



SUMMER 1989

LOS ANGELES CORRAL

NUMBER 176



Point Conception Lighthouse

by Don Pflueger

The last few years have seen a rash of centennial and bicentennial celebrations come and go, some provoking fireworks and others slipping by almost unnoticed. In 1989 one in the latter category deserves at least passing mention, especially for those of us living in a coastal state. The year marks the two hundredth anniversary of the United States Lighthouse Service, a governmental agency formed soon after the ratification of the Constitution.

Our coast is dotted with lighthouses, most of them quite old. In terms of being permanent fixtures in our state, the chain of lighthouses rank next to our chain of missions. They get

little attention from the public, and no doubt the universal feeling is that "if you've seen one lighthouse you've seen them all." In truth, each is distinctive and has its interesting story to tell.

Possibly the world's first lighthouse was at the entrance to the Nile, its beacon fires maintained by priests as early as the third century BC. Smoke by day and the fire's glow at night aided the ancient mariners. One of the original "seven wonders of the world," the lighthouse at Alexandria lasted until 1340 when it was toppled by an earthquake.

In America, lighthouses were established in
(Continued on Page Three)

The Branding Iron

THE WESTERNERS
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THE BRANDING IRON solicits articles of 2,500 words or less, dealing with every phase of the Old West. Contributions from members and friends welcomed.

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Los Angeles Corral



THE MONTHLY ROUNDUP

by Abraham Hoffman



Photograph by - Frank Q. Newton

Corresponding Member Dick Noonan spoke to the Corral about building the Central Pacific Railway over Donner Pass.

APRIL 1989 MEETING

Corresponding Member Dick Noonan offered an illustrated program on the building of the Central Pacific Railroad over Donner Pass, focusing on the construction and maintenance of the railroad during the harsh winters in the Sierras. Noonan credits Theodore Judah with the idea of a trans-Sierra railroad and his persuading the famous "Big Four" to back its construction.

The biggest problem faced by trains crossing the Sierra was the heavy snowfall that could prevent them from making the trip or, worse, leave them marooned. To counter this problem, the railroad built 37 miles of wooden snowsheds, also known as snow galleries. These snowsheds became quite elaborate and covered spur lines, maintenance buildings, and homes. Some of the wooden snowsheds still exist, though they are being replaced by concrete snowsheds which

(Continued on Page Five)

colonial days, the first one dating to 1716 at Little Brewster Island off Boston. In 1789 the new federal government took over existing lighthouses and began building new ones. Here in California there apparently were no lighthouses *per se* during Hispanic days. In that era Santa Barbara's first beacon was a lantern suspended in a sycamore tree. The hazards along the California coast were numerous and shipwrecks common.

In the period between California's admission to the Union and the outbreak of the Civil War several lighthouses along the coast were constructed, manned, and began service. One of these was at Point Conception, perhaps the most conspicuous promontory along our coast. Vessels at sea had to change their courses after rounding the point; doing so too late led to delays while doing so too soon could lead to dire consequences.

Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo rounded the point in 1542, but it was Sabastian Viscaino who, in 1602, gave the name of "Punta de la Limpia Concepcion" to the desolate and windblown jutting. From here northward the stretch of treacherous coastline became known as the "Graveyard of the Pacific." Subsequent designations were "Cape Horn of the Pacific" and "Pivot Point of the Pacific."

The "pivot point" concept extends in a degree to the weather patterns and ocean currents. Lighthouse keepers have commented on the phenomenon of storms, approaching from opposite directions, seeming to meet off the point and clashing with unrelenting fury. It can be argued that Point Conception is the northernmost tip of southern California for we often hear the meteorologists announce our weather patterns as extending "from Point Conception to the Mexican border." Further proof lies in the fact that Point Arguello, only fifteen miles farther north, has four times as much fog. That *has* to be in northern California!

In 1852, just two years after statehood for California, Congress appropriated funds to build eight lighthouses along the California coast. Contractors Gibbons and Kelly landed building materials at Cojo Bay down the coast slightly from Point Conception, loaded them on wagons, and trudged through the sand to the point. Two years later they completed the brick tower that rose through the middle of a brick dwelling on the highest point of the cape, but the structure

failed to pass government inspection and had to be rebuilt.

France led the world in lighthouse technology by the mid-nineteenth century, so most everything other than the structure itself came from there as a "package." The metal tower dome, lens, lamp, and even metal circular staircase came from France. The unusual Russian wood paneling in the interior of the 1½-story lighthouse may have come as a part of the kit or from a Russian vessel that pulled into Cojo Bay — accounts differ.

The Fresnel (pronounced Fray-nell) lens, invented by Augustine Fresnel, is the most fascinating aspect of the lighthouse. It has sixteen sides and measures seven feet high by five feet wide, a galaxy of prisms that reflects a spectral rainbow in the sunlight. It was crafted by Henri Le Paute, a skilled glassmaker. The lens focuses the light into a sharp beam that plays for two seconds out of thirty, each coastal lighthouse sending out a distinctive beam both in terms of timing and color.

George Parkenson was appointed first lighthouse keeper, but when he arrived in 1855 the lens had yet to be delivered and a group of Chumash Indians had moved in. The Indians left peacefully, but it was not until February 1, 1856, that the lighthouse became functional. On that date the 150-pound pendulum weight was wound, the five-wick sperm oil lamp was lit, and the huge lens mechanism started to rotate. The steamer *Golden Gate*, at a distance of 42 miles, reported seeing the beacon a few days later. The lighthouse was carrying out its destiny.

Badly damaged by the Fort Tejon earthquake in January 1857, the lighthouse, cracks and all, stood another 24 years. Having been built atop the peak at Pt. Conception at an elevation of 250 feet, the lighthouse sent forth a beam that could be seen for tremendous distances on clear nights, but it was not very effective when the fog rolled in. In 1881 it was decided to build a new lighthouse closer to the water's edge, allowing the beam to project out under the layer of fog that often gripped the area. The "new" structure is the one seen today, but, interestingly, the original equipment was transferred and is in use to this day!

Four lighthouse keepers and their families lived at the Point. A duplex near the site of the original lighthouse accommodated two families

while a third lived in a smaller dwelling nearby. The fourth family lived down near the newer lighthouse. Supplies came in every six months or so, bringing in not only food and medical supplies, but the all-essential sperm oil for the lamp.

The "wickies," as the keepers were called, worked on four-hour shifts, constantly cleaning the prisms because even a speck of salt or sand lowered the effectiveness of the beam. On one occasion when the rotating mechanism failed, three men cranked by hand while the fourth made repairs. Lives at sea were at stake.

Surprisingly, there have been more shipwrecks off Pt. Arguello than off Pt. Conception, the worst occurring during a heavy fog on the night of September 8, 1923, when a squadron of seven U.S. Navy four-stacker destroyers, one after another, crashed against the rocks, the worst peacetime disaster in American naval history.

