

Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society



<https://www.psrhs.org>

February 2023 Newsletter

In this issue:

FEBRUARY MEETING PROGRAM. Page 2

January Board Meeting Hi-Lites. Page 2

Web Site Enhancements. Page 2

Amazon Smile Program Ends. Page 2

Rotaries In Action. Pages 2 & 3

Passing Scene. Page 3

From the Archives. Page 4

Saving Sacramento Trolleys. Pages 5 & 6



Rotaries were the talk of local rail fans the second week of February when they appeared on the Donner route for snow removal and training. See story and photos on page 3. Roger Staab photo

Scheduled Events & Notices



Feb 28 PSRHS Monthly Meeting, 7PM – Program – Clark Colahan
– The history of the Blue Mountain Railroad in southeastern Washington

Mar 28 PSRHS Monthly Meeting, 7PM – Program TBA

Apr 25 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 their web site for details
<https://www.splives.org/sprhc-rlhs-nrhs-joint-meet-may-2023>

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 3 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

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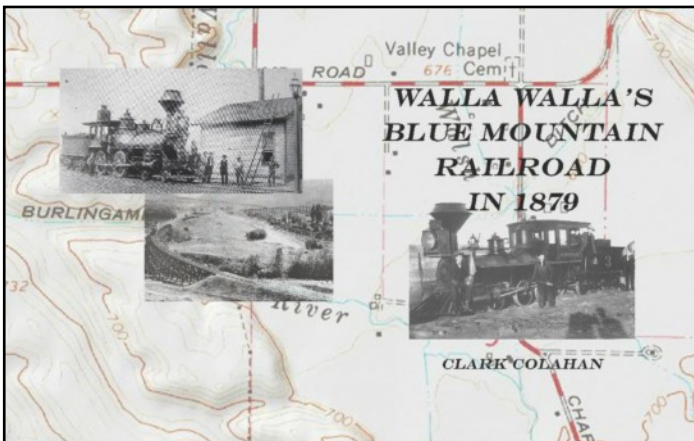
PSRHS MONTHLY MEETING

TUESDAY, FEB. 28, 7PM

Auburn Veterans Memorial Hall

February Program: Clark Colahan, historian, author, and Professor of Literature at Whitman College in Walla Walla Washington will give a presentation on the history of the Blue Mountain Railroad in southeastern Washington. The original Walla Walla and Columbia River Railroad was organized in 1869 to carry wheat and passengers from Walla Walla to the Columbia River steamboats. It was constructed as a low-budget 36" gauge railroad using iron strap rail nailed to wood stringers. Professor Colahan located a long-hidden map of the railroad in an archive and headed to the countryside to re-locate portions of the abandoned right of way. A portion of the old railroad was purchased by the Union Pacific railroad and still exists as the short line Blue Mountain Railroad.

See our web site for directions to the meeting location.



January Program Recap: Chuck Spinks gave an interesting talk on **"The Early Bridges of the Central Pacific Railroad."** Vintage photos were shown to illustrate the design of these early wood bridges, most featuring Howe trusses. Chuck included background on wood bridge designs and advantages the Howe truss provided for building early railroad spans. He also pointed out that Central Pacific built its early bridges and trestles to be more than stop-gap structures that would require early replacement, unlike UP's roadbed construction methods in the race to Promontory.

JANUARY BOARD MEETING HI-LITES

Malcolm Frost's position on the PSRHS board was renewed for another three years. Chuck Spinks continues as board president, with Don Anderson serving as vice-president. Responsibility for setting up monthly programs will be shared by all board members.

PSRHS is looking for program ideas for our monthly meetings. If you would like to present a program or know of a program topic or presenter, contact any board member with details. Videos of some programs may be posted on our web site for future viewing.

Also discussed at the board meeting were re-issuing member badges and revisiting our by-laws policy on terms of memberships paid mid-year or later.

WEB SITE ENHANCEMENTS

The Publications tab on the home page of our web site <https://www.psrhs.org/> now includes several historical documents that on-line visitors can download. More documents will be added in the future.

AMAZON SMILE PROGRAM ENDS

Amazon has announced that effective this month they are ending their philanthropic program Amazon Smile. PSRHS has benefited under this program from people making purchases at Amazon using our code to get a percentage donation to our group. Over the past four years PSRHS has received over \$300 from Amazon Smile purchases. Our thanks to those of you who have included the PSRHS code when making your purchases.

