

# Petticoat Junction Notes

Aired from September 24, 1963 to April 4, 1970. (222 episodes)

Episode for class: **Betty Jo's Dog**

Aired September 22, 1964

**Filming Locations:** Railtown 1897 State Historic Park  
Sierra Railroad in Jamestown, California

**Tuolumne County, California** (Opening credits) provided a setting for the locomotive scene in the opening credits. It's where you'll find the Railtown 1897 State Historic Park, which is currently the home to Sierra No. 3. Location scenes for the show were filmed on the Sierra Railroad, with its locomotive #3 and combination baggage-passenger car #5. While the Shady Rest Hotel never existed in any form along the Sierra Railroad, the water tower was a real structure within the Jamestown yard. Full-sized sets for 'Sam Drucker's General Store' and the 'Hooterville Depot' were constructed along the track west of Jamestown so that scenes could be shot around those buildings during location visits early in the series' 1963-1970 run. Those buildings had matching counterparts on a sound stage at the studio.

**General Service Studios** - 1040 N. Las Palmas, Hollywood, Los Angeles, California (program interiors)

The end credits acknowledge the Barbary Coast Hoyt Hotel for furnishing the train. The Sierra No. 3 steam locomotive seen in credits and moving scenes did not belong to the Hoyt Hotel. It was and still is in Jamestown California and still operational.

The credit was for the plastic mock up (shell) of the train that was seen in close ups of the cast along side or on the train. The plastic replica which could be dismantled or put together in minutes was originally built for the 1950 film *Ticket To Tomahawk*. Harvey Dick, who owned the Hoyt Hotel, bought the full size replica from 20th Century Fox to display in his Barbary Coast Lounge, located at the hotel.

When Paul Henning was in need of a train for the series, he and Harvey Dick came to an agreement where the Filmways Production Company would rent the the train and they would be credited, thus the closing credit "Train furnished by Barbary Coast, Hoyt Hotel, Portland, Oregon." The Hoyt Hotel would close the hotel, just two years after Petticoat Junction ended on August 2, 1972 due to declining business. It was demolished in 1977. The hotel was built in 1912, Harvey Dick, purchased the Hoyt Hotel in 1941. In 1962, he renovated the hotel and added the Barbary Coast Lounge and Roaring 20's Room, a nightclub that attracted many celebrities. Harvey purchased the mock train that wasn't hooked up to a real track or operational "to give give the hotel class!"

The Sierra Railway is also famous for its role in the film industry. It began in 1919 when Hollywood discovered the old steam engines and rolling stock for the silent movies. It also became one of the first field facilities to use sound on location. Over 200 films and TV programs were filmed using Sierra's rolling stock and steam engines and it continues to play a role in filmmaking supported by the Tuolumne County Film Commission. Many notable movie location sites, which were used in such films as "High Noon" starring Gary Cooper, still exist today.

The Sierra No. 3 steam locomotive, a ten-wheeler was built in 1891. After sitting dormant for much of the Great Depression, the Sierra No. 3 locomotive got Hollywood's attention.

In *Petticoat Junction* the actual Sierra No. 3 locomotive can be seen in the opening and closing credits rolling down the tracks. A full-scale replica train was constructed for still shots in the show, also making appearances on *The Wild Wild West* and the 1950 movie *A Ticket to Tomahawk*. The replica is last known to be on display at Santa Rita Park in Durango, Colorado.

The Sierra No. 3 appeared in shows such as *Rawhide*, *Gunsmoke*, *Bonanza* and *Death Valley Days*. During the 1950's and 1960's, General Service Studios was home to many of television's most popular situation comedies. It was a small facility at 1040 North Las Palmas Avenue in Hollywood that had been there for decades.

Producer Paul Henning worked there on *The Bob Cummings Show* prior to creating *The Beverly Hillbillies* in 1962 and "Petticoat Junction" in 1963. A third series, *Green Acres*, joined them in 1965 and this trio ran on CBS-TV until the early 1970s. All of them shot on sound stages at General Service Studios. The mansion for *The Beverly Hillbillies*, which included the front entryway and "cement pond" (swimming pool) in the backyard was on Stage 4. The interior and exterior of the Shady Rest Hotel for "Petticoat Junction" was on Stage 1. The Shady Rest water stop, train, Hooterville Depot and the General Store were all on Stage 7. The farmhouse and barnyard for *Green Acres* were on Stage 5. Today, General Service Studios is owned by a large corporation and known as Sunset Las Palmas Studios.

