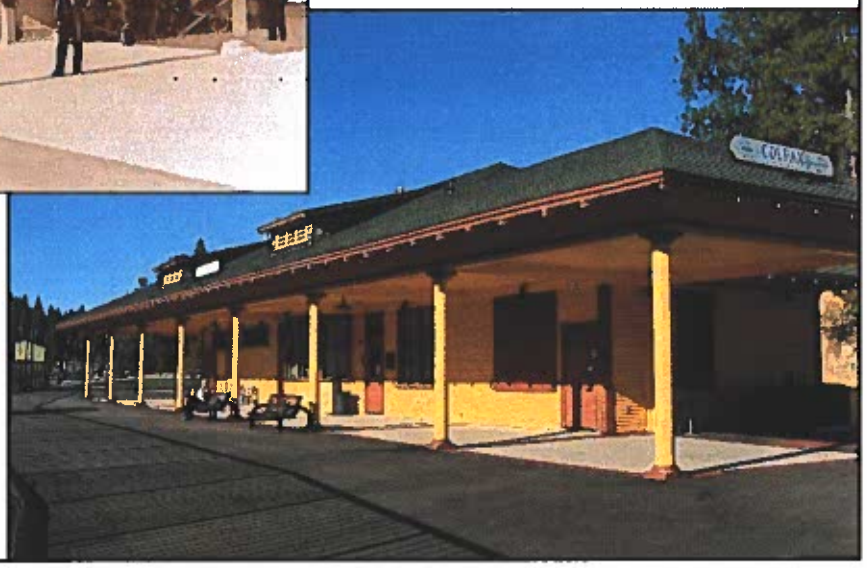
DONNER CROSSINGS

A Publication of Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society
Issue No. 15, Fall 2021

PLACER-SIERRA RAILROAD HERITAGE SOCIETY
www.psrhs.org

Preserving Railroad History along the Donner Pass Route

Colfax Passenger Depot



The Rest of the Story

From 1905 to Present Use

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From the Editor:

Portions of the story of the 1905 Colfax Southern Pacific passenger depot have been told in previous issues of Donner Crossings. This issue presents the Rest of the Story, starting with events that occurred prior to the building's construction and extending to the depot we see today. We will look at the many changes in its use, first during the heyday of rail passenger service, followed by its transition to a supporting role for freight and maintenance-of-way crews. We then witness its resurrection as a proposed multi-modal station for Capitol Corridor service, before becoming a centerpiece for the City of Colfax, housing the Colfax Heritage Museum and Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center, as well as a waiting room and respite center for rail travelers, a role it last enjoyed in the 1960's. Walk with us through the years as we examine this prominent piece of Colfax and railroad history, and learn how PSRHS members played a key role in its renovation and return to active use.

Roger Staab, editor

In This Issue:

Colfax Passenger Depot – The Rest of the Story

This issue of Donner Crossings is dedicated in memory of PSRHS member Tony Hesch. Tony was instrumental in leading the 2003-2007 volunteer project that completed the exterior and fully renovated the interior of the Colfax Passenger Depot and returned it to active use for Colfax residents and members of the traveling public.

You are invited to submit feature articles and/or photos for future issues of Donner Crossings. Please contact Roger Staab, email roger.staab@psrhs.org, or by mail at PSRHS, P.O. Box 1776, Colfax, CA 95713. Assistance is available to format your information or photos into final form for publication.

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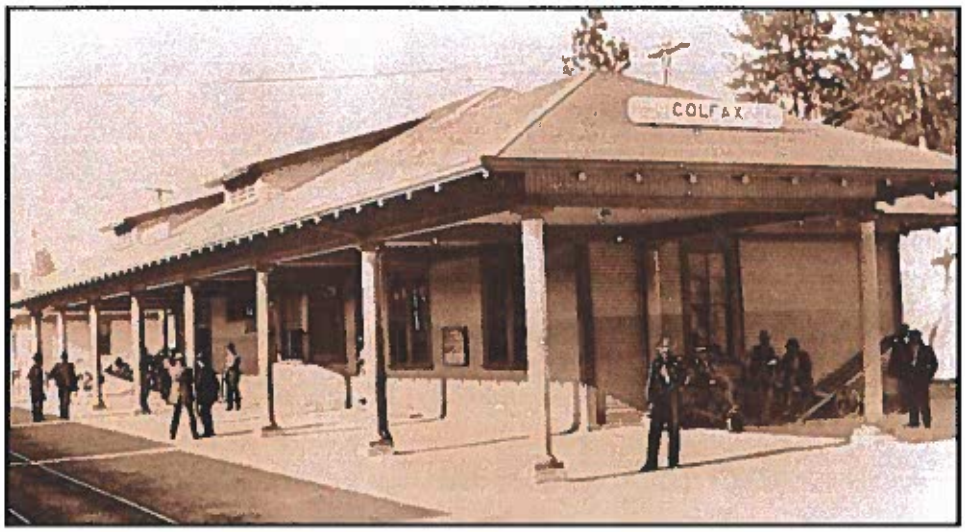
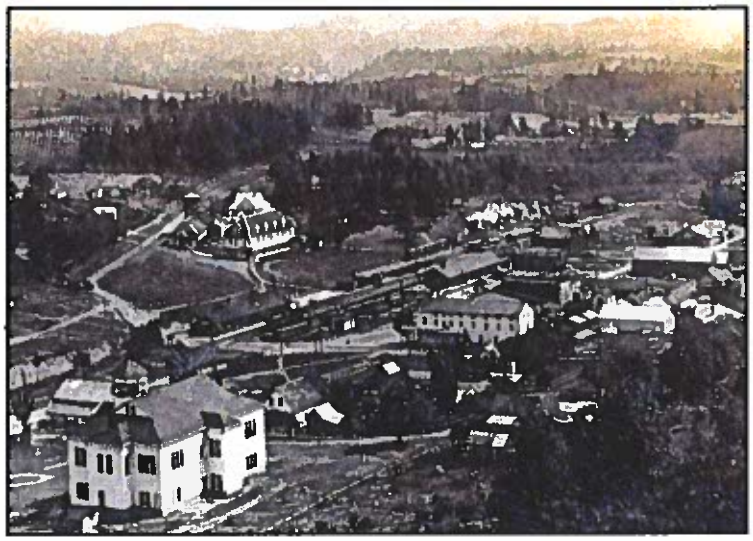
Colfax Passenger Depot