ROTARIES IN ACTION

See page 3 for a brief story and photos of rotary action on Donner earlier this month.

SAVING SACRAMENTO TROLLEYS

A TV report on efforts underway to save vintage trolleys that once operated in Sacramento is featured on pages 5-6.





Passing Scene – Rotaries In Action

On Feb. 8 your editor was standing at the overlook on Tokayana Way near the crossover west of Colfax and heard the slow approach of an engine. Much to my surprise the Roseville rotary set soon passed by heading toward Colfax on the #2 track (top left photo). Knowing the rotaries can't clear the Colfax Amtrak platform on #2 without removing sections of the platform, we hi-tailed it to Colfax in time to watch the rotaries back into the siding by the depot for the night (top right). Early the next morning they headed up the hill for snow clearing and training along with a spreader crew from Truckee. PSRHS member Mike Haire captured the lower two photos near Troy showing a spreader and rotary in action.



Rotary set approaching Colfax from crossover west of town, viewed from Tokayana Way



Backing into siding by Colfax depot. Amtrak platform sections were removed to provide clearance for rotaries



Spreader pushing snow from the core between the tracks onto the #2 track.



Rotary doing what it does best, throwing the snow well clear of the tracks.

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:

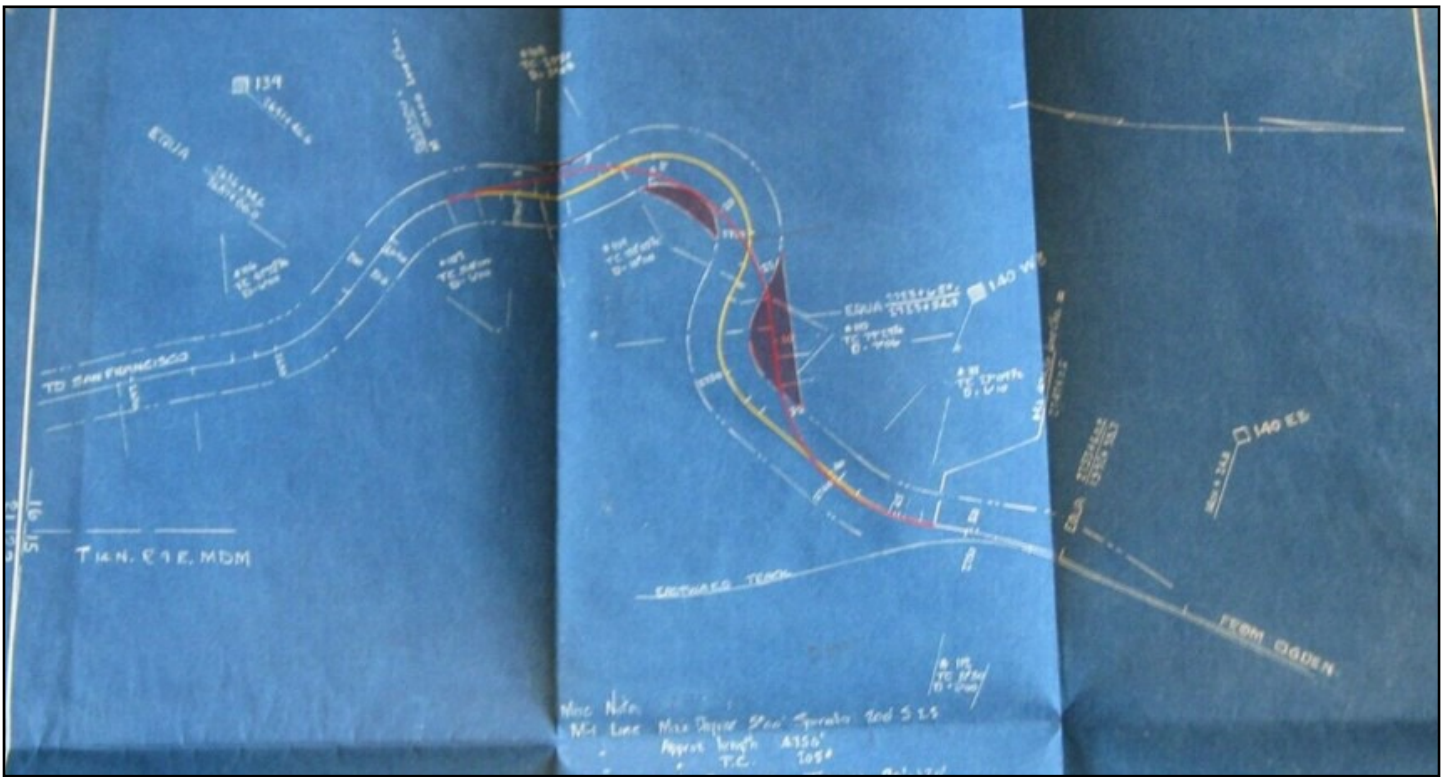
roger.staab@psrhs.org



From the Archives - Lander Curve Straightening?

PSRHS recently acquired a blueprint for a proposed line change to reduce a tight s-curve on the #1 track at Lander, west of Colfax. Date on the blueprint is Dec. 10, 1944, suggesting the proposed line change was likely in response to the disastrous Nov. 8, 1944 derailment of SP's Challenger passenger train that was transporting troops westbound on the number one track during WWII. Nine people died in the wreck, including the train engineer and an infant, and another 80 people were injured.

It is unclear whether the proposed line change was ever completed. The drawing shows the need to purchase right-of-way on both sides of the track to straighten the curves. Member Jim Wood acquired the blueprint on eBay and proposes a future field trip to view the site and possible track changes. *PSRHS Collection*



Accidents/Other Incidents. *Sacramento Daily Union*, May 27, 1910 – “**BLASTS BREAK WINDOWS - Colfax Residents in Danger of Flying Stones.** *Special to the Union.* COLFAX (Placer Co.), May 26 – The residence of George E. West was struck yesterday by a large stone thrown by a blast touched off on the Southern Pacific cut-off [second track project – ed] by employes [sic] of the Chadwick & Sykes Construction company.

