



Quarterly Newsletter of the Truckee Donner Railroad Society

# Snowshed

*Keeping Truckee's Railroad History Alive!*

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## **Event Calendar**

Model Railroad Set Up at the Rec Center	ends November 20
Model Railroad at Engel & Völkers building in downtown Truckee	November 23 - December 1
Christmas run of the Truckee River Railroad	November 30
TDRRS Board Meeting	December 4

## President's Letter

Dan Cobb

It has been a busy three months for the Railroad Society. We wrapped up the season on the Truckee River Railroad park train on September 29th after logging more than 3,600 rides and more than 300 volunteer hours since May. If the weather cooperates, we'll run the "Santa Train" on Saturday, November 30th, before putting the equipment away until next spring.

We also completed repairs on the Truckee Railroad Museum (caboose) deck and led our third trestle tour of the season, chasing a century-old Verdi Lumber logging grade above Dog Valley.

Our "Truckee 1927" model railroad has been on exhibit at the Steve Randall Community Recreation Center since mid-September. Since then, we've put some miles on our HO-scale cab forwards and other steam power, added some beautiful Truckee Canyon scenery, and talked railroading and Truckee history with fans of all ages. See Bill Ramsey's article in this newsletter for more details and what's next for the model railroad.

On October 24th, we made a presentation to the Truckee Donner Regional Park District Board of Directors, introducing our plan to build a railroad museum with a permanent model train layout in the Truckee River Regional Park. The Board gave preliminary approval to our plan and directed District staff to work with us on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to guide the project. Our next big hurdle is funding, which will probably require a combination of grants and large individual and/or corporate donations. If you've always wanted your name on a railroad museum in Truckee, now is your chance!

It is with great sadness that I must report the passing of our long-time member Ron Mason. Ron had been a life member since 2007 and was a very skilled scale modeler who built the dioramas in the caboose museum and several impressive models for "Truckee 1927."

As always, we'd love to have more people involved. You can help out with the riding railroad, build models, run trains with us on the "Truckee 1927" model railroad, or talk railroading with visitors at the museums. No experience is necessary, you'll learn some local history, and you'll have the satisfaction of giving back to the community.

## Truckee River Railroad

Bob Bell

Well, the 2024 Truckee River Railroad riding train season is a wrap. It was another very successful year with 9 run days (only one rain out), 3600 riders, 310 volunteer hours, and 19 crew members helping out at various times. Most of the trains were headed by our reliable GP35 with new batteries, our new Switcher, and occasional running of our Big Blue. All 19 volunteers need to be thanked, but special thanks to Tom Smith for debugging and keeping our engines running week after week and to Teri Smith for helping out with the Trainmaster duties on several occasions as well as crewing most of the run days and bringing some refreshments on occasion. Thanks also to Durk Stelter for helping Tom out and making multiple run days, Dave and Judy

DePuy with Operation Lifesaver and Trainmaster one day and crew members for several. Also helping out with many crew days, not only running but set up and take down, were Jerry Blackwill, Dan and JoAnn Cobb, Bill Ramsey, Jay Jacobs, Kevin Kelleher, Ben Bloomfield, Marisa and Jack Dunne, Bobby Carter, Wil Eber, Greg Zirbel and Andrew Esler. We are in touch with Santa and he plans to show up for a Christmas train run on Saturday November 30 if the weather cooperates.

On the construction side of our engine house, thank you to Tom Nixon and some of his family for renovating our trestle structure and stairs to make the transfer table more user friendly and to Tom Smith for extending the steel elevated storage track so we can accommodate more engines. I am looking forward to next season and hoping to get more people involved.