The **Rest** *of the Story*



From 1905 to Present Use

Our story of today's Colfax Passenger Depot begins years before it was built. Central Pacific Railroad's construction of what would become the nation's first transcontinental railroad reached Colfax in September 1865. At that time railroad crews were focused on constructing railroad track, not buildings. Charles Crocker made handshake deals with local businessmen, allowing them to build eating houses and saloons on railroad property in the new towns along the route, with the caveat that they provide ticket offices and waiting areas in the buildings. In Colfax the 1865 passenger depot was built by Curley and Mahon. Their building was located at Depot Street east of the tracks, and included an eating house and saloon along with a railroad ticket office. Initially the depot served only Central Pacific railroad passengers, but in 1876 the Nevada County Narrow Gauge railroad was completed, connecting Colfax with Grass Valley and Nevada City. The NCNG tracks were on the opposite side of the depot from the Central Pacific tracks.



In the 1904 photo at right and highlighted in the inset above, the 1865 Central Pacific Passenger Depot is between the grammar school in the foreground and the Gillen (Colfax) Hotel in the distance. The passenger depot was on the far side of the mainline tracks next to the Depot Street crossing, while the freight depot (center) was on the near side of the tracks..

By 1905 Central Pacific was operating under the name of its parent company, Southern Pacific. SP management decided to relocate its freight depot from the Main Street side of its tracks to the area between SP and NCNG tracks. Plans were also underway to build a modern passenger depot near the relocated freight depot. In May 1905 the original CP Depot burned to the ground. Construction of a new passenger depot was accelerated and the SP depot was completed in November 1905. The new building was located south of Grass Valley Street, where it still exists to this day. However, the SP depot has seen many changes in its use and surroundings during its more than 100 year lifetime, including being moved briefly for repairs before returning to its original location.

In 1905 the original Central Pacific depot burned. That year the Freight depot (upper center in photo at left) was moved to the area vacated by the CP depot. The new Colfax Passenger Depot (far upper right and inset above) was built that year east of the SP tracks and south of Grass Valley Street, where it still sits to this day.

The 1905 SP passenger depot was built in SP's colonnade style. It was constructed of redwood framing and siding. Along the side of the building facing the SP tracks was a colonnade or covered arcade supported by cast iron columns. The colonnade extended beyond the building itself at each end. SP tracks at that time ran parallel to the building and were readily accessible to passengers, but that would change with time.

From 1905 until about 1914, the Colfax Passenger Depot was parallel to the mainline tracks and just south of the Wells Fargo (later Railway Express) building. NCNG tracks ran behind both buildings along Railroad Avenue.

The depot included a large baggage room at the north end that served both SP and NCNG passengers from sliding doors on both sides of the building. This room had an unfinished floor, but walls and ceiling were finished with tongue and groove boards. Windows in the baggage room were high on the wall with vertical bars to prevent break-ins.

The main SP offices were in the center portion of the building, finished with lath and plaster walls and vertical wainscot boards. This room featured a bay window so telegraphers could see trains approaching from either

direction. A semaphore signal was operated by levers from inside the telegrapher's area, notifying train engineers that orders needed to be picked up. If the train was not scheduled to stop in Colfax, the orders could be "hooped up" to the train crew using a hand-held hoop or special posts next to the tracks. The office area included a counter where passengers could buy tickets or conduct other business with the railroad. Western Union also maintained an office here.

The southern portion of the building housed the passenger waiting area and public rest rooms, accessible to both SP tracks and NCNG tracks on opposite sides of the building. Contrary to some reports, there was no saloon in the 1905 depot, but food and drink were available nearby in the Gillen (later Colfax) Hotel. The Colfax roadmaster had an office at the southern corner of the building.

Southern Pacific Railroad experienced increased passenger service through Colfax in the early 20th century. The passenger depot was a beehive of activity, serving numerous trains from both sides of the building. Freight trains became more numerous as well, and the depot served as office support for both passenger and freight trains. Starting in the teens, Colfax began to see more of the huge cab-forward steam locomotives that remained a fixture on the line until the early 1950's. Colfax was a watering stop for the thirsty Eastbound locomotives as they climbed the grades toward Donner Summit. Special Presidential trains or those carrying other dignitaries stopped at Colfax to take on water. From 1915 until the late 1940's Colfax was also home to a fleet of helper locomotives. Their crews and support personnel operated out of the Colfax engine house and the passenger depot.

