

**MOUNT DIABLO  
COAL MINE  
RAILROADS**

**PITTSBURG RAILROAD**

**BLACK DIAMOND COAL & RAILROAD COMPANY**

**EMPIRE COAL MINE & RAILROAD COMPANY**

**By B. H. Ward**

**The Western Railroader**

*For the Western Railfan*

Booklet 370-E

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### BLACK DIAMOND COAL & RAILROAD COMPANY

### EMPIRE COAL MINE & RAILROAD COMPANY

By B. H. Ward

Thirty miles to the East of San Francisco, the twin peaks of Monte del Diablo rise 3856 feet above sea level to dominate the skyline of that portion of the Coast Range mountains that break to allow the waters of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers to reach San Francisco Bay. Six miles to the northeast of these peaks in deeply gulched foothills, ranging some 1500 to 1700 feet in elevation, lies the site of three coal beds. The coal from these California beds was not the best, being soft, with much ash though capable of considerable heat. Coal from Oregon and Washington was of much better quality, but in time all coal was generally replaced by oil, electricity or natural gas.

Real interest in this area did not begin until 1849 when nearby Pittsburg was platted by William Tecumsh Sherman. The plat was so large that it was referred to as "New York of the Pacific" and the name New York was applied to the slough bordering this plat. In 1851 the government built a cabin on the peak of Mt. Diablo in which a telescope was installed for this was to be the base point for the United States surveys in California.

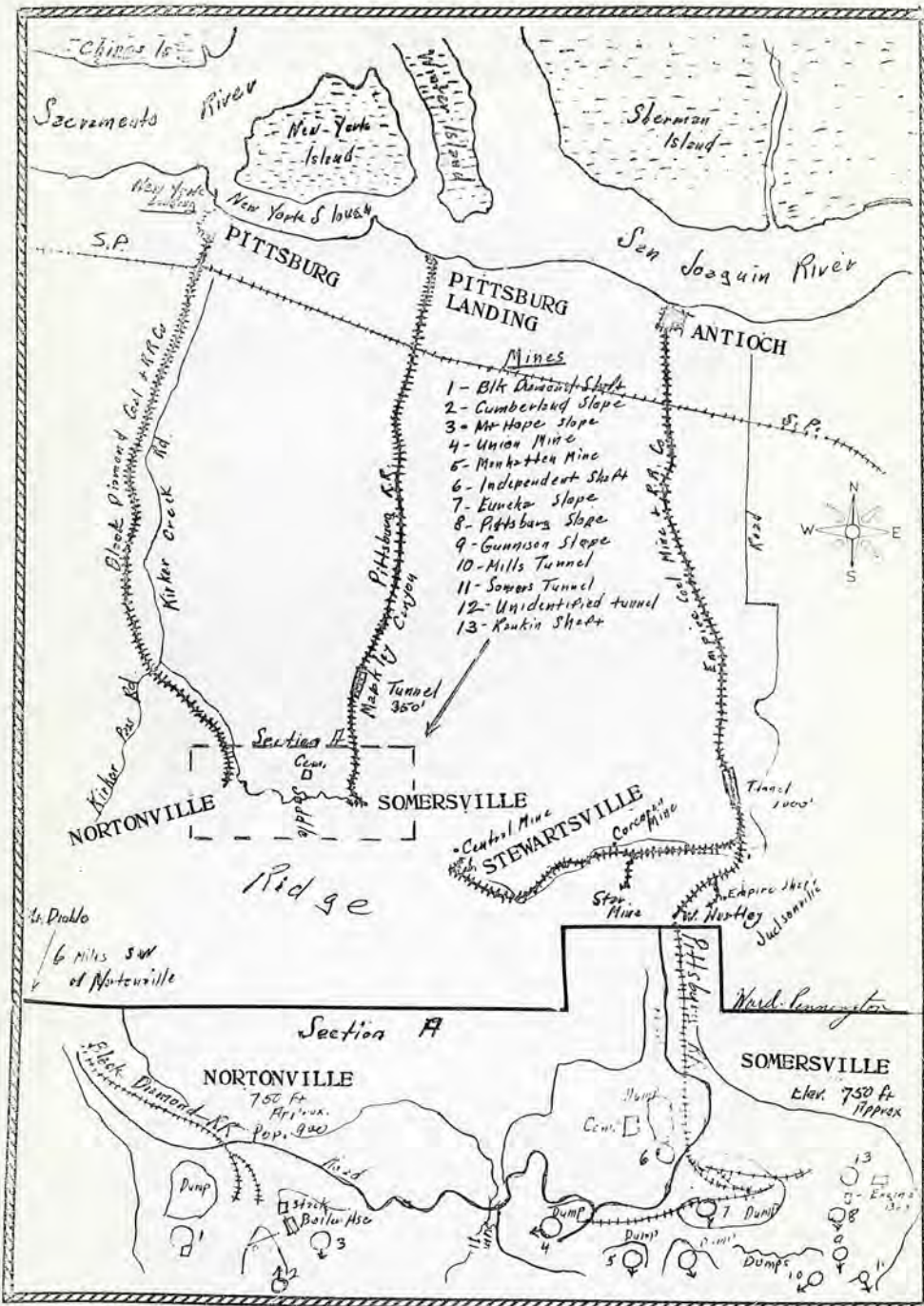
Two stories are told of the finding of the Black Diamond coal which opened the Mt Diablo region. One is that a miner going to Benecia to record the strike of gold at Sutters Mill stumbled over the coal outcropping. The other story is that Francis Somers standing at the rail of a river steamer on his way to the gold diggings saw in the Mt Diablo foothills the same formations that occurred in his native Australia in which coal was being mined.

# SOMERSVILLE

The Union Mine was located in March, 1855 by G. W. Hawhurst in the Somersville basin, site of the future town of Somersville. It was natural that the town be named for Francis Somers for he had returned to confirm his suspicions of coal in the area. Mr. Hawhurst had also worked in the Mother Lode then came to the Mt Diablo fields, a transition from quartz mining to coal. The mine tunnel, properly called a "slope" went down a decline of 37 degrees. Its length was 417 feet to a level cross tunnel, called a "gangway" along the face of the uppermost bed of coal called the "Clark Vein". Subsequent counterlopes and gangways carried the workings down to "Little Vein", then finally to "Black Diamond Vein", the thickest and lowest bed.