The 'Shady Rest Hotel' was located out in the country, between the fictional towns of Hooterville and Pixley, on an isolated railroad branch in an unidentified state.

The *Petticoat Junction* crew last visited the area in 1965 to shoot color stock footage of the train to replace the black and white footage from the first two years. These new shots were used for the remaining five seasons of the show.

During the show's first three seasons, the entirety of the hotel was never seen; just the front porch and interior, built on a sound stage at General Service Studio in Hollywood.

**Sharon Tate** - The original choice for Billie Jo Bradley, but lost the role because she had posed for Playboy magazine.

**Bea Benaderet** (Kate Bradley) - studied voice and the piano. Her first acting performance was at the age of 11 when she portrayed a bearded old man in a school play. In 1926, Benaderet joined the staff of San Francisco radio station KFRC where her duties included acting, singing, writing and producing.

Originally looking for work as a dramatic actress, she switched to comedy and performed on many programs where her castmates included Meredith Willson, Elvia Allman and future *I Love Lucy* producer Jess Oppenheimer. Benaderet relocated to Hollywood in 1936 and joined radio station KHJ.

The following year she received her first big break on *The Jack Benny Program*, where she played a wisecracking telephone operator who gossiped about Jack Benny with her cohort Mabel Flapsaddle.

Other recurring characters Benaderet portrayed were Blanche Morton on *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show*, school principal Eve Goodwin on *The Great Gildersleeve*, Millicent Carstairs on *Fibber McGee & Molly*, the maid Gloria on *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* and Iris Atterbury on the Lucille Ball vehicle *My Favorite Husband*, opposite Gale Gordon. The 1950 CBS program *Granby's Green Acres*, a spinoff of *My Favorite Husband*, was her one radio lead role and reunited her with Gordon as a husband and wife who abandon city life to become farmers.

In television, Benaderet was Lucille Ball's first choice as Ethel Mertz for *I Love Lucy*. However, she had to turn down the offer since she was contracted to *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show*. Benaderet became a fixture on television from 1960 to 1964. She played housekeeper Wilma in the one season of the 1960 sitcom *Peter Loves Mary*. The same year, she was then cast as the voice of Betty Rubble in the animated series *The Flintstones*. Benaderet also voiced guest spots on *Top Cat* and *The Yogi Bear Show* during 1961 and 1962.

In the late 1940's, Benaderet befriended Paul Henning, a scriptwriter on the radio production of Burns & Allen. After reading the 1961 first script for Henning's *The Beverly Hillbillies*, Benaderet wanted to audition for the role of Granny. Irene Ryan won the role. Henning then created for Benaderet the supporting character of Cousin Pearl Bodine, the widowed mother of Jethro Bodine and cousin of Jed Clampett, whom she convinces to move from his humble home in the Ozarks after he strikes oil on his property and becomes a millionaire.

Henning admired Benaderet's talents and wanted to create a starring vehicle for her, as he felt she was worthy of headlining her own series after years of supporting parts. When CBS granted him an open time slot after the massive success of *The Beverly Hillbillies*, he crafted the 1963 sitcom *Petticoat Junction* around Benaderet, starring as Kate Bradley, the widowed proprietor of the Shady Rest Hotel.

During a routine checkup in 1963, a tumor was discovered on one of Benaderet's lungs. It was no longer visible at the time of her follow-up visit, but by November 1967, it had returned and grown in size. On November 26th, she underwent surgery when it was discovered the tumor could not be removed. Diagnosed with lung cancer, Benaderet underwent six weeks of radiation treatment. Her treatment was initially successful and concluded in January of 1968. She had missed 10 episodes of *Petticoat Junction* as she recuperated, during which her character of Kate Bradley was vaguely described in the storyline as being out of town.

Benaderet returned for the March 30th, 5th-season finale "Kate's Homecoming", but five months later, after shooting the first three episodes of the sixth season, she took leave from the series due to being too ill to continue. The fourth show of the sixth season, "The Valley Has a Baby", marked Benaderet's last episode and featured only her voice with her stand-in filmed from the rear. Bea Benaderet died on October 13, 1968, a year and a half before the series would end.

Bea Benaderet is credited with over 1000 combined radio and television episode appearances, which earned her the nickname of "Busy Bea" from members of the press. For her contributions to television, Benaderet received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 1960, on 1611 Vine Street.

