

Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society



<https://www.psrhs.org>

January 2025 Newsletter *1947-49 Freedom Train Special Issue*

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This 1948 view of the Freedom Train locomotive was captured by student Don Anderson in Fresno. Don will help narrate the story of this train at our January 28 program. See pp. 2 & 4 for more details.

Scheduled Events & Notices



- Jan 28** PSRHS Monthly Meeting, 7PM – Program - 1947-49 Freedom Train:
Its Objectives, Whistle-Stop Tour & Regional Reaction
- Feb 25** PSRHS Monthly Meeting, 7PM – Program - Dick Dorn
- Southern Pacific Snow Fighting on Donner Pass
- Mar 25** PSRHS Monthly Meeting, 7PM – Program - Brendan Compton Video
- Panel Discussion on Norden Operations

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

JANUARY 28, 7PM

AUBURN VETERANS MEMORIAL HALL

January Program: 1947-49 Freedom Train: Its Objectives, Whistle-Stop Tour & Regional Reaction.

The PSRHS January 28 meeting will provide a detailed look at the nearly forgotten 1947-49 Freedom Train that visited all 48 states from Sept. 1947-Jan. 1949. Using archive photos and newspaper reports, we will look at the objectives and rationale behind the train's creation, the documents it displayed to show our country's hard-won freedoms, the commitment it asked viewers to make toward recognizing and preserving those freedoms, and the stops the train made in California. As a special bonus, we will hear and see Don Anderson's personal memories of the train's visit. Don was one of 1000 regional school students selected to attend a special viewing of the train and its contents during its stop in Fresno in March 1948.

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.

November Program Recap: Newcastle Railroad Changes Revealed in Maps and Photos – Jim Wood

discussed the many changes that have taken place over the years regarding railroad alignment and features in Newcastle. He used maps and photos to highlight major changes in track alignment that occurred during double-tracking circa 1910 including the construction of a new tunnel and a new crossing of Newcastle Gap. Locations where today's visitors can walk portions of the original Central Pacific right-of-way were also noted. His program showed that Newcastle is a place one can still see lots of railroad history if you know where to look.

MORE ON JANUARY'S PROGRAM

Welcome to the start of a new year and the promise of interesting programs and railroad history to come in the months ahead. Note the topics already scheduled for February and March listed at the bottom of Page 1.

Occasionally a great program idea falls into your lap but you have to be alert to recognize it. Such is the case with our January program.

At a PSRHS meeting late last year, member Don Anderson handed me a flyer and said he had seen the train it referenced when he was a school kid. I thanked him for the flyer, put it aside and tended to the day's business. A few weeks later I noticed the flyer, looked at it more closely and said, whoa - what is this? An important-sounding train that I had never heard of – the 1947-49 Freedom Train – not to be confused with the 1976 American Freedom Train.

I initially saw this as a topic for an expanded article in our monthly newsletter. But when I called Don to discuss it and he told me of the photos he had taken, I did a prompt turn and decided this was program material.

A web search produced a site with a lot of background material including the train's journey to all 48 states delivering its message. That led to newspaper searches from that time frame, revealing a wealth of news from the day about the train's purpose, journey, and public response. Chuck Spinks added to the treasure trove with archive photos he found of preparations for the whistle-stop tour, along with a map showing its actual route to visit all 48 states. Finally, Don produced a few more documents from his tour of the train and its contents to go with his personal memories.

As a result, a program was born and the train's story will be told with all its interesting details at our January 28 meeting. Additional material related to the train and its mission can be found on pages 4, 5 & 6 of this newsletter issue.

