

El Dorado County
Historical Museum

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El Dorado County Historical Railroad Park

A Proposal for the Development of a
Satellite Museum in the town of El
Dorado on the Sacramento Placerville
Transportation Corridor



El Dorado County Historical Railroad Park

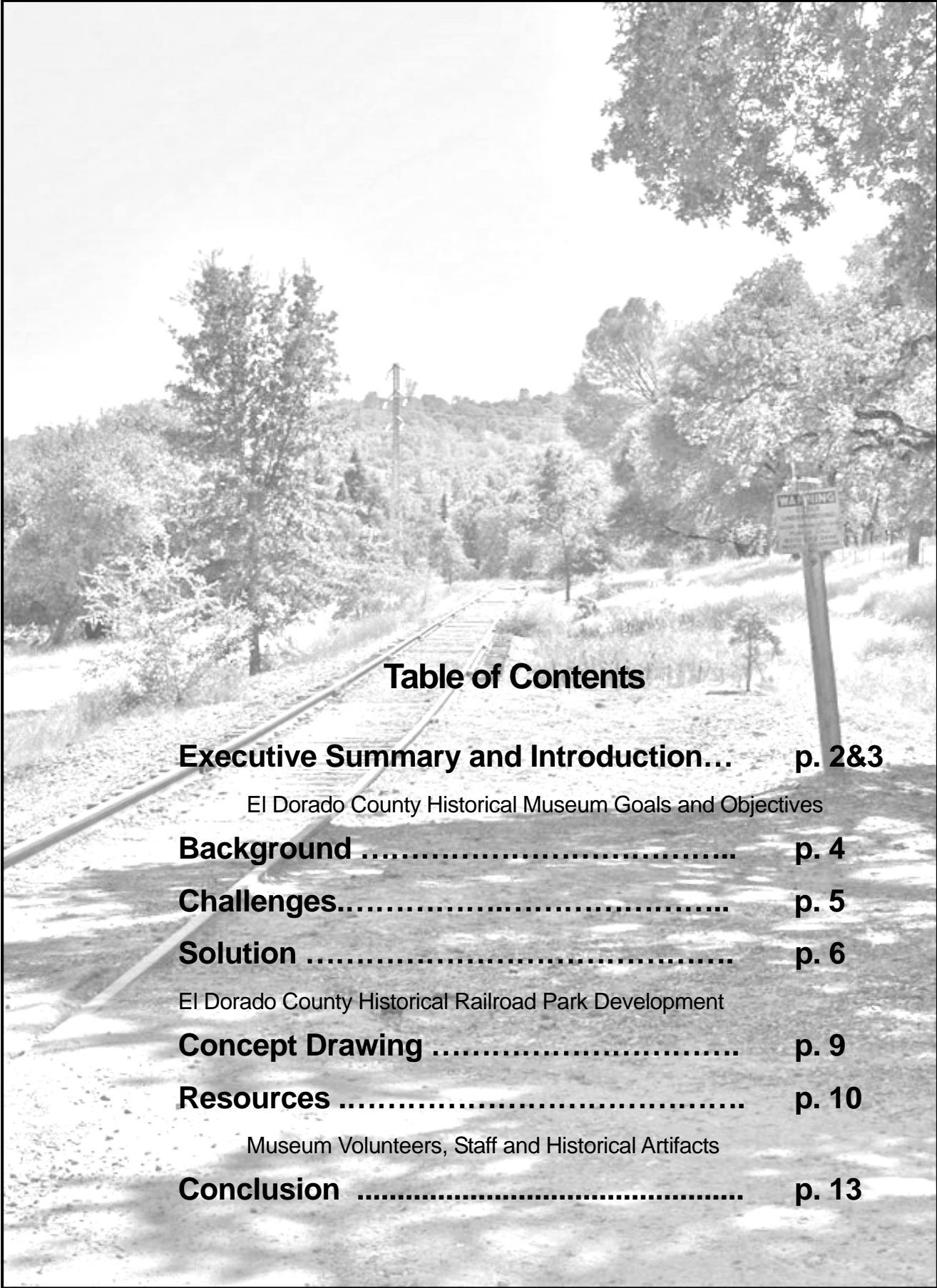


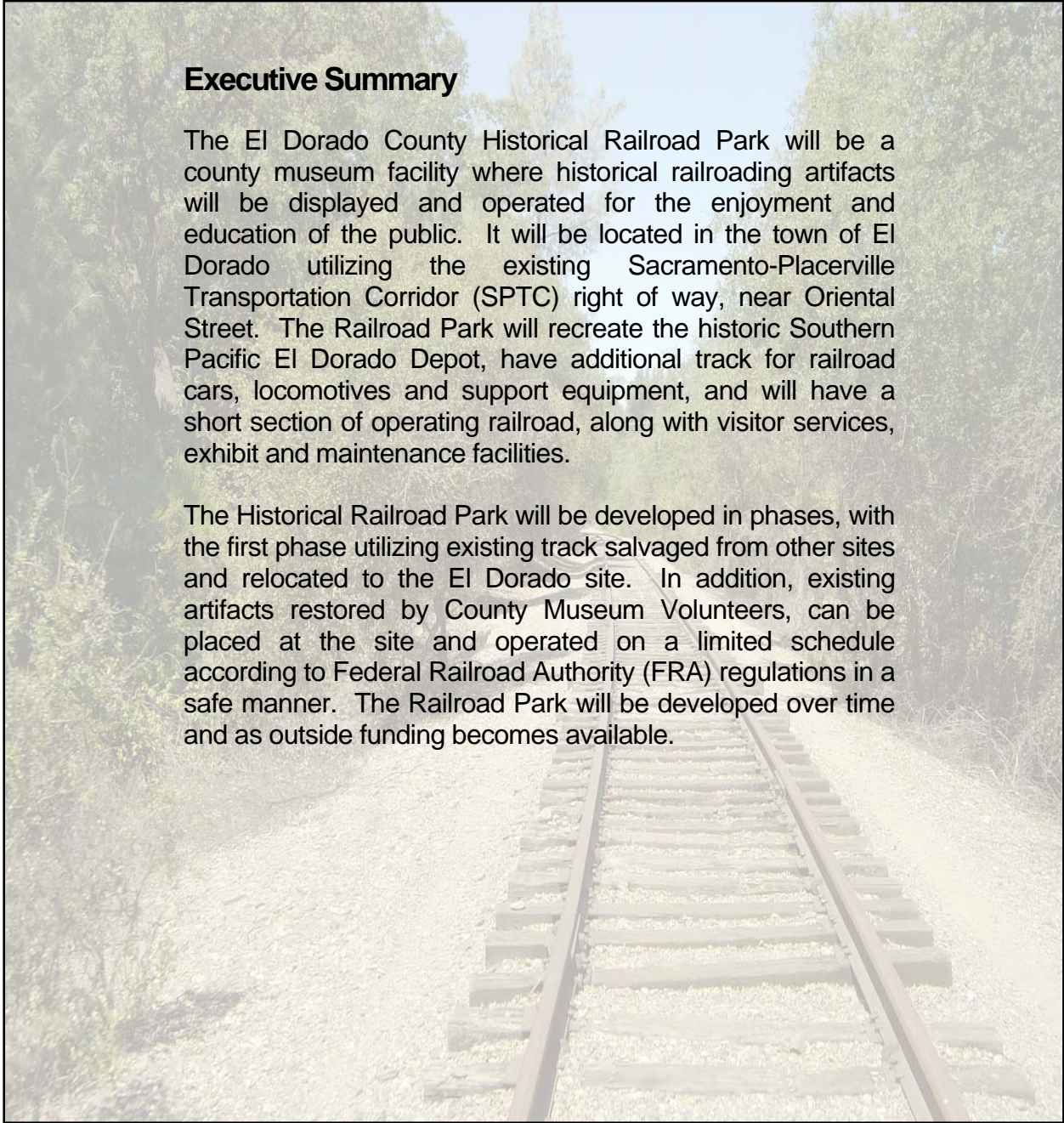
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Executive Summary

The El Dorado County Historical Railroad Park will be a county museum facility where historical railroading artifacts will be displayed and operated for the enjoyment and education of the public. It will be located in the town of El Dorado utilizing the existing Sacramento-Placerville Transportation Corridor (SPTC) right of way, near Oriental Street. The Railroad Park will recreate the historic Southern Pacific El Dorado Depot, have additional track for railroad cars, locomotives and support equipment, and will have a short section of operating railroad, along with visitor services, exhibit and maintenance facilities.

