

Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society



<https://www.psrhs.org>

July 2025 Newsletter

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What's the significance of this plaque and why is it being featured in this month's newsletter? See page 2 and come to our July meeting for more details

Scheduled Events & Notices



Jul 22 PSRHS Monthly Meeting, 7PM – Program - Chuck Spinks - Plaque Dedication – Summit Tunnel National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark

Aug 9 Colfax Museum & Caboose Open for Placer County Museums Heritage Trail

Aug 26 PSRHS Monthly Meeting, 7PM – Tentative Program - Jim Wood - England Trip Photos of British Railroads

Sep 13-14 Colfax Railroad Days – Volunteers Needed to Staff Caboose Both Days

Annual membership renewals pay for publishing railroad history documents, purchasing and posting historic photos, arranging field trips, & other historic preservation activities.

Preserving Railroad History on the Donner Pass Route

Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society



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PSRHS MONTHLY MEETING

JULY 22, 7PM

AUBURN VETERANS MEMORIAL HALL

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

July Program: PSRHS President and Registered Civil Engineer Chuck Spinks will highlight the recent dedication of a plaque honoring the construction of Summit Tunnel 6 by crews composed primarily of Chinese workers, with the **American Society of Civil Engineers designation of the Summit Tunnel as a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark.**

Chuck will provide examples of construction details at the Summit Tunnel that contributed to this designation, such as the first use of nitroglycerin in U.S. railroad construction, and difficulties that had to be overcome by Chinese crews to complete the construction during the heavy snows of Sierra winters. His research was a major factor in securing the Civil Engineering society's recognition of the Summit Tunnel construction.

A ceremony dedicating the plaque was held in Colfax next to the tracks and historic train depot on June 21. A photo of the plaque is shown below. Page 3 images show a surprise visitor to the ceremony. Some historic views of Tunnel 6 can be found on page 4.



June Program Recap: Marilyn Sommerdorf presented an interesting look at the bright colors and detailed graphics on early steam locomotives. Black soon became the color of choice by manufacturers, but some of these colorful locomotives live on in museums, particularly those of the Virginia and Truckee RR. Marilyn showed examples of several preserved locomotives that illustrate the earlier colorful paint schemes.

JUNE BOARD MEETING

The PSRHS Board of Directors met prior to the June meeting. Items discussed included:

1. Delivery is still being blocked for some newsletter emails. Malcolm and Bill will continue to work with our web site host to fix a security handshake issue.
2. Roger described web site updates including recent changes to our home page to make it easier for viewers to access key information. A new section has been added after the Next Meeting listing that highlights selected items of interest. This will be updated every 2-3 months to call attention to new focus items.
3. Jim reported that Chinese attendees at the plaque dedication want to donate a small statuette to the Colfax Museum honoring Chinese railroad workers during Colfax Railroad Days. We should plan a donation ceremony. They also expressed interest in helping place a full-size statue in the Railroad Heritage Park.
Chuck suggested we promote Sisson & Wallace's role supplying Chinese railroad construction workers. Early partner R.S. Egbert built the brick building that now houses Colfax Market at Main & GV Streets.
4. The Colfax Heritage Museum wants to begin installing a G-gauge train to circle the room perimeter in the passenger depot. It will feature a replica provided by PSRHS of the 'Colfax Local' train.

Volunteers are sought to help with selection of track and supports, constructing or buying the parts, and doing the installation. Interested people are asked to contact the Museum Director Ric Nepil or your newsletter editor.



Passing Scene - Private Varnish for the Plaque Dedication

These two private cars attracted a lot of attention when they made a surprise Amtrak appearance during the plaque dedication ceremony in Colfax on June 21. These same cars were featured in the November 2021 PSRHS newsletter after a previous visit to Colfax. Per their web site, phcp.com/the-train/: "Travel in Luxury Aboard our Private Train Cars. View North America in style and comfort onboard our two beautifully restored historic rail cars. Our dome lounge car ...and accompanying sleeper car ...are perfect for Corporate Meetings, Honeymoons, Anniversaries, Family Vacations, Unique Trips and Incentive Travel ..."



