

Snowshed

March, 2011

Volume 4 Number 1

Major Sierra Snow Keeps Crews Busy

Nelson Van Gundy



News Flash!

- Sierra hit with major winter snowfall
- Endowment reaches initial goal



UP Spreader



UP Flanger

Snow removal equipment at the ready in Truckee



Amtrak enters Truckee after snow clearing

It has been an interesting winter in Truckee and on Donner Pass. UP brought up three flanger sets and two spreader sets in November with the first series of storms, and they have stayed pretty busy throughout the winter. The snowfall in the Tahoe Basin has continually run well above 100% of average, and it is snowing again right now [March 20, 2011] with more in the forecast. The new/rebuilt spreaders seem to be working well. Union Pacific's method of running them in tandem, with the lead spreader moving snow from along the high side to the low side, and the follower moving the snow across the roadbed to the low side, has so far prevented a rotary call-out.

December 2010 Trains magazine had a great article by Dick Dorn on the rebuilding and use of the spreaders; also in that issue is a story of rotary use in the Mid West which is quite informative.

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TDRS Museum Report

Don Davis

It is hard to believe that a year has passed since opening the museum and that our visitor count will soon pass 6000. While we've had some heavy snowstorms this winter, we've only missed 2½ days that we had planned to be open. Many thanks to our docent crew for that record.

We opened on Train Day, May 8 2010 and are now making preparations for our "Birthday" celebration on the upcoming Train Day, May 7, 2011. We will celebrate with an Open House complete with birthday cake and a minimum of oratory.

We do not have all the details worked out yet but a round trip package with Amtrak is coming together to bring visitors up from Reno to Truckee for the day on the California Zephyr. There is also potential for a package from the Bay Area or Sacramento that would include a discounted room at the Truckee Hotel. If this can be put together, we will let you know the details via E-mail.

Several volunteer opportunities will be available this spring. There is some minor carpentry to be done on the deck and it will need a coat of paint. We have a bit of snowplow rash received during the winter that needs some paint as well. The paint used to cover the windows behind displays has peeled off and we need someone to investigate solutions (possibly plastic window tint?). Lastly we can use several more docents in the pool in order to get to the point where only one shift a month is required. If you can help in any of these areas it will enable us to use more of the donations we receive for new displays, equipment restoration and fund raising for the future museum. If you would like to help in

any of these areas, contact me at dda-vis@ltol.com.

To keep the visitors coming we need to keep adding new displays to the museum. Thanks go to Ron Mason for creating a display on the summit tunnel (no. 6). We plan to place it in the Transcontinental Railroad theme area for all to see by the "Birthday" Celebration. Bob Bell and Nelson Van Gundy are working on another new display featuring a Shay locomotive to be added in the "logging" theme area. If you haven't been to the museum in a while, come see us.

Presidents Letter

Jim Hood

The majority of the effort of the Tahoe Donner Railroad Society is now focused on two primary activities. The first is the continued operation and improvement of our existing Interim Museum. The second is the planning activity for our Permanent Museum.

The Interim Museum continues to have excellent interest from the public with well over 6000 visitors since the Museum opened in May 2010. Renewal of the exhibits is essential to maintain the public interest. Two new exhibits have been approved by the Board of Directors and are currently in the planning and/or construction phase. An adequate supply of Docents continues to be a challenge. Currently a small number of people (less than six) are filling the vast majority of shifts. We strongly request that our existing members become more active in the Docent program - it is really quite enjoyable to talk to visitors about the "Truckee Railroad" Story and can be quite rewarding. The second activity is the planning of our permanent Museum. Jerry Blackwill has

completed an excellent Market Analysis of the economic impact that a "proper" Railroad Museum can have on the Town of Truckee. The Strategic Planning Committee is currently working on the definition of the features and floor space requirements for the future Museum. Next comes the effort to get overall buy in with a generic concept for the Museum. In addition, we are making the first steps toward developing a fund raising program for the Museum. This is obviously a long term project but our goal remains to open the Museum on the 150th anniversary of the first train arriving in Truckee from Sacramento on the Transcontinental Railroad. That anniversary will occur in 2018.

Conquering the Sierra

Ron Mason

During construction of the Transcontinental Railroad the Central Pacific encountered numerous challenges, specifically tunneling in the steep hard granite rock of the Sierra Nevada Mountains between Sacramento and Truckee Meadows (Reno). Progress was slow and dangerous as Black Powder was used to blast the granite rock in tunnels and cuts along the right of way. Excavation using Black Powder required boring holes by hand, tamping the powder into the holes and exiting the area before the charge was ignited. The debris was then removed by hand and cart to the nearest flat car for disposition. Progress averaged approximately two feet per day using black powder; however, in 1867 James Howden introduced nitroglycerin for blasting. Due to its unstable nature the "nitro" was mixed on site and used only in the Summit Tunnel; progress increased from two feet per day to four feet per day due to the increased power of the nitroglycerin.

In order to accelerate completion of the Summit Tunnel, a 124' vertical shaft was dug above the tunnel down to the level of the horizontal bore.

This allowed the excavation to proceed in four directions reducing the overall time required to complete the 1,659 foot long tunnel. Excavation of the shaft and rock from the horizontal bores was accomplished by stripping an early locomotive, "The Sacramento", of non-essential parts, hauling it to the summit by oxen, positioning it above the shaft, and attaching it to a hoisting mechanism.

In August 1867 workers broke through the ends of the tunnel with an accuracy of two inches between the East and West bores, a tribute to the surveying skills and methods used at the time. Although currently not in use by the Union Pacific Railroad, the Summit Tunnel is structurally sound and with further enlargement may be used again in the future.

Society Reaches \$10,000 Endowment Goal

With a final \$350 dollar donation, our society has reached its objective of establishing an endowment with an initial \$10,000 investment. This is a great start but not the end of the story. We need to continue growing this fund to not only generate a reliable revenue stream but demonstrate to potential donors that we are a serious organization worthy of their support. Your continued endowment giving are the gifts that keep on giving!

Your Input Please

We are always looking for input for Snowshed articles. If you have ideas, photographs or articles you would like to see included in the newsletter, please send your thoughts to Steve Disbrow at sjdisbrow@yahoo.com

Truckee Donner Railroad Society

Society Mission:

To preserve, interpret, and educate the public about rail-roading 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 Donner Railroad Society
P.O. Box 3838
Truckee, Ca 96160

www.truckeedonnerrailroadsociety.com
501(c) 3 non-profit organization

Board of Directors:

Jim Hood—President

Bob Bell—Vice President/
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Ed Czerwinski—Secretary

Nelson Van Gundy —
Historian

Jerry Blackwill

Don Clukey

Don Davis

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Ted Owens

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 in to 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 Enjoy
- ◆ A place to Interact

Current Projects Seeking Support

- ◆ Caboose Museum Interior
- ◆ Crane Rehabilitation
- ◆ Rotary Restoration
- ◆ Sleeper Restoration
- ◆ Switcher Operational repair
- ◆ Internet Book Sales

If you are able to support any of these projects with your time, talent or dollars, please contact us.

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