

THE JOURNEY

ISSUE No. 1, JANUARY 2024

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NEWS & VIEWS



WHY TUOLUMNE RAILROADS? AND WHY THRA?

By Glenn Sutherland

First of all, welcome to the inaugural issue of the Tuolumne Historical Railroad Association, Inc., ("THRA") newsletter, *THE JOURNEY*. To those of you who have already joined THRA, thank you; we sincerely appreciate your interest and support.

THRA was formed with the mission of preserving the history of all the railroads of Tuolumne County, CA. The founders of THRA obviously believed that those railroads are significant, and their history is worth preserving. By joining THRA, you show that you agree. Therefore, in this inaugural newsletter, we thought it important to document why the railroads of Tuolumne County are significant.

We believe that Tuolumne County's historical railroads are significant because of their extent, variety, longevity, notoriety, and inter-connectedness. Let's consider each of these attributes in turn.

Many of us first became aware of the scope of the railroads in Tuolumne County from the map on the inside cover of Dorothy Newell Deane's 1960 book *Sierra Railway*. That map, drawn by Alfred Rose, Jr. in 1955, showed an amazing spiderweb of railroads in and around Tuolumne County. At the upper right was a list of 20 – yes, 20! – different railroads. The sheer quantity and extent of the railroads in such a small area is remarkable. We will include a list of all Tuolumne County railroads in the next issue of this newsletter.

While the density of railroads in Tuolumne County is impressive, their variety is even more so. Over the past 127 years (and counting), those railroads have carried passengers and general freight, served gold mines, delivered logs to the mill and lumber to market, built major dams, hosted countless excursions, and filmed hundreds of Hollywood movies and TV shows. The variety extends to just about every type of trackage: several different track gauges, turntables, wyes, dual gauge track, switchbacks, inclines to pull cars uphill, and inclines to lower cars down. Locomotives have ranged from early 4-4-0s to modern low-emissions diesels, and everything in between, including Shays, Heislars, and an articulated steam locomotive. The terrain includes wide-open prairies, foothills, deep canyons, high mountain passes, nail-biting cliffs, and seemingly endless forests. The variety of Tuolumne County railroading is astounding.

Tuolumne County railroads also have demonstrated impressive longevity. Both the West Side Lumber Company and the Pickering Lumber Company used steam-powered trains to deliver logs to their respective mills for over six decades, and the Pickering extended railroad logging into the diesel era. The Sierra, which started it all in 1897, is still operating today, and looks forward to a long future both as a steam excursion railroad and as a commercial freight railroad.

As a result of their variety and longevity, many Tuolumne railroads have become very well-known, among both railroad fans and even the public at large. Many books have been published about one or more Tuolumne County railroads (watch for a future article listing those books). Railroad and model railroad magazines have included numerous articles about Tuolumne railroads; one of them called the Sierra Railroad the "Perfect Prototype" for modeling. Information on Tuolumne railroads is all over YouTube, Facebook, and other social media. A great many models of Tuolumne locomotives and cars have been produced, particularly for the Sierra Railway and the West Side Lumber Company (watch for a future article listing all Tuolumne County railroad models produced). Finally, the (Continues on Page 2)

(Continued from Page 1) Sierra Railway is considered to be the most recognizable railroad in the world, due to its appearance in hundreds of Hollywood movies and television shows. Tuolumne County railroads are very well-known and loved.

While the Sierra Railway is perhaps the best-known, many of the Tuolumne County railroads were inter-connected – physically, operationally, and/or financially. On the THRA membership application form, we ask applicants to indicate which railroads are of particular interest to them. Almost everyone checks many on the list, and some even add a couple. That confirms why THRA chose to include all the railroads of Tuolumne County in its mission: they come as a package, and they are significant.