The Historical Railroad Park will be developed in phases, with the first phase utilizing existing track salvaged from other sites and relocated to the El Dorado site. In addition, existing artifacts restored by County Museum Volunteers, can be placed at the site and operated on a limited schedule according to Federal Railroad Authority (FRA) regulations in a safe manner. The Railroad Park will be developed over time and as outside funding becomes available.



The Sacramento Placerville Transportation Corridor looking west towards El Dorado Road.

Introduction

The El Dorado County Historical Museum opened to the public in 1974 at its current location on Placerville Drive. It is a program within the Library Department with Mary Cory in the position of Museum Administrator since 1999. Mary works under the direction of Jeanne Amos and currently has a staff of over 80 volunteers carrying out the day to day functions of the County Museum. The Board of Supervisors appoints seven “at large” members of the public to the Historical Museum Commission who provide oversight to the County Museum and make recommendations to the Board regarding County Museum policy and future plans.

The Mission of the County Museum is:

- To exhibit and interpret the heritage of El Dorado County
- To be a valuable historical resource to the community
- To collect, document and preserve artifacts and records significant to the county’s history
- To provide a rewarding experience for volunteers and enhance the museum’s significance to the community

EL DORADO COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

This year El Dorado County Historical Museum Commissioners have identified as one of five goals, the development of a satellite museum to display and operate El Dorado County railroad and logging artifacts. These historically valuable artifacts can then be displayed in a more accurate context. By relocating them, space becomes available at the current Museum property on Placerville Drive which will be used to better protect other important county artifacts such as the wagons and historical mining equipment, provide an interpretation center for school groups, and allow for safe and attractive displays. As part of the County Museum Yard Master Plan developed seven years ago by the Historical Museum Commission and staff, the Railroad Park is part of long range and ongoing efforts to improve the County Museum, a valuable County resource.

The Sacramento-Placerville Transportation Corridor (SPTC) adjacent to the Town of El Dorado is a suitable location for the museum to relocate these unique artifacts where the fast disappearing technology of steam locomotion can be seen and we can present the county’s railroading history to school groups, tourists and the general public. After exploring other sites, including a detailed study of property adjacent to Wal-Mart on Missouri Flat Road, the SPTC in the town of El Dorado has been determined to be ideally positioned with a wide right of way, the Community Center close by, and the concept of the historical railroad park warmly received by local merchants and residents. The Historical Railroad Park appears to be in compliance with the Master Plan for the SPTC adopted by the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors in 2003.

The El Dorado County Historical Railroad Park will operate as part of the El Dorado County Historical Museum under the day-to-day direction of the Museum Administrator, with trained volunteers as staff and the Museum Commission providing oversight. The County Museum is in the Library Department, and will continue to depend upon Library staff for budget and other administrative services.

Background

The El Dorado County Historical Museum has been collecting, preserving and restoring artifacts from the County's rich railroading past for many years. It has long been the goal of Historical Museum Commissioners, volunteers and staff to have a facility dedicated to their interpretation and presentation to the public.

The history of logging in El Dorado County is an important story to tell. After the discovery of gold in Coloma in 1848 put this area on the map, the economy boomed. As gold became scarcer logging became an integral part of the county's economy. Two companies, the California Door Company and the Michigan-California Lumber Company, both developed narrow-gauge railroads to move timber to their lumber mills. Until diesel trucks took over, these railroads were familiar sights in El Dorado County. In addition, the Sacramento Valley Railroad, the first railroad west of the Mississippi River, extended its operation first to Shingle Springs and then on to Placerville with freight and passenger service. This line was extremely important to the economy of El Dorado County as refrigerated railroad cars were able to transport the county's pear crop and dairy products to Sacramento, and then distributed across the country. Milled wood, as door and window sash products, were shipped around the world. With the logging railroads closed down in the 1950s and the last service on the SPTC by Southern Pacific Railroad in 1986, the importance of remembering, preserving, and understanding this vital industry, its technology and the people who were involved with it is that much more crucial.

