

Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society



<https://www.psrhs.org>

July 2026 Newsletter

In This Issue:

JULY MEETING PROGRAM Page 2
History/Restoration of 1903 Colfax Hotel

PSRHS Board Vacancy Page 2

More Ways You Can Help PSRHS Page 2

Surplus Railroad Books for Sale Page 2

**Passing Scene - Eastbound Movement
of Military Equipment** Page 3

**From the Archives -
The Gillen/Marvin/Colfax Hotel** Page 4

**Nevada County Quartz Monument
In Colfax - The Rest of the Story** Pp. 5-6



The 1903 Gillen/Marvin/Colfax Hotel is being restored! See the article & photos on pages 2 & 4 for more information about our July program. *PSRHS Collection*

Scheduled Events & Notices



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 - Roger Staab + Leif & Wendy Lowery - History, Restoration Plans and Status for 1903 Colfax Hotel

Aug 25 PSRHS Monthly Meeting, 7PM - Program - Selected Photos from the William Wauters Collection

Sep 12-13 Colfax Railroad Days

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



Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society

July 2026 Newsletter

PSRHS MONTHLY MEETING

July 28, 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: Our July program features an insider's look at the restoration underway on the 1903 Colfax Hotel which has stood vacant in the heart of town for over 50 years. Roger Staab will present a brief history of this Colfax landmark and its early role supporting railroad workers in the heyday of steam. Then Leif and Wendy Lowery, the building's owners and entrepreneurs, will share their vision for the hotel's future role in the Colfax community, the current status of this major restoration project, and its projected reopening to the public.

Leif and Wendy are also owners of the historic Dutch Flat Hotel which they restored, along with other projects in Placer County. Colfax is fortunate to have them on board bringing its historic hotel back to life.

June Program Recap: Andrew Saunders presented a brief history of the Lincoln Highway leading up to the 1913 Lincoln Highway formation. He then discussed the Northern 1913 Route from Reno through Truckee to Colfax, Auburn, Roseville and Sacramento. He added 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 concluded with some of the 1928 changes along the **Sacramento - Sierra Historic Lincoln Highway Corridor.**

PSRHS Board Vacancy

A reminder that we have 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 Your PSRHS

Volunteers being sought to help PSRHS:

- keep our website content current; (5-10 hrs/mo.)
- send out monthly newsletter and announcements via email or snail mail; (2 hrs/mo.)
- coordinate PSRHS participation in area events;
- identify topics & speakers for monthly programs.

These tasks can be performed individually from home.

**** Training provided ****

Surplus Railroad Books for Sale

PSRHS is in the process of cataloguing railroad books that have been donated to the club, and identifying books that are duplicates or not pertinent to the Donner Pass route between Roseville and Truckee. The following duplicate copies of books important to our region will be offered for sale at our July meeting:

Kraus, George -- High Road to Promontory
Abdill, George -- Pacific Slope Railroads
Abdill, George -- Rails West
DeNevi, Don -- Tragic Train: City of San Francisco
Beebe, Lucius -- The Overland Limited
Beebe, Lucius -- The Central Pacific &
The Southern Pacific (Centennial Edition)
Combs, Barry -- Westward to Promontory
-- Building the UP -- A Pictorial Documentary
Grenard, Ross & John Krause -- The Overland Route
-- Union Pacific Railroad (Booklet)
Kalmbach -- Southern Pacific Lines -- Trains Album
of Photographs, Number 11 (Booklet)

The Colfax Heritage Museum in the passenger depot is selling railroad-related books as a museum fundraiser. Some of these offerings are out-of-print and hard to find, while others are general interest. Books for sale can be viewed and purchased at the museum, and will soon be offered through a museum on-line store.



Passing Scene - Eastbound Movement of Military Equipment

On the evening of June 22, 2026 this eastbound movement of military equipment was captured on the PSRHS/Southwest Railcams Colfax webcam. It was a mixed consist with a series of boxcars leading the way as seen in the inset photo. Perhaps some of our readers can offer more information about this movement and its significance.

