

Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society



www.psrhs.org

April 2018 Newsletter

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Movement of private railcars like this image captured in Colfax may be eliminated or greatly restricted under a new policy announced last month by AMTRAK. See page 2 for details. Roger Staab photo

Scheduled Events & Notices



- Apr 21** Joint Book Signing at NCNG Railroad Museum (see page 2)
- Apr 26 (tentative)** PSRHS Board Meeting – 5:30pm prior to member meeting
- Apr 26** PSRHS Monthly Meeting & Presentation – 7pm
Program – Bill Oudegeest, The Rails at Donner Summit
- Future Programs//Events**
- May 24** Andrew Brandon, Railroads of Nevada County
- Jun 7-10** Pacific Narrow Gauge Conference, NCNG Museum, Nevada City
- Sept 15-16** Colfax Railroad Days 2018

*****Remember to Renew your Membership for 2018*****



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Monthly Member Meeting 7PM Thursday, Apr. 26th, Auburn Airport Pilots Lounge

April Program: Bill Oudegeest will present a program about The Rails at Donner Summit and show why the summit is the most historically significant square mile in California. Bill has been enjoying Donner Summit for more than thirty years and is one of the founders of Donner Summit Historical Society. He is editor of The Heirloom, the Society's monthly newsletter, as well as web master, publications editor, and author of the 20 Mile Museum signs.

March Program Recap: Paul Helman presented an interesting history of locomotive boilers and their changes over the years. His descriptions and images made a complex technical topic both interesting and easy to understand. Thanks Paul.

New AMTRAK Policy on Private Cars

In late March AMTRAK issued a new policy to take effect immediately. Citing on-time-performance and safety as factors, AMTRAK will no longer pick up and drop off private railcars or support private car movements. The statement published by AMTRAK on March 28 said in part:

"Generally, AMTRAK will no longer operate charter services or special trains. These operations caused significant operational distraction, failed to capture fully allocated profitable margins and sometimes delayed our paying customers on our scheduled trains."

"There may be a few narrow exceptions to this policy in order to support specific strategic initiatives ... Otherwise, one time trips and charters are immediately discontinued."

Another referenced email mentioned that AMTRAK would no longer pick up or drop off private cars at intermediate stops where less than 30 minutes were allocated as station time. This would effectively kill excursion runs to intermediate locations.

I'm sure there will be more to come on this hot-button topic. Under the new policy all excursion runs that rely on AMTRAK for service or track rights are in jeopardy.

Book Signing April 21 at NCNG Museum

On Saturday, April 21, from noon to 2pm, a joint book signing will take place at the NCNG Railroad Museum in Nevada City. Art Sommers and Roger Staab will be there with their new book **Railroads of Placer County**, and Andrew Brandon will be introducing his new book, **Railroads of Nevada County**. Both books are published by Arcadia. For those who own a copy of Railroads of Placer County signed by Roger, this will be an opportunity to get Art's signature as well.

Andrew Brandon will be the guest speaker at the PSRHS May meeting, presenting a slide show based on his book Railroads of Nevada County. He will also be selling copies of his book at the May 24 meeting.

Colfax Caboose Status

Negotiations with the City of Colfax over leasing the Colfax caboose to the PSRHS caboose sub-committee hit a snag in recent meetings. The issue is liability insurance, which the City insists the club carry as a condition of the lease. Our current liability insurance policy covers a single event, Railroad Days, but not recurring events throughout the year. If the caboose is open only for the events the City is co-sponsoring, such as Third of July, Railroad Days, and Winterfest, the City's liability policy will cover the caboose. Likewise, when club members are working on the caboose, the City provides coverage for volunteers as long as they have filled out and signed a City form.

After discussing the issues at the last board meeting, the committee and board decided to not pursue the lease at this time but continue to do caboose volunteer work and historic displays under the City's liability umbrella, and staff the caboose for City-sanctioned events.

