

Snowshed

December 2017

Volume 10 Number 4



- ◆ Future museum unable to locate suitable location. May require distributed museum.
- ◆ Track expansion opened this year requires some re-work on the lower curve.
- ◆ Summit Tunnel diorama moved with interactive story display.

In side

Truckee River Railroad provides Christmas Train at Squaw Valley 2

So what did area loggers do during then long winters to sustain themselves? The answer is Ice. 2

The Summit Tunnel was not only the longest on the Transcontinental RR but critical to CP's race with the UP. 2

President's Letter

Jim Hood

2017 has been another banner year for the Tahoe Donner Railroad Society. The Truckee River Railroad - a 1/8 scale riding railroad built and operated at the Truckee Regional Park by the Railroad Society has been a huge success with large crowds of enthusiastic riders. The major contributors to planning, building and operation of this Railroad are Bob Bell and Tom Smith. Bob and Tom and their crew of volunteers added a significant amount of new track to the Railroad this year. It takes a relatively large staff to operate the Railroad and I want to thank all of the volunteers that allow us to function on a regularly scheduled basis.

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The Truckee River Railroad

Bob Bell

The season's running at the Regional Park is over for the Society's TRUCKEE RIVER RAILROAD miniature train. We ended up with over 4000 rides. Thanks much to our fantastic crew members mentioned in our last newsletter.

With the great weather, Tom Nixon has diligently pursued the supervision and construction of our trestle from the loading/unloading dock to the location of our future engine and car storage building. The materials for this project were provided through a grant obtained by the Rotary Club of Truckee.

Jim Schmidt, owner of The Great Outdoor Landscape company, spent a week or more fine grading the curve at the far end of our track expansion. We plan to re-lay the track in that area in the spring. The initial



Trestle to Storage Building

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curve was too tight to accommodate Tom Smith's steam engine.

We also have established a strategic steering committee for the Truckee River Railroad. The committee consists of myself, Ed Larson, Tom Smith, Jim Schmidt, and Greg Kuzma and will meet once a month or more as necessary. Currently we have identified 40 projects that need attention including a five year long range plan. We are in the process of prioritizing this list and as the projects evolve, each committee member will take responsibility for completion of a project, with the help of other volunteers of course. Please step up if you want to get involved in a project or have a skill you want to contribute (mental or physical).

Thanks again to all our members and the community at large for your support to our success.

Truckee River Christmas Train at Squaw Valley

For the second year, the Truckee River Railroad has installed and operated a Christmas Train at Squaw Valley for the enjoyment for kids of all ages. The train ran from December 17 through the 24th and by all accounts was a great hit with 873 rides and \$715 in donations in addition to the substantial donation from Squaw Valley/Alpine Meadows. Thanks to the many RR Society members who gave up their time to make this happen.



A special thanks to Tom Smith who donated the use of his engine.

Truckee Uniqueness

Nelson Van Gundy

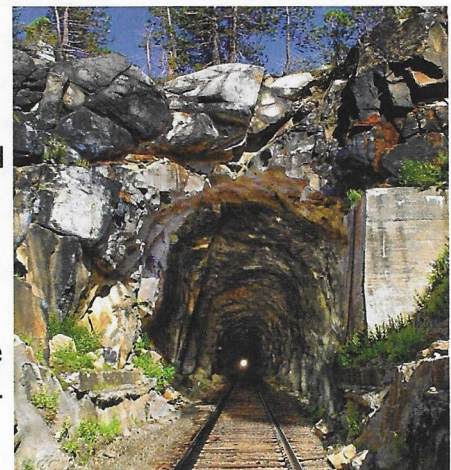
So how did Truckee loggers sustain themselves over the long and brutal winters you ask? The answer is quite simple, Ice! The harvesting, storage and shipping of ice provided employment for loggers during the winter not available to loggers in other locals. This situation was distinct to Truckee resulting from the combination of cold weather, good water supplies, available labor and easy access to shipping via the Transcontinental railroad. So now you know.

