

Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society



<https://www.psrhs.org>

September 2023 Newsletter

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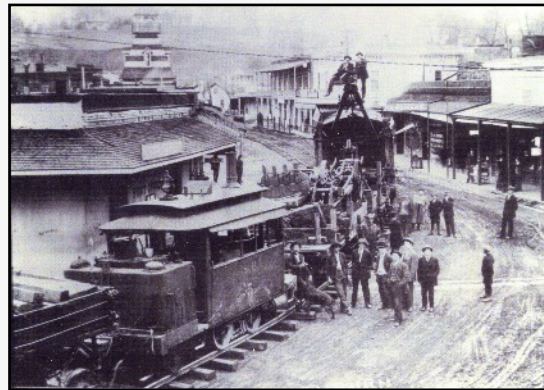
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Is that really a train on tracks in Old Town Auburn? Read the details of this event on page 4. Ken Yeo Collection

Scheduled Events & Notices



Sept 16-17 Colfax Railroad Days - 10am-5pm (See Page 2 for how you can help)

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

Oct 24 PSRHS Monthly Meeting and Program, 7PM

Nov 28 PSRHS Potluck Dinner Meeting and Program, 6:30PM

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



Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society

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PSRHS MONTHLY MEETING

NO MEETING IN SEPTEMBER

Join Us at Colfax RR Days

August Program Recap: PSRHS founding member **Jim Wood** presented an informative program on historic railroad features at or near Clipper Gap, site of a previous PSRHS field trip. Using a combination of photos and maps, Jim made a convincing case for the locations of three trestles that were built as part of the original CPRR construction, and related the history behind the creation and later abandonment of Tunnel 0. A repeat field trip to that location is being considered, as well as trips to other sites of regional interest.

Our meetings are open to all who are interested. See our web site for updates on future meeting topics and directions to the meeting location.

STORAGE OF PSRHS DOCS & ARTIFACTS

On August 30 PSRHS president Chuck Spinks and historian Roger Staab met with Kelsey Monahan, Curator of the Placer County Archives. Purpose of the meeting was to explore the possibility of housing the PSRHS collection of documents and photos in one place at the Placer County Archives where they would be more accessible to people doing research on local railroad history.

The meeting was very productive and provided us with an insider's view of the county archive facility. County museum policy requires that collections housed in their archives be under the ownership of Placer County Museums, but our collection would be held in our name and would be accessible by our members at no cost. They have storage space for a box of photos, but we would need to help locate a flat file for maps and oversized documents.

We have an inventory already prepared for many of the books and documents in our collection, but not for our photos. We need to establish an inventory listing of both printed photos and electronic scans in our collection. Chuck and Roger discussed the possibility of scheduling a work session to generate

a list of photos along with pertinent descriptions, mark each photo with an identifying number, and enter the information in an inventory spreadsheet. To date our collection includes several hundred photos. Watch for more news about how you can help with this task.

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 PSRHS's railroad history activities along with educating the public about the important role cabooses played in past freight-railroad operations.

We will have a PSRHS table next to the caboose, providing literature about our organization and offering surplus books and other documents to the public. 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.

So far we have volunteers available to staff the caboose and table both mornings, but need additional staff for afternoon shifts from 12:30-3 and 3-5 each day. At least two people are needed for each shift to answer questions about the caboose and items on the PSRHS table, and to help kids safely climb into the cupola.

If you can help at the caboose for an afternoon (or morning) shift, email Roger Staab at rsrr@exwire.com with your preferred day and time slot(s). Thanks in advance for your support.

While enjoying Railroad Days activities, be sure to visit the Colfax museum in the 1905 passenger depot that was renovated in 2003-2007 by a team of volunteers headed by PSRHS members. If you have not yet visited the caboose, Railroad Days is a great opportunity to have a look. The 1924 wood-sided caboose was completely renovated by PSRHS members from 2007-2015.