PSRHS/Southwest Railcams image



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/>

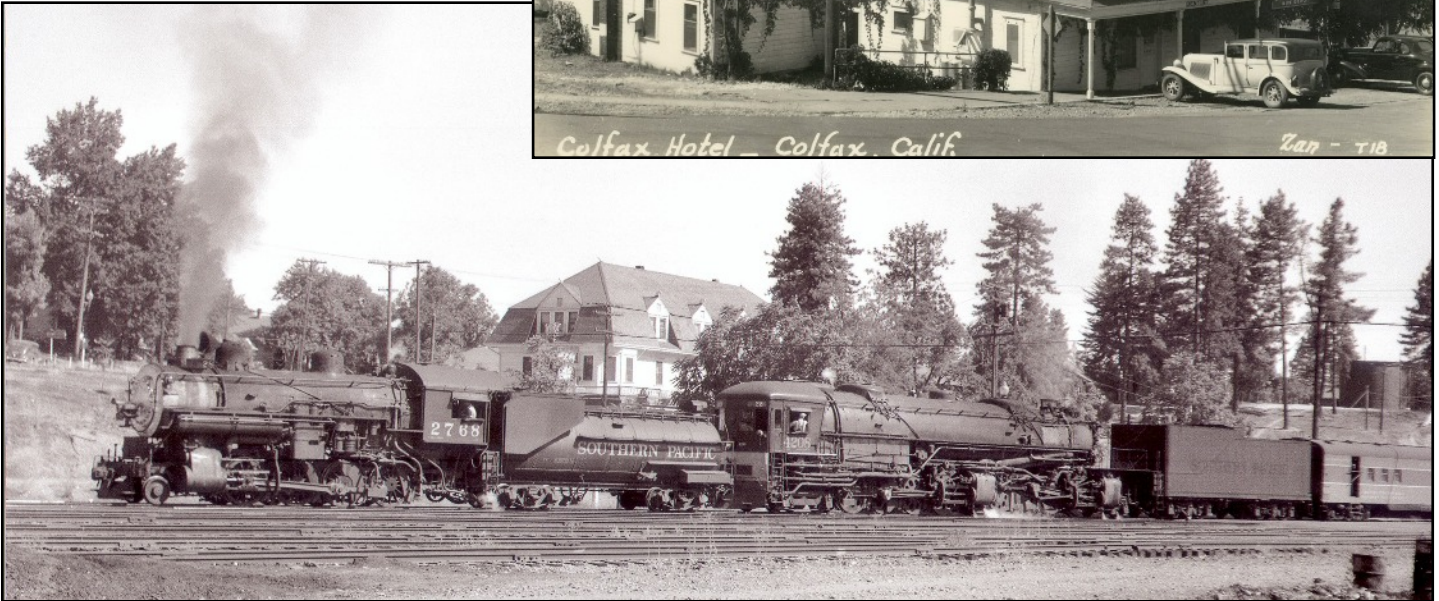


From the Archives - The Gillen/Marvin/Colfax Hotel

The Gillen Hotel was opened by a railroad man in 1903 next to the tracks in Colfax. For a brief time it was known as the Marvin Hotel before adopting its Colfax Hotel name in the mid-1920's. It served travelers on Southern Pacific & Nevada County Narrow Gauge trains, and housed railroad crews assigned to a fleet of helper locomotives that were stationed at the Colfax Engine House during the first half of the 20th century. Long a centerpiece of the bustling railroad activity in Colfax, the hotel sat dormant since the late 1960s, still overlooking the tracks but no longer a participant. That is about to change as the hotel is now undergoing a major restoration that is the subject of our PSRHS July member meeting.

*Colfax Area Historical Society
(CAHS) Collection*

PSRHS Collection

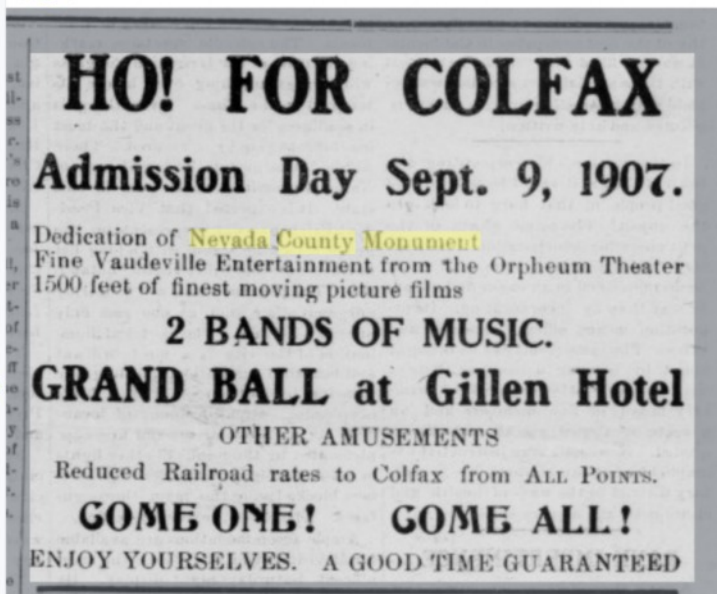


Accidents/Other Incidents. *The Colfax Weekly Record*, Apr. 5, 1946. “**NEW SODA FOUNTAIN AT COLFAX HOTEL** – John Kauffman is having a new soda fountain equipment installed at his Colfax Hotel lunch room. Many other improvements are being made also, including new drapes in the lobby and new furniture. A new hotel desk was recently installed and the office and lobby have been modernized.”
[Ed. Note- Kauffman took over ownership and operation of the Colfax Hotel in January 1944, and soon opened a lunch counter in the dining room – *Colfax Weekly Record*, Jan. 14, 1944]

The Nevada County Quartz Monument in Colfax “The Rest of the Story” - 1907-1920

Not long after the Gillen Hotel opened in Colfax in 1903, another event put the spotlight on the hotel and nearby area. In 1907 Nevada County decided to place a monument in Colfax to promote the hard-rock gold mining in Grass Valley/Nevada City. The monument was made from hard-rock tailings from the mines. It was located on railroad property directly in front of the Gillen Hotel, between the mainline and NCNG tracks, and bounded by the 1905 Colfax passenger depot and newly opened Grass Valley Street.

