



Quarterly Newsletter of the Truckee Donner Railroad Society

Snowshed

Keeping Truckee's Railroad History Alive!

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Event Calendar

Truckee River Railroad kick off run	May 25
Truckee River Railroad runs	June-September
Trestle Tour: Tahoe City	June 23
Trestle Tour: Hobart Mills	July 21

President's Letter

Jerry Blackwill

We're looking forward to the arrival of Union Pacific's Big Boy steam locomotive in Truckee on July 14th at 3:30. It is scheduled to be in town about ten minutes before heading further east. Planning is now going on between the Railroad Society, the Town of Truckee, and the Truckee Downtown Merchants Association.

Our annual meeting will be held this August 3 at 2 pm, after the Truckee River Railroad run is completed. I am stepping down as president and we will vote for our next President at the meeting. I am endorsing Dan Cobb to be our new President. Dan is currently a society Vice President, board member, and chair of our strategic planning committee. He has also been heading up the construction of our historical HO model railroad layout, "Truckee 1927." Dan will be a great asset as president.

I will continue to serve on the board, offering my support to the Society. During my tenure on the board and later as president, we accomplished several key projects: the Truckee River Railroad became operational, we moved the Rotary Snow Plow and Crane to the Railyard Pocket Park, we collaborated with the Truckee Donner Historical Society to establish the Museum of Truckee History, and we completed the Caboose Railroad Museum.

Our popular Truckee River Railroad starts operation May 25 and will continue every other Saturday until September 28th.

Please come and enjoy our activities and exhibits.

2024 Trestle Tours

Dan Cobb

The Railroad Society is planning at least three trestle tours this summer, including one by a "guest leader" who has written a book on the subject! On June 23rd, we'll be joined by Bo Grebitus, author of *Touching History: Rediscovering Tahoe City's Hidden Waterfront*, for a walking tour in Tahoe City. Bo will show us the locations of the Lake Tahoe Railway and Transportation Company's facilities that existed in the first quarter of the 20th century and will show us historical photos for a "then and now" comparison.

On July 21st, Dan Cobb will lead a hiking tour of the Sierra Nevada Wood & Lumber (later Hobart Estates) grades and trestles around Hobart Mills, north of Truckee. This will include a 2-mile hike along a narrow-gauge logging grade with four fallen trestles and exploration of the main logging line east out of Hobart Mills. In September (date TBD), we also plan to hike the



Remains of a trestle for a long-abandoned logging railroad

Verdi Lumber standard-gauge line north out of Dog Valley. Watch our website for details on these and other possible trestle tours.

Truckee River Railroad

Bob Bell, Trainmaster

The Truckee River Railroad (miniature riding train at our Regional Park) will kick off the run season on May 25 and continue with the following dates: June 8 and 22, July 6 and 20, August 3, 24 and 31, and September 14 and 28. We will have three locomotives available for us and depending on crew and public turnout will have two trains running most of the time. We had a successful workday May 16th with Jerry Blackwill and Bill Ramsey lubing and getting all our switches functioning properly. Durk Stelter and Tom Smith worked on tuning up the engines, his friend Tom Nixon and Ben Bloomfield cleaned the track and cars. If you have helped out before you will be getting emails from me in advance of work and run days, but if you have not helped out in the past and would like to get involved, please contact me at bellbob@sbcglobal.net or text 916-716-7897 to be sure you get information from me when the season starts. Last year we had 2,500 riders, 4,000 rides, and we are always in need of more help. Hope to see you at the track on May 25th and in June!

The First Streamliners

Dan Cobb

We think of the mid-1930s as the depths of the Great Depression, a time marked by bankruptcies, unemployment, bread lines, and widespread suffering. While that was true for many people and businesses, for the railroads it was also a time of technological innovation, bold aesthetic statements, and speed records.

This was in part due to competition from new modes of transportation. Automobiles became more competitive with railroads as rubber-tire roads improved. Passenger airplanes provided a new, exciting, and fast way to travel for those who could afford it. While railroads still provided efficient and comfortable transportation, the steam trains of the day were a dirty and noisy “old technology.”

Railroads had been experimenting with internal combustion engines since the 19-teens, but the early engines and drive trains were neither powerful nor reliable, and they were used mainly for streetcars, switchers, and short branchline trains. At the same time, the public’s fascination with airplanes had created a demand for “streamlining” everything that moved and a few things (like buildings) that didn’t. While aerodynamics wasn’t a major factor for train performance given their slow speeds and heavy weight, many of these early motorcars, such as the McKen car and the Brill streetcars, were “streamlined” to at least look fast.

When the depression hit, urban and branchline services were the first to be cut. Perhaps because of this, the new internal combustion technologies and streamlined designs were refocused on developing fast, modern-looking mainline passenger services. In Europe, the streamlined German *Schienenzeppelin* train set a speed record of 120 MPH as early as 1931. In the U.S., the Budd Company and Pullman-Standard were early pioneers in combining lightweight aluminum construction with petroleum-powered engines, and attracted interest from the Union Pacific and Chicago, Burlington, & Quincy (CB&Q) railroads.

