

Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society



<https://www.psrhs.org>

November 2022 Newsletter

In this issue:

NOVEMBER PSRHS POTLUCK. Page 2

Board Member Elections. Page 2

Tribute to Ken Fletcher. Page 2

Membership Renewal Time. Page 2

**SPRHS/R&LHS/NRHS Joint Meeting
Sparks, NV May 16-21, 2023.** Page 2

Passing Scene. Page 3

From the Archives. Page 4

A Train Ride Gone Bad. Pages 5 & 6



*UP's Business/Passenger train with vintage cars visited the Donner route in October.
See additional photos on page 3.
Paul Greenfield photo*

Scheduled Events & Notices



Nov 22 PSRHS POTLUCK DINNER Meeting – 6:30 PM – Join us for good food and conversation – See Page 2 for details

No Meeting in December HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!

Jan 24 PSRHS Monthly Meeting, 7PM – Program TBA

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

A reminder to renew your membership for 2023 or join PSRHS if you are not already a member. See the box at the bottom of page 4 for details.
Thank you for helping support our local railroad history activities.

Preserving Railroad History on the Donner Pass Route



Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society

November 2022 Newsletter

PSRHS POTLUCK DINNER

TUESDAY, NOV. 22, 6:30PM

Auburn Veterans Memorial Hall

(Note Earlier Start Time)

The November meeting will be our annual potluck dinner. PSRHS will furnish baked ham with raisin sauce, apple cider and water. Members are each asked to bring a favorite side dish, salad, snack or dessert to share to complete our feast. There will be railroad songs playing in the background as we enjoy good food and conversation, with perhaps some railroad videos included as well. **Family, guests, and friends of railroad history are welcome to join us.**

Mona Anderson has volunteered to organize this year's event and bring the ham. Mona asks that you take leftovers home with you of the dishes you brought along with portions of leftover ham, and help clean up the area after the potluck. These small acts will really help us with clean-up and will be much appreciated!

Our thanks to Mona for coordinating our event. If you have any questions Mona's landline # is 530-888-6710, or email rlanderson@wavecable.com

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

October Program Recap: Nevada County Narrow Gauge Railroad expert **Herman Darr provided narration for circa 1940 film footage shot by Al Phelps of NCNG operations**, including yard switching, mainline and excursion train runs, turntable action, and brief footage of dismantling the line. Herman added insight into locations of many of the filmed scenes along with historical notes about the line and its operation.

BOARD MEMBER ELECTIONS

Due to Covid disruptions, we have not held elections of PSRHS board members for a couple of years. Per our bylaws, terms for 3 of our 9 board members expire each year. There will be a brief discussion at the November meeting regarding options to get board member terms back on track.

TRIBUTE TO KEN FLETCHER

We received word that Colfax resident Ken Fletcher recently passed away. Ken and his wife Mickey were members of PSRHS from 2006-2019, and they were both very active in the Colfax Historical Society. Ken also played guitar and sang with the Lyrical Locos. Mickey his wife of 54 years passed away in 2019.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME

If you have not already done so, it's time to renew your membership in PSRHS. Member dues are our primary source of revenue for PSRHS field trips, restoration projects, purchase of historic photos, and publication of our monthly newsletter and other documents covering local railroad history. You can renew by check payable to PSRHS, PO Box 1776, Colfax, CA 95713, or on our secure web site <https://www.psrhs.org/> using pay pal. Yearly dues amount can be found in the box on page 4.

Thank you for your support of PSRHS and our mission Preserving Railroad History on the Donner Pass Route.

SPRHC/R&LHS/NRHS JOINT MEETING

Sparks, NV May 16-23

A reminder that 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 event will feature presentations focused on SP's last 25 years, and tours of nearby railroad sites of interest. Attendance at many of the 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>

A TRAIN RIDE GONE BAD

Read the story on pp. 5-6





Passing Scene – UP Passenger Special on Donner

The UP business train made several runs over Donner this fall. The ‘consist’ of all-yellow heritage and special cars is an eye-catcher but the train operates unannounced so capturing photos of it in action can be a challenge. PSRHS member Paul Greenfield was notified on October 25 that the train had been sighted going through Truckee westbound, and he passed the word to others. Paul took the upper image in Rocklin. The lower image by your newsletter editor shows the rear portion of the train as it cleared the Grass Valley St. crossing in 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.

