

History of the Golden Gate Live Steamers

In Memory Victor Tom Shattock 1886--1974

The Early Years

With the passage of time and with the passing of older members whose personal memories extend to the founding and early years of the club, there is a danger that their record of accomplishment will recede into limbo. This brief history then is intended to be a tribute to those stalwarts and a reminder to newer members that our club facilities did not just emerge out of thin air, like Brigadoon! A reminder too is that ours is the **Oldest Live Steam Club in the country!** It was founded by Victor Shattock in 1936, though at that time the club had no outdoor trackage as we have today, steam operations being confined to the basement of Vic's home in Oakland, California as well as to outdoor trackage (after 1940) of club member Loren Thacker in Stockton, California.

Victor was born in Culmstock, Devonshire, England on December 20, 1886 one of five children of James and Lavinia Shattock. Victor was born in "Bridge House" located on the river Culm immediately next to a railroad track. Possibly a sign of what the future would have for the young infant, James worked as a station master on the Great Western Railway for some 47 years (1878 - 1925). He worked at a number of railway stations but the two that he was predominantly at the longest of his career were DUNBALL and DURSTON. His brother Harry Shattock (Vic's uncle) was an Inspector on the GWR Exeter Branch. When Vic was still in his teens, he started working in one of the Engineering Offices of the GWR and stayed with them for approximately three years. He was eventually trained as a Tinsmith (plumber) by his maternal uncle John Smith.

In September 1906 Victor married Maude Alice Drake, the oldest of eleven children who lived in the Hornsey district of London, England. Her Father Josiahs, was a local shop keeper and cabinet maker who "was very proud of his tools" and would not let just anyone touch them. No one, that is, except a young Victor Shattock.

After they got married Vic and Maude started their family. Two sons and a daughter were born in England. Around 1911 the family made the decision to set out for a new life in North America and they decided to settle in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Victor set himself up in the plumber's trade and some years later would own his own shop in the farming community of Nanton, some sixty miles south of Calgary. Three more daughters were born to Vic and Maude during their years of living in Canada. During those very early

years, Vic tried to find whatever time he could to devote to his hobby. He built model steamboats and scale models of stationary traction engines. In 1913 he built his first live steam locomotive model and had it running on a short test track in his backyard. His wife Maude was not always pleased when he tinkered with his models on her dining room table. When World War I began, he enlisted in the Canadian army and served in France in a division of the Canadian Expeditionary Forces known as the 8th Railway Troops. While there he was instrumental in repairing railroads that had been damaged during the fighting by the Germans. He helped to build a railroad that was approximately two-foot gauge (60 cm).

When the war ended Vic came back to his family in Canada but began to hear of greater job opportunities, and possibly a better life, in California from his longtime friend Walter Melvin. The family made the decision to move in 1923 and they settled in the Suisun-Fairfield area of California, several miles southwest of Sacramento. Once there, Vic started working for the Southern Pacific Railroad as a "Water Service Helper" (a glorified name for a "railroad plumber") and was required to travel in an "Outfit Car" around parts of the railroad's Western Division, fixing most anything requiring the services of a plumber, tinsmith or HVAC repairman. While living in the Outfit Car (SPMW #417), Vic built a 2 1/2" gauge live steam railroad that ran up and down on a piece of track inside his Outfit Car. When the car was set out on a siding in various towns that it visited, Vic would have guests over to see the wonders of steam railroading in action as he demonstrated what his models could do when put to the test. In the late twenties the family was stationed at Niles in what today is a historic district of Fremont, California. About 1930, the State of California put on a big Agricultural Show at Davis, California and set up a large display tent for exhibits. S.P. carpenters were used to lay a runway on which Vic built a track for demonstration purposes. This display was a great success and was seen by an estimated 10,000 people during the course of the event.

During the thirties, Vic moved his residence several times, with each move hoping to find a place where he could build a railroad and have room for a nice workshop. Finally in 1934, he found a house in the Fruitvale district of East Oakland which he could build the railroad empire he had always dreamed about. The house was a two-story Victorian built sometime in the late 1800's, with the living quarters on the second floor and the basement located actually on ground level. The basement was quite large at 32' x 45' and with the notable exception of the heating furnace and the laundry tubs, it could be entirely devoted to steam railroading! The house was located near the corner of 38th Avenue and Foothill Blvd right next door to a Signal gas station. The track ran all the way round the basement walls and included an electrically operated model of a 110' turntable built to prototype Southern Pacific standards. The official address of Vic's residence was 1877- 38th Avenue, Oakland, California. This address graced the club's letterhead stationary for many years.