If you are not already a member, please consider joining. You can do this on our website, www.TuolumneRailroad.org. To those of you who are members, thank you again. We are glad you're on board as we pursue our mission of preserving the history of all the railroads of Tuolumne County. Welcome to *THE JOURNEY!*

ORIGINS OF THE SIERRA RAILWAY SEMINAR AND THRA - PART ONE

By John Zach

In the summer of 1992, the first issue of the *Sierra Railway Journal* was published by the Railtown 1897 Docent Association. The Editor was Curt Bianchi, the Associate Editor was Larry Jensen, and the Contributing Editor was Kyle Wyatt. The Docent Association also created the Sierra Railway Historical Society, which held periodic meetings. The purposes of the *Journal* and the Historical Society were to provide a way for individuals to share knowledge of the history of the Sierra Railway, and to support Railtown 1897 State Historic Park.

For the next six years, the *Journal* and the Historical Society were a key source of information on Sierra Railway history and current developments at Railtown 1897. The Historical Society brought Dave Connery, Glenn Sutherland, me, and many others together to share our interest in modeling the Sierra Railway.

The *Journal* was a high-quality publication with original articles, plans, and photos of Sierra Railway history, Railtown 1897 happenings, and occasional modeling of the Sierra Railway. Thirteen issues were produced between 1992 and 1998. We hope to post all the issues to our members-only section of the THRA website in the near future. (Continues on Page 3)

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**WEST SIDE LUMBER COMPANY NO. 2 ON
DISPLAY IN WEST SIDE MEMORIAL PARK,
TUOLUMNE, CA.**



**SUGAR PINE RAILWAY / PICKERING
LUMBER CORPORATION NO. 3 ON DISPLAY
AT THE FAIRGROUNDS IN SONORA, CA.**

(Continued from Page 2)

Prior to the Historical Society, there was the *Sierra Newsletter*, produced by Charles Beargie of Cleveland, Ohio. It also ran for thirteen issues and allowed us to share our knowledge of the Sierra Railway and our HO scale layouts. Once we had the chance to meet in person through the Historical Society, we developed a strong fellowship for the Sierra Railway.

In 1997, the California State Railroad Museum Foundation (CSRMF) became the non-profit associated with Railtown 1897. The Railtown 1897 Docent Association was merged into the CSRMF, transferring \$5,465 towards future issues of the *Journal* and \$7,190 towards the future rebuilding of the Jamestown depot. Sadly, with this change, the Historical Society and the *Journal* both ceased to exist in 1998.

In the fall of 2008, Glenn Sutherland had an open house at his home in Midpines, CA, for his Sierra Railway HO scale layout. It was during a BBQ lunch that Dave Connery, Glenn Sutherland, and I came up with the concept of having an annual Sierra Railway Seminar. The Seminar would follow the lead of the former Historical Society, featuring presentations on the history of the Sierra Railway, and modeling the line.

The first Sierra Seminar was held on May 2, 2009. There has been a Sierra Seminar every year since 2009, except for 2020 and 2021, due to Covid. The first seminar brought 40 supporters of the Sierra Railway together for a day-long event. The main activities of that first Seminar were a trip to Railtown to learn about the restoration of Sierra 4-6-0 No. 3, a hike on the right-of-way of the the Angels Branch in Calaveras County, and a tour of the remaining buildings in Angels Camp. In the following years, there have been trips/hikes from Oakdale to Cooperstown, the Melones Dam Branch, the Don Pedro Dam Branch, and a hike along the original 1897 main line right-of-way through the Red Hills. There have been numerous presentations on the history of the Sierra's equipment and structures, as well as presentations on modeling the Sierra Railway. Also included have been themed model displays (e.g., Sierra depots), silent auctions, and show-and-tell opportunities.

Starting in 2010, the Seminar has been held in mid-April on Sunday, the day after the West Side Reunion, a gathering of logging railroad fans. For the past several years, the number of Seminar attendees has been in the 70 to 80 range. For the past four years, the two events have been held at the same location, the Senior Center in Sonora. In 2024, both the West Side Reunion and the Sierra Seminar will be held at the Black Oak Casino Hotel in Tuolumne City on Saturday and Sunday, April 20 and 21.

