

Snowshed

August, 2022

Volume 15 Number 2



News & Events:

TDRS annual meeting & picnic—August 20th at 3:00 PM, Regional Park.

The Truckee Railroad Museum (the caboose) is open Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 4.

The Museum of Truckee History is open Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from 10 to 4.

The Truckee River Railroad (ride-on train) runs 8/20, 9/3, 9/24, 10/8.

Boca & Loyalton Trestle Tour: Sept. 10th, 8:30 a.m.

Contents:

President's Letter, 1
by Jerry Blackwill

Summer Fun on the Truckee River Railroad, 1
by Bob Bell

Hobart Mills and the Hobart Estate Railroad, 2
by Dan Cobb

Fall Trestle Tours 3

Presidents Letter

By Jerry Blackwill

This season is shaping up very well. The Truckee River Railroad in the Truckee River Regional Park is able to give over 400 rides every two weeks. Our caboose museum is open for most shifts on the weekend. Dan Cobb is taking over running the Trestle Tours from Nelson Van Gundy. Thanks, Nelson for your many years researching and running these tours (see Dan's article in this issue of *Snowshed*.)

Jay Jacobs is our newest board member. Jay continues to be our webmaster and has plans to update our website. Greg Kuzma had to step down because of work responsibilities. We hope to have Greg on our board again once his workload decreases.

A number of us were able to go to the Train Mountain Triennial event in June. Train Mountain has over 35 miles of 7 1/2" gauge railroad track winding through the Oregon forest. If you're not careful, you can get lost with the multitude of switch options.

Thanks again to all our members who operate the trains and help with the crowds. We can always use more volunteers to help run the trains and staff the museum. If you would like to get involved, please contact either museum_manager@truckeedonnerrailroadsociety.com or kids_train@truckeedonnerrailroadsociety.com. Also, please send your membership renewal in as soon as possible. Take advantage of the offer of free rides on the Virginia and Truckee railroad out of Virginia City—see our website for details.

Jerry Blackwill
President

Summer Fun on the Truckee River Railroad

By Bob Bell

The Truckee River Railroad continues to be a big hit here in Truckee. To date we have run 6 Saturdays and have had 2,435 riders running both Tom Smith's steam Forney and our battery powered Diesel GP35. Running these trains has required 245 volunteer hours to date (not counting track, engine, and facility maintenance) and we want to thank everyone that has helped out

Continued on Page 2

Summer Fun on the Truckee River Railroad (continued from Page 1)

running the engines, conducting safety training and education, issuing tickets, operating the crossing gates, maintaining the track, and the numerous other tasks to operate the railroad. We have four more scheduled runs on August 20, September 3 and 24, and October 8. Please contact me if you would like to help out. We always need your help and we are confident you will have a good time also.



Bob Bell

Hobart Mills and the Hobart Estate Railroad

By Dan Cobb

About 6 miles north of Truckee on Highway 89, there's a side road with a small sign that says "Hobart Mills". If you give in to curiosity and turn off the highway there, you'll find yourself in the midst of an industrial scene with construction equipment, storage containers, and endless piles of rocks, gravel, dirt, and logs. It's hard to imagine anyone living there now, but this was once a thriving company town and railroad hub with a population of 1,500.

The town of Hobart Mills was built by the Sierra Nevada Wood and Lumber Company (SNW&L) when it had exhausted its timber holdings in the Lake Tahoe basin, in and above what is now Incline Village. In 1895-96, SNW&L dismantled and moved its milling and railroad equipment to the new location north of Truckee, and built a new sawmill, box factory, locomotive and rail car servicing facility, a hotel, and housing for 1,000 residents. By 1900, the town boasted a school, hospital, post office, and numerous social clubs. Saloons and liquor sales were banned.



Hobart Inn, Hobart Mills, California (TDHS collection)

SNW&L, or Hobart Estate as it was called after 1917, used narrow-gauge railroads to move logs from the forests to the mill. Narrow gauge rail was cheaper and lighter than standard gauge rail, and could accommodate tighter curves. Hobart built temporary lines into new logging areas, following the contours and using local timber to build light trestles, moving as little dirt and rock as possible. Donkey engines were used to drag logs to the nearest rail spur, and geared Shay locomotives pulled trains of 28-foot flat cars through the mountains to the mill at Hobart Mills. Once the timber was exhausted, workers would pull up the rails and move them to the next cut, leaving the trestles and anything else they didn't value to decay in the cut-over forest. Hobart ran spur lines west and north up Prosser, Sagehen, and Independence creeks and the Little Truckee River in the 1900s and 1910s, and east and

Hobart Mills and the Hobart Estates Railroad (continued from Page 2)

north along Davies and Merrill creeks near Sardine Valley in the 1920s and early 30s. At any given time, Hobart had as much as 25 miles of narrow-gauge lines and spurs in operation.



Log train at Hobart Mills (TDHS collection)

To move the milled lumber to market, SNW&L built a standard-gauge railroad from Hobart Mills to Truckee, where it connected with the Central Pacific Railroad. Known as the Hobart Southern, the 7-mile railroad followed a mostly level route around the west side of what is now Prosser Creek Reservoir and into Truckee at the east end of town. Conventional rod engines, including the ex-V&T "J. W. Bowker", were used for the run to Truckee. In addition to moving lumber to market and supplies to the town, the Hobart Southern provided convenient transportation for visitors to the company town, and for Hobart residents to Truckee for shopping and entertainment not available locally.

The sawmill at Hobart shut down in 1936 when the virgin timber had been exhausted and further operation became unprofitable. With no local jobs available, residents moved on. Equipment was sold off, structures were gradually sold or salvaged, and the cut-over land was sold to the U.S. Forest Service.

While the Hobart Mills townsite has been largely obliterated by decades of industrial use, evidence of their thirty-plus years of railroad logging abounds in the forests north of Truckee. Many of the back roads and trails follow the old railroad grades, and collapsed trestles and other evidence of the logging railroads can be found if you know where to look (see *Fall Trestle Tours*, below). Both the Truckee Railroad Museum (caboose) and the Museum of Truckee History have exhibits on logging railroads and the lumber industry around Truckee.



Hobart Estates Narrow-gauge Trestle, north of Truckee (photo by Dan Cobb)

Dan Cobb

Fall Trestle Tours

TDRS will offer two Trestle Tours this fall, weather permitting. On September 10th, Dan Cobb will lead a driving tour of the route of the Boca and Loyalton Railroad, beginning at Boca at 8:30 AM and ending in Loyalton in the early afternoon. In October (date TBD), Dan will lead a hiking tour to several remote Hobart Estates trestles and other logging railroad artifacts. Watch our website, truckeedon-nerrailroadsociety.com, or [email Dan](mailto:Dan) for details of both tours.

Truckee Donner Railroad Society

Board of Directors:

Jerry Blackwill — President

Bob Bell — Executive Vice President and Treasurer

Ed Larson — Vice President, Museum Operations

Dan Cobb — Vice President, Strategic Planning and Historian

Ed Czerwinski — Secretary

Nelson Van Gundy — Historian Emeritus

Chip Huck — Rolling Stock Restoration & Preservation

Judy DePuy — Publicity

Tom Smith — Truckee River Railroad

Jay Jacobs — Webmaster

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.

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.

Donate!

You can also help by donating at our website, truckeedonerrailroadsociety.com, at the bottom of the home page.

The Truckee Donner Railroad Society is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization.

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