

Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society



<https://www.psrhs.org>

January 2026 Newsletter

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View of December Colfax derailment as the cleanup process begins. See article on page 2 and photo on page 3. *Roger Staab photo*

Scheduled Events & Notices



Jan 27 PSRHS Monthly Meeting, 7PM – Program – Craig MacGlashan – "After Judah" – a look at Samuel Montague and James Strobridge, the two men in charge of the building of the western half of the transcontinental railroad after the death of Theodore Judah.

Feb 24 PSRHS Monthly Meeting, 7PM – Program –Photos of Cleanup and Track Repair after the December 13 derailment near Colfax (Plus an Added Feature)

**Welcome to Another Year of Local & Regional Railroad History
Watch our website and newsletter for monthly program details**

**** Remember to Renew Your Dues for 2026 or Become a PSRHS Member (see page 2) ****

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



January 2026 Newsletter

PSRHS MONTHLY MEETING

January 27, 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.

January Program: **Craig MacGlashan's January program "After Judah"** will provide a detailed look at Samuel Montague and James Strobridge, the two men who were directly in charge of the building of the western half of the transcontinental railroad after the death of Theodore Judah. A local connection made during the construction was the adoption by Strobridge and his wife of two orphaned Auburn children.

Craig MacGlashan has been a docent at the California State Railroad Museum since 2016. During his tenure at the museum, MacGlashan has made several presentations to his fellow docents and museum staff on a variety of historical subjects. Prior to his retirement in 2016, MacGlashan was an attorney for forty years, serving as a deputy district attorney in Tulare County for three years. He was then a civil trial attorney in Visalia and Sacramento.

November Program Recap: **Paul Greenfield presented Highlights of UP Equipment Setup, Display & Removal at Colfax Railroad Days.** As a follow-on to Union Pacific's display of railroad equipment at this year's Colfax Railroad Days, PSRHS member Paul Greenfield presented a compilation of video footage captured from the Colfax Webcam along with still photography, maps, and additional video taken by member Mike Haire to highlight UP crews performing the maneuvering of their display equipment before and after the Railroad Days event.

UP DERAILMENT AT COLFAX

On the morning of December 13, Colfax residents woke up to news of a significant derailment just east of the Hwy 174 bridge that crosses over the tracks. An eastbound UP double-stack freight train had derailed in

the early hours, and crowds soon gathered on the highway bridge to view the 13 cars that had derailed, some still upright near the tracks, others resting crosswise on Track 2 and partially blocking Track 1, while other cars had tumbled down the bank and were blocking Narrow Gauge Road that parallels the tracks at that location. The photo on page 3 shows the status of the derailment as repair crews and equipment arrived at the scene.

Spectators were treated to a near-armchair view as crews worked to first reopen Track 1 to get the wheels of commerce rolling again, then clean up the twisted cars blocking Track 2 in order to repair the damage to ties and the track itself. Track 1 was reopened about noon that first day, and rail traffic on Track 2 resumed the next morning.

The derailment location just east of the highway bridge provided the opportunity to observe crews using their array of specialized equipment to reopen the line. Our **February 24th PSRHS program** will feature highlights of the cleanup & repair actions to get the railroad back in operation. The program will also include images of a unique railroad scene in Colfax the day before the derailment. **Please join us for two interesting programs in January & February.**

DUES RENEWAL REMINDER

As we start a new year, we hope you will renew your membership in PSRHS if you have not already done so, or consider joining PSRHS as a paid member.

The board of directors established a single membership category beginning in 2026 – \$30 per year for all family members residing at the same address. You can renew or join using the PayPal link on our web site, <http://www.psrhs.org/society-info/crews/membership/>.

If you prefer paying with a check made out to PSRHS, mail your check to PSRHS, P.O. Box 1776, Colfax CA 95713, or bring it to the next meeting.

We thank our paid members for the financial support for our programs that your yearly membership provides.



Passing Scene - UP's December Derailment at Colfax

In the early hours of December 13 an eastbound UP double-stack freight train derailed just east of the Hwy 174 bridge at Colfax. This photo shows the status of the derailment that morning as crews and equipment began arriving to begin the task of reopening the rail line. Both tracks were blocked by the derailed cars and would remain blocked until Track 1 was cleared around noon. In addition to the equipment strewn about, Track 2 suffered major damage but many of the 13 derailed cars had to be cleared before track repairs could begin. A sequence of photos that were captured as cleanup progressed will be featured next month as our PSRHS monthly meeting program on February 24. *Roger Staab Photo*



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

editor@psrhs.org

Membership Information

Annual Membership = \$30.00/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/>