By this time Vic had three or four engines which were fired up near the turntable adjacent to where the water tank was located. Denatured alcohol was used for fuel which burned with a terrific heat in a special vaporizing burner of Vic's own design. A blower was used during the start up procedure, the fumes being directed up the nearby chimney. Once the first engine was fired up a test run was made. If successful, a freight consist

was coupled to the engine and running would commence, sometimes single-headed and sometimes double-headed. These weren't passenger hauling runs of course, just free running alcohol burning engines. Although the club later moved to outdoor facilities, the basement track continued in use for twenty-seven years until the house was torn down. At that time the track was sold to a former club member in San Francisco who set it up in his basement and used it from time-to-time for many years. About 2003 most of this original basement trackage was sold to club member Kevin Lee who lives in Northern California near the town of Yreka. It is truly amazing that after all of these many years, a large portion of Vic Shattock's famous basement railroad trackage still exists!

Vic was not the only one using the track as many other steam aficionados frequently visited the basement railroad and brought their own engines to run. Folks like Fred Braasch, Al Forst, Ralph McChesney, Harold Collins, Fred Daly, Frank Dee, Charles Garbett and Walter Brown. There were plenty of non-live steamers too who came to watch the proceedings. Even the press got into the act where the concept of a scenic steam operation in someone's basement being the basis of several articles in the printed media. No television in those days, of course!

The number of visitor's questions like "How do you get started?", "What do they run on?", "Where do you get your Kits?" began to become somewhat overwhelming. So Vic Shattock, Fred Braasch and Charles "Budge" Garbett decided that the thing to do was to form a club and put out the requested information to help other interested hobbyists get started.

All of the publicity that Vic received from numerous sources over the years led to Vic's basement becoming a magnet that attracted model railroaders and he conducted classes (clinics really) complete with a blackboard on a large easel. He used ordinary white chalk to draw out designs for making piston valve cylinders, check valves, pumps, boilers, mechanical lubricators, whistles and so forth. The floor of the basement was usually covered with a thick layer of freshly obtained sawdust from the S.P. wood working mill in West Oakland. Long wooden benches were spaced around the south end of the basement room for visitors and members to sit on. There was a large ornate ashtray on a bronze stand that stood in the middle of the floor as a courtesy to those who cared to smoke during the meeting. These were originally from an old railroad Pullman car.

Around July 1936 the Live Steam modelers in the area got together and started their own organization. Fred Braasch had a suggestion for the new club's name: **Golden Gate Live Steamers.**

In a film made about his basement layout, Vic is shown working on his six-inch Atlas lathe which together with his Atlas drill press seems to have constituted the extent of his machine shop. Compare that to the shop equipment of some of our present club members! Whatever the lack of equipment may seem to imply, Vic turned out a series of beautifully built engines in 1/2" and 3/4" scales.

MODEL RAILROADER author "Boomer Pete" visited Vic's layout and wrote about his visit in the January 1939 MR. He wrote that

“All model railroaders are brought up to believe that live steam and model railroading are two distinct hobbies.” And went on to note, “But, I’ve just found out this is not always the case. I put in an evening last month as brakeman on a pike that really ran trains, did switching, included scenery in the layout and was in every way a true model railroad — but the motive power was honest-to-gosh steam.”

In these sentences, Boomer Pete summed up the unique quality of Vic Shattock’s layout.

“There were 12 turnouts, including a double-slip switch, all hand-laid with scale 110-pound rail specially made for Vic by the O-scale manufacturer, Lobaugh. There was a working turntable, a five-stall roundhouse, a ballasted deck trestle, one steel girder bridge, two signal bridges, one working water column, one working water tank, three tunnels and an automatic block signal system.”

Rolling stock included 22 scratch-built freight cars and a Harriman Coach. The wood bodies of the freight cars were made from Kraft cheese boxes and the tanks on the tank cars were from old carbon tetrachloride bottles. Vic’s Pacific Fruit Express refrigerator cars could keep your sandwiches cold if you dropped ice cubes through the working ice hatches!

The motive power was all scratch-built by Vic. There were six ½ inch scale, alcohol-fired, SP prototype steam locomotives. Two (#3217 and #3254) were 2-8-2 Mikados and two (#2422-1, built in 1929 and #2422-2, built later) were 4-6-2 Pacifics (the number “2422” was Vic’s favorite locomotive number and he used it several times). There were also #2753, a 2-8-0 Consolidation and #1207, an 0-6-0 switcher. Locomotive #1207 was stolen from Vic’s basement in 1946 and has not been seen since.

These steam locomotives were manually controlled and fired by a vaporizing alcohol burner system of Vic’s design. The locomotives averaged about 42 inches in length and weighed from 70 to 80 pounds each. All were highly detailed scale models, had axle-driven water pumps, mechanical lubricators and ran on 85 to 100 pounds of pressure. Ken Shattock (Vic’s grandson) describes them as “works of art” and noted that to build them Vic had to know “... general machine work, tool and die making, pattern making, sheet metal work, woodworking, blue print and layout work, you name it.” He told Ken that he read everything he could find on the subjects he was interested in.

Vic and his layout were often the subjects of local media reports and he and his layout were filmed by Movietone News. In October 1938 Vic took the train to New York City with one of his locomotives (SP #3217) where he steamed her up on the weekly “Hobby Lobby” radio program. He was involved with an exhibit at the 1939 - 1940 Golden Gate International Exposition on Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay and later loaned a locomotive as centerpiece for a luncheon meeting of the famed Bohemian Club.