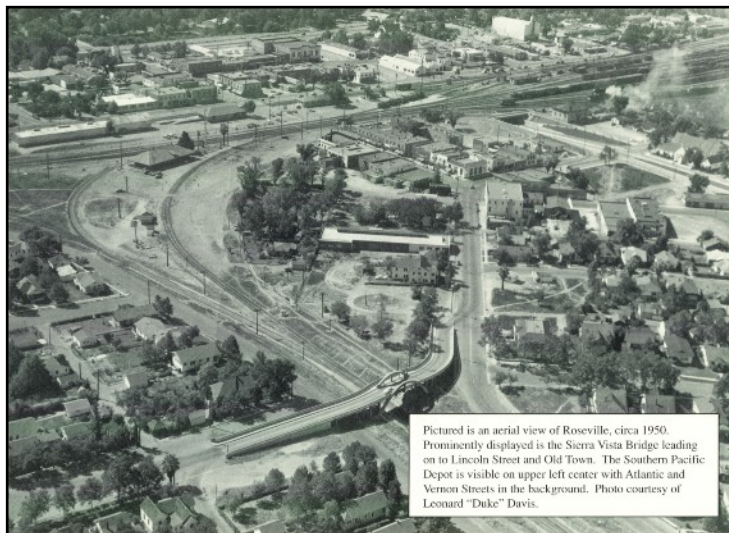
<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/68-0488569>

Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society

November 2022 Newsletter

From the Archives

October Mystery Photo (right): In this 1950 aerial view of Roseville, the eastbound tracks to Ogden go from right to left near the top. The tracks curving toward the bottom head north toward Oregon as they pass the 1907 Roseville depot within the wye, then go under the Sierra Vista Bridge, also known as Rainbow Bridge and crooked bridge, built in 1929. Old town Roseville is at right center. *Photo provided by Leonard Davis.*



November Photo From The Archives (left): This Issue marks a change in the 'From the Archives' page. Instead of a small mystery photo, future issues will feature a larger-format historical photo from the PSRHS collection, along with a descriptive caption. At times some details may be left for readers to ponder until the next issue.

This month's photo is from Watkins stereo view #49 of the Secret Town Trestle near Gold Run looking westbound. It dates to the early 1870's before the trestle was completely filled in by Chinese laborers. Note the early wagon road that is crossed by the trestle in the foreground. *PSRHS Collection*



Accidents/Other Incidents. *Auburn Journal*, Jan. 25, 1917 – “**SECTION BOSS KILLED - Henry Jenkins, Section Forman for Mountain Quarries Railroad Struck Down by Train No. 9.** Henry Jenkins, employed by the Pacific Portland Cement Company, as a section boss on the quarry railroad, was instantly killed last Friday by Southern Pacific passenger train No. 9, while he was watching switching operations on the quarry train.... Jenkins was watching the quarry train switching and was presumably unaware of the oncoming passenger train, which was several hours late and running at good speed.... At the inquest held over the body in this city Saturday, the verdict of the jury was accidental death without any blame being placed on anyone.”

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



A TRAIN RIDE ADVENTURE IN THE PAST GONE BAD

Editors Note: With winter weather once again upon us, we are reminded that train travel can be disrupted by fickle mountain weather. Think of the 1952 stranding of the City of San Francisco for 3 days, or the 1890 stranding of two passenger trains on the Sierra west slope for over two weeks.

There have been numerous other weather-related incidents on the Donner route over the years that didn't get the attention of those major events, but were none-the-less memorable to the people who endured them.