In this photo from the early 1940's, an eastbound Southern Pacific cab-forward locomotive pauses in front of the Colfax Passenger Depot. A Colfax-based helper locomotive has been added in front of the big cab-forward. The helper will provide added power for the heavy grades between Colfax and Emigrant Gap.

From 1911 to 1915 major changes were made to the Colfax yard and the track alignment through town. Hillsides at the north and south ends of town were cut away and an area to the southwest of the depot was filled for a large railyard and an engine house to maintain helper locomotives. The tracks in front of the depot became spur tracks and the mainline tracks were moved to their present location, several feet from the depot and passing the building at an angle. Passenger trains still stopped in Colfax but riders had to walk a bit further to get to their trains. So when visitors ask when was the depot moved, the answer is "the depot wasn't moved, the tracks were."

Mainline tracks originally ran directly in front of the Colfax Depot. After tracks were realigned through town in 1915, mainline tracks passed the depot at an angle. In this scene likely from the 1950's (note the VW Beetle), passengers can be seen walking from the depot to the boarding area next to the mainline tracks.

Passenger trains retained their luster into the 1920's and '30's, but the automobile was beginning to draw riders away from the trains. The Colfax depot remained active, still serving both SP and NCNG trains, but passenger service was definitely on the decline. Freight traffic was increasing during this period, along with local fruit packing and shipping at the nearby Colfax fruit sheds. When the US entered WWII the movement of troops and supplies to and from west coast ports resulted in dramatic increases in both passenger and freight activity at Colfax, even though the NCNG ceased operations in 1942.

After the war, passenger ridership continued to decline while freight business increased. The depot still served passengers but its focus was increasingly on offices and support for freight movements and track maintenance. By the 1960's Southern Pacific joined many other railroads in petitioning to discontinue passenger service altogether. While total shutdown was denied, SP gradually reduced service until only its once premier City of San Francisco passenger train remained, operating just 3 days a week.

In 1971 AMTRAK was created to take over passenger service on most of the nation's major railroads. AMTRAK replaced SP as operator of the route through Colfax and over Donner Summit, but the stop at Colfax was discontinued, thus eliminating passenger train service at the Colfax depot. At this point the depot became entirely office space for SP employees, with the baggage room serving as warehouse storage for maintenance-of-way supplies.

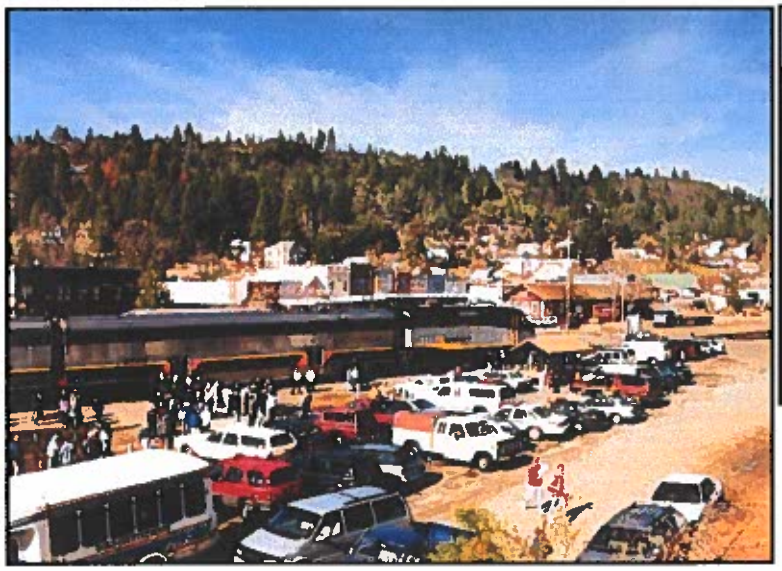
At left, after AMTRAK took over operation of passenger trains in 1971, the Colfax Passenger Depot became offices and storage for railroad maintenance and operations. AMTRAK reestablished the Colfax stop in 1976 (right), but the depot was not made available for AMTRAK passengers.

In 1976 AMTRAK was persuaded to reinstate the stop in Colfax by Councilmember Ben Hartske with help from area politicians. However, AMTRAK passengers did not utilize the passenger depot; instead a small kiosk was placed near the tracks with benches under a roof for waiting passengers. The passenger depot remained office space for SP crews until the 1990's.

The passenger depot was originally painted SP colonial yellow, with samoa brown trim on the colonnade posts and green trim around the windows. The depot was likely repainted many times, but sometime after the war years the building was painted a light blue color which it retained until the turn of the century. It also received a metal roof, likely after the demise of passenger service. The Colfax station signs on the roof indicating distance to San Francisco and Ogden were replaced around 1950 with signs that simply said "Colfax". The semaphore signal for train orders remained in place until 1984 when it was no longer needed and disappeared to an unknown fate, along with the levers near the telegrapher's desk that controlled the signal. Tongue-and-groove wall and ceiling coverings in the former baggage room stayed intact but slowly

deteriorated in condition and appearance. Interior walls were modified in the rest of the building to better serve the SP personnel who worked there.

