

Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society

P.O. Box 1776

Colfax, CA 95713

Apply
U.S. Postage
Here



www.psrhs.org

To:

PSRHS Activities & Events...

Editor's Comments

NOTICE:

Meeting: April 27, 2006

Program: Ken Yeo presentation of snow shed construction over Donner.

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

Editor: Lyle Brown, (530) 885-6997
<2lebrown@infostations.com>

In this Issue...

Monthly Meeting...

The next PSRHS meeting will be held on 7:00PM Thursday, April 27, 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

Monthly Newsletter ---April 2006

President's Notes:

Announcements/Updates-

The first field trip of this year will be to Blue Canon and is tentatively set for the last weekend in June- confirmation of date to follow.

April Program Presentation:

Donner Pass Snow Shed Construction

Our own Ken Yeo will share his photo collection documenting the construction of the prefabricated concrete snow sheds that replaced the wood ones over the Donner Pass Route. Ken's photos include views of the concrete panel construction in Colfax as well as the snow shed assembly process on the Summit. Should be an interesting insight into another one of the unique aspects of the Donner Pass Route.

March 23, 2006 program: Brendan Compton honored us with a showing of his video *Day of the Spreader*. This film is the second in his series about snow removal along the route over Donner Pass in the winter. The spreader is a specialized snowdozer called into action when the snow becomes too heavy for the flanger. It has a high glassed in cab for visibility and a wedge front with adjustable wings at the side, which can push snow well off the track. It takes a strong crew to change the wedge angle from one side to the other. The men stand back when they hear the call coming through! referring to the throwing of the heavy metal brace arm from one side of the spreader to the other.

The Snow Service crew are all volunteers, pulled from regular duty when the Sierra snow starts building up along the tracks. The crew consists of 2 wingmen and

1 noseman and they remain on duty day and night, until the tracks get cleared. The Snow Office is located in Truckee and all communications originate from there. During heavy storms and whiteouts, everyone's goal is We don't want to lose the hill.

The spreader is pushed from behind by a diesel locomotive. The speed is determined by the depth and weight of the snow. Sierra snow is known for its tendency for heavy packing, which makes it feel like white cement. An experienced crew can feel the texture of the snow through the wings, and adjust the angles and throw accordingly. It usually takes 2 or more passes of the spreader to clear the double track.

One episode showed the derailing of the spreader, caused by exceptionally heavy snowpack. The emergency call of *Spreader on the ground - reraill the spreader!* brought the railroad crane, bulldozers, shovels, and strong backs to the derailment site. After a long 12 hours of hard, cold, backbreaking work, the spreader was back in business. Then the crew had to lay a diesel fuel-soaked rope along the rolled track, light the rope on fire, and wait for the steel to soften so it could be reshaped back into line. One hearty crewman described this kind of work as *playing in the snow!* Another referred to it as *another day at the office.*

The video left us with many memorable images and sounds of men and machines struggling through the deep snow, dedicated to the ultimate goal of keeping the mountain open.

Thank you Brendan for sharing your unique snow experiences with us. There will be a DVD available for purchase at the next meeting. † † †