The founding of Somersville took place early in 1859 at which time the Manhattan Tunnel and Eureka Slope were already in operation. Both had been located by Francis Somers with the aid of John T. Cruikshank, Samuel Adams and H.S. Hawhurst. This group had just previously located the Black Diamond and Cumberland mines at nearby Nortonville where the coal was sacked and teamed out to the river for shipment. Also at Somersville the Pittsburg mine had been put into production in December 1860. The Manhattan mine used a level tunnel to enter the Clark and Black Diamond veins, while the Eureka ran down a slope to the Clark and Little veins as did the Pittsburg Mine. The Pittsburg people penetrated the Black Diamond bed with a counter slope but found the vein to thin to be mined despite that adjacent mines at either side of its property could mine this vein profitably. This will indicate the irregular nature of the Mt. Diablo coal fields. It is interesting to note that a heavy slippage completely shut off the Somersville coal seams with those in the Stewartsville area to the east. To the west a severe fault distorted the seams with those of the Nortonville basin.

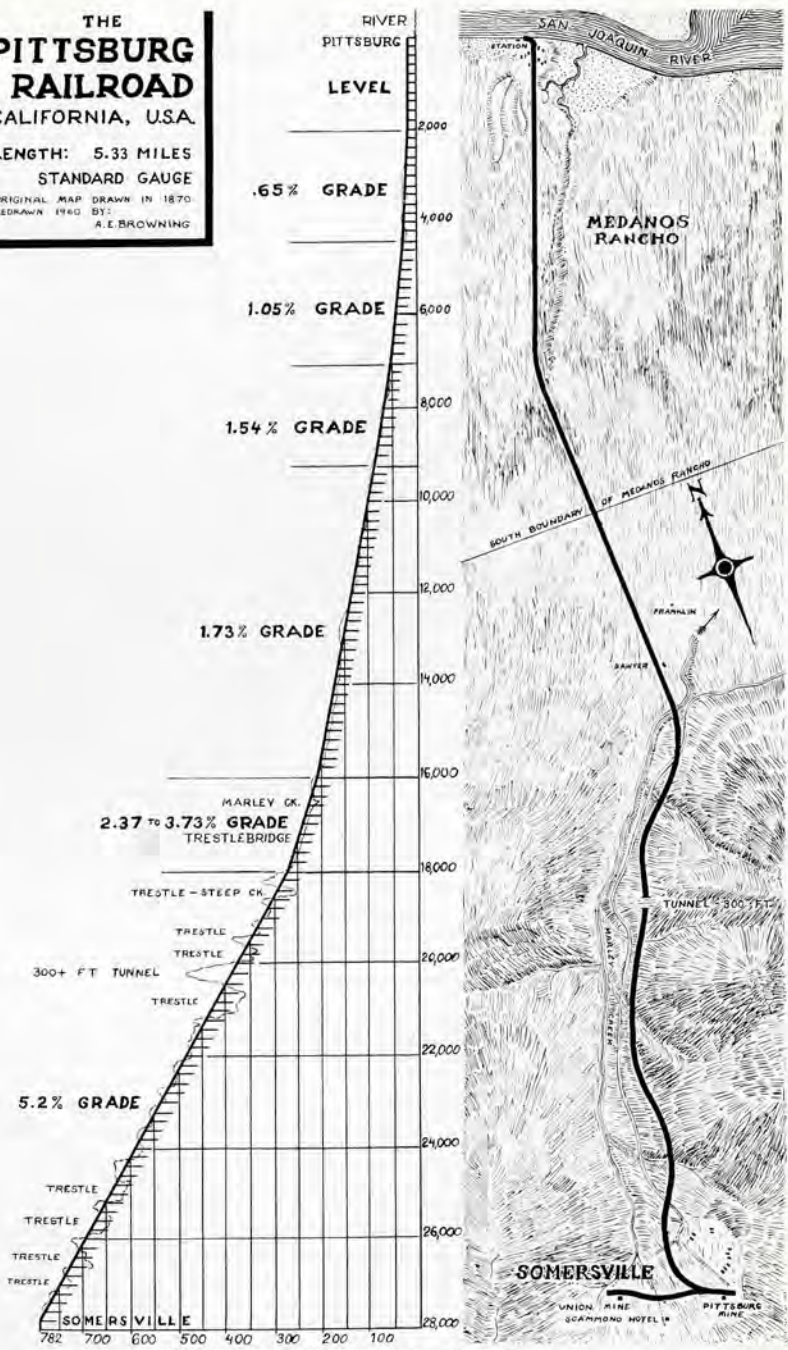
Until the building of the railroad all coal was drayed down to the landing on the San Joaquin River for shipment. In its earliest days it was sacked at the mines before shipment. The railroad came in 1865-1866 when the Pittsburg Railroad Company organized and built its line from Pittsburg Landing to Somersville a distance of about 5½ miles. Completion took place in February 1866 and the following month the first train made its run. Gauge was standard and the weight of the rail was 47 pounds as it wound down the Markley Canyon to the San Joaquin plain and on to the river. Pittsburg Landing, the railroads terminous, is not to be confused with the present city of Pittsburg for the landing was just over two miles to the east. On the



