

# Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society

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## March 2013 Newsletter

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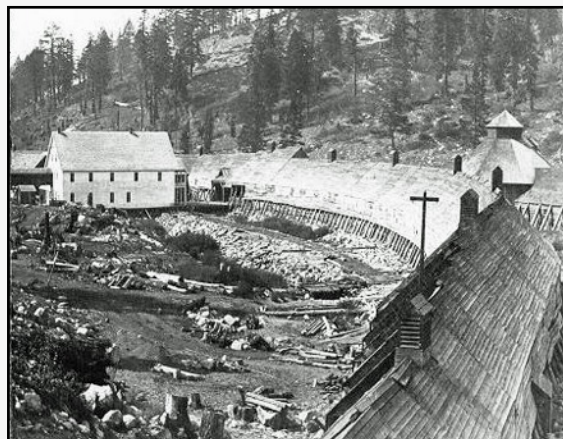
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*Summit Hotel, Tunnel 6 station and snowsheds at Donner Summit. See Page 4.*

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### Scheduled Events & Notices



- Mar 28    **Monthly Meeting & Program** – 7 pm  
– Mike Roque will talk about the Niles Canyon Railway activities.  
– **NOTE NEW LOCATION - Auburn Airport Terminal Bldg** – see p. 2
- Ongoing    **Colfax Caboose Work Sessions** – Scheduled work sessions are resuming this month. Contact Tony at 346-9179 if you can contribute some time to this project.
- Apr 25    **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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### March Meeting – Thursday, 28 March, 7:00PM -

**Note New Meeting Location – Auburn Airport Terminal Bldg (old restaurant) on New Airport Rd. From Bell, drive north to end of New Airport Rd., turn right after passing building, then right again to parking lot.**

**March Program: Niles Canyon Activities.** Mike Roque will talk to us about what is happening at Niles Canyon Railway. Pacific Locomotive Association operates the railway and maintains equipment in their on-site maintenance shops. Golden Gate Railroad Museum's equipment is located in an adjacent area.

### Summary of February Membership Meeting

Due to access issues, the meeting was moved to the Auburn Airport terminal building at the end of New Airport Road. The meeting was called to order by President Malcolm Frost. Malcolm invited members to attend a PSRHS board meeting on Monday, March 4.

Brendan Compton's video on rotaries to be aired on PBS has received UP approval with a signed contract.

Regarding Colfax Railroad Days, Jim Wood met with Jan Decker of Placer County Tourism and discussed advertising and promotion strategies. Malcolm met again with UP and found their management very receptive to our Railroad Days celebration, especially for any programs that emphasize safety around the tracks. **UP is concerned about repeat offenders on the railroad right of way.**

A visit to Niles Canyon was suggested as a field trip.

**February Program** – Paul Beckstrom presented a very interesting and informative slide show on Michigan Cal Lumber Co.'s narrow gauge railroad and tramway that operated near Camino. Paul is co-author of a book about Swayne Lumber Co. that operated in the Sierra foothills east of Oroville.

### March 4 Board Meeting

**Web Site** – Malcolm reported that the new web site is up and running. He is looking for someone to provide day-to-day maintenance of the web site.

**PBS Video** – Brendan provided details on his contract with UP for his film on rotaries, and the steps needed to prepare the video for PBS broadcast. He is targeting an October air date.

**Towle Brothers book** – Roger Staab presented a proposal to the board to have PSRHS be the publisher of record for his book on Towle Brothers soon to be published. In return for handling sales of the book, proceeds beyond the initial publishing costs would be donated to PSRHS.

**Transcontinental 150th** – Board members discussed potential club participation in events celebrating the 150th anniversary of Central Pacific construction completion. Brendan suggested that history displays or video segments be prepared but held until the months before Promontory's 150th. Alternatively, the club may want to participate in selected events that will likely be held in various communities along the construction route.

**Colfax Railroad Days** – Tony and Malcolm met with the Colfax Chamber of Commerce to address questions of who is in charge and what administrative structure needs to be put in place. Jim reported on his meeting with Jan Decker of Placer County Tourism. Jim and others mentioned the railroad retirement group as a potential resource. CSRM has expressed interest in bringing equipment to this year's event, and is coordinating with UP. There has been no response yet from AMTRAK or Capital Corridor, but Malcolm reported that response has been very supportive from UP, especially if we maintain emphasis on safety programs.

