

# Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society

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## November 2021 Newsletter

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*What's the story behind this private rail car seen passing through Colfax in September attached to AMTRAK? See page 3 for details.*

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### Scheduled Events & Notices



**Nov 20** NCNG RR Museum Special Event Weekend & History Program, see p. 2

**Nov 23** PSRHS Potluck Dinner Meeting, 6:30PM – RR Videos and Conversation

**No Meeting in December.** Happy Holidays!!

**Jan 25** PSRHS Monthly Meeting, 7PM – Program TBA

As we move on from the COVID trials of 2020-21, we encourage you to renew your membership in PSRHS for 2022 or join PSRHS as a paid member. As conditions permit, we will be hosting presentations on historic or contemporary operations along the Donner Route using Zoom and/or in-person meetings, offer field trips to regional sites, publish our monthly newsletter articles and historic photos, and expand resources on our web site. More web cams are planned so viewers can track rail operations over the route. Thanks for your past and continued support of PSRHS and regional railroad history.



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### NOVEMBER POTLUCK DINNER

**Potluck Dinner Meeting November 23, 6:30pm, Auburn Veterans Memorial Hall. Note earlier time.**

The November 23 meeting will be our annual potluck dinner. There will not be a program but railroad videos will be playing in the background as we enjoy good food and conversation. Family and guests are welcome to join us. Ham, water and hot drinks will be provided by potluck organizer Shirley Racine and the society; please bring a favorite side dish, salad, snack or dessert to share.

**NOTE: There will NOT be a zoom broadcast of the November event.**

Directions to Auburn Veterans Memorial Hall meeting location can be found on our web site, [www.psrhs.org](http://www.psrhs.org). The entrance to the meeting room is downstairs, through the door facing the parking lot.

**October Program Recap:** PSRHS member Mike Haire discussed his hobby of photographing trains over Donner since the 80's. He described his initial interest and how his photographs grew in complexity and focus over the years. Mike provided several of his picture albums for attendees to browse. His program was well received by a sizable in-person audience.

### ANOTHER NCNG MUSEUM EVENT

The NCNG Narrow Gauge Railroad Museum in Nevada City has announced another special weekend event. On Saturday, November 20th Museum Curator and Historian Andrew Brandon will give a two hour symposium on the glorious 66-year history of the railroad, followed by a detailed account of its rolling stock and equipment.

In addition, the Wilmunder's 1889 Porter Steam Locomotive is slated for operation throughout the day and along with shop tours, plus viewing of the 20+ pieces of restored rolling stock, will make for an educational and inspirational day.

The public is cordially invited to attend. Lectures run from 11 AM to 3 PM with a break for lunch. The rail bus will also be in operation weather permitting. Don't miss out!

### THOUGHTS ON PRESENTATIONS

Peter Diurni, PSRHS Programs Coordinator

I've liked trains since I first saw a Santa Fe F-7 when I was three. Of course, I had no idea what an EMD F-7 was or what a warbonnet was or who Santa Fe, was. All that came in time and now sixty years later, I have learned about that, but I still don't know everything I'd like to know. My education was nurtured by my Mother, a grade school teacher, who would haul me around the country from California to Wisconsin, twice in a car and once a return on the City of San Francisco, to Truckee, California. She was newly hired to teach school in Tahoe City. She only took me to the best places. Growing up on the north shore I was immersed in Placer County, Donner and Espee history, when we'd go to Reno, Nevada, for 'The Big Shop'!

The interesting thing with history and the present, it garners a vast tangible amount of knowledge to be gained from what we are interested in, which always leads to tangents, or in our case, sidetracks that shunt us to other subjects not often thought about, but interesting enough to pursue.

So, I challenge, all who belong to PSRHS, to drop me an email and offer up what you don't know about Placer County - the Sierra - or Railroad(s) that you have yet to get to and maybe we'll pursue it as a presentation matter. Our last two presentations were very good in opening my mind to other facets of the subject matter that I will pursue in time. But it dawned on me, during Mike Haire's excellent photo presentation, that in the meeting room there were three photographers known to me who had spent a combined 60 years committing Tri-X, Kodachrome, and SD cards on S.P. locomotives and rolling stock.