**THE  
PITTSBURG  
RAILROAD**  
CALIFORNIA, U.S.A.

LENGTH: 5.33 MILES  
STANDARD GAUGE

ORIGINAL MAP DRAWN IN 1870  
REDRAWN 1960 BY:  
A. E. BROWNING

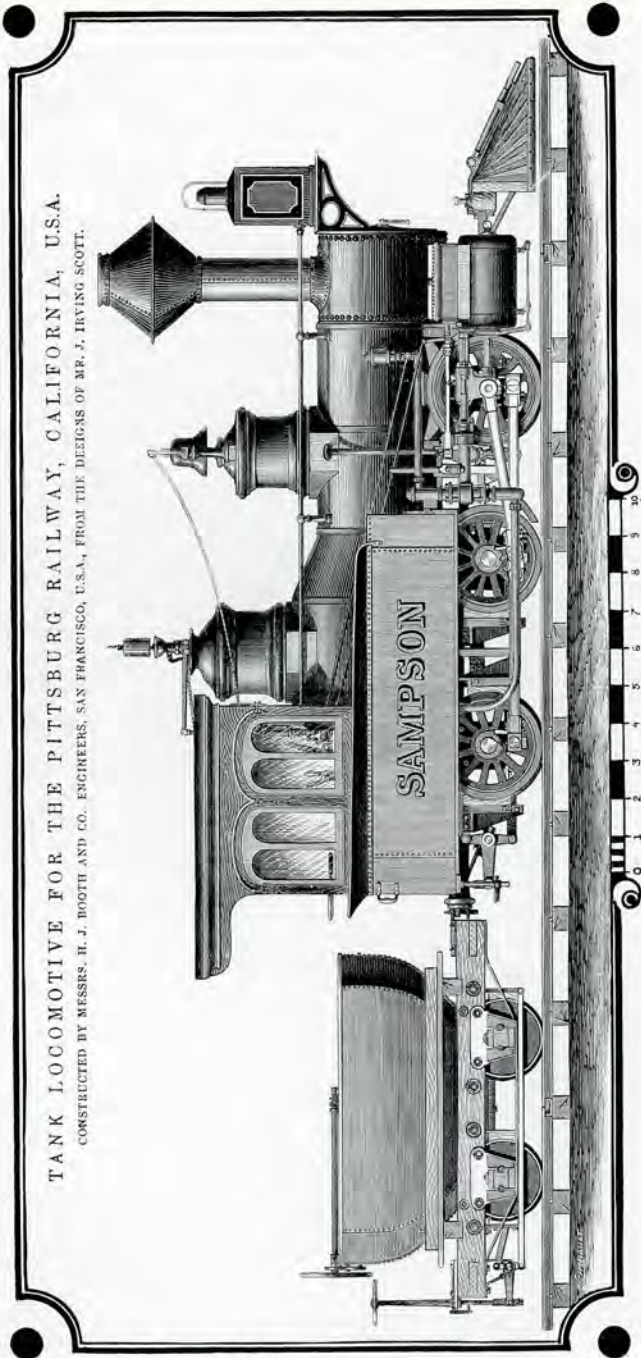


plain the grade was usually a bit under 1%, but in the canyon it averaged 3.6% with sharp curves, a 350 foot tunnel one mile from Somersville and a series of trestles. In the upper portion of the line there were eight trestles, one of which was 304 feet long and 60 feet high.

The locomotives of the Pittsburg Railroad were considered by the company to be specially built for the road by H. J. Booth (Union Iron Works) of San Francisco. The design was evolved by Irving Scott the engineer for Booth who with others was first to succeed Booth in the ownership of Union Iron Works. The first two 17 ton engines were delivered in 1866 and the other followed in the next year. They were quite powerful for their size and were equipped with a complex braking system. Trains would consist of twelve to sixteen four wheel cars built of iron having a capacity of about four tons. Operation was by gravity, being hand braked down to the landing. On rainy days sand was applied to the rails to aid the brakemen in handling the train. The return trip was made with one of the steam engines returning the empties to Somersville. The cost of building the line was \$145,000. No passenger service was offered so the Welsh and Cornish miners had to utilize Wards Stage coaches to the landing at New York Slough or Cornwall station on the newly built line of the Southern Pacific Railroad. This station became the community of Black Diamond in 1863 and was renamed Pittsburg in 1909.

With the inauguration of the railroad, the mines then served were the Eureka, Union and Pittsburg. The Manhattan mine operated only one year and was closed, while the Independent Shaft produced only in the years of 1866 and 1867 when it was shut down. The regrouping of these mines brought about the incorporation of the Pittsburg Mining Company as of October 1, 1861. Exception was the sale of the Manhattan property to the Black Diamond Coal Company prior to 1877. Prior to its becoming a part of the Pittsburg complex, the Eureka had acquired the Independent Shaft. Coal shipped in 1866 was 91,065 tons which did not include that which was used in the mines boilers, locomotives or consumed locally. All of the slopes, tunnels, gangways were double tracked to a 26 inch gauge with steam hoisting engines at the head of the slopes or counter slopes. Steam for these engines was piped down from the surface. Man power was used to move the cars on the gangways in all of the mines of the Somersville basin. The portals of the Somersville mines ranged from 719 to 866 feet above mean low water of the nearby San Joaquin River. Several mines were interconnected such as the Eureka Union and Independent mines. Usually this was for drainage and or ventilation.

Booms, busts and strikes have plagued any mining



TANK LOCOMOTIVE FOR THE PITTSBURG RAILWAY, CALIFORNIA, U.S.A.  
 CONSTRUCTED BY MESSRS. H. J. BOOTH AND CO. ENGINEERS, SAN FRANCISCO, U.S.A., FROM THE DESIGNS OF MR. J. IRVING SCOTT.

area along with fires and explosions. The Mt. Diablo district was no different but earthquakes such as the one in 1868 along the Hayward fault did considerable damage to all of the Mt. Diablo mines. With these ups and downs, the Eureka mine suspended production in 1873, and a strike settled over the region the next year due to a wage cut. At this time, the Pittsburg mine ceased work on the Clark Vein and pulled out its pumps from the lower level on this seam. Water had become a major and costly problem in all of the mines and by now the Clark Vein had been pretty well worked out. A drainage-haulage tunnel had been proposed that would have been about 7000 feet in length along the lines of the Sutro Tunnel at Virginia City, Nevada but the owners of the Nortonville and Somersville mines could not agree so the idea was dropped.

In 1876 the Pittsburg people saw fit to reopen the Eureka slope to work the Little and Black Diamond seams. But this same year saw the windup of the Union mine and by the next year a general decline was observed reducing production even more so into the following year. This brought the temporary closures of the mines for the entire region. However undaunted, efforts were under way to develop new mines where operating costs would be lower. Opened through the 1878-1888 period were the Mills Tunnel, Gunnison Slope and Somers Tunnel. Also opened were the Rankin Shaft and an unidentified tunnel. Mining at this time was conducted by the Somersville Coal Company who was either a lessor or contractor on the Pittsburg property. Efforts were made to clean out the Independent shaft but these failed so a new shaft was sunk to be called the Pittsburg Shaft, which was finished in 1891. From this shaft the bed of the Clark Vein revealed a thickness of three to four feet, while two feet-two inches of coal were found in the Little Vein and the Black Diamond bed showed three and a half feet of coal. Coal now sold was no longer sorted and contained much slack and slate which angered the consumers. This same policy was pursued by the neighboring Black Diamond mines to the west.

The mines were active during the nineties but not nearly as much as they had been in the earlier period of 1868 to 1875. Activity had been on the decline for both the Somersville, Nortonville and the Stewartville basins, so that with the year 1902 the Somersville mines showed a negliable output. With 1907 came the notices of mine closures however there was enough activity to keep the Pittsburg Railroad going until 1916. A change took place for this road on June 30, 1911 when the name of Pittsburg Railway Company superceded the old name. In this same year, on November 30, the Union Coal Company forfeited its charter for failure to pay its license tax. Disposal of the railroad equipment remains one of the many mysteries of the Mt. Diablo coal operations at the time of this writing.