## Model Railroad Update

Bill Ramsey

As you are well aware we have a model railroad project underway. Approximately a third has been completed for purposes of running some trains. Although our project will eventually be a permanent Truckee area railroad display, it is still a portable modular set up that spends too much time in members' garages. Of course we have



plans. Currently we have a layout set up at the Truckee Recreation Center off Truckee Way where we are operating trains a few days each week, generally weekday afternoons and weekend mornings to either noon or 1 PM (closing time unfortunately). We will stay there until Nov 20th, for a total of about 2 months. We are in the west hallway. Plexiglass panels protect the layout but permit viewing at any time. On November 21st we take it all down and transfer it to the Engel & Völkers Real Estate "Flying A" building in downtown Truckee with set-up the following day, in time for Truckee Christmas tree lighting on the 23rd. It will remain set up until December 1st, then back to our garages.



Scenery including buildings, roads, other places of interest, hills and mountains, trees, water, and people are currently a distant second to track and trains, but we have accomplished some scenery work to give fans a sense of what to expect. The Truckee River area in front of Truckee itself is reasonably complete. Truckee is partially complete with duplications of the depot, freight house, Truckee hotel, and much of the commercial area. We have the roundhouse and mallet shed finished. The Truckee River area east of town is mostly finished with the river, hills, trees, and lots of rocks, but once we go permanent the hills will be redone larger. Come and see!

## 2024 Trestle Tours

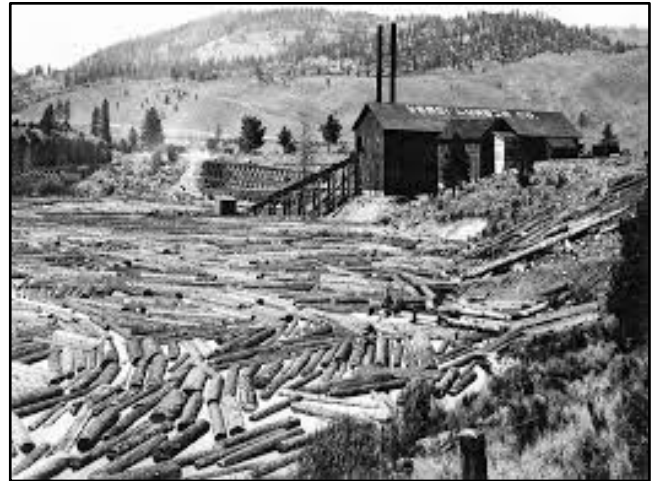
Steve Edelman

We conducted three trestle tours during the 2024 season. During our first tour, conducted on June 23, we explored the southern terminus of the Lake Tahoe Railway, and during our second tour, conducted on July 21, we explored the Hobart Southern Railroad. These tours were detailed in the August issue of *Snowshed*.

For our final trestle tour of the season, conducted on September 21, we explored the Verdi Lumber Company Railroad. The story of the Verdi Lumber Company began in 1900 when Oliver Lonkey, a logger in the Truckee area, incorporated the company to harvest timber in the Dog Valley area, which is located about 15 miles as the crow flies northeast of Truckee. The primary milling facilities for the Verdi Lumber Company were located at the town of Verdi, Nevada, on the Southern Pacific (original Central Pacific) transcontinental railroad. Present day Crystal Peak Park occupies the land where the mill once existed and features a pond that was built by Verdi Lumber Company to float logs to the mill.

In order to haul logs from the mountains to the mill, the company began construction in late 1900 of a standard gauge logging railroad. The railroad started at a junction with the Southern Pacific on the south side of Verdi. The railroad ran north for half a mile, where it passed by the pond and mill, and then turned northwest to cross the Truckee River and head up Dog Creek into the Carson Range. The steep route up Dog Creek required two switchbacks to reach Dog Valley, where tracks arrived in August 1901, 5 rail-miles from the starting point at Verdi. Starting in 1904, as timber accessible to the railroad was clear cut, the railroad was extended from the end of track in Dog Valley to new uncut stands of timber. The line was first extended north and east and later to the west, crossing the Boca and Loyalton Railroad at a location called Merrill. With each successive extension, many of which required numerous switchbacks, the railroad moved entire logging camps to the new logging areas. By 1924, the Verdi Lumber Company Railroad boasted 32 miles of track. In 1926, after a quarter century of logging, the mill and railroad facilities at Verdi burned. The following year, the tracks and unburned structures were removed.