Volunteers of the County Historical Museum have been the "fire in this boiler." Following the rescuing of the Diamond & Caldor Shay No. 4 locomotive by Bev and Joe Cola, the push at the County Museum to restore and someday operate historical railroading artifacts has been carried on by these volunteers for the past 17 years. Several volunteers formed a non-profit organization in 1997, the El Dorado Western Railway Foundation (EDWRF,) in order to secure grants, promote the project and eventually operate the historic steam railroad. Keith Berry, president of EDWRF, also serves as an appointed member of the Historical Museum Commission. Volunteers, skilled and mechanically knowledgeable, are working on the meticulous restoration of the railroad artifact collection. Extensive research continues to be conducted in all areas relating to the history of the county's railroad lines as well as the history of the artifacts themselves. Staff and volunteers are working with members of the El Dorado County Parks and Recreation Commission, have consulted with the El Dorado County Trails Advisory Committee and spoken of this project with the SPTC Joint Powers Authority.

The plan for the Historical Railroad Park has been discussed and refined for many years. At the same time, a Community Services District is currently being explored in the Diamond Springs/El Dorado area as the means for creating a large regional park that could provide a number of different recreation services. At the County Museum, volunteers are developing a Railroad Park Master Plan for the physical layout, operations, and growth in phases as resources become available. The facility, developed as a satellite of the County Museum, would be managed by the Museum Administrator, Historical Museum Commissioners and volunteers under the administration of the Library Department. Funding opportunities will be

explored for its continued operation, as well as maintenance and restoration of the artifacts and equipment.

Challenges

Currently, one of the biggest challenges the El Dorado County Historical Museum faces is limits on space. Many wonderful and fascinating artifacts have been treasured by individuals who donate them to the County Museum so that they may be enjoyed by all residents and visitors who come to the Museum. Over the years, the County Museum has accepted these donations with the belief that the preservation and interpretation of that donation is most important and adequate space will be found. As a result, the County Museum became overcrowded. Since 1999, a process to review all offered donations is in place limiting acquisitions to artifacts with a history in El Dorado County. In addition, artifacts with no known history or in poor condition are being removed and sold, with the funds set aside to support the remaining collections.

However, even with these procedures in place, the County Museum still has insufficient space for a special collection of large artifacts which document the history of logging and railroading in El Dorado County. These collections of railroad cars, engines, and logging equipment are not currently displayed in a manner that allows visitors to really appreciate and understand these relics of the past.

Many visitors to the County Museum are interested in railroading history. There is a strong segment of the tourism market that focuses on railroading history. In fact, rail fans travel all over the country from railroad museum to railroad park, looking for historical local railroads. Currently, the limited space set aside for the locomotive restoration and rail cars at the County Museum does not provide adequate space to properly interpret and demonstrate the historical technology that produced them.



Diamond and Caldor rail bus, flat car, Michigan-Cal Porter switch engine, and narrow gauge parlor car, undergoing restoration in County Museum's yard, July 2009.

Solution

EL DORADO COUNTY HISTORICAL RAILROAD PARK DEVELOPMENT

The Historical Museum Commissioners, Museum Staff and Volunteers strongly recommend developing and operating the El Dorado County Historical Railroad Park. It will be an attractive and welcoming place to exhibit, interpret and operate historical artifacts reflecting El Dorado County's rich railroading history. It will have a short section of operating railroad, along with visitor services, exhibit and maintenance facilities. The Park will be designed to enhance the Parks and Recreation Commission's proposed County-wide Parks and Trail Master Plan, offering a "way station" as a destination for access, rest and a point of interest.

