

THE JOURNEY

ISSUE No. 4, JANUARY 2026
WWW.TUOLUMNERAILROAD.ORG

NEWS & VIEWS



ANOTHER EXCITING YEAR IS HERE

By John Zach, Chairman

The Tuolumne Historical Railroad Association has more fun events planned in 2026. Before I tell you about them, let's recap what happened in 2025.

Our annual Sierra Railway Seminar was held on Sunday, May 4. For many years now, the event has followed the long-running West Side Reunion, which was held the previous day, May 3, and focuses on Tuolumne County's West Side Lumber Company and other logging railroads. The two events were separate for many years, but shared a weekend to allow people from out of town to attend both. In 2024, and again in 2025, a Saturday evening banquet for these events' attendees was added, featuring a guest speaker.

Last year, the West Side Reunion and the evening banquet on Saturday, and the Sierra Seminar on Sunday became the main components in the newly named Tuolumne Railroad Weekend. More information on last year's event can be found in Issue 3 of *The Journey*, which was published in July 2025.

Our **PRESERVATION SUNSET LIMITED** barbecue dinner and train ride on September 26, 2025, was a big success. Photos and information about it can be found on pages 4 and 5 of this issue. (Continued on Page 2)



**SIERRA RAILWAY #3 BACK IN THE ROUNDHOUSE AFTER THE PRESERVATION SUNSET LIMITED.
PHOTO BY JOHN ABATECOLA / TSG MULTIMEDIA.**

(Continued from Page 1) This year, the Tuolumne Railroad Weekend is expanding to three days, Friday, April 17, through Sunday, April 19. With help from the West Side Reunion leaders, it will be bigger and better than past events. The weekend begins with the **TGIF EXPRESS** excursion train on Friday afternoon. This train, headed by locomotive #3, departs Railtown 1897 State Historic Park at 4:30 p.m. Complete details about the weekend events and how to register for them can be found on the last page of this issue of *The Journey*.

THRA is working on having two field trips to places of railroad interest this summer and fall. When we have the events finalized, we will email the details to members. If you have any suggestions for Field Trips please contact us.

Your continued support helps us preserve and share the history of railroads in Tuolumne County. If you are a member, you have our sincere thanks. If you aren't, please consider becoming a member.

THRA WEBSITE UPDATES

In addition to continually adding more content, we recently completed a major upgrade to the structure and functionality of our website. You can visit it at www.tuolumnerailroad.org.

The improvements include:

1. In cooperation with the organizers of the West Side Reunion, you can now register for the Reunion with a credit or debit card on our website.
2. All the events during Tuolumne Railroad Weekend now appear on a single page. You can still get all the detail about any event by clicking on that event.
3. Everything that you would like to purchase on our website can be accumulated in a cart, and then purchased in a single transaction.

If you are new to THRA, you can use our website to get a feel for what we are all about. This includes reading about our programs and upcoming events, reading back issues of *The Journey*, viewing videos of past THRA events, and showing your support by becoming a member. If you are already familiar with THRA this would be a great time expand that knowledge by exploring our upgraded web pages.

The Journey
 AN OCCASIONAL PUBLICATION OF



**TUOLUMNE
 HISTORICAL
 RAILROAD
 ASSOCIATION INC.**

**17921 BONANZA DRIVE
 TWAIN HARTE, CA 95383**

EDITOR: LARRY JENSEN

**GRAPHIC DESIGNERS:
 KEIJI MURAMOTO
 KEN MURAMOTO**

2026 BOARD MEMBERS:

**JARON BRANDON
 MARTIN E. HANSEN
 CHRIS HART
 LARRY JENSEN
 PATRICK MICHAEL KARNAHAN
 NANCI SIKES
 GLENN SUTHERLAND
 KYLE WYATT
 JOHN ZACH**

