

Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society



<https://www.psrhs.org>

August 2023 Newsletter

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CPRR Trestles at Clipper Gap are featured in this month's newsletter and in our August program. See pages 2, 4 & 5. Alfred Hart image.

Scheduled Events & Notices



Aug 22 PSRHS Monthly Meeting, 7PM – Program – Jim Wood
– Recap of Past Field Trip to Clipper Gap - (Rescheduled from July)

Sept 16-17 Colfax Railroad Days (See Page 2 for how you can help)

No Meeting in September – Support Colfax Railroad Days, PSRHS Table & Caboose

Oct 24 PSRHS Monthly Meeting, 7PM – Program TBA

Your annual PSRHS membership helps fund purchase of historic photos, publication of railroad history documents, field trips, and other historic preservation activities.

Preserving Railroad History on the Donner Pass Route



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PSRHS MONTHLY MEETING **TUESDAY, AUGUST 22, 7PM** **Auburn Veterans Memorial Hall**

August Program (Rescheduled from July): PSRHS member **Jim Wood** will present a photo review and discussion of a **previous club field trip to Clipper Gap**, including visits to abandoned Tunnel 0, the sites of three former Central Pacific trestles, and line changes due to double-tracking. Other previous field trips are being considered for either future meeting presentations or return field trips.

Our meetings are open to all who are interested. See our web site for directions to the meeting location.

July Program Recap: Because of technical issues Jim Wood's program on the Clipper Gap field trip had to be postponed to August. For the July meeting **Paul Greenfield** presented a 15-minute video showing some of his photos from 1976 to the present. It included many fallen flag railroads and historic locations from across the U.S. and even South Africa.

NEW DONNER CROSSINGS ISSUE

If you are a paid PSRHS member for 2023 you should have received Donner Crossings Issue #17, Summer 2023 in the mail. If you did not receive the Donner Crossings issue but believe your paid membership is current for 2023 let our membership chair Jim Wood know by email at rockwrangler51@gmail.com

STORAGE OF PSRHS DOCS & ARTIFACTS

The PSRHS board of directors has been discussing possible storage locations, preferably with climate-control, for historic railroad books, papers, and hardware items that have been donated to or purchased by the society. Many items are stored at members' homes. A few rare high-value documents are being stored at the Colfax Historical Society Archives but space there is limited and not climate-controlled. The board's objective is to identify a storage location where the society's collection can be consolidated.

To help alleviate the storage issue, board members are reviewing the books and documents in the society's collection with the intent of disposing of items that are not directly supporting our mission. Those items will be offered to members and the public at future events. Which brings us to the next topic —

COLFAX RAILROAD DAYS SEPT. 16-17 **10AM-5PM**

PSRHS will again help staff the Colfax caboose for this year's Railroad Days event, which gives visibility to our railroad history activities as well as educating the public about the important role cabooses played in past freight railroad operations. We will have a PSRHS table at the caboose enclosure, providing literature about our organization and offering books and other documents for sale. To simplify the process we will place our donation box next to the table with a note that the items are available for a donation rather than a set price. Volunteers won't need to handle money and make change.

How can you help, you ask? Donate 2 or 3 hours of your time staffing the caboose and table during the two-day event. You will have plenty of time to enjoy the festivities while helping ensure at least two people are on hand in the caboose from 10-5 each day.

There will be no PSRHS meeting in September, so we hope you can make the time to help staff the caboose at Railroad Days. Email Roger Staab at rsrr@exwire.com with your preferred day and time slot(s). Thanks in advance for your support.

CLIPPER GAP TRESTLES

Jim Wood's program for the August meeting will feature several railroad landmarks in the Clipper Gap area, and the track changes that occurred after the initial construction of the line in 1864. To whet your appetite for Jim's presentation, photos of two of the trestles can be found on page 4, while page 5 includes highlights from Chief Engineer's reports.



Passing Scene - American Railway Explorer

The July 2013 PSRHS Newsletter featured a photo in Colfax of three private varnish cars owned and operated by American Railway Explorer, on the westbound California Zephyr. The same three cars are pictured below at Colfax in June 2013 on the eastbound Zephyr. American Railway Explorer bought three vintage cars from the defunct GrandLuxe Express and announced tours starting in 2010, but the operation was scrapped before its first run. By 2013 they were offering regional charter-only operations in the private cars for \$5000 per day per car. A 2015 charter participant noted the company promoted itself as *“a collection of three Los Angeles based luxury charter railcars, the finest private railcars in America. The railcars travel linked to regularly scheduled Amtrak trains.”* For the 2015 LA to Santa Barbara charter, the “California” dome car provided 360 degree views along the coastline. The center car, the “Utah” was used for gatherings and where the drinks and upscale snacks were served, while the “Kansas” Platform Car had several sleeping bedrooms, a catering kitchen, dining room and a large roomy sitting room at the very back of the train. *Photos by Roger Staab*



