

# Snowshed

May, 2021

Volume 14 Number 1



## News & Events:

Museum of Truckee History is now open 11-5, Saturdays and Sundays.

Truckee River Railroad will open June 19th!

Caboose Museum will open weekends beginning late June or early July.

See our Facebook page for details & updates.

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## Presidents Letter

### Jerry Blackwill

At last, we can see a light at the end of the tunnel! Most of our volunteers have been vaccinated against COVID-19 and California's governor has indicated that June 15th will be the end of pandemic restrictions. We plan to start running the Truckee River Railroad in June and perhaps opening the Railroad Museum (caboose) in July. The Museum of Truckee History that we operate jointly with the Truckee Donner Historical Society is now open on weekends.

We're working to get things back to normal. Bob Bell, who manages the Truckee River Railroad has been engaged with our volunteers to restore the track and equipment. It's been two long winters since we've operated the trains and work needed to be done. Ed Larson, who manages our volunteers for both the Railroad Museum and the Museum of Truckee History has also been working hard to build a group of docent-volunteers.



Truckee River Railroad, 2018

While we've been able to paint the rotary snow plow in the Pocket Park, we're still in need of donations for the wrecking crane and interpretive signs. Our volunteers can help with some of the painting, but we need to contract for lead abatement. See the TDRS Railyard Pocket Park article in this newsletter for donation information.

We're looking forward to a summer of train-filled fun. I hope you can join us in some of these endeavors.

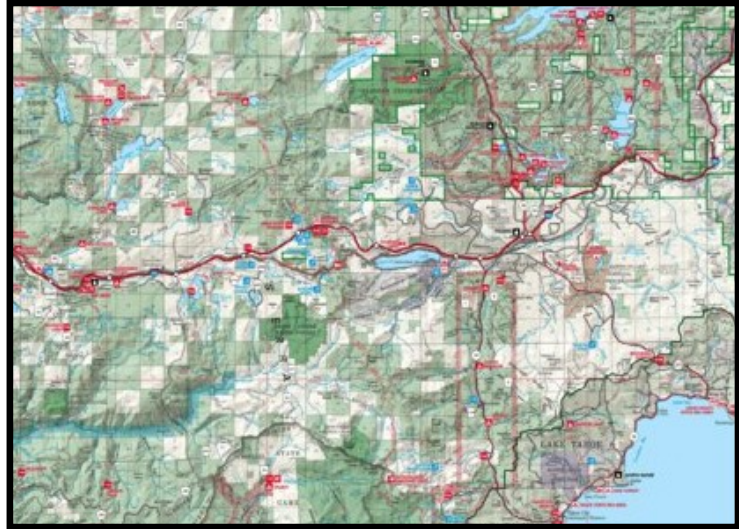
Jerry Blackwill  
President.

## Checkerboard!

### Nelson Van Gundy

Have you noticed the checkerboard effect on the Tahoe National Forest map? It is the result of one of the most important, effective, and little-known aspects of the building of the Transcontinental Railroad.

Before his Presidency, Abraham Lincoln had been an attorney practicing law for railroads. He represented the Chicago and Rock Island RR when it built the first railroad bridge across the Mississippi River in the early 1850's, and consequently had considerable knowledge of railroad-ing's ability to move large amounts of passengers and freight. As President, he signed the Pacific Railroad Act of 1862, which provided major U.S. government incentives for building the first transcontinental railroad line. Both government bonds and land grants were offered; this was the first time the government had offered land grants directly to corporations.



National forest map showing the checkerboard pattern over Donner Pass.

Section 2 of the Act granted each Company contiguous rights-of-way for their rail lines as well as all public lands within 100 feet (30 m) on either side of the track. Section 3 granted an additional 10 square miles (26 km<sup>2</sup>) of public land for every mile of grade except where railroads ran through cities or crossed rivers. This allotment was specified as "five alternate sections per mile on each side of said railroad, on the line thereof, and within the limits of ten miles on each side". A "section" is one square mile, so the 10 sections per mile gave the Central Pacific 6,400 acres for each mile of railroad built, allocated in the checker-board pattern we still see on Forest Service maps.

In 1864 the Act was modified to increase the grants. From 1850 to 1871, the railroads received more than 175 million acres of public land – an area more than one tenth of the whole United States, and larger in area than Texas!

Railroad expansion provided new avenues of migration into the American interior. The railroads sold portions of their land to arriving settlers at a handsome profit. Lands closest to the tracks drew the highest prices, because farmers and ranchers wanted to locate near railway stations. This also opened up logging opportunities on both the public and now-private lands, and the railroad could ship lumber all across the nation and ultimately to the rest of the world. Consequently, Sierra Nevada wood went world-wide.

That's why we see the checkerboard on the TNF map!

*Nelson Van Gundy, Historian  
Truckee Donner RR Society*

## The TDRS Railyard Pocket Park – Spring 2021 Update

### Chip Huck

We are looking forward to taking our next steps in completing the Pocket Park. In addition to the Steam Crane aesthetic restoration, we'll be installing interpretive signage. The text and photos will describe our rolling stock and the railroad history of the Truckee area and acknowledge and thank our donors who have helped to make this park possible.



We are planning to model our signage after signage the Land Trust and other organizations have installed on hiking trails and historic sites in the Truckee Region. We believe the design of the signage is long lasting and aesthetically pleasing. We will also incorporate colors from the Rotary and Crane to tie everything together.

Please help us restore the steam crane and complete the interpretive signage by donating funds to the Truckee Donner Railroad Society, P.O. Box 3838, Truckee, CA 96160.

You can also donate online at <https://www.truckeedonerrailroadsociety.com/involvement/involvement.html>. Your donation is greatly appreciated and will help to complete the park for all to enjoy Truckee's railroad history.

## Museum of Truckee History is Open!

### Dan Cobb

The new Museum of Truckee History, located in the depot building in downtown Truckee, opened its doors on May 8th. Exhibits include indigenous cultures, logging, contributions of the Chinese, the ice industry, Boca Beer, winter sports, and Truckee's railroad history. Given the ongoing concerns about COVID-19, we decided on a quiet opening to ensure that visitors feel welcome, safe, and comfortable. Guests have expressed their appreciation of the exhibits with many compliments and generous donations that will help us keep the museum in top shape.

The museum is currently open Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays 11 AM to 5 PM, volunteer schedules permitting. We plan to add Truckee Thursdays to the schedule over the summer, and additional hours as we continue to add and train volunteer docents. If you're interested in becoming a docent, please contact Ed Larson at [MuseumOfTruckeeHistory@gmail.com](mailto:MuseumOfTruckeeHistory@gmail.com).

# Truckee Donner Railroad Society

## Society Mission:

### 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—Rolling Stock Restoration and Preservation

Greg Kuzma

Judy DePuy

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, 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 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.

## 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@truckeedonerrailroadsociety.com](mailto:volunteer_manager@truckeedonerrailroadsociety.com).

## Donate!

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

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

Truckee Donner Railroad Society  
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