Ken Young who has been heading the PSRHS efforts on the caboose project in recent months has had to withdraw from that post due to family health issues. A new point of contact for the PSRHS/community effort will be appointed to replace Ken.



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Passing Scene

Special Movement. On March 19 your editor noticed a special UP Business Train rolling through Colfax westbound, but I wasn't quick enough to get a photo of it. I queried downhill members and learned that Paul Greenfield had captured this excellent image of the train on Track 2 (normally the eastbound track) at MP 115 from the east portal of Tunnel 16. On the point is UP 1943 *The Spirit* commemorative locomotive honoring our Armed Forces, and inspired by a Boeing B-17 that was named *The Spirit of the Union Pacific* in 1943. According to UP's web site, *The Spirit's* front is symbolic of Air Force Silver, and the blue stripe is a reflection of the former Strategic Air Command's "nose sash." The lettering inside the sash is the original hand-drawn font used on the B-17. It is followed by the Coast Guard's "Racing Stripe" and the Navy's Battleship Gray, which frames Union Pacific's traditional American flag. The military camouflage is a nod to the Army and Marines. It also features the POW/MIA symbol and motto. *Photo by Paul Greenfield; Inset from UP web site*



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>

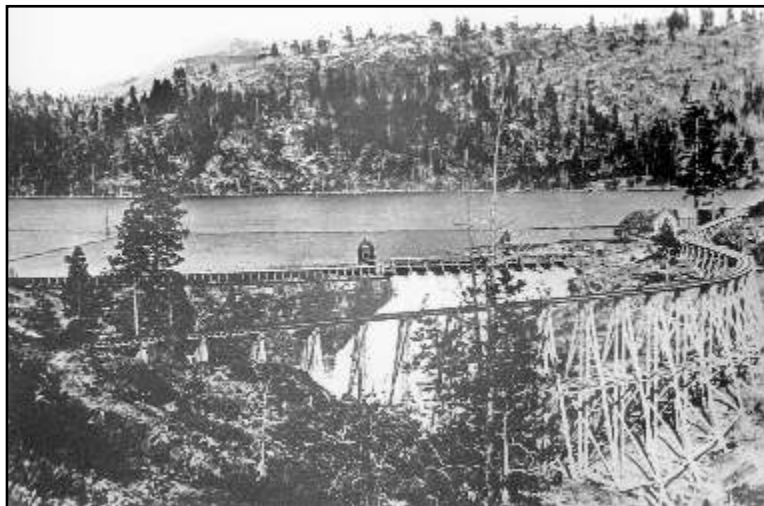


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From the Archives

March Mystery Photo (right): In 1905 lumbermen Birce & Smart built a wooden trestle on which their narrow gauge railroad crossed the Yuba river just below the 1892 Spaulding Dam. This gave their logging railroad access to virgin timber stands on the north side of Spaulding reservoir. This entire scene was in Nevada County, but Birce & Smart's logging railroad connected with Southern Pacific at Smart siding in Placer County a few miles east of Emigrant Gap. *Photo courtesy of Art Sommers.*



April Mystery Photo (right): Where was this picture taken, and what is the significance of the locomotive, the tracks it is on, and the building in the left background? Hint #1: It has something to do with PG&E's operations. Hint #2: That is not a standard locomotive. What kind of locomotive is it? *Photo courtesy of Herman Darr*



Accidents/Other Incidents. Hazards Everywhere – *The San Francisco Call* contained the following item in its 18 October 1890 edition -- "The Nevada City Herald of Saturday says: Day before yesterday a crew of men working for Towle Bros. were standing by the Central Pacific railroad-track above Towle's Station, near Blue Canyon, when a train passed by. The fireman, who was shoveling coal into the fire-box, it seems, ran across a piece that was worthless and threw it out. The rock hit one of the men, by the name of Durkey, on the head, instantly killing him. The trainmen did not know anything about it till they reached Colfax."

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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