The Evelyn Henry deluxe sleeping car, built in 1954 for the Union Pacific, features 6 double bedrooms with lower and upper beds. A shower & bathroom is located between each pair of bedrooms.

Photos by Roger Staab



The Warren R. Henry dome lounge car, built for Union Pacific in 1955, features panoramic viewing upstairs, a formal dining room or boardroom for meetings and a beautifully appointed lower level lounge with satellite TV, DVD, and CD player.

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/>

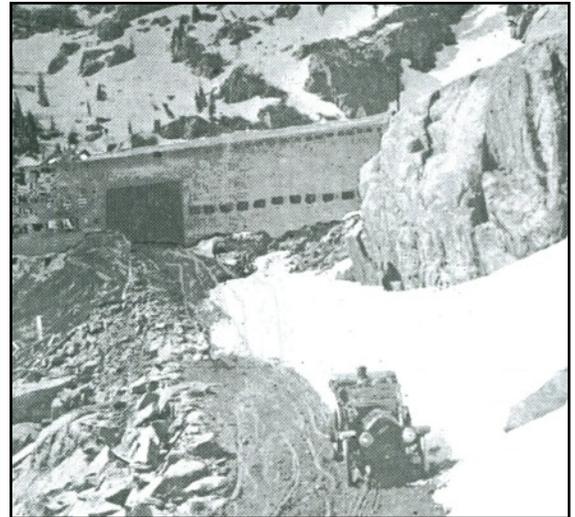
Reader comments, additional details, etc., are invited on any newsletter items or photos. Please forward comments, suggestions or information for inclusion in future issues of the newsletter to:

roger.staab@psrhs.org

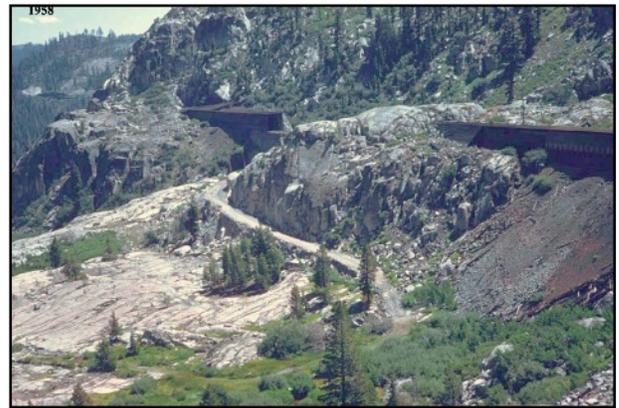


From the Archives - Summit Tunnels 6, 7 & 8

Summit tunnels 6, 7 and 8 were a focal point for all forms of early “traffic” over Donner Summit. The Central Pacific Railroad crossed over Donner Summit in the 1660 foot Summit Tunnel 6. Heavy snowfall soon dictated that snowsheds were needed to keep the rail route open in Sierra winters. The wagon road that predated the railroad passed between Tunnels 6 and 7, crossing the rails at grade level in the shed. In 1914 a subway was built between Tunnel 7 and 8, eliminating the “at grade” crossing. See the Accidents/Incidents news reports below.



In the image above, the east portal of Tunnel 6 is at lower right under sheds that extend to Tunnel 7 and Tunnel 8. The image at upper right shows the 1860's wagon & auto road passing through the sheds between Tunnel 6 and 7, while the image at right shows the 1914 realigned auto route passing under the tracks in a subway hidden from view between Tunnel 7 and 8, before rejoining the old road north of the tunnels. *PSRHS collection*



Accidents/Other Incidents. *The Placer Herald, Oct. 14, 1865.* “**The Summit Railroad Tunnel** – The Central Pacific R.R. Co. Have commenced the tunnel on the line of their road, at the summit of the Sierra Nevadas. It is to be 1600 feet in length, and the work will be prosecuted night and day until completed.

The Roseville Register, Oct. 24, 1913. “The road crossing at the east end of Tunnel 6, near Summit, will in the near future be a thing of the past. A subway is under construction at a point 100 feet east of Tunnel 7, and the road will be graded up to it so that automobiles and all conveyances can pass under the track, thus doing away with the attendant dangers of grade crossing.