Part Two of this story will deal with the creation of the Tuolumne Historical Railroad Association, Inc., in 2021. Watch for it in the next issue of *THE JOURNEY!*

TALK ABOUT QUALIFIED!

THRA is governed by a board of directors comprised of nine individuals with very diverse and extensive experiences, as follows:

- One is the retired Curator of the California State Railroad Museum.
- Four have direct, hands-on experience in operating railroad excursion trains.
- One has a collection of over 500,000 railroad photos, including many of Tuolumne County railroads.
- Five have had direct experience at Railtown 1897.
- Two have published books about Tuolumne County railroads, and a third has published other railroad books.
- Four have direct experience working in cooperation with California State Parks.
- One did his master's thesis on the early history of the Sierra Railway.
- At least one member of the board has professional experience in...
 - o Law
 - o Accounting
 - o Government
 - o Tourism
 - o Freight railroads
- All nine members are dedicated to THRA's mission to preserve, enhance, and interpret the rich railroad history of Tuolumne County, CA, and the surrounding region.

Want to learn more? See the biographies about our nine THRA directors in the "ABOUT US" menu at www.TuolumneRailroad.org.

LOCOMOTIVE "JEWELRY" SAVED FROM SIERRA RAILWAY LOCOMOTIVES

By Martin E. Hansen and Kyle Wyatt

Introduction

In this article, we will explore the various pieces of Sierra Railway locomotive "jewelry" that has been saved over the years. Jewelry means the number plates, builder's plates, whistles, bells, and other collectable items of both steam and diesel locomotives.

History of Collecting Locomotive Jewelry

Even in the early days of steam locomotives, certain items that were applied to these locomotives were deemed collectable to a certain extent.

The first items that were routinely saved from a steam locomotive that was to be scrapped was the bell. Not only was the bell a large piece of brass that had value for the brass itself, there were many people who wanted these bells to be repurposed to church and school belfries or other uses. For this reason, even in the early days (pre-1920), railroad employees often saved bells off locomotives.

At that time, the other items of locomotive jewelry were not routinely seen as collectable or valuable and they were usually scrapped along with the locomotive.

Beginning in the early 1930s, there were a handful of publications devoted to railroads and railroad history. At this same time, there was the beginning of what we now know as people who dubbed themselves "railfans". These early railfans started traveling around the country to photograph their favorite railroads. Steam locomotives of the day were of particular interest to them.

Railfans slowly began to collect items associated with these railroads. The earliest "collectables" were railroad lanterns, switch locks and keys, and railroad china. Even today, these items are at the top of the collectable items of what is known as "railroadiana".

Only a handful of early railfans collected locomotive builder's plates, number plates, and whistles. These items were not expensive and could often be purchased from the scrapyards that were cutting up retired locomotives. Usually, they could be had for the scrap price of the metal they were made out of.

It was not until the 1950s that collecting these locomotive plates became more prevalent. This was due largely to the fact that steam locomotives were being replaced at that time by diesel locomotives. Literally thousands of steam locomotives were headed to the scrapyards. Thus, the quantity of these locomotive plates available for purchase went up considerably.

While collecting locomotive plates became more popular, they did not cost as much as lanterns, locks, and other items that had been sought for decades. It was not until the late 1990s that the prices of locomotive plates started to rise as railfans realized these items were special in their own right because only a finite number of them were saved.

Today, the market value of both steam locomotive and diesel locomotive plates is considerably higher than in any time in history. Rare plates with certain styles, plates from certain locomotive builders, or famous locomotives can now fetch several thousand dollars each. Nearly every auction of railroadiana today includes a number of locomotive plates, headlights, bells, and whistles.

Over the years, railfans who considered the Sierra Railway one of their favorite railroads made it a point to save jewelry from its locomotives. We will chronicle below those jewelry items that are known to have been preserved, in particular the builder's plates, number plates, and bells.