Here is a listing of technical articles that Vic contributed to various magazines in the early years. This is only a partial listing:

Victor Shattock Bibliography

1. "An Alcohol Burner for Live Steam Locomotives" by Victor T. Shattock; *The Modelmaker*, February – March 1939, Page 87
2. "A Denatured Alcohol Burner" for 2 ½" gauge locomotives operated by Steam. by Victor T. Shattock; *The Miniature Locomotive*, March – April 1953, Page 19
3. "Piston Packing" by Vic Shattock ("Out in the Tool Shed" Department); *The Miniature Locomotive*, January – February 1954, Page 22
4. "Mechanical Lubricator" by Victor T. Shattock; *The Miniature Locomotive*, May – June 1952, Page 19
5. "Helpful Hints" by Vic Shattock; "Split Smokebox" access; *The Miniature Locomotive* (date unreadable). Splitting the smokebox so that the top half is removable for better access to piping and feedwater/superheater appliances.

As interest grew it became clear that an outdoor track where larger passenger hauling engines could run was a desirable goal, although full achievement of that goal was many years down the road. In the meanwhile several temporary outdoor installations were built. One notable example was for Southern Pacific and the Yardmaster's Association on 74th Avenue in Oakland. An 80 foot track was installed where an engine ran back and forth hauling children, succeeding at least in part to bring the existence of the club to the public's attention. Club member Larry Duggan wore himself out lifting children on-and-off the riding cars.

In 1939, an "Industrial Arts Teachers" convention was held in downtown Oakland, California in the ballroom of the old Hotel Oakland at 14th & Alice Streets. Several members of the Golden Gate Live Steamers displayed their models and a portable track built to ½ inch scale, 2 ½ inch gauge was constructed in such a way to allow for one or two of Vic's locomotives to pull flat cars to-and-from the hotel kitchen and return with plates of food for the convention delegates which was one of the special highlights of the convention. In the March 1940 *Model Craftsman* magazine there is a photograph of the live steamers who participated in this exhibit as well as a detailed listing of the locomotives and rolling stock that they had on display.

In 1940 club member Loren Thacker built an outdoor track in the back garden of his home at 1620 Walnut Avenue in Stockton, California. Loren used "keystock" for rails which were spiked down to the cross ties using finishing nails. This track was used not only by Loren, but was frequented by many of the other club members for it provided a venue where passengers could be hauled, something that was not possible on the basement layout. Once World War II started there was of course no opportunity to advance the club's plans to construct a permanent outdoor track so those plans had to be put on hold. Basement activities continued however, sometimes with an un-anticipated result.

It seems that the suspicions of the police and other authorities had been aroused by the number of cars parked in front of Vic's house. During World War II the authorities were always on the lookout for meetings where subversive activities were being planned

against the security of the nation. Every Friday night and other times as well, visitors were always streaming into Vic's basement to see the trains. Usually they parked out on the street or in the back lot of the Signal gas station next door and walked down a side walkway to the back of the house, usually in the dark since there was no external walkway lighting. They would skip the front stairs and completely ignore the operation of Vic's door bell to let him know that any visitors were coming by. Perhaps it did seem like there **were** some subversives planning an insurrection or some sort of underhanded activity within! Vic then started noticing that a couple of strangers were too well dressed to be potential live steam enthusiasts when they started attending his Friday night meetings now-and-then. One night they arrived extra early before other visitors came and in a private meeting with Vic identified themselves. They told him that someone had reported the suspicious activity but after making several visits they admitted that they could see that nothing wrong was happening. They later made several more visits because they developed an interest in seeing Vic's trains operate.

During most of the 1940's, club members Vic Shattock and Walter Brown were co-chairmen of the Live Steam Standards Committee for the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA). In 1947, the NMRA held their annual National Convention in Oakland, California and on one of the group's "Layout Tours", the convention delegates were bused to Vic's home so that they could see his famous layout in operation. So many delegates attended this tour that some had to stand outside the house and peer thru the basement windows at the live steam operations. As one old time visitor to Vic's basement fondly recalled:

"Open the Windows" --- "Light Off The Boilers" --- "Run Trains"

Yes, it was just that simple and sadly it is all gone today, with only great memories remaining!

In the mid-to-late 1940's the search was on for a suitable piece of land on which a permanent outdoor track could be laid. Eventually the club got word of an area in Redwood Regional Park in Oakland, California that might be available for constructing a miniature steam railroad facility. It was located at 7861-A Redwood Road, a couple of miles east of the intersection with Skyline Blvd. Upon inspection, it was found that a lot of vegetation had to be cleared before a real survey could be done. But it was a suitable site and it was available for use by the club under the auspices of the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) of the Park Department, whose intent was apparently to provide an entertaining spectacle for the public at large. The late club member Frank Dee was chiefly responsible for negotiating with the Board of Directors of the Park District.

