

# Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society



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## May 2013 Newsletter

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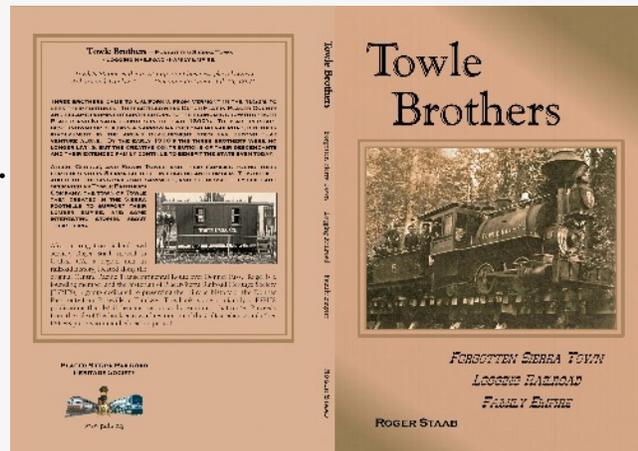
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*Front and back covers of Towle Brothers book recently published by PSRHS*

### Scheduled Events & Notices



- May 23 Monthly Meeting & Program – 7 pm**  
– Roger Staab will discuss Towle Brothers and his book recently published by PSRHS on this interesting company, its logging railroad and the town of Towle  
– **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.
- TBA June field trip** – Date and location to be announced
- Jun 7-8 Dunsmuir Railroad Days** – <http://www.dunsmuirrailroaddays.org/>
- Jun 18-21 Sierra Narrow Gauge Conference** – **NCNG Museum, Nevada City, CA**  
– <http://www.ncngmuseum.org/> ‘Sierra NG Conference’ Tab for info
- Jun 27 Monthly Meeting & Program – 7 pm** – Program to be announced

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**May Meeting – Thursday, 23 May, 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.**

**May Program:** Roger Staab will discuss his new book on Towle Brothers Company recently published by PSRHS. Maps, photos and newspaper quotes describe the evolution of Towle Brothers' lumber operations and their narrow gauge logging railroad in Placer and Nevada Counties, and the rise and fall of the town of Towle established by Towle Brothers to support their lumber businesses.

Copies of the book will be available at the meeting at a discount price of \$18 for PSRHS members (list price is \$22 + tax). Copies can also be ordered on-line at [www.thebookpatch.com](http://www.thebookpatch.com).

Click on the bookstore tab, then search for 'Towle Brothers'.

Proceeds from sale of the book will go toward PSRHS historic preservation and education activities.



### Summary of April Membership Meeting

The meeting was called to order by President Malcolm Frost. Malcolm introduced new member Trevor Westoby.

Brendan Compton continues to work on details for establishing web cams at Colfax and Cape Horn. The web cams would be linked to the PSRHS web page.

Member Tony Hesch represents the City of Colfax at Placer County Transportation Planning Agency meetings. He reported on status of recent discussions to get an additional Capital Corridor train to Auburn and beyond. The idea has been tabled for the time being since it would require double tracking of a portion of the Donner route above Emigrant Gap. Tony invited members to bring items to his attention that could be discussed at future PCTPA meetings.

Tony also announced that windows for the caboose cupola can be purchased for \$125. A plaque will acknowledge each window contributor.

Treasurer Peter Hills reported that after subtracting funds set aside for the Colfax caboose project, the club has a slight positive balance in our checking account.

Malcolm reported that Jim Wood will be helping with web site maintenance. Some links have recently been added. Notify Malcolm of any problems found with the web site or links.

**April Program – Early CPRR Construction and Operation.** Chris Graves gave a very interesting and informative presentation on topics related to early CPRR construction and some of the personalities involved. Some tidbits from his presentation:

- In 1868 before the rails were joined, CPRR already had 163 locomotives on its roster
- A conductor's record from 1906 noted that two engines were used to pull a train of 27 cars
- Strobridge hired Chinese workers for a business venture as early as 1852, before he was involved

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### April Program – continued

with CPRR construction. In March 1865 Strobridge hired Chinese for railroad construction approaching Clipper Gap.

- Judah was involved in several California land deals. He invested in land in the Gold Hill area east of Lincoln, the area that would become the city of Folsom, and a portion of the area now occupied by the Roseville railyard. None of these ventures paid off in his lifetime.
- 135 workers died in CPRR construction-related accidents (not counting avalanches, etc.). Two died at Summit tunnel. After the center bore was added

at Summit tunnel, there were 100 people working per shift, with three eight hour shifts each day.

- Regarding use of nitroglycerine, it appears likely that Nobel's patent and not frequency of accidents stopped its use on CPRR construction.



**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** – Last month's Passing Scene showed BNSF engines traversing the Donner route at Colfax. Some of you may remember seeing this photo that dates back to 2001. It shows the strange combinations that appeared on the route in the years following the UP/SP merger. While this photo has been enhanced to bring out details, the colors are all genuine. UP and not yet repainted SP locomotives lead a green Burlington Northern, Orange BNSF, and Black and Yellow Santa Fe heading eastbound at 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](http://www.psrhs.org)

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

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## From the Archives

**April Photo:** Two trestles were constructed in the vicinity of Clipper Gap, one at Clipper Gap and one at Clipper Ravine. This Watkins photo shows the smaller of the two trestles. In his Chief Engineer's report in June 1877, Montague reported "*The following-named trestles have been filled or the line so changed as to avoid them: Clipper Ravine Trestle. 500 feet long and 43 feet high – line changed.*" Montague did not mention the other trestle at Clipper Gap in his report. *Photo courtesy of Jack Duncan.*



In the photo at left, the double-track grade now curves around the hillside at left, east of the Clipper Gap road crossing. The level area in the foreground appears to be part of the old grade, ending at a steep ravine in the distance. The old roadbed reappears beyond the ravine. This is the possible location of the trestle above that traversed a ravine that was not filled, but the track realigned to avoid the ravine and trestle. *Roger Staab photo.*

**May Photo:** This should be an easy one. Where was this photo taken, and what was the approximate time frame? Answers in June newsletter.



**CPRR/SP Donner Route Timeline:** With construction complete between Sacramento and the East, the Central Pacific turned its attention to completing a rail link from Sacramento to San Francisco. The CP acquired the Western Pacific Railroad (not the later WP), and in September 1869 completed the new line from Sacramento to Alameda via Stockton, Livermore and Niles. A month later the track was extended to Oakland. Ferries provided the only connection to San Francisco until a rail link was established via San Jose and the San Francisco and San Jose Railroad.