

Rain Uncovers 1860s Sacramento Railroad Trestle

SACRAMENTO, CA -- It's not often you make an archeological find just out your back door but that's what happened at the California State Railroad Museum in Old Sacramento.

Shallow excavation work has been underway in the back parking lot recently to put in railroad tracks for repair and maintenance work. When everyone went home last Friday night, the project had been unexceptional.

"And then with the rains over the weekend, we came back Monday and there's a timber sticking out," said museum curator Kyle Wyatt.

A 15-foot by 30-foot surface area in the parking lot had caved in, exposing the timber. At first, it didn't seem that impressive.

"A rotted piece of nondescript wood" said historian Richard Orsi. "And who knows what it is? Well, it's an incredibly significant artifact."

Museum officials believe the timber was actually part of a trestle that dates back to the 1860s and the very beginning of the Transcontinental Railroad.

The find also confirmed historical maps showing the original route of the line.

At the time, the trestle was over the outlet to China Slough which was part of a local wetlands area. The area was filled in in the 1880s and 90s.

Officials plan to dig up more of the trestle, but after it is studied and documented, it will be covered over again and the area once again filled with dirt so that the original project can continue.

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