But where was the money going to come from for all of the necessary materials to build a track at the Redwood Park site and how much labor would be required to build such a monumental project as initially planned? During the basement days of the club dues were ten cents a month (mostly for coffee and donuts) but often ran in the red, so dues were raised to one dollar a month or ten dollars per year. Even so, the coffers were hardly full by the time the decision was made to move to Redwood Park. So it was decided to use the basement railroad as a fund raiser and ask visitors & spectators to make a donation to the new track fund. Many would give a dollar or so, sometimes a ten

dollar bill and occasionally something even larger. After a visit by a local scout troop, the lady in charge sent the club a check for \$120, quite a sum in those days! Fortunately the club still had extremely good connections with many of the people at Southern Pacific which included some twenty-six managers who were Honorary Members of the Golden Gate Live Steamers. These connections were to prove invaluable later on.

Within the club there were many discussions as to the type of facilities that should build at the new site. Most members favored having an elevated High Track so that they could ride behind their engines sitting "side saddle" on a flat car behind the locomotive. Remember that in those days there were far fewer large engines than there are today.

The need arose for a good supply of lumber for the High Track construction, so the thought was that maybe one of our good friends at S.P. would be willing to supply Vic Shattock with the ties, all 150 of them! The S.P. Roadmaster told Vic that S.P. doesn't give away or sell railroad cross ties to their customers, let alone a scale live steam railroad club. Vic replied that he wasn't interested in their customers and that the ties didn't have to have new ones, just good ones. The Roadmaster responded "You have your nerve!". "Even if we wanted to help you," said the Roadmaster, "where would we get 150 ties from?" Vic replied "there is a couple of box cars currently sitting in West Oakland Yard containing approximately two hundred ties that came from a ballast deck trestle being taken apart in Cordelia, California". The Roadmaster looked surprised and responded "How do you know that?". Vic replied back that "the GGLS have their *spies* out watching for such availability!"

After some discussion S.P. came through but there was still the question of how to get the ties to the track site. Well Vic was a foreman with S.P. and had two trucks at his disposal and they were put to good use. The trucks backed up to the boxcars in the yard and the ties rolled off onto the truck one at a time. Then the trucks were driven to Redwood Park by S.P. employees, unloaded and stacked neatly to greet the club members when they arrived at the site the following weekend. As such the ties were only suitable for use as high track beams when stretched end-to-end, so more *spare* lumber was acquired from S.P.'s various facilities and sawn into triangular piers or bases on which the ties would rest. Some of this *spare* lumber came from the large bridge timbers that became available upon the dismantling of the overhead trestle approaches to 16th Street Station in Oakland, which formerly hosted the S.P.'s Red Electric trains of the 'IER' system. Some of these massive timbers were rather bent/twisted and contained a lot of grit in the wood. They had to be planed flat & cut to size and this was accomplished at the West Oakland Woodworking Mill of the Southern Pacific, wearing out five bandsaw blades in the process!

Construction at the Redwood Park site got started in mid-1948. Once all of the heavy vegetation was cleared away by the Park District, club member Scotty Gordon of the S.P.'s Engineering department went to work and did a complete survey of the site. He then drew up contour maps of the site and the Park District performed all the required grading at no cost to the club. The first track built at Redwood Park was the High Track that was used for the smaller gauge engines and it was all that was necessary in those early days. It is a tri-gauge 2 ½", 3 ½" and 4 ¾" track that used scale railroad ties for the roadbed and these scale cross ties were fastened across the top width of the prototype

supporting ties. Originally the aluminum rails were fastened to the ties by drilling holes in the bottom flanges of the rails and driving in screw nails. This method was later abandoned but the screw nail system kept the original track in perfect alignment for many years.

Through out all of the construction, the people at S.P. were amazingly supportive, providing a planer for squaring up the lumber and many other tools that eased the workload. They even provided the redwood for the scale cross ties, cut them (7,500!), banded them, packaged them and delivered them to the track site. So how was the High Track assembled? With nails supplied by S.P. of course!

At the opening ceremony at the track in 1950, someone mentioned to S.P. Assistant General Manager Moody that there appeared to be an awful lot of S.P. material being used by this private hobbyist club and was he aware of that? Mr. Moody replied that he was fully aware of that and it had his personal approval!

Most of the money that had been saved by the club was allocated to buying the rails for the new Redwood Park track and that left little for other purchases. It was at this time that our good connections to S.P. officials paid off again. A dinner meeting was held with them at Oakland's Belini's Restaurant on Telegraph Avenue at 40th Street and then again in the basement meeting room of Vic Shattock. It showed them how worthy the effort was, that it deserved their support and adding that any help that they could give would be greatly appreciated. They seem to have been so impressed that they got their engineers to survey the site, put in the stakes for the layout, prepared the contour maps and submitted them to the Park District for its approval! Without S.P.'s help the Redwood track may never have got underway or at the very least it would have been delayed for a long time.

