

# Railtown 1897

## State Historic Park



### Our Mission

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



California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park at (209) 984-3953. This publication is available in alternate formats by contacting:

#### CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

P. O. Box 942896

Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

For information call: (800) 777-0369

(916) 653-6995, outside the U.S.

711, TTY relay service

[www.parks.ca.gov/railtown](http://www.parks.ca.gov/railtown)

Discover the many states of California.™



**Railtown 1897**  
**State Historic Park**

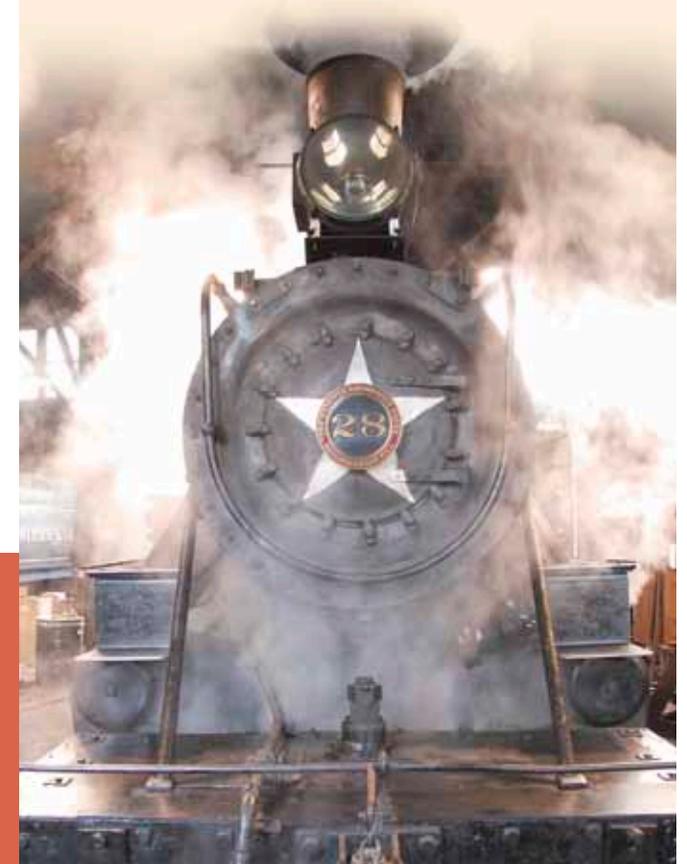
P.O. Box 1250

Jamestown, CA 95327

(209) 984-3953

Cover photo courtesy of The Dunlavey Studio.

*Climb aboard an  
authentic steam  
locomotive and travel  
back to 1897 through miles  
of picturesque meadows  
and an oak-studded,  
“Wild West” landscape.*



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

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

Located about 135 miles east of

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

**PARK HISTORY**

**The Sierra Railway Company**

Incorporated on January 1, 1897, the Sierra Railway Company was the brainchild of Midwesterner Thomas Bullock. Bullock and his fellow investors—San Francisco banker William Crocker, Crocker's brother-in-law Prince Andre Poniatowski, and others—had



*Volunteer Car Host*

lumber and mining interests in the area. The development of a short-line railroad from Oakdale could replace horse-drawn wagons to bring lumber and mining materials to the growing Sacramento and San Francisco areas.

Bullock had owned a failed railroad venture in Arizona that left him with three steam locomotives and several miles of rail.

With the addition of 15 new freight cars, the Sierra Railway was soon moving U.S. mail, passengers and freight.

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



*Interior, first-class observation car*

**The Sierra Railroad Company**

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

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

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

**Railtown 1897 is Born**

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

The attraction has had support from several advocacy groups. The California State Railroad Museum Foundation, an integral partner, has assisted California State Parks in funding important restoration projects. This partnership has brought about the recent restoration of steam locomotive Sierra No. 3, one of the three original locomotives that Thomas Bullock brought with him to California.



*Locomotives stored at roundhouse*



*The Durnlavy Studio*

*Conductor*



*Workers in roundhouse*

days of steam transportation, including three locomotives original to the railroad. The railroad's operations and maintenance trades continue to be preserved.

### EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

Railtown 1897 State Historic Park has a year-round schedule of events, including spring wildflower train rides, guided tours, and holiday celebrations. Some holiday events include patriotic celebrations on Memorial Day and Independence Day. Most of these special events include steam train excursions. Call (209) 984-3953 for a schedule.

### ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

The historic roundhouse and other exhibits are generally accessible. Some assistance may be required with steep ramps or raised flooring details in the depot. One portable restroom is accessible. For updates, call the park or visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

### NEARBY STATE PARKS

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

### POINTS OF INTEREST

- California State Railroad Museum  
111 "I" Street, Sacramento  
(916) 445-6645
- Capital District State Museums and Historic Parks  
(916) 445-7373

### PLEASE REMEMBER

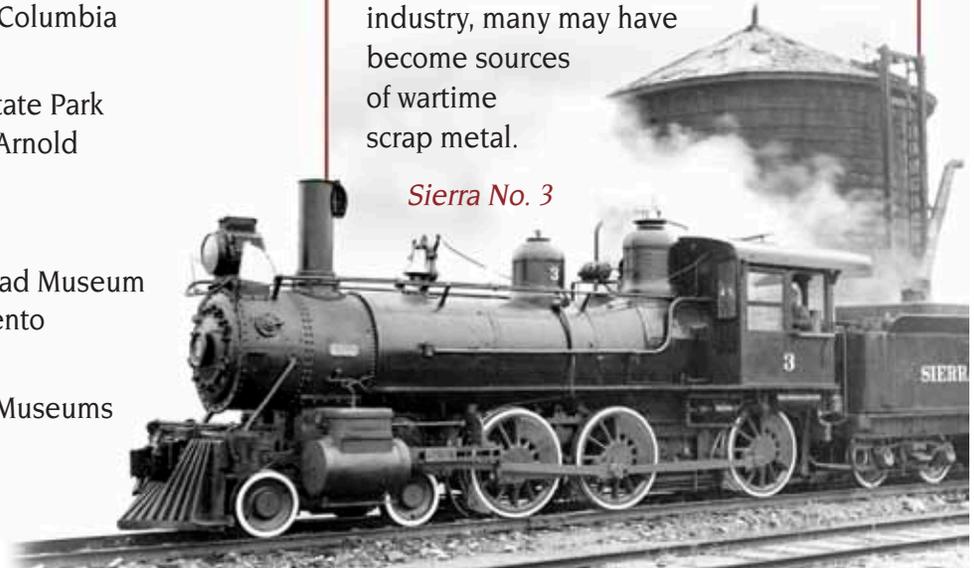
Dogs must be kept on a leash no longer than six feet. Only service animals are allowed on excursions or tours.

### "The Movie Railroad"

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

Between 1919 and the present, the Sierra Railroad would "star" in more than 200 motion pictures, television programs and commercials—including *High Noon*, *Back to the Future III*, *Rawhide*, and *Death Valley Days*. Even during tough economic times, Hollywood helped keep the railway afloat. If not for the vital importance of these venerable locomotives and railroad cars to the film industry, many may have become sources of wartime scrap metal.

*Sierra No. 3*



*Machine shop*

In 1982, California State Parks acquired 26 acres of land between Jamestown and Oakdale, through a gift from Charles Crocker. This acquisition included trackage rights on the Sierra Railroad.

### Railtown Today

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

However, Railtown 1897 offers more than train rides. Visitors will see the historic facilities of a short-line railroad from the

# Railtown 1897 State Historic Park



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