



Quarterly Newsletter of the Truckee Donner Railroad Society

Snowshed

Keeping Truckee's Railroad History Alive!

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Event Calendar

Holiday Volunteer Event at The Museum of Truckee History	Dec 12, 5:00-6:30 PM
Truckee Winter Carnival at the Truckee Community Arts Center and Truckee River Regional Park.	Feb 2-4

President's Letter

Jerry Blackwill

Summer is over and we had a busy season. The Truckee River Railroad ran the train in the regional park nine times this season.

Nelson Van Gundy, one of the society's two founders has moved from Truckee to the Sparks area. We want to thank Nelson for all his work over the years. Nelson was instrumental in organizing the society in 1999 and has been a board member all these years. Nelson explored the Little Truckee Valley above Boca reservoir and was able to identify the location of the old logging railroads. He used this knowledge to develop the popular trestle tours that are done each summer. Dan Cobb is now leading these tours.

Nelson had been a one-room schoolteacher before moving to Truckee and continued his interest in teaching children about trains. When steam locomotive 844 visited Truckee, he taught the children to explain to their parents how steam engines worked. He also gave railroad presentations to local elementary school students. Here are comments from some fourth and fifth grade students thanking Nelson:

"Thank you for coming to our school to show and tell us about trains. I like the scale models of the snowplow and the locomotive."

"Thank you for taking the time to come to our school P.S. I was the one who had to try to give the report on why the rotary is better than the cyclone."

"My favorite thing that you taught us was about the history of the logging railroads. Those topics that you gave us to search on Google really taught me a lot about the transcontinental railroad... I was amazed at the cleverness of the rotary plow and how it worked."

"I learned a lot from you, I learned that a spike is the nail like thing in a train rail. And a lot of other things but I forget but I told it to my mom."

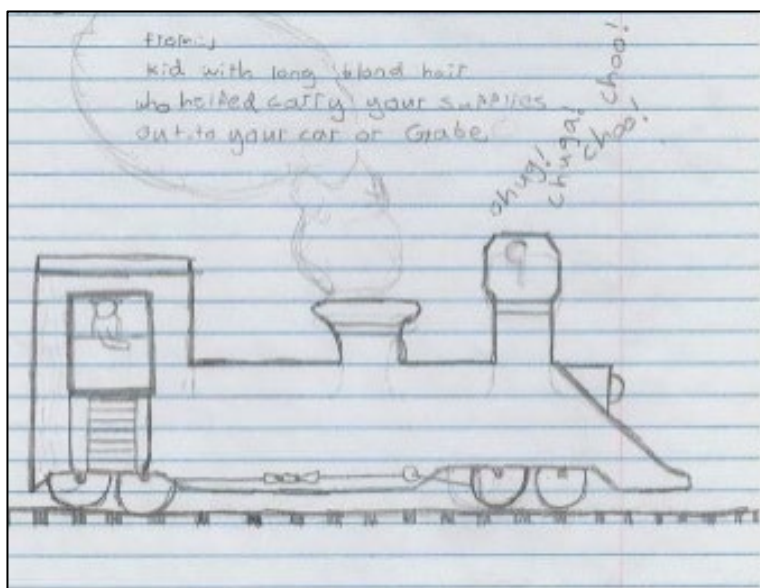
"I really enjoyed learning about the steam locomotives. I would also like to thank you for giving us those really cool railroad spikes ..."

"It was fun showing us how the rotary and other designs of trains work... I really liked the spike from the mining railroad. Unfortunately I lost the spike."

Nelson will still live near Truckee and we look forward to seeing him in the future.

We continue to need more volunteers. The railroad museum has been closed on a number of weekends because we didn't have enough docents for staffing. It would greatly help if you could see your way clear to give us even a single three-hour shift at the museum or help with the Truckee River Railroad. If you can help, please send me a note at info@tdrrs.org.