In early 1934, the CB&Q launched its *Burlington Zephyr*, an all-aluminum 3-car trainset powered by a 600 hp diesel-electric locomotive. Union Pacific followed quickly with its own 3-car streamlined trainset, the M-10000. The M-10000 consisted of a combined power car / rolling post office and two passenger cars, powered by a 600 hp engine that burned a petroleum distillate similar to kerosene. The engine powered a generator which in turn powered electric traction motors on each of the two trucks, much like today's diesel-electrics. The passenger cars were articulated, sharing common trucks to minimize weight and friction, and had tapered sides, adding to the "streamlined" look. As a result, however, the interiors were about a foot narrower than conventional passenger cars.



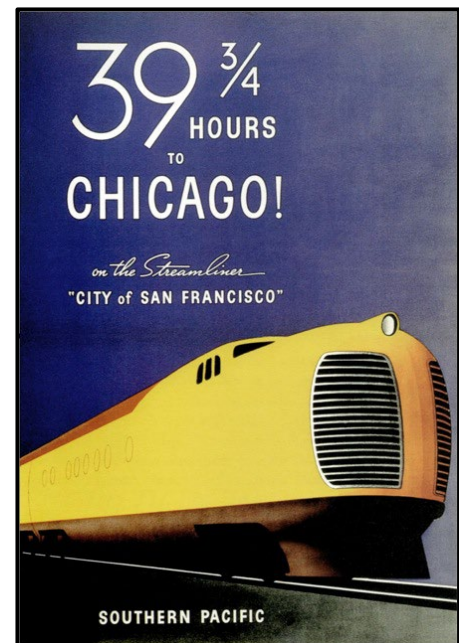
Union Pacific's M-10000 (left) and CB&Q's Burlington Zephyr (right) in 1934 (photo downloaded from "Streamliner Memories")

Nicknamed "Little Zip," or less charitably "the tin worm," the M-10000 was sent on a 13,000 mile publicity tour around the U.S. and then put on display at the 1934 World's Fair in Chicago. It entered revenue service between Kansas City, Missouri and Salina, Kansas as *The Streamliner* on January 31, 1935, and was renamed *City of Salina* about 3 months later.

Based on the success and popularity of the M-10000, Union Pacific commissioned the construction of six more streamliners as the *City of Portland* (M-10001), the *City of Los Angeles* (M-10002), *City of San Francisco* (M-10004), and the *City of Denver* "twins" (M-10005 and M-10006). M-10003 and put into service as a backup for the other "City" trains. All of these trains had two power cars and four to seven passenger cars, all articulated like the original M-10000.

The new streamliners not only looked fast, they were fast. In May 1934 the *Zephyr* set a record of 13 hours from Denver to Chicago, averaging over 77 mph. In October 1934, the M-10001 set an as-yet unbroken record of 57 hours coast to coast on an exhibition run from Los Angeles to New York City. The 9-car, 1800 hp *City of San Francisco* bettered the fastest steam timetables of the day by more than 20 hours with a schedule of 39 $\frac{3}{4}$ hours from San Francisco to Chicago or, as the advertising put it, "one day and two nights". It ran five times a month in each direction.

Truckee residents would have been aware of the streamliners from advertisements in the major newspapers and frequent reporting even in small town journals, but would have experienced the *City* only as a blur in the night as it came through non-stop between Sacramento and Reno. The eastbound sped through town around 10 PM, and the westbound was undoubtedly noisier as it powered up for the climb over Donner Pass at about 3:00 in the morning. Truckee passengers bound for Chicago would have taken the local to Reno in the afternoon, had a leisurely dinner, and boarded the *City* about 10:30 PM.



Magazine ad for the 1936 City of San Francisco.

While the M-10000 series trains were popular and fast, they were obsolete almost as soon as they were put in service. The engines proved to be underpowered for their service assignments, especially over Donner Pass. They were also expensive to maintain, and diesel-electric technology was improving very quickly. The shared-truck design of the articulated cars also made it more difficult to switch out power and passenger units for maintenance and repair when compared to conventional equipment. The M-10004 only lasted 18 months in service on the Overland Route before it was replaced with a 14-car train powered by a 5400 hp three-unit EMC E-2 diesel lash-up with passenger cars articulated in pairs, rather than the full train. The original M-10004 power units were reassigned to the other City trains as booster engines, as were the passenger cars for increased capacity. The remaining City trains were in service until WWII, when most of the equipment was scrapped for the war effort.



Union Pacific Streamlined 4-6-2 steam engine (photo from steamlocomotive.com)

While the first streamliners were short-lived, they had a lasting effect on locomotive design. From the 1930s through the 1960s, the streamlined “car body” shape dominated passenger diesels such as the EMC/EMD “E” and “F” series, ALCO PA, Baldwin DR, and Fairbanks-Morse Erie-Built and CPAs. Many railroads also shrouded their passenger steam locomotives to create a similar streamlined appearance. Steam locomotive streamlining had little impact on performance, but as one railroad executive of the era put it “streamlining is not to lower air resistance but to lower passenger resistance.”

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 snowplow.

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

Jerry Blackwill — President
Bob Bell — Executive Vice President and Treasurer
Dan Cobb — Vice President, Strategic Planning and Historian
Ed Czerwinski — Secretary
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Chip Huck — Rolling Stock Restoration & Preservation
Jay Jacobs — Webmaster
Bill Ramsey
Tom Smith — Truckee River Railroad

Our History

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.

Our Mission

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.

The Truckee Donner Railroad Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, tax-exempt organization. EIN 91-1917864.