During construction of the original High Track at Redwood Regional Park and for quite a number of years immediately following completion, the site came to be known among its many members as "**The Project**".

As was to be expected, there was some opposition from other users of the park land, particularly from the local Horsemen's Association as to why the club should have the use of all that nice, flat land for free. But after a series of meetings with other interested park user groups, things were eventually brought to a relatively amicable state and the club was allowed to proceed with its plans.

The High Track was 1,330 feet long and had a transfer table about six-foot, six-inches long that was used to move the engines from the firing-up tracks to the operating track. The track was officially opened on September 2, 1950 at which time the Golden Spike Ceremony was performed. A miniature golden spike was jointly driven by Mr. E.D. Moody, Assistant General Manager of the Southern Pacific Company and Mr. John MacDonald, President of the park district Board of Directors. A red ribbon stretched across the track was then cut by Mrs. Irene Evans, one of Vic's daughters who was employed in S.P.'s West Oakland Signal Office. Following the ribbon cutting portion of the ceremony a parade of locomotives took place, led by Jim Keith's 4-6-4 Hudson locomotive driven by his son Sid. Jim and Sid were from the Southern California Live

Steamers organization. There was a somewhat disturbing incident on that opening day where one of the engines fell off the High Track together with the engineer! Fortunately neither were badly hurt, with the engineer suffering a few scratches and the engine a couple of bent pipes. Both were steaming well later in the day. Such incidents is, happily, extremely rare and to this day High Track engineers refuse to wear bulky padding whilst driving their engines.

Once the track was complete the club had to show the Park Department that they had been justified in allowing the club to build on this site. At the time there were only 2 or 3 members with suitable engines so they were put to good use in showing the public the possibilities of hauling freight & passengers with small live steam locomotives. Members Vic Shattock, Al Forst, Harry Dixon, Tim Reardon, Walter Brown & a handful of others kept the rails shiny and the interest up among members & the public. As time went on, more and more members had completed engines that ran on the track, creating ever greater interest for the public.

In the early days in Redwood Regional Park Dick Walpole was the general manager of the Park District and at times he sometimes seemed hard-to-please in some of the requests he would come up with now and then. But on the local level, Wes Adams was the Park Supervisor and resided within the park in a single family home situated within earshot of the club's track. He was a wonderful person to work with and very cooperative as to certain requests from the club.

In 1954 the club began to publish the Callboy, its monthly newsletter, which it has continued to do to the present day. The late member Larry Duggan came up with the idea of the Callboy and named it as well. It is a record of the club's achievements, a fountain of technical information and a somber list of club members that have passed on.

In 1955 the club hosted the Model Engineer Show in the 3rd floor ballroom of the Oakland Auditorium building, now known as the Henry J. Kaiser Convention Center. The dates were May 13th, 14th and 15th. Member John Sweet appeared on KGO-TV's "San Francisco Tonight" program to promote the show. A portable track, built by Harry Cook and Bill Anderson, was set up in the studio for Bill Brower to run his Mastodon engine on, while Harry ran his Tich. Both the TV appearance and the show itself served to promote the interests of the club and no doubt helped to bring more member into the fold.

The April 1955 Callboy noted that there would be 33 finished locomotives, 20 unfinished locomotives, 32 stationary engines, 6 boilers, 16 boats and 20 other miscellaneous models and parts as well as 80 feet of track, planes, tools and other items at the show. As an additional promotion, the Emporium in San Francisco and Capwell's in Oakland had window displays of club models. The 80 feet of portable track was utilized in the Ballroom location of the show to give rides to the general public and members Vic Shattock and Al Forst came forward with their 3/4" scale Pacific and Atlantic locomotives, respectively, to fulfill this responsibility. The show was officially opened by the Vice-Consul of the British Consulate in San Francisco and profits from the show were used to purchase materials to build the new clubhouse/station building in Redwood Regional

Park. This building was designed and laid out by the member Bill Smith who was employed by the City of Oakland.

It was in 1955 that dues were set at \$10.00 a year. A measure of prices at that time can be noted that Lester Friend's Yankee Shop catalog of engine castings and supplies cost all of 25 cents.

By August 1956 discussions were underway as to whether the proposed ground track at Redwood Park should be 7 ¼" or 7 ½" gauge and it was at this time that Vic Shattock was asked to write a history of the club. A few months later in November, Vic celebrated his 50th wedding anniversary.

It is easy to forget that as well as being the oldest live steam club in the country, the Golden Gate Live Steamers has had other notables that it can be proud of. In the August 1957 issue of the Callboy it stated that the club had the longest 2 ½" gauge track in the world!

In September 1957 it was announced that 7 ½" gauge had taken hold as the standard on the West Coast and that would be the gauge that the club would use at Redwood Park and that adoption has led to one major conflict over the years. One cannot travel from coast-to-coast (or overseas) with a large scale locomotive and expect to be able to run on all of the tracks belonging to all live steam clubs. In fact only the two smallest passenger hauling gauges (2 ½", 3 ½") are universal through out the world.