Locomotive whistles were easily and often changed, so that will be a topic for another issue.
(Continues on Page 5)

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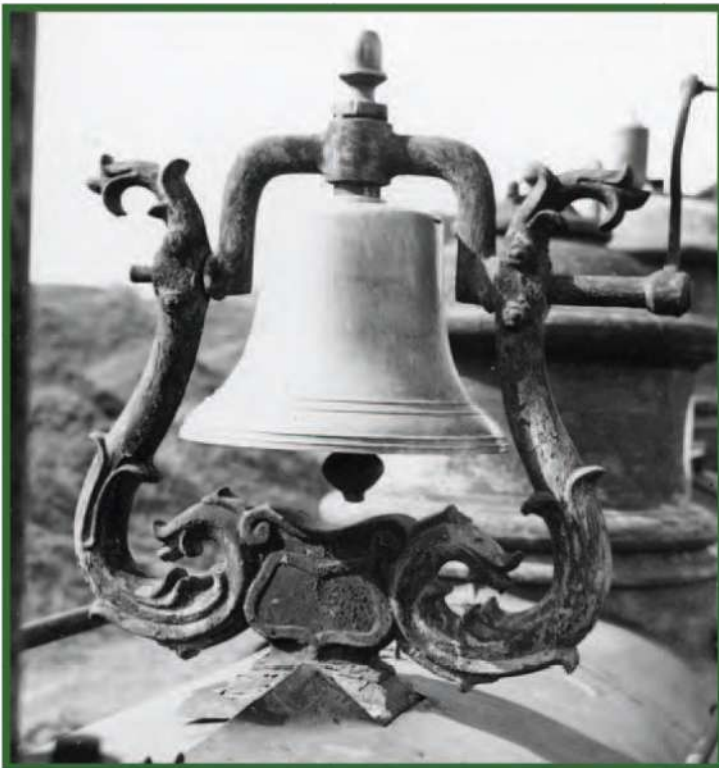
Known Surviving Sierra Locomotive Jewelry

Sierra No. 2, 4-4-0, builder and date unknown, circa 1850s

Built for an unknown railroad; sold to the Prescott & Arizona Central Railroad as No. 2 in 1886; to the Sierra Railway as No. 2 (1st) in 1897 as the passenger engine; scrapped circa 1901 by the Sierra. Its particularly ornate bell was moved to Sierra No. 6, the new passenger engine.

Sierra No. 6, 4-4-0, Baldwin, Construction Number (C/N) 6113, 1882

Built as Northern Pacific Railway No. 114; renumbered NP No. 853 in 1897; sold to the Sierra Railway as No. 6 in 1899; used as the primary passenger locomotive by 1901, and received the ornate bell from Sierra No. 2; sold to the Atlas-Olympia Company in 1929; scrapped in 1937. Alfred Rose Jr. (1918-1995) collected the number plate and ornate bell. The bell went to Gerald M. Best and was donated to the Tuolumne County Historical Society upon his passing in 1985. The number plate is in the Rose estate collection.



BELL FROM SIERRA 4-4-0 No. 2 (1st); LATER USED ON 4-4-0 No. 6. AL ROSE SHOT THIS PHOTO IN 1937 ON THE DAY IT WAS REMOVED FOR PRESERVATION.



NUMBER PLATE FROM 4-4-0 No. 6 (TURNED UPSIDE DOWN). AL ROSE PHOTO TAKEN IN 1937.

Sierra No. 3, 4-6-0, Rogers, C/N 4493, 1891

Built as Prescott & Arizona Central Railroad No. 3 (3rd); sold to the Sierra Railway as No. 3 in 1897; to Railtown 1897 State Historic Park in 1982. The original bell and number plate are on the locomotive. The original 1891 builder's and trust plates were removed from the locomotive before it arrived on the Sierra and are considered lost. Replica builder's plates were made by Gerald M. Best and Richard B. Jackson for the locomotive's 1948 restoration. New replica plates were made by Leonard Jones for the 2010 restoration. A more detailed history of jewelry on Sierra No. 3 will appear in Issue No. 2. (Continued on Page 6)



REPLICA BUILDER'S PLATE FOR 4-6-0 No. 3 MADE IN 1948 AND USED UNTIL 1996.

