

Snowshed

December 2015

Volume 8 Number 4

President's Letter



- Truckee River Railroad still a huge success!
- Future focus of miniature railroad to feature safety first
- Several organizations donate to support pedestrian crossing guard
- Optimist club makes significant donation to the TRK

In side

Truckee River Railroad 2
has banner first full
year of operation

Static Train completed and 2
installed in the Park

Mouse Hole Mystery 2
Solved

Jim Hood

2015 has been a very busy year for the Tahoe Donner Railroad Society and we have experienced many successes. The Truckee River Railroad - a 1/8 scale riding railroad that we constructed in the Truckee Regional Park – operated successfully in 2015 with significant crowds of enthusiastic riders. It takes a relatively large staff to operate the Railroad and I want to thank all of the volunteers who allowed us to function on a regularly scheduled basis. The major contributors to planning, building and operation of this Railroad are Bob Bell and Tom Smith. Bob and Tom are actively working on adding more track and adding an “Operation Life Saver” feature to the layout in 2016.

The visitation at our Museum has continued to be very good and I want to personally thank Don Davis for all of his hard work in keeping the Museum running. I also want to thank all of the Docents who give generously of their time so that we can continue to have our doors open.

The Brewster West Foundation made a very generous donation to the Museum in 2015. They are by far our largest contributor. We have used their contributions to continue to upgrade our Museum and keep the exhibits “fresh” for visitors.

In 2015 we started working cooperatively with the Truckee Donner Historical Society and the McGlashan Family to define a “Truckee Historical Museum” to preserve and present the rich history of our area. A group consisting of three members each from the two societies has started working on a business plan for the new museum. We have set a time frame of five years to have a new, permanent museum in operation.

The annual meeting of the Truckee Donner Railroad Society was held on August 30th at the home of Carey and Jim Hood. Attendees had plenty of food and beverage and received an update of the Societies activities.

I want to thank all of our members and friends for their support throughout 2015 and to wish all of you a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

Truckee River Railroad

Bob Bell

Our first full year of operation is behind us and we had 2,704 riders sign up. We know many kids were riding multiple times during the day so our ridership easily exceeded 3,000. Our record holder is a young lad that rode nine times in one day! Many thanks to our volunteers that enjoyed helping to run the railroad: Tom and Teri Smith, Steve and Marilyn Disbrow, Nelson VanGundy, Ed Larson, Laurie and Roger Skinner, Don Clukey, Jim Schmidt, Jerry and Kay Blackwill, Bill Sunnergren, Glee Willis, Greg Zirbell, Bob Gray, Tom Combs, and Charlie Lix combining for well over 1,000 hours of operations time.

The static train addition to the kids playground area is complete along with the concrete foundation for our snowshed. We will spend the winter building track panels for our phase 2 expansion and should start laying track in the early summer after our final grading. Thanks to the same group of volunteers plus Ed Geiger, Ed Czerwinski, and Don Davis for helping with various construction and maintenance work. Please watch for our Wednesday day and/or evening work day email announcements to our volunteers and please contact me at "bellbob@sbcglobal.net" if you want to receive notices of volunteer work and train operations this summer. Learning to operate the train is simple and rewarding and the kids and parents are very appreciative of our efforts. We would love to have more people getting a share of the fun. Congratulations to Tom Smith, Jerry Blackwill, Ed and Barbara Czerwinski, for becoming authorized Operation Lifesaver volunteers. We plan to present RR safety education when possible on Truckee Thursdays and when our Train runs at the park next summer.



The completed static Train



Future TRR Engineers



We all know the Highway 89 Union Pacific undercrossing affectionately called the "Mouse Hole" and you may know a second under crossing the "Mini-Mouse Hole" providing a safer pedestrian & bicycle path, is in the final stages of construction.

During this construction, two pieces of wood, 12" x 12" x 5' and two smaller fragments were uncovered. Since it was common practice to fill trestles with soil rather than maintain the wooden structures, the first thought was perhaps they were segments of

the original Central Pacific trestle over Donner Creek constructed in 1876. (A picture of this trestle, taken in 1902, is on page 76 of John Signor's book "Donner Pass"). The pieces were placed in a dry and secure location while we continue to discover their story.

The CP track was realigned in 1911 to smooth out a curve; moving the track about 100 feet to the south where it crossed Donner Creek. Rather than build a new trestle, they built a culvert for the creek and laid a berm over it. The berm measured 70 feet from the top of the culvert to the base of the rail above. The berm was widened in 1913 when the second track was laid and is the berm we see today. So how did our wood segments get into this berm?

In 1928/9 the Mouse Hole was built to accommodate a road (now Highway 89) connecting Highway 40 to Lake Tahoe to pass underneath. The Historical Society had a copy of the construction drawings which describe the building of a temporary trestle to handle rail traffic during the construction. The plans call for bents (vertical assemblies supporting the structure) spaced roughly 14 feet apart reaching +/- 81 feet out from the centerline of the mouse hole structure.

Now, fast forward to 2015 and the construction of the "Mini-Mouse Hole" which could not interrupt railroad traffic, and led to a very interesting construction method. A reinforced concrete shell 15' wide, 16' high, by 111' long was constructed on the south side of the berm. It looked like a box with open ends. Next, 33 pipes were driven horizontally through the berm, outside the perimeter of the planned structure. The pipes were connected in series forming a huge refrigerator element embedded in the berm. Refrigerant was then pumped through, freezing the ground. Next, the box was pushed up against the berm with the open end against the slope. Then dirt was dug out from inside the box while hydraulically pushing the box structure through the frozen ground. Grout pumped through holes in the sides of the box served both as a lubricant and filled any voids that developed. The path was parallel to the highway, about 50 ft from its centerline and at a 60 degree angle to the track.

So what's the problem? If the bents were in the locations shown on the plans, the construction should have encountered 10 or more piles, not two. There are several theories. Perhaps the piles were not driven as deep since it was a "temporary" trestle, or perhaps most were pulled out after completion, or perhaps they weren't there in the first place. There are some hints in the drawings that indicate the excavation may not have been as extensive as indicated in one part of the drawings and therefore the trestle would be much smaller with fewer bents. The next step will be to see if the State Highway department has any records of the Underpass Construction.



Next issue, discover the joy of our many trestle tours and the history of the Incline Rail Road and the Bull wheel (pictured at left) that pulled lumber from the Mills in Incline Village to the flumes that sent it on its way to the Comstock Load.

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

Board of Directors:

Jim Hood—President

Bob Bell—Executive Vice President/Treasurer

Don Davis—Vice President, Museum Operations

Jerry Blackwill—Vice President, Strategic Planning

Ed Czerwinski—Secretary

Nelson Van Gundy — Historian

Barbara Czerwinski

Steve Disbrow

Chip Huck

Bonnie Thompson (on leave)

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.

- ◆ A place to Discover
- ◆ A place to Interact
- ◆ A place to Enjoy

Current Projects Seeking Support

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

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

Year	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																		
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