

# Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society



<https://www.psrhs.org>

## November 2025 Newsletter

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(1962 Innovation)



Why is a BNSF freight engine leading Amtrak at Colfax? See page 3 for thoughts regarding this image captured on the Colfax Webcam.

### Scheduled Events & Notices



**Nov 25 PSRHS Monthly Meeting, 7PM – Program – Paul Greenfield - Highlights of UP Equipment Setup, Display and Removal at Colfax Railroad Days**

**THERE WILL BE NO MEETING OR NEWSLETTER IN DECEMBER**

**\*\*\* HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM PSRHS \*\*\***

**Join us on January 27 for Another Year of Local & Regional Railroad History  
Watch our website and newsletter for program details**

**and**

**Remember to Renew Your Dues for 2026 or Become a PSRHS Member**

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



November 2025 Newsletter

## PSRHS MONTHLY MEETING

November 25, 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.

### November Program: Paul Greenfield will present Highlights of UP Equipment Setup, Display & Removal at Colfax Railroad Days

As a bonus feature of this year's Colfax Railroad Days, our Colfax webcam provided a bird's eye view of Union Pacific crews arranging and placing their snow-fighting and firefighting equipment for display prior to the event. Included is the after-event shuffling for return to Roseville. PSRHS member Paul Greenfield has edited video footage captured from the Colfax Webcam along with still photography, maps, and additional video taken by member Mike Haire to produce a highlights video of UP crews performing the maneuvering of their display equipment before and after the Railroad Days event.

We invite you to join us at our November meeting for Paul's video summary of the movement of this unique and interesting equipment and the resulting display.

October Program Recap: Railway 200 Celebration in Britain. **Chuck Spinks and Jim Wood** presented an overview of the 200th anniversary celebration of the first public railway in Britain...the Stockton and Darlington Railway in Northeast England. Chuck discussed the history of the railroad and its significance to ensuing passenger service, while Jim showed photos of vintage equipment displayed at Britain's Railway 200 Celebration that he recently attended.

## SERVICE TO HISTORY REGISTER

This year Placer County initiated a new **Service to History Register**, a yearly recognition of several local people who have made significant contributions toward documenting and preserving Placer County History.

At our October meeting, your newsletter editor and society historian **Roger Staab** was recognized by Placer County Historical Society officials Mike Lynch and April McDonald-Loomis as one of the 2025 recipients. It is a great honor to be singled out by fellow historians for doing something I thoroughly enjoy. We are blessed to live in a region with a wealth of local railroad and other history, and chasing and documenting that history is a personally rewarding challenge for me.

My thanks to PCHS and PSRHS members and readers for the much appreciated comments and recognition.

## ROUGH DAY AT COLFAX CROSSING

(Correction to Report in October Issue)

The October newsletter reported on the delays that Amtrak experienced in Colfax on Oct. 9 due to a freight train derailment at Gold Run. Much of what I reported was based on personal observation or radio traffic. Amtrak #6 did back up around 6pm to let off some passengers to catch Amtrak buses, then moved westbound and stopped beside the freight train waiting on Track 2. I checked back around 9pm and Amtrak was gone. Their web site showed #6 running late beyond Truckee and I assumed the Colfax train had been released and was eastbound. **BAD ASSUMPTION!**

Newsletter reader Steven Kendall notified me that Amtrak #6 returned to Emeryville that evening. They used a Colfax siding to move the power units to the other end of the train for the return trip. The Amtrak #6 that was running late eastbound in Nevada was former Amtrak #5 that had been held at Truckee and was reversed to become #6. Thank You to Steven for filling in the details to correct my bad assumption.

## PSRHS YEARLY DUES CHANGE

At the October meeting the PSRHS board voted to discontinue separate individual and family memberships and adopt a \$30 Annual Membership that includes family members at the same address. This change is effective with 2026 renewals or new memberships. We thank our members for the financial support for our programs that your yearly membership provides.





**From the Archives - Passing Train Orders to Helper Crew**

This May 1965 photo taken by Herman Darr shows Colfax Station Agent Thomas Irion handing up orders to the helper crew of Southern Pacific's eastbound x-434 train as it passes the Colfax depot. A replica of the wye-shaped train orders wand used by Irion is on display in the Colfax depot waiting room. *PSRHS Collection*



**Accidents/Other Incidents.** *Auburn Journal, June 18, 1964.* (The following caption text accompanied a poor quality newsprint photo that is not included here) “Frank Pucci, Southern Pacific roadmaster, gleefully clipped an unofficial ribbon as a beaming bunch of builders, engineers and railroad men posed for this shot shortly before the first diesel engine poked its nose gingerly onto the new Lincoln Way bridge. Southern Pacific mainline traffic is now moving over the structure after 100 years of routing over the old narrow underpass. While much remains to be done before automobile traffic will use the new underpass the crew ... breathed a sigh of relief when the first freight train moved across the new span...”



### **Electronic Crossing Control** **New device synchronizes warning signals with train speeds** *Reprinted from SP Bulletin, October 1962*

*Have you ever wondered how signals and gates at railroad crossings know how soon to activate as a train approaches? This article describes a 1960's innovation that adjusted the crossing gate response according to the speed and movement of the oncoming train. Ed.*

A joint research project, initiated by Southern Pacific, has led to development of a new electronic control device to activate signals and gates at railroad grade crossings.

Named the "Grade Crossing Predictor," the new device is being manufactured and marketed by the Marquardt Corporation, in Pomona, Calif., Under a licensing agreement with Southern Pacific. First units of the device are now in production.

The predictor, brainchild of A.C. Krout, SP's principal assistant signal engineer, transmits electronic impulses through rails and continuously monitors the speed and position of approaching trains. Transistorized circuits predict within a split second when the train will reach the crossing and they then activate the advance warning signals in synchronism with the train's speed.

According to SP's announcement of the research development, the electronic system represents a simplification and improvement over the present conventional crossing protection controls, which require timing and control circuits with relays and insulated rail joints to detect train movements.

The Grade Crossing Predictor also distinguishes between through trains and the no-pattern movement of switch engines which may be maneuvering near the crossing. It will not halt highway traffic unless a switcher actually intends to move into the intersection.

Southern Pacific, which was assisted by Stanford Research Institute in the initial research, joined with Marquardt in the final development of the system.

