary Evaluation, Revised May 5, 1981**  
Box 4 : 8                    **Scope of Collections, California State Railroad Museum June 24, 1998**  
Box 4 : 9 - 10              **Sierra Railtown Project Inventory of Features, Draft ca. 1983**  
Box 4 : 11 - 12             **Sierra Railtown Project Inventory of Features March 1983**

Box 4 : 13 - 4 : 14  
Box 4 : 15

**Sierra Railway Jamestown Depot Reconstruction Report February 1991**  
**The Sierra Railroad: An Economic Analysis May 1981**