

Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society



www.psrhs.org

February 2013 Newsletter

In this issue:

February meeting and presentation on Michigan Cal Railroad. Page 2.

President's Message. Page 2

Colfax Derailment. Page 2

Colfax Caboose Update. Page 3

Caboose Fund-raiser Photo Display. Pg. 3

Passing Scene. Page 3

From the Archives. Page 4



Cleaning up after the Jan. 20 derailment at Grass Valley Street crossing in Colfax. Photo by Roger Staab

Scheduled Events & Notices



- Feb 28 **Monthly Meeting & Program** – 7 pm
– Paul Beckstrom will discuss the Michigan Cal Railroad that operated near Camino.
- Mar 4 **PSRHS Board Meeting** – 7 pm
– All members in good standing are welcome to attend board meetings
- Mar 28 **Monthly Meeting & Program** – 7 pm
– Program to be announced
- Jun 18-21 **Sierra Narrow Gauge Conference** – NCNG Museum, Nevada City, CA
– <http://www.ncngmuseum.org/> ‘What’s Happening’ Tab for info

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February Meeting – Thursday, 28 February, 7:00PM - DeWitt Senior Center

February Program: Michigan Cal Railroad presentation by Paul Beckstrom. The Michigan California Lumber Company's 3-foot railroad delivered logs to the mill at Camino, where it connected with the standard gauge Camino, Placerville & Lake Tahoe Railroad to Placerville. The line included a cableway to carry logs from the north side of the river canyon to the south side. Paul is a model railroader and retired from Office of Emergency Services (OES).

Membership by the Numbers

Treasurer Peter Hills reports that we currently have 35 paid-up members, including one new member. Last year we had 64 paid members by the end of the calendar year. Please renew your membership for 2013 if you have not already done so.

President's Message

Well . . . what's new? For those of you not at January's meeting, the Society has a new President. Let me introduce myself. My name is Malcolm Frost and it was a great honor to be selected by the Board to help lead us into this next year. I want to thank everyone at the meeting for the warm welcome and look forward to meeting many more of you soon.

At our January Board meeting we identified our projects for this coming year. Of course the restoration of the caboose is at the forefront and thanks to Tony Hesch's work to recover expenses we have a significant budget to continue. Planning for railroad days has already begun. We have had conversations with a number of potential equipment exhibitors and Union Pacific is on board to help bring them in. The Society will help sponsor and promote Brendan Compton's video commemorating the 150th anniversary of the railroad completion, which he anticipates airing on public television. And Walt Wilson is working diligently to bring new speakers to our monthly meetings.

I want to thank Mike Lynch for his presentation of the Mountain Quarries Railroad at our January Membership meeting. There is a lot of history in that big hole we call the American River Canyon and Mike brought a great deal of it to life.

Of course we can't ignore the derailment in Colfax. Trying to find the silver lining, no one was hurt and it gives us a great opportunity to thank local emergency personnel for their response. Railroad right of ways can be a hazardous area and we must all respect the potential dangers. I know the enthusiasm in this group when it comes to viewing and capturing train movements along the Donner Pass Route, however be smart, be diligent and be safe.

As you can see there is lots going on, please don't hesitate to bring your thoughts and insights "to the table". I would enjoy hearing your opinions and ideas on how we can make our society better. You can email me at malcolm.frost@psrhs.org. Thank you again and be safe. — **Malcolm**

Colfax Derailment

On Sunday, January 20, a westbound UP double-stack train derailed at the Grass Valley Street crossing in downtown Colfax. There was minimal damage considering what could have resulted from a derailment in the center of town. One of the crossing arm standards was taken out by the derailed cars, and both east and west-bound rail traffic was halted until the next day. The street crossing was not reopened until late in the day on Monday (fortunately a holiday).

The incident serves as a good reminder of the dangers inherent in being close to the railroad right-of-way.

The cleanup efforts attracted a large crowd of onlookers, who had front-row seats to the action. It was a great opportunity to witness the Dobbas and UP crews at work doing what they do so well – clearing the tracks and right-of-way of debris and quickly but safely getting the railroad back to full operation.

