



CURRENT INVOLVEMENT

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A TRESTLE TALK (UPDATE #2!)

by Lynn Melton

Bent #1 has been repaired! In September, we got all the elements together – Wayne Turner, our good friend and former BNSF bridge carpenter, a crew of NMRTA volunteers, and the timbers – and in two days, we did it! We removed the rotten stringers remaining on the Bent #1-Bent #2 span, removed the rotten timbers from Bent #1 (except the mud [bottom] sill – which was still good), and rebuilt Bent #1 with sound posts and cap. The rotted timber in the bulkhead were also replaced. A pictorial story of the work is available on the NMRTA website.

A bit of vocabulary: A *bent* is a vertical structure within the trestle. It consists three parts: the bottom horizontal beam perpendicular to the line of the rails, the *mudsill* lies directly on the ground. The vertical timbers are *posts* (or *plombs* and *batters*) and rest on the mudsill. They support the *cap*, the top timber perpendicular to the line of the rails. Bonnie’s Trestle has four bents, two of which are in contact with the soil at each

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AUG 2016-JAN 2017 ACTIVITIES

Our last newsletter came out August 2016. This newsletter will cover all the fantastic work we’ve accomplished up till January 2017!

WORK DAYS

Since our August 2016 newsletter, we have had five regular monthly workdays. As is customary, we did not have a workday in December. We averaged 11 volunteers per workday and logged 167 volunteer-hours.

We also facilitated at least 11 mini-workdays (a few were not recorded) and averaged 2-3 volunteers per workday. Over 150 volunteer-hours of work was accomplished during these “mini” workdays!

SALADO CANYON AREA & TRESTLE

- The Salado Canyon Trestle got a major face lift. This trestle was restored by NMRTA in 2006 and has not received any significant maintenance since. We have concentrated a lot of effort on the trestle for the last three workdays.
- We replaced 65 boards of the 160 or so total boards on the trestle tread. We also water treated almost the entire walk area of the trestle and tightened all the hardware holding the structural pieces under the trestle, much of which had loosened over the years.
- We had to do a lot of brushing to clear the rail trail so a vehicle could deliver the tools and supplies to the trestle. This section of the rail trail has significant erosion problems which will require attention in the near future.
- We also brushed the rail trail down trail from the trestle for a quarter mile or so. This trail section generally receives little attention. Our new trail

(A Trestle Talk continued)

end and require a *bulkhead* to hold the soil in place, and two of which are free-standing. The bulkhead plus the soil behind it is an *abutment*. *Stringer* timbers are parallel to the line of the rails and span from one bent to the next. In a completed trestle, the ties rest on top of the stringers, and the rails are attached to the ties.

Six NMRTA volunteers worked on rebuilding Bent #1: Adam Foster, Mark Horton, Steve McCloskey, Lynn Melton, Grady Nicholson, and Rod Sims.

What is next? In March 2017 we hope to move stringers from Wayne Turner's lot in Hatch and store them at the Cloudcroft Municipal yard. OCEC has agreed to help us move the stringers down Bonnie's steep driveway to the trestle site. Yes, they also know how to move power poles! With Wayne's help, we will start placing sound stringers on the trestle, with the first ones going on the span between Bent #1 and Bent #2.

If you would like to be part of the rebuilding of Bonnie's Trestle, contact Grady Nicholson so that he can notify you when we schedule our work days

tools, purchased by one of our donors, received a good workout.

- Very recently, a Forest Service crew has built 5 water bars on the big curve just uphill from the trestle. More will be required.
- We started work on an original wooden culvert on the trail above the Slado trestle. The culvert was only partially in service. We cleaned up the facing and identified some wood that will need to be replaced. Quite a bit more work needs to be done – preferably with an excavator – before a railroad tie facing can be built to extend the life of the culvert.

RETAINING WALL – BROOKS CABIN

- We worked the August and September workdays completing the retaining wall supporting the Brooks Cabin and starting the backfill behind the wall.
- A total of five workdays were required for this project and we used 41 railroad ties to construct the wall.
- This was a particularly difficult effort. We had to work on a 45 degree slope and the soil had rocks and roots; each vertical tie was an adventure to get into place.
- Also, there was a persistent group of wasps that really took a liking to the wall. We had to treat the area before each workday. Several volunteers got stung, but no real problems.
- More backfill will be required to finish the job, and steps leading down to the wall will need to be worked on.

