

Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society



<https://www.psrhs.>

October 2022 Newsletter

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*New AMTRAK Charger locomotives were recently spotted on the Donner Route in a unique train consist. See page 3 for details.
Paul Greenfield Photo*

Scheduled Events & Notices



Oct 22-23 International Railfair, Roseville, info at www.internationalrailfair.com

Oct 25 PSRHS Monthly Meeting, 7PM – Program: Herman Darr Narrates circa 1940 Al Phelps Film Footage of NCNG Operations

Nov 22 PSRHS Monthly Meeting/Potluck – details to be determined

May 16-21, 2023 Joint Meeting of Southern Pacific Railroad History Center, Pacific Coast Chapter R&LHS, and the National Railway Historical Society – Nugget Casino Resort in Sparks, Nevada, see Page 2 for web site & details

Please consider joining PSRHS or renewing membership for 2023. 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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PSRHS MONTHLY MEETING

Tuesday, Oct. 25, 7PM,
Auburn Veterans Memorial Hall

October Program: Nevada County Narrow Gauge Railroad expert Herman Darr will provide narration for circa 1940 film footage shot by Al Phelps of NCNG operations. The film includes switching in the Colfax yard, mainline and excursion train operations, turntable action at Colfax and Grass Valley, and brief footage of dismantling the line.

Herman Darr witnessed the last days of SP steam while growing up in Tracy, CA. He has an extensive collection of NCNG photos and information, along with knowledge of its equipment and operation. You have likely seen one or more of Herman's railroad maps of Grass Valley, Nevada City, Colfax and Auburn. He personally knew NCNG Master Mechanic Johnny Nolan, and has interesting stories to tell of those days.

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

September Colfax Railroad Days Recap: A few PSRHS members assisted Colfax Historical Society in staffing the Colfax caboose during Railroad Days on Sept. 16. The second day of the planned two-day event was canceled by the event organizer due to inclement weather. Good crowds were in town for the Saturday portion, and the caboose experienced a steady stream of visitors. Many were disappointed that UP had not provided any rail equipment for display, but they appreciated the chance to view the caboose and hear about its history and the renovation conducted by PSRHS. Thanks to those who helped staff the caboose and promote PSRHS activities.

TRIBUTE TO STAN KISTLER

We are sad to learn of the recent passing of Stan Kistler. Stan has been a friend of PSRHS through the years, providing interesting programs at two of our meetings,

and donating several photos to our collection. His recent donation of his NCNG photo collection to PSRHS has been posted on our web site. We have all benefited from Stan's years of dedication to and support of railroad photography and history.

Rest In Peace Stan.

The link to Stan's NCNG RR photo collection can be found under the Exhibits tab on our web site <http://psrhs.org>. From this link a set of thumbnail images can be accessed, along with a list of descriptions for many of the images. **Have a look and enjoy the images compliments of Stan's generosity and PSRHS's commitment** to document and share railroading history and contemporary operations along the Donner Pass Route.

SPRHC/R&LHS/NRHS JOINT MEETING

Sparks, NV May 16-23

The Southern Pacific Railroad History Center, Pacific Coast Chapter of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society, and the National Railway Historical Society welcome all to attend their 2023 joint meeting at the Nugget Casino Resort in Sparks, Nevada between May 16 and May 21, 2023.

The History Center is sponsoring a two and one-half day focus on Southern Pacific's last twenty-five years and this overview will be provided by panels and presentations. Speakers are primarily former Southern Pacific officers whose unique observations will complete many portions of the story of this era of Southern Pacific that have yet to be told.

Tours of nearby railroad sites of interest are also planned. Attendance for many of these activities is limited, so early registration is recommended. For further details, visit the event's web site

<https://www.splives.org/sprhc-rlhs-nrhs-joint-meet-may-2023>





Passing Scene – New Siemens Charger Locomotives for AMTRAK

Last month's newsletter featured images captured by Paul Greenfield and Mike Haire of the westbound delivery of Caltrain train sets by UP. These electric units were manufactured in Utah. This month's passing scene shows new Charger locomotives manufactured by Siemens in South Sacramento, being delivered to AMTRAK locations via AMTRAK's #6 eastbound California Zephyr. On the point is #301 featuring AMTRAK's "Day One" fiftieth anniversary paint scheme. *Paul Greenfield photos captured at Newcastle and Colfax.*



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.

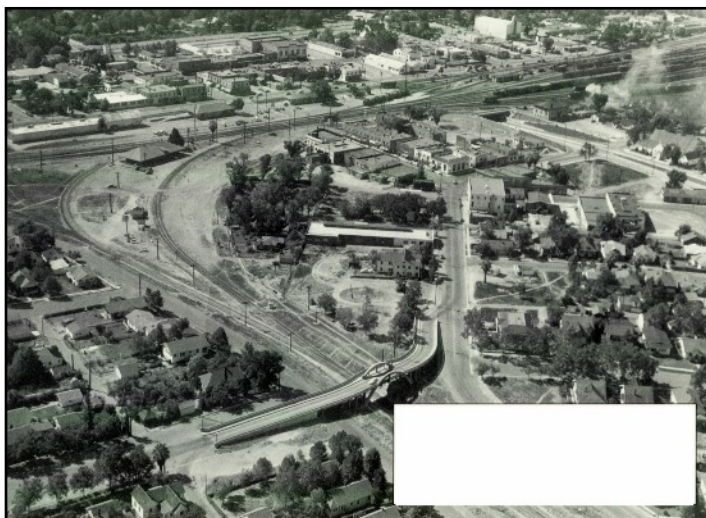
<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/68-0488569>

