

Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society



www.psrhs.org

April 2022 Newsletter

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*What's the story on this piece of rail equipment spotted in Colfax? See page 3 for details.
Roger Staab photo.*

Scheduled Events & Notices



Apr 19 PSRHS Field Trip to Siemens Sacramento – Attendance Limited to 20 People. There are a few slots still available to PSRHS paid members and spouses. If you would like to attend email Paul Greenfield, cal.greenf@gmail.com by noon Thursday, Apr. 14.

Apr 26 PSRHS Monthly Meeting, 7PM – Program: Kyle Wyatt – The Central Pacific Story: Building the Western Half of the Pacific Railroad

May 24 PSRHS Monthly Meeting, 7PM – Program: Paul Helman

Jul 6-22 UP Big Boy West Coast Steam Tour with Planned Stops in Sparks & Roseville
Watch the May PSRHS Newsletter for specific dates & whistle stop locations

Please consider joining PSRHS or renewing membership for 2022
See the box at the bottom of page 4 for details. Thank you for supporting our railroad history preservation activities.

Preserving Railroad History on the Donner Pass Route



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April PSRHS MEETING

Tuesday, April 26, 7PM,

Auburn Veterans Memorial Hall

April Program: Kyle Wyatt will present **The Central Pacific Story: Building the Western Half of the Pacific Railroad.** His program will cover the many-year lead up to the Transcontinental RR, and then the actual construction, emphasizing the Central Pacific, but also some on the Union Pacific.

Kyle has worked in railroad history and preservation since 1977, when he started work as a historical researcher at the CSRM Restoration Shop. He continued there until the museum opened in 1981, then did other things, including completing higher degrees focused in California and Western American history and the history of technology. Even before then Kyle had an avocation in railroad history. In 1990 he was hired as Curator of History at the Nevada State Railroad Museum. He returned to the California State Railroad Museum as Curator of History & Technology in 1999, and retired in 2018. He still does occasional consulting work.

The program will be presented live at the Auburn Veterans Memorial Hall. See our web site for directions.

March Program Recap: Kevin Knauss discussed Amos Catlin, Theodore Judah, and the Sacramento Area's Early Railroads. He provided interesting details about the Sacramento Valley Railroad, American River Railroad, and the California Central Railroad.

FUTURE PROGRAMS

Our program director is building a calendar of future programs for our monthly meetings. The speaker lined up for May is listed below. Meanwhile program Chair Peter Diurni would like your ideas for future speakers and programs. You can email him at

petediurni@hotmail.com

Paul Helman will be our May speaker. Paul has conducted extensive research on how the principal players financed construction of the transcontinental railroad. His program should provide an excellent follow-up to Kyle Wyatt's April program.

150-YEAR-OLD LOCOMOTIVE RENO RETURNS TO VIRGINIA CITY

By Nevada Traveler, Dec. 18, 2021

(Ed. Note - Thanks to PSRHS member Paul Lanyi for alerting us to this article that appeared on the Nevadagram.com web site)

"The most historic existing icon of Nevada's past, the 150-year-old Virginia & Truckee Railroad steam locomotive Reno, has made its final run full circle, returning home to Virginia City, where it originally operated from 1872 – 1938.

The famous engine, featured in more than 100 Hollywood films and productions and reputed to be the most photographed locomotive in American history, has taken residence on the same tracks where it transported passengers from Reno and Carson City to Gold Hill and Virginia City on the Comstock Lode.

Tom Gray, owner of the Virginia & Truckee Railroad, responding to echoes from the Old West and family tradition, secured the famed No. 11 engine for Nevada posterity as the last V&T engine in private hands. He purchased it August 13, 2021 from Old Tucson Studios with plans for a full restoration, then a highly anticipated return to film use along with three historic coaches originally used in the movie classic, *Gone With The Wind*."

"It's home again as a premier Nevada historic object — it's outlived everybody and deserves to be recognized," Gray noted. "It's as authentic Nevada as anything we have today."

"The engine's original journey began when it [was] ordered by the V&T as No. 11 and rolled off the assembly line at the Baldwin Locomotive Works in Philadelphia in 1872, bound for Carson City. Ulysses S. Grant had just been re-elected the 18th United States president. The V&T ordered the ornate American style 4-4-0 engine (wheel arrangement classification) to pull its highly varnished passenger trains between Reno and Virginia City. Upon arrival, she was christened by the V&T as Reno."

Continued on page 5





Passing Scene – UP's Brandt OTM Tracker

This photo captured in Colfax on April 7 shows an important piece of UP's OTM Tracker manufactured by Brandt. Perhaps you have seen a string of gondola cars with a bright yellow machine literally walking along the length of the car string, offloading ties, picking up brush, or other maintenance tasks. The yellow machine is the OTM Tracker that provides considerable flexibility for trackside right-of-way maintenance activities. The truck in this photo adds to that flexibility by transporting the Tracker unit over highways to the work location, off-loading the tracker onto the gondola string, then providing the on-track motive power for the equipment combo.

According to Brandt's brochure, found at www.brandt.ca, "...the proven and efficient OTM Tracker is a single, fully integrated track maintenance machine that safely moves from highway transport deck to the top of rail maintenance cars and back again in a matter of minutes maximizing your productivity and efficiency. Once elevated to the top of your maintenance cars, the OTM Tracker moves effortlessly from car to car enabling the management of all your track maintenance materials with unmatched dexterity, reach, lift and speed. Once your job is complete, the OTM Tracker can safely resume its highway transport position and be on its way to the next job site in only minutes." Referring to the truck in the photo, "The Brandt R4 Power unit and the OTM Tracker can travel on the road at full highway speeds or on rail at 40 miles per hour while pulling or pushing railcars. The conversion from road-to-rail or vice versa can be accomplished within any 30 foot crossing in three minutes."