Summary of Development Plans

It is vital that the El Dorado County Historical Railroad Park comply with all applicable Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) requirements for operational safety. Many of the County Museum's railroad cars and engines are narrow gauge requiring track laid out at 3 feet wide. However, standard gauge track, with a width of 4 feet 8 ½ inches will also be needed for two Museum artifacts as well as possible future acquisitions. By the use of a third rail along the main line track in the designated area (El Dorado Road to Blanchard Road) the Railroad Park operation can be co-mingled with other standard gauge rail activity along the SPTC.

Restored artifacts will be operated on the main line. Additional track will accommodate most of the current railroad artifacts undergoing restoration and will provide exhibit space, allow rolling stock to be moved, and create space for loading and unloading passengers.

The initial phase of the proposed track plan offers maximum safety to visitors in that no paved road crossings are crossed. The operational speed is estimated as between 3-8 miles per hour. No tunnels or bridges are involved on this segment.

Track development will be done in phases with each phase building on previous phases. Initial phases can be done with little or no extra funds using materials already at hand, volunteer labor, and with the donation of additional materials, such as railroad ties, from Union Pacific or other operating railroads. With some track laid, we are confident that a viable presentation can be made with a limited operation costing very little money. By offering rides on the Rail Bus for a small donation, revenue can be established early in the development and increase as track is laid. Future grants and funding can be pursued as the project progresses.

By working with other County departments and commissions, such as Department of Transportation, Development Services, the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Trails Advisory Committee, the Railroad Park will be developed in compliance with county regulations and with safety as the number one priority.

A brief summary of a proposed schedule is as follows (See concept site plan on page 9):

Phase 1: Develop the Historical Railroad Park Site Plan and relocate track

Working with County staff, a Site Plan will be developed with approval by all stake holders in the project, such as the Historical Museum Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission, Trails Advisory Committee and El Dorado Community Hall staff and volunteers. In addition, track dismantled from the old Diamond Springs Yard will be moved to the vicinity of the proposed Railroad Park to be stored for future use. The track includes rail, railroad ties, joiner plates, bolts, spikes and other associated materials.

Phase 2: Bunk Car and limited Rail Bus operation on narrow-gauge track

Standard and Narrow gauge track layout – The second phase utilizes the existing track of the former Placerville Branch of the Southern Pacific Railway and adjoining right of way due north of the El Dorado Township. Volunteers will be able to lay short lengths of rail to operate the rail bus and track inspection car. In later phases additional track will be installed to access an exhibit building, locomotive turn table, restoration shop and support areas.

Bunk car - The bunk car was built by the Diamond and Caldor Railroad (D & C) to house loggers working in the camps during the summer cutting season. The car is 36 feet long and is the only remaining D & C bunk car in displayable condition. The bunk car is ideal as a first “way station” and small exhibit area. Currently stored, the car can be transported to the El Dorado County Historical Railroad Park and set along side the existing track.

Rail bus – The rail bus, built in 1936 by D & C the shop crew, will serve as the first operable passenger-carrying artifact. With a capacity of 12 and utilizing a regular gasoline engine, a short length of narrow gauge rail can be laid within the existing standard gauge rail to give rides to the public and bring the Railroad Park to life.

Phase 3: Historic El Dorado Railroad Depot and Rest Room Facilities

Working with the El Dorado community, an accurate reproduction of the historic Southern Pacific Depot will be planned, funded and built in the original location. The Depot will be the centerpiece of the Railroad Park, providing a place for ticket sales, a gift shop, visitor amenities and exhibit space. A separate building to house restrooms will be built between



the Depot and the Community Center Parking Lot. It will be accessible to the El Dorado Trail, as well as accommodate visitors to the Railroad Park.

Southern Pacific Depot in the town of El Dorado, c. 1912. Built in 1888, it served both as a passenger and a freight depot.

Phase 4: Restoration Shop

This facility will be located at the northeast corner of the Railroad Park, and will house the County Museum's machine shop and yard for ongoing restoration and maintenance work on the historical artifacts and railroad equipment. Currently the D & C Shay #4 Locomotive is the major artifact undergoing restoration. Different options for boiler repair or replacement are being explored.

