

Railtown 1897

State Historic Park



Our Mission

The mission of California State Parks is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.



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Railtown 1897
State Historic Park
10501 Reservoir Road
Jamestown, CA 95327
(209) 984-3953

Cover photo courtesy of Michael Sharps

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Climb aboard an authentic steam train and travel back to 1897 through miles of picturesque meadows and an oak-studded, "Wild West" landscape.



In the heart of the Sierra foothills, Railtown 1897 State Historic Park

invites visitors to experience the thrill of traveling back in time to the era of steam railroading.



Volunteer car host

Located 135 miles east of San Francisco, the park is a unique treasure trove of preserved railroad buildings, equipment, locomotives, and rolling stock. Many of these date back to Railtown's 1897 origins. The Railtown roundhouse—a semi-circular building for housing and maintaining locomotives—stands as the only continuously operating steam locomotive roundhouse in the United States.

PARK HISTORY

The Sierra Railway Company

Incorporated on January 1, 1897, the Sierra Railway Company was the brainchild of Midwesterner Thomas Bullock. He and his

fellow investors—San Francisco banker William Crocker, Crocker's brother-in-law Prince Andre Poniatowski, and others—had lumber and mining interests in the area. They anticipated that a short-line railroad from Oakdale could replace horse-drawn wagons to bring lumber and mining materials to the growing Sacramento and San Francisco areas.

Bullock had owned a failed railroad venture in Arizona that left him with three steam locomotives and several miles of rail. With the addition of 15 new freight cars, the Sierra Railway was soon moving U.S. mail, passengers, and freight.

The Sierra Railway Company also established working relationships with the Southern Pacific Railroad Company and several stage lines to serve mining, lumber, and agricultural interests. However, as the costs of gold mining increased with the onset of World War I, the Railway's profits decreased. Even worse, bus and trucking companies had begun competing with trains.

The Sierra Railroad Company

During the Great Depression, the Sierra Railway Company went into receivership, a form of bankruptcy in which the company is allowed to reorganize without losing the value of its property. On April 1, 1937, it was



Photo courtesy of Michael Sharps

Open-air observation car

renamed the Sierra Railroad Company and incorporated under the ownership of Crocker Associates.

In 1955, almost twenty years after regular passenger operations had ceased, the Sierra Railroad Company replaced the last of its steam locomotives with diesel power and opened modern maintenance shops in Oakdale. Fortunately, the historic Jamestown shops and locomotives were left intact.

Railtown 1897 is Born

Charles Crocker—a descendant of one of the original investors—decided to bring the Jamestown shops back to life as an excursion train theme park in the 1970s.

In 1982, California State Parks acquired the railway's 26 acres of land and shops in Jamestown, as well as trackage rights on the Sierra Railroad. Charles Crocker donated the railway's tools, cars, and shops equipment.

This historic site has had support from several advocacy groups. The California State Railroad Museum Foundation, an integral



Locomotives stored at roundhouse



Docent leads a tour in the roundhouse

partner, has assisted California State Parks in funding important restoration projects. This partnership brought about the restoration of steam locomotive Sierra No. 3™, one of the three original locomotives that Sierra Railway founder Thomas Bullock brought with him to California.

Railtown Today

Railtown's locomotives, vintage passenger and freight cars, and historic buildings give visitors the chance to journey back in time to the exciting days of steam-train travel.

However, Railtown 1897 offers more than the historic short-line railway from the days of steam transportation and three locomotives original to the railroad. The railroad's operations and maintenance trades—the artifacts and skills necessary to run a century-old railway while adapting to the modern environment—continue to be preserved on the Sierra Railroad.

EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

Railtown 1897 State Historic Park has a year-round schedule of interpretive events and excursions, including spring wildflower train rides, guided tours, Junior Rangers, Apple Harvest, Worker's Reunion, and holiday Polar Express™ tours.

Visit www.railtown1897.org or call (209) 984-3953 for a calendar.