**Edgar Buchanan** (Uncle Joe Carson) - In 1928, he earned a DDS degree from North Pacific College School of Dentistry. His classmate in dental school, Mildred Marguerite Spence and he were married in 1928. In 1939, they moved from Eugene, Oregon to Altadena, California, where they relocated their dental practice. He joined the Pasadena Playhouse as an actor. He appeared in his first film in 1939, after which he turned his dentistry practice over to his wife.

Buchanan appeared in more than 100 films, including *Penny Serenade*, *The Talk Of The Town*, *Cheaper By The Dozen*, *Shane*, *McLintock!* and *Move Over, Darling*.

Among the many television series in which he was cast as a member included Red Connors in the Western *Hopalong Cassidy* and J.J. Jackson in the CBS crime drama *Cade's County*.

Buchanan appeared as Uncle Joe Carson in all 222 episodes of *Petticoat Junction*, the only actor from the show to do so, as well as in 17 episodes of *Green Acres* and three episodes of *The Beverly Hillbillies*. On *Petticoat Junction*, he took over as proprietor of the Shady Rest Hotel following the death Bea Benaderet, who had played Kate Bradley.

**Jeanine Riley** (Billie Jo Bradley) - appeared in guest roles on several television series such as *Route 66*, *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*, *The Wild Wild West* and feature films such as *The Big Mouth*, *Fever Heat*, *The Comic* and *Electra Glide In Blue*.

Riley portrayed Billie Jo Bradley on the first two seasons of *Petticoat Junction*. The role of daughter Billie Jo Bradley was at first given to actress Sharon Tate. When word got out that she had posed nude in photo shoots, Tate was dismissed from the Ivory-Soap-sponsored series before scandal and controversy could cause damage. The part was recast and Jeannine won the role. She left the series in 1965 to pursue movies. She also had a regular cast member role on the comedy variety series *Hee Haw*. She played Lulu McQueen (a take-off on Ginger Grant from *Gilligan's Island*) on the western sitcom *Dusty's Trail* which aired in 1973–1974. In 2020, Riley released *The Bolder Woman: It's About Time*, a book she wrote "to instruct women how they can still fulfill their dreams no matter how old they get.

**Gunilla Hutton** - The 2nd Billie Jo Bradley (1965 - 1966)

**Meredith MacRae** - The 3rd Billie Jo Bradley (1966 - 1970)

**Pat Woodell** (Bobbie Jo Bradley) - Originally hoping to be a singer, she made some appearances as a teenager in Catskill Mountains hotels before making her acting debut in an episode of *Cheyenne*. She went on to appear on the shows *Hawaiian Eye*, *The Gallant Men*, *GE True* and *77 Sunset Strip*.

Woodell is best remembered for being the first Bobbie Jo Bradley, on *Petticoat Junction*. She played the book-smart character for the first two seasons before leaving the series in the spring of 1965. She went on to have guest roles on *The Hollywood Palace* in 1965 and in the last episode of *The Munsters* in 1966. She then toured as a singer with Jack Benny and recorded an album.



Woodell retired from acting in 1973 at the age of 29, after appearing on an episode of *The New Perry Mason*, entitled "The Case of the Murdered Murderer".

**Lori Saunders** - The 2nd Bobbie Jo Bradley (1965 - 1970)

**Linda Kaye (Henning)** (Betty Jo Bradley) - is the daughter of television producer and screenwriter, Paul Henning. She was born on her father's 33rd birthday. Her career began in 1953. Her earliest acting roles include *Rebel Without A Cause*, *Bus Stop* and *Gidget*. She was cast as a dancer in the film *Bye Bye Birdie*. She also appeared in several musicals, including *High Button Shoes*, *Brigadoon* and *The Sound Of Music*.

Henning made many television appearances on a variety of programs, including *The Ed Sullivan Show*, *Adam-12*, *Happy Days*, *Mork & Mindy*, *The Facts Of Life* and *The Tonight Show*. She provided the voice of Jethrine Bodine in *The Beverly Hillbillies*. She made dramatic appearances in *Hunter* and *Capitol*. Her many game show appearances include *Family Feud*, *Match Game*, *Hollywood Squares*, *Password* and *Tattletales*. She was also a substitute hostess on the 1974–1976 daytime edition of *High Rollers*.

Henning's most memorable role was as Betty Jo Bradley in *Petticoat Junction*. She was only one of three cast members, along with Edgar Buchanan and Frank Cady, to remain throughout the show's entire run and appeared in all but three of the 222 episodes.

