

# Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society

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## October 2024 Newsletter

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*An interior view of one of the themed cabooses at Olympic Railway Inn, the subject of our October program. See page 2 for more details. Image from Olympic Railway Inn website.*

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## Scheduled Events & Notices



**Oct 22 PSRHS Monthly Meeting, 7PM – Program - Roger Staab**  
**– The Caboose: From Railroads to Creative Lodging - Olympic Railway Inn**

**Nov 8-10 Northern Nevada Model Railroad Layout Tour**  
**– For details contact Jim Petro at [jpetro328@gmail.com](mailto:jpetro328@gmail.com)**

**Nov 25 PSRHS Monthly Meeting, 7PM – Will start earlier if Potluck. Watch for details in the November newsletter and on our web site.**

**No Meeting in December**

*Preserving Railroad History on the Donner Pass Route*



# Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society

October 2024 Newsletter

## PSRHS MONTHLY MEETING OCTOBER 22, 7PM

**October Program: The Caboose: From Railroads to Creative Lodging - Olympic Railway Inn.** Roger Staab will focus on a classic part of railroading's past, the caboose. For railfans, the caboose is a symbol of railroad nostalgia, and some have even placed old cabooses on their property as guest houses. Several resorts in northern California, such as in Dunsmuir and near Clear Lake, have taken advantage of this nostalgia with caboose motels. But Roger says the most creative cabooses he has visited are at the Olympic Railway Inn in Sequim, WA. The exteriors of the seven units look like standard cabooses, but the owners of this "caboose motel" chose a separate interior theme for each of their units, then pursued décor that reflected those themes. Roger will highlight the resulting interiors of each caboose along with detailed views of décor accents for two of the units. The program will also include a brief look at restoration underway on a unique caboose and exterior views of a vintage passenger railcar.

Our meetings are open to all who are interested. See our web site for updates on future meeting topics and directions to the meeting location.

## COLFAX RAILROAD DAYS RECAP

Colfax held its annual Railroad Days celebration Sept. 14-15. Despite the absence of UP rolling stock, the event was well attended with numerous model railroad layouts, food vendors, shootouts with the Black Flag Gang, and railroad movies at the Colfax Theater. One unique display was a model railroad in a trailer. See page 3 for photos of this layout.

PSRHS staffed a table at the caboose that contained club information and concept plans for the proposed Railroad Heritage Park near the Passenger Depot. Another table offered surplus books and videos to the public for a donation toward the Railroad Park concept. The two day-event resulted in \$142 added to fund the move of the Colfax caboose to the proposed Railroad Heritage Park.

A steady stream of visitors toured the caboose all day Saturday. Sunday was not as busy but still well attended. There was a good turnout of volunteers from PSRHS and the community to staff the caboose and table this year. The extra volunteers made it possible for your editor to conduct walking tours of Colfax railroad history on both days. A big Thank You to all who participated.

## BOARD MEMBERS WORK PARTY

Members of the PSRHS Board of Directors met on a recent Saturday at Peter Hills' place in Applegate to remove remaining PSRHS items from his property prior to his final move from the area. The camera that had served as the PSRHS Applegate webcam was removed from its perch on an oak tree next to the eastbound right-of-way. The camera may find new life as a webcam at another location in the future.

Also retrieved were a switchstand with attached lights, a 4' x 8' HO layout table that had been set up at past Colfax Railroad Days for our younger guests, a concrete Highway 40 marker, and a square power pole that may have been an original CPRR telegraph pole. These have been moved to other locations, joining several railroad items that were removed from storage at Peter's property earlier this summer and fall. Some of the items may be incorporated into outdoor displays at the proposed Colfax Railroad Heritage Park.

## OCTOBER FEATURE ARTICLE

### "An Unscheduled President"

Many of our readers are aware that President Teddy Roosevelt made a brief stop in Colfax in 1903 while traveling through the area by train. But do you know the story behind how the stop was added to his trip, and the gift that was presented to the President that day? The visit was recounted by historian Steve Cottrell in the Grass Valley Union's Foothill Weekly, Dec. 16, 2020. Steve's article can be found starting on page 5. Also note the historic photo and news article on page 4.