The stone smashed a window and passed through a room, striking a bathtub. This is only one of many similar accidents during the past several weeks. Postmaster Butler has lost several windows as a result of the blasting.”

Preserving history: Work underway to preserve 4 Sacramento trolleys from early 1900s



NOTE: This story appeared on the KCRA web page in December 2022. The transcript is repeated here in its entirety along with a screenshot (above) from the video, for those interested in local trolley history who missed the story when it aired. To view the full video, follow this link:
<https://www.kcra.com/article/sacramento-rt-trolleys-western-railway-museum/42271847>



Updated 7:54 PM PST Dec. 16, 2022

[DeNeeka Hill](#)

SACRAMENTO, Calif. —

Work is being done to preserve four historic Sacramento trolleys.

Sacramento Regional Transit is partnering with the Western Railway Museum to remodel the trolleys, which range in age from 1909 to 1929.

Continued on page 6





SacRT Trolley Preservation, Continued from page 5

Robert Immergluck with the museum said one of the cars was built in downtown Sacramento by Pacific Gas & Electric Co. For him, keeping history alive is a duty.

"Without this, the history just consists of pictures and words," Immergluck said.

Volunteers from the museum are working to preserve and prepare the four historic trolleys for transportation.

The more than century-old trolleys made their way to SacRT after a search-and-save mission by the [Friends of Light Rail & Transit](#) group. Now, SacRT is handing them to the Bay Area Electric Railroad Association, where they will be remodeled.

"We were able to store them here for really over the last 10 years but we aren't in the trolley restoring business. We are in the transit business. We're working with a museum in the Bay Area that's going to take them, restore them as much as they can and hopefully one day put them in the museum," said Jessica Gonzalez, a spokesperson for SacRT.

One of the biggest challenges in restoring these trolleys is getting them to where they need to be so the work can begin.

"We braced this car, so we can move it. This car was physically decrepit that we didn't think it would get down the freeway unless we braced the interior. Before we can move these cars we have to get them completely tarped," Immergluck said.

The mission to restore these trolleys is crucial to Immergluck.

"This car was basically a status symbol for most cities, and to have a trolley system was something to be proud of," Immergluck said.

The trolleys will likely make a nearly 50-mile journey to Suisun city in January 2023.

