

Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society



www.psrhs.org

October 2019 Newsletter

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A 1958 view of Tunnels 8 and 7, snowshed remnants and the old auto road at Donner Summit on the original transcontinental route. The fall PSRHS field trip will visit these sites on Oct. 19. See page 2 for details.

Scheduled Events & Notices



Oct 19 PSRHS Fall Field Trip – Donner Summit - Details on pages 2

Oct 24 PSRHS Board Meeting prior to member meeting

**Oct 24 PSRHS Monthly Meeting – 7pm – Program – John “Specs” Lanahm
– United States Railroad Administration (USRA), 1916 - 1920.**

Nov 9-10 International Rail Fair – Roseville – www.internationalrailfair.com



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PSRHS Monthly Meeting 7PM Thursday, October 24, Auburn Airport Meeting Room

October Program: John "Specs" Lanahm will present a program on the **United States Railroad Administration (USRA), 1916 - 1920**. During WW I, all of the nation's railroads were nationalized and put under the control of the USRA. This provided for more efficient movement of key war material and also led to standardized locomotive designs, which reduced the competition for locomotive construction among the railroads and allowed for the interchangeability of parts.

John is retired from a career with a large property and casualty insurance company. He was an adjunct professor at Cal State Long Beach and Cal State Fullerton teaching entry level Psychology and Computer Science courses. He is currently a railroad historian and a docent at the California State railroad Museum, where he provides training to other docents on railroad history topics.

September Program: There was no meeting in September due to several conflicts and Colfax Railroad Days.

Colfax Railroad Days Summary

PSRHS member response to the call for volunteers for staffing the caboose and PSRHS booth at Colfax railroad days was in a word dismal. Because virtually no one volunteered to help, **we did not staff a PSRHS booth** at this year's event. With the help of a handful of PSRHS and community members we did open the caboose for visitors, promoted PSRHS involvement in the rehab of the caboose, and discussed the caboose role in railroad history.

Special thanks to PSRHS members **Jim Wood, Anne and Ben Marzo and Malcolm Frost** for volunteering their time to assist at the caboose.

At the next PSRHS board meeting I will request that the board formally notify the City of Colfax that PSRHS will no longer staff the caboose for city events such as railroad days, Winterfest and Third of July.

Fall Field Trip

Place: Donner Summit Tunnels and Norden

Date: Saturday, October 19, 2019 at 9AM

Meeting Place: Parking area across Donner Pass Road (old US40) from Donner Ski Ranch.

Led by Jim Wood

At long last, we will repeat a trip we last made in 2007 to visit a most interesting area for the history of the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad completed in 1869, 150 years ago this last May. Our primary place of interest will be the Summit Tunnel No 6 and the others further east. We will walk through No 6, 7 and explore No 8 as well as the China Wall built to hold up the grade between Tunnel 7 and 8.

In addition, we will visit the sites of three historic locomotive turntables that were built to accommodate ever increasing sizes and lengths of locomotives beginning with the wood burning 4-4-0's up to the culmination of the steam era locomotives, the famous Cab-Forwards. Historic photos of the early day scenes will be presented for viewing. Rumor has it that Donner Summit historian Norm Saylor will accompany us to share photos as well.

We will assemble at the informal parking area at the entrance of Tunnel 6 at 9am. We will initially stroll through the Summit Tunnel looking at construction techniques and move on to the east. Following the tunnel explorations, we can take lunch at the adjacent Donner Ski Ranch café on their deck or inside if chilly. The café has an assortment of lunch items, beverages and facilities.

Following the lunch break, we'll move on to the west to intersect some of the historic sites at Norden. Plan on sturdy walking shoes, possible sun precautions. Snacks and water are recommended as we'll be on foot for a couple of hours before the lunch break. Carpooling is encouraged. Email Jim at

greenstonemaker@gmail.com

to RSVP, get a head count and hook up with carpool possibilities if you wish. Our field trips typically wrap by 3pm.





Passing Scene – Red Mountain Snowshed Fire Lookout

PSRHS member **Mike Haire** captured this excellent September 25 photo of the inactive Red Mountain fire lookout. Central Pacific established this lookout in 1876 to watch for fires in the extensive snowsheds that protected higher-elevation tracks on the Donner Route. Watchmen would alert Cisco by telephone of a fire location so that fire trains could be deployed to the location before the fire could spread and cause major damage. Mike's image clearly shows how valuable the Red Mountain location was. The lookout is adjacent to the Cisco area, and provides a clear view of the tracks (and Interstate 80) to the west beyond Emigrant Gap in the distance. The view to the east reaches nearly to Donner Summit. According to John Signor's book *Donner Pass*, the stone building dates to 1909 & the lookout was in continuous use until 1934.



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

September Mystery Photo (right): There were actually three turntables near Donner Summit. The first was at the west portal of Tunnel 6. As locomotives became larger, a second longer turntable was built about half way between tunnel 6 and today's Norden. Portions of the turntable pit are visible in this image. Norden's even larger turntable replaced this one in 1924. *Photo by Jim Wood*



October Mystery Photo (left): What is the location of this classic image of SP diesel-powered passenger service on the Donner Route? What is the designation for the locomotive configuration? *Photo purchased on EBay by Jim Wood*

Accidents/Other Incidents. *From the Placer Herald, Sept. 2, 1876:* **Run Over and Killed** – As the passenger train on the Nevada County Narrow gauge railroad was starting away from Colfax last Sunday evening, it run (sic) over John Mischler, the butcher of that town, and killed him almost instantly. It seems that Mr. Mischler lives near the track, a short distance the other side of town, and was walking along it on his way home. The train was going very slow when he was first seen, and to alarm him the engineer rang the bell. He not paying any attention to this, the whistle blown, though still he heeded it not. By this time the engine was very close to him and the engineer, who, up to this time thought the man would certainly get out of the way, whistled down brakes and reversed his engine, but it was too late. The grade being down, it was impossible to stop the train in time to save him. He was knocked down and rolled under the cow-catcher in such a manner as to break his legs and crush his skull. An inquest was held by Coroner Sweet over the remains, and the findings of the jury were in accordance with the above. The managers of the train were by the jury exonerated from all blame. Mr Mischler, we understand, leaves a wife and three children to mourn his death.

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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