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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From the Archives - Clipper Gap Trestles

At our August meeting, Jim Wood will show photos taken during a previous PSRHS field trip to Clipper Gap, along with photos and maps from more recent visits. His program will include features such as locations for three early Central Pacific trestles that are no more, line changes that replaced two of the trestles, and construction and later abandonment of Tunnel 0. Photos below show two of the trestles as they originally appeared on the line east of Clipper Gap station. *Alfred Hart images, PSRHS collection.*



Accidents/Other Incidents. *Colfax Record, Oct. 26, 1967.* “**S.P. Asks to Halt Trains 21,22.** SP Trains No. 21 and 22 may soon join the Colfax institutions which live only in the memory of older residents. Southern Pacific has asked the Interstate Commerce Commission for permission to discontinue its mail trains No. 21 and 22, operating daily in each direction between Oakland and Ogden, Utah, as of November 16. SP claims that mail formerly carried on the mail trains has been diverted to air lines, trucks and piggy-back trains. The Railway Post Office cars carried on Trains 21 and 22 were discontinued October 14. Without this business, the railroad maintains, the two trains would lose about \$475,000 a year. Nos. 21 and 22 have performed mail and express services to communities in California, Nevada and Utah, and each carries a single coach for occasional short distance passengers. An average of only about nine tickets are sold per trip. SP’s streamliner, the City of San Francisco, offers passenger service over the same route.”





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CLIPPER GAP TRETTLES

(Continued from page 2)

The CPRR Chief Engineer's report of 1865 lists three trestles that were built near and above Clipper Gap. By 1877 all three trestles were gone. Excerpts outlined below from early CPRR Chief Engineer Reports mention the construction of these trestles and their disposition. In our August program, Jim Wood will present photos and details showing where the trestles were located relative to present-day tracks and what became of them.

Reports of the President and Chief Engineer Of the Central Pacific Railroad December 1865

Engineer's Office, Nov. 25, 1865

Bridging

"But few timber structures have been found necessary. Those originally designed for crossing the deeper ravines and gaps, between Newcastle and Colfax, have mostly been discarded, and embankments built instead. The Newcastle trestling, sixty feet in high (*sic*) and 500 feet long, one similar structure near Auburn, thirty-eight feet in high and four hundred feet in length; two of the same high at Lovell's Gap; one near Clipper Gap station fifty feet high and four hundred feet in length; two in Clipper Ravine fifty and ninety-three feet in high and three hundred and fifty, and five hundred feet in length, respectively, and one trestling of four bents at Lower Illinoistown Gap (introduced for the convenience of a road crossing), are the only wooden structures between Newcastle and Colfax."

Chief Engineer's Report, S.S. Montague Engineers Office, CPRR, July 1, 1873

Bridges and Trestles

"On the Sierra Nevada two trestles have already been filled, one near Colfax and one near Clipper Gap; another, crossing Deep Gulch about a mile east of Clipper Gap (the highest structure of the kind on

the road), will soon be abandoned for the track just built upon a new line (without trestle), crossing the gulch just above the old one.

"The change of line was necessary, as it was not deemed prudent to build an embankment on the old line and maintain the trestle at the same time. This change has materially improved the alignment, but has involved the necessity of an open cut of 90,000 and an embankment of 70,000 cubic yards, a tunnel 700 feet in length with approaches of 100 feet on either end. Five hundred feet in length of this tunnel has been lined with granite masonry, with portals of the same material."

Chief Engineer's Report Central Pacific Railroad Chief Engineer's Office June 15, 1877

"The most important permanent improvements made upon your road during the year 1876, have been the filling of all the high trestles remaining on the Sacramento division (Sacramento to Truckee), the changes in grade on a portion of the Oregon division, and the construction of protection walls at a number of places on the Sierra Nevada, where snow-slides have sometimes occurred. The following-named trestles have been filled or the line so changed as to avoid them, viz:

Newcastle trestle	- filled
Auburn trestle ...	- line changed
Lovell's Mill trestles ...	- line changed
Clipper Gap trestle ...	- line changed
West approach Long Ravine	- filled
Secret Town trestle ...	- filled

"This completes the work of this kind required on the mountain division, unless it may be deemed advisable in the future to make an embankment across Long Ravine which is now crossed upon a Howe truss bridge. This being a deck bridge, built of the best quality of timber and securely covered with corrugated iron, its renewal should not be necessary for twelve or fifteen years, probably longer."