How cool is that? Thank you for your time, hope to hear from all of you in due course!

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## Passing Scene – Luxury Rail Excursion on Private Varnish

Two private railcars belonging to Patrick Henry Creative Promotions were spotted passing through Colfax on westbound AMTRAK 9/23/21 and returning eastbound on 9/24. *Photos by Roger Staab*

Per their web site, [phcp.com/the-train/](http://phcp.com/the-train/): “Travel in Luxury Aboard our Private Train Cars. View North America in style and comfort onboard our two beautifully restored historic rail cars. Our dome lounge car, the Warren R. Henry and accompanying sleeper car, the Evelyn Henry are perfect for Corporate Meetings, Honeymoons, Anniversaries, Family Vacations, Unique Trips and Incentive Travel. Your all-inclusive and unforgettable journey includes panoramic views of the countryside and gourmet meals prepared by our executive chef who only uses the finest and freshest ingredients. Overnight trips accommodate up to 10 guests.”

“Built in 1955 for the Union Pacific Railroad, the dome car features panoramic viewing upstairs, a formal dining room or boardroom for meetings and a beautifully appointed lower level lounge with satellite TV, DVD, and CD player.”

“The deluxe sleeping car built in 1954 for the Union Pacific features 6 double bedrooms with lower and upper beds. A shower and bathroom is located between each pair of bedrooms.”



Just in time for your Christmas wish list, **this luxury experience can be booked starting at a mere \$12,750 per day.**



## Amazon Smile Fund Raising

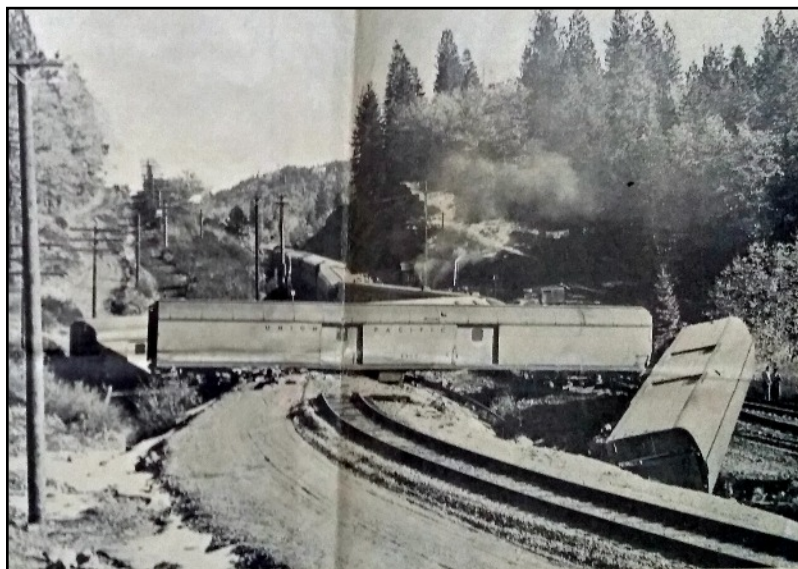
We are now part of the Amazon Smile fund raising campaign. We receive a donation to the society based on your purchases. Please feel free to copy and paste the link below and include it in all your emails.

<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/68-0488569>



### From the Archives

**October Mystery Photo (right):** This “building” served as SP’s New England Mills station. The SP station book lists it as N.E. Mills from 1866 to 1892 and New England Mills on Track 1 from 1892 to 1974 and nearby Track 2 after 1912. The N.E. Mills station was located near where present-day Weimar Cross Road crosses Track 1 adjacent to the Weimar Exit on I-80. *PSRHS Collection*



**November Mystery Photo (left):** What train is shown in slightly inoperable condition, where did this accident occur, and when? Hint: Clues can be found in a recent issue of this newsletter. *Colfax Area Historical Society Collection*

**Accidents/Other Incidents.** *Auburn Journal*, 21 Dec 1911 - **CONFESSES TO ATTEMPT WRECKING** – “Ralph Booyan, a half-witted Russian, confessed Friday afternoon to Sheriff McAulay that he attempted to wreck an overland passenger train, by turning a switch at Zeta, December 8. Sheriff McAulay has suspected Booyan of the deed, and when the latter was brought to the county jail Friday afternoon on a vagrancy charge, he was questioned. Booyan readily admitted the crime. It is not likely that Booyan will be prosecuted as he really belongs in an insane asylum. He contends that he owns half of the Southern Pacific railroad and that he has the right to wreck his trains whenever he pleases. The wrecking of the passenger train was averted by the timely arrival of an extra freight, which was ordered to the siding at Zeta to let the westbound passenger train pass. The engineer of the freight train found the switch open upon his arrival at Zeta.”