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## Passing Scene - Wandering Railroad in a Trailer at Colfax RR Days

One of the many interesting attractions at this year's Colfax Railroad Days was Matt Abreu's model railroad layout in a trailer, which he calls The Wandering Railroad. Matt built his G-scale layout in a 38 ft x 10 ft trailer, making for quick setup at shows. If you didn't get a chance to view the layout in Colfax, google Wandering Railroad to find YouTube videos including an interview with Matt and views of his railroad-in-a-trailer in operation. He talks about his concept, how he built it to withstand the jarring from road transport, and special animation features he has added to the layout. The views below captured at Colfax Railroad Days show both static and operational features of his trailer-mounted layout. *Roger Staab photos*



### Membership Information

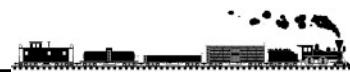
Individual Members = \$25.00/yr  
Each Additional Family Member = \$5.00/yr

- 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/>

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

[roger.staab@psrhs.org](mailto:roger.staab@psrhs.org)





**From the Archives - President Theodore Roosevelt in Colfax May 19, 1903**

In 1903 President Theodore Roosevelt gave a brief speech from the rear platform of his train during a brief stop in Colfax while traveling from Reno to Sacramento. He was on a tour of the western states but was not scheduled to speak in Colfax. However he was persuaded to make the stop and speech and receive a special gift from the mines and miners of Grass Valley/Nevada City. Read the article on pages 5-6 of this newsletter to learn about the efforts to get the unscheduled stop added to his trip, and the contents of the gift he received,

President's  
**SPECIAL!**

\*\*\*\*\*  
 President Roosevelt's Special Train will stop  
 at COLFAX at 4:50 P. M.  
**Tuesday, May 19, '03**

\*\*\*\*\*  
**THE N. C. N. G. R. R.**

Will run trains from Nevada City and Grass Valley as follows:  
 Leave Nevada City 12:25 and 2 p. m.  
 " Grass Valley 12:55 and 2:30 p. m.  
**RETURNING:**  
 Leave Colfax 5:10 and 7:45 p. m.  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
**FARE FOR ROUND TRIP:**  
 Gentlemen, 75c. Ladies and Children 50c.  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
**F. G. BEATTY, General Passenger Agent.**  
**C. P. LOUGHRIDGE, General Manager.**

*President Theodore Roosevelt speaks to a large crowd from the rear platform of his train during a brief stop in Colfax in May 1903. PSRHS collection.*



*This ad announced special NCNG trains to Colfax on May 19, 1903 to see President Roosevelt's brief stop.*

**Accidents/Other Incidents.** *The Daily Morning Union, Grass Valley, Cal., May 20, 1903.* **"NEVADA COUNTY'S MAGNIFICENT GREETING AND GIFT TO AMERICA'S PRESIDENT. Greatest Gathering in History Assembles at Colfax and Madly Cheers for Roosevelt - Given Box of Glittering Specimens - Addresses at Station.** President Roosevelt was given a miner's welcome yesterday afternoon at Colfax, when he was presented with a magnificent box of costly quartz specimens and nuggets. Fully three thousand madly cheering people flocked about his car, displaying that enthusiasm and loyalty for which the mountains have been noted since the days of 'Forty-nine. The greatest gathering within its history met in Colfax yesterday to see and hear President Roosevelt, and witness the presentation of Nevada county's magnificent gift to the nation's chief executive. Not an untoward occurrence marred the day's pleasure, and witnessing the presentation, feasting its eyes on the greatest man in the United States, and cheering itself hoarse, the vast sea of humanity melted away to the four quarters of the compass... An endless line of vehicles on every road, it seemed, came winding its way over the hills... Two long excursion trains went out over the Narrow Gauge, in addition to the regular passenger trains ..." *The article goes on for half the front page. Ed.*



### Echoes from our Past: An Unscheduled President

Grass Valley Union – Foothill Weekly, Dec. 16, 2020  
Steve Cottrell, Special to the Union

The recent release of Michael F. Blake’s “Go West, Mr. President: Theodore Roosevelt’s Great Loop Trip of 1903” – chronicling TR’s historic whistle-stop tour that focused on the American West – reminded me of how three Nevada County men arranged for Roosevelt’s train to stop at Colfax long enough for the president to receive a special gift.