During our trestle tour on September 21, we met at Crystal Peak Park, the former site of the Verdi Lumber Company log pond and milling facilities. From there, we drove up Dog Valley Road (unpaved), passing quickly



Historical photo of the Verdi Lumber Company mill and log pond. The pond is now a popular fishing spot at Crystal Peak Park.



Ties are still in place on the Verdi Lumber Company Railroad grade in Dog Valley.

into California and then over the “First Summit” of the original 1913 alignment of the Lincoln transcontinental highway and from there down into Dog Valley. The railroad route up Dog Creek, which runs parallel to and about one mile northeast of Dog Valley Road, is so steep that no road follows that route. In Dog Valley we explored a four mile stretch of the railroad grade that runs north, so including the walk back to the cars we walked 8 miles!

More details on the history of this railroad and the history of logging at Verdi prior to the Verdi Lumber Company are presented in Dan Cobb’s wonderful article in the August 2023 issue of *Snowshed*.



A spike is still in a tie of the Verdi Lumber Company Railroad.



During salvaging operations following the abandonment of the Verdi Lumber Company Railroad in 1927, somebody apparently left a rail behind!



This collapsed “trestle” on the Verdi Lumber Company Railroad is really just a pile of logs that fill a ravine with tracks that once ran across the top of the pile.

## Volunteering and Membership

The Railroad Society could use your help in the following areas:

**Truckee River Railroad (ride-on train)** – Issue tickets, load the train, run the crossing gates, operate the trains as engineer or conductor, and help keep our riders safe. Training is provided and new volunteers are always welcome.

**Museum Volunteer** – Learn and share your knowledge of Truckee’s history and local railroading in the Truckee Railroad Museum (caboose) or the Museum of Truckee History. Volunteers work as individuals or pairs in three-hour shifts. Training is provided.

**Newsletter Contributor** –Contribute articles on local railroad history or other topics of interest for publication in our *Snowshed* newsletter.

**Cosmetic Restoration of Railroad Equipment** – We’ll hire professionals to do hazardous materials abatement and retore our wrecking crane to its full mid-century glory, but we can use some help with detailing and ongoing maintenance of the crane and the rotary snowplow.

**Model Railroad** – We need additional railroad modelers and builders to design and build structures, create scenery, run trains, and talk with visitors about Truckee’s railroad history. Join our committee and build “Truckee 1927”!

To volunteer, drop us a line at [info@tdrrs.org](mailto:info@tdrrs.org). Memberships are open to anyone interested in preserving Truckee’s railroad history and supporting the ongoing activities of the society. To join, renew your membership, or make a donation to the society, visit our website at <https://tdrrs.org/membership> or scan the QR code.



<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Board of Directors</b></p> <p>Dan Cobb — President and Historian                  Bob Bell — Executive Vice President and Treasurer                  Jerry Blackwill — Vice President and Museum Manager                  Steve Edelman — Newsletter Editor                  Chip Huck — Rolling Stock Restoration &amp; Preservation                  Jay Jacobs — Webmaster                  Tom Smith — Truckee River Railroad                  Bill Ramsey                  Durk Stelter</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Our History</b></p> <p>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 engines coming into town, to the whistles of lumberjacks in the mountains, to the crack of ice being loaded in the reefers, to the tourists flocking to enjoy the beauty of the area, Truckee’s story is very much the story of its railroads.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Our Mission</b></p> <p>Our mission is to preserve, interpret, and educate the public about railroading life and history in the Truckee region including its contribution to Truckee and the nation. We will accomplish this through the acquisition, preservation, and restoration of relevant equipment and artifacts and the display of exhibits in our Truckee museums.</p>
<p>The Truckee Donner Railroad Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, tax-exempt organization. EIN 91-1917864.</p>	