

# Snowshed

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## Society Mission:

To preserve, interpret, and educate the public about railroading life and history in the Truckee region including its contribution to Truckee and the Nation. Specifically, to 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.

## Presidents Letter

### Jerry Blackwill

Jim Hood has moved out of the area and I wish to thank him for all the things he's done for both the railroad society and the new Museum of Truckee History. Jim was president of the Truckee Donner Railroad Society for over ten years and also president of the Museum of Truckee History since it's inception. He's now resigned from both boards.

As railroad society president, Jim was involved in many of our projects. He oversaw the improvements in our caboose museum and the growth of our Truckee River Railroad. Jim also led the planning and execution of the Society's annual 4th of July float, telling the story of the building the transcontinental railroad. Lastly, he led the acquisition of the pocket park for the rotary snowplow and crane.

In addition to all that, Jim was active in the involvement of our society in the Museum of Truckee History. He led the planning, organizing, and getting the Town's permission for the new museum. We wish the best for Jim in his new location.

Thank you for the contributions that are coming in to help us with the restoration of the rotary snowplow and the railroad crane. Chip Huck and our volunteers have painted the rotary in time for winter. (See Chip's article in this newsletter.) We hope to put up new interpretive signs and start restoring the crane in the spring.

We still need funds for their restoration and display. If you can help, please either send your donation to the Truckee Donner Railroad Society, P.O.Box 3838, Truckee, CA 96160, or contribute on our website: <https://www.truckeedonnerrailroadsociety.com/involvement/involvement.html>.

Thanks again to everyone who is helping to keep the railroad society going during these difficult times.

Jerry Blackwill

## History of Truckee Springs

### Nelson Van Gundy

Across the Truckee River from downtown Truckee is an undeveloped 26-acre parcel known locally as Truckee Springs. The Truckee Donner Land Trust is now under contract to purchase the property, with the intention of preserving and opening this previously inaccessible land forever as natural open space for public enjoyment.

According to The Washoe Tribe's oral history, their ancestors camped across the Truckee River from the present location of downtown Truckee for hundreds of summers. Shortly after the Gold Rush, an influx of emigrants began using the area, and Coburn's Station, as Truckee was then known, was established on the north side of the river. Coburn's Station grew, both as the last stop for the climb over Donner Summit, and as a base for the logging industry which was growing to meet the demands of the Comstock Lode in and around Virginia City.

In 1866-67 a sawmill was built on the south side of the river by George Schaffer and Joseph Gray, utilizing the Truckee River for power. The mill and yard gradually expanded until the entire property on the south side of the Truckee River was occupied. A wide variety of local loggers brought timber to the mill, first by animal-power and later by railroad. The inclined grade on the hill directly south of this property is all that remains of a line from Martis Valley to the mill.



George Schaffer and Joseph Gray constructed Truckee's first saw mill in 1866. This locomotive was part of Schaffer's private railroad line, which hauled logs from the logging camps to the mill.

Over the next forty-plus years, a majority of the transcontinental Central Pacific Railway's ties, bridge timbers, and snowshed lumber were logged

locally, milled here, and then shipped to locations all along the Central Pacific Railway. The mill's market for railroad materials expanded across the West, with the location providing similar materials for a number of other railroad lines located in California, Nevada, Utah, Idaho, and Oregon.

Toward the end of this period the Truckee Lumber Company provided the right-of-way for the Lake Tahoe Railway and Navigation Company to build a three-foot narrow gauge line from Truckee to Tahoe City, in exchange for a favorable rate for log delivery to the sawmill. There is a fascinating discussion regarding these financial arrangements in *The Swayne Lumber Company* by Beckstrom and Braun.

The mill property was sold in December of 1909. In 1913, Truckee's grandest ice palace was constructed on the site, but was only used for two seasons before it burned to the ground. Over the more than one hundred years since then, a wide variety of development schemes have been proposed, but none have been realized. The Truckee Donner Land Trust's proposal is a brilliant solution for Truckee, providing a uniquely gorgeous park, with great historical value, directly across the Truckee River from downtown for all to enjoy!

[Thanks to Beckstrom & Braun for the Truckee Lumber Co. history in their Swayne Lumber book, and to Dave Myrick for his seminal *Railroads of Nevada and Eastern California!*]

Nelson Van Gundy, Historian  
Truckee Donner Railroad Society

## Rotary Snowplow Aesthetic Restoration

### Chip Huck

We are pleased to share an update on the Pocket Park, where the aesthetic restoration of the 1937 ALCO Rotary Snowplow is substantially complete.

Prior to the work, part of our team toured the California State Railroad Museum Restoration Facility with Al Di Paolo, Restoration and Maintenance Leadworker. We were able to see the restored sister rotary. Thank you to Al for the tour and recommendations.

In October of this year we began abatement efforts and surface prep by 8884Abatement. Following that was the first coat of paint by Accurate Painting. From there our team of Carolyn Dee, Jerry Blackwill, Ed Czerwinski, Greg Kuzma and his son John, Greg Zirbel, and I had the privilege of applying the second coat and the detail trim work. In the near future we will be completing the effort by adding the proper "SP 7210" identification and operation labels.

The Society's rotary aesthetic restoration would not have been possible without donations, and we would like to thank all those who have contributed to date.

There is much more to come at the Pocket Park. Next up is the aesthetic restoration of the 1930 Bucyrus Erie Steam Crane (see photo). We will also be adding interpretive signage to share the history of the snowplow and steam crane.

The Railroad Society needs to raise about \$25,000 to pay for these improvements, and our fundraising activities have been drastically curtailed due to COVID-19. You can help by donating funds to the Truckee Donner Railroad Society, P.O.Box 3838, Truckee, CA 96160, or online at [www.truckeedonnerrailroadsociety.com/involvement/involvement.html](http://www.truckeedonnerrailroadsociety.com/involvement/involvement.html). Your donation is greatly appreciated and will help complete the park for all to enjoy Truckee's railroad history.

Please stop by the park at the Railyard in the near future to see the Rotary!



1937 Rotary Snowplow Prior to Restoration



Rotary Snowplow with Aesthetic Restoration Substantially Complete



1930 Bucyrus Erie Steam Crane Ready for Restoration

# Truckee Donner Railroad Society

## Board of Directors:

Jerry Blackwill—President

Bob Bell—Executive Vice  
President/Treasurer

Ed Czerwinski—Secretary

Nelson Van Gundy —  
Historian

Ed Larson—Vice President,  
Museum Operations

Dan Cobb—Strategic  
Planning & Snowshed  
Newsletter Editor

Chip Huck

Greg Kuzma

Carolyn Wallace Dee

## 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

Truckee Donner Railroad Society  
P. O. Box 3838  
Truckee, CA 96160

[www.truckeedonnerrailroadsociety.com](http://www.truckeedonnerrailroadsociety.com)  
501(c) 3 non-profit organization

## Volunteer!

You can help TDRS and serve the community by volunteering for one of our projects or ongoing operations:

- ♦ Snowplow & Crane Restoration
- ♦ Truckee River Railroad Operations
- ♦ Museum Docent

Contact our volunteer manager [volunteer\\_manager@truckeedonnerrailroadsociety.com](mailto:volunteer_manager@truckeedonnerrailroadsociety.com).

## Donate!

You can also help by donating at our website, [truckeedonnerrailroadsociety.com](http://truckeedonnerrailroadsociety.com), at the bottom of the home page.

Truckee Donner Railroad Society  
P.O. Box 3838  
Truckee, Ca 96160