# NORTONVILLE



NORTONVILLE on the Black Diamond Coal Company looking south showing the Black Diamond Exchange Hotel on the left. The heading of the Cumberland Slope can be seen behind the coal bunker.--Bancroft Library Collection

The second railroad came into existence to the Mt. Diablo mines about a year after the start of the Pittsburg Railroad. Known as the Black Diamond Coal and Railroad Company, this firm covered mining, transportation and its marine department under one title. The marine aspect is a surprise but a tug boat and some parges were owned by the Black Diamond firm. Originally called the Carbondale, District the name was retained only on the schoolhouse later adopting the name of Black Diamond District. Activity began here a bit later than in Somersville a mile to the east, over the other side of a narrow ridge. The dates of November 24, December 11, 1858 and December 22, 1859 appear with the credit for the first going to Messrs. Roundtree, Walker and Dickson; the second date to an unknown party, and the third to Francis Somers and James Cruikshank. This last pair discovered the Black Diamond vein of coal and were joined by E.S. Hawshurst, George, and William Henderson in the development of the Black Diamond and Cumberland mines. However, the expense of making the needed roads discouraged them and they made no attempt to secure the required titles. Consequently both mines were relocated a short time later, the first by Noah Norton and the second by Frank Such. Such sold out to a group from Martinez; C.D. Cutter, Ashlor Tyler, Josiah Sturges and L. C. Wittenmeyer. This quartet also assisted Norton in the opening of his mine. As such the Nortonville mines were operated at this time as the Black Diamond Coal Mines. Roads were constructed to Clayton and New York Landing to set the stage for this large operation.

Already discussed was the person of Francis Somers but with Noah Norton in addition to the development of the Black Diamond mine Norton is credited with the development of part of the industry of the present city of Pittsburg. The village named for him was perched on the hillsides of the basin much like near-by Somersville. The houses were of adobe, clay, brick and wood. Noah Norton built the first and second houses there in 1861 and 1862, with its first hotel - rooming house erected in 1863, the first store in 1865 and the schoolhouse in 1866. Norton's grave overlooks Somersville in the graveyard in which he shares the ground with the miners, both men and boys, that perished in the mine disasters or from ailments common to coal mining of those days.

The Black Diamond Mine was the colossus of the Nortonville area and was actually a series of tunnels, shafts and slopes, each with its own name, opening into the Nortonville basin. The portals of these mines ranged from 790 to 1034 feet above low water of the San Joaquin River.

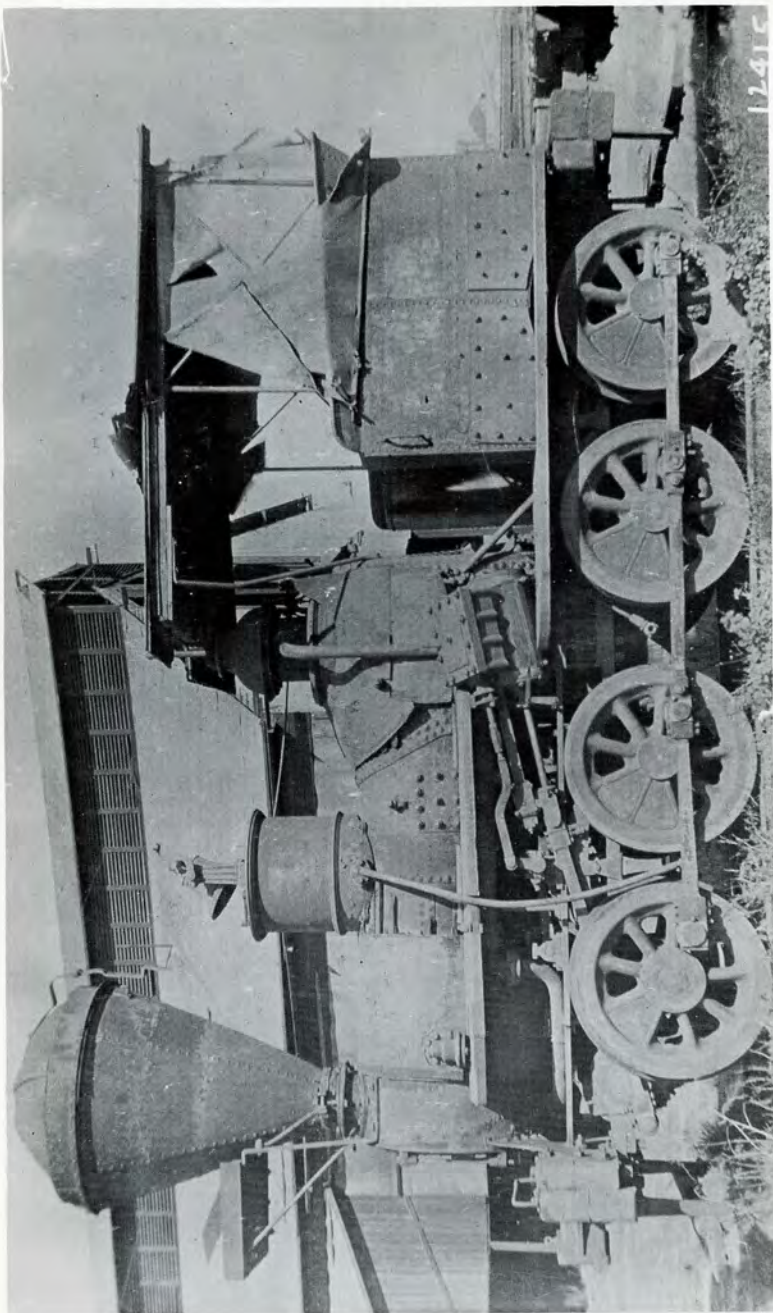


Big Day at Nortonville on the railroad of the Black Diamond Coal Company possibly a baseball game down at Black Diamond (Pittsburg). As soon as the engine arrives the men will board the flat car while the women will ride in the former San Francisco horsecar that served as a passenger car.  
California Historical Society Collection