Phase 5: Exhibit and Interpretation Building

Placed adjacent to the El Dorado Railroad Depot, this building will provide a large area to exhibit historical artifacts, provide space for displays on the history of railroads in El Dorado County, and for use as an interpretation center for school groups. Currently there are plans to include a kitchen and storage areas so that it can be rented out after hours for meetings, lectures, and dinners to provide a revenue stream for the Railroad Park.

Phase 6: Historic Turntable

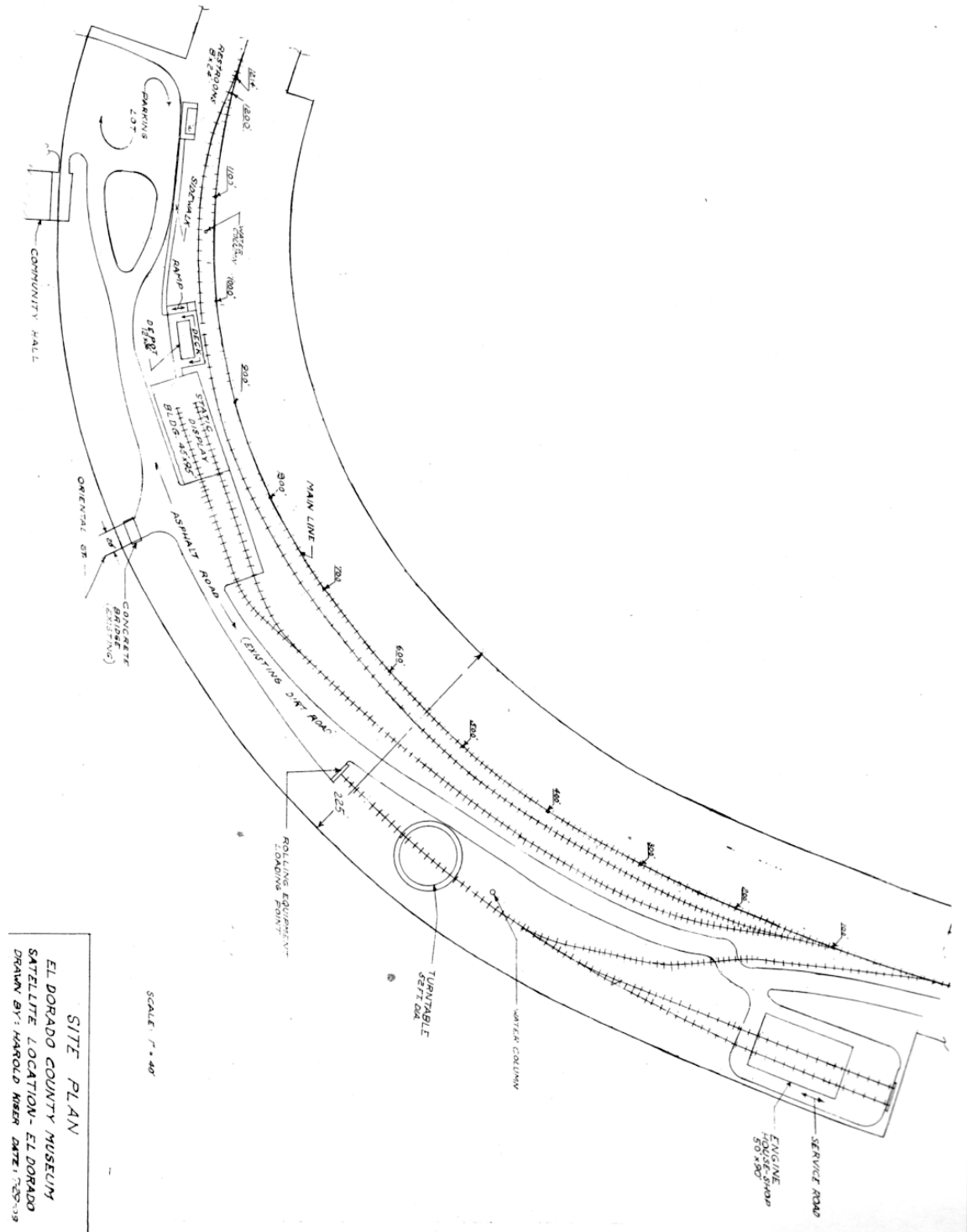
The County Museum currently has the castings for an authentic 1881 narrow gauge turntable that will be re-created and used to engage visitors in the historically accurate manner of turning historical engines and cars.