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From the Archives

September Mystery Photo (right): This photo taken from Rollins Lake Road near Colfax shows what is normally a branch of Rollins Lake. Concrete pillars in the exposed bottom once supported a NCNG trestle as it crossed this low area. In the distance is the walking path that goes to Rollins Dam, once the route of the NCNG on its way to the high bridge that crossed Bear River. A portion of old Hwy 40 is visible at lower center. *Roger Staab photo.*



October Mystery Photo (left): Where was this photo taken and what railroad-related features are visible? Hint – Our web site might provide some answers. *Photo provided by Leonard Davis.*

Accidents/Other Incidents. *Auburn Journal, Aug. 21, 1916 – “Railroad Speed Car Wrecked – Rider Hurt.* C.W. Samuelson, a track man of the Southern Pacific had an accident near the Nevada Street station when the speeder on which he was riding jumped from the rails, giving him a bad fall. He was severely injured about the shoulders and chest.

The accident was witnessed by a number of people as it was near train time. The wreck of a speeder was something unusual and unique, and caused a great deal of comment.”

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





End-of-Train Devices -Bringing up the Rear-

Robert S. McGonigal, May 1, 2006

Trains Magazine <http://trn.trains.com/railroads/abcs-of-railroading/2006/05/end-of-train-devices>

Editors Note: Last month's newsletter featured the transcript of an interview conducted by Tony Hesch and others with a retired freight railroad conductor, describing his experiences riding in a caboose and the many roles the caboose and crew played in freight operations. Included in Tony's notes was the following article from Trains magazine on end-of-train devices that replaced the caboose functions on freight trains.

"Not so long ago, train-watchers almost everywhere could count on a final point of interest at the end of each freight train: a caboose. The distinctive little cars housed crew members who would observe the cars ahead for defects, process the train's paperwork, operate track switches, monitor the air-brake system to see if it was functioning throughout the train, observe if the train was moving or stopped as intended by the engineer, and apply the brakes in an emergency. Cabsomes also carried marker lights to warn following trains.

"But the caboose has yielded to other technology. Defect observation has been taken over by trackside detectors, the conductor now does his paperwork in the engine cab, and many main-line switches are thrown by remote control (though many others are still manual).

"The caboose's other functions are now performed by end-of-train telemetry, best represented by the end-of-train device (ETD), the small metal box with a flashing light on the rear coupler of the last car. Most ETD's are of the "smart" variety, so called because of their ability to do a number of tasks.

"Perhaps their most visible element is the flashing marker light. Powered by rechargeable batteries, the marker is controlled by a photoelectric cell which turns the flasher on when ambient light levels become low. (Many streetlights and yard lights work this way.)

Reflective material, sometimes striped, on the exterior of the ETD is meant to catch the headlight beam of an approaching locomotive, so the unit still provides a warning even if the ETD light has failed.

"Another important ETD job is monitoring of the brake-pipe pressure. A sensor extends down from the ETD unit (which, depending on the design, can be mounted on the knuckle or the side of the coupler) and attaches to the end of the air hose. This way, the ETD gathers data on the brakeline pressure, one of the most crucial measurements on any train. This information is transmitted by radio to the engine cab, which must have equipment to receive, decode, and display the data. The engineer can thus monitor the integrity of the train line as he sets and releases the brakes.

"ETD's are also equipped with sensors that determine motion of the rear end. Radio transmissions from the unit tell the engine cab if the rear end is stopped or moving forward or backward. Information on the marker light (on or off) and batteries (how much charge is left) is also included in ETD radio messages. If there is a loss of radio continuity between the ETD and cab, this will also be displayed.

"Florida East Coast pioneered ETD use in 1969, and most other railroads followed suit by the mid-1980's. Early units simply transmitted data to the cab. Now railroads are required to use "two-way" equipment. A two-way telemetry system allows the ETD to apply the train brakes on radio command from the engine crew, sometimes necessary in emergencies.

"Other improvements have been a reduction in weight to under 30 pounds and an increase between battery rechargings to 6 days. (Throwaway batteries were used at first.) Only two manufacturers are currently producing ETD's: Pulse Electronics and Union Switch & Signal.

"Each ETD is identified with its owner's initials and a number. By entering the unique code of his train's ETD in the cab equipment, the engineer sets up to receive the proper signals.

Continued on Page 6





End of Train Device - continued from page 5

“An ETD transmits data roughly every 40 seconds, but if it detects a change in train status, it sends a signal immediately. To facilitate run-through operations, the AAR has assigned the frequency of 457.9375 MHz to ETD’s, though Norfolk Southern uses 161.115. Under favorable conditions, a signal will travel 3 to 5 miles. Special equipment is needed to interpret the ETD transmission, but the railfan with a scanner will hear an ETD as an intermittent chirp – a useful tool in finding trains.

“Just as cabooses were variously called hacks, crummies, cabins, etc., end-of-train devices go by a variety of names. Besides ETD, there’s EOT, marker, FRED or Freddy (flashing rear-end device), even Billy and Red-man.

“The simplest ETD’s are merely darkness-actuated flashing lights that serve only as markers. These are referred to as “dumb”, to distinguish them from their more sophisticated counterparts. Lacking all the features of smart ETD’s, these units are smaller and lighter. Their main use is in short-distance transfer service.

“Cabooses have not quite disappeared, however. Trains that perform a lot of switching, make extended back-up moves, or use lots of passing sidings with hand-throw switches still employ cabooses.”



Modern ETD Image and features from web search