Sierra No. 18, 2-8-0, Baldwin, C/N 29790, 1906

Built as Sierra Railway No. 18; retired in 1951; tender sold in 1953 to the Tidewater Southern Railway for use with Sierra No. 32; locomotive sold in 1966 to West Coast Trailer Sales in Sacramento, CA; sold in 1986 to Fred Kepner, moved to McCloud, CA, then to Merrill, Oregon; sold to private party in Washington State in 2021 and moved there in 2023. Both builder's plates survive, one in the Rose estate collection, the other in the Martin E. Hansen collection. The original number plate is thought to have been in the Jamestown General Office and is speculated to have been destroyed in the 1978 fire. A replica number plate was cast from the original for the late Dick Lucas, using the original plate as the pattern. It was donated to Railtown 1897 State Historic Park. (Continued on Page 7)



BUILDER'S PLATE FROM 2-8-0 No. 18.



REPLICA BUILDER'S PLATE MADE USING THE ORIGINAL PLATE FROM 2-8-0 No. 18 AS A PATTERN. THE CASTING IS STILL IN ITS RAW FORM.

(Continued from Page 6)

Sierra No. 20, 2-8-0, Baldwin, C/N 43344, 1916

Built as Sierra Railway No. 20; sold in 1942 to the U.S. Army; resold to Kurth Lumber as No. 20, circa 1948; scrapped in 1955. One builder's plate survives in a private collection.

Sierra No. 22, 2-8-0, Baldwin, C/N 53205, 1920

Built as Sierra Railway No. 22; sold in 1940 to the California Western Railroad as No. 41; scrapped in 1950. One builder's plate survives in the Martin E. Hansen collection.

Sierra No. 24, 2-8-0, Baldwin, C/N 39577, 1912

Built as Nevada Copper Belt No. 3; sold in 1921 to the Sierra Railway as No. 24; scrapped in 1955. The original number plate and builder's plates were removed in 1955, but their whereabouts are unknown. The plates reportedly may have been in the Jamestown General Office in the 1978 fire, and if so, may have been destroyed. A replica plate with the Sierra numbering of "24" was cast using the original plate as a pattern. This probably was done after the locomotive's 1955 retirement, but might have happened earlier. It exists in a private collection. The bell was saved by Dick Lucas and donated to Railtown 1897 State Historic Park. (Continued on Page 8)



BUILDER'S PLATE FROM 2-8-0 No. 20.



BUILDER'S PLATE FROM 2-8-0 No. 22.



REPLICA BUILDER'S PLATE MADE USING THE ORIGINAL PLATE FROM 2-8-0 No. 24 AS A PATTERN.



BELL FROM 2-8-0 No. 24. NOW ON DISPLAY IN THE RAILTOWN 1897 ROUNDHOUSE.

(Continued from Page 7)

Sierra No. 30, 2-6-2, Baldwin, C/N 55412, 1922

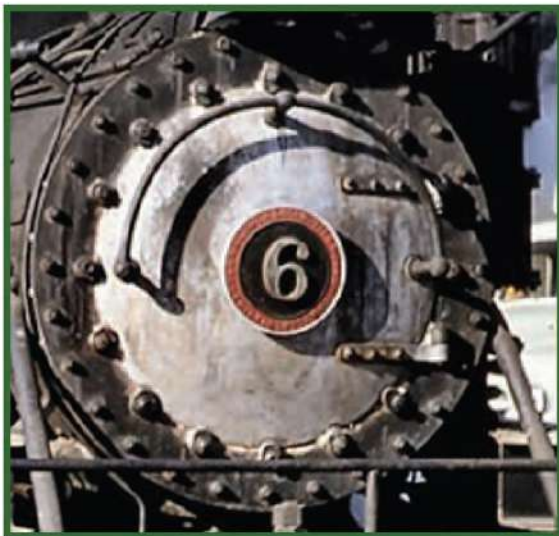
Built as Sierra Railway No. 30; sold to the Howard Terminal Railway as No. 6 in 1937. It was sold to the Pacific Locomotive Association (PLA) in 1966. PLA has the modified number plate and may have the builder's plates and bell.