Over the years there have been several changes in the lighthouse. An incandescent kerosene vapor lamp replaced sperm oil in 1911 and, in 1948, a 1,000-watt mercury vapor bulb was installed. The original 3,136-pound fog bell was replaced by a steam operated diaphone in 1872 and that, in turn, was replaced by an electrically powered horn at a later time. The two-second blast has the same rhythm as the beacon; under normal circumstances it can be heard about as far as the light can be seen.

In 1939 the Lighthouse Service was abolished, all functions being transferred to the Coast Guard. Wisely, our government phased out the personnel, allowing resident keepers to retire gradually.

It was another world as late as 1946 when the old *Saturday Evening Post* described life at Pt. Conception. There was no electricity, the lamp still burning kerosene. Max Schlederer and his wife and Charley Hellwig and his mother were the sole residents. They had no telephones, no electrical appliances, no neighbors. The plank road was all but impassible. Entertainment came from a hand-cranked phonograph. In the jet age it was another world, one of desolation and

beauty, of loneliness and contemplation. Last of a breed destined for extinction by a world made safer by radar and loran, the Schlederers and Hellwigs were gone a few months after the article was published.

Although Coast Guard personnel took over actual operation in the late forties, there was still one family left as late as 1977 to provide grounds maintenance and security functions. The Coast Guard automated all functions, monitoring them from Pt. Arguello which is completely surrounded by Vandenberg Air Force Station.

Pt. Conception is surrounded by private property, so the public has little access to the promontory with its historic lighthouse. Perhaps it is just as well for the place shows depressing evidence of neglect in an era of tight budgets. What the future holds for this historic old structure that has served so well for so long is anybody's guess. If the lighthouse at Alexandria lasted nearly two millennia, certainly some effort should be made to save this 107-year-old structure with its 134-year-old lens. Those wishing to become involved in the effort to preserve our nation's lighthouses may want to join the U.S. Lighthouse Society, 964 Chenery St., San Francisco, CA 94131.

Few spots in California are as isolated and dramatic as Pt. Conception where you have the water on three sides of you and a continent to your back. The sun rises over the water and sets over the water. On a clear day the horizon seems only an arm's length away; at other times the fog can be so thick that sea gulls have to walk. The rugged beauty and serenity are incomparable.

Long the symbol of hope, lighthouses reflect not only a beacon to the mariner but the quest for human survival and man's concern for his fellow man. On the 200th birthday of the founding of the U.S. Lighthouse Service let this be a tribute to the brave and valiant men and women who have stood vigil along America's jagged coastlines. Their service exemplified our better nature. There's increasing evidence that Americans have a love affair with lighthouses.



Monthly Roundup (continued) . . .

came into use after 1925. Fires destroyed many of the old snowsheds, another reason for removing them.

Snowplow technology today is quite advanced and represents an interesting history of technological development and change. The pioneer builders grossly underestimated Sierra snowfall which can run up to 780 inches in a wet year. This snow had to be dealt with one way or another in order to keep the trains on schedule. Pilot plows attached to locomotives were initially used to remove snow banks, with occasionally unexpected and disastrous results, as engines were derailed. Other devices included the flanger, the Jordan spreader, rotary snow plows, and icicle breakers atop the locomotive to knock off icicles forming inside the snowsheds. Smoke caused problems inside the snowsheds, so locomotives had to be redesigned to put the stack behind the engine crew.

Many of the scenes shown by Noonan were quite spectacular, particularly those of Donner Pass in the wintertime. Anyone crossing the pass by rail today, in the warmth and comfort of a passenger train, can only imagine the hardships of the pioneering party that gave Donner Pass its name.

Photograph by - Frank Q. Newton



"Two-Fisted Journalism on the Texas Frontier" was Corral Member Ray Wood's topic for the May meeting.

MAY 1989 MEETING

At the May meeting Corral Member Raymund Wood spoke on "Two-Fisted Journalism on the Texas Frontier: The Career of William C.

Brann." Brann's experiences indicate just how violent the life of a journalist could be in the 19th-century West. To set the stage, Wood described a feud and gunfight in West Texas in the 1890's to illustrate how honor was served by recourse to violence. As a center for post-Civil War cattle drives, Waco supplied drovers with recreation and an arena for cowboy violence. It was also the heart of religious and intellectual activity, the home of Baylor University, and the base for Brann's *Iconoclast* periodical—a volatile mix for intellectual violence, or violent intellectuals!

Brann came to Waco with extensive experience as a journalist in various Western towns. Once established in Waco, he revived his *Iconoclast* periodical at 10 cents a copy. Shortly after he began publication in 1895, Brann attacked in print the American Protective Association, an anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic organization opposed to immigration and the Catholic faith. Brann objected to the appearance of an APA speaker at the Waco Opera House. Slattery, the APA orator, traded insults with Brann, naming him a Pope-lover and an incompetent scribbler. The controversy continued as Brann wrote subsequent articles exposing the bigotry of the APA and its spokesman.

In another controversy, Brann publicized the rape of a 16-year-old Baylor co-ed by a relative of the president of Baylor, and the failure of school officials to punish the culprit. Brann defended the girl's honor which had been stained by false accusations from the Baylor officials. The girl finally surrendered to pressure from the officials, and the case was dismissed when she returned to her Brazilian homeland, with passage paid by the people who wanted to be rid of her embarrassing presence.

These and other episodes indicated Brann's willingness to expose hypocrisy, but his courage earned him many enemies. In 1897 Brann was kidnapped, beaten, and horsewhipped by Baylor students. Brann died the following year, mortally wounded by an assailant. In this curious encounter Brann, the victim, was arrested by local police! Brann's violent end illustrated the perils of a journalistic career in frontier Texas.

In other Corral business, the Corral welcomed Bill Catron as an Active Member and Craig Cunningham, Alex Guthrie, Alex Kerr, Richard Yale, and Don Snyder as Associate Members.

1989 FANDANGO

The Andres Pico Adobe, built in 1834 by the Indians from the San Fernando Mission, was the scene for the 1989 *Fandango* held on Saturday afternoon June 3rd. The event was staged and under the direction of Deputy Sheriff Siegfried Demke.

This interesting Southern California landmark was open for inspection while Westerners bellied up to the bar for their favorite libation and a handful of nuts. Wrangler Boss Fred Bennett was busy placing ice in plastic glasses while Wrangler Don Snyder poured. Wranglers Bob Kern and Craig Cunningham were kept busy selling chances on an original Andrew Dagosta watercolor called "White House" (an Indian cliff dwelling). At three chances for \$5.00, these chances were selling better than tickets to a Bruce Springsteen rock concert.