Jerry Blackwill

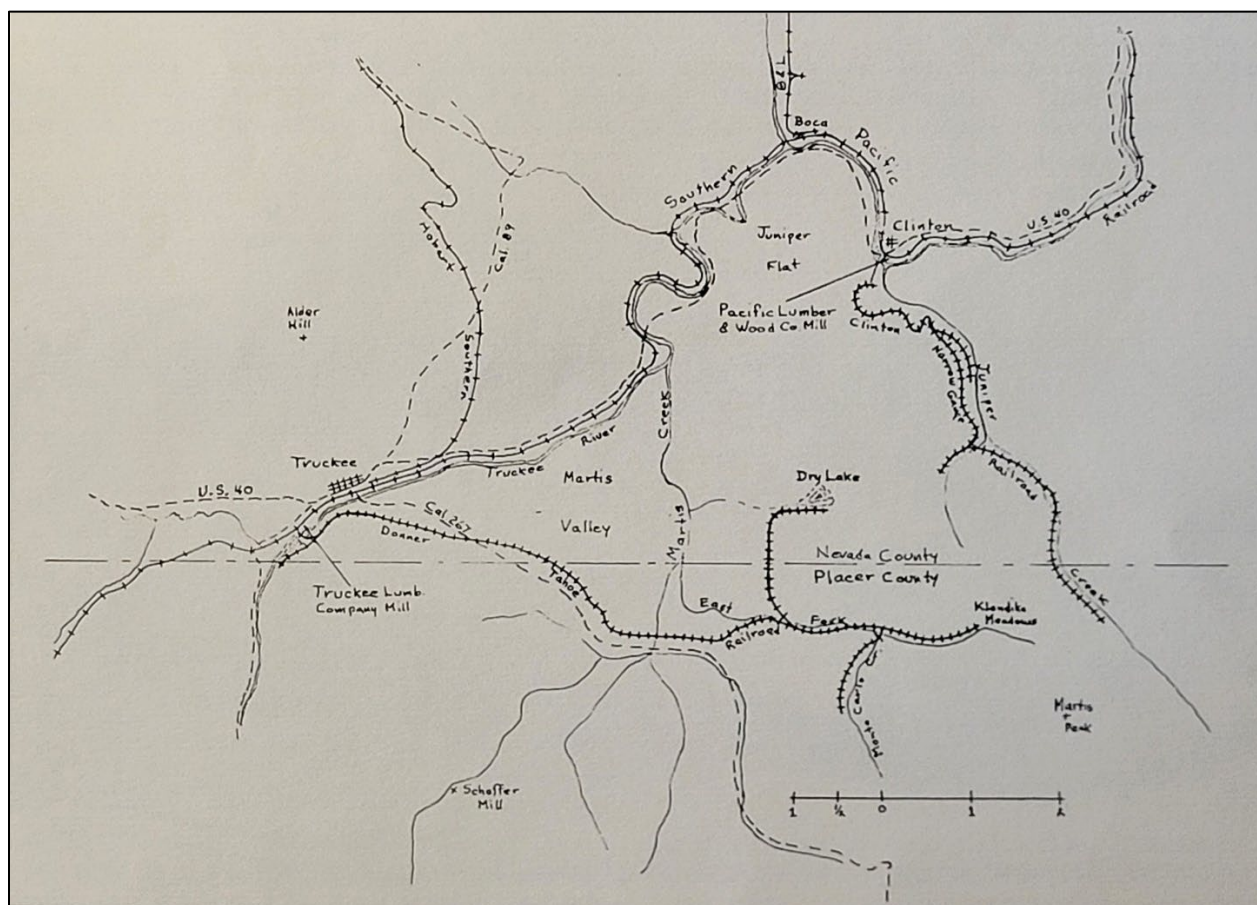


Truckee's First Logging Railroads

Dan Cobb

Two decades before Sierra Nevada Wood & Lumber, Boca and Loyalton, and Verdi Lumber built their logging railroads north of Truckee, the Pacific Lumber & Wood Company (PL&W) built and operated two narrow-gauge roads to harvest timber to the south and east of Martis Valley.

The story began in 1868 during the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad, when Thomas Jones built a steam-powered sawmill and log pond at Clinton (a.k.a. Camp 18), a Central Pacific construction camp on the Truckee River about 10 miles downstream from Truckee at the mouth of Juniper Creek. Initially the mill processed timber cut in the lower Prosser Creek and Little Truckee River drainages, which was floated down those streams and the Truckee River to the mill. In 1870, Jones sold the mill to partners Charles Bragg and Gilman Folsom, who were soon joined by Fred Burkhalter, a prominent Truckee merchant.



