

Newsletter

Samuel Knight Chapter
Society for Industrial Archeology
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The Newsletter is published in April, August, and December with special issues when they are needed.

The Chapter web site is hosted by the SIA headquarters site:
<http://www.sia-web.org/chapters/knight/knight.html>

Chapter News

by Jay McCauley

Upcoming Event: Amtrak Capitol Excursion to Sacramento

In 2004 I developed a class for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at San Jose State University that was an annotated trip the California State Railroad Museum via the Amtrak Capitol Corridor train. I'd taken the train to Sacramento several times, and had wondered about several of the things along the way. So, with a little help from google, I was able to put together notes for the trip, some of which started out as articles in past issues of the Newsletter. The journey has many IA highlights.

I am organizing a trip for Chapter members and friends on Saturday, 12 Mar 05. Although subject to the whims of Amtrak schedule changes, the basic plan would be to catch Amtrak Train 728, which leaves San José Diridon Station at 9:40 AM and arrives in Sacramento at 12:55 PM. You would need to purchase your own tickets. They can be purchased on-line, but need to be picked up before the train leaves (lines can be a hassle at Diridon Station, if possible do it in advance.) Return is open, there are convenient trains at 2:10 and 4:10. The train stops at several places along the way, so the journey can be joined in progress, though I find the first little bit from San José to be quite interesting (maybe because you see familiar things from a different perspective). There is ample parking at Diridon, though the ticket machines can be balky (leave time to find one that is being cooperative...)

The California State Railroad Museum is a short walk from the Sacramento Station. There are many delightful restaurants and shops in Old Town, and other shopping a short walk away. The State Capitol is a moderate walk away.

If you would like to go on the trip, drop me a note. The notes are available electronically (3.8 MB PDF). I'll have hard copies available for folks who let me know they are coming. If you are unable to make the trip that day, but would like the notes anyway, I'd be happy to send them to you.

The docents at the Museum are excellent, so I'm not planning to organize a formal tour, but would be happy to chat with anybody who wants to wander with me. Through volunteer work, I've gotten to know the Museum a lot better. Also recommended is the Sacramento Discovery Museum next door to the Railroad Museum.

Springtime in the Central Valley is lovely, I do hope to see you on the trip!

Upcoming Event: Bale Grist Mill State Historic Park

Although the details are still to be worked out, mark your calendar for Saturday, 7 May 05 for a visit to the Bale Grist Mill State Historic Park, just north of St. Helena in the Napa Valley. The mill, built in 1846, features one of the largest overshot waterwheels in the US. (Recent damage has prevented its operation.) We'll firm up and expand the plan a little closer to the event. Drop me a note if you're interested in the trip.

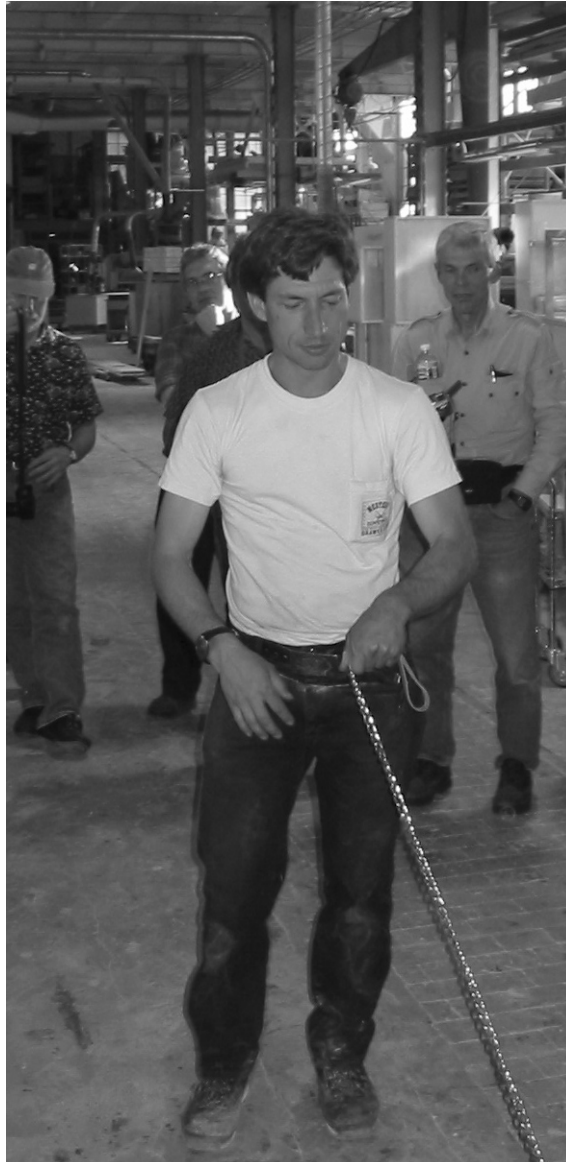
2004 Review

Apologies for not getting the newsletter out on schedule.