A cluster of three itinerant Mexican Mariachi musicians, under the direction of Anselmo Rivera, played their hearts out for nearly two hours in the secluded garden patio complete with water fountain. All the while, Iconographer "Tired Eyes Newton" was busy running around capturing the event and guests with his Kodak.

Once the dinner bell sounded, 95 guests lined up similar to the que at the hot dog stand at a Laker game. Loading their plates with tasty beef over rice, or chicken, hot rolls, and salad, the guests sat down to a fine meal provided by the San Marino Caterers of Glendale. The fast eaters were quick to pick up a slice of Bavarian Chocolate Cake (with cherries) and a warm cup of coffee to kill the evening chill.

As the sun began to dip in the west, young Mari Tiscareño was selected to pull the winning ticket for the original Andrew Dagosta watercolor from Sig's hat. The winner was — Joan Newbro!

As the silver urn ran out of coffee, those with cold bones due to sharp blowing breezes off the snow covered hills of Mission Hills, folded their chairs and made for their motor cars.

Wrangle boss Fred Bennett checks out the two loaded plates of grub balanced by Henry Welcome. Mrs. Selmer checks out the chicken, while Randy Joseph looks on.



Under a large pepper tree, Anselmo Rivera and his Mariache musicians serenade while Fandango guests dine.



Deputy Sheriff Sig Demke has just shaken up the chance tickets for Andy Dagosta's watercolor "White House" shown at the left. Mari Tiscareño is about to reach in and pull the winning ticket.



Photograph by - Frank Q. Newton



Guest speaker Al Brown enlightened the Corral about the history and the various amusements of the Long Beach Pike.

JULY 1989 MEETING

Guest speaker Al Brown addressed the Corral on the heyday of the amusement park era in Long Beach. The Pike at Long Beach was established in the early 1900s when thirteen acres were purchased for an amusement park. The first attraction, a salt-water plunge, was opened in 1902. The Pacific Electric connection made it possible for 50,000 people to come to the Pike, a figure that overwhelmed local accommodations — so thousands slept on the beach. The first roller coaster appeared in 1907, the merry-go-round in 1911. A speedier roller coaster was opened in 1914. No rides were built on the beach at the time because of the tides, but in its heyday of the 1920s and 1930s the Pike featured three bowling alleys, four dance halls, six theatres, barber shops, ice cream and salt-water taffy stores, thirteen bingo games, and twenty major rides among the many attractions. The number of employees varied from 350 in the winter to 900 in summertime. Two and a half million visitors a year came to spend \$5 million in this era.

Long Beach had blue laws restricting Sunday amusements, and clothing restrictions were applied to women's swim suits. A proposed 1925 parade resulted in court injunctions and protests. It should be noted that Long Beach could also appeal to a more sober element; a 10,000-member Bible class met on the beach. Anyway, 200 women, participated in the 1925 parade, the only one held until the Miss Universe contests of a later era. Other events included installation of a

Cyclone roller coaster which at 98 feet in height attracted attention as the highest, fastest, and steepest in the world. On Halloween children scrambled for pennies; picnic days to the Pike meant family outings, and ten police and fifteen shore patrolman provided law enforcement. But there was little to fear in those innocent prewar days from muggers and rapists.

Visitors to the Pike enjoyed such special activities as Redhead Day (red-haired people got in free), baby parades, balloon ascensions, and, of course, the ubiquitous carnival sideshows. One show, the headless chicken, was featured in *Life*, and rivals slaughtered thousands of chickens trying to duplicate the freak of nature. There were sword swallowers, fire-eaters, a flagpole sitter, and a 650-pound fat woman. Pitchmen sold items whether wanted or not, and famed dentist Painless Parker started his career on the Pike.

The 1930s and the Great Depression hurt Pike attendance, but World War II brought an Indian summer as servicemen flocked there. By the 1970s competing amusement parks, especially Disneyland and Knott's Berry Farm, put an end to the Pike — a fascinating and inexpensive diversion for three quarters of a century.



Corral Member John Kemble explained about the steamship lines to the Orient operated by the Southern Pacific.

AUGUST 1989 MEETING

An unusual focus on a well-known subject was given to the Corral by Active Member and former Sheriff John H. Kemble. He spoke on "The Big Four at Sea." Best known for their control of the Central and Southern Pacific railroads, Collis

Huntington, Charles Crocker, Mark Hopkins, and Leland Stanford were also involved in steamship lines and the development of trade with the Far East.

By 1867 an irregularly scheduled connection between San Francisco and Yokohama and Hong Kong had been established. The Pacific Mail Steamship Company at first monopolized this trade. Then, in 1871, PMS came under the control of New York investors who owned the Panama Railroad. It was announced that no cargo would be unloaded at San Francisco, thus effectively cutting out the transcontinental railroad from Far Eastern trade. The Big Four responded to this threat by organizing the Occidental and Oriental Steamship Company, capitalized at \$10 million — half owned by the CP, the other half by the Union Pacific. This new company bought three steamers from White Star in England. The first of these steamers, the *Oceanic*, rounded Africa and headed for Yokohama. It arrived in San Francisco in June 1875, having taken only sixteen days to travel from Yokohama.

Meanwhile, PMS relented, working out an agreement with the Occidental company, and thus avoiding cutthroat competition. From 1875 to 1906 both lines operated as a joint service, sharing wharves, and working harmoniously. Expecting to lose money at the outset, the Big Four made a huge profit — up to 60% a year — on their investment.

The PMS-OOS ships had British officers and Chinese crews. No recreational facilities were offered in those pre-“love boat” days, but the 65 first-class passengers found ways to amuse themselves. Steerage carried a much larger number, between 700 and 1,000. A first-class ticket cost \$300, while it cost \$51 to go in steerage. One interesting feature of the Pacific trade was that westbound passengers included dead Chinese being taken to their homeland for burial; a ticket had to be purchased, and the company saved money on meals not served to the dead passengers! From the Orient came tea, silk, textiles, opium, and curios, while westbound cargoes included flour and ginseng.

In 1880 the PMS came under the control of Huntington, who became its president in 1893. At his death in 1900 the SP controlled PMS until the demise of the line in 1916. Huntington was also active on the Atlantic side of the continent,

starting the shipyard at Newport News, Virginia. In addition, Huntington's Morgan line operated between New Orleans and New York from 1883 to 1941. As Kemble noted, the Big Four's connections went well beyond the borders of the U.S. to many other parts of the world.



Corral Chips

Norman Neuerburg presented a paper on the “Restoration of the Altarpiece at Mission San Gabriel” to the California Mission Studies Association's annual conference held at San Juan Bautista in February. Walt Wheelock and CM Lou Bourdet were in the audience.