The following article about a 12-hour train nightmare by Erin Allday, Chronicle staff reporter, appeared in the Feb. 1, 2008 San Francisco Chronicle. While this incident doesn't rival the conditions experienced by snowbound train passengers in 1890 or 1952, it does illustrate the frustration sometimes experienced when "riding the rails".

To be fair to rail travel, air travel passengers have had their share of frustrations in recent months.

TWO-HOUR AMTRAK RIDE TURNS INTO 12-HOUR NIGHTMARE FOR PASSENGERS

It was supposed to be a two-hour train ride – a pleasant afternoon of gorgeous, snow-trimmed scenery and sweeping views of the Sierra Nevada for Loretta Porta and her daughter, Bethany.

It turned into a 12-hour nightmare. A snowplow accident stranded their Amtrak train in the mountain wilderness Friday and Saturday, and they were stuck with sobbing kids, desperate smokers, a frustrated crew and teens who thought it'd be fun to play with the train PA system.

"I can't believe I took a day off for this," said Porta, who never made it to her destination in Truckee and arrived back at her home in Merced at 4:40 a.m. Saturday. "We'd heard how wonderful the train ride is, everyone was telling us to take the train. My boss said I would love it. But it's going to be a long time before I get on another train."

About 400 passengers on two Amtrak trains were stalled for hours Friday and Saturday when a Union Pacific snowplow became stuck and blocked the tracks. One train, which was traveling from Emeryville to Chicago, was stranded in Gold Run, about 40 miles east of Yuba City. The other train, traveling in the reverse direction from Chicago to the Bay Area, stopped west of Reno.

Passengers on the Emeryville-bound train were put up in hotels overnight and were offered bus rides to their final destination early Saturday. Passengers on the Gold Run Train, including Porta and her daughter, were kept on-board until midnight, when they were given the option of staying until the train was able to continue its journey, or getting bus rides back home.

Porta and about 60 other passengers opted for the bus. A wedding party bound for Reno decided to crawl through the snow to get to the highway, where guests with cars had driven back to give them rides, Porta said.

Continued on page 6





A Train Ride Gone Bad *(continued from page 5)*

Porta and her daughter left Merced to catch the noon train in Sacramento. They were due to arrive in Truckee by about 2 p.m., when they would meet Bethany's grandparents, who were going to teach her to ski.

The problem seemed innocent enough when the train first stopped about an hour into the ride, Porta said. Passengers were told that the snow was falling too fast and hard for workers to keep the tracks cleared. But as the hours passed, passengers grew suspicious of the cause of their delay, and started calling friends in Reno and local news stations, she said.

By 5 p.m. – nearly four hours after the train had first stopped – the facts started drifting back to the passengers. They would still have heat and electricity, and they would get a free dinner, but they learned it would be hours until the train was allowed to move.

People were getting pretty fed up, Porta said.

The smokers were clamoring to be allowed off the train so they could get a few puffs. When they were told no, they went to the back of the train and tried to crack open doors and windows.

Sometime in the early evening, a couple of kids got on the PA system and acted as though they were Amtrak officials giving information. Other kids screamed and ran through the cars. Porta's daughter made a friend, and for a few hours they entertained themselves with card games. But before long, she said, they were both begging to be let outside and *(sic)* play in the snow.

"And then the tears started," Porta said with a sigh. "We were stuck for hours looking at the same trees. We asked if they could move the train up a couple of hundred feet every hour, just so we could see some different trees. We were just hoping for some deer to come by. Even a squirrel."

The Feb. 2, 2008 Sacramento Bee article on the same incident reported this cause for the Amtrak delays:

"A large snowplow being used to clear the tracks had fallen through a walkway about 2 p.m., blocking the paths of two trains near Donner Pass, said Karina Romero, an Amtrak spokesperson."

The Bee reporter interviewed a train passenger by phone. That person said train staff was feeding them well, but passengers weren't being kept informed of the train's status. The passenger went on to say, "People are getting a little anxious because we don't know what's going on and how long we're going to be here."

