

Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society

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March 2009



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To:

PSRHS Activities & Events...

Editor's Comments:

NOTE:

My computer is finally up and running.

Sorry this newsletter is a little late getting out.

March meeting will include further presentations of the Roseville rail yard explosions.

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

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Monthly Meeting...

The next PSRHS meeting will be held at 7:00PM Thursday, March 26th, in the Multi-purpose Senior Citizen Center on D Ave. at the Dewitt Complex in Auburn. Call (530) 346-9607 for more info.

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 – March 2009

February 2009 Meeting Minutes

New Business:

Spring Field Trip Discussion – Ideas were presented for our Spring Field Trip. A possible destination is the Bowman area. Some Club members scouted the area, exploring the original right-of-way for old trestles that have been filled in.

Announcements/Updates:

Historic Caboose restoration in Colfax – All the boards for the caboose siding will need to be replaced. We are looking for a suitable source. Volunteers gather on the 2nd Saturday of the month at 9 am to work on the caboose. Contact Jim Wood for more information.

The **UP steam locomotive No. 844** will be in Roseville April 18 – 20 and April 24 – 30 for Roseville's Centennial celebration.

Newsletter delivery via email saves the cost of printing and postage. Members are encouraged to sign up for email delivery, if possible.

February Meeting Presentation:

Club member Walt Wilson (retired SP Conductor) presented a fascinating review of the Roseville Yard bomb explosion on April 28, 1973. He showed first hand photos taken from an airplane of the explosions, smoke, debris, and bomb craters. 7000 bombs (300 per car) were being transported over Donner Summit on their way to the Navy Depot in the Bay Area.

The train, with a total of 103 cars (21 containing the bombs), arrived at the Antelope receiving yards in Roseville at 6:30 am. At around 8 am, the bombs started exploding. These bombs were Mark 81's; 74 in long, 260 pounds. They contained plastic explosives that could only be ignited with a detonator or by exposure to a high temperature over 1000 degrees. The

yardmaster had placed the train next to cars containing liquid propane gas.

Member Dave McClain added some eye witness information to the story. He had seen the train coming down the hill and noted a number of wheels emitting sparks. Typically, the floors of boxcars carrying explosives have a metal shielding to prevent the wooden floors from igniting from hot boxes. Investigations later showed the metal shielding to be missing from some of these cars. Dave was interviewed by the FBI, Intelligence agencies, newspapers, and eventually by SP.

Aerial photos taken by Herb Joiner and Gary Nelson showed plumes of smoke rising into the air, destroyed buildings, debris scattered for long distances, mangled rail sections, and huge craters in the ground. Windows were shattered 3-4 miles away. Around 50 people were injured and amazingly, no deaths occurred.

Thank you Walt and Dave for your presentations (Shirley Belleville, Secretary)

March Meeting Presentation:

The March meeting presentation will be a continuation of Retired SP Conductor Walt Wilson's gripping story of the bomb train explosion that occurred in the Roseville/Antelope train yard in 1973 that caused much damage to the yard and surrounding areas.

Member Dave McClain will tell the next chapter of the saga —the story of the accident investigation conducted by the US military and Southern Pacific Railroad as well as the court battle over responsibility for the ammo train explosion.