From the Archives - Amtrak Initiates Colfax Stop

When Amtrak took over passenger rail service in much of the US in 1971, the San Francisco Zephyr route over Donner Pass continued to provide passenger service between Sacramento and Reno, but the trains did not stop in Colfax. After a persistent effort by Colfax City Council member Ben Hartzke aided by Colfax businessmen and regional politicians, Amtrak was persuaded to reinstate eastbound and westbound stops in Colfax on a trail basis. Oct. 31, 1976 marked the inauguration of the Colfax stop. A large crowd was on-hand to witness the event. Arrangements were made for special cars to be attached to the eastbound Zephyr that day, with an Amtrak special returning them to Colfax later that night. See the newspaper article below and the article on page 5 of this newsletter for details of that special train. *PSRHS Collection*



Accidents/Other Incidents. *Auburn Journal*, Nov. 3, 1976. “Amtrak’s Colfax Inaugural Is Success. A touch of nostalgia, much excitement, and a slight overcrowding problem combined to set the tone for the day Sunday, as the inaugural run of Amtrak’s San Francisco Zephyr left Colfax for a daylong trip to Reno. The Colfax station became a regular stop Sunday and to commemorate the daily run, the Colfax Chamber of Commerce sponsored a special round trip run from Colfax to Reno that day. According to Arthur Lloyd, Amtrak’s Western Regional manager, 561 local Placer County Residents boarded the train at 1:35 Sunday afternoon. They departed the Colfax station only to find that there was a slight overcrowding problem. John Delgado of Colfax, one of the local residents making the special run, estimated that there were about 100 people who had to stand. “But it was a great ride,” he stated. “People were sitting wherever they could. There were 12 of us sitting on a bench in the men’s bathroom, but still it was a lot of fun ...”





**Information Letter Provided to Passengers
On Amtrak's Special Train
Inaugurating Service to Colfax, CA**

October 31, 1976



Welcome

Aboard

The City of Colfax, Colfax Area Chamber of Commerce, Placer County Chamber of Commerce, and Amtrak welcome you to this inaugural run to Reno and return. Today marks the first day that the "San Francisco Zephyr" will stop at Colfax and do so henceforth on a daily basis. This is also the first time that a community effort has been made to the scale where a special train has been chartered in recognition of the event.

You are now in special cars coupled to the eastbound "San Francisco Zephyr". These cars will return as a special train arranged with Amtrak by the sponsors. Following are some basic items of information for your guidance during the afternoon and evening:

ARRIVAL RENO:

Scheduled at 4:55 p.m. Detrain from the nearest exit and please do not leave any items of a personal nature on the cars as Amtrak and the sponsors will not be responsible for any losses.

DEPARTURE RENO:

Departure will be promptly at 8:00 p.m from the Amtrak station... the same point as where you detrain. Please return to the same car in which you made the eastbound trip. Cars will be in reverse order with car 5-8 at the head end of the train.

DANCE CAR:

The dance car located in the center of the special section is for everyone's enjoyment. Liquid refreshments are available for sale and there is also a selection of sandwiches in case you did not use your three hours in Reno for dinner.

Continued



SHOULD YOU MISS THE RETURN TRAIN:

In the event you miss the return train your ticket will be honored on the regular “San Francisco Zephyr” departing Reno 8:55 a.m tomorrow morning, November 1st. Reservations are required and should be obtained at the ticket office before boarding the train. **THERE ARE NO REFUNDS** for any unused tickets wholly or partially used. The sponsors were required to make a financial guarantee to Amtrak for the special train which was prepaid. The regular train arrives at Colfax 12:19 p.m.

DINER AND LOUNGE CAR:

These cars, in the regular consist of the “San Francisco Zephyr”, are also available for your use on the eastbound trip. Lunch will be served until approximately 2:30 p.m. There is no diner on the return special train.

THANK YOU

for making the special train possible and taking part in this memorable day. Ben Hartzke, “Robby” Robinson, Randy Shields, and Steve Sparling worked long and hard to make this a success. You can continue to show your interest by telling your friends and family about the Colfax stop and using it whenever possible. An average of six people per day must use this service to justify its continuance. *(emphasis added)*

QUESTIONS:

Any questions about Amtrak and today’s events as well as history of the line (this is part of the original transcontinental railroad on which you are riding today) can be asked of the Amtrak representatives on board ... Arthur Lloyd, Regional Manager - Public Affairs; Ted Fitter, Sales Representative; or Susan Ueberroth, Special Assistant.

Sincerely,

(Signed)

Arthur Lloyd
Western Regional Manager
Public Affairs