COLFAX

VISIT HISTORIC COLFAX

COLFAX'S HISTORICAL MARKERS

Take a walk through California's history

Colfax, California is home to an early station on America's Transcontinental Railroad. Just a minute off Highway 80, find a series of historic markers that tell the story of this mid-1800s town.

Take an easy, level stroll through Colfax's historic downtown to understand more about how towns throughout the Gold Rush country of the Sierras were shaped by both gold and the coming of rail transport.

Note: *This marker list begins walking from the southern end of Main Street to the northern end, crossing the street and returning with a stop by the train station. The final marker, Cape Horn, requires about a one-mile drive on Highway 174 toward Grass Valley. The drive is made worthwhile by the canyon view to the original railroad tracks.*

1. Colfax Theatre (49 S. Main St.)
The Colfax Theatre was opened in 1939 with 394 seats, and was a replacement for an earlier Colfax Theatre, located on Depot Street, which burnt down. It was renovated in 1988-1989 to the plans of Sacramento architect Jay Hyde.

2. Memorial Hall (33 S. Main St.)
City Hall, formerly a Memorial Hall in honor of WWI Veterans, with a cornerstone laid April 23, 1927 on the former site of W.H. Russell's Livery Stable. In June 26, 1928 this building was under joint ownership as Colfax City Hall and Placer County Courthouse. A time capsule was sealed in the cornerstone Sept. 10, 2000, to be opened in the year 2050. This plaque was dedicated by Gertrude Paul for the Colfax Area Historical Society on Dec. 1, 2000.

3. First Brick Building (Colfax Market, 2 N. Main St. & West Grass Valley St.)
The first brick building, opened as a General Merchandise Store, established by Robert & William Wallace in 1865.

4. Colfax General Store (6 N. Main St.)
This general merchandise store was established by Leopold & Josephine Lobner in 1867 and is still operated by the Lobner family.

5. Murphy's Saloon
(Known as the Pastime, 10 N. Main St.)
Pastime Club, since 1925, owned by Harry & Elvira Bianchi. It was known as Murphy's Saloon in 1866 and was owned by Bernard Murphy.

6. IOOF Hall (24 ½ N. Main St.)
This building was constructed in 1867 and occupied by The International Order of Odd Fellows in 1889.

7. Masons Lodge 51 (24 ½ N. Main St.)
Free & Accepted Masons occupied this building in 1868.

8. Colfax Drug Store
(30 N. Main St., now Railhead Saloon)
One of California's oldest pharmacies, established in 1876, then owned by the Wayland family until 1996.

9. George's Club (34 N. Main)
Railhead Saloon from 1982-2020, owned by Gilbert & Pearl Dalpino. Formerly George's Club in 1946. Listed in 1865, Historic lot 6 block 3.

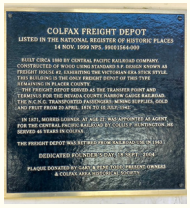
10. Jacob Keck Saloon (40 N. Main St.)
In 1865 Jacob Keck Sr. established this building as a Saloon.

11. Jacob Keck Trading Post
(46 N. Main St.) Jacob Keck Sr. established a Trading Post here in 1865.

12. John Mischler Butcher Shop
(54 North Main St.)
One of the early town buildings was the Butcher Shop, constructed in 1875.

13. Monitor (N. Main & Depot St., median)
Monitor (water cannon) sits in an island median at the intersection of N. Main & Depot St. It was used in hydraulic mining only a few miles East of town, at Gold Run.

14. Freight Depot (7 N. Main)
Built circa 1880 by Central Pacific Railroad Company. Constructed of wood using standard S.P. design known as Freight House #2, exhibiting the Victorian Era stick style. This building is the only freight depot of this type remaining in Placer County.



15. First Transcontinental Railroad Marker
(E. Grass Valley Street, on the right by Arbor Park when traveling south. By AMTRAK.)
The first train rode through Illinoistown (as Colfax was once known) in September of 1865. The railroad became a vital link for traders, commerce and travel that joined the eastern and western halves of the United States. The advancement of the railroad opened up expansion opportunities in the West, bringing more population in and further enraging the Native Americans. Rail service ended slow and often dangerous stagecoach rides. Today, Interstate 80 follows the train route through Placer County and across the Sierra Nevada.

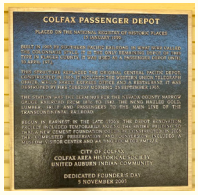
16. Nevada County Narrow Gauge Railroad Marker (East Grass Valley Street, on the right by Arbor Park, when traveling south. Near the AMTRAK Station.)

The Narrow Gauge Railroad Depot was 100 yards N.E. of this spot. Built by John Flint Kidder between 1874-76. It ran 22 miles from Colfax to Nevada City via Grass Valley. Rails taken up in 1942. Sarah Kidder, widow of builder, was the world's first woman railroad president 1901–13.

17. Blue Star Memorial Highway (East Grass Valley Street, on the right by Arbor Park when traveling south. Near AMTRAK). Blue Star plaque is in Arbor Park in Colfax, CA.

18. Schuyler Colfax Statue & Marker
(Grass Valley Street, near Railroad St.)
This is written on the dedication plaque at the base of Schuyler Colfax's monument: *"Schuyler Colfax, Speaker of the House of Representatives, was asked by President Abraham Lincoln on April 14 to take a message to the miners of the West, that their prosperity is the prosperity of the nation. These may have been Lincoln's last words on public subjects, as he was shot later that evening at Ford Theater, Washington, D.C. In May 1865 Colfax traveled 2,000 miles by stagecoach, reaching San Francisco on July 1, 1865...Colfax went on to be vice president under Ulysses S. Grant, 1869-1873."*

19. Colfax Amtrak Passenger Depot
(99 Railroad St.) Colfax Amtrak Railroad Station, Chamber of Commerce, Visitor Center & Heritage Museum.



Walking tour ends here. *Drive about a mile to see the Cape Horn Marker and enjoy the view across the canyon.*

20. Cape Horn & Blue Star Highway Marker
(CA HWY-174, Red Frog Parking Lot, Colfax, CA)
The Capehorn Overlook has a bench provided by Colfax Area Historical Society with plaques commemorating Cape Horn, the Central Pacific Railroad construction, and the Blue Star By-Way. *"This marker is dedicated to the memory of thousands of Chinese who worked for Charles Crocker on the Central Pacific Railroad. They were lowered over the face of Cape Horn Promontory in wicker Bosun's chairs to a point 1332 feet above the canyon floor. The ledge created for the railbed was completed May 1866. " —HMDB.org*

For more notes on history and markers, visit Colfax Area Historical Society colfaxhistory.org and the Historical Marker Database HMDB.org.

Produced by the City of Colfax, California
Visitor information:
www.colfaxchamber.com (530) 346-8888

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