The ambitious 1903 tour by rail took the president through 25 states in nine weeks – a 14,000-mile round trip that began and ended in Washington, D.C. As Roosevelt made his way along what author Blake described as the Great Loop, he delivered more than 250 speeches, including one at the Colfax train station. This is the story of how that unscheduled stop came to be.

On May 13, while the president was in San Francisco preparing to join John Muir for a tour of Yosemite, William Englebright, representing Nevada City, and Charles Clinch, from Grass Valley, sent the president’s personal secretary, William Loeb, a telegram requesting an opportunity to present TR with a gift on behalf of the Nevada County Promotion Committee.

Roosevelt’s schedule was heavily publicized, so Englebright and Clinch knew that following his visit to Yosemite, the president would be taking a side trip to Nevada, then heading west from Reno to Sacramento on May 19. A short ceremony at the Colfax depot was all they asked for, but Loeb took a pass at the offer. “The president thanks you cordially, and very much regrets that the itinerary as already arranged will not permit him to stop in Colfax,” he said in a May 13 telegram to Englebright.

That might have deterred most people, but Englebright and Clinch knew something Loeb apparently didn’t know, so they sent him another telegram, this time adding the name of James Hague – owner of the North Star Mine in Grass Valley and longtime friend of Roosevelt – as a promotion committee member.


“While we do not wish to be persistent,” the follow-up telegram began, “we cannot forbear making another effort to secure a chance to present a token which is entirely representative of our great mining district.” The “token” for TR was a glass-covered manzanita case with gold samples from more than a dozen Nevada County mines.

Then, with a hint of sarcasm, came information that Loeb couldn’t ignore. “We understand from the railroad people that the train will stop in Colfax for about five minutes during which time the wheels are examined. Now, if the president will allow us the honor of presenting our testimonial during those five minutes, we will be very grateful.”

The Nevada County men knew that when westbound trains steamed down the long, steep grade off Donner Summit, pieces of steel sometimes chipped off the wheels – hence the need for a routine inspection at Colfax. That fact, coupled with including Hague’s name on the follow-up telegram, prompted Loeb to advise the promotion committee that a brief ceremony at the Colfax station would be added to the president’s tight schedule.

William Loeb had been outmaneuvered, but politics being politics, California Gov. George Pardee – perhaps unaware of the May exchange of telegrams and the case of gold samples – wired the local promotion committee and took credit for the schedule change.

“I have arranged for the president to stop at Colfax five minutes, and speak from the rear of his train,” Pardee claimed. “He is pressed for time, but will give the people a chance to see and hear him.”

*Cont’d on page 6* 

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## *An Unscheduled President (cont'd)*

On the afternoon of May 19, 1903, when the president's train arrived in Colfax, there were thousands of people waiting, mostly from Nevada City and Grass Valley. And after Superior Court Judge Frank Nilon presented TR with the gold, the president exuberantly announced, "I'm so happy to be in Nevada County," to which a spectator yelled, "You're in Placer County!" – a geographical correction drowned out by the roar of the huge crowd.

As Roosevelt spoke from the train's rear platform, Englebright, Cling and Hague stood below on the tracks. And when TR spotted his old friend, he leaned over and asked Hague to climb aboard and join him for the 50-mile trip to Sacramento. The unscheduled event took less than 15 minutes, but the determined Nevada County Promotion Committee had accomplished its mission.

Three years later, William Englebright was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, where he served until 1911. And in addition to being a Grass Valley mayor and fire chief, Charles Clinch was a delegate to three national Republican conventions.

As for mine owner James Hague, he and President Roosevelt had an intriguing discussion on the way to Sacramento. And that conversation will be the subject of next month's history column.

*Historian Steve Cottrell, former Nevada City Council member and Mayor*