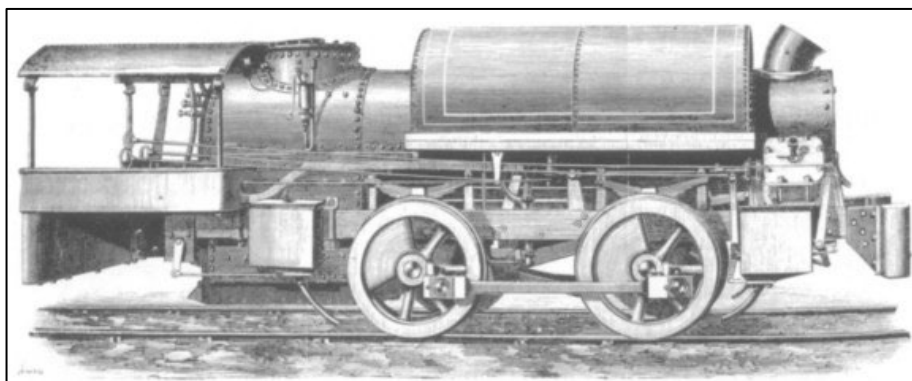
Map of Pacific Lumber & Wood Company Railroads (from *The Pacific Lumber and Wood Company*, by David Spohr, *Western Railroader*, Spring 1990).

In the early 1870s, the partnership began logging on the Juniper Plateau, south of the mill and several hundred feet higher. Teams of oxen dragged logs to a 1600 foot chute that sent them at great speed down the face of

the bluff to the mill pond, where they arrived with a huge splash. By 1878, logging had progressed up the drainage to the point that dragging logs by oxen was no longer cost-efficient, and the partners determined that a narrow-gauge railroad was needed.

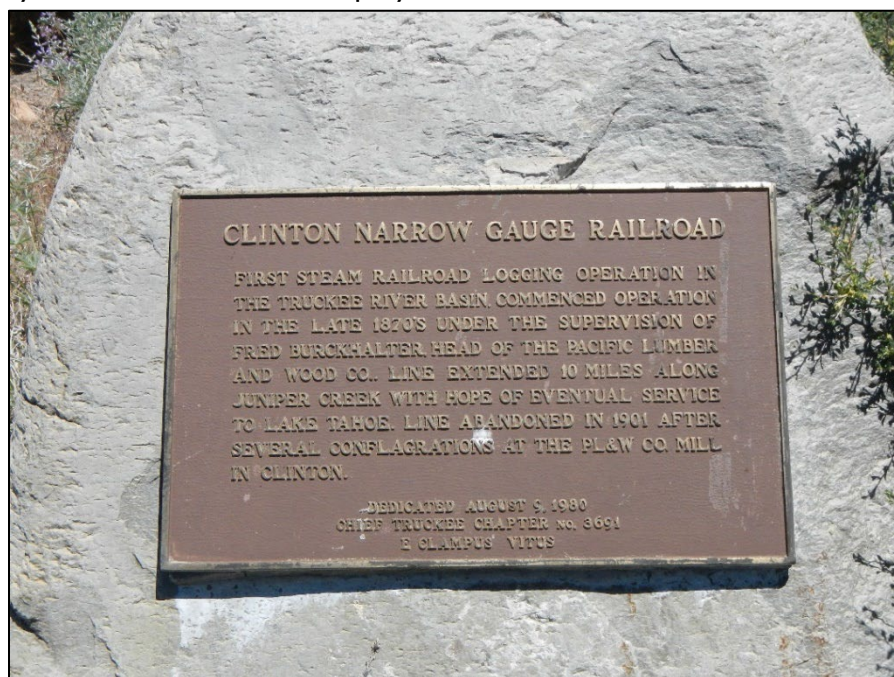
Casting about for a low-cost, local solution, they were able to purchase a little-used 0-4-0 narrow-gauge Porter tank engine from the Sutro Tunnel Company in Nevada. They added a wooden cab and a new stack, a few home-built flat cars, and a couple of miles of lightly-built track, and the railroad was up and running by the end of that summer.