Sierra No. 32, 2-6-2, Baldwin, C/N 57018, 1923

Built as Sierra Railway No. 32; sold to the Tidewater Southern Railway as No. 32 in 1940, renumbered to No. 132, and scrapped in 1955. One of the builder's plates is in the Martin E. Hansen collection. The second plate may still exist.

Sierra No. 36, 2-8-2, American Locomotive Co., Schenectady, C/N 68278, 1930

Built as Sierra Railway No. 36; sold to Reed Hatch in 1962 for the White Mountain Scenic Railroad as No. 36 in Arizona; became Wasatch Mountain Railroad No. 36 at Heber City, Utah, in 1976; a purchase agreement to Fred Kepner was executed circa 1987; the locomotive was moved to storage at Ogden, UT, and later moved to storage at Merrill, OR; sold in 2021 to the Oregon Coast Scenic Railroad, which has it for sale at the time of this writing. The original number plate, builder's plates, bell, and whistle are in the Martin E. Hansen collection. (Continued on Page 9)



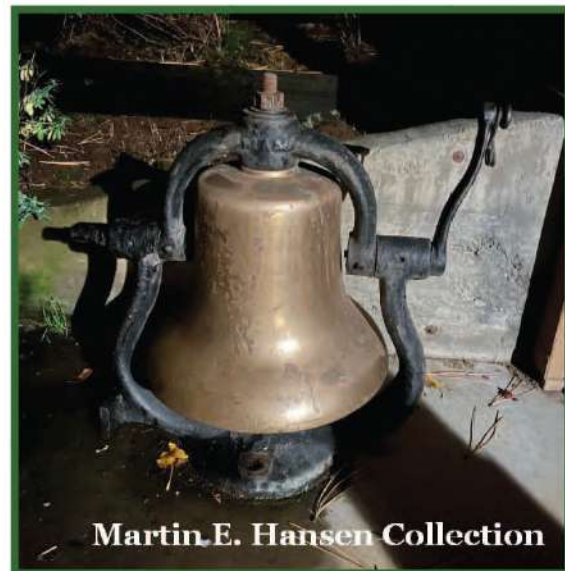
**NUMBER PLATE FROM 2-6-2 No. 30,
MODIFIED TO No. 6.**



BUILDER'S PLATE FROM 2-6-2 No. 32.



**NUMBER AND BUILDER'S PLATES FROM
2-8-2 No. 36.**



Martin E. Hansen Collection

BELL FROM 2-8-2 No. 36.

Sierra No. 38, 2-6-6-2, Baldwin, C/N 61781, 1934

Built as Weyerhaeuser Timber Company No. 4; sold in 1952 to the Sierra Railroad as No. 38; sold in 1955 to Rayonier, Inc. as No. 38; retired in 1968 and placed on display in WA; sold to Fred Kepner circa 1986; sold in 2021 to the Oregon Coast Scenic Railroad for display. The number plate is presumed to survive in an unknown private collection. The brass "38" number insert cast to replace the No. 4 on the number plate, both builder's plates, bell, and whistle are in the Martin E. Hansen collection. The wood pattern for the "38" number casting is in a private collection.

Sierra No. 44, S-12 diesel, Baldwin-Lima-Hamilton, C/N 75140, 1951

Built as Sharon Steel Co. No. 2 in Sharon, PA; sold to the Sierra Railroad as No. 44 in 1966; scrapped in 2008. Both builder's plates survive, one in the Martin E. Hansen collection, and the other in the Ron Muldowney collection.

If you have additional information on surviving jewelry, please email Kyle Wyatt at info@tuolumnerailroad.org. We will include updates in future issues of *THE JOURNEY*.



