

# Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society

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## June 2017 Newsletter

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*A reminder of what the Colfax wood-sided caboose looked like before PSRHS and community members "rescued" it from its slow but steady decay. See article on page 2. Photo by Tony Hesch*

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### Scheduled Events & Notices



- Jun 15** Colfax Caboose Planning Meeting – 7pm- 8:30pm – Colfax City Hall
- Jun 17** Colfax Caboose Workday – 8am-1pm (note earlier start time)
- Jun 22** PSRHS Monthly Meeting & Presentation 7pm  
– Auburn Airport Pilots' Lounge  
– Program – Don Anderson - Construction of the Auburn-Foresthill Bridge
- Jun 24** Colfax Caboose Workday – 9am-1pm
- Jul 1** Caboose display set-up and dry run for Grand Opening – 9am
- \*\*Jul 3\*\* \*\*\*Colfax Caboose Grand Opening at City of Colfax July 3 Event\*\*\***
- Jul 27** PSRHS Monthly Meeting & Presentation 7pm  
– Auburn Airport Pilots' Lounge – Program – Stan Kistler

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### Monthly Meeting 7PM Thursday, June 22nd, Auburn Airport Pilots' Lounge

**June Program:** PSRHS member **Don Anderson** will present a slide show on construction of the Auburn-Forest Hill Bridge, 1969-73. Don was the Resident Engineer for the Bureau of Reclamation from start to finish of the bridge. He will have handouts on the bridge specs and timeframe available at the meeting.

Don worked for the Bureau for 31 years, in California, Nevada and Arizona. He was then Santa Clara Valley Water District's Field Engineering Manager in charge of construction before retiring to Auburn. He was a consultant on the recent seismic retrofit of the Forest Hill Bridge, and says there are only about three people left who know details of the bridge construction.

**May Program Recap:** **Kevin Knauss** gave an interesting and informative talk about the California Central Railroad and showed a self-produced video retracing its route from Folsom to Roseville. Much of the route has been overtaken by residential developments but small portions of the old roadbed are still visible today.

### May FieldTrip Clipper Gap & Tunnel Zero

The weather was perfect. The attendees were enthusiastic. We successfully tracked down and found quite a bit of railroad history.

One unique aspect to our organization that distinguishes from other historical groups is our ability to go out to ground zero where the subject of our organization's historical focus lies and see it in the flesh. This time our field outing focused on the location of a number of trestles that were built as part of the initial CPRR construction effort to conquer the Sierra.

Some of the largest trestles that the Central Pacific built on the Donner route were located between Clipper Gap and Applegate. About 10 years after construction, these three were either filled or abandoned by realigning the route. Our group walked the old alignment for one trestle at Clipper Gap. We also walked through Tunnel Zero built in 1872 to accommodate the realign-

ment of the track to abandon the second trestle. This latter trestle was the tallest of any on the Donner Route.

Our next trip in the Fall will likely focus on the tunnels and snow sheds at Donner Summit. See you there.

### Colfax Caboose Grand Opening July 3

You are invited to join us at the **July 3rd celebration** in Colfax. Activities will include a **Grand Opening Ceremony** for the newly refurbished wood-sided **Colfax Caboose**, which is located at the corner of Main and Grass Valley Streets near the railroad crossing. Come see the results of the volunteer efforts headed by **Tony Hesch** that have successfully "rescued" the caboose from its badly decayed condition. Hear about plans for interactive displays that will tell the story of the caboose in railroading history. The caboose will be open for tours during the day's festivities.

If you are willing to help staff the caboose for a couple of hours during the July 3 event, please contact Ken Young at [colfaxcaboose@gmail.com](mailto:colfaxcaboose@gmail.com).

There is still work to be done to get the caboose in final shape for the grand opening. A **planning meeting** will be held on **Thursday, June 15** from 7pm-8:30pm at Colfax City Hall to iron out details for the grand opening. **Work sessions** are scheduled for **June 17 and June 24** (Saturdays) from 9am-1pm to put the finishing touches on the caboose, and a **dry-run and display set-up** will take place on Saturday, **July 1**. If you can help at the work sessions please contact Ken at the email address shown above.



*Installing Replacement Catwalk*



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## Passing Scene

**Sometimes you get lucky** – Word was passed around in mid-May that the AMTRAK Zephyr would be featuring locomotive #42 adorned with a special paint scheme saluting our veterans. Your intrepid editor caught a photo of the train and locomotive from a distance. I then learned the locomotive was making a repeat appearance over the Donner Route. After checking the AMTRAK on-line train status (which fortunately was reasonably accurate on a chilly day), I settled into a spot in Colfax to catch a closer view. As luck would have it the eastbound Zephyr was departing Colfax as the westbound approached town. *Photos by Roger Staab*



## **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

**May Mystery Photo (right):** This photo of Colfax was taken in or after May 1915. The train is heading east on the new realigned tracks that were completed in 1915 after the freight depot was moved in May to its present location. The tall building in the distance is the Marvin Hotel next to Grass Valley St. The hillside at left was removed for the new track alignment. Of the tracks in the foreground from the old alignment, only a single spur track remains. *Photo courtesy of Art Sommers*



**June Mystery Photo (left):** Here's another view of Colfax. What features can be seen in this photo that help identify the time frame in which it was taken? *Photo courtesy of Art Sommers*

**Accidents/Other Incidents.** Crews on early trains faced many dangers including climbing to the top of moving cars to check on problems or to manually set the brakes before the advent of air brakes. The Nov. 18, 1876 Grass Valley Union gave this report on one near-fatal incident: "Narrow Escape – On Sunday night last, Conductor Webster, of freight train No. 7, had a narrow escape from death. When the train was between Pino and Penryn he attempted to descend from the roof of a box car to the caboose by the caboose ladder, when it broke and he fell, but by good fortune caught hold of the last bar of the ladder on the end of the box car and clung to it, being dragged a long distance. Finally he succeeded in swinging aside sufficiently to be clear of the wheel and let go, being precipitated down an embankment, where he lay stunned for some minutes. After a while he was missed from his train and one of the engines went back from Auburn and took him on board."

#### 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](http://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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