An early photograph of the El Dorado Depot with the school visible on the hill in the background. The El Dorado Community Hall is now located in the old school building. The plan, along with recreating the depot and loading platform, would recreate this rail siding, add an exhibit building, a turntable, a restoration shop and additional rail sidings.

Concept Site Plan for El Dorado Historical Railroad Park

Drawn by Harold Kiser, Historic Museum Commissioner



CURRENT RESOURCES

People

The El Dorado County Historical Museum has a long and strong history of dedicated volunteerism. The County Museum started in 1974 in a purpose-built facility on County Fairgrounds land. The exhibits, collections, and archives were assembled by volunteers and members of the El Dorado County Historical Society. The County Museum was staffed by volunteers until 1992 when the first paid director was hired.

Currently, the County Museum has a corps of over 80 volunteers that are involved in all functions of the museum. As the only paid staff Mary Cory coordinates and supervises them as they carry out their assigned tasks. Volunteers are responsible for giving tours, helping Mary with exhibit research, design and installation, artifact cataloging, archival collections, administration, and museum facilities operations.

The museum volunteers who work directly with the railroad artifacts bring with them many necessary skills, such as welding, machining, and detail knowledge specific to railroads, track and locomotive restoration. They also have a network of friends, family and other railroad fans to provide the necessary labor to lay track. Many of these volunteers are also members of the El Dorado Western Railway Foundation (see page 11,) a non profit group dedicated to the restoration of the Shay Locomotive.

Volunteers will continue to be key to the operation of the El Dorado County Historical Railroad Park, and will be recruited and utilized as needed.

Funding

Currently various funding opportunities are being explored. The restoration of the Rail Bus is being funded by the El Dorado Museums Foundation, the County Museum's non profit support organization. Grant applications have been submitted to fund needed materials to complete restoration projects. The County Museum Trust Fund has also contributed to these projects, and other sources of outside funding are being explored. It is also expected that providing rides on the restored Rail Bus and a small gift shop will produce a small but steady revenue stream. Being very aware of current General Fund limitations, the proposed Railroad Park will not be asking for any funding from the County at this time.

Support

The County Museum volunteers and staff have been discussing the idea of an authentic demonstration railroad using historical artifacts with various members of the community. Without exception, the idea has been embraced with enthusiasm and support. On October 7, 2003 the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors gave their support to the concept of a historical railroad and logging museum. Due to issues stemming from Wal-Mart's Development Plan, placing our Historical Railroad Park on property donated by Wal-Mart had to be revised. With strong encouragement from the El Dorado Community Center,

residents of the town of El Dorado, and the County Parks and Recreation Commission, we developed this concept of the Historical Railroad Park along the SPTC in El Dorado. We will continue to develop collaborative planning with the business members of the town of El Dorado, the El Dorado Community Center, neighbors along the Transportation Corridor in El Dorado, the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Trails Advisory Committee, Trails Now, and the El Dorado County Historical Society. We are very receptive to including any and all who have an interest in this project. We are asking the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors to give their support to the El Dorado County Historical Railroad Park as we now envision it in the town of El Dorado.

Historical Artifacts

The El Dorado County Historical Museum has a fine collection of artifacts relating to the railroading history of El Dorado County. There is the D & C Rail Bus, Flat Car, and Bunk Car, the Michigan-California Lumber Company Porter Engine, Caboose, and Track Inspection car. The Museum also has possession of track, plates, spikes and switches preserved from various pieces of track removal projects. The El Dorado Western Railway Foundation owns the D & C Shay Locomotive #4, along with two wooden cars from a now defunct narrow gauge excursion railroad, a box car, and a Plymouth switch engine. The County Museum also owns a number of pieces relating to the operations at the Diamond & Caldor Railroad and the Michigan-California Lumber Company, such as carts, crossings, equipment and tools.