BUILDER'S PLATES FROM 2-6-6-2 No. 38.



WOODEN PATTERN TO CHANGE THE ORIGINAL NUMBER PLATE FROM WEYERHAEUSER No. 4 TO SIERRA No. 38.



BRASS CASTING MADE FROM PATTERN FOR 2-6-6-2 No. 38's NUMBER.



BELL FROM 2-6-6-2 No. 38.



BUILDER'S PLATE FROM BALDWIN S-12 DIESEL No. 44.

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THRA ACQUIRES WEST SIDE LUMBER COMPANY ARTIFACTS

By Glenn Sutherland

In 2023, THRA received a generous donation of several West Side Lumber Company artifacts from Dr. Nick Muff. The largest item received was a grade crossing sign (crossbuck) from below West Side's Camp 21. The accompanying photo shows this sign in its present condition. Dr. Muff's donation also included two link and pin couplers and a section of rail that appears to have been used as a dinner bell.

Dr. Muff is a Master Model Railroader and a longtime fan of the West Side Lumber Company. At the 2017 Sierra Railway Seminar, he made a very popular presentation entitled "West Side Lumber Company Adventures: 1960-1963". In this presentation, he told entertaining stories and showed amazing videos of his adventures riding a speeder on West Side tracks in his younger days.

THRA thanks Dr. Muff for donating these artifacts and allowing THRA to continue their preservation. For the time being, THRA has arranged with the Yosemite Mountain Sugar Pine Railroad to display these items in the railroad's engine house, which also contains a number of other West Side artifacts (including two West Side Shays!). The YMSPRR is in Fish Camp, CA, near the South Entrance to Yosemite National Park.



**CROSSBUCK FROM BELOW WEST SIDE
LUMBER COMPANY'S CAMP 21.**

Tuolumne Historical Railroad Association, Inc. ("THRA")

2024 Membership Application

Except for Individual Life Membership, all Memberships are annual and are on a calendar year basis.

The goal of THRA is to help preserve and disseminate knowledge about the history of all the railroads of Tuolumne County, CA. We plan to accomplish this by (1) preserving and organizing knowledge about those railroads (documents, photos, etc.), (2) disseminating that knowledge through publications, websites, events, and other media, (3) providing assistance to and acting as a liaison between other interested organizations, and (4) raising funds to acquire or restore key artifacts.

We anticipate that many of our projects will be in direct support of Railtown 1897, supplementing the efforts of the CSRM Foundation. However, we do not plan to limit our activities just to Railtown or to the Sierra Railway. We intend also to help preserve the history of the WSLCo, Pickering, Hetch Hetchy, and all the other railroads that comprise the incredibly rich railroad history of Tuolumne County.

THRA is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization. Memberships are tax-deductible. THRA Members receive discounts on Sierra Seminar registration, THRA merchandise, and other THRA events and programs.

Membership Status: NEW _____ RENEWAL _____

Membership Level:	INDIVIDUAL (\$35)	\$ _____
	FAMILY (\$50)	\$ _____
	INDIVIDUAL SUSTAINING MEMBER (\$100)	\$ _____
	INDIVIDUAL LIFE MEMBER (\$1,000)	\$ _____
	BUSINESS MEMBER (\$250)	\$ _____
	ADDITIONAL DONATION	\$ _____
	TOTAL REMITTED (payable to "THRA")	\$ _____

Please Print

Name(s): _____

Street Address: _____

City, State, ZIP _____

E-mail _____ **Telephone** _____

Interests: (check all that apply)	Sierra Railway	_____	West Side Lumber Co. RR	_____
	Sierra Railroad	_____	Sugar Pine/Pickering RR	_____
	Hetch Hetchy RR	_____	Railtown 1897	_____
	Other	_____		_____

Please Make Check Payable to THRA and mail with this form to:

THRA, c/o Glenn Sutherland, P O Box 124, Mariposa, CA 95338

OR

Join or renew with a credit or debit card at www.tuolumnerailroad.org