Associate Mike Torguson had his new body on display at the 1989 *Fandango*. Rumor has it that he purchased his frame from Nutra Systems, however, others say he was taking a Charles Atlas home course. In any case the part above the neck is the same, but the balance is a mere shadow of itself.

CM Warren Beck, professor of history at California State University-Fullerton, received the university's highest faculty honor during an awards reception held on May 26th on the eve of the 1989 commencement ceremonies. This honor carries a \$4,000 cash award and his name on a perpetual plaque. Beck will be the university's nominee for the California State University's Outstanding Professor Award. According to Doyce Nunis, “Beck is recognized by his peers as one of the five leading historians of the American Southwest.”

Jerome R. Selmer, our former Sheriff and newly appointed Executive Director of the Southwest Museum, was featured on the front page of the May-August 1989 issue of *Southwest Museum News*. Selmer, a third generation Californian,

was born in Huntington Park and grew up in Pasadena.

CM *Dan Post* of Arcadia died in May after an apparent heart attack. He was recognized internationally for his knowledge and books on the restoration of antique cars. He was always interested in typewriters and had one of the largest collections of pioneer typewriters from all over the world.

Walt Wheelock, publisher of La Siesta Press of Glendale, was a guest speaker at the SIRCULS Annual Meeting, on May 5th. Not knowing what these initials stand for, I can only say that the announcement sent me speaks of regional library news. His topic was "A Day in the Life of a Small Publisher." Also, on Saturday evening June 10th the Wheelocks celebrated the 25th anniversary of Walt's retirement, his birth on June 8, 1910, his move to Glendale in 1924, his graduation from UCLA in 1935, his joining the Glendale Police Department in 1937 and retiring in 1964, and the formation of La Siesta Press in 1960. There were no speeches from "The Great One," but wine and potables could be found.

Andrew Dagosta had three pieces of art on display at the American Indian & Cowboy Artists exhibit at San Dimas on April 28-30. Other Westerners who were on hand to see the display were *Dr. Alden Miller*, *Siegfried Demke*, *Ben Abril*, *Donald Duke*, and Associate *Rick Arnold*, along with corresponding members *Art Beeman*, *Jim Burger*, and *Loren Wendt*, who was one of the show's directors and also the auctioneer for the auction which is held on Sunday.

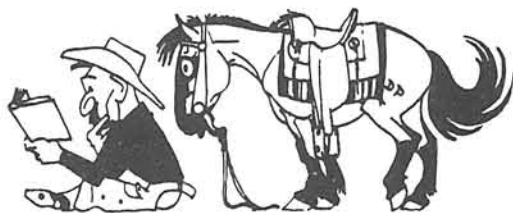
Bill Lorenz and *Donald Duke* were among the many on hand May 5th to welcome two steam powered trains to Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal as part of the 50th anniversary celebration of this famous structure. *Hugh Tolford* took part in the festivities, when he presented Los Angeles, on behalf of E. Clampus Vitus, with a beautiful bronze plaque about the history of the depot. This was a special ceremony with such prominent participants as Mayor Tom Bradley, railroad officials, and civic leaders of the community. Also on hand, with their cameras, were Associate *Rick Arnold* and CM *Bob Kern*. There were more than 500,000 visitors at the celebration, exhibits and special events.

Associate *Max Barnett*, who had been in the hospital with heart problems, got out of his bed to watch the Southern Pacific steam train round

Tehachapi Loop on its return trip north after the Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal anniversary. All that steam and smoke probably reduced his cholesterol level some 50 points.

Francis J. Weber continues to keep his type-writer smoking with his articles for the *Branding Iron* and other publications. His latest is "Alemany Returns to San Francisco: A Personal Memoir" in the December 1988 issue of *California History* which was received in late Spring 1989. Msgr. Francis has served for 25 years as archivist for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and is considered the foremost historian on the history of the Catholic Church in California, having had numerous books published by Westernlore. He has also done monographs, bibliographies, and articles in that field. The archive at the San Fernando Mission is probably the best Church History library in the United States.

Robert Clark and the move of the Arthur H. Clark Company from Glendale to Spokane, Washington, was the topic of an almost full page feature in a recent issue of the Spokane newspaper. The article included a large photograph of 'smiling Bob' among his books.



DOWN THE WESTERN BOOK TRAIL ...

EXCEPTIONAL TREES OF LOS ANGELES. By Donald R. Hodel. Chatsworth: California Arboretum Foundation, Inc., 1988. Available from California Arboretum Foundation, 301 North Baldwin Avenue, Arcadia, CA 91006. \$14.95

The variety of trees found in and around Los Angeles, nearly 1,000 species, is perhaps unmatched by any other area of equal size in all the world. This phenomenon is due to the area's long and colorful history of horticulture dating back to the days of the Spanish missions. Early friars, many of whom came from the Province of

Catalonia, an area of similar climate, took full advantage of the diverse climatic zones in California — ranging from desert and alpine areas inland to frost-free, nearly tropical coastal areas — to plant and nurture a host of non-native tree species.

In 1984, a group of distinguished horticulturists and botanists began a program of identifying trees in the area. Then, four years later, Donald R. Hodel expanded upon their findings to produce his treatise on 167 *Exceptional Trees of Los Angeles*, a book published by the California Arboretum Foundation. The enumerated trees were evaluated according to age, historical or cultural value, esthetic quality, endemic status, location, rarity, size and spread of branches.

The two giant star pines that spread majestically over the garden area at San Buenaventura Mission date back to the 1890's — maybe even earlier. Native to Norfolk Island, a penal colony east of Australia, the star pine is a distinctive and formal tree characterized by its pyramidal shape and uniform layers of whorled branches appearing as spokes on a horizontally set wheel. Whorls of young branches at the top are star-shaped, hence the name.

The Guadalupe palm trees at San Fernando Mission are native to Mexico and northern Central America. Their botanical name, *braeha edulis*, honors the noted 16th century Dutch astronomer, Tycho Brahe, who first recorded the palm on Guadalupe Island, off the western coast of Baja California. The floss-silk trees at San Fernando Mission, introduced by Clarese Kroll in 1982 from the Huntington Library, are often referred to as "the single most spectacular flowering trees in the United States."

Silk trees are natives of southern Brazil and Argentina and are called *samohu* by local Indians. They are truly breathtaking in the late summer when their bare branches are covered completely with pink flowers and green fruit.

Though it might be stretching the definition of "tree" slightly, the *vitis vinifera* at San Gabriel Mission is a remnant of the first vineyard planted in Alta California by the missionaries in the early 19th century. Hodel affirms that San Gabriel Mission "played an important role in the introduction of exotic plants into California." In fact, their nurseries were the only source of plants for the early settlers.

