

# Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society



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

## April 2013 Newsletter

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*See pages 3 & 4 for information on this locomotive boiler explosion at Dutch Flat in 1898. .*

### Scheduled Events & Notices



- Apr 25 Monthly Meeting & Program – 7 pm**  
– Chris Graves will discuss early history of the Central Pacific and the roles the Chinese played in the construction.  
– **NOTE NEW LOCATION - Auburn Airport Terminal Bldg – see p. 2**
- Ongoing Colfax Caboose Work Sessions** – Caboose work sessions have resumed.  
Contact Tony at 346-9179 if you can contribute some time to this project.
- May 23 Monthly Meeting & Program – 7 pm**  
– Program to be announced
- Jun 18-21 Sierra Narrow Gauge Conference – NCNG Museum, Nevada City, CA**  
– <http://www.ncngrrmuseum.org/> ‘What’s Happening’ Tab for info

**\*\*Please notify the editor of any railroad-related events to list in this calendar\*\***

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**April Meeting – Thursday, 25 April, 7:00PM - 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.**

**April Program:** Chris Graves will talk about the early history of the Central Pacific including the role of Chinese workers. Chris has accumulated a wealth of information about the construction of Central Pacific Railroad over Donner Pass and will share some of his insights (and probably an opinion or two).

### Summary of March Membership Meeting

The meeting was called to order by vice-president Walt Wilson. Walt briefly discussed some of the programs he is trying to arrange for future meetings.

Brendan Compton reported that his video on rotaries will air on PBS in October. Brendan also discussed negotiations he has had with Wave Broadband to support installation of web cams in the Colfax area to be linked to our PSRHS web site. Desired locations are one at the Cape Horn overlook to watch trains rounding “the cape” and two in Colfax looking both westbound and eastbound. Cost figures are being developed to formulate a specific proposal. Activating the web cams should bring a lot of attention to our web site and the club’s activities. Anyone interested in working on development and implementation of the web cams should contact Brendan or the newsletter editor.

Field trips were discussed, and there was general agreement to do a spring field trip to Niles Canyon Railway, likely in June. Details will follow when a date is set. For the fall field trip, Cisco or the summit tunnels were discussed as possible locations. Our field trips must consider safe access while on or near Union Pacific right-of-way.

Roger handed out copies of the latest issue of Donner Crossings containing articles on AP Stanford and the soon-to-be published Towle Brothers book. Donner Crossings copies are being mailed to paid members.

**March Program – Niles Canyon Activities.** Mike Roque gave an informative talk about the history of Niles Canyon railroad operations, along with present happenings and future plans 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.

### Further information on the FRA Research Vehicle (March newsletter photo)



PSRHS member and Federal Railway Administration

employee Mike Ramsey provided some additional information on the photo of the FRA research vehicle that appeared in the March newsletter. The DOTX216 is a converted AMTRAK metroliner coach equipped with a track geometry measurement system, a rail profile measuring system, a multi-car ride quality measuring system, and other state-of-the-art instrumentation for conducting railway research. It can make track measurements at speeds up to 165 mph and serves as a high speed track research instrumentation platform for a variety of tests and research projects.

The DOTX216’s mission objectives include:

- Test bed for new technologies for high-speed track and vehicle/track interaction assessment
- Assess track condition and ride quality over candidate high-speed rail routes
- Assess relationships between ride quality and track conditions
- Assess effectiveness of new high-speed track geometry standards, ride quality standards and typical maintenance practices

The DOTX216 contains a workshop, a conference area, an instrumentation area, and an observation area at the end of the car that provides a view of the track. It also offers sleeping quarters and a kitchen to accommodate long-term test efforts.

Thanks for the information, Mike.

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### Comments from member Doug Ferrier on the Dutch Flat Boiler Explosion photo in the March newsletter (see photo on page 4)

I am sure your readers have already identified the picture in the March issue as being the locomotive that exploded in front of the Dutch Flat Station on July 22, 1898. It was locomotive No. 1993, and was eastbound by Dutch Flat Station at 4:30 AM when it exploded. All three men on the locomotive died: Engineer Thos. Kelley, Fireman Terry, and an at first unidentified man who was breaking coal on the tender, but was later identified as C.F. Jackson. It was reported that Engineer Kelley's body was found 300 yards from the exploded locomotive. The explosion was the result of lack of water in the boiler. The Faller Hotel and bar at the Station was also blown up in the accident. Four people were in the Hotel at the time: Mrs. Faller, two of her sons, ARaymond (10 years old) and Lawrence (6 years old), and one hotel guest, Henry Disque. The Fallers mainly sustained cuts and bruises, while Mr. Disque had several ribs broken, and was knocked

unconscious. At one time, it was thought he also sustained life threatening internal injuries, but that evidently was not the case. All of the people in the Hotel survived, although Mr. Disque would continue to suffer back pains for the rest of his life.