Because her father Paul Henning was afraid of being accused of nepotism, he was not involved in her casting as Betty Jo Bradley. Once she was cast, she dropped her last name at the request of her father and used her middle name of Kay instead. He suggested she add an "e" to make it "Kaye" so people might think she was the daughter of comedian Danny Kaye.

**Smiley Burnette** (Charley Pratt) - was born Lester Alvin Burnette in Summum, Illinois. He worked on a local radio station and in Vaudeville after high school and was friends with Gene Autry. They worked together on the radio show *The National Barn Dance*. In 1934, both Autry and Burnette made their debuts in *In Old Santa Fe*. Burnette became well known as Autry's sidekick Frog Milhouse,. They worked together in over 80 Westerns.

In June 1944, he became the sidekick to Charles Starrett at Columbia Pictures in the new Durango Kid series. Starrett and Burnette were paired in 56 films from 1945 to 1952.

Smiley Burnette also wrote more than 400 songs and sang many of them on screen. Eventually, Burnette turned to broadcasting and made guest appearances on many country music radio and television programs such as *Louisiana Hayride*, *The Grand Ole Opry* and *Ranch Party*. Just after filming concluded for the fourth season of *Petticoat Junction*, Burnette became ill. He died on February 16, 1967, one month before his 56th birthday.

He was posthumously awarded a Star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame at 6125 Hollywood Boulevard in Hollywood, California on May 22, 1986. In 1998, he was inducted into the Western Music Association. On May 5, 2012, he was inducted into the Cowtown Society of Western Music Hall of Fame as a Hero.

**Rufe Davis** (Floyd Smoot) - was born Rufus Eldon Davidson in Vinson, Oklahoma. He began imitating animal sounds at a young age and proved himself to be a natural mimic. He later claimed to be able to imitate over 200 different sounds, though he regretted that he never mastered the sound of a piano.

He made his big-screen debut in the Warner Brothers' short *The City's Slicker* in 1936 playing a hillbilly mimic pursuing stardom in the big city. He shortened his name to Rufe Davis because he thought Rufus Davidson would be too expensive on a marquee.

Davis is best remembered for his portrayal of Hooterville Cannonball train conductor Floyd Smoot on *Petticoat Junction* and occasionally on *Green Acres*. Davis left *Petticoat Junction* after the death of Smiley Burnette when producers refused his request for a guaranteed number of episodes. However, he did return to the show twice in 1970.

In 1964, Davis and his *Petticoat Junction* co-star Smiley Burnette released the single "Steam, Cinders and Smoke". The song was written by Burnette. Davis voiced the train sounds in the song.

**Higgins** (Dog) - In 1960, animal trainer Frank Inn found the dog at the Burbank Animal Shelter as a puppy. Higgins's career was facilitated by Frank Inn, who also trained Arnold Ziffel (the pig) and all of the other animals used on *The Beverly Hillbillies*, *Petticoat Junction*, *Green Acres* and *The Waltons*.

As an actor, Higgins first came to national attention as the character of "Dog" on *Petticoat Junction* for six of the show's seven seasons, from 1964 to 1970, appearing in 149 episodes. As a result of his work in *Petticoat Junction*, Higgins received a PATSY Award in 1966 in the television category and was featured on the cover of an issue of *TV Guide* magazine. In 1971, Higgins starred in the television film *Mooch Goes To Hollywood* with Zsa Zsa Gabor and Vincent Price. He came out of retirement at the age of 16 to star in the 1974 feature film *Benji*, which became his greatest commercial success.

**Paul Henning** - His ambition was to be a singer on the radio. When the local radio station KMBC had no money for writers to create the "filler" between songs, he became a writer as well as a singer. Writing proved a better option of the two, so he abandoned singing in order to write for series like *Fibber McGee and Molly* and *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show*. Later television series like *The Dennis Day Show*, *The Real McCoys* and *The Andy Griffith Show* were on his résumé. Henning was also the creator, writer and producer of *The Bob Cummings Show*, where he met many of the actors who appeared in his later series.

His creation, *The Beverly Hillbillies* was one of the highest-rated series of all time. After the major success of *Hillbillies*, CBS gave Henning another half-hour time slot on its schedule. In 1963, *Petticoat Junction* debuted on CBS and was also a great success. In 1965, this was followed by *Green Acres*, of which Henning was only the casting director and executive producer.

## **Other Cast Members**

**June Lockhart** - appeared as Dr. Janet Craig on the final two seasons of the CBS sitcom Petticoat Junction from 1968 to 1970. Her character was brought in to fill the void created after Bea Benaderet died during the run of the show.

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## **REFERENCES**

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