2004 was an interesting year for the Knight Chapter. It began in February with a fascinating trip to Folsom, California, organized by Board Member Scott See, just before he left to return to graduate school at Michigan Tech. Folsom is a rich area for IA, including aspects of gold mining, early railroading, and the beginnings of the electric power industry. An amazing surprise was that the replica turntable had been built with castings poured at the Knight Foundry, one of the last commercial projects there.

In early March, Chapter members Jay and Sharon McCauley and Noel Kirschenbaum attended the SIA Spring Study Tour that explored the industry around Barcelona, Spain, which was described in Issue 17.

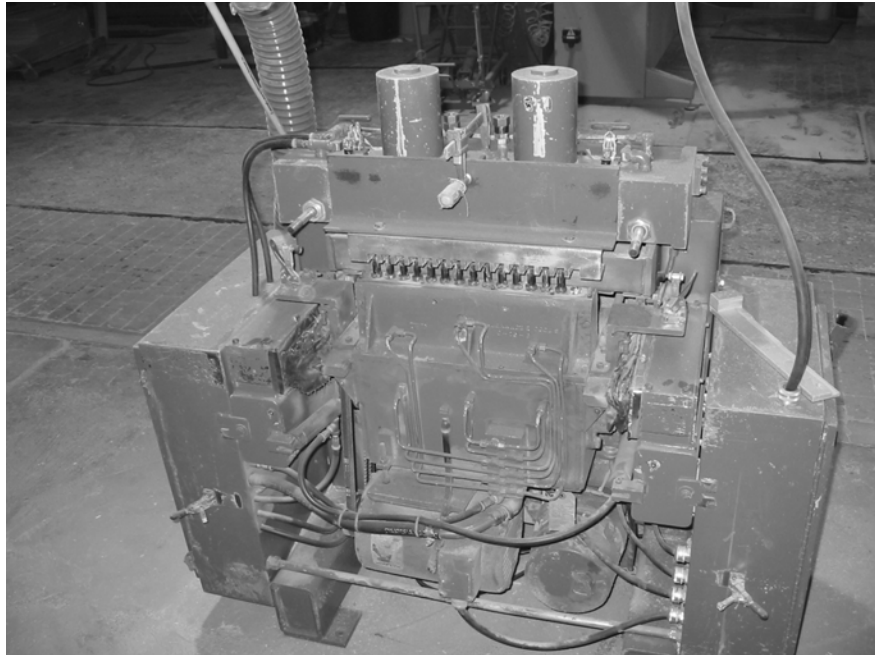
I attended the SIA National Conference in Providence, RI in June. The conference focused on the 19th century growth of industry in the region, and the decline and renewal in the 20th century. Many of the tours were to sites in the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, a “virtual park” uniting various independent sites and museums along the Blackstone River. Termed the hardest working river in New England, because there were so many water powered factories along its relatively short length and modest descent. The area was new to me, and I’d definitely like to go back and explore more of the places. Though no other Chapter members made the trip, I did get a chance to chat with Scott See, who was doing field work at the West Point Foundry in New York, and looking forward to starting classes in the fall.



Western Dovetail President Max Hunter

The Chapter participated in two events organized by the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association. John de Marchi and Chuck Quibell are members, and suggested that the Chapter might be interested in these events. The first was a fascinating tour of the Western Dovetail Company at Mare Island, California. Mare Island was a Naval Shipyard for over 100 years, and is being transformed into a mixture of light industry and housing. Western Dovetail is a specialty woodworking company

producing boxes and drawers made with dovetail joints for customers around the country. Housed in the former woodworking shop for the shipyard, the company makes use of a mix of old machinery dating from the 1950's or so and the most modern machines in producing finely crafted products. The actual dovetail machinery is the last stage in the process, and occupies only a small amount of the floor space. Most of the other stages are to produce pieces of exactly the right dimensions, starting with rough sawing and proceeding through several more stages of sawing and sanding. In this highly competitive business, speed of production is everything, so the plant is been organized for efficient work flows. When the company moved into the building, they not only salvaged some of the machinery, but also inherited a number of tools, the most fascinating of which was a large set of planes for producing moldings. During the Navy years, as ships moved from wood to steel, the plant also produced building materials for military housing in Vallejo, using these tools.



Dovetail Machine

The second event was a visit to the annual open house at the Sturgeon's Mill near Santa Rosa, CA. This well attended event, featured operation of the sawmill (powered by compressed air, as the boiler was damaged in floods several years ago). The mill complex was operating almost identically as it would have in early 20th century. Horses dragged logs over to the sawmill, where belt driven cranes and brute force moved them into position for sawing. The belts and line shafts also powered the large rotary saw, and the platform that moved the logs back and forth to product planks.