CONTENTS

PAGE 1
ANOTHER EXCITING YEAR IS HERE,
 BY JOHN ZACH, CHAIRMAN

PAGE 2
THRA WEBSITE UPDATES

PAGE 3
PAST AND FUTURE THRA EXCURSIONS,
 BY GLENN SUTHERLAND

PAGE 5
*TUOLUMNE RAILROAD WEEKEND BANQUET
 AND RAFFLE*

PAGE 6
SIERRA No. 18'S ORIGINAL NUMBER PLATE,
 BY KYLE WYATT

PAGE 7
*SIERRA No. 3'S BUILDER'S PLATES, PART 3:
 A NEW BUILDER'S PLATE REPLICA FOR A
 NEW BOILER,*
 BY KYLE WYATT

PAST AND FUTURE THRA EXCURSIONS

By Glenn Sutherland

THRA's first excursion train event, the **PRESERVATION SUNSET LIMITED**, was held on Friday afternoon and evening, September 26, 2025. It began with a social hour in the picnic area behind the roundhouse at Railtown 1897 State Historic Park. THRA Board of Directors member Patrick Michael Karnahan and his Black Irish Band provided musical entertainment, and roundhouse tours were offered to our guests. Chairman John Zach and I welcomed the attendees. That was followed by an excellent barbecue chicken and ribs dinner provided by Devon's Delectables. Soft drinks, wine and beer were available from bartender extraordinaire Cody LaPertche. After dinner, everyone boarded the train headed by Sierra Railway's "Movie Star" steam locomotive #3. The happy crowd enjoyed two round trips to Rock Siding, plus some extra milage above the Railtown 1897 shops.

Our next excursion train event, the **TGIF EXPRESS**, is scheduled for Friday, April 17, 2026. It will get our annual Tuolumne Railroad Weekend off to a rolling start. See the the order form on the last page of this newsletter for information about all of the events included in Tuolumne Railroad Weekend. Tickets for this train are available to everyone, regardless of whether you plan to attend any of the other events during the weekend. Please join us!



PHOTOS BY JOHN ABATECOLA / TSG MULTIMEDIA.





**THE PRESERVATION SUNSET LIMITED SITS IN FRONT OF THE JAMESTOWN FREIGHT DEPOT.
PHOTO BY KEN MURAMOTO.**



**THE BLACK IRISH BAND ENTERTAINS PASSENGERS ABOARD THE PRESERVATION SUNSET LIMITED.
PHOTO BY KEN MURAMOTO.**

TUOLUMNE RAILROAD WEEKEND BANQUET AND RAFFLE

BANQUET PRESENTATION

This year's banquet will again be held at the Black Oak Casino Hotel on Saturday, April 18. The after-dinner presentation is entitled "Sugar Pine Railway 1903–1974." Guest speaker Brian Wise is a life-long railroad man and Sugar Pine/Pickering fan. His topics (in words and photos) will include the creation of the Sugar Pine Railway in 1903; why its successor, the Pickering Lumber Corporation, decided to leave two Shays and other equipment in the woods after the 1964 shutdown; and the 1971 Labor Day weekend steam "rebirth." The banquet is open to all, but the capacity is limited to 66 people. Tickets are \$60 in advance; \$65 at the door (if available). Current THRA members will receive a \$5 cash rebate at check-in. See the Order Form on the last page.

BANQUET RAFFLE

A raffle will be held at the end of the banquet; approximately 9 p.m. We have listed this as a separate event because anyone is welcome to participate, whether or not you attend the Banquet (or any of the weekend events, for that matter). You DO NOT need to be present to win one of these fabulous prizes:

1. The 2027 Tuolumne Railroad Weekend All-Inclusive Package, which includes one free entry to each event during the 2027 Tuolumne Railroad Weekend, plus a two-night stay in the beautiful Black Oak Casino Hotel. Total value: \$551.
2. The West Side Shay Lover's Dream Excursion for four people, featuring tickets for Yosemite Mountain Sugar Pine Railroad's beautiful excursion, located on Highway 41 near the south entrance to Yosemite National Park. Total value: Priceless.