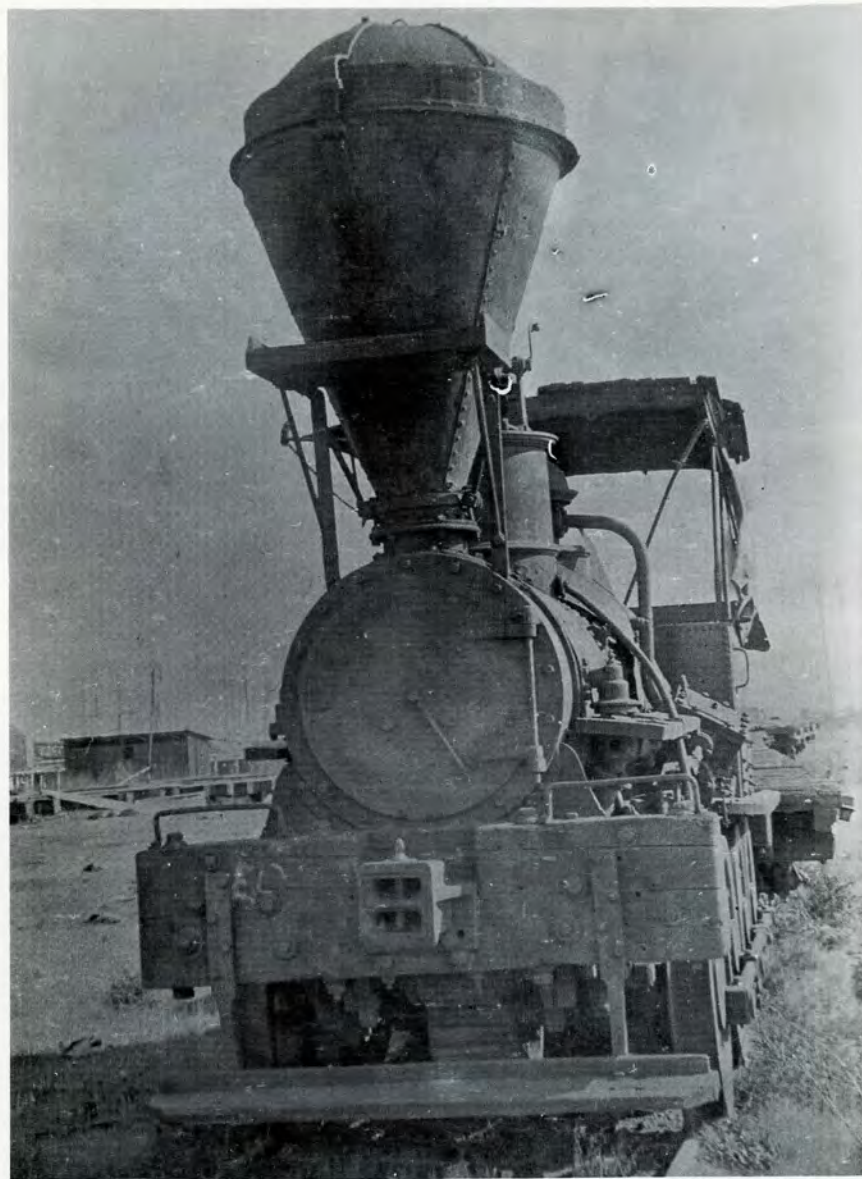
The railroad came as a necessity in moving an ever increasing volume of coal demanded by the Bay Area cities with those of the San Joaquin Valley. This was also a standard gauge railroad entering Nortonville between two round topped hills which were some six to eight hundred feet above the floor of the basin. Linking the eastern hill to the ridge beyond was a saddle some three hundred feet lower which was the division between Nortonville and Somersville. The route of the railroad was along Kirker Creek, quite steep and crooked, just about the capacity of the engines. In practically all circumstances this railroad was a duplicate of the Somersville line. Curves of 18° were not uncommon to either of these two lines. However to reach one bunker the Black Diamond had to climb up five-eighths of a mile of 5.2% grade. To avoid another steep grade a nine hundred foot incline was built from one of the mine portals to the top of the bunker. The standard gauge cars were four wheels, of wood and iron construction and had a capacity of about 4½ tons. They were operated by gravity being hand braked down to New York Landing. The author's mother recalls them coasting by her classroom in Black Diamond in the 1903-1906 period. Indelibly etched in her mind was the lack of a locomotive to pull these moving cars! This was true for the engine would come down later to gather up the cars and return them to the mines for the next days loading.

The engines were an interesting group, two local San Francisco builders were represented and a prominent one in Philadelphia. The first one was of a Vulcan Iron Works design, a slow rigid 0-8-0 geared locomotive, quite similar to the smaller four-wheeled kettles that appeared at Gualala and Caspar in the redwood region. The next two were 17 ton identical side tankers just like the Somersville engines, but one was built to a thirty six inch gauge. Both came from H. J. Booth (Union Iron Works) in San Francisco. The narrow gauge engine was named "D.O. Mills" for Darius Mills the big factor of the Black Diamond Mines, who from his New York office operated the now Black Diamond Coal & Railroad Company through his South Port Land Company. To ascertain the possible reason for a narrow gauge engine one could consider that the mine gauge of the Black Diamond group of mines was thirty six inches. Movement of coal cars in the mines was more advanced than at Somersville as animal power was used in the tunnels and gangways, thus the use of a steam locomotive is conceivable between the mine portals and the bunkers. The final of the four engines was the 21 ton Baldwin 0-6-0 saddle tank type locomotive which well suited for the Black Diamond line. The slopes and counter slopes were all double tracked using steam hoisting engines for which the steam was piped down from the surface.





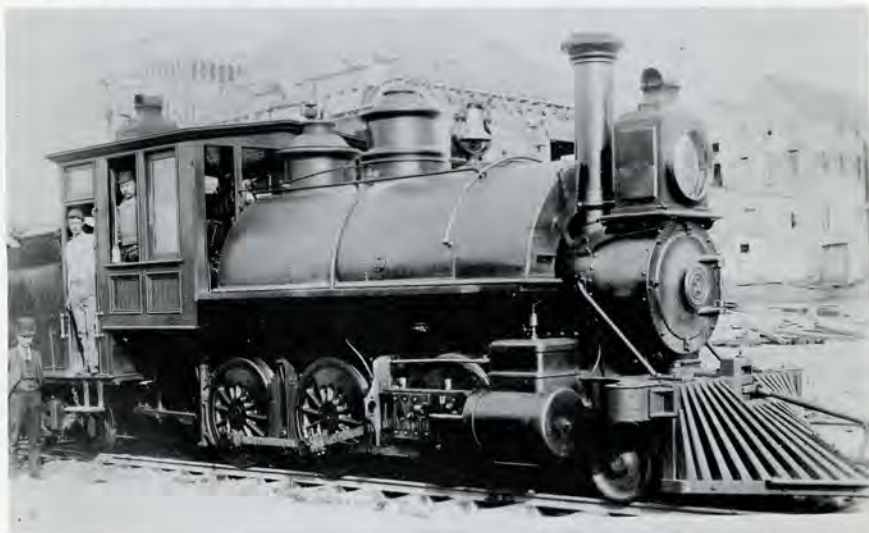
The "Hayward" of the Black Diamond Coal Company built by Vulcan Iron Works in 1867 from a rare picture in the Smithsonian Institution.



Head-on view of the "Hayward" of the Black Diamond Coal Company in a companion view from the Smithsonian Institution. This shows the gear on the independant shaft from which the front wheel was driven with the other wheels connected by the engine rods.