By June 1959 work had commenced on pouring concrete piers for the High Track at Redwood Park to replaced the wood piers that were beginning to show their age. And because ten 1 ½" scale engines were being complete or were under construction, a large portion of the original dog-bone pattern of the High Track had to be re-designed to provide right-of-way space for the new ground level track for the larger engines.

By August 1959, twelve concrete piers had been cast and there was a call for some muscle power to be used in the removal of the wood piers. Members Ken Shattock and Walter Oellerich came forward and carried out this nasty, dirty duty at the far end of the existing layout. Member Bill Brower praised Ken and Walter for doing this rather heavy task as it seems that only a few members were doing all the work. Isn't that a familiar cry?!

At the September 1959 meeting John Sweet announced that the Park Department had placed some fencing around the facility at Redwood Park to provide some measure of crowd control since the club was becoming popular enough to require such restraining measures.

The Fall Meet of 1959 had a low attendance, both by live steam members and the public. This was blamed on being too little advance publicity, a conscious decision by the club's members since it was felt that previous meets had been too popular with the public that leading to crowd control problems. Perhaps the club had gone too far in reducing the promotion of the event.

A letter from the famous LBSC was read at the October 1959 meeting. He claimed to have made and given away, 181 of his standard size injectors. He also reported that some of the Welsh coal that he had been getting was of poor quality and that even at the best of times the quality was very variable. Over the years there were a number of communications from this well known writer on building model locomotives although he hated the term *model* when applied to his designs!

Regarding the subject of "Welsh Steam Coal" in the small nugget size, member John Sweet arranged for individual orders to be taken from club members who desired to use this type of coal for fuel in their locomotives. He then pooled the orders together and placed a large order for several sacks of the product with the National Coal Board in the United Kingdom. The sacks of coal arrived by freighter in San Francisco Bay several weeks later.

At the December meeting there was a lengthy discussion on the potential arrangement of the ground track at Redwood Park. There were four schemes presented:

1. A forty-foot minimum radius continuous track around the existing high track.
2. A fifty-foot minimum radius continuous track around the existing high track. This scheme would require a trestle and moving the road.
3. A seventy-five foot minimum radius continuous track with long trestles across the creek and back.
4. Two single tracks side by side with 30' turntables at each end, plus firing up and loading bays behind the station.

After a great deal of back and forth argument, scheme 1 was adopted.

At the January 1961 meeting the question of financing the construction of the ground track at Redwood Park was discussed. Several members had investigated this matter and had concluded that some \$1,384.50 was required to cover the cost of purchasing rails, ties, concrete, etc. There was a general agreement to proceed with the purchases as the work progressed.

On February 3, 1961 the **LAST MEETING** of the Golden Gate Live Steamers was held in Vic Shattock's basement. The house had been sold and Vic and his family had to vacate and be out by April of that year. The railroad was dismantled and placed in storage for a while and later on certain locomotives and rolling stock & accessories were disposed of in various manners. This was a very sad ending to a live steam empire created by a very congenial man considered by some to be a genius in his field.

The Callboy for May 1961 reported that construction of the ground track at Redwood Park was underway. Such a simple statement is inadequate in describing the amount of planning and labor that went into this enterprise, mostly by a hardy few of the members. The ground at the site was not exactly pool table level but was sufficient to start building on because of the extensive grading done by the Park District many years earlier. The

completion of the dual-gauge ground level track at Redwood Park was celebrated by the driving of the Golden Spike in June 1963.

The Move to Tilden

By the end of 1962 it seemed that the club had only just settled into Redwood Park when the question arose as to the possibility of moving to Tilden Regional Park in the Berkeley hills. William Penn Mott, General Manager of the Park District, gave a presentation at the December meeting in which he discussed the pros-and-cons of such a move.

The principle problem of remaining at Redwood Park was that there was a very limited useable level area for track expansion where even the existing facilities were somewhat cramped. By contrast Tilden Park would offer a much more spacious layout and the Park Department supplied a simple topographic map of the proposed Tilden area site so that some terrain measurements could be made.

The proposed site at the Tilden Park was located in the hills of Berkeley, California at the intersection of Grizzly Peak Blvd & Lomas Cantadas. It is a former location used by the U.S. Army for their NIKE missile program to provide a defense from our enemies around the San Francisco Bay Area and included a three-story concrete bunker building that was used by the Army as a communication center.

By April 1968 the decision had been made to move to Tilden Park even though such a move would require a great deal of effort in building the new facilities after only a few years of the arduous work done at Redwood Park. Suggestions were made that the High Track at Tilden Park be made lower so that straddle riding cars could be used. This lower height would prevent the *height-challenged* individuals amongst us from having to *Jump-into-the saddle* with a high High Track! But it was recognized that a lower track would necessitate building new track supports so the decision was made to keep the existing track height and the existing concrete track supports reused.