The early 1990's brought winds of change to the passenger depot. Capitol Corridor train service had proved successful enough in runs between Sacramento and San Jose to prompt officials to consider extending the train service to the foothills. Funding was secured for a trial period of train service as far as Colfax, where a train would overnight on a Colfax siding. The first train on this new extension arrived in Colfax to much fanfare in January 1998, and daily service began shortly after. The train arrived in Colfax in the evening, remained overnight, then departed for Sacramento in the wee hours of the morning. The service was augmented with AMTRAK buses at other hours of the day.



The first Capitol Corridor train to overnight in Colfax arrived to fanfare in January 1998 (left). Above, the train prepares for an early morning departure near the Colfax depot building in 1999.

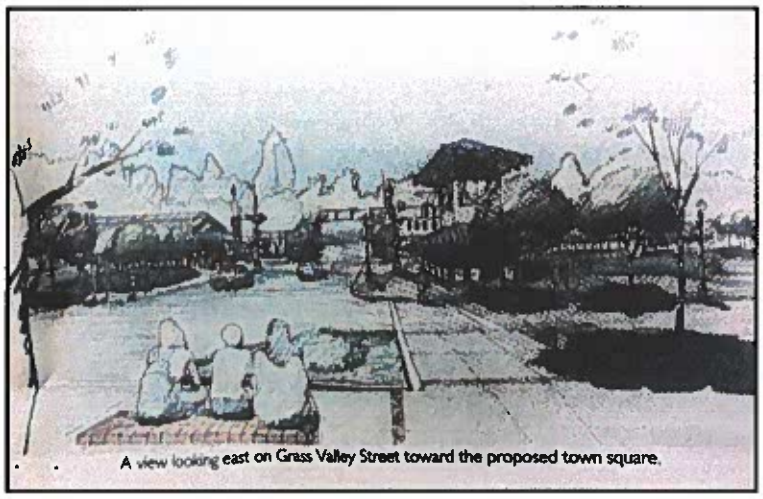
In parallel with inaugurating this new service, Placer County began a project to establish stations along the new expanded route. Negotiations were begun with Southern Pacific, continuing with Union Pacific when that company acquired the Southern Pacific holdings. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was reached in 1996 between UP and the affected communities that promised the transfer of properties along the route for the purpose of establishing Capitol Corridor stations. Included in this MOU was the transfer of the Colfax Passenger Depot to the City of Colfax. The deed of transfer was executed in 1998, with the City of Colfax receiving ownership of the Passenger Depot and most of the land under it between the tracks and Railroad Avenue, with the exception of a 50-foot strip between the tracks and the building. That strip was instead leased to the City. Also included in the deed transfer was the parcel now occupied by the Colfax caboose and the Roy Toms Plaza gazebo and parking.

Placer County Transportation and Planning Agency (PCTPA) secured funding to build or remodel buildings in the impacted towns to serve as multi-modal transportation facilities. In 1994 pre-planning was initiated to convert the Colfax Passenger Depot to such a muiti-modal facility, with a projected contract award date of 1998 and completion of the first phase of the work in 1999. When the property was officially transferred from Union Pacific in 1998, a Memorandum of Understanding was generated between PCTPA and the City of Colfax outlined the details and responsibilities of this project and restrictions on permissible uses of the facility once work was completed.

Meanwhile the design of the new Colfax multi-modal facility was underway. The Sept. 11, 1996 issue of the Colfax Record contained a front-page article on the design concept as it was then envisioned. A series of committee meetings had resulted in an elaborate concept for a town-center focused on the area where Grass Valley Street crosses the tracks. It included a clock tower, benches and landscaping, as well as brick paving. Of course this elaborate plan had major costs associated with it. The plan was to be presented to the Colfax

City Council later that month but City politics delayed the presentation into 1997. This and other delays meant the finalized design was not ready to go out to bid until the Spring of 1999. This timing became important since some of the funds that had been secured for the project required a contract commitment by July 1999.

An artist rendering of the Town Center concept that was described in the Sept. 11, 1996 issue of the Colfax Record. The design concept was to be presented to the Colfax City Council later that year. It included a clock tower, brick paving and landscaping near the Grass Valley Street railroad crossing.


A view looking east on Grass Valley Street toward the proposed town square.

As part of the design process, the historical significance of the depot building was reviewed, and the decision was made to submit the depot to the National Register of Historic Places. That designation was approved in January 1999, and offered the promise of increased emphasis on completing the building renovation and identifying additional funding sources.