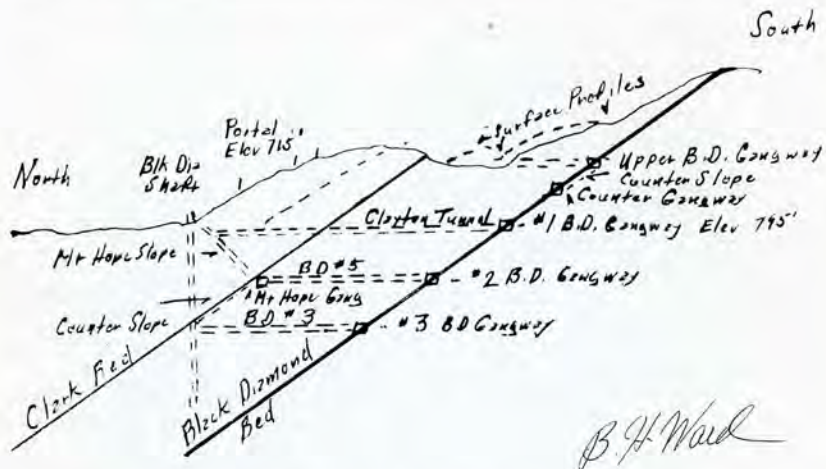
One of the two Booth engines of the Black Diamond Coal Company as it appeared in service on the Bellingham Bay & British Columbia Railroad after slight modification. Photo by Fred Jukes from Collection of G.M. Best



Black Diamond Coal Company engine No. 3 as it appeared in later years as Bellingham Bay & British Columbia R.R. #2 as a 2-6-4T. It was originally an 0-6-0T when outshopped by Baldwin in 1870. Photo by Fred Jukes.

The Black Diamond mines ultimately had seven openings, the Little or Hoisting Slope, Mt. Hope Slope, Black Diamond Shaft, Mt. Hope Shaft, Clayton Tunnel, Upper Black Diamond Tunnel and of course the Cumberland Slope. With the exception of the Cumberland, Clayton and Upper Black Diamond Tunnel, all the others were inter-connected below by their various gangways and tunnels. One of these gangways was over a mile long along the Clark Vein running east and west. The Black Diamond Shaft was like other workings in this group, well built, with a three compartment shaft 22'-4" x 11'-10", heavily timbered with two double deck cages which went down 415' to the Lower Mt. Hope gangway. A flat wire rope was used on a pair 24"x60" hoisting engine to operate the cages. The Black Diamond bed was mined simultaneously from both surface portals and subterranean tunnels. From their Clayton Tunnel at its extreme end a mile and a half of gangway was driven in both directions with one side going three quarters of a mile to the east to just under the gangway of the Manhattan mine to which a chute was driven for ventilating purposes only. Portals of the mines ranged to a bit below the level of the basin to about three hundred feet above the town. Some three hundred and fifty men and boys were employed in the mines and the population of Nortonville was around 900 persons.

The economic and natural conditions which plagued the Somersville mines were also present at Nortonville. However the better condition of the Black Diamond mines made reopening and restoration work much simpler. But the deeper the Black Diamond vein the greater the problem of water, driving up the costs of mining in the face of coal coming down from the northwest. Then too, there was more mining in this basin on the Black Diamond bed, which because of its nature was more costly to work. Only the middle of this seam produced fair coal and neither the floor or roof was as substantial as the stratas above and below on the Clark Vein. The costs were felt as early as 1883 and by May of 1885 the decision was made to close down the mines. The result was devastating on Nortonville and overnight it was practically abandoned. However a sufficient market appeared to have remained to drive the Mt. Hope Shaft and it with the old Cumberland Slope seemed to have carried the region through its remaining years. In fact the Cumberland remained in existence in one form or another when it lost its charter to back taxes in March 1923. There was no longer the need for four locomotives to be kept in the stable so in November of 1888 two were sold to Mill's Bellingham Bay & British Columbia Railroad Company. These were the Baldwin which was rebuilt to a 2-6-4t and one of the Booth engines. If it was the narrow gauge 0-6-0t, it operated as a standard gauge engine at Bellingham.



Profile drawing of the Black Diamond Coal Mine from the Black Diamond Shaft showing the Clayton Tunnel, Mt Hope Slope and various cross tunnels called Gangways.

The colossus of the Mt. Diablo region had been on the want since the late seventies but by 1902 it was about finished. It had produced some 3,000,000 tons of coal values at \$15,000,000. A note made in the later period gave the railroad a roster of two locomotives, one passenger, three flat and 32 coal cars. On May 14, 1904 the Black Diamond property was sold to the well known Pacific Coast Company, operators of the Pacific Coast Steamship Company, the Pacific Coast Railroad in Washington and the Pacific Coast Railway in California. Involved in this sale were 2720 acres of land and a lease on 960 more. Some time in 1900 the old Vulcan engine found itself in the Pacific Iron & Nail scrap yards in West Oakland. In the vicinity of 1910 the Black Diamond Railroad was discontinued, to leave the scar of its grimy fill with some old rail scattered about, through the city of Pittsburg as late as the mid twenties. The remaining Booth tanker vanished into one of the many mysteries that cloak the Mt. Diablo mines at the time of this writing. Surprisingly the Clayton Tunnel was worked for granite sand for steel and glass manufacturers since 1930 and was test drilled in 1949 to the Clark and Black Diamond veins. Uncovered in recent years were these workings as the Pacific Cement & Aggregate Corporation developed its Clayton quarry.

## STEWARTSVILLE

Horse Haven, six miles south of Antioch, was the scene of a coal strike, the next to be found east of Somersville, the earliest one of this area. William C. Isreal with his father and brother were cleaning out a spring on their ranch when they found the out-cropping in the spring. After opening the vein for a short distance it was turned over to Messrs. Watkins and Hays who a short time later failed in the project, the date being 1861. However a mine of a more permanent nature was the Empire near Judsonville, about three and a half miles east of Somersville and five miles south of Antioch. This was a slope sunk during 1860-1861 and at a depth of 100 feet, a four and a half foot bed of coal was found. It was soft and friable much like that from the other Mt. Diablo mines but of a softer nature. As work progressed down the slope the quality of coal did improve, but despite these good indications work was stopped and the mine abandoned. In 1875 George Hawxhurst, the superintendent of the Union mine, with John C. Rouse, took over the Empire mine, cleaned it up, did some enlarging, layed a double track on the slope, installed pumping and hoisting machinery plus extending the slope to a total of six hundred feet. Then this pair drove a gangway both east and west across the bottom of the slope for a total of seven hundred feet. From this they ran a tunnel from the bottom of the slope into an underlying bed of coal. The first showed three feet of clean coal in a four foot bed and was considered to be part of the Clark Vein. The lower bed, believed to be a part of the Black Diamond seam had about twenty-three inches of mineable coal. The mouth of this Empire mine was about four hundred feet above tidewater at Antioch. Later they were to drive another slope one hundred feet down, this one on the Black Diamond Vein. Production began in 1876 but was handicapped since all of the coal had to be teamed to Antioch, which was costly and inadequate.

