

Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society



www.psrhs.org

January 2017 Newsletter

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Your help is sought in identifying this building located next to railroad tracks that may be on the Donner Route (or not) See page 4 for details. PSRHS collection courtesy of Art Sommers.

Scheduled Events & Notices



- Jan 26** PSRHS Board Meeting 5:30 pm prior to monthly member meeting
- Jan 26** PSRHS Monthly Meeting & Presentation
– Auburn Airport Pilots' Lounge
– Presentation – Brendan Compton's work in progress on Rotaries Part II (rescheduled from November – see page 2)
- Feb 23** PSRHS Monthly Meeting & Presentation
– Auburn Airport Pilots' Lounge

It's Time to Renew Your Membership for 2017
(See Pages 2 and 4 for details)



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Monthly Meeting 7PM Thursday, January 26th, Auburn Airport Pilots' Lounge

January Program: Brendan Compton will be showing his "work in progress" on Rotaries Part II. It will entail footage from the return trip from Truckee back over the Summit from the Rotary. Come check it out on the NEW HD Projector the PSRHS will have by then!! Running time for the video is over 1 hour of pure Rotary action!! This program is rescheduled from the November meeting.

Election of PSRHS Board Members

Election was held for three board positions that expired at the end of 2016. Elected to three year terms are:

Malcolm Frost
Dave Ferreira
Don Brown

The board of directors will meet at 5:30pm Thursday, January 26 prior to the regular monthly meeting. PSRHS members and visitors are welcome to attend board meetings.

A Tough Week For UP

The week of January 8th saw heavy snow on the Donner route, then rain on top of the snow causing heavy runoff and mudslides, followed by more snow. Trains Magazine reported on January 10th that a washout had affected UP tracks west of Norden in the vicinity of Troy (see photos on page 3 of this newsletter -- ed.). An official from UP confirmed to Trains that a small-scale washout had occurred near Norden, but "The equipment staged prior to the weekend came in really helpful and was ready to respond." Your editor observed two trainloads of ballast and heavier fill rock going eastbound through Colfax during this period.

Rail traffic through Colfax remained light for several days during the week, likely impacted by repairs to the washout and ongoing efforts to clear the tracks of heavy snow that fell during the snowstorm that followed.

Trains Magazine also reported on the storm's impact on AMTRAK travelers. The eastbound California Zephyr was halted on Sunday January 8th after reaching the Sierra foothills. The westbound Zephyr made it through, picked up the eastbound train and returned the combined trains to Emeryville. When the tracks reopened a couple of days later, a combined consist of three locomotives and 12 cars plus two baggage cars was observed going eastbound through Colfax.

In the past when problems have occurred on the Donner route AMTRAK has rerouted through Feather River Canyon. Last week though a more serious washout closed the Feather River Canyon route, leaving AMTRAK no choice but to wait for the Donner line to reopen. (Ed. Note: I have been unable to find an updated status on the Feather River rail closure)

NOTE: If any of our members or newsletter readers have first-hand information and/or photos of events affecting current operations on the Donner route, please consider sharing it with our members by submitting the information to the editor at roger.staab@psrhs.org. Per your wishes I can quote your information or help format it for the newsletter.

Our club's stated mission includes both the history of the railroad line over Donner and current operations along the route. You can help be the eyes and ears of current operations, as well as the source for historical items of interest. Publication date for the newsletter is the Thursday before the monthly meeting.

Membership Renewal Reminder

If you have not already done so it's time to renew your membership in PSRHS for 2017. Payment of dues is a major source of revenue for club activities including field trips and other special events, restoration projects, and publishing documents on regional railroad history. Tax-deductible donations are also welcome.

You can mail your payment to PSRHS, or renew or join on line at our web site www.psrhs.org. Membership details can be found in the box at the bottom of page 4.

Passing Scene

During last week's heavy runoff caused by rain falling on top of recent snow, a small washout temporarily interrupted rail traffic on UP's Donner Pass mainline west of Norden near Troy or Cascade. The washout impacted freight trains as well as AMTRAK for a couple of days until track repairs were complete. The storm's effects were wide-ranging. A mud slide closed Interstate 80 near the summit for about 18 hours, and a more serious railroad washout occurred on UP's Feather River route in the vicinity of Blairsden. See article on page 2 for more details. *Photos courtesy of Jim Wood*



Amazon Smile Fund Raising

We are now part of the Amazon Smile fund raising campaign. We receive a donation to the society based on your purchases. Please feel free to copy and paste the link below and include it in all your emails.

<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/68-0488569>

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From the Archives

November Mystery Photo (right): This photo shows the NCNG transfer shed in Colfax. The poor quality of the left edge of the photo masks the Colfax freight depot that was adjacent to the transfer shed. Those are NCNG cars in the foreground and SP cars beyond the shed. The narrow gauge tracks continued to the left past the freight depot to the passenger depot. This was the second location for the freight depot and transfer shed, thus the photo was taken between 1905 and 1914. *PSRHS Collection*



January Mystery Photo (left): Does anyone recognize this building? It is likely a hotel, and note the railroad tracks in the left foreground. The building's gabled roofline and balconies do not match known images of early hotels along the Donner route, especially those right next to the tracks. E-mail any thoughts you have to the editor. *Photo courtesy of Art Sommers*

CPRR/SP/UP Donner Route Timeline. In recent years wood ties on portions of the Donner route mainline tracks have been replaced with concrete ties. Wooden ties have been used since early railroad days, but had to be replaced regularly due to damage from the punishing effects of heavy rail traffic. Concrete ties are more durable but are also more expensive to purchase. Where concrete ties have been installed, rail spikes in wood ties have been replaced with bolt-down fasteners. But not all wood ties are being replaced with concrete. In 2016 replacement wood ties were installed on a large section of mainline track above Colfax.

Note: The construction timeline for the Donner Route as reported in this column has reached the present time. Starting next month the emphasis of the column will shift from construction to operational incidents of note. Further details and an invitation to submit your ideas will appear in next month's newsletter.

Membership Information

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

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

PSRHS, P.O. Box 1776, Colfax, CA 95713
or join/renew online at www.psrhs.org

Reader comments, additional details, etc., are invited on any newsletter items or photos. Please forward comments, suggestions or information for inclusion in future issues of the newsletter to:

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