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

A manual wheelchair lift allows excursion train access. The historic roundhouse and other exhibits are generally accessible. Some

assistance may be required with steep depot ramps or raised flooring. The freight shed restroom and one portable restroom are accessible.

For accessibility updates, visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Columbia State Historic Park
11255 Jackson Street, Columbia 95310
(209) 588-9128
- Calaveras Big Trees State Park
1170 East Highway 4, Arnold 95223
(209) 795-2334

PLEASE REMEMBER

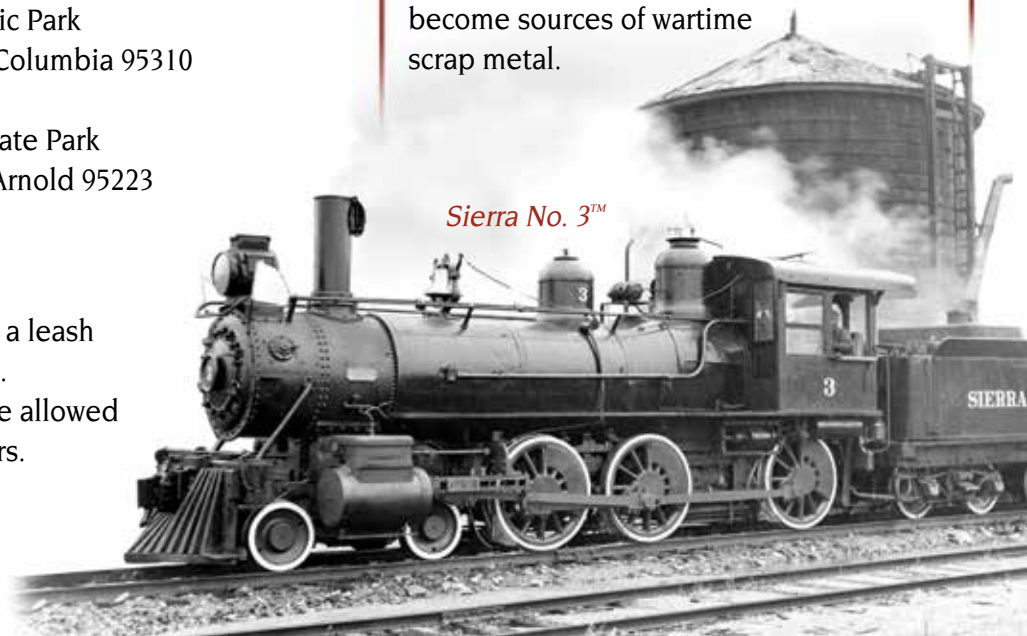
- Dogs must be kept on a leash no longer than six feet. Well-behaved dogs are allowed on excursions and tours.

“The Movie Railroad”

As its freight-hauling days were ending, the Sierra Railroad was still being used for Hollywood movie productions. It had everything—a ruggedly perfect “Old West” landscape, miles of tracks, and a wealth of very old trains and railroad settings. Film producers the world over clamored to use this special location.

Between 1919 and the present, the Sierra Railroad would “star” in more than 200 motion pictures, television programs, and commercials—including *High Noon*, *Back to the Future III*, *Rawhide*, and *Death Valley Days*. Several of the Sierra Railroad's featured roles may be seen in the park's movie exhibit next to the blacksmith shop.

Even during tough economic times, Hollywood helped keep the railway afloat. If not for the vital importance of these venerable locomotives and railroad cars to the film industry, many may have become sources of wartime scrap metal.



Railtown 1897 State Historic Park

This park receives support in part from the nonprofit California State Railroad Museum Foundation www.railtown1897.org and www.csrmf.org

Legend

- Paved Road
- Unpaved Road
- Paved Path
- Railroad
- Fence
- Parking Area
- Restricted Access
- Accessible Feature
- Drinking Water
- Movie Exhibit
- Parking
- Park Building
- Picnic Area
- Restrooms
- Viewpoint