#### 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 <https://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@psrhs.org](mailto:roger.staab@psrhs.org)



### TRACK LABORER DURING WWII – By E.L. Wall, Retired UP Signal Engineer

During World War II the Southern Pacific hired women and high school kids to do track work. I went to work on the section gang in 1944 at Colfax along with several other high school kids. There were no women on this gang. I worked weekends during school and one summer. The majority of the men were Mexican Americans and Mexican Nationals. The Foreman's name was Jack Perry and the Ass't Foreman was Juan Seliz. All these men were hard workers and they taught me how to pace myself so I could last all day at hard labor.

Colfax back in the forties was a railroad town and steam was still going strong. It also had a few fruit packing sheds. The pear industry was big then but during the fifties a blight hit the surrounding orchards and killed most of the fruit trees. Colfax had a round house that had about 8 stalls for engine repair. This round house was mainly used to maintain helper engines for trains going over Donner Pass. When freight trains came out of Roseville Yard headed for Truckee, there was one cab forward in front and a cab forward near the rear of the train. When the train got to Colfax a helper engine was added to the head end. The grades between Colfax and Donner Pass would be over 3%.

In those days, everything was done by hand. We drove spikes with spike mauls, carried rail with rail tongs, pulled spikes with claw bars, tamped cross ties with picks that had a broad end on one end and a sharp end on the other end (the WP used tamping bars), shoveled ballast with ballast forks, drilled bolt holes in rails with a two-handled track drill and used a 3ft long open ended wrench for tightening or loosening track bolts.

Working on the track is a dangerous place to work. In those days hard hats weren't used. I thought the only people that wore hard hats were miners. It was very easy to mash a finger or foot especially when changing a rail. When using a pick or spike maul you had to be careful not to hit the man working next to you. No one was hurt while I was there.

When we changed out old cross ties and put in new ones and since we were under age, it was considered a days work if we changed out four ties. The older men had to change out eight ties. Occasionally we would change out a broken rail. All rail, then, was 39 ft long except today most mainline rail is welded together. Rail size is designated by weight per 3 ft., for example 85#, 100#, 115#, 119#, 132#, and 136#. Most of mainline rail around Colfax at that time was 115# rail if I remember correctly. When a rail needed to be changed out, we would lift a rail out of the stock pile next to the tool house and jockey it over to the nearest track where we had a push car. With six to eight men with rail tongs, we would lift one rail up and push the push car under it. Then we would pick up the other end and slide it onto the push car. The push car was then towed to where the rail needed to be changed out. The rail was then rolled off onto the ground. The old rail was removed and the new one put in.

During the war, the S.P. Took out a lot of sidings and spur tracks that weren't needed any more and the steel was sold for scrap. One time, a work train was organized with a crane, flat car for rail, a gondola car for tie plates, spikes, anti-creepers and angle bars and bolts. We all loaded up our tools and boarded the train and headed for Cape Horn, the next siding east of Colfax. At Cape Horn there was a siding between the two main lines about a mile long. The siding was to be removed. The crane was used to pick up the entire track, ties and all, to about waist high. We then would use sledge hammers to knock the ties away from spikes and tie plates. After all the ties were knocked off, we proceeded to take all the angle bars off and generally dismantle everything. For the next few days we loaded all the scrap into the gondola with the help of the crane. After using the sledge hammers my wrists got very weak and I could hardly lift anything the next day. So I faked it until my wrists got better.

Anyway, when pay day came along it all seemed worth it. My pay rate then was \$0.62 per hr. Can't beat that.

*E. L. Wall's Story Found in Colfax Area Historical Society Archives*