Raffle tickets are \$10 each; Advance Purchase Special is four tickets for \$25. All proceeds of the Raffle go to THRA's Special Project Fund.

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP, OR JOIN THRA

If you are receiving this newsletter, it means you are either a Subscriber or a Member.

Subscribers are those who have given us your name and e-mail address and clicked the "Subscribe" button in one of the "Stay in Touch" sections of our website. We appreciate that. If you are interested in the history of Tuolumne County railroads, we want to keep in touch with you and make you aware of our projects and activities.

Members are those who have taken the next step by choosing to support our efforts financially. That support can range from an annual Individual Membership for \$35 to a Life Membership for \$1,000. No matter what your level of support, your membership enhances our ability to preserve the rich history of all historical railroads of Tuolumne County.

If you have been a member in 2025, you should have received a renewal notice in the mail. If you are not a member, now would be a great time to join. You can become a member (or renew your membership) by going to the THRA website, www.tuolumnerailroad.org, clicking on the "Join Today" button, entering your information, and paying with a debit or credit card. You will also find a Membership Application you can print, complete and mail with your check (payable to THRA) to THRA, c/o Glenn Sutherland, PO Box 124, Mariposa, CA 95338.

SIERRA No. 18's ORIGINAL NUMBER PLATE

By Kyle Wyatt

In the first issue of *The Journey* (Issue 1, January 2024), Martin E. Hansen and I collaborated on the article, "Locomotive Jewelry Saved from Sierra Railway Locomotives." It included number plates, builder's plates, whistles, bells, and other collectible items. At that time, it was not known if the original builder's plate for Sierra No. 18 still existed. It was believed to have been on display in the Jamestown depot when it was destroyed by a fire in 1978. Happily, it still exists.

In the article, we had a photo of one of the builder's plates from No. 18 that is in Martin E. Hansen's collection, and a rough replica casting of No. 18's number plate that is in the Railtown 1897 State Historic Park collection. This replica appears to have used the original number plate as a pattern, and would have been made long ago.

After Sierra No. 18 was retired in 1951, the original number plate was acquired by Dick Lucas, who grew up in Jamestown. He was a steam locomotive fireman on the Sierra in the 1950s. After Dick passed away in the 1980s, the No. 18 number plate was acquired by a friend, and remains in that family's possession today. The Baldwin Locomotive Works class number stamped on the back side confirms that it is, indeed, the original plate for that locomotive.



PHOTOS FROM THE KYLE WYATT COLLECTION.

SIERRA No. 3'S BUILDER'S PLATES, PART 3

A NEW BUILDER'S PLATE REPLICA FOR A NEW BOILER

By Kyle Wyatt

(Part 1 of this series appeared in Issue 2, Page 8. Part 2 was in Issue 3, Page 8.)

In 1996, after many years of service, Sierra's famous 4-6-0 No. 3's most recent boiler tube time expired and it was taken out of service for a major boiler overhaul. Coinciding with this was the introduction of new Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) regulations and standards for all steam locomotives operating on FRA-regulated railroads, including the Sierra Railroad.

Not surprisingly, the over 100-year-old boiler on No. 3 had a number of areas where it did not comply with modern FRA boiler safety standards. After studying the boiler and the many modifications that would be necessary to make it compliant with the new FRA boiler standards, it was decided that having a new boiler made, designed to be compliant with the FRA standards while still retaining the shape and layout of the original boiler, would be the most effective approach. The expense of building a new boiler, plus taking the opportunity to thoroughly overhaul the locomotive running gear and tender, required an extended and extensive fundraising effort, pursued on a number of fronts. Separately, the original boiler could be preserved as a 3-D "document" of the original 1891 technology.