The Summit Tunnel

Jerry Blackwill

The most challenging project on the transcontinental railroad was boring a right-of-way through 1695 feet of solid granite at the top of Donner Summit. When completed in 1868, it was the longest tunnel on the transcontinental railroad.

The Central Pacific Railroad was under pressure to complete the tunnel quickly because of their race with the Union Pacif-



ic. Congress had passed laws that for every contiguous mile, the railroads would receive government land and US government guarantee of their construction bonds. To further push the race, each railroad was hurrying to get to the Utah coal fields and prized coal hauling contracts.

To speed up tunnel construction, a vertical shaft was cut through the granite to what would be the center of the tunnel floor. This enabled drilling on four faces, east and west from the base of the shaft and one at each entrance.

By laboring three shifts a day, the Chinese workers completed the tunnel in less than two years. At the beginning of each shift, they would clear rubble from the previous shift. The workers at the base of the vertical shaft would put the rubble in a basket that was pulled to the top and dumped. When all the rubble was cleared, they then bored holes for explosives. One man would hold the drill in place while the other two took turns hitting the drill with sledge hammers and hopefully missing the guy holding it!

Once the drilling was completed, the Chinese would place black powder or nitroglycerine in the holes with fuses. All the workers but one would ride the bucket to the shaft top. They would send the bucket back down and the last man would light the fuses, jump in the bucket and ride it up as the explosives detonated below him.

When the four tunnels were finally united, they were less than six inches off. The floors were trimmed, the track was laid, and the first work train traveled through in 1868.

President's Letter

Continued from page 1

The visitation at our Museum has continued to be very good. Ed Larson has taken over operation of the Museum this year and Art Diaz has taken over the task of upgrading and refreshing the exhibits in the Museum. I also want to thank all of the Docents who give generously of their time so that we can continue to have the doors of our Museum open.

The Brewster West Foundation made a very generous endowment to the Museum in 2017. They are by far our largest contributor. We have used their contributions to continue to upgrade our Museum and keep the exhibits "fresh" for visitors.

In 2015 we started working cooperatively with the Truckee Donner Historical Society and the McGlashan Family to define the Truckee History – Railroad Museum to preserve and present the rich history of our area. It has become problematic to find a suitable location for a new – standalone Museum within the downtown area of Truckee. We are now focused on a "distributed" Museum concept where we would have multiple smaller locations dotted around town each focused on a subset of our area's history.

I want to thank all of our members and friends for their support throughout the year and to wish all of you a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

Truckee Donner Railroad Society

Society Mission:

To preserve, interpret, and educate the public about rail-roading life and history in the Truckee region including its contribution to Truckee and the Nation. Specifically, depict railroad involvement in local industry through the acquisition, preservation, and restoration of relevant equipment, documents, and artifacts all to be part of a permanent museum facility in downtown Truckee.

Truckee Donner Railroad Society
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Board of Directors:

Jim Hood—President

Bob Bell—Executive Vice
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Jerry Blackwill—Vice Presi-
dent, Strategic Planning

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Nelson Van Gundy —
Historian

Barbara Czerwinski

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Truckee Railroad museum Vision:

Keeping Truckee railroads alive!

Railroads of the Truckee area played a significant role in founding and developing the town of Truckee. From the blasting of black powder in the granite over Donner Lake, to the hissing of the first steam coming into town, to whistles of lumberjacks in the mountains, to the crack of ice being loaded in the reefers, and tourists flocking to share the beauty of the area, the Truckee Railroad Museum tells the story.

A place to Discover

A Place to Interact

A place to Enjoy

www.truckeedonnerrailroadsociety.com
501(c) 3 non-profit organization

Current Projects Seeking Support

- ◆ Caboose Museum Interior
- ◆ Crane Rehabilitation
- ◆ Rotary Restoration
- ◆ Sleeper Restoration
- ◆ Internet Book Sales

If you are able to support any of these projects with your time, talent or dollars, please contact us.

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