

Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society



<https://www.psrhs.org>

June 2026 Newsletter

In This Issue:

JUNE MEETING PROGRAM Historic Lincoln Highway Corridor	Page 2
PSRHS Board Vacancy	Page 2
More Ways You Can Help PSRHS	Page 2
Sacramento Shops Field Trip Recap	Page 2
Passing Scene - PSRHS Field Trip - Pitless Transfer Table	Page 3
From the Archives - Sacramento Shops Complex and Railyard, 1930s	Page 4
Sacramento Shops Map and Pitless Transfer Table	Pgs. 5-6



Attendees at our June 4 field trip to the Sacramento Shops are checking out the pitless transfer table. See more photos & details on pages 2, 3, 5 & 6.
Paul Greenfield Photo

Scheduled Events & Notices



- Jun 23** PSRHS Monthly Meeting, 7PM – Program - Andrew Saunders
– Sacramento-Sierra Historic Lincoln Highway Corridor
- Jul 3** Colfax July 3 Celebration – Volunteers Needed to Staff the Caboose
- Jul 25** Placer County Museums Heritage Trail - Colfax Museum Open 9am-4pm
- Dutch Flat Museum Open 10am-4pm
- Jul 28** PSRHS Monthly Meeting, 7PM - Program Under Development

Watch our website and newsletter for monthly program details

**** 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

PSRHS MONTHLY MEETING

June 23, 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.

June Program: Andrew Saunders will present a brief history of the Lincoln Highway leading up to the 1913 Lincoln Highway formation. His program will focus on the Northern 1913 Route from Reno through Truckee to Colfax, Auburn, Roseville and Sacramento, along with brief mention of the Southern 1913 Route from Reno to Carson City, Lake Tahoe, Placerville, Folsom and Sacramento, and the continuation from Sacramento to San Francisco via Stockton, Livermore and the Jack London Ferry. He will also discuss some of the 1928 changes along the **Sacramento - Sierra Historic Lincoln Highway Corridor**.

Andrew's recent work has helped to revive and preserve the early 20th-century heritage of the Lincoln Highway in Citrus Heights, Orangevale, Fair Oaks, and Roseville, documenting and interpreting the region's Lincoln Highway history and calling attention to its remaining roadside landmarks. His heritage projects include the installation of historically accurate Lincoln Highway signage across Sacramento and Placer County. His passion is in the coordination of dedication ceremonies that reconnect residents with the region's transportation past.

May Program Recap: Marilyn Sommerdorf presented **RAILROAD DINING: A Culinary Adventure**. She touched on the early food stops at depots along the route; how the food stop was improved from a rushed event to one of excellence by the Fred Harvey Company; early on-board dining service dominated by special trains that included hotel & buffet cars usually operated by Pullman; and finally dining car service including the on board crew and support staff who together provided a memorable passenger experience.

PSRHS Board Vacancy

The recent passing of William Wauters has left a vacancy on the PSRHS Board of Directors. Our board meets on the 4th Tuesday from 6-7pm prior to our monthly program meetings. Contact one of the current board members if you are interested in serving on the board and helping steer the club's activities and programs.

More Ways You Can Help PSRHS

We also can use your help and involvement keeping our website content current, sending out our monthly newsletter and announcements via email or snail mail, coordinating PSRHS participation in area events, and identifying topics and speakers for future monthly programs. These tasks can be performed individually from home by members or board staff.

Sacramento Shops Field Trip Recap

On June 4, about 30 members of our Society were privileged to attend an enjoyable and informative tour of the Sacramento Railroad Museum's shops which house the museum's surplus collection of railroad equipment and memorabilia. The tour was organized and led by our Society member, Paul Helman, a long-time museum docent of the CSRM Foundation. Paul is very knowledgeable about the CSRM collection. He shared insights and details about the vast railroad collection that is not on display to the public in the museum building.

The railroad equipment in the shops not only includes steam and diesel locomotives, but various passenger and freight cars as well as assortments of railroad equipment such as signals, maintenance of way, and antique machining tools from the Central Pacific Railroad era. The photos in this newsletter show views of the transfer table outside the shops buildings that supports movement of equipment in and out of the shops. A full collection of photos of the tour will be shared at a future Society monthly membership meeting.