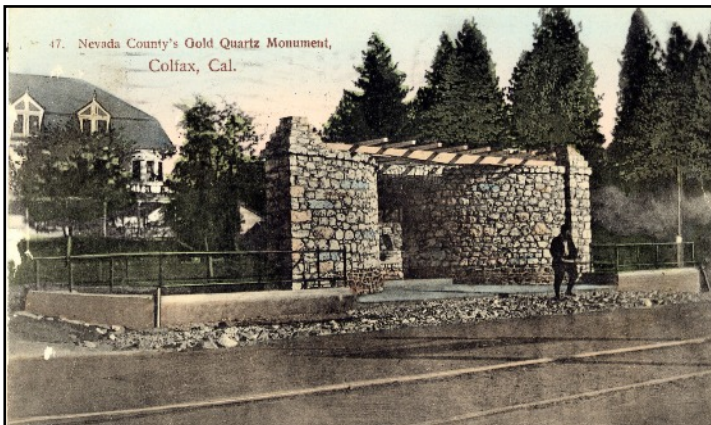
A major event to dedicate the monument took place in Colfax on Sept. 9, 1907. Special fares were offered for attendees arriving by train, and a Grand Ball at the Gillen Hotel helped celebrate the occasion.



Left - Ad in Placer Herald, Sept. 7, 1907

Below - Crowds gather near the Gillen Hotel for the Nevada County Quartz Monument Dedication.

Below left - Monument in front of Gillen Hotel



Nevada County Quartz Monument (cont'd)

The celebration for the monument was a huge success, with large crowds arriving in Colfax for the festivities. The Grass Valley Morning Union reported in its Sept. 12 issue, *"While Colfax had no ores on exhibition, the town made a very good display of grapes at the passenger depot. Tokays and Muscats from the famous Tokayana and Belmont ranches were placed in an attractive glass case and received much attention. The dance at Gillen's Hotel at night was a grand success and was enjoyed by an immense crowd."*

But there is more to our story. As early as 1908, the Grass Valley Morning Union reported that *"Several specimens were taken from the ceiling of the arch of Nevada County monument at Colfax. The loss was attributed to souvenir hunting tourists."* The hard-rock tailings that made up the monument were viewed as potential sources of gold, an ongoing temptation for vandalism during the short life of the monument.

In 1909 Southern Pacific began surveying for a realignment of the tracks through Colfax as part of double-tracking and expansion of the Colfax railyard. In its September 25, 1909 issue the Sacramento Daily Union reported that *"Nevada County's [illegible] quartz monument at Colfax must be removed. The new railroad survey goes through the big pile which the county has taken such pride in, and it is only a question of time, declare people at Colfax, when it must be moved to some other site..."*

This news caused great concern among Nevada County officials. The October 14, 1913 Grass Valley Union reported, *"... Inasmuch as the committee was assured at the time of erection of the monument that it would never have to be removed the communication caused considerable dissatisfaction. The secretary was instructed to communicate with the Southern Pacific Company along the lines that the moving of the monument would be a distinct loss to the committee and to ask the company to move it."*

Discussions between Nevada County and Southern Pacific finally resulted in locating an alternate site for the monument across Grass Valley Street. The Auburn Daily Journal issue of July 20, 1914, reported *"BIG QUARTZ MONUMENT GIVEN 100-FOOT RIDE. Colfax, July 20 – The quartz monument in the railyards here, erected by Nevada county as an advertisement of their mineral resources, now occupies its new position 100 feet northeast of its former location. The monument, massive and made up of many pieces of quartz cemented together, was moved intact by the railroad company. It was placed on skids and rolled to its new site. Little damage resulted. It cracked in a couple of places, but cement was poured in to fill these cracks."*

But wait – there's one more piece to this story. In its March 19, 1920 issue, the San Francisco Call reported, *"The famous gold quartz monument at Colfax ... has yielded to the automobile. Officials of the railroad company, on whose property the monument is located, have decided to raze it because it is dangerous to motorists in that it obstructs their view of the railroad yards and tracks."*

Today no remnants of the Nevada County quartz monument are visible, only photos and faded memories .

