

Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society



www.psrhs.org

May 2019 Newsletter

In this issue:

May Meeting and Presentation. Page 2

Golden Spike 150th. Page 2

Tribute to Jack Duncan. Page 2

Cape Horn Overlook Plaque Update. Page 2

Fall Field Trip. Page 2

Passing Scene. Page 3

Amazon Smile Fund Raising. Page 3

From the Archives. Page 4

Golden Spike 150th Activities. Page 5.



This caboose was spotted on a recent outing in the Sierra. See page 4 for more on this month's mystery image. Photo by Roger Staab

Scheduled Events & Notices



- May 18** Colfax Area Historical Society Meeting & Presentation – 7pm, Colfax Depot
– Program - Roger Staab - Railroad Scenes Then & Now on the Donner Route
- May 23** PSRHS Monthly Meeting & Presentation - 7pm, Auburn Airport Meeting Rm
– Program – Paul Greenfield – Silver Iris private railcar trip to Denver
+ UP Big Boy run from Evanston, Wyoming to Ogden, Utah
- Jun 27** PSRHS Monthly Meeting & Presentation – Program TBA
- Jul 25** PSRHS Monthly Meeting & Presentation – Program TBA
- Sep 4-7** 39th National Narrow Gauge Convention – Sacramento www.nngc2019.org/



Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society

May 2019 Newsletter

PSRHS Monthly Meeting 7PM Thursday, May 23rd, Auburn Airport Meeting Room

May Program: Paul Greenfield will discuss his recent trip to Denver and back aboard the private railcar, Silver Iris. He will share photos of the car and snowy trip along with a brief summary of the car's history and what it costs to operate private cars today. As an added bonus, Paul will show a few photos and video clips of his trip to Promontory and Ogden for the 150th celebration, along with scenes of UP's 4014 Big Boy in action on its western run from Evanston, Wyoming.

April Program: Tom Shook gave a great presentation on **Siemens Mobility**, with some background on the company and their facilities in the U.S. He went into detail on the Sacramento facility and their processes for ensuring the quality of the locomotives and rolling stock manufactured at the plant.

Golden Spike 150th Transcontinental Railroad Sesquicentennial Celebration

The newly rebuilt UP #4014 Big Boy steam locomotive and UP #844 appeared in Ogden UT for the celebration of 150 years since completion of the nation's first transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869. Many locals made the trip to Ogden and/or Promontory Summit to participate in the festivities. Our May speaker, Paul Greenfield was one of those making the journey to witness the run of 4014 and 844 from Wyoming to Ogden. Paul's presentation will include some photos and video clips of the Big Boy run and the festivities.

In addition to the activities in Ogden, a ceremony was held on May 10 at Promontory Summit in Utah, along with other activities and celebrations through May 12. The web site for the heritage locomotive movements to and from the Utah celebration is

<https://www.up.com/heritage/steam/schedule>

Page 5 of this newsletter lists remaining events, meetings and conventions planned in conjunction with the golden spike celebration. The list was compiled by Chuck Spinks, and updated by Chuck and Roger Staab.

Tribute to Jack Duncan

Long-time PSRHS member Jack Duncan passed away earlier this month after a brief illness with metastatic melanoma. His daughter reports that he did not suffer any pain from the cancer, and is now, as he wanted to be, "there with Cleona." She added that her dad enjoyed many years of friendship and a shared love of railroad history with the members of PSRHS and offered her thanks for the good times shared with him.

Jack and Cleona were charter members of PSRHS and active participants in our meetings and activities. Several of us spent many hours tramping through the woods with Jack, investigating the prevailing slopes at Cape Horn, or following traces of old roads, both auto and railroad. Jack was a wealth of information, from his growing up years near Stirling City to the extensive research he did on the routes of early automobile roads and railroads over the Sierra. He was always interested in learning more, and was a great sounding board for identifying locations of old photos.

Jack published two excellent local history references:

To Donner Pass from the Pacific, about the Lincoln, Victory, US40 and I-80 routes over Donner, and

A Study of Cape Horn Construction on the Central Pacific Railroad, 1865-1866.

A memorial service celebrating Jack's life was held in Auburn on May 16. We'll miss you Jack.

Cape Horn Overlook Plaque Update

The plaque at the Cape Horn overlook near Colfax has been covered with a temporary plaque that eliminates the wording regarding use of baskets and bosun's chairs by Chinese construction workers. See page 3 for photos and brief story on this correction to a long-standing controversy in regional railroad history.

Fall Field Trip

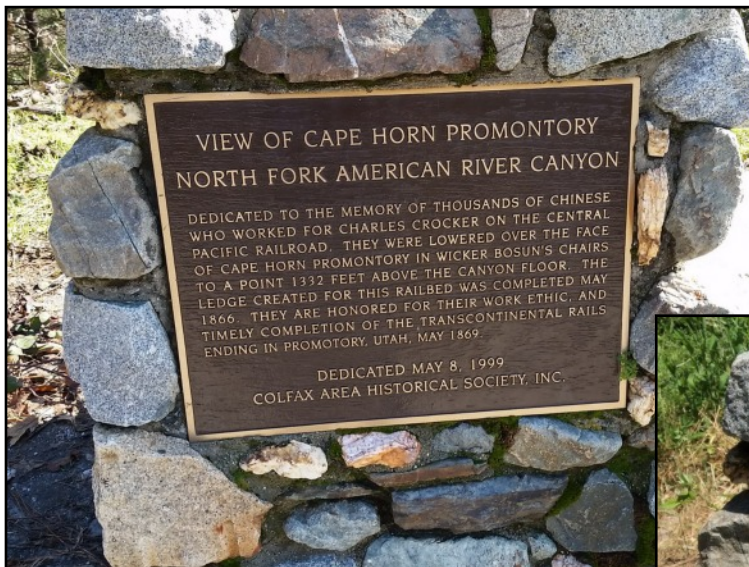
A return visit to the many historic sites at or near Donner Summit is being planned for our fall field trip. Watch the newsletter for details to follow.





