

Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society



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June 2018 Newsletter

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This FRA track diagnostic car was spotted in Colfax on eastbound AMTRAK in 2014. See page 3 for details on this car. Photo by Roger Staab.

Scheduled Events & Notices



Jun 28 (tentative) PSRHS Board Meeting 5:30pm

Jun 28 PSRHS Monthly Meeting & Presentation – 7pm
Program – Roger Staab – PG&E Railroads in the Central Sierra

Jul 3 Colfax July 3rd Event – Caboose Open

Jul 26 PSRHS Monthly Meeting - Program TBA

Jul 28 Heritage Trails Museum Tour - Colfax Caboose Open

Future Programs//Events

Sept 15-16 Colfax Railroad Days 2018



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Monthly Member Meeting 7PM Thursday, June 28th, Auburn Airport Pilots Lounge

June Program: Roger Staab will present a slide show titled **"PG&E Railroads in the Central Sierra."** The program highlights PG&E's construction of Spaulding Dam in 1912-13 and 1916, Drum Forebay and Powerhouse in 1912-13, and raising Fordyce Dam in 1924-26. Emphasis will be on the roles PG&E narrow- and standard-gauge railroads played in supporting these construction projects.

Roger has conducted in-depth research on the PG&E railroads as an expansion of the abbreviated look included in the new book **"Railroads of Placer County."** His research was further spurred on by an invitation to provide a program on this topic at the recent Sierra Narrow Gauge Conference in Nevada City.

May Program Recap: Andrew Brandon gave a great talk that everyone enjoyed covering some of the railroad lines included in his new Arcadia book, **Railroads of Nevada County**. His book is for sale on Amazon and locally at the NCNG RR Museum in Nevada City and the Colfax Museum as well as other outlets.

Andrew's book covers the Central Pacific/Southern Pacific from Truckee to the Nevada state line, as well as the many logging railroads that once operated north and east of Truckee. His chapters on Nevada County Narrow Gauge (NCNG) Railroad, Towle Brothers logging railroad and Lake Tahoe Railway were coordinated with the book **Railroads of Placer County** to minimize overlap between the two books.

Volunteers needed to staff Colfax Caboose

We have been asked by the City of Colfax to have the caboose open for two events in July. Volunteers are needed to help staff the caboose and answer questions posed by visitors. These events are an opportunity to educate the community about the nearly forgotten role of the caboose, to provide information about our group and its railroad history preservation activities, and to draw in new members and donations.

July 3 - Colfax will again hold its Independence Day celebration on July 3. Intent is to have the caboose open for the afternoon and evening until the fireworks show. The caboose is becoming known as a great place to view the parade and fireworks.

July 28 - Heritage Trails Museum Tour. The Colfax Heritage Museum in the passenger depot is listed as a stop for visitors to a series of museums in the area on July 28. We have been asked to have the caboose open as an adjunct to the depot museum. This event will bring numerous visitors to Colfax from surrounding areas and is a great opportunity to promote Railroad Days and other activities of our group. The museum and caboose will be open 10am-4pm that day.

If you can volunteer an hour or two on either (or both) of these days let me know by email (see contact information on the bottom of page 4 of this newsletter). Please list what days you can work and preferred times. Thanks in advance for your willingness to help out.

Sierra Narrow Gauge Conference

I participated in the Sierra Narrow Gauge Conference in Nevada City at the NCNG Museum June 7-10. In addition to numerous presentations, Les Wilmunder's Porter steam locomotive was operating, switching cars in the museum's yard and taking visitors on rides to the meadow below the museum. The restored railbus was also operating with tours to the meadow.

Several of the presentations described preservation and restoration efforts on logging-railroad narrow-gauge equipment. NCNG Museum personnel discussed their program now underway to return NCNG #5 to operating condition. Histories of some of the lines were covered, including my presentation on PG&E Railroads used in construction at Spaulding and Drum.

Another major focus of conference attendees was modeling these narrow gauge lines and equipment. This was an excellent conference offering lots of good information and interaction, along with the opportunity to view operating railroad equipment.



Passing Scene

This **Federal Railway Administration** diagnostic car was spotted passing through Colfax eastbound in May 2014. **FRA DOTX 221** is one of several diagnostic cars used by FRA to monitor rails for potential problems. Some of the cars are self-propelled but must take up track time to do their diagnostics. Others can be added to existing trains but have to be manned to collect the track data. FRA developed a prototype Autonomous Track Geometry Measurement System (ATGMS) that would not require on-board staffing. The objective of this development is to install such systems in operating freight or passenger cars, thus increasing the frequency of track testing while reducing costs and without disrupting rail operations. After proving the concept in trial runs, the prototype ATGMS was installed in DOTX 221 in August 2011 with the aim of operating it in conjunction with manned diagnostic cars such as DOTX 220 for further testing. The ATGMS is designed to detect, locate, and report potential track defects in near real-time to a web-based inspection data management system for review and remedial action. *Text info from FRA/ENSCO report on ATGMS Development presented at American Railway Engineering and Maintenance-of-Way Association (AREMA) 2011 annual conference. Photo 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>



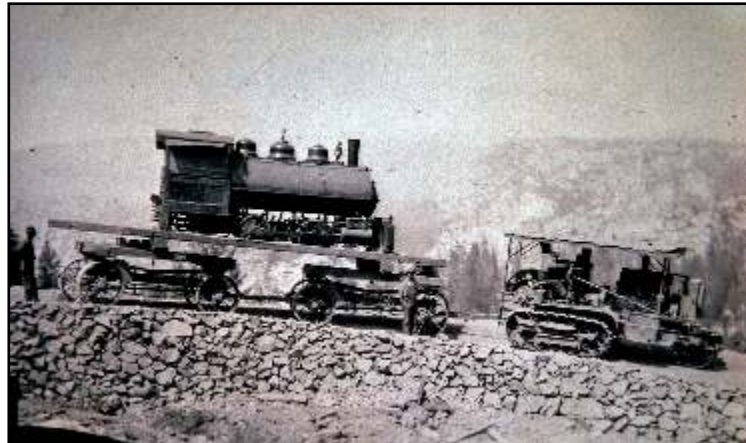
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From the Archives

May Mystery Photo (right): In the mid 1920's PG&E initiated a project to increase the height of the rock-fill Fordyce Dam. The nearest supply point was at Cisco, 7 miles from the dam. A road was built and railroad equipment and supplies transported over the road to assist in the construction at the dam. This locomotive helped move tons of rock at Fordyce Dam to increase the height of the dam by 47 feet.

Ken Yeo Collection



June Mystery Photo (right): This should be an easy one. PG&E Co is stenciled on the side of the locomotive. Where is the location of the photo and what is happening in the captured image? Answers will be revealed during the June meeting presentation and in next month's newsletter.

Ken Yeo Collection



Accidents/Other Incidents. Did Chinese workers lose their lives while constructing the railroad at Cape Horn? (Part 2) A second incident involving the death of Chinese working on the railroad construction was reported in the Daily Alta California dated 18 April 1866. The incident happened near Colfax but not on Cape Horn. **“Explosion at Colfax - Six Men Killed - Colfax, April 17.** A terrible explosion occurred at Camp 9, near Gold Run, on the line of the Pacific Railroad. Six men were killed - three white men and three Chinese. The foreman ... was blown to bits ... One man was thrown fifty feet in the air and one hundred feet from the blast. The blast had been set off, and while reloading for a seam blast, explosion took place. No further particulars.”

In searches of newspapers of the day, this incident and the one noted in last month's newsletter are the only reports found so far involving deaths of Chinese working on initial construction at or near Cape Horn.

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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