Horsepower at Sturgeon's Mill

The final Chapter event, the annual meeting held at the Computer History Museum in Mountain View, CA was sparsely attended. Members did get a chance to see some of the largest collection of computer related materials in the world. One of the most significant artifacts is a panel from the Eniac, the first electronic digital computer. There is also a collection of supercomputers designed by Seymour Cray, one of the most influential figures in supercomputer design.

Looking Forward

There are several things that the Chapter needs as we enter into a new year. First is your help in selecting and organizing events. We'd like to hear about sites or events that are of interest to you and other Chapter members.

Second, we have openings for the Board of Directors. If you'd like to help, the time commitment is quite light, and several members call in to avoid coming down to Oakland for meetings.

Finally, we're always open to articles for the Newsletter (one of the reasons for the delay in publishing was that there wasn't much new material available). If you've visited an interesting site, done some research that might be interesting to other members, or read a book with IA relevance, write about it. It doesn't have to be the great American novel, and submissions in almost any format are acceptable.

Notes and Tidbits

by Jay McCauley

Knight Foundry Update

After a lot of behind the scenes work, things are starting to happen with the Knight Foundry.

In late September, the Knight Foundry Corporation submitted an application to the California Culture and History Endowment (CCHE) for \$1.77 million. This was half of the estimated cost to purchase, stabilize and preserve the Foundry, and allow it to return to operation. Over 240 other groups submitted applications. In early December, the Knight Foundry Corporation was informed that it was one of the finalists in this highly competitive environment and was invited to give a five minute presentation to the Endowment's Board on December 13. For a variety of reasons, I

wound up giving the talk, with lots of help from other members of the Corporation Board on the content. Margaret Mills was also presenting in case there were detailed financial questions. Our talk was well received. Later that week it was announced that the Foundry had been selected to receive a \$50,000 grant, one of just 24 awarded. We are extremely pleased to have been selected, and hope that the funds can be used to bootstrap other grants to move the acquisition of the Foundry forward.

Also in December, the Corporation announced the award of a contract with the City of San Leandro for the creation of patterns to cast historic lampposts, with the casting of 24 lampposts to follow. The construction of the patterns will be done as part of a class in pattern making.

The main priority for the Corporation is fund raising to enable the purchase of the Foundry. An offer to the current owners has been made, following the completion of appraisals of the real estate and the tools and machinery.

I've joined the Corporation Board of Directors, and have started work on a new web site, <http://www.knightfoundry.org> Right now, it's a placeholder to get the domain name, but we have plans to get imagery and other information on the site.

Book Review: *Building Construction Before Mechanization*

John Fitchen, MIT Press, 1986, ISBN 0-262-56047-X

Last Christmas, my daughter Erin gave me this fascinating book which she'd found in a used book store. One of the things which has long intrigued me is how large buildings were raised before mechanical devices like steam engines were available. This book explores the topic in a thorough, yet highly readable way. Fitchen explores topics as diverse as how the Egyptians moved the huge blocks for the pyramids to how Inuits build igloos.

The book is well illustrated with photographs and line drawings showing the concepts visually. It contains introductory material to allow readers without an engineering background to appreciate the engineering issues that must be addressed in the construction of a building such as static and live loads.

Fitchen is a registered architect and is Professor of Fine Arts, Emeritus at Colgate University.

The book is available new in both cloth and paperback through MIT Press, <http://mitpress.mit.edu>

Knight Chapter Membership Renewal Form

My address is correct on the mailing label
(but please do fill in your current email address if you wish to receive Chapter email)

Name(s): _____

Company: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Membership Type:

- Individual \$25
- Couple \$30 One copy of newsletter
- Student \$10 Please send copy of current ID
- Senior \$10 Age 65 or older
- Contributing \$60
- Institutional \$30
- Sustaining \$125
- Corporate \$100 Includes 4 memberships - please list names

Your check should be made out to Samuel Knight Chapter, and mailed to:

Samuel Knight Chapter SIA
c/o Jay McCauley
1350 Vance Drive
San José, CA 95132-2455

Events/Activities you'd like to see/do: _____

I (we) are also National SIA members. The Chapter encourages its members to also join the National SIA.

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Address Correction Requested

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Membership in the Samuel Knight Chapter is available in the following categories:

Individual	\$25	
Couple	\$30	One copy of newsletter
Student	\$10	Please send copy of current ID
Senior	\$10	Age 65 or older
Contributing	\$60	
Institutional	\$30	
Sustaining	\$125	
Corporate	\$100	Includes 4 memberships - please list names

To join the Chapter, please send a check or money order (made out to the Samuel Knight Chapter) to the Chapter Treasurer. We'd also love to know about your interests, skills, etc. that might be part of a future Chapter event. We encourage Chapter members to join the National SIA.