The years went by as the club continued to reside at the Redwood Park site although there were frequent planning sessions as to what should be done at Tilden Park. Arguments for and against having a dual-gauge ground track at Tilden were eventually resolved with the decision to transfer the existing dual-gauge track from Redwood Park to Tilden Park but to make all further extensions 7 ½" gauge only. And the final decision was to make the outside public-hauling track single-gauge and the inner loops dual-gauge.

In May of 1965 the club continues to run at Redwood Park and the Callboy reports that an air compressor had been donated to the club. Discussion ensued as to whether to install it at Redwood Park or to wait and install it at Tilden Park when the club moved to the new site. These were the transitional years for the club.

It was not until the Fall and Winter of 1971 that the move to Tilden was finally started. There was a tremendous amount of work to be done even though the Park Department had graded most of the site and installed drainage because in those early years certain areas of Tilden Park (which is now the track) could become flooded after heavy rains.

By December of 1972 the Callboy reported that the ground level steaming bays had been completed at Tilden Park. Construction work continued on for several more years until in September 1975, the Golden Spike Ceremony was performed before an audience of several hundred people and the attending complement of more than forty locomotives! This ceremony also dedicated the completion of the Heintz Loop, named after Ralph Heintz who donated some 4,000 feet of track and other materials to the Tilden Park project.

At a special meet in 1975, under the club presidency of Lou Bradas, several different individuals took a turn at “tapping” the Golden Spike to complete the new Tilden Park facilities. One of those individuals given this honor was club Treasurer Ken Shattock, the late Vic Shattock’s grandson.

For those members who joined the club after the completion of the major Tilden facilities it is difficult to imagine what a huge enterprise its construction was where thousands of man-hours went into both the planning and the building of this project. This was spearheaded by such notables as Bill Brower, Bob Byers, Jim McDaniel, Dick Thomas, Louis Lawrence, Art Stewart, Frank Larimer, Blair Phillips, John Sweet, John Curtis and a host of others, not all whom are with us today. Two other people should be singled out for their great contribution to the Tilden Park track. Louis Romani, who together with his crew built the clubhouse complete with toilets and kitchen and Frank Larimer, who was boss and slave driver over the whole Tilden Park project.

In 1973, the club participated in the “Oakland Hobby Show” which was held in the arena section of the Oakland Auditorium and was sponsored by the Parks & Recreation Department of the City of Oakland. A small number of locomotives and rolling stock were on display for the Public to admire and the booth was staffed by members Ken Shattock, Jim McDaniel and the late Gary Smith. Also in 1973, member Ken Shattock (Vic’s grandson) was appointed Secretary of the Western Region of the International Brotherhood of Live Steamers (IBLS) by outgoing secretary Harry Dixon.

Unfortunately our founder, Vic Shattock, did not live to see the Golden Spike ceremony of the newly completed railroad complex in Tilden Park in 1975 having passed on in April 1974. But his name still lives on with a memorial plaque that adorns the side of the car barn and it is hoped that the name will not soon be forgotten but will continue to be revered by all present and future club members. In May 1974, Suzie Shattock became the club’s first official woman member and is the wife of member Ken Shattock, grandson of club founder, Vic Shattock.

For members who have joined the club after those years of major construction ending in 1975, it may seem that the situation has remained relatively quite apart from such projects as the building of the roundhouse. But those with long memories or those with a large collection of Callboys will be able to recall many of the proposed construction projects, some of which actually were completed. At the end of 1984 there was a proposal to build a heavy lift engine hoist since it was observed that the existing hoist was somewhat overwhelmed by the weight of the larger engines. By some sleight-of-hand, someone acquired a hydraulic ram lift from a gasoline service station, a suitable tbeam with track was built and in short order a new heavy lift hoist was put in place. In

1985 there was a proposal to build a Gauge 1 track on the hill at the back of the clubhouse and there was enough enthusiasm expressed and energy applied so that this project was completed in November of 1986. However after a few runs with a fair selection of engines on display, the enthusiasm waned and the track fell into disuse where very little evidence of its existence remains.

In 1985 there was a major change in the venue of our monthly meetings from Laurel School to St. Christophers Church Hall. This move was in part due to the fact that on several occasions members were left locked out of the school when the janitor failed to appear. This could hardly be tolerated when so many members had to travel considerable distances to get to the meetings so the club had to change its meeting location a few times more. Presently the membership meetings are held on the 2nd Sunday of each month at 10 AM at the GGLS clubhouse at their Tilden Park site.

A banner year for construction started in March 1986 with a proposal to build a pedestrian bridge from the parking lot to the station. There was merit in this proposal since visitors were forever asking the question "How do we get to the station to take a ride on the train?" and were invariably disappointed to find that they have to walk down to the Redwood Valley Railroad station to get to the club track. Member Stan James designed a suitable steel truss bridge and submitted drawings of it to the club for their approval. There was general agreement that the scheme was viable, so the drawings were presented to the Park Department by member Herm Volz for their approval. Unfortunately they rejected it because there was no provision for wheelchair access, clearly impossible on a bridge of this nature, so the project was dropped.