Roger Staab Photo



Inset Photo of Tracker on Gondolas from Brandt brochure

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

March Mystery Photo (right): The Auburn Lincoln St. Depot is on the right looking west-bound toward the Cherry Ave. bridge. Western Pacific's California Zephyr is passing through town on its way to Sacramento. The Zephyr was apparently rerouted onto SP tracks due to a problem somewhere on the Feather River route.
Ken Yeo Collection. PSRHS



April Mystery Photo (left): What is the back story on this locomotive, and where is it headed? (Careful - this may be a trick question)
Ken Yeo Collection. PSRHS



Accidents/Other Incidents. *San Francisco Call, Jan. 19, 1913 – Transcontinental Trains Suspended – Sacramento, Jan. 18* – “Transcontinental train service was suspended during the day on both the Southern Pacific and Western Pacific railroads because of snowslides and landslides in the Sierra Nevada mountains. All westbound overland trains on the Southern Pacific were delayed five hours, and eastbound trains were running eight hours behind schedule tonight... After succeeding in clearing this morning, following a night of persistent struggle against the elements, the Southern Pacific was suddenly plunged into new difficulties at 2:30 this afternoon, when 250 feet of snow sheds at the head of Donner lake, three miles east of the summit, caved in, blocking traffic. This cavein did not come until the westbound trains had been rushed through. The eastbound trains were on their way, but were held up for more than eight hours. Additional machinery and extra crews of men were rushed to the scene. Later reports from the summit were to the effect that the road would be opened by tomorrow.”

Membership Information

Individual Members = \$25.00/yr
Each Additional Family Member = \$5.00/yr

- Monthly Meetings (4th Tuesday) 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



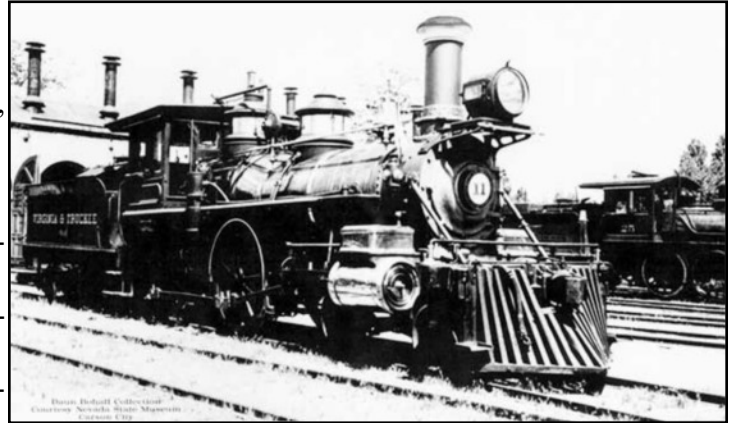
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V&T #11 Reno (*continued from page 2*)

“Proud of their new addition, the crews attentively kept her bright metal work – the brass handrails and domes, polished and the engine spotlessly clean, earning her the nickname, ‘Brass Betsy.’

In 1875 she began leading the daily San Francisco-bound Lightning Express train and she plied the line between Reno and Virginia City until 1924 as the centerpiece of the V&T. During that time, Reno was thought to have transported four U.S. Presidents: Grant, Rutherford B. Hayes, Theodore Roosevelt, and ex-president Herbert Hoover, along with silver barons, the wealthy, Comstock fortune seekers and the public.



In 1938, with war on the horizon and rail traffic at an all-time low, V&T leased the engine to Hollywood so she could be preserved on film in the epic movie, *Union Pacific* by Cecil B. DeMille.

Reno achieved silver screen superstar status by appearing in more than 100 productions with major studios as well as Western television series. Hollywood stars who rode Reno included John Wayne, James Stewart, Katherine Hepburn, Paul Newman, Clint Eastwood, and Elizabeth Taylor. Over the years, four different smokestacks were interspersed to denote various time periods.

In 1945 Reno was sold to MGM Studios, then in 1970 to Old Tucson Studios as the centerpiece of its Old West operations. A fire there in 1995 ended its useful life as a movie star. The rusting hulk was cosmetically restored for use as a prop, imagined to never run again under its own power – until now.

Tom Gray followed his father’s journey along the tracks and shared the same dream to bring the V&T back to life. In 1972, following a successful business career, Robert C. Gray assumed abandoned V&T property in Virginia City. It seems Reno captured his imagination as a young man – it certainly captured his heart as he was a passenger on its final trip to Virginia City in 1938.

He ran his first popular steam tourist train on July 2, 1976 and improved the V&TRR the next 50 years, active as president until he was 95, two years before his passing in 2019. As more history would have it, Tom acquired Reno the day his father would have turned 100.

Led by the Grays’ efforts, along with the Nevada Commission for the Reconstruction of the V&T Railway, the original 16-mile right-of-way between Carson City and Virginia City was rebuilt, then reopened in 2009 for summer weekend rides.

Thanks to the movie industry, Reno retains many of its original parts and all the brass. Reno, 149 years after the V&T originally ordered the No. 11, is once again home on the line she was built for.

Today, the V&T Railroad operates original steam train and heritage diesel locomotive rides daily from May through October over a scenic three-mile loop through historic Virginia City. Special theme excursions include the visually stunning Electric Train of Lights holiday trains, the Pumpkin Patch and Candy Cane Express.

For more information on the Virginia & Truckee Railroad rides, holiday excursions and more, contact: <https://www.virginiatruckee.com/> or call 775-847-0380.”