Leonard Jones, a Union Pacific employee in the Roseville yard, was a volunteer at the California State Railroad Museum, often working in the museum's restoration shop as a machinist and metal worker. He also had experience in pattern-making for his own hobby interests. The 1948 Gerald M. Best/Richard Jackson replica builder's plates were (and are) considered to be pretty good, especially given the limited time-frame within which they were produced, and the hand tools used in making the letters for the pattern. In 2005, Leonard offered that he could produce a more accurate pattern and cast replica plates in the absence of the restricted time frame of the 1948 plates. On that basis, California State Railroad Museum (CSRM) Director Cathy Taylor accepted his offer.

Kyle Wyatt (the author, then-CSRM Curator of History & Technology) provided Leonard with photos of appropriate period Rogers builder's plates, and had several discussions with him about the details desired for the new Sierra No. 3 plates. As time went by, Leonard realized the amount of work needed to make all the details he had "committed" to produce. He began making compromises. He used available foundry letters instead of making his own to match the Rogers style. He made the plate much "thicker", with "deeper" letters on the face, and having the back edges accommodate the curve of the smokebox. He also had more slope on the edges of the plate to facilitate "release" of the casting from the mold.

A comparison of three original 19th Century Rogers plates from the same time period; a 1948 Best/Jackson replica plate and its wood pattern; and two views of the 2009 Leonard Jones plate appear on the following pages. The photos speak for themselves.



Rogers construction number 2581, 1880
Nashville Chattanooga & St Louis #11 4-6-0
Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania



Rogers construction number 3157, 1882
New York West Shore & Buffalo #76 4-4-0



Rim 5/8
inch thick

5 1/2 inches

14 inches
hair longer if bend in plate flattened

Rogers construction number 4126, 1889
St Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba #345, GN #345, 2-6-0, class D-2, scrapped 3-1926
private collection