Passing Scene - PSRHS Field Trip - Pitless Transfer Table

This photo shows participants in the PSRHS-sponsored field trip to the Sacramento shops on June 4. They are checking out the Pitless transfer table between two of the shop buildings that now belong to CSRM. The section of track they are standing on moves left or right to align with a bay opening in the building, allowing cars or locomotives to be moved in or out of the building for repairs or maintenance. Note that the track section moves on rails embedded in concrete on a flat surface, thus eliminating a dangerous pit between the buildings. More information on this pitless transfer table can be found on page 6.

Photo by Paul Greenfield



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 - Sacramento Shops Complex and Railyard, 1930s

This aerial view of the Sacramento Shops Complex was taken in the 1930s. The main shops buildings are in the center. The passenger depot with multiple tracks for passenger boarding is at lower right. Today the sharp curves at far right are gone, the passenger loading platforms now run diagonally across the lower right of this scene parallel to the shops complex, and bridges carry 5th and 6th Streets over the realigned tracks at upper right. Much of the area in the upper portion of this view is now undergoing redevelopment. *PSRHS collection.*

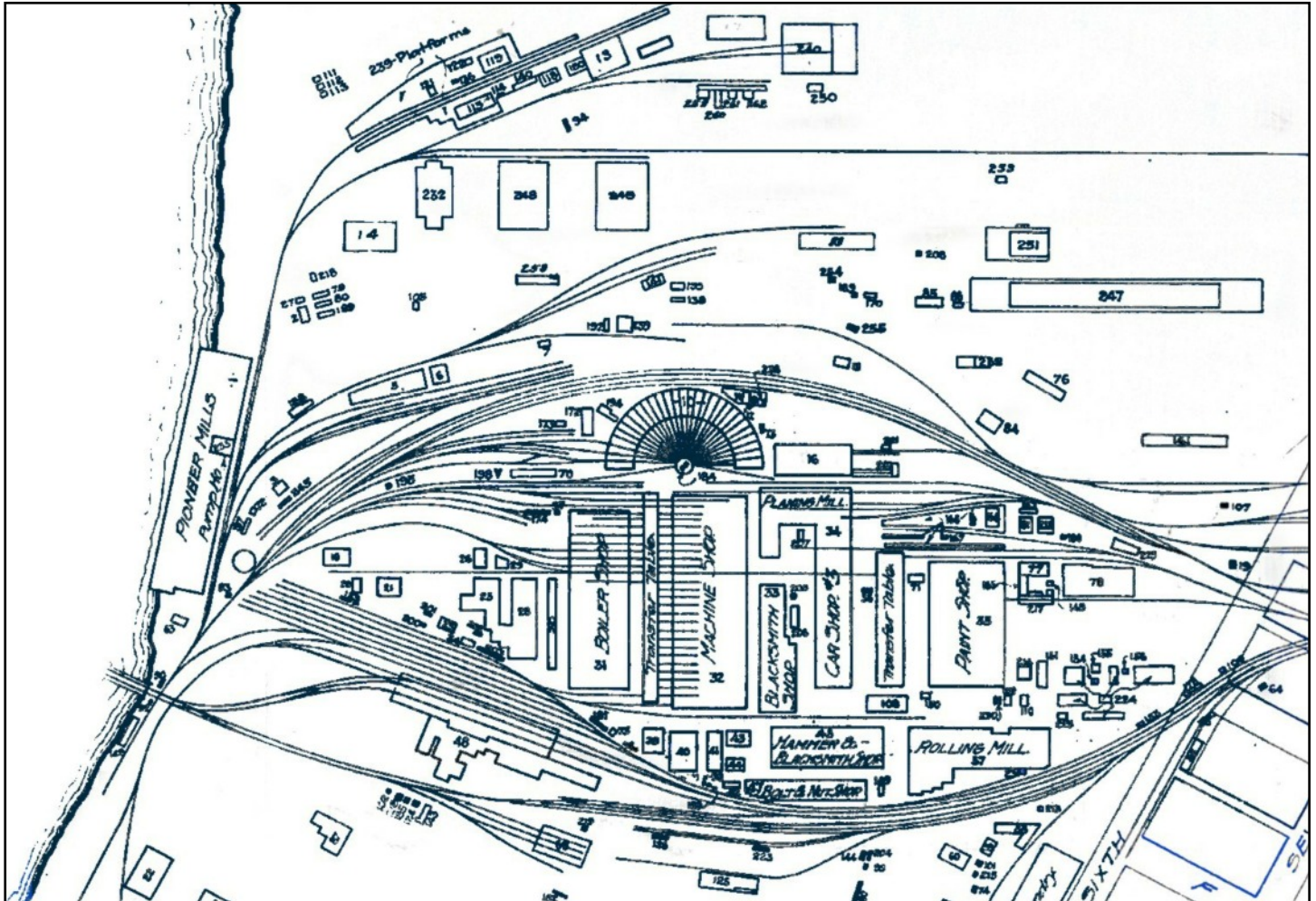


Accidents/Other Incidents. *The Press Tribune. Jan. 24, 1941.* “**Southern Pacific to Expand its Program.** A one million dollar program for construction and reconditioning of freight and passenger cars at the Sacramento shops of the Southern Pacific company was announced this week in San Francisco, and will start immediately. To the 3000 men already in the shops, the new construction program will immediately add 140 journeymen mechanics, helpers and apprentices. Steel has been ordered for 125 new flat cars and gondolas, to cost between \$3000 and \$4000 each, while \$20,000 will be spent on each of 25 coaches, diners and club cars, air conditioning and modernizing them for transcontinental use.”





Sacramento Shops Map & Pitless Transfer Table



PSRHS Collection

This map shows main buildings and features of the Sacramento Shops complex. The turntable was originally constructed to turn steam locomotives for their return trip. The transfer table between the Boiler shop and Machine shop was used to move locomotives and railcars into one of the bays in either of these shops for repair.

Many of the smaller buildings have been removed through the years, but major features remain to this day. Some of the remaining buildings are being incorporated into re-purposed Sacramento Railyards destination venues.

The former Boiler shop and Machine shop are now part of the California State Railroad Museum, and will feature future tours of railroad maintenance and repair activities in action. Between these two buildings is a pitless transfer table, modified to its present configuration in 1910. See page 6 for more information on this unique feature of the Sacramento Shops complex.



