

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

Presently in Humboldt County, our transportation is provided by auto, bus, truck and aviation. Water transportation is limited and rail transportation is nonexistent. Looking back to the Eighteen Nineties, water transportation was king with passenger and freight vessels providing the bulk of transportation for merchandise and passengers to and from the World. Ships carrying freight and passengers arrived and departed from Humboldt Bay almost daily plus ships from all over the world arrived to pick up cargos of lumber. There was an amusement park located near what is now Fairhaven. It was called 'New Era Park', a place that provided a dance pavilion and picnic areas and a ball park. Different types of outdoor demonstrations were also held there such as hot air ballooning. The only way to get to this popular park was by boat so the bay was a busy place. Did you know that there were one hundred and twenty miles of railroad track owned by ten companies in Humboldt and not one track led to the outside world? There were no buses or autos or trucks. Roads as we know them were nonexistent, only wagon roads and horse paths. The population of Humboldt County at that time was about twenty six thousand. The rail system ran from Scotia to Eureka and as far north as Trinidad with other short lines to Blue Lake, the Jacoby Creek and Freshwater areas as well as Ryan Slough and Elk River. As most of us know the rails were placed to transport logs from the woods but these trains also carried the employees to and from the mentioned areas with regularly scheduled freight and passenger trains running from the Blue Lake/Korbel area to Eureka and south to Scotia. There were two passenger and two freights daily between Eureka and Scotia. I have read but don't remember the rail ridership for that period but it was very high. Not only were the trains used for everyday business but there were specials that ran on some weekends and holidays for those attending picnics and other public functions in Blue Lake or Scotia and points between. I remember my mother telling me about some of the rail excursions that she took when a young girl. People were starved for entertainment and recreation and the trains provided the best way to travel to the areas. In Nineteen Hundred and Three, another rail improvement added to the traveling pleasure of the local citizenry with the start-up of Eureka's electric trolley system. Now there was a better, faster way to reach the train depot from your home and, best of all, one of the trolley terminals was Sequoia Park, a jewel among Eureka's destinations then as it is now. Weekends and holidays saw extra, larger trolleys operating to handle the passenger loads to the Park. Yes the rails were the backbone of Humboldt County for many years and the area could not have flourished without them.

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