"The Spanish *padres* introduced the first lemons, limes, oranges, figs, olives, pecans, dates, apples, pears, pomegranates, plums, grapes and bananas to California, in addition to many ornamentals and other flowering plants, including the California pepper trees from South America."

A group of Moreton Bay fig trees dating to the 1870s is located in El Pueblo de los Angeles State Historic Park, just across from the Old Plaza Church of *Neustra Señora de los Angeles*. Those fig trees are native of Queensland and northern New South Wales in Australia. Specimens are noted for their massive, buttressed trunks which spread out for many feet from their trunks.

The author of this informative book is the Cooperative Extension Horticulture Advisor in Los Angeles for the University of California. His special interest and affection for trees are evident in this fine book.

Msgr. Francis J. Weber

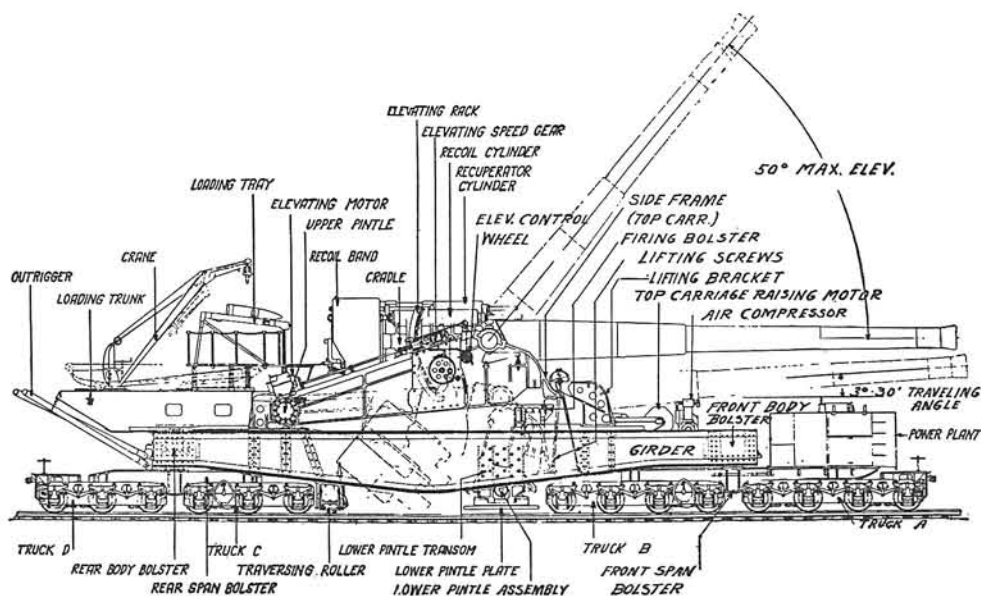
WORKERS ON THE WATERFRONT: Seamen, Longshoremen, and Unionism in the 1930s, by Bruce Nelson. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988. 352 pp. Illustrations, Notes, Bibliography, Index. Cloth, \$29.95. Available from University of Illinois Press. 54 East Gregory Drive, Champaign, IL 61820.

Workers on the Waterfront captures the drama and force of the Pacific maritime workers in the 1930's. Their history, labor relations, and working class psyche are drawn together by Nelson into an emotional mind set of unrest and turbulence, a drama of activism, militancy and indefatigable resistance to oppression.

Nelson introduces us to the subject with a general historical portrait of seamen and one can't help but wonder if the maritime workers biggest obstacle wasn't themselves. Their poor public image and lack of education didn't help them. Despite this, however, the reader is drawn to their side. The depth of historical background and its emotional description, side the reader with the worker at once. They wanted fair treatment. But they had to fight to achieve it.

Carefully described, analyzed and documented in the beginning part of the book are the methods the exploited maritime workers used as well as

(Continued on Page Sixteen)



Nomenclature and Details for the 14-inch Railway Gun and Mount

Fort Mac's 14-inch Railway Guns

by Konrad F. Schreier, Jr.

Crowds of Los Angeles citizens were visiting, and for good reason, the private railroad car track of the old Southern Pacific Riverside Station on Thanksgiving Day — 1925. They were there to see the new U.S. Army 14-inch railway gun that was on its way to nearby Fort MacArthur. Later it, and another gun just like it would “defend” the Los Angeles-Long Beach harbor from attack until the end of World War II. But eventually time passed by these dinosaurs on rails and they became forgotten history.

Their story began in World War I when five U.S. Navy 14-inch railway guns joined the American Expeditionary Force — A.E.F. They proved to be very effective, and consequently became quite famous. Although they only saw action for the last month of the war, they literally destroyed the German's supply railroads, and helped bring the war to a sudden end.

When the U.S. Armed Forces were sorting things out following the war the Navy agreed to give up railway artillery. The U.S. Army inherited their 14-inchers, and they became part of the armament of the U.S. Army Coast Artillery.

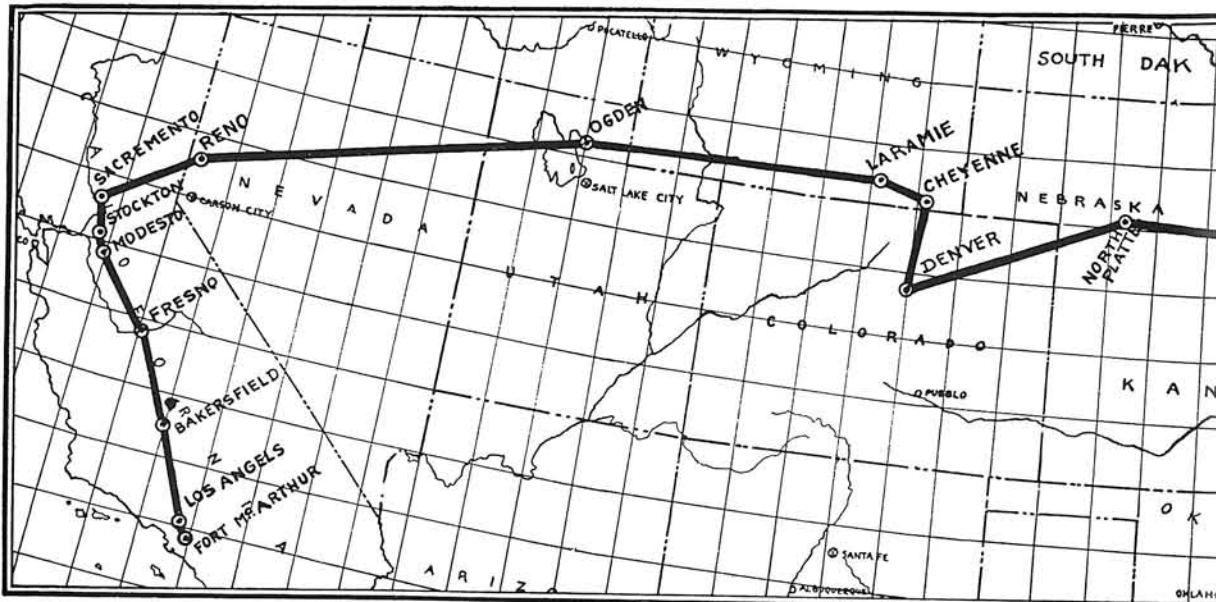
The Coast Artillery railway artillery had a dual mission: it was to be a movable coast defense artillery, and it was also to be a super-heavy field

artillery as the Navy 14-inchers had been with the A.E.F. However, the Navy 14-inchers were not suitable for this dual mission, but the Army had one experimental gun that was.

