

# Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society

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## *PSRHS Activities & Events...*

Editor's Comments

### **NOTICE:**

A field trip to the **State Railroad Museum** will be conducted in Sacramento on October 28<sup>th</sup>.

Please forward any comments, suggestions or ideas for trips or other activities to me for consideration and information.

Editor: Lyle Brown, (530) 885-6997  
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## *In this Issue...*

### **Monthly Meeting...**

There will be no regular meeting in October. In its place will be a field trip to the Sacramento Railroad Museum on October 28, 2006

### **Membership Information**

Individual Members = \$20.00  
Family Membership = \$25.00

- Monthly Newsletter
  - Member Activities, Presentations and Field Trips
  - Display & Restoration Projects
- PSRHS, P.O. Box 1776  
Colfax, CA 95713

# Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society

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## **October Program:**

Fieldtrip to California State Railroad Museum

Our fall fieldtrip will be a personalized tour of the California State Railroad Museum in Sacramento led by our own member Ken Yeo. Ken has a vast knowledge of the museum's collection of railroad rolling stock and artifacts from the years he spent as the Director of Restoration for the museum until his retirement.

We have a **10:00 AM** tour time at the museum on **Saturday, October 28**. Those attending should meet the group no later than **9:45 AM** at the entrance of the museum in Old Town Sacramento. Parking is available in a parking structure directly across the street from the museum building on the corner of I Street and Second Street. For those who are not CSRM museum members and have their own passes, the group tour rate for individuals on our tour will be \$7. The museum requires one check for payment for our group so I will collect money for everyone required to pay for admission when we meet outside the museum.

Those that wish to car pool from Auburn at 8:30AM can meet in front of Staples in the parking lot on Hwy 49 near the I-80 freeway. I anticipate completing the tour at the museum between 1PM and 2PM (Ken has a lot of stories about the museum!).

Those with more questions may call me at (530) 346-9607.

We look forward to seeing you all there.

Jim Wood

*There will be no regular meeting this month.*

## **September Meeting Minutes:**

**September 28, 2006**

### **Announcements/Updates-**

Colfax Depot – The current project is to finish the painting; next will be the flooring. Hopefully, by the end of the year, the renovation of the Depot will be completed and all rooms will be ready for occupancy.

We are all saddened by the death of our friend and PSRHS Member Hattie Burner. Her vibrant personality will be missed. Our condolences to her family and Ken Yeo.

We are hoping to reschedule our tour of the Sacramento Railroad Museum for our October Meeting. Details to follow.

### **Program**

We enjoyed watching a video by Brendan Compton. He interviewed Gerry Lutz, a retired fireman who worked on the cab forward steam engines over the Donner route in the 1940-1950's.

Gerry shared tales of running the trains over the summit during winter time. He remembers going through snow as high as 15 feet in Blue Canyon. The first line of snow removal was the flangers, with a blade underneath to break the ice off the rails. It was the job of the engineer to elevate the blade at crossovers. If this was not done, it would pop off, and the brakeman would have to dig in the snow and put it back on. A chain was connected to the blade so it wouldn't get lost. Engineers that paid attention and raised the blade appropriately were highly valued by the brakeman!

When he first started working on the steam engines, Gerry tells of the problem he

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had keeping the temperature of the oil-fired boiler hot enough to provide enough power to run the engine. By careful observation, he saw that the snow was being sucked up into the boiler area, causing the temperature within to drop. This required frequent stopping to allow the engine to build up a head of steam again. Gerry figured out a way to keep the snow away from the boiler and keep the steam temperature up, which saved a lot of time.

Another fact of life with steam engines was keeping the boiler full of water. This required frequent stops along the way. On a heavy train, stops for refilling water would be made at Roseville, Colfax, Emigrant Gap, Gold Run, Norden, and Sparks.

When asked how he judged how much fuel and fire was needed, he said he was constantly watching the stack for the color of the steam, and listening to how it sounded. This required sitting sideways in the cab in order to see the gauges and sticking his head out the window to see the stack. Many hats were lost in this maneuver and he frequently had to pull his head back in quickly when a train on the second track suddenly appeared. He said there wasn't a lot of extra space between those two trains!

One hazard Gerry encountered on the trains going downhill was pin-wheeling. This referred to the sparks coming off the wheels when the brakes were applied. The steam engines had sprinklers underneath to spray the ties with water so they wouldn't catch on fire. Gerry commented that he never worried when he saw the pinwheels; he only worried if he didn't because that meant the brakes weren't working.

It was a real pleasure to hear Gerry's comments about working as a fireman on the steam engines on the Donner route. Sharing his stories about the cab forwards, the snow tunnels, deer retrieval from the tracks, and listening to the stack "talk" were

all very enjoyable. Thanks to Brendan for doing the interview and recording this bit of history for all of us to share.

Shirley Belleville Secretary

### Departed:

**Member Harriet (Hattie) Burner, a long time Auburn resident, passed away on September 23, 2006. She was very knowledgeable of the history of the Placer County region. One of her ongoing crusades was to correct anyone of identifying the "Mountain Quarries Railroad Bridge" as "No Hands Bridge".**

**Hattie volunteered during WWII to visit wounded soldiers at the DeWitt Army Hospital. She also worked at Areojet and for the Placer County Auditor's office. She also volunteered at the California State Railroad Museum and later at the Railroad and Transportation Museum in Nevada County.**

**Hattie will be missed by her family and many friends.**

(From Article in Auburn Journal by Staff Writer Gus Thompson).