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Colfax Caboose Project Update

At our January meeting, Caboose Project Manager Tony Hesch reported that the city of Colfax voted to reimburse over \$5,900 to the caboose fund for city permit fees and electrical service upgrades. PSRHS had fronted the money to do the electrical upgrades so the caboose project could proceed. The electrical work that was completed brought the City's electrical service to the area near the caboose up to code.

The Colfax Record featured a front page article on the caboose project in its February 14 issue. Tony hopes to get the project back underway soon. Call Tony at 346-9179 if you would like to help or make a donation.

Photo Sale Fundraiser for the Caboose Project

Jay and Chris Hansell and Steve Wolf displayed a number of railroad photos at Cafe Luna in Colfax during January. Jay recently announced that 16 pictures were sold for a total of \$210, which is being donated to the caboose project. The rest of the pictures

were taken to the Colfax chamber of commerce, where they will be displayed and sold by the chamber or museum with proceeds going to the caboose.

Steve Wolf provided this photo of their display at Cafe Luna. Thanks Jay, Chris and Steve!



Passing Scene – Late afternoon sun highlights the Western Pacific heritage paint on UP 1983. This scene was captured in March 2006 at the old Dinky Way crossing in Colfax. *Photo by Roger Staab*



Membership Information

Individual Members = \$25.00/yr
Each Additional Member Card = \$5.00/yr

- Monthly Meetings (4th Thursday) and Newsletter
- Member Activities, Presentations and Field Trips
- Display and Restoration Projects

PSRHS, P.O. Box 1776, Colfax, CA 95713
www.psrhs.org

Please forward comments, suggestions or information for inclusion in future issues of the newsletter.

Roger Staab (530) 346-6722 roger.staab@psrhs.org

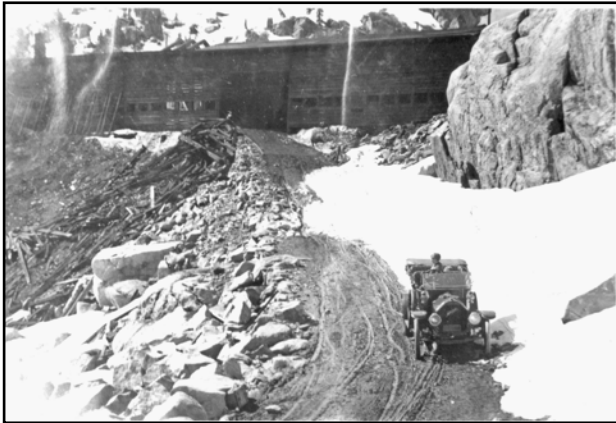
Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society



February 2013 Newsletter

From the Archives

January Photo: The classic photo at right shows construction underway on summit Tunnels 7 and 6, looking westbound from above Tunnel 8. The steam plume above the gray ridge at top center is likely from the stationary engine atop the center shaft of the Tunnel 6 bore. Note buildings at left along the Dutch Flat & Donner Lake wagon road, which crossed from left to right between Tunnels 6 and 7. *Photo at right from the PSRHS collection courtesy of Dana Scanlon and the family of Gary Todd.*



After the tracks were completed, the roadway crossed the tracks in the snowshed between Tunnels 6 & 7, seen in the photo at left. In 1914 the roadway was rerouted to cross under the tracks in an underpass between Tunnels 7 and 8. *Photo at left courtesy of Jack Duncan.*

February Photo: Where and when was this photo taken? What Sierra event is documented in the scene? Answers in the March newsletter.



CPRR/SP Donner Route Timeline: Track construction at the summit was suspended during the 1867-68 winter, but roadbed construction continued east of Coburn's Station (now Truckee). On Dec. 13, 1867, the first Central Pacific locomotive nosed into the state of Nevada. On May 4, 1868, tracks reached 14 miles east of the California/Nevada state line. An auction for town lots was held on May 9, and the new town of Reno sprouted into existence.