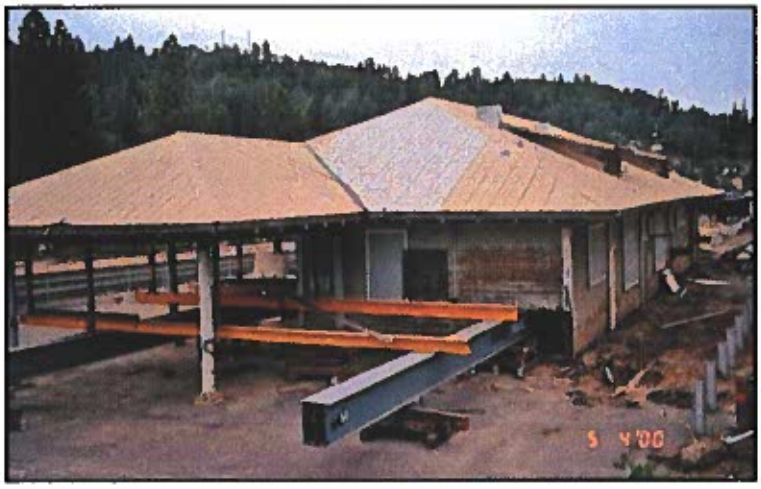
Unfortunately the Capitol Corridor trial extension was not faring well. Ridership was much less than expected on the whole line, with only a few people boarding at Colfax for the early morning departure. By 1999 the handwriting was on the wall – the trial extension of Capitol Corridor service was in trouble and was scheduled to be terminated later that year. In a scramble to save at least part of the extension, officials abandoned the idea of overnighting a train in Colfax, and instead argued for the extended service to continue to Auburn. That plan was eventually adopted, but it left Colfax without a Capitol Corridor train stop.

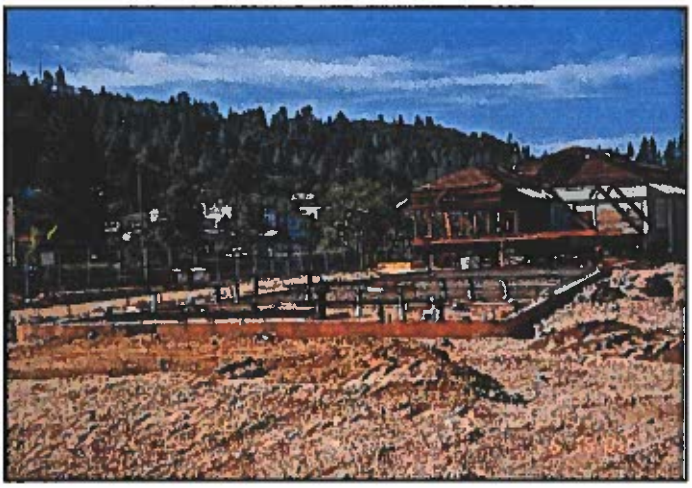
As this was playing out, the Colfax project was finally ready to go out to bid in the late spring of 1999. Only two bids were submitted, and each was well over the government estimate and available funds. With the news that the Capitol Corridor train service to Colfax was likely going away that year, the Colfax multi-modal project was all but dead.

Some of the funding set aside for the project was lost without a contract award in 1999, but some funds remained available. The City of Colfax petitioned PCTPA to allow the City to proceed with a downsized project utilizing portions of the existing design and the remaining funds. The City was authorized to proceed, and the City Engineer put a package together to complete limited portions of the project. That contract was awarded in 2000, and included hardscape (streets, gutters, lighting and storm drains) for the area around the depot, and a new foundation and roof for the depot building itself to preserve the structure until further funds could be found to complete the building. The contract also included hardscape for the area that is now Roy Toms Plaza and gazebo.

In order to give the depot a new foundation, a commercial mover lifted the building intact and moved it a few hundred feet north toward Grass Valley Street so that its old foundation could be replaced with a new concrete foundation, slab floor and utilities stub-outs. The old roof was removed while the building was in this temporary location. When the new foundation was complete the building was moved back into place and bolted to the foundation. Prior to installing new roofing a large glue-laminate beam was inserted in the

attic reaching the length of the building. This was one of several retrofits required to meet California earthquake standards before the building could be open to the public.





The depot building was lifted off its old foundation and moved a few hundred feet toward Grass Valley St. A new foundation was poured at the old site with utility stub-outs. The building was then moved back in place and bolted to the new foundation. Note the hole in the roof for inserting the glue-laminate beam.

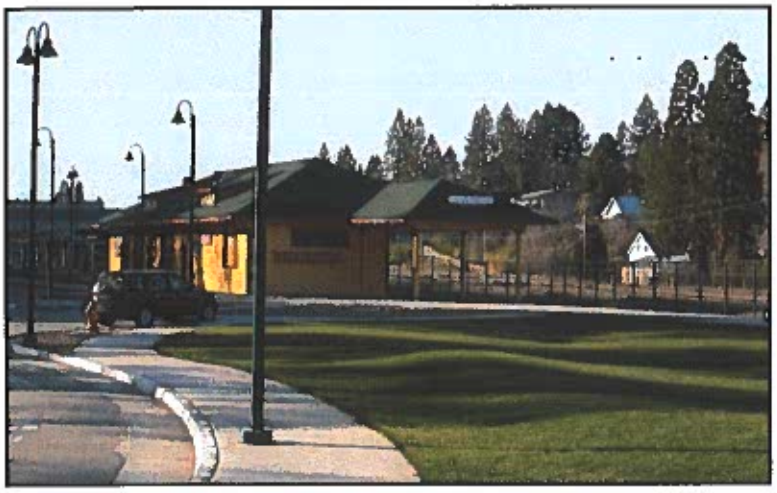
At the end of this construction phase, new streets, gutters and parking spaces were completed, along with new street lights and a power pedestal that provided electrical power to the depot area. The building was now back in its original 1905 location but sitting on a new concrete foundation and sporting a new roof with green asphalt shingles. Siding repairs were done where the original siding had been penetrated for the large beams used to move the building or removed to provide access for bolting the building to the new foundation. The siding repair boards were matched as closely as possible to the original siding and painted yellow with the thought toward returning the building to its original colonial yellow color, but the rest of the building retained its badly weathered light blue color. A temporary fence was placed around the building and there it sat awaiting a source of funding to pursue further renovation.