*See Page 5 for feature article
"Better than Covered Wagon"*





Passing Scene - Seaboard Sun Lounge Hollywood Beach

This unique railcar appeared in Colfax on eastbound Amtrak in March 2022. It is Seaboard's Sun Lounge car Hollywood Beach. The Sun Lounges were a fleet of three streamlined sleeper-lounge cars built by Pullman-Standard for the Seaboard Air Line Railroad (SAL). They were designated the Miami Beach, Palm Beach, and Hollywood Beach, numbered 18-20 respectively. All three entered service in 1956 on the Silver Meteor.

The cars featured a distinctive glazed roof area meant to capture the ambience of a dome car in a lower profile, as tunnels on the East Coast of the United States prevented the use of dome cars there. The Seaboard employed all three Sun Lounges on its flagship Silver Meteor between New York City and Miami, Florida. The cars later saw service with the Seaboard Coast Line Railroad (SCL), then Amtrak, renumbered 3200–3202, and renamed Sun Beam, Sun Ray, and Sun View respectively. The Sun Beam (Palm Beach) was scrapped in the 1980s. The other two cars are privately owned. *Car info from Wikipedia. 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





From the Archives - Temporary Tracks in Old Town Auburn

This photo from the Ken Yeo Collection appeared in the October 2011 PSRHS newsletter. It is repeated in this issue to accompany the article in the box below that describes what was going on in Old Town Auburn when the photo was taken in 1909. The equipment is to be used to begin constructing the new second track along Nevada Street prior to completing the Auburn Ravine Trestle. The inset shows the same location in 2003.



Accidents/Other Incidents. *Placer Herald, May 22, 1909.* **“DOWN AUBURN RAVINE. The first Train on Rails Through Old Town.** Willett & Burr began moving their seventy-ton steam shovel and dump cars, with dinkey engine in the lead, from the Bernhard crossing Saturday. Ties and a temporary track were laid ahead, which as fast as the train advanced were taken up and relaid ahead down Chinatown Hill into the Plaza, along Main and Nevada street and up the grade to the excavation opposite Odd Fellows cemetery. Cables held the train in check. The cable was broken several times in lowering the train down Chinatown grade. The Plaza was reached at noon Monday, with the dinkey engine decked with flags. At noon the engines whistled long and loud and thirty charges of giant powder were fired in honor of the first train on rails ever seen “Down Auburn Ravine.” At sunset the big shovel was across the bridge at Predom’s blacksmith shop. All day long crowds witnessed the progress of the train. Predom’s blacksmith shop became the ticket office where tickets were sold for all points of the compass. On Tuesday the climbing of the Nevada street grade began, and the train had climbed half way that evening. The heavy cable was broken eight times during the forenoon. One tree to which the cable was fastened was pulled up by the roots. On Wednesday at noon the top of the hill was reached...”





BETTER THAN WAGON TRAIN **BUT STILL AN ADVENTURE**

This article from the Colfax Record's Golden Spike Centennial Edition, May 8, 1969, describes what rail travel was like on the new transcontinental railroad shortly after its completion. Text for the article was provided by Southern Pacific Company.

The completion of the railroad cut the time in which a trans-continental journey could be made to a few days. It also eliminated almost all the hardships of former sea and wagon train travel, but a journey by train by no means lacked adventure. There was no through equipment at that time. Union Pacific cars and Pullmans went only as far west as Ogden. There passengers changed to Central Pacific cars and Silver Palace cars. Meals were served at certain stopping places. The usual charge was \$1.00 although the Colfax eating house made a specialty of 75 cent meals.

Before the railroad was completed a group of easterners visited the end of the Union Pacific track. It was considered so perilous an undertaking that upon their return to Chicago the Mayor officially welcomed them back to civilization.

One early traveler, W.L. Humason of Hartford, Connecticut wrote his experiences under the heading of "From Atlantic Surf to the Golden Gate." The journey he describes started at Omaha and includes experiences at Ogden where they changed for Promontory.