Passing Scene – Updating History

The story of construction of the Central Pacific Railroad around Cape Horn has been a hotbed of controversy for many years. A plaque placed by the Colfax Area Historical Society (CAHS) in 1999 near the Cape Horn overlook on Hwy 174 stated that Chinese workers were lowered in bosun's chairs to cut the roadbed into the mountainside. Yet no primary references have been found to support that statement, and PSRHS has spearheaded a campaign to get the plaque corrected. A few weeks ago a temporary plaque purchased by PSRHS was installed by CAHS to correct this apparent urban myth, while still giving credit to the tremendous work ethic of the Chinese workers. A permanent bronze plaque is being procured by CAHS that will replace the temporary plaque. *Photos by Roger Staab and Swend Miller*



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>

From the Archives

April Mystery Photo (right): This is one of many views of Colfax taken from the hill above the old grammar school. Visible are the freight depot near lower center, the Marvin and Gillen hotels above the freight depot, and the passenger depot beyond the train at right. The NCNG transfer shed and hillside to the left of the freight depot have been removed in preparation for double tracking. The freight depot itself will be moved in May 1915 to make way for the new tracks. *PSRHS Collection*



May Mystery Photo (left): Where was this caboose spotted on a recent drive in the west slope of the Sierra? Hint – It can be seen from the road and UP's mainline route between Roseville and Truckee is visible if you drive a short distance from the caboose's location. *Photo by Roger Staab*

Accidents/Other Incidents. 1899 proved to be a tough year for railroad accidents. Here are a few examples.

Sacramento Daily Union, 5 April 1899. Three Cars Derailed. The Central Pacific line was blocked for some hours yesterday by the derailment of three freight cars between Auburn and Clipper Gap, but it was soon cleared.

Sacramento Daily Union, 20 Nov 1899. Freight Cars Derailed. About noon yesterday four cars of a west-bound freight train left the track between Newcastle and Auburn, blocking the track for several hours. A wrecking crane was sent out from this city, and the derailed cars were righted as soon as possible. Nobody was hurt, and the damage to the cars was nominal. The cause of the derailment was not learned.

Sacramento Daily Union, 2 Dec 1899. Two Freight Cars Off the Track. Early yesterday morning two cars of a freight train were derailed near Towles, on the Central Pacific line. The derailment was due to a broken axle. Traffic was blocked for about an hour. Nobody was hurt and the damage was slight.

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:

Roger Staab (530) 346-6722 roger.staab@psrhs.org





2019 Golden Spike Sesquicentennial Activities

Through May 26 Salt Lake City, Utah

Utah Museum of Fine Arts *Union Pacific Railroad "Race to Promontory" exhibit*

Through May 31 Sacramento California State Railroad Museum

Special Exhibit in the museum of Original 66' long 1861 Theodore Judah Map of Central Pacific Railroad
From California State Archives

Through Aug 30 Sacramento Sierra-Sacramento Valley Medical Society

Museum of Medical History *History of Railroad Hospitals*

Date and Location to be determined

Chinese Historical Society of America *Chinese Railroad Worker Memorial Monument Dedication*

May 23 – 25 Santa Clara O Scale National Convention

May 25 – 27 Sacramento Old Sacramento Gold Rush & Railroad Days

Jun 23 Sacramento Crocker Art Museum 150th Anniversary Community Festival

Jun 23 – Sep 29 Sacramento Crocker Art Museum

Union Pacific Railroad Historic Photographs Exhibit

"Race to Promontory: The Transcontinental Railroad and the American West"

Jun 27 Sacramento Gold Spike Lecture Series California State Railroad Museum

The Transcontinental as a Business Venture and How it Shaped the American West Richard White

Jul 2 – 13 Salt Lake City NMRA National Convention

Jul 25 Sacramento Gold Spike Lecture Series California State Railroad Museum

California's Complicated Relationship with the Railroad William Deverell

Aug 22 Sacramento Gold Spike Lecture Series California State Railroad Museum

The Recovery and Interpretation of the Experience of Chinese Railroad Workers in America Gordon H. Chang

Sep 4 – 7 Sacramento National Narrow-Gauge Convention

Sep 6 Niles Niles Canyon Railway Museum

Celebration of completion of Western Pacific Railroad Extending the Transcontinental Railroad to the Bay

Sep 7 Sacramento Gold Spike Lecture Series Crocker Art Museum

Photographing the Transcontinental Railroad Glenn Willumson

Sep 21 – 22 Colfax Colfax Railroad Days

List compiled and updated by Chuck Spinks and Roger Staab