As an aside, this construction phase also included relocating the Chamber of Commerce green railcar, that had once been a bank branch for Heart Federal Savings, from its site in front of the Colfax Hotel to its present location across Railroad Avenue from the depot.

The City of Colfax had an active program underway to preserve the historic nature of downtown buildings, and the passenger depot offered the potential to be a centerpiece of historic downtown if its renovation could be completed. In 2002 the City formed the Depot Project Management committee, made up of local volunteers along with representatives from the Economic Development Commission, Planning Commission, Garden Club, Historical Society, and chaired by the City Manager. The committee was tasked with identifying potential uses for the building and sources of funds to complete the renovation and bring the building into productive use.

The first focus was on finding the resources to get the building painted. Utilizing a volunteer work party was not an option since the building exterior likely contained lead-based paint which required special handling. A Colfax business owner came forward and hired a contractor who repaired the exterior siding and repainted the building. A local railroad history group researched the building's paint history and identified the correct mix for colonial yellow siding, samoa brown columns, and green trim that were the original colors on the building when it was built in 1905. While the painting preparation was underway, city crews reglazed the windows reusing the original single pane glass. The committee considered installing more efficient double pane windows but opted for staying with the original glass to retain the historical appearance of the exterior.

Above - Depot building back on new foundation with repairs where siding was penetrated to move it or removed to bolt it to foundation. Below - Depot building after exterior was prepped and painted.



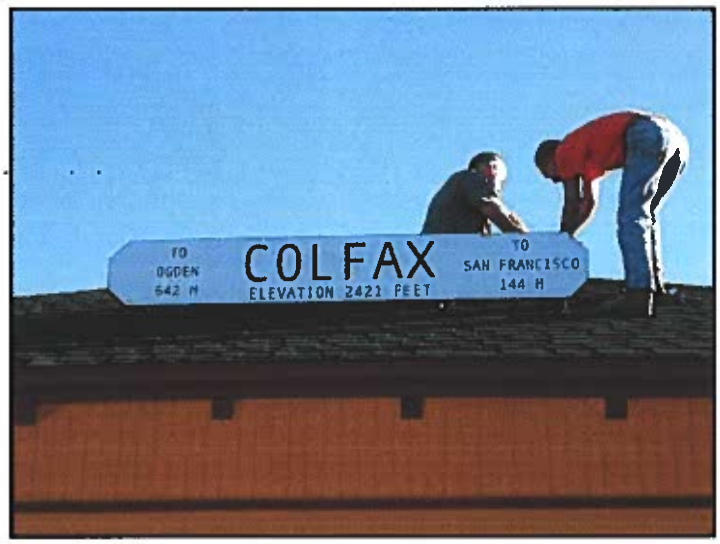
The painting was completed in 2003 and the temporary fence was removed but the building still sat vacant. The newly painted and reglazed windows were covered with plywood to prevent damage. The City purchased sod with parks funds and installed it on the large landscaped area between the depot and Grass Valley Street. At this point the building looked attractive with a grassy area adjacent to it, but further funds were needed to complete the interior renovation before it could be put into productive use.

In the initial multi-modal drawing package, the depot building was designed to be a branch of the Placer County library. When the contracted renovation was delayed, the library found another location and was no longer interested in the depot building. A series of public meetings were held by the committee to determine the desired use of the building, with the thought that usage might help determine funding sources. The consensus from the community meetings was to use the building to house a museum of local history, a visitor center, and a waiting room and public restrooms for rail and bus passengers.

Colfax-based Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society agreed to oversee the renovation of the building's interior. PSRHS member Tony Hesch volunteered to be the project manager, offering his expertise gained from managing numerous school construction projects. And member Roger Staab would serve as project administrator, drawing on his background as a project planner and licensed professional engineer. Cost estimates were prepared for completing the interior renovation utilizing the existing drawing sets, modified

to reflect the new planned uses. The drawings were marked up to show the modifications, but no structural features in the drawings were changed. Electrical modifications were made to match the new arrangement of office spaces, and a planned alcove in the waiting room to house vending machines was eliminated.

When the building was moved to pour the new foundation, interior walls were removed in all but the baggage room, leaving bare framing except for residue from dry wall and lath and plaster. With funds not yet identified for further renovation, committee members and volunteers began to clean and prepare the interior for future work. Numerous historical items had been stored in the building and these needed to be disposed of or moved to new locations. Plaster and drywall residue was removed from wall and ceiling framing members, and double-hung window mechanisms were repaired and restored to working condition. During this time the depot committee researched, procured and installed Colfax Station roof signs to match the original ones.

