

Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society



<https://www.psrhs.org>

November 2024 Newsletter

In This Issue:

NOVEMBER MEETING PROGRAM. Page 2

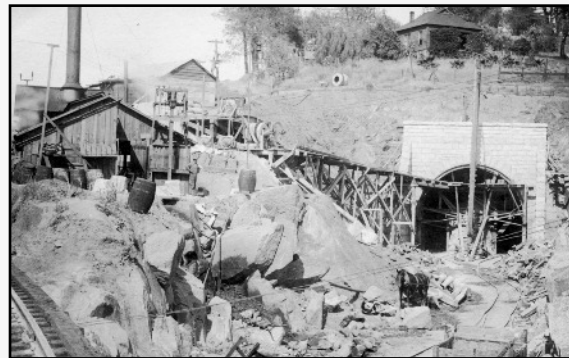
October Board Meeting Recap. Page 2

November Featured Article. Page 2

Passing Scene. Page 3

From the Archives. Page 4

**We're Moving with the Westbound
Tonight, Babe (SP's Outfit Cars)** Pages 5-6



The Newcastle tunnel is under construction in 1909. The tunnel will house the new second track as well as the realigned original track which can be seen at lower left. See pp. 2 & 4 for more details

Scheduled Events & Notices



NOTE: The November Meeting will not be a potluck, but you are invited to bring dessert snacks to share in the spirit of the Thanksgiving holiday

Nov 26 PSRHS Monthly Meeting, 7PM – Program: Jim Wood – Newcastle Railroad Changes - Walk Portions of the Original Central Pacific Roadbed

No Meeting in December Happy Holidays!!

Jan 28 PSRHS Monthly Meeting, 7PM – Tentative Topic - 1948 Freedom Train

Your annual PSRHS membership helps fund purchase of historic photos, publication of railroad history documents, field trips, and other historic preservation activities.

Preserving Railroad History on the Donner Pass Route

PSRHS MONTHLY MEETING

NOVEMBER 26, 7PM

AUBURN VETERANS MEMORIAL HALL

November Program: Newcastle Railroad Changes Revealed in Maps and Photos – Walk Portions of the Original Central Pacific Roadbed. PSRHS member and historian **Jim Wood** will use maps and photos to highlight major changes in track alignment through Newcastle circa 1910 including the construction of a new tunnel and a new crossing of Newcastle Gap. He will also identify locations where today’s visitors can walk sections of original Central Pacific roadbed.

NOTE: **The meeting will not be a potluck**, but you are invited to bring a dessert snack to share.

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.

October Program Recap: Roger Staab’s program **The Caboose: From Railroads to Creative Lodging** featured exterior and interior views of caboose lodging units at Olympic Railway Inn in Sequim, WA. Each caboose was decorated and furnished in a theme such as casino, wild west, and steam punk. The owners took great care to carry their themes throughout the caboose interior layout and décor, so much so that one person in the audience asked if some of the interior photos were taken inside a constructed building, not a caboose.

OCTOBER BOARD MEETING RECAP

The CAHS board met prior to the October member meeting. The following issues were discussed:

1. Our old Applegate webcam will be offered to Truckee railroad historians for possible installation there. Paul Greenfield will contact Roger Skinner with the offer.
2. The simple HO layout table that was a hands-on attraction for children to operate at past Colfax Railroad Days events is being offered to Chachi Macchietto

and his Chicago Park museum/store West Coast Trains. He is interested in setting it up at his store and at public events for kids’ enjoyment.

3. Square telegraph poles will be offered for future display at the Colfax Railroad Heritage Park.

4. Board members discussed our web site and what its focus should be. There was general agreement that the web site is not only a source of information for current members and guests, but also the legacy we can leave to local railroad history that endures for the benefit of future researchers. The board agreed to dedicate a future member meeting to an open review and discussion of how to improve our web site and populate it with documents and photos on local railroad history.

NOVEMBER FEATURE ARTICLE

“We’re Moving With the Westbound
Tonight, Babe”
(SP’s Outfit Cars)

Editor’s Note: Southern Pacific used to provide “outfit cars” as temporary lodging for workers (and sometimes families) assigned to a remote location along the tracks. Former Colfax residents Bill and Kay Fisher wrote a book about their experiences in outfit cars titled “A Baggage Car with Lace Curtains.” In going through information I have collected I ran across a newspaper article written by Colfax Record editor & reporter Pat Jones in 1967. She provided a brief history of the use of outfit cars for railroad maintenance workers, and included anecdotes passed on to her by local railroad workers about their experiences. The outfit car story as told by Pat Jones can be found on pages 5-6 of this newsletter. rs



Happy Holidays
From
PSRHS



Passing Scene - But Is It Art - Part 2

Last week a set of Union Pacific locomotives had the street crossing in Colfax blocked for a bit while they did some switching of a disabled train. The delay provided a good opportunity to study the “graffiti” on the lead locomotive. The larger image below shows the intricate painting on the nose and around the locomotive number, making one wonder if it was the work of a graffiti artist or a new UP paint scheme. The intricate lines and careful preservation of the locomotive number indicates a delicate hand with a brush, stencil or spray can. Perhaps one of our readers can offer an opinion of what it represents?? More conventional graffiti on the rest of the locomotive can be seen in the lower inset photo. *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





From the Archives - Newcastle Track Realignment Underway circa 1909

The photo below from the PSRHS collection shows the Newcastle depot at far right and the filled-in curved trestle beyond the depot and train locomotive. Construction of a new fill is underway at upper left that will soon greatly change the track layout through Newcastle as Southern Pacific contractors realign the original Central Pacific roadbed through the town and add a new second track. **At our November meeting Jim Wood will show maps and photos that help define the changes in track alignment through Newcastle and identify where today's visitors can walk sections of the original Central Pacific right-of-way.**



Accidents/Other Incidents. *The Placer Herald, Aug. 29, 1908.* “ **Railroad Notes.** ... At Newcastle the cutoff will diverge from the present track and cross over the Madden home site to the east of the Wittemore home and enter the hill this side by a tunnel. The subway will be under the cutoff. ...”