Based on experience and reports from the A.E.F. the U.S. Army Ordnance Department Artillery Division began to design a 14-inch to meet the Coast Artillery's requirements. It was designed to fire from either a specially prepared and reinforced railway track or from a special concrete and steel base which gave it the turning ability in order to track moving targets such as ships. This new design was adopted as the U.S. Army 14-inch Railway Gun Model 1920.

The mount (gun car) was built by the U.S. Army Watertown Arsenal near Boston, the 14-inch gun, one which came from the U.S. Navy, was reworked by the U.S. Army Watervliet Arsenal located on the Hudson River in New York. The project was not urgent, so the work on it progressed at a deliberate pace.

The first of the new 14-inchers was completed in 1924. It was the biggest thing ever built to travel on railroad tracks. The 14-inch gun weighed 117 tons, the car to mount it on was 248 tons, the total weight 365 tons! It was assembled at Watertown Arsenal, and then taken to the



The route of the 14-inch Railway Gun on its journey from the Aberdeen Proving Grounds, Maryland, to Fort MacArthur, California, in 1925. Deviations to the most direct route include the side trip to Denver. It took nearly a month to make the coast to coast journey. — U.S. Army

U.S. Army Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland for testing.

Although there had been concern about moving the huge gun over a railroad, the move to Maryland went without problems. Then the test firing proved the 14-inch gun to be as satisfactory as had been expected. The Navy 14-inch gun was inherently accurate, and the new railway gun proved it could hit targets at ranges of 20 miles or more.

As the new 14-inch railway gun was completing its test firing at Chesapeake Bay, the Coast Artillery made the decision to station it at Fort MacArthur — Fort Mac — “way out in Los Angeles.” The reason was that, while the East Coast of the United States had coast defenses at every important point, the Pacific Coast had practically no protection.

In fact there were only five places on the Pacific Coast with coast defenses: San Diego harbor, Los Angeles-Long Beach harbor, the entrance to San Francisco Bay, the mouth of the Columbia River, and the entrance to Puget Sound. This made the Pacific Coast seem to be the ideal place to station this movable 14-inch railway gun. The Los Angeles-Long Beach harbor was becoming a most important oil port and it was felt it really needed additional coast defenses.

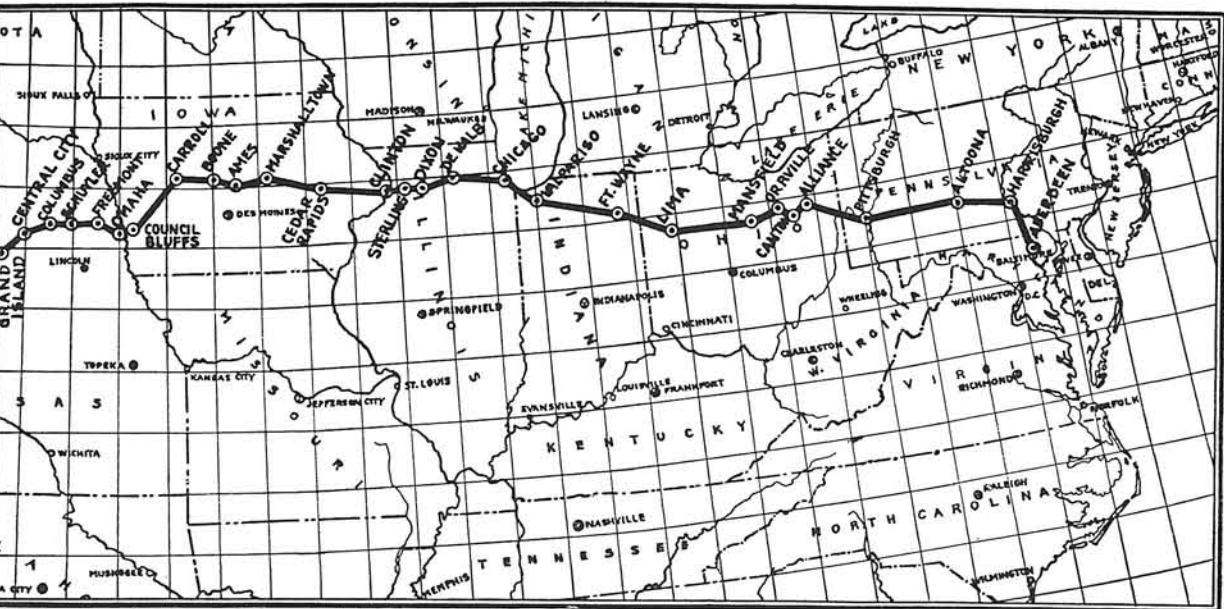
The U.S. Army reckoned that moving the huge 14-inch railway gun from coast to coast would

accomplish several things. First it would be a real test to move such a gun over a very long distance. In fact it was the longest railway journey that a huge railway gun had ever made. Secondly, it would be good public relations for the Army if its route and stops were publicized.

Organizing the trip involved the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Quartermaster Corps, the Coast Artillery Corps, the Ordnance Department and, of course, the railroads which were to be used.

The Corps of Engineers worked with the railroads to make sure they could handle the 365 ton load — the biggest ever run on tracks. The Quartermaster Corps arranged the actual transportation schedule with the railroads. The Ordnance Department worried about how the unit would travel on the long trip. The Coast Artillerymen were interested in seeing just how well their latest super-heavy weapon would perform.

The route was set: from Aberdeen Proving Ground to Chicago, the gun would travel over the Pennsylvania Railroad. Then on to Council Bluffs, Iowa, over the Chicago & North Western Railroad. The Union Pacific Railroad would pick it up at Omaha, Nebraska, and take it to Ogden, Utah. The Southern Pacific Railroad took it over Donner Pass to Sacramento, California, and then on to Los Angeles. Practically every paper along the route published the schedule, with the gun



Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, to Fort McArthur, Calif.

being displayed for a time in some 40 cities along the way.