The County Museum and volunteers have amassed a large collection of historical resources relating to the railroad and logging history of the County. The County Museum actively collects photographs, documents, ephemera, artifacts and tools which will be used in the exhibits and displays in the El Dorado County Historical Railroad Park. Also, working with the large resources of the California State Railroad Museum as well as other railroad museums, we anticipate continuing to build our collections as the development of the Park progresses.

With the vision of an operating historical railroad in mind, volunteers and Museum Commissioners assembled a comprehensive machine shop at the County Museum in the mid 1990s, where unique parts for the Shay Locomotive and other artifacts continue to be manufactured by volunteers. In addition, volunteers have donated tools and materials as needed. Plans to dispose of unnecessary equipment will produce funds to help purchase materials for ongoing restoration projects.



The standard gauge D & C Track inspection car was one of the first artifacts to be restored.

El Dorado County Historical Railroad Park

El Dorado Western Railway Foundation (EDWRF)

Beginning in 1994, a small group of museum volunteers began the restoration of the Diamond and Caldor No. 4 Shay locomotive on the grounds of the El Dorado County Historical Museum with the support of Beverly Cola and members of the Historical Museum Commission. Restoration of a narrow gauge passenger car and drover's caboose soon followed.

The crew started the construction of the engine house to secure the locomotive and protect it from the elements. Acquisition of considerable quantities of large shop machinery and tooling made it possible to move ahead with restoration. Additional rolling stock, turntable castings and other items for the interpretation of logging in El Dorado County have also been acquired. Restoration of the D&C No. 4 continues to this day.

In early 1997, the group incorporated as a non-profit public benefit corporation, chartered under the laws of the State of California and the federal government. The officers and directors of the foundation represent a wide range of talent, including mechanics, engineers, machinists, a financier, historians, a lawyer, an accountant, grant specialists and administrators. The board represents considerable background in narrow gauge historic rail preservation. All EDWRF members are volunteers of the County Museum.

The D&C No. 4 is the property of EDWRF. Ownership rights of the locomotive revert to the El Dorado County Historical Museum in the event of the foundation's demise. The foundation is actively supporting a historic location on the SPTC for the historical railroad park. Planning is underway to apply for grants, both locally and within the national railroad community, to pursue funding of restoration and building costs.



Harold Tilton, Bill Rodgers, Keith Berry, Sam Thompson, Alberto Weiss, Dale Mace, Steve Karoly, Eric Stohl

Conclusion

The El Dorado County Historical Railroad Park will be a great asset to the County of El Dorado. It will:

- ☑ Provide an exceptional location to better exhibit and interpret a distinctive collection of artifacts which will allow visitors a tangible experience with the county's past.
- ☑ Relieve crowded conditions at the current County Museum facility allowing for the acquisition of important historical artifacts associated with El Dorado County's past, and the space to exhibit them in an attractive and educational manner.
- ☑ Provide a tourist destination to the town of El Dorado and its surroundings, with a resulting increase to the county's economy
- ☑ Place El Dorado County on the map with a far reaching and passionate population of Rail Fans

Contact: Mary Cory, Museum Administrator, (530) 621-5828 or mcory@co.el-dorado.ca.us. Additional information about the County Museum is on the web at: www.edcgov.us/museum

Information on the restoration projects can be found at the EDWRF Blog at www.eldoradowestern.blogspot.com. *(Please come by the County Museum to see the restoration work in person on Wednesdays and Saturdays!)* .

Photographs are from the El Dorado County Historical Museum collection. Thanks to Steve Karoly and Keith Berry for helping to put this proposal together.



El Dorado Depot looking east. Oriental Street, with the bridge over Slate Creek just visible, on the right side of the photo. Oriental Street intersects Pleasant Valley Road opposite the El Dorado Post Office.