In September of 1986 Loren Bryon and Bill Schaefer proposed a steep graded loop for use by geared locomotives on a hilly area out in the Heintz Loop. A preliminary rough survey was done and it was concluded that it was probably possible to build such a loop but that at least two bridges would have to be built across the existing ground tracks in order to get track radii that even geared engines could traverse. One of the bridges would have to be of approximately 50-foot span and again a drawing of a suitable design of a through truss bridge was presented to the club members. This time though there was no immediate need of Park approval as the interest in the project simply faded away!

This was the year that the proposal to build a roundhouse was submitted to the membership, only to have it go down in defeat and that was not the first time that such a building had been proposed and rejected. But after a few years the feelings of the membership changed and the roundhouse was finally approved and construction got under way. Although there were some bad feelings expressed by some members over the method of financing its construction, those members who now use this facility have nothing but praise for it. The area in front of the roundhouse building has been enhanced in recent years by the inclusion of a number of scale sized buildings and structures, as well as the compressor house to allow members to steam up their locomotive without having to drag them to the steaming bays near the clubhouse. It seems amazing now that there ever was any objection to this facility!

As the years pass the activities and needs of the passenger hauling of the public aspect of the club seem to grow ever larger. At times the public train loading platform were often

subjected to hours under the broiling sun, a suggestion was made that a canopy be built over the station to protect the public and train crew from the elements in April 1986. This turned out to be one of those projects that went very quickly, at least by our standards and January 1987 saw it completed. The club has acquired two engines that are used almost solely for the purpose of public train hauling and one or the other is in use for this purpose nearly every weekend. In addition some members with large engines are frequently seen using them to haul the public much to the club's benefit. An then there are the club members who give their time as station masters, conductos and engineers on the trains. Without these individuals the club's coffers would be less full than they are because voluntary donations by the riding public constitute a considerable portion of the club's income.

The club's 40th anniversary was celebrated on the July 4th Holiday weekend in 1976, the 50th in 1986 and in 1996 the club celebrated the Diamond Jubilee of its founding. There have been more than sixty exciting and interesting years and it seems unlikely that Vic Shattock ever envisaged such a lengthy existence for the club that he started in the basement of his house. But now that the club has journeyed this far, it would appear quite likely that the club will one day celebrate its centennial but not to get ahead of ourselves, we should give thanks for what the club has at Tilden Park and the fellowship of those members who enjoy it.

In the year 2011, the club will celebrate its 75th Anniversary! The **Steamers** have come a long way!

Editors note

In compiling the information that has gone into this brief history of the Golden Gate Live Steamers I have made reference to a number of sources, principally the Club's collection of Callboys, but also to a previously written brief history published a number of years ago. I have found a degree of variation of noted facts between these sources, though I doubt that these variations are of great significance to the overall history.

Rough drafts of this document have been submitted to several long time club members for their perusal and comment in the hope that any inconsistencies and inaccuracies will be caught before publication. If such has not been the case I apologize for the errors. The intent has been to provide as complete a history as the currently available information will allow to be written, but with the passing of almost all of the founding members it has been difficult to ensure that complete accuracy has been achieved.

Stan James 1996

Additions, Changes and Corrections :

Ken Shattock July 2007

Editors note (addendum):

Ken Shattock “officially” joined the Golden Gate Live Steamers organization in February 1961. During that same year, he was a member of the GGLS Safety Committee along with member Tom Stambaugh.

However Ken lived with his grandfather (club founder Vic Shattock) from 1948 thru 1961. As a young boy growing up in his native Oakland, California, he attended those Friday night GGLS meetings in Vic’s basement and was exposed to the early day construction activities in Redwood Regional Park for many years. It is his personal memories as well as stories from Vic that have helped him contribute the more detailed facts in the overall founding of the Golden Gate Live Steamers organization. For this, the Club is indebted for this additional information.

Ken Shattock (Vic’s grandson) has produced an historic DVD video for purchase :

VICTOR SHATTOCK STEAM TRAINS ****1938—1968****

The historic motion picture film displayed on this DVD gives the viewer a 30-year overview of the life of the late Victor Shattock of Oakland, California during his active years of affiliation with the Golden Gate Live Steamers.

Part 1. Vic’s famous Live Steam basement railroad in full operation.

Part 2. Loren Thacker’s outdoor 2 ½ inch gauge line—Stockton, Calif.

Part 3. GGLS Gold Spike Ceremony—Redwood Park—1950

Part 4. Brotherhood of Live Steamers Meet—GGLS—1951

Part 5. Various Annual GGLS Meets (Up to about 1968) : Features larger ¾” inch and 1 inch scale locomotives built in later years by “Vic Shattock”

Length of Video: Two Hours .. B&W... Color... Narration... Music...
Detailed program index listing... COST: \$20.00

Contact Ken Shattock direct at keyrouteken@msn.com for further ordering information.