The "Coast Defense Gun Special" pulled out of Aberdeen Proving Ground on October 15, 1925, and from the beginning it drew crowds of spectators. The train travelling slowly made it easy to see the gun in motion. When stops were made hordes of people were there to see it. All in all the trip was considered a publicity coup for the U.S. Army.

The gun arrived at its siding at "Fort Mac" the afternoon of Friday, November 27, 1925, and during that long ago Thanksgiving weekend several hundred thousand people looked it over. The Southern California papers gave it great coverage. All seven radio stations in the area reported on it, and Major Harold E. Small, the Coast Artillery officer who commanded the transcontinental trip, gave a radio talk about it.

Soon after the 14-inch railway gun had been delivered to the post at "Fort Mac," a massive steel and concrete firing platform was built for it. The gun was then put in place, and test fired in the summer of 1926. This wasn't the first time that the nearby towns of San Pedro, Wilmington and Long Beach had been subject to the roar of a 14-inch gun. "Fort Mac" already had four fixed model 14-inch guns mounted in the battery.

Like all the previous big gun firings, the 14-inch test was usually a spectator show. Crowds of people, who were able to find out when the shooting would occur, came out to see it. Ad-

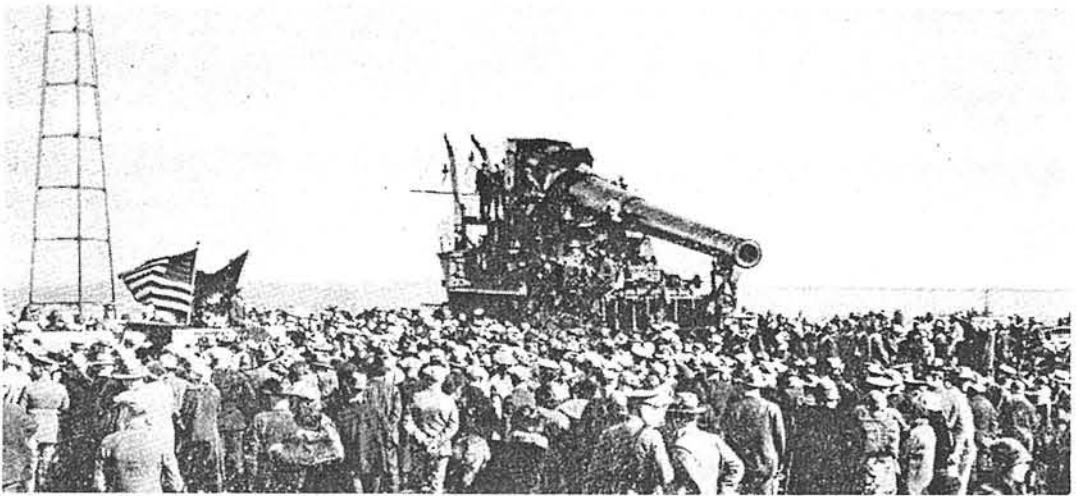
vanced warnings in the local papers, including instructions that people should keep their windows open during the firing, resulted in little, if any, damage in the nearby cities.

Once the first of the 14-inchers had been proven successful the Army Arsenals which built it were already working on a second rail gun. This unit was to be stationed at San Francisco in order to protect the Golden Gate. The need for it was not pressing, and thus it was not completed until mid-1929.

"Number Two," as it came to be known, left Aberdeen Proving Ground for California on June 28, 1929. The route taken for this second "Coast Defense Gun Special" railroad trip was the same as for the first gun, that is as far as Sacramento. From there the gun travelled to Benicia Arsenal just up the Sacramento River from San Francisco Bay. This particular run was to be the determining factor on just how fast one of the monster guns could be moved from coast to coast. It arrived at Benicia Arsenal July 16th, having taken 18 days for the rail journey across the continent.

The Army report indicates that the gun had been moved a total distance of 3,047 miles. The longest day's movement was 279 miles, and the top speed held for any distance was 17 miles per hour, with an average speed of 25 miles per hour on straight and level first-class track.

Along with the above report, the Army also released other details about the gun. It stated that its firing range was 25 miles with 1,400



Once the railway gun was placed on its mount at Fort MacArthur, the public and military officials were invited to a dedication ceremony. At the time this was the biggest gun to travel on railroad tracks. — U.S. Army

pound shell. The cost of the gun was \$185,000.00 — \$125,000.00 for the gun car and mount, \$60,000.00 for the 14-inch caliber 50 cannon. That put an individual rail gun in a cost class equivalent to one of today's ICBM missiles.

Once No. 2 was at Benicia Arsenal, the Army began scouting around the entrance to San Francisco Bay for a spot suitable for emplacement. At first the Presidio area near the Golden Gate was searched, without much success. Further surveillances found there were no railway tracks close enough in order to move it to the seaward side of the peninsula. Sites as far away as the Embarcadero were considered but with no success. There were no railroad tracks anywhere near what were considered suitable sites on the north side of San Francisco Bay, and the East Bay was too far away for ideal protection of the Golden Gate.

It took a few months, but the Army finally decided that the 14-inch railway gun No. 2 should join No. 1 at "Fort Mac." It was transported south on June 25 and 28, 1930. The move was made with little or no publicity, and with the inference that it had been the Army's original plan all along.

A fixed mount was built for No. 2 and the gun was mounted and test fired in late 1930. Number 2 was rated just as successful as No. 1.

In 1934 the Coast Artillery decided the time had come to field test Fort Mac's two 14-inch railway guns on a maneuver. A plan, developed

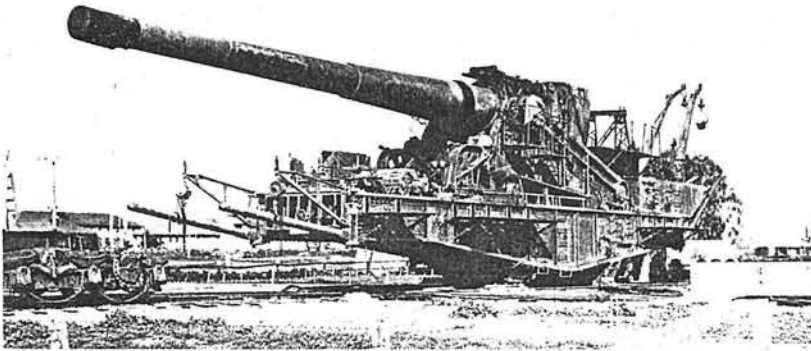
with the cooperation of the Santa Fe Railway, was to haul them to a point called Don Siding located between San Clemente and Oceanside on what is now the Camp Pendleton Marine Corps base.

At Don Siding a pair of special sidings had been constructed to accommodate the two guns. The trip was uneventful, and they arrived accompanied by a contingent of Army brass curious to see them in action. Thirty rounds were fired, 15 from each gun. This was considered to be a fair test for such large guns. Targets were located at ranges from 7 to 24 miles, and their accuracy was as good as could be expected. The firing exercise and the train movement maneuver were rated a complete success by the Army.