BRIDGE A249 SPECIAL WORK

- Almost all of the 11 plus extra workdays mentioned above were used to work on Bonnie's Trestle (Bridge A249). See Lynn Melton's Bent #1 story in this newsletter.

- A terrific amount of work went into preparing for that Bent #1 replacement effort described in the article, most of which could only be done by a two or three man crew because the unique nature of the work and the safety required did not fit well with a normal sized workday crew.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

POTLUCK

- We had a fantastic Potluck for our volunteers in mid-October. It was hosted by Matt & Jessie Willett in their really big yard on the edge of Cloudcroft.
- Nearly 40 people attended. Barbeque was furnished by Lewis and Bonnie Brooks Peebles in appreciation of the work on the retaining wall and trestle on their property.
- Great weather, a great location for a party, and a beautiful view overlooking the Mexican Canyon Trestle. There was a nice area for a walk on an old railroad bed, along with horseshoes, table tennis, basketball, axe-throwing and great friends. NMRTA *really* appreciates Jessie & Matt for their hospitality.

FLOOD CONTROL FOR BRIDGE A249

- NMRTA has just submitted an application for a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP).

- The grant requests money to fund a study by an engineering firm in El Paso to detail an effective method to control flooding that threatens to destroy the trestle (Bridge A249) on the Brooks property.
- The trestle was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in December 2015.
- The application was extensive, with some six pages or so of documentation that had to be entered via the NTHP website, plus 14 uploads consisting of letters of support, resumes and similar information.
- Lynn Melton, our resident trestle expert, generated most of the *heavy* documentation.
- The competition is reportedly very stiff. We should hear if we are successful before April 1, 2017. If approved, Bonnie Brooks and others, are ready to provide the required matching funds.

GOODBYE TO HEATHER BERMAN, FOREST SERVICE

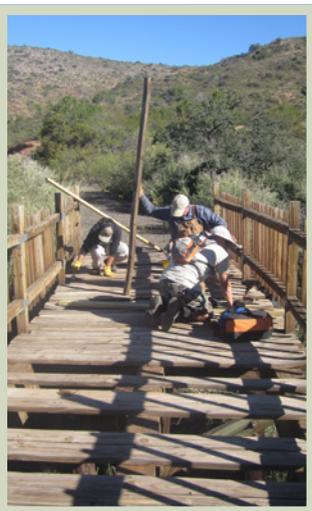
- Some of NMRTA board members attended a going away dinner for Heather Berman, a Forest Service employee who has gone out of her way to assist NMRTA over the years in its trail work activities. Heather seemed to be able to find ways to get things done that didn't seem doable. Heather is moving to work the forests in Montana, and we wish her the best in her new position. We gave her our *Special Spike Award* for being such a special friend.

FOREST SERVICE APPROVAL FOR PENDING WORK – IN PROGRESS

- We are nearing completion of a package to be submitted to the Forest Service requesting approval to: (a) Build a series of new trails – when connected to existing trails will form one contiguous trail system from Cloudcroft to La Luz – a long standing goal of NMRTA. (b) Work the three sections of FS property in the mouth of La Luz Canyon so they can be part of the trail system. (c) Rework gating to allow equestrian and bicycle (non-motorized) use of certain existing trails. (d) Build a trail from the Harris Hallow gate north to the Bridal Veil Falls Trail to allow easy access to the falls.

OPENING BROOKS PROPERTY TO HIKERS

- During the combined weekends of August 6-7 and September 10-11, a total of over 200 hikers took advantage of the opportunity to walk to the Mexican Canyon Trestle on the original railbed trail through Bonnie's Brooks Peoples property. They were rewarded with a close-up view of Trestle A249 being restored, and now recognized as the area's most recent National Historic Site, and were treated to refreshments at Bonnie's cabin.



UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

SALADO CANYON AREA

- We will be continuing erosion control efforts in Salado Canyon area, primarily between the trestle and the long stairs up-trail from the trestle.
- Continue work on the original wooden culvert in the area that is still in service. A railroad tie facing is planned to extend the life of the culvert.
- Other original culverts – long since buried – need to be located if possible and placed back in service. Otherwise, water bars will need to be dug (and in some cases metal culverts installed) to control the erosion damage.
- NMRTA hopes to rent an excavator to use in the area. That's the only practical solution to the vast amount of dirt work that needs to be done.

OTHER AREAS

- NMRTA hopes to obtain Forest Service approval to work the three sections of FS property in the mouth of La Luz Canyon along the original railroad bed. Considerable erosion control is needed. Those three sections, along with the two sections of private property we have been working, will make a pleasant hiking trail and is near the origination point of the "Cloud-Climbing Railroad."
- When the snow and cold dissipate, we will be returning to continue restoration work on Trestle A249 on the Bonnie Brooks Peoples property, with renewed interest in flood water control.
- We will also be giving attention to our routine trail maintenance.

VANDALISM

- We are unhappy to report recent graffiti in the Bridal Veil Falls shelter area and at the "long stairway" up-trail from the Salado Canyon Trestle. The perpetrators have been identified and will pay restitution. NMRTA volunteers will do the clean-up.
- Also, a 4-wheeler decided to tour Bridal Veil Falls Trail from top to bottom, exiting through the private gate at Harris Hollow. Motorized vehicles use on that trail is, of course, prohibited. The driver(s) were able to remove the two upper trail gates from their hinges and swing them out of the way even though they were chained on one side; no real gate damage was done. But, the Harris Hollow gate was chained on both sides, so the gate was laid down in the road way and driven over. This gate has been a frequent target of similar incidents in the past, but the first since we placed bollards in the road in front of the gate. The bollards evidently block pick-ups, but will need augmenting to handle 4-wheelers. NMRTA will repair/replace the gate and *adjust* the bollards.

CALL FOR BOARD MEMBERS!

Our volunteer board GUIDES the work needed on our trails – you are invited to join us!

To operate a functioning nonprofit like NMRTA, a committed board, with its officers is essential. If you are interested in helping guide NMRTA in a continued positive direction, please contact Grady Nicholson at:

nmrailtrails@gmail.com

575-495-5795

NMRTA, P.O, Box 44, Cloudcroft NM 88317

MEMBERSHIPS ARE NEEDED!

The only way we can continue our work is with YOUR help!

If you have not started or renewed your membership, please take the time to mail the form on the last page of this newsletter along with your check to:

NMRTA, P.O, Box 44, Cloudcroft NM 88317

WE APPRECIATE OUR CONTRIBUTORS & BENEFACTORS!

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- Collin & Connie Broughton**
- Dr. Bonnie Brooks & Lewis Peeples**

NMRTA Work days are most often held on the third Saturday of each month from 9:00am until 12:00 noon. You do not need to be a member to attend the work days. Volunteers of all skill levels are welcome and there's always something to do for everyone. Just bring your drinking water, work gloves, sturdy boots and sun protection. All tools will be provided.

To receive notifications of our upcoming workdays by e-mail, please send a message to nmrailtrails@gmail.com with the word "WORKDAYS" in the subject line.

NMRTA Annual Memberships
NMRTA is a 501(c)(3) Organization

Business/Organization	\$20
Family	\$15
Individual	\$10
Student	\$5
Membership	\$ _____
Donation	\$ _____
TOTAL	\$ _____

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: _____
(Home) (Work) (Cell)

E-mail address: _____

Please let us know if & how you would be willing to support NMRTA in addition to coming out on our trail-building workdays. We do everything we can with volunteers; so let us know about your talents and we'll call on you when the need arises. Thanks!

- Lead guided hikes Give educational talks Write articles Graphic design
- Fund raising Plan events Membership drive Historian Grant writing Other

Remit to: New Mexico Rails-to-Trails Association, PO Box 44, Cloudercrot, NM 88316-0044



P.O. Box 44
Cloudercrot, NM 88317

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ASSOCIATION

