

# Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society

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## *PSRHS Activities & Events...*

Editor's Comments

### ***NOTICE:***

**Meeting: March 23, 2006**

**Program: Day of the Flanger by Brendan Compton.**

Please forward any comments, suggestions or ideas for trips or other activities to me for consideration and information.

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## *In this Issue...*

### ***Monthly Meeting...***

The next PSRHS meeting will be held on 7:00PM Thursday, March 23rd. in the Multipurpose Senior Citizen Center at the Dewitt Complex in Auburn.

### **Membership Information**

Individual Members = \$20.00  
Family Membership = \$25.00

- Monthly Newsletter
  - Member Activities, Presentations and Field Trips
  - Display & Restoration Projects
- PSRHS, P.O. Box 1776  
Colfax, CA 95713

# Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society

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## Monthly Newsletter ---March 2006

### *President's Notes:* Announcements/Updates-

Field Trip: proposed for June 10, to Blue Cañon. More info and confirmation of date to follow.

Proposed showing of Brendan Compton video Day of the Spreader at Colfax Theater as a thank you for those who worked on the Colfax Depot.

### *February Program Notes:* February 23, 2006

Brendan Compton showed his video of an interview with Nancy Longnecker (May 2004), a long time Blue Cañon resident. Many of her family members lived there and were involved with the railroad, as BC was a main stop on the line for water for the steam engines and for ice to pack the fruit in the PFE cars. She gave a charming and articulate review of her memories growing up in Blue Cañon.

### **Highlights:**

Area named for blue haze that came up the canyon; was not fog.

Her grandfather settled there because of the good water. He envisioned starting a brewery. Each house had its own spring that had water cold enough to frost a glass.

Great grandfather was engineer on Central Pacific and was one of the first engineers to take a train over the Donner Summit

Grandfather was engineer on Southern Pacific and was chosen to take the train carrying President Roosevelt over the mountain. He stopped the train in Blue

Cañon so everyone could see the President. He also helped design the cab forward type locomotives.

Snow stories- so much snow that they had to raise the power poles to get under the wires. Trains got stranded in snow at times. They frequently had to dig tunnels to get from house to house. The children would ski off the roof of the 3-story hotel. It was always exciting to see the big rotary plows go by.

Everyone in town had train passes and could ride the train for free. They just had to notify the dispatcher so the train would stop. She would ride up with the engineer and got to share their very hot sugared coffee.

Everyone got used to the noise of the passing trains; windows would rattle and conversations would have to stop. She found the sound of the steam engines to be comforting; the sound of the diesels was just noise! If no trains came by, the silence was strange and everyone knew something had happened along the line.

Burning outhouse. The kids snuck into the outhouse to sample and share a cigarette. There was difficulty getting it lit, and they ended up catching the outhouse on fire. They ran off and never confessed what had happened.

One time there was a train wreck and grapes spilled everywhere. The whole town collected the grapes and the Italian family made wine.

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The families in BC were of diverse backgrounds (Italian, Mexican, Japanese, and Caucasian). Everyone was like family and she appreciated everyone's differences and enjoyed sampling the various ethnic foods and treats.

Her mother killed a huge rattlesnake one day on her way to the cookhouse. The Chinese cook saw this as a delicacy, cooked it and ate it.

WW II- she was listening to the radio when the first news of the bombing of Pearl Harbor came over the airwaves. She was the first person in town to hear the news and quickly spread the word.

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### ***March 23<sup>rd</sup>. meeting presentation:***

Don't miss the special preview showing for PSRHS members of the new **Day of the Spreader** Video

The Union Pacific's Donner Summit line crosses the Sierra Nevada at over seven thousand feet in elevation. Keeping this "All Season Pass" open is absolutely vital to the railroad and California's economy.

Harsh winters with temperatures in the low teens and snow accumulations of forty-eight inches in a single day and up to sixty-five feet in a year, has long been a major obstacle to keeping trains rolling over the Sierra.

When the snowfall gets too great for the **Flangers** to remove it from the rails, the second line of defense is called into action.

The **Spreader** is deployed to remove large amounts of snow accumulations from the mainline and shove it off the banks and bridges to clear the path for new snow to fall. With the nose blade down, the wings extended, and the addition of speed, the **Spreader** can literally move a mountain of snow.

Included in the video is the amazing history of **Norden** Southern Pacific's former headquarters for snow removal operations. The video shows how operators and crews lived under the snowpack all winter long and used the buried warren of long connecting hallways beneath the snow to get from place to place.

This amazing film gives the viewer another rare glimpse into the drama of Donner Summit snow clearing operations.

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*Invite your friends!*