In the picture, the locomotive has been righted and put back on the tracks, and was eventually taken to Sacramento. The blown up Faller Hotel is behind the railroad car on the left, in among the trees. The building behind the locomotive is the warehouse of the Munro Store, which was located west of the Faller Hotel.

Sources of information: Placer Herald newspapers of 7/123/1898, 7/30/1898, August 6, 1898; Colfax Sentinel newspapers of 7/22/1898, 7/27/1898 and 8/5/1898.

Doug Ferrier 3/31/13



**Editor's Note:** Reader comments, additional details, etc., are invited on any newsletter items or photos. See contact information at the bottom of this page.

**Passing Scene** – Trackage rights secured by BNSF in the merger of Union Pacific and Southern Pacific resulted in occasional views of BNSF colors traversing the Donner Route. This March 2007 photo shows the lead engine in new BNSF paint followed by two Santa Fe warbonnets passing the Colfax Depot heading westbound. *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](http://www.psrhs.org)



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

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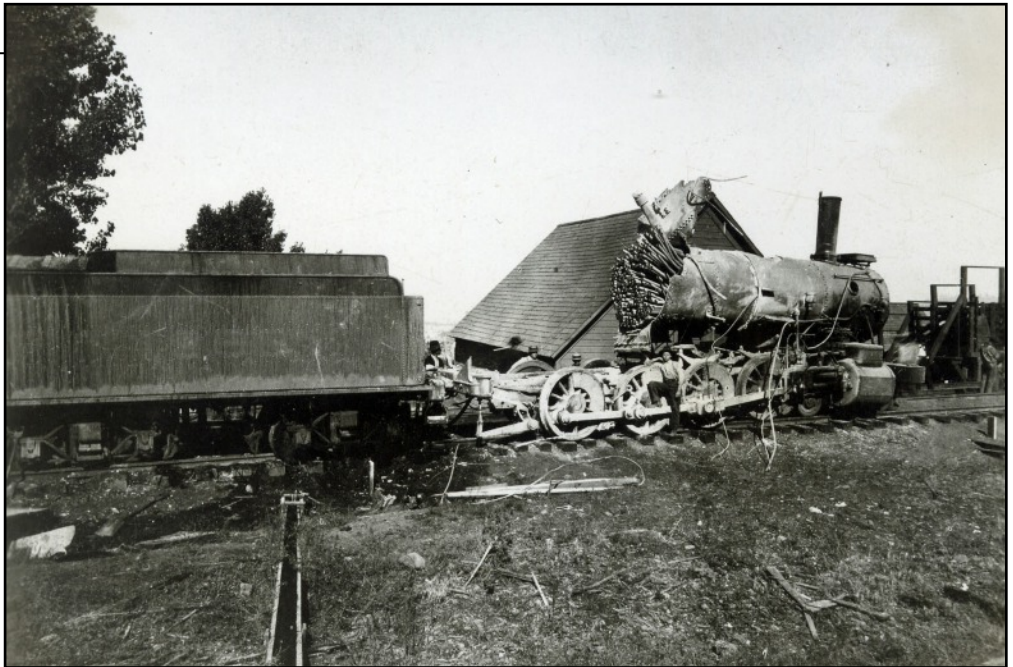
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## From the Archives

**March Photo:** The Sacramento Union reported in its July 23, 1898 issue that the boiler of a Southern Pacific locomotive had exploded when the engine was passing the Dutch Flat Station at 4:50 am on July 22. The engineer, fireman, and an unidentified person were killed in the explosion and several people in the nearby hotel were injured. The eastbound special freight with its load of fruit had stopped at Gold Run to take on water and fuel. It was traveling at about 10 miles per hour past the Dutch Flat station and hotel when the explosion occurred. The hotel building was considerably damaged by the explosion and flying debris. The engine boiler had recently passed through a thorough overhauling and pressure testing. For more on this incident see Doug Ferrier's comments on page 3. *Photo from the Ken Yeo collection*



**April Photo:** Where was this trestle located, and what is there today? Answers in May newsletter.



**CPRR/SP Donner Route Timeline:** On April 28, 1869 track crews on the Central Pacific laid 10 miles of track in one day. The meeting point with the westward-building Union Pacific crews was initially to be determined by construction speed until Congress established Promontory, Utah as the meeting point. The Central Pacific and Union Pacific tracks met at Promontory on May 10, 1869. The first transcontinental trains ran over the new line to Sacramento on May 15. The nation's first Transcontinental Railroad was now an operating reality.