Ultimately, the "Clinton Narrow Gauge," as it was known, extended about 6 miles up Juniper Creek to a point just south of the Placer County line, with a short spur and switchback at East Juniper Creek.



Porter Saddle Tank Mining Locomotive (from <https://www.irsociety.co.uk/Archives/49/Underground.htm>).

By 1890, PL&W's timber stands in the Juniper Creek drainage were largely depleted. Adjacent to the PL&W's timber operation, in the headwaters of the east fork of Martis Creek, was a large uncut stand of timber owned by the Truckee Lumber Company. Truckee Lumber had been in business since 1867 and operated a large mill



Historical Marker "Clinton Narrow Gauge Railroad" (from the Historical Marker Database, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=105205>).

on the south side of the river in Truckee but owned no railroad equipment. The fact that the Burkhalters' daughter Carolyn was married to William Spaulding, Vice President and General Manager of Truckee Lumber, probably helped bring the two companies together. In any case, Truckee Lumber contracted PL&W to build a railroad from the Martis Creek timber to the mill in Truckee. PL&W's track and rolling stock were teamed over the ridge separating the Juniper Creek and East Martis Creek drainages, and the new "Donner and Tahoe Railroad" was built from Klondike Meadow, down East Martis Creek, across Martis Valley and into Truckee. Spurs were built to Dry Lake (Lake Ella) and Monte Carlo Meadow.

PL&W acquired two additional locomotives in the 1890s, both wood-burning 0-6-0 Baldwin saddle tankers. The fate of the original Porter mine locomotive is unknown. PL&W cut timber and hauled logs to the Truckee

Lumber mill for almost 10 years, pushing further into the headwaters of Martis Creek, nearly to the ridge separating Martis Valley from the Tahoe Basin.

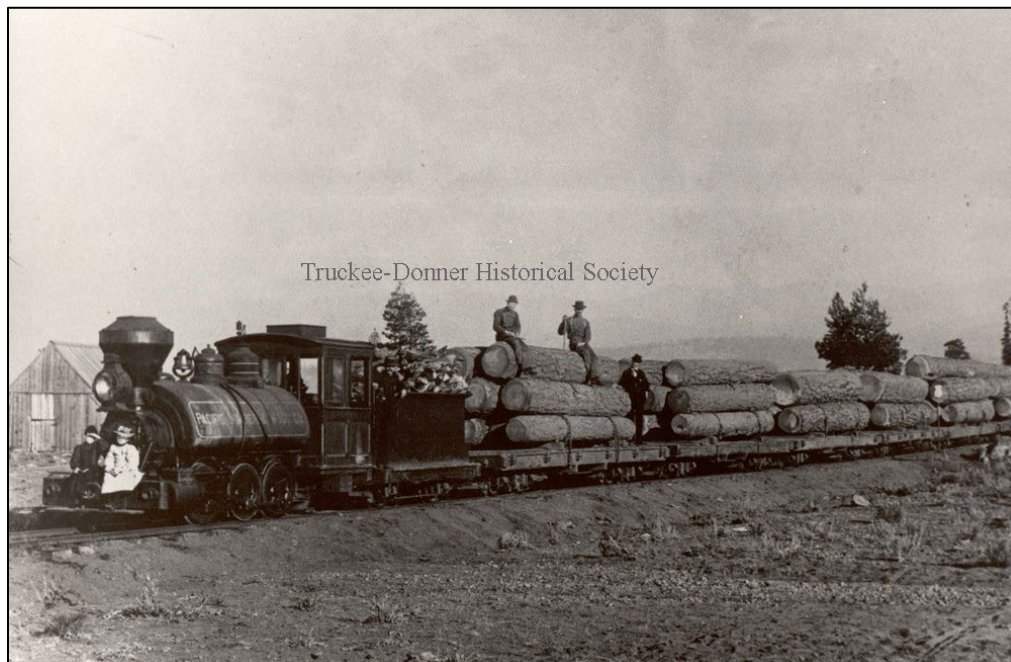


Photo of PL&W log train, 1890s. from TDHS collection.