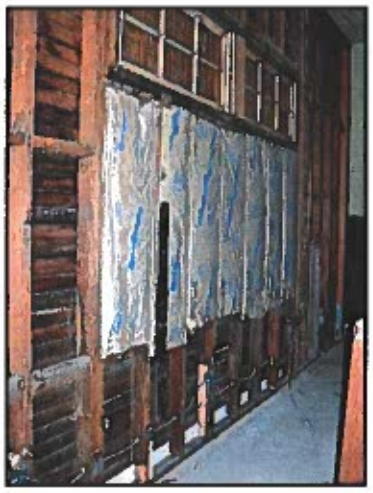


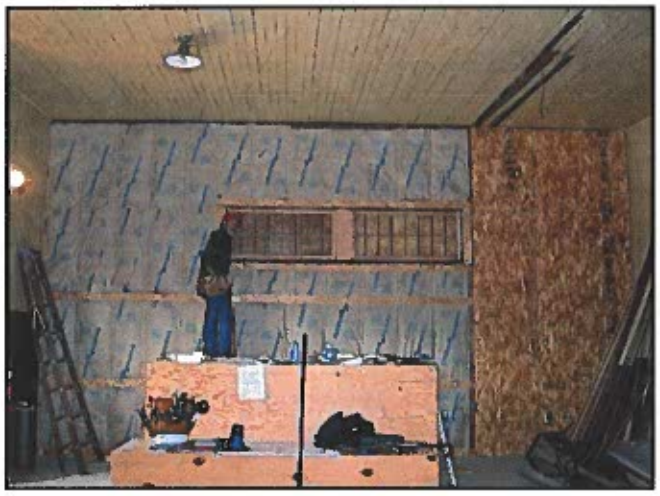
At left, residue from old plaster and sheetrock wall and ceiling coverings had to be removed from framing members by volunteers before new work could begin. At right, volunteers researched, procured and installed new roof signs for Colfax station consistent with historical signage..

The first funding break came when the Colfax Area Historical Society secured a $50K grant from United Auburn Indian Communities. That support was based on the promise to feature regional Native American history in the planned museum. The grant required matching funds in the form of volunteer labor and donations. The City Parks and Recreation Commission added $75K toward the project, recognizing the public recreation associated with the planned use of the building.

With funds in hand, work began in earnest and materials were procured. Volunteer labor was used wherever practical to minimize costs. The initial focus was on the former baggage room that would become the museum. Its beaded tongue-and-groove interior walls and ceiling coverings were still intact but in need of major repair. The north wall required an earthquake retrofit composed of a large plywood shear panel to strengthen and protect the building framework from side-to-side shaking. Since the plywood would increase the depth of that section of wall, the tongue and groove boards were removed from the entire north wall, insulation installed in the wall, and the required plywood earthquake retrofit installed in the northeast corner. Nailing strips were then added to the rest of the wall so the tongue and groove when reinstalled would be on the same plane. Prior to attaching the plywood shear panel and reinstalling the tongue-and-groove boards, new electrical circuits were installed in the wall framing. Several of the tongue-and-groove boards were damaged when removing them or had been cut when the beams were inserted to move the building. About 20 replacement boards were custom-milled to match and were inserted into the north wall or other parts of the walls or ceiling where damage had occurred.

The interior boards on all the walls had been cut off about a foot or more above the floor to facilitate bolting the building to the new foundation. The decision was made to cut off all the boards evenly at about two feet from the floor and install a wainscot-type covering. This served two purposes – it made the cuts even on all the interior wall boards, and provided access to new electrical circuits that were installed in the walls.





In the photos above, the north wall of the baggage room required the addition of a section of plywood sheer wall to meet earthquake standards. The beaded.tongue-and-groove boards were removed from the entire wall and insulation added along with shear plywood at far right corner and nailing strips.

A new double-doorway was cut between the baggage room and former railroad office. The original drawings called for this to be an open passageway between two parts of the library but now the opening was framed to be a lockable set of doors between the museum and visitor center. Original drawings called for the large sliding freight door on the track side to be secured in the open position and a new doorway and window installed in the opening. To preserve the historical look of the building, the sliding freight door was left intact and its hardware reconditioned so it would close and open smoothly. This later proved useful when moving large display cases into the museum. To meet the requirement for two exits from any room, the opening for a new doorway was cut at the corner of the building adjacent to the sliding door, and framed so its exterior appearance matched the other exterior doors.

Electrical service was modified from the original drawings so that both the museum and visitor center would have separate breaker panels. A master electrical panel near the restrooms served the remainder of the building. With the assistance of city staff and volunteers, an electrician pulled electrical service wire from the power pedestal located across Railroad Avenue through underground conduit to the building's main electrical panel. Within the museum electrical distribution circuits were run from the museum panel to numerous wall outlets, ceiling fixtures and switches. Period light fixtures were installed in the ceiling, along with track lights for displaying artifacts. A local painting contractor donated services to paint the interior walls and ceiling of the renovated baggage room/museum, along with sliding door hardware and trim. Finally simulated stressed oak flooring was installed over the concrete floor.

A soft opening was held for the museum portion of the depot on November 5, 2005, coinciding with the 100th anniversary of the depot building. The Colfax Heritage Museum established an initial presence in the building, but except for limited access during the soft opening public access was not allowed until work on the rest of the building was finished.

Above left, original boards were reinstalled along with custom-milled replacements. After the room was painted, simulated oak flooring was installed to complete the look. In the photo at right note the operational sliding door at far left next to the new doorway being installed. Simulated wainscot covers new electrical wiring and wall boards that were cut off above the foundation attachments.