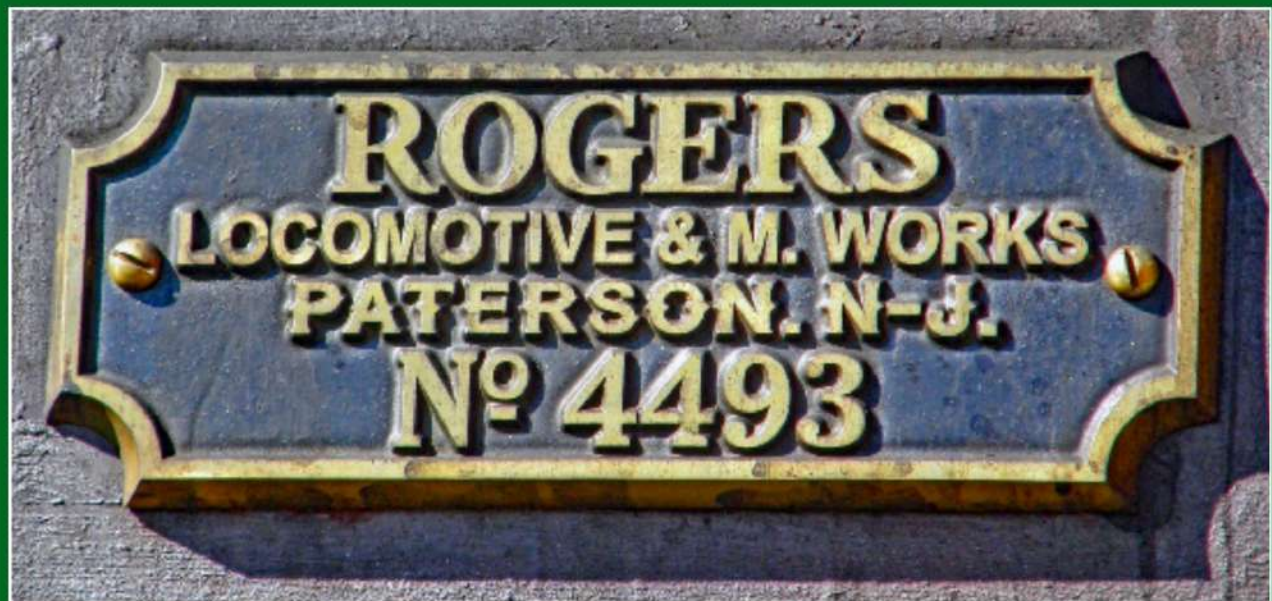


Jackson-Best 1948 Sierra #3 replica Rogers plate
Wyatt photo 11-2009



Martin E. Hansen Collection

Jackson-Best 1948 Sierra #3 replica Rogers plate pattern



Rogers construction number 4493, 1891, Leonard Jones 2009 replica plate
Prescott & Arizona Central/Sierra #3 4-6-0
Railtown 9-27-2011 (upper) and 7-2-2010 (lower), Wyatt photos

2026 Tuolumne Railroad Weekend

Presented by the Tuolumne Historical Railroad Association, Inc. ("THRA") and the West Side Reunion

Friday, April 17, 4:30-8:00 pm: TGIF EXPRESS EXCURSION TRAIN – Railtown 1897, Jamestown, CA

This special excursion train will be pulled by historic Sierra Railway "Movie Star" steam locomotive #3. The event will start with a reception in Railtown's picnic grounds, with beverages, light snacks, and special tours included. The train will include extra mileage, departing at 6:30 and returning at approximately 8:00 pm.

Saturday, April 18, 9:00 am-4:30 pm: WEST SIDE REUNION – Black Oak Casino Hotel, Tuolumne, CA

Starting in 1987, this annual event includes several clinics featuring historical research and/or modeling techniques for logging or mining railroads. Vendors will be selling new products, along with individual/estate sales of railroad and logging related items. The model contest covers all scales.

Saturday, April 18, 6-9 pm: THRA BANQUET AND RAFFLE - Black Oak Casino Hotel, Tuolumne, CA

The buffet dinner will include your choice of steak or chicken, salad, and side. Soft drinks, beer, & wine will be available for purchase from an onsite bar. The after-dinner presentation by Brian Wise is entitled "Sugar Pine Railway 1903 – 1974." Raffle prizes are (1) a 2027 Tuolumne Railroad Weekend All-Inclusive Package, including 2 nights' hotel (\$551 total value) and (2) the West Side Shay Lover's Dream Excursion for 4," including 2 cab rides in a former WSLCo shay and 2 rides in the caboose cupola, all on the Yosemite Mountain Sugar Pine Railroad. You do NOT need to be present to win.

Sunday, April 19, 8:30 am-4:00 pm: SIERRA RAILWAY HISTORICAL & MODELERS' SEMINAR – Black Oak Hotel

Since 2009, the Sierra Seminar has been an annual gathering of fans, students, and modelers of the Sierra Railway and other Tuolumne County railroads. Included are coffee & pastries, multiple presentations, a sales/swap area, silent auction, and lots of camaraderie.

See www.tuolumnerailroad.org for more information about all these events, and to register for any or all of these events. Or you can register by mail using the form below.

TUOLUMNE RAILROAD WEEKEND ORDER FORM *(Please Print)*

	Number	Total Cost
Name(s): _____	___ EXC. TRAIN @ \$40	\$ _____
Street Address: _____	___ W. S. REUNION @ \$25	\$ _____
City, State, ZIP _____	___ BANQUET @ \$60	\$ _____
Email: _____	___ 1 RAFFLE TKT @ \$10	\$ _____
Phone: _____	___ 4 RAFFLE TIX @ \$25	\$ _____
	___ SIERRA SEMINAR @ \$25	\$ _____
Note: Most events will cost more at the door	TOTAL ENCLOSED	\$ _____

Please Mail Check and Registration Form To:

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

OR you can register with a debit or credit card at www.tuolumnerailroad.org.