In an interesting side note to the Donner and Tahoe Railroad story, there was considerable speculation in the late 1890s about the companies extending the railroad over Martis Ridge to Hot Springs (Brockway) to serve the growing commercial and tourist trade at Lake Tahoe. This plan never came to fruition, perhaps because the business opportunity was preempted by the completion of the Lake Tahoe Railway & Transportation

Company's narrow-gauge line from Truckee to Tahoe City in 1900.

Lumbering in the Klondike Meadows and Martis Peak area came to a close in 1900 when all the timber had been cut. After having moved about 100 million board feet of timber over more than two decades, the Pacific Lumber & Wood Company ceased railroad operations that year and sold its equipment to Truckee Lumber. Rails were torn up and repurposed elsewhere in the area along with the engines and rolling stock. The two Baldwin locos were used for a few years for shuttling loads around the mills in Truckee and for logging operations in Ward Valley, and then moved to Oroville around 1910 to take part in an ill-fated logging operation that ultimately brought about the downfall of Truckee Lumber as a going concern. But that's a story for another article.

Material sourced from The Pacific Lumber and Wood Company, by David Spohr in *Western Railroader*, Spring 1990, and *Railroads of Nevada and Eastern California*, Vol 1, by David Myrick.

Truckee River Railroad

Bob Bell

We concluded our 8th (I think) successful season of running the Truckee River Railroad, our 1 1/2" scale miniature train at our Regional Park. We had 9 runs (one rain out) and hosted 3400 rides for our community and visitors. These train days required the help of 360 volunteer hours plus many more hours, mostly by Tom Smith, to keep the trains and track maintained and running. Also, we completed two special runs with Operation Lifesaver railroad safety theme for about 120 school kids. We received a fantastic donation from longtime friend Fred Twigg in Reno that consisted of a 1 1/2" scale battery powered GP38, two riding cars, 400

feet of aluminum track with ties, and 6 switches for future track expansion. This addition to our fleet was a significant addition to our train capacity and operations after the retiring of Tom Smith's steam Forney that he graciously used for our benefit for so many years. We have another engine, engineer cars, and accessories promised in the near future, that I will write about soon, that will further expand our operations capacity and facilities. Of course, without our volunteer crew members none of this would have been possible. So, a big THANK YOU goes out to Nelson and Edna VanGundy, Tom and Teri Smith, Will Eber, Dave and Judy DePuy, Tina Waterfield, Ed Larson, Durk Stelter, Barbara Czerwinski, Jerry Blackwill, Greg Zirbel, Dan and JoAnn Cobb, Ben Bloomfield, Robert Forren, Bill Ramsey, Jay Jacobs, Bobby Carter, and Dave Gregory. We always need more help so please consider coming out next year. If the weather cooperates, we will plan a Santa Christmas run in early December. As the saying goes, Keep Up Your Steam, and more to come.



Photo of park train with riders, July 1, 2023. (Photo by Dan Cobb.)

Volunteer Opportunities

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 snow plow.

Model Railroad – We need additional railroad modelers and builders to construct modular benchwork, install track and wiring, design and build structures and create scenery. Join our committee and build "Truckee 1927"!

To volunteer, drop us a line at info@tdrrs.org. To join or donate, see <https://tdrrs.org/membership>.

Board of Directors	Our History
<p>Jerry Blackwill — President</p> <p>Bob Bell — Executive Vice President and Treasurer</p> <p>Dan Cobb — Vice President, Strategic Planning and Historian</p> <p>Ed Czerwinski — Secretary</p> <p>Nelson Van Gundy —Historian Emeritus</p> <p>Chip Huck — Rolling Stock Restoration & Preservation</p> <p>Judy DePuy — Publicity</p> <p>Tom Smith — Truckee River Railroad</p> <p>Jay Jacobs — Webmaster</p> <p>Bill Ramsey</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Steve Edelman – Newsletter Editor</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>Our Mission</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>
The Truckee Donner Railroad Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, tax-exempt organization. EIN 91-1917864.	