With the museum portion virtually complete, work focused on completing the rest of the building interior. A new wall was framed between the visitor center and waiting room. This wall and doorway opening had to incorporate a steel post that provided support for the glue-laminate beam installed in the attic as an earthquake retrofit. Shear plywood panels were also required on some of the interior walls to satisfy earthquake retrofit standards. Outside walls were insulated, and interior walls were constructed and insulated for the men's and women's restrooms and janitors closet. Another wall was framed and insulated to separate the corner office from the restrooms. At that time the corner office was slated to be used by railroad crews and included framing for its own restroom. Distribution wiring was installed for electrical service in all the rooms, along with telephone and signal wiring for data. Phone and data cables terminated at cabinets near the main electrical panel adjacent to the restrooms.

Framing underway for visitor center wall and doorway (left) and waiting room/restroom walls (right)..

Selected parts of the project were completed by contractors. During work on the former baggage room, a contractor was hired to blow insulation into the already enclosed walls. A second contract was awarded to install the heating and air conditioning systems, with one system serving the museum and another the rest of the building. After walls in the visitor center and waiting room were framed and insulated, a third contract was awarded to sheetrock those areas. Volunteers then installed simulated wainscot and chair rails in both rooms. A small contract was awarded to a cabinetmaker to construct a custom cabinet to fit under the bay windows in the visitor center. The painting contractor who had painted the museum interior donated time and materials to paint the interior walls and ceiling of the visitor center and waiting room, as well as the custom cabinet under the bay window. Flooring was then installed by another contractor.

Above, sheetrock was installed in visitor center (left) and waiting room (right). Original brick chimneys were preserved and period light fixtures added. Below, Finishing touches in the visitor center include a custom desk and telegrapher equipment (left). Waiting room (right) includes photo displays and custom art.

It was during this second phase of the interior renovation that the depot project received a $49K Save America's Treasures grant from the National Park Service, with the assistance and prodding of one of California's congressmen who had an interest in railroad history. This grant emphasized preserving the historical significance of the building and contained restrictions on what could be done and not done to the exterior. Fortunately all the steps taken to date had not significantly altered the external appearance, and

in fact some changes such as preserving the operating freight door actually enhanced the preservation of the exterior appearance. To fully qualify for the grant the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was consulted to review the project drawings, and a historical architect was brought on board to ensure that the historic appearance of the building would be preserved in perpetuity.

A local businessman donated the services of his plumber to plumb the bathrooms and install fixtures purchased by the project. At this stage the project received another major donation to finish the bathrooms. A local resident arranged for his tile company to bring tile setter trainees to the depot and set donated period tile for the bathroom walls and floor.

Left - Donated bath tile installation underway. Right - Completed tile work and installed plumbing fixtures.

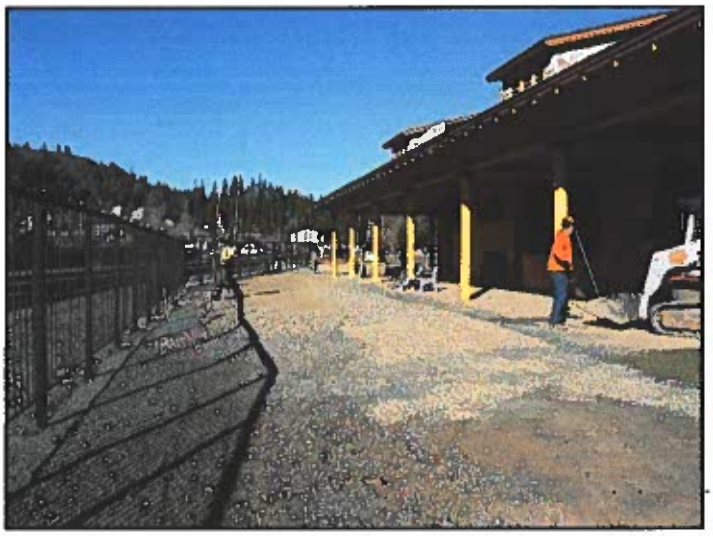
Custom wood doors were procured that closely matched period doors that would have been used in the early 1900's. The doors were painted and fitted with modern door hardware and closers that satisfied ADA requirements for public access. All four of the exterior doors providing public access were made ADA compliant. New transom windows were fabricated to match the one surviving original and installed above the new doors. Period light fixtures were installed near the doors on the street side, and period pendant lights installed under the colonnade. A security system was also installed with keypad-controlled access at doors in each room. A locksmith donated his time to key the locks.

When the depot was placed on its new foundation in 2001, the area around the building was rough and ungraded. Prior to the soft opening of the museum portion in 2005, some fill was needed to provide a more level and accessible approach to the building and doorways. CALTRANS was doing a major repaving project

Donated asphalt grindings from a nearby road construction project are being spread in the area between the depot and tracks to provide an even surface. A local contractor provided the truck and driver.

on nearby Interstate 80. The old asphalt surface was being ground in preparation for new pavement, and the grindings were free for the taking. A local contractor donated his equipment to haul loads of the asphalt grindings and spread them evenly around the building.

In 2006 further work began on the outside hardscape. A contract was awarded to prep and pave the area around the building. This resulted in a smooth paved apron around the building out to the fence next to the tracks and to the sidewalk on the street side, with proper surface drainage. Another contractor donated asphalt curbs along the fence line. With the outside surface now at the correct height relative to the building, the column surrounds that had been carefully preserved were reinstalled, a condition imposed by the SHPO to match the historical appearance of the original building.