Exit now Mr. Hawxhurst and enter Mortimer Belshaw and Egbert Judson to play the major role of the Empire mine and the narrow gauge railroad later to come. Belshaw was well known in mining circles in California, being active in the northern counties and in the Cerro Gordo mine in the southland, as well as in the early history of Los Angeles. In Antioch he built his home, opened the Belshaw Mercantile Company the Bank of Antioch and a water company. Judson can be traced to the Judson Steel Company of the San Francisco Bay Area. Water flooded the mine, stopping production in 1881, but mining was resumed again in March of this same year and continued until 1890-1891 when it was again suspended.

The need for a railroad was evident, so on June 23, 1877 Captain Flint, who held the contract for grading began work on Kimble Street, now F Street, in Antioch. July saw piling in place on the waterfront for the coal dock, August found 15,000 feet of redwood ties arrive from Point Arena, while the rails and engine #1 arrived in San Francisco, both coming around the Horn. The "Empire" was a fifteen ton 0-6-0 saddle-tank Baldwin built locomotive which had been ordered by Belshaw himself. In the meantime a 1000' tunnel had been driven up near the Empire Mine, for this railroad was not much different in grades or curves through the hills than its neighbors just to the west. September saw the rails arrive in Antioch along with thirty four-wheel, five ton coal cars from San Francisco. The engine was also delivered at this time and was fired up by S.H. McKellips, her engineer. Mid-January of 1878 found the engine house finished and the ballasting of the thirty pound rail with a type of cement sand. The twenty-sixth of January saw the first shipment of coal over the railroad which was about 400 tons. February 9 recorded 365 tons and eleven days later 1813 tons were moved.

In 1881 a second 0-6-0t engine was purchased new; however, it was built by the San Francisco firm of Marshutz & Cantrell (National Iron Works). It was a very faithful copy of the "Empire", slightly heavier and larger though barely detectable to the eye. This engine was given the name of "J.E. Belshaw" but was called the "Jennie Belshaw" by the localites. The appearance of the second engine concurred with the placing of a switch in the main line one mile north of the Empire mine and the building of two miles of railroad to Stewartville. Here a switchback crossed the gulch and ran up to the mine, which had come under the control of Judson and Belshaw. In 1884, this pair opened a one mile branch to reach their newly opened Hartley mine, then added a quarter mile spur off this branch to their West Hartley mine. Later, in 1893, another branch was built off the new line about one mile west of the Hartley branch for about a third of a mile to the Star I and Star II mines. Mid-1888 recorded the movement of 2,000 to 2,500 tons of coal over the railroad each month to Antioch. About one hundred men were employed by Belshaw and Judson at this time and production was expected to rise. The railroad also owned a 1500 gallon tank car, two wooden square water cars of 1000 gallon capacity, three thirty-foot flat cars and a half-flat-half caboose for freight and passengers. Fare to the mines was a quarter.

The Stewart mine began to deepen their slope down on the Black Diamond vein by following the natural tilt of the bed, but the mine became idle in 1890.



Views of EMPIRE COAL MINE & RAILROAD engine No. 1, the "EMPIRE" from the Collection of KENNETH KIDDER.

However the West Hartley was producing from their new slope which had been driven down some four hundred and fifty feet to a bed of coal that was three feet thick. This slope was only a short distance west of the now idle Empire Mine, which had gone down a thousand feet with its slope to mine out the coal in that area before closing. A year later the Stewarts mine was back in operation along with the Hartley mines plus a slope at their newly opened Corcoran Mine. This went down four hundred and twenty five feet following the bed tilt of 26.5°, in 1892, on the Little Vein. Also located was a new vein designated as the Belshaw Vein, which was worked for the coal that was mineable. In the subsequent expansion of the Stewarts mine a number of slopes were driven so that coal could be mined in the Black Diamond, Little, Belshaw and Clark veins.

The mines and railroad were closed down in 1897 to make a false attempt at reopening the next year. Mr. C.M. Wilson of San Francisco had acquired the property now, to spend a lot of money on rehabilitation of the mines and railroad. But for all of his efforts only a small amount of coal was moved to Antioch when again the entire operation was shut down. This time the employees went unpaid and had little to look forward to in the coal industry of the Mt. Diablo region. Little seemed to have transpired until in 1902 when the two locomotives appeared in Marin County, thus indicating it was all over for the Antioch Railroad. The new name was a short lived replacement for the old Empire Coal Mine & Railroad Company. The "Empire" and "Jennie" stayed in the North Bay county to standard gauge and electrify the commuter district of the North Shore Railroad, which was faced with a growing patronage on its local trains. After a brief stint here this pair moved on, it was reported, to the Russian River Land & Lumber Company up in the redwood country of Sonoma County.

**NOTICE:** The area of Nortonville and Stewartville are now private property of the Ginochio Livestock Company of Antioch. Although traversed by county roads, it is advisable to obtain permission from the company before entering the private property.

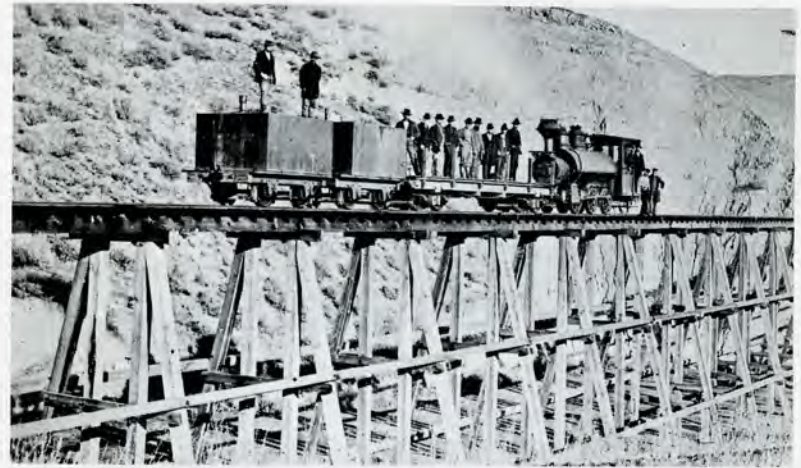
**CREDITS:** Ted Wurm, Roy D. Graves, G. M. Best, D. S. Richter, H. M. Mentzer, William Pennington, Earle E. Williams and James Boynton.

Dan McKillips "EMPIRE COAL MINE & R.R." Western Rail-roader, March, 1944.