**Colfax Caboose** – Tony reported that with Spring approaching he plans to hit the project hard, aiming to have the caboose ready for an opening by railroad days. The board spent time discussing what the caboose

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should be, and whether the club wants to assume oversight of the caboose including its maintenance. A proposal will be put together to be presented to the city.

Field Trips – target May and September. Suggestions include Niles Canyon, Placerville Branch Museum, Rio Vista, Yolo Shortline, and Oakdale shops.

### President's Message

People sometimes ask me where I got my interest in trains. My grandfather on my mom's side owned a gas station in Los Nietos California. What more could a small boy ask for except from my Grandparents' house on Norwalk Blvd. I could see the trains pass. My grandmother would walk with me to the station to watch the Santa Fe Budd Cars and freights and passenger trains go by on what is now the line between Fullerton and Los Angeles Union Station. Grandfather had an HO set in the garage with cast iron locomotives and scratch built cars. I remember the smell of motor oil and grease from the garage mixed with the ozone emitted from the old model engines.

Then there was my dad. He would take the family to Cajon Pass and to Travel Town in Los Angeles. Prior to going in the Army Air Corps he worked at the movie studios and when a lot of his friends retired they built and operated live steamers at LALS. He would get us in to the firing area and get me instruction on how to run them. Perhaps however the greatest gift he gave me was the stories of he and his father grabbing freights out of LA. They didn't hop freights; granddad knew the engineers and they would get cab rides over Cajon and Tehachapi. He loved telling me of riding the Cab Forwards over Tehachapi in thunder and lightning storms. I could smell the wet grass and feel the chill in the cab with him.

"So where did I get my love of trains?" I inherited it.

Please respect the right-of way and preserve your love & appreciation for those who come after.

— Malcolm



**Passing Scene** – In February 2007 this car running as a special passed the Colfax depot heading east. The markings identify it as Federal Railway Administration's T-16 High Speed Rail Research Car. Originally built for Penn Central by Budd in 1968, it was rebuilt by AMTRAK as cab car #9642. In 2000 it was rebuilt for FRA by ENSCO and The Delaware Car Co. Perhaps Mike Ramsey can offer some further insights on its FRA role.  
*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

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[www.psrhs.org](http://www.psrhs.org)



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

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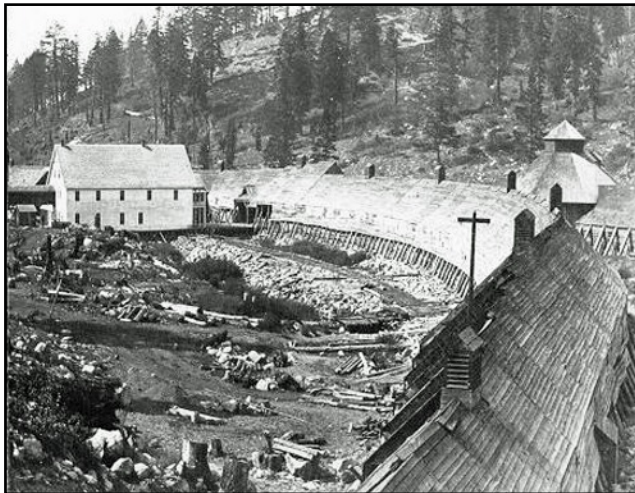
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## From the Archives

**February Photo:** The photo at right from Signor's book, Donner Pass, shows Tunnel 6 station just west of the summit tunnel after a disastrous fire in 1921 destroyed the snowsheds that had enclosed the Donner summit tracks and station. The hotel (see photo below) survived, but an engine and valuable snowsheds were lost to the flames.



The photo at left shows the Summit Hotel and Tunnel 6 snowsheds prior to the fire. The domed structure at far right housed the turntable. Sheds in the foreground covered the tracks to the west portal of Tunnel 6. *Photo extracted from an Anthony stereograph – PSRHS collection.*

**March Photo:** Oops! Where did this mishap occur, and what were the consequences? Answers in the April newsletter.



**CPRR/SP Donner Route Timeline:** On June 18, 1868, the seven mile gap from Summit to Coburn's Station (Truckee) was completed, and the first through train entered Coburn's on June 19. By July 22 tracks reached Wadsworth, NV (mile 188), where a division yard and repair shops were erected. It had taken five and a half years to build the 188 miles from Sacramento to Wadsworth. The next 501 miles to the junction with the Union Pacific were built in nine months.