1910 Pitless Transfer Table



Paul Greenfield Photo

“The first Transfer Table at Sacramento Shops ‘Called for ... iron sills forty feet long, suitably braced with iron braces riveted together and supported on six pairs of wheels with three pairs front, three pairs rear.’ It was powered by a two-cylinder steam engine and ran in a pit between the Erecting/Machine Shop and Boiler Shop. The table could move side to side with a total travel of 395 feet. There were originally tracks leading to the Erecting/Machine Shop, but subsequent expansions led to the Transfer Table being the only access to the building. Access to the Transfer Table was available from tracks at either end of the pit, but expansions to the Boiler Shop eliminated access at the south end.

“Steam locomotives coming to the Boiler and Erecting/Machine Shops for heavy repair arrived ‘dead’ their fires quenched, their boilers drained. A small locomotive called a ‘goat’ shuttled the tender-less locomotive to the north end of the table, where it was then moved south to line up with tracks of the appropriate bay of the shop where repairs would be completed. The table was outfitted with a winch to move locomotives on and off the table, although winches in the shops sometimes supplemented this maneuver.

“In 1905 the Transfer Table was converted to electric power using a 25 horsepower streetcar traction motor, and the pit was lengthened to 544 feet to access the additions to the Erecting/Machine Shop. While the Transfer Table was a very efficient way to move locomotives as they progressed through the heavy repair process, unless the table was located nearby, the pit between the Machine Shop and the Boiler Shop forced workers moving between the two buildings to walk around it – which could be a substantial distance if you were going from the middle bays of one shop to the other – or jump down into the pit, cross, and climb back out on the other side, a very dangerous procedure.

“The solution implemented in 1910 was so innovative it earned the inventor a patent. The new design put the track on which the table ran in slots that were left open as the ground around them was filled in, leaving a smooth surface at ground level. The table was also increased in length to 44 feet.

“By 1945 locomotive sizes had increased drastically. The largest Southern Pacific motive power was articulated locomotives with two sets of eight driving wheels that had a wheelbase of more than 60 feet. Extensions on each end of the table lengthened it to 70 feet and new rails were added to support the additional length. A new 50 horsepower motor was also added to move the heavier weight.”

<https://freemodellrailroadplans.com/buildings/maintenance-buildings/southern-pacific-sacramento-shops/>