C. A. Goodyear "COAL MINES OF THE WEST COAST" A. L. Bancroft & Co., publishers, 1877

GEOLOGIC GUIDEBOOK OF THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY COUNTIES California Department of Natural Resources.

special thanks to Arthur E. Browning, Uniontown, PA for engraving of "Sampson" and Pittsburg R.R. map.



EMPIRE COAL MINE & RAILROAD engine No. 1, the "EMPIRE" at top, middle: No. 2, "JENNY E. BELSHAW" in San Francisco in Builder's photograph; bottom: No. 2 in service. All from collection of DAN MCKELLIPS

# MT. DIABLO COAL MINE RAILROADS

## PITTSBURG RAILROAD

- 1 0-6-0T UNION IRON WORKS #4 1866 "MT DIABLO"  
36" drivers; 14"x18" cylinders
- 2 0-6-0T UNION IRON WORKS #5 1866 "BOSTON"  
36" drivers; 14"x18" cylinders
- 3 0-6-0T UNION IRON WORKS #7 1867 "SAMPSON"  
36" drivers; 14x18" cylinders

Disposition of all engines unknown. "Sampson" was altered considerably to run without a cab and fitted with larger coal bunker and box type sand dome located right behind the stack.

## BLACK DIAMOND COAL & RAILROAD COMPANY

- 1 0-8-0 (geared) VULCAN IRON WORKS #10 1868 "HAYWARD"  
sold about 1900 to Pacific Iron & Nail Co. at Oakland, Cal., scrapped shortly thereafter.
- 2 0-6-0T UNION IRON WORKS #8 1867  
36" drivers, 14"x18" cylinders, 23-tons weight  
Sold in Nov., 1888 to Bellingham Bay & British Columbia R.R. #1 at Bellingham, Wash.
- 3 0-6-0T UNION IRON WORKS #9 1868 "D.O. MILLS"  
36" drivers, 14"x18" cylinders, 23-tons weight  
Reference to this engine as "narrow gauge" appear to be in error. Disposition unknown
- 3 0-6-0T BALDWIN LOCOMOTIVE #2141 5/1870  
Second No. 3, 44" drivers, 15"x22" cylinders  
21-tons weight, sold to Bellingham Bay & British Columbia Railroad #2, rebuilt to 2-6-4T

## EMPIRE COAL MINE & RAILROAD COMPANY

- 1 0-6-0T BALDWIN LOCOMOTIVE #4107 7/1877 "EMPIRE"  
33" drivers; 10"x16" cylinders Sold in 1902  
to Willet & Burr for electrification and stand-  
ard gauge conversion of North Shore Railroad.
- 2 0-6-0T MARSHUTZ & CANTRELL 1881 "JENNIE E. BELSHAW"  
36" drivers; 11"x16" cylinders; 18-tons weight  
Sold in 1902 for construction work on North  
Shore Railroad (Willet & Burr); later used in  
1909 by E.B. & A.L. Stone filling 14th Avenue  
gulch in Oakland.

# Empire Coal Mine and Railroad Company

By DAN McKELLIPS

MY FATHER, S. H. McKellips, had charge of the building in 1877 of the Empire Coal Mine and Railroad Company's line from the water front at Antioch to the old Empire Mine, Hartley Mine, West Hartley Mine, and Stewartsville Mine in Contra Costa County, California. The line was three foot gauge. It was five miles to Empire Mine, six to the Hartley Mines and eight to Stewartsville Mine.

Mr. Judson, of the Judson Iron Works of San Francisco, and M. W. Belshaw, capitalists of San Francisco, were the original owners of the company. Later the Judson interests were acquired by M. W. Belshaw. The latter was manager of the company and his son, C. M. Belshaw, was the superintendent at Antioch.

The line was laid with thirty pound steel on cement sand ballast and, believe me, it was good. There were six bridges, some large and some small, a tunnel 1000-feet long and an incline overpass over the Southern Pacific a mile out of Antioch.

The road had a pair of 0-6-0T's for motive power. Engine number one was named the "Empire". She was a Baldwin job with 10x14 cylinders and 30-inch drivers. She had no brakes, only the reverse lever. Engine number two was the "Jenny E. Belshaw" built in San Francisco by the Marchutes and Cantrell Iron Works in the early '80s. She had 11x16 cylinders, 36-inch drivers and also no brakes. The saddle tank on number one held 1000-gallons while number two held 1200-gallons. The engines had a crosshead pump and injector—a Mack on engine two and a Gifford on engine one—neither of which worked worth a cent.

The line also had 30 five-ton dumps, three 30-foot flat cars, two 1000-gallon square water cars and one 1500-gallon tank car. The caboose (only one) was 30 feet long, half of which was for passengers and half for freight. There was no

cover on the freight half, only side rails.

The passenger fare on the road was 25c each way between the mines and Antioch. Fares were collected by the engineer, S. H. McKellips, of the original crew. Other members of the original crew were Wm. Bullock, fireman; Louie Dahnken, head brakeman; Putney Reed, second brakeman; and Elmer Page, third brakeman.

In 1884 I started running the engine on the line and my dad took the conductor's place. The Empire Coal Mine & Railway had only one crew of an engineer, fireman, two brakemen and a conductor so when we needed the two engines father took over one of them and I the other engine. We did all of our own work on the cars and engines on Sundays as the road never ran on Sundays and the mines were idle.

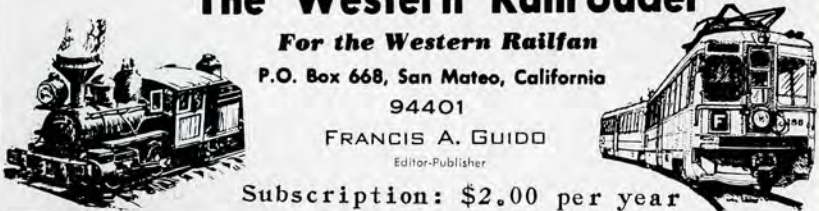
There were various grades on the road, and at the Stewartsville mine the last half mile between the switchback and the bunkers was about two percent. The caboose or train could run all the way to Antioch under its own momentum and steam was used only in two or three spots on the down trip with a loaded train of coal.

There were three veins of coal at old Empire, the Little Vein, Clarke Vein and Black Diamond, the last being the deepest and best. The coal was full of sulphur, but was very hot and very dirty—lots of slate and ashes. They shipped coal to the mills at Stockton and also supplied the river boats with coal. The "Solano", the S.P.'s big car ferry used it for years and the "Contra Costa" also if I remember rightly.

The coal couldn't compete when the Washington coal started being shipped in from the Pacific Northwest and the mines were allowed to flood around the turn of the century. I had left there in 1890 to work for the S.P., so I don't know much about the last days. There is nothing left of the road now except the fills of the railroad and the dumps at the mines.

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