Roseville Register, Oct. 22, 1908. “**Newcastle Notes.** *Newcastle News, Oct. 14.* ... The railroad company have begun operations in town on the line of the cut-off. A force of men and teams removed the barn on the Frank Rodgers’ place to the lot formerly occupied by the old Sturgis residence. ...”

The Placer Herald, May 8, 1909. “**Railroad Notes.** ... The approaches to the tunnel this side of Newcastle are gradually lengthening. It will be a month or more before work on the tunnel proper will begin. ...”

Roseville Register, Apr. 12, 1912. “**Southern Pacific Notes.** ... All trains east and westbound pass through the double-track tunnel east of Newcastle, the westbound trains using the new track that leads from the present down track to the east portal of the tunnel. This way of routing westbound trains went into effect April 1, the trestles that spanned the new track at each end of the tunnel having been torn out March 31st. ...”



We're Moving With the Westbound Tonight, Babe

By Pat Jones; *Colfax Record*, Jan. 19, 1967

I'm like many non-railroaders who thought life in those apartments on train wheels, the outfit cars, was romantic but I have been told to forget it. Several Colfax area residents gave me this suggestion and they know what they're talking about. They've lived in them.

In fact, most people say the happiest day of their life in the outfits was the day they moved out.

The outfit car, sometimes referred as a "camp car", is fast slipping into history. The Southern Pacific has been switching to off track trailers as housing for personnel that must be moved frequently. Trailers can be hauled on the highway or piggy back. They can be placed in regular trailer facilities or by the tracks.

One of the many disadvantages of outfit cars was that under modern sanitary ordinances there were few places on the line with hookups for them. They could not be connected to city sewers.

Under more modern maintenance methods, the section gang no longer exists. It has been replaced by the extra gang. Highly specialized crews do specific jobs over a district, a region or even the entire system.


The railroad provided housing for their employees in the old days because wages were lower than average. With improved pay, in most cases housing is no longer necessary.

The history of the use of the outfit car is extremely vague. Letters to the Southern Pacific, Southern Railway, Union Pacific, etc., on the subject brought apologetic replies. The Association of American Railroads sent a long list of possible references and the closing remark, "Ask us something easy next time."

It is thought the first use of railroad car homes for maintenance crews might have occurred soon after the South Carolina Canal and Railroad Company began operating over its entire length of 136 miles between Charleston and Hamburg, South Carolina. This line was opened in 1883. The Southern Railroad obtained this line in 1899.

It is known that outfit cars were used during the construction of the Southern Pacific's predecessor, the Central Pacific. The late Mrs. Anna M. Knight of Vallejo and Weimar told of the car her father used as he went to San Francisco and back to recruit Chinese. He had a special car fitted so he could take a cow along for a fresh milk supply.

Work trains came into use around 1866. These included bunk cars, tool cars, commissary, blacksmith shop and a tail piece of flat cars loaded with spikes, tools and other equipment. The types of outfit cars varied. Some were converted boxcars. When lines converted to metal cars, old passenger, baggage, pullman cars, diners etc were remodeled for outfit cars. Some families were provided with a tool car in which to keep kindling and other supplies ordinarily kept in a shed or garage.

Cont'd on page 6 



Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society



November 2024 Newsletter

We're Moving with the Westbound Tonight (cont'd)

Tales of woe are many about sudden, unexpected bumps by switch engines ... or worse yet, being moved in the night without warning.

As men in the gang were needed elsewhere, the families had to move, often with little notice. Everything loose had to be packed carefully. All the heavy furniture including the stove and refrigerator was bolted down.

Even with these precautions, after the journey coupled into a freight, the car would be a mess when it reached its destination. On some occasions pipes from overhead tanks that held the water supply broke and everything was doused.

Families were sometimes on a siding in an isolated area inaccessible by car. Supplies had to come by train. It was much nicer to be near a town where one could shop or attend a show.

Trains passing on the tracks were a problem. If one was next to a fast line, the passing trains would cause the oven and cupboard doors to fly open. Conversation had to cease. One woman recalls missing important parts of radio programs because of the noise.

Sometimes it was like living in a goldfish bowl. As the outfit car's occupants were dining, a passenger train would pause alongside and people on it would stare.

One couple tells of the time they were coupled into a freight with no warning. The pushing and jerking awakened them but they had to stay in bed for fear of breaking a leg. During the trip the bed slid the length of the room and back many times. But the worst part of the story was that their dog, portable outhouse, automobile and steps were left behind. Two days elapsed before they could be retrieved.

Their dog, by the way, had bones buried from Roseville to Cisco and beyond along the right of way.

The Colfax yards have been full of work cars for the past couple of months. Some of the 15 or 20 bunk cars are being painted. An outfit car in the group, now occupied by the Charles Nordins, is reputed to be one of the nicest cars used locally. It was once the private car of a member of the Southern Pacific brass.

While attempting to gather information on the outfits, your reporter heard some colorful tales of life in a haunted section house near Penryn but that's another day's story.