In 1937 as the U.S. Army was gearing up for the inevitable, World War II, it was decided to hold another field exercise with "Fort Mac's" two 14-inch railway guns. This maneuver was set up to be both a field maneuver and a publicity stunt directed at the press and for the new and very popular movie newsreels.

This exercise was carried out with the cooperation of the Southern Pacific. The firing sidings were built at a point 15.5 miles west of Santa Barbara, and the guns were then moved uneventfully, this time accompanied by the press, the newsreel cameramen, and a lot of Army brass.

Although everything seemed ready things were not to go smoothly. The guns fired in a



The 14-inch railway gun and mount was photographed en route to Fort MacArthur somewhere in the Midwest. Its 1,400 pound shell had a range of 25 to 30 miles.

staggered salvo, and then literally bounced on the rails! Both guns nearly tipped over! The siding rails, badly bent, had to be rebuilt in order to return the guns to Fort MacArthur.

It was found that the alluvial adobe soil of the bluff the guns were sited on was not only too weak to withstand the shock of their recoil, but it actually reacted to it in a springy manner. The Army was embarrassed and no more firings were attempted, luckily the photographers had been able to get good pictures of the first shot.

It took track crews five days to rebuild the sidings in order to move the guns back onto the Southern Pacific's main line. The two guns were then returned to their permanent emplacements. From that point on the guns were never taken "into the field" on maneuvers again.

The last time the Army would ever haul one of the 14-inchers out of "Fort Mac" was in 1939. The occasion was the opening of the Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal. A Southern Pacific cab-ahead locomotive pulled the gun and its "gun train," consisting of a flatcar on either end of the gun car, two ammunition cars behind them and a caboose bringing up the rear. The gun train was spotted in a display area with other railway equipment, and it drew crowds of spectators.

By this time the warm-up for World War II had begun in Europe, leading to the last firing of "Fort Mac's" two 14-inch railway guns. This time they were fired from their fixed mounts in an August 1941 "full service firing test" in which all Fort Mac's guns were tested.

The 14-inch railway guns fired at towed targets in the Catalina Channel at ranges up to

25 miles. Great care was taken not to hit Catalina Island, but nevertheless, shells still landed within a mile or so. The island was well within the range of the 14-inchers, and plans called for them to shell it in the event "hostile forces" landed there.

While this test firing was entirely successful, the terrific muzzle blast from the 14-inchers did some \$50,000 worth of damage which included the demolishing of two buildings in the vicinity of their fixed mounts! Consequently the guns were kept in a "ready state," but orders stated that they were only to be fired at "hostile target" in the future. No enemy ever appeared, so the guns had been fired for the last time.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers went on a binge camouflaging key military and industrial areas around Southern California during the early years of World War II, and the "Fort Mac" 14-inch railway guns were not left out. They were covered with false "buildings" which blended in with the structures surrounding their emplacements. These 'sheds' also protected the guns from the weather and were made so it took just minutes to remove them when the guns were placed "on alert."

Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, all Fort MacArthur's guns were placed on continuous alert, as there were many false reports of enemy ships. The "great anti-aircraft shoot" and the Japanese sub that shelled an old oil tank at Goleta took place in February 1942. However, it was soon obvious the Japanese fleet was no threat to the Pacific Coast, and the continuous erratic sighting reports and

full alerts ended.

Somebody seriously suggested that the two 14-inch railway guns should be tried out in a role as super heavy field artillery with the U.S. Army Desert Training Command that was operating in southeastern California. This idea never came to fruition since the place they would have had to go with the Army was North Africa, and the planners reckoned there was other equipment to use on Rommel which would be much easier to get there and more mobile in the field.

Once the offensive capability of the Imperial Japanese Navy was crippled in the Battle of Midway in June 1942, the U.S. Army began putting much of its heavy Coast Artillery guns on a "stand-by" status, and this included all the big guns at "Fort Mac." When the U.S. Navy ran short of 14-inch battleship gun ammunition in late 1943, part of the stocks at "Fort Mac" were given to them. By this time the 14-inch railway guns had been placed on a "caretaker status," and they were never manned again.

By the end of World War II all U.S. Coast Artillery guns of 10-inches and over had been

declared obsolete. On May 14, 1948, a U.S. Army order declared all "large caliber" coast defense and railway artillery obsolete and surplus. They were "to be disposed of in an authorized manner" — scrapped. The 14-inch guns had been built of very high quality steel, and the scrap dealers had a ready market for their remains. The era of giant guns had come to an end.

It is interesting to note that only four of these 14-inch railway guns, Model of 1920, were built. Two were located at Fort MacArthur, the other two at the Panama Canal Zone. The latter pair were also scrapped, sometime in 1949.

Source Note: Extensive reports in Army Ordnance magazine, U.S. documents and reports, U.S. Army Coast Artillery manuals and other publications, and contemporary newspaper reports. An excellent secondary source on the story of Fort MacArthur and its guns is Charles S. Small's *California's Railway Guns*, (1984) Railroad Publications, P.O. Box 526, Canton, Ohio 44701.



their fight to achieve organization and craft unionism among themselves. It tells how they did it, inch by painful inch.

Historically the often repeated sequence (since mankind has yet to learn from history) is *problems — oppression — no solutions — bigger problems — militancy — violence — solutions*. The violence was during the 83-day long, "big strike" of 1934. This part of the book is a very good anatomy of a strike and a detailed, step-by-step look at how and why workers strike. It became the "workers" breakthrough, the price they paid for solutions. Nelson describes it as the "spirit of the crusader" with the fervor of a Pentecostal meeting. It was the "festival of the oppressed" reawaking hope and a new dignity in the maritime workers. But there was great confrontation and death. This atmosphere of insurgency created self-confidence, a new found power and solidarity.

The aftermath of that strike, what it accomplished in terms of better working conditions, wages, etc. was subsequently eroded by fratricidal wars, union rivalries and a host of

other problems. Nelson carefully describes and analyzes this as well throughout the remainder of the book.

This is an excellent work on the subject and worth reading by those interested in labor relations, particularly of seamen and longshoremen, history of the 1930s in the U.S., as well as discovering a little more about what the thinking was of the average American worker of the 1930's. However, one cannot help but note that the portrait is virtually all one-sided: *Workers on the Waterfront* is an apt title. They battle what seems to be a nameless, faceless mass referred to mostly as "the employers" or "the company," an apparently wicked lot that does not get equal time; in fact, they get no time. This book is carefully and extensively annotated with a thorough bibliography. The documentation is there to analyze and weigh. The research is good, and overall, quite well done.

Joseph Cavallo