"Twelve o'clock came, also the train, and with no sleeping cars. We took seats and reached Promontory about daylight. We were at the end of the Union Pacific Railroad. Our further journeys were to be over the Central Pacific. Owing to a quarrel or misunderstanding between the superintendents of these two roads, we found that we could make no connection and could not leave the place until evening. The passengers became very indignant and there was some tall talk which fell unpleasantly upon the ears of Mr. Marsh, a Central Pacific director, who had come to Ogden to meet us and had done all in his power to remedy the matter and prevent the delay. The officials of the Union Pacific ordered us out of their cars, saying they

had use for them. They had carried us to the end of their road and they had nothing more to do with us only to discharge us. Out we were turned into the hot sun with no shade, no house, surrounded by no comforts – nothing but sand, alkali and sage brush. The road had been finished so far ahead of time that the Central Pacific had no sleeping cars and would have none until July."

The train finally arrived. He tells how he spent the night. "I went forward into the baggage car, rolled up in my blankets, cast my lot among the mail bags and slept soundly until morning. I awoke covered and choking with dust.

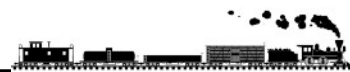
"One feature of our journey was the interesting sight of large numbers of Chinamen constantly at work upon the road, making the bed wider and the track more secure. These Chinamen are not to be immediately discharged, but are to continue their labor until the Central is made in every respect a first-class road."

He continues: "As we descended the mountains, the snow storm turned into a rain storm and we reached Sacramento in the midst of it." He took a steamer down the Sacramento River, seeing huge piles of salmon that had been caught in the river and were waiting to be loaded on the boat. He expressed surprise at the advanced stage of crops and vegetables along the shore, including strawberries ready for harvest.

William R. Stockton, who came west on an emigrant ticket in 1872 describes his trip from Taswell County, Illinois, to Sacramento. "The cars were very much like the construction cars of the 1920's, except they were much smaller. The seats were of bare boards, and for windows they had small peek holes high up on the sides where one at a time might stand to see out." For this reason, during the nine days from Omaha to San Francisco he spent most of the daytime hours on the top of the cars.

The emigrant trains were sociable affairs. People got acquainted, shared their food, washed clothes, cooked on the stove at the end of the car and entertained each other. Many meetings and marriages occurred aboard these trains just as they had in the covered wagon trains.

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Glenn Dumke, in his book “Boom of the Eighties,” said, “Emigrant cars aided poor settlers by providing folding seats which could be flattened into beds and cooking accommodations. Emigrant houses furnished a week’s free lodging while travelers earned enough to continue their journey. ‘Land-seeker’s ticket’ was a method by which the fare paid would be applied on the purchase of railway-owned land. Railway land was sold by installments and special reduced rates were given to colonists who traveled and settled together.”

Later travelers moved with greater ease. Advertisements after 1900 told prospective emigrants that colonization cars were “similar in all respects to standard sleeping cars except in upholstery, which is rattan instead of plush. They have a large smoking washroom for gentlemen and a lavatory and toilet for ladies.” Each car was personally conducted across the continent by a railroad agent.

After the Santa Fe came to California, a rate war developed in which the two lines began cutting rates to bring passengers west. By March 6, 1887, the fare had fallen from \$15 for first class fare to \$1 a day – but soon this was raised back to \$50 for the first class fare and \$40 for second, compared with \$118 and \$85 the year before.

Following the rate war, the railroads both started running thousands of “Zulu cars,” as they were known. One member of the family traveled with livestock and belongings with the remainder riding in passenger cars at low rates. In one year, SP had moved 120,000 arrivals into Los Angeles. Townsites, 60 of them, sprang up in the surrounding areas. By 1888 Los Angeles County had 100 towns platted and with streets named. By 1889 the number of colonists carried by SP into the West and Southwest was equivalent to 70 per cent of the increase in population following the opening of the Central Pacific.

Dumke said, “The Southern Pacific – Central Pacific Railroad cannot be denied acknowledgement that is due for the role it played in helping bring attention to and in its development of California.”

Land values jumped. The gold rush made Northern California a real part of the United States; the land boom of the ‘80s did the same for the south.