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Passing Scene - Uphill Delays in Colfax

The wheels of commerce move slowly at times, or sometimes not at all. January 16 was one such day in Colfax. An uphill freight stood idle on Track 2 just east of the Grass Valley St crossing for much of the morning. A glance up the tracks from the depot revealed railroad workers in crew vests checking out the train. Meanwhile, a glance back to the west revealed another long train sitting idle on Track 2, apparently waiting for the train ahead of it to get going. Eastbound Amtrak made its stop at Colfax on Track 1, then proceeded past the stalled train. Later that afternoon the train finally began moving, apparently with the second eastbound train providing added power to get the combined consist rolling again. *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:

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January 2025 Newsletter

From the Archives - 1947-49 Freedom Train

The 1947-49 Freedom Train made a whistle-stop tour of all 48 states from Sept. 1947-Jan. 1949. The train included three cars housing historic documents related to our country's freedoms that were accessible for public viewing. The PSRHS program for our January 28 meeting includes an in-depth look at the concept behind the train and stops it made in Fresno and Sacramento. See pages 2, 5 and 6 for more details. The postcard image below of the train is from the collection of Don Anderson who as a school student visited the train at its Fresno stop March 11, 1948. The diesel locomotive was built specifically to power this train.



Accidents/Other Incidents. *The Sacramento Bee, Mar. 19, 1948.* **“Freedom Train Bearing History’s Great Papers Will Be Here Tomorrow.** The seven-car Freedom Train, bearing history’s greatest collection of documents recording advances in freedom, will be in Sacramento tomorrow... The program is scheduled to get under way at 9:45 A. M. with Governor Warren delivering a welcoming address from a platform to be erected on Seventh Street, near G, adjoining the railroad siding on which the train will be spotted... **127 Documents Travel** One hundred and twenty seven historic documents are aboard the Freedom Train which will be on exhibition here tomorrow. The collection begins with a late Thirteenth Century manuscript copy of England’s Magna Carta ... Other documents include originals or copies of: The Mayflower compact; Thomas Jefferson’s rough draft copy of the Declaration of Independence; George Washington’s copy of an early leaflet printing of the Constitution; the Bill of Rights; the Emancipation Proclamation; the manuscript of Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address ...”



Messages Received From The 1947-49 Freedom Train Visits

The Freedom Pledge

I am an American. A free American
Free to speak – without fear,
Free to worship God in my own way,
Free to stand for what I think is right,
Free to oppose what I believe is wrong,
Free to choose those who govern my country.
This heritage of Freedom I pledge to uphold
For myself and all mankind.

The Nine Promises of a GOOD CITIZEN

Ask yourself,


“Am I truly a good citizen – or just a fortunate tenant of this great nation?”

Here is a summary of the working tools of good citizenship. Pledge yourself here and now to these nine points – that you, your children and your children’s children may continue to enjoy the American Heritage of “life, liberty and pursuit of happiness.”

1. I will vote at all elections. I will inform myself on candidates and issues and will use my greatest influence to see that honest and capable officials are elected. I will accept public office when I can serve my community or my country thereby.
2. I will serve on a jury when asked.
3. I will respect and obey the laws. I will assist public officials in preventing crime and the courts in giving evidence.
4. I will pay my taxes understandingly (if not cheerfully).
5. I will work for peace but will dutifully accept my responsibility in time of war and will respect the flag.
6. In thought, expression and action, at home, at school and in all my contacts, I will avoid any group prejudice, based on class, race, or religion.
7. I will support our system of free public education by doing everything I can to improve the schools in my own community.
8. I will try to make my community a better place in which to live.
9. I will practice and teach the principles of good citizenship right in my own home.

Remember ... FREEDOM IS EVERYBODY’S JOB!

Both Items from American Heritage Foundation 1947-49 Freedom Train Brochure

Cont’d on page 6 



Messages Received From The 1947-49 Freedom Train Visits

FREEDOM TRAIN EDITORIAL

The Press-Tribune (Roseville), March 12, 1948. “The Freedom Train affords a rare privilege to see the documents upon which our American liberties and our way of life are founded.

But as the train passes through California and we stand before these documents, we should be impressed by the fact that in themselves, **they are only declarations of intent and that it is we ourselves who must give them meaning.**

We ourselves must in our day to day lives make the decisions, give our loyalty, resist pressures of extremists, do the things that give these documents substance. **In short, defend them day by day.”**

(Emphasis added - ed.)



Waiting to see the Freedom Train in San Francisco

The sign says “Freedom is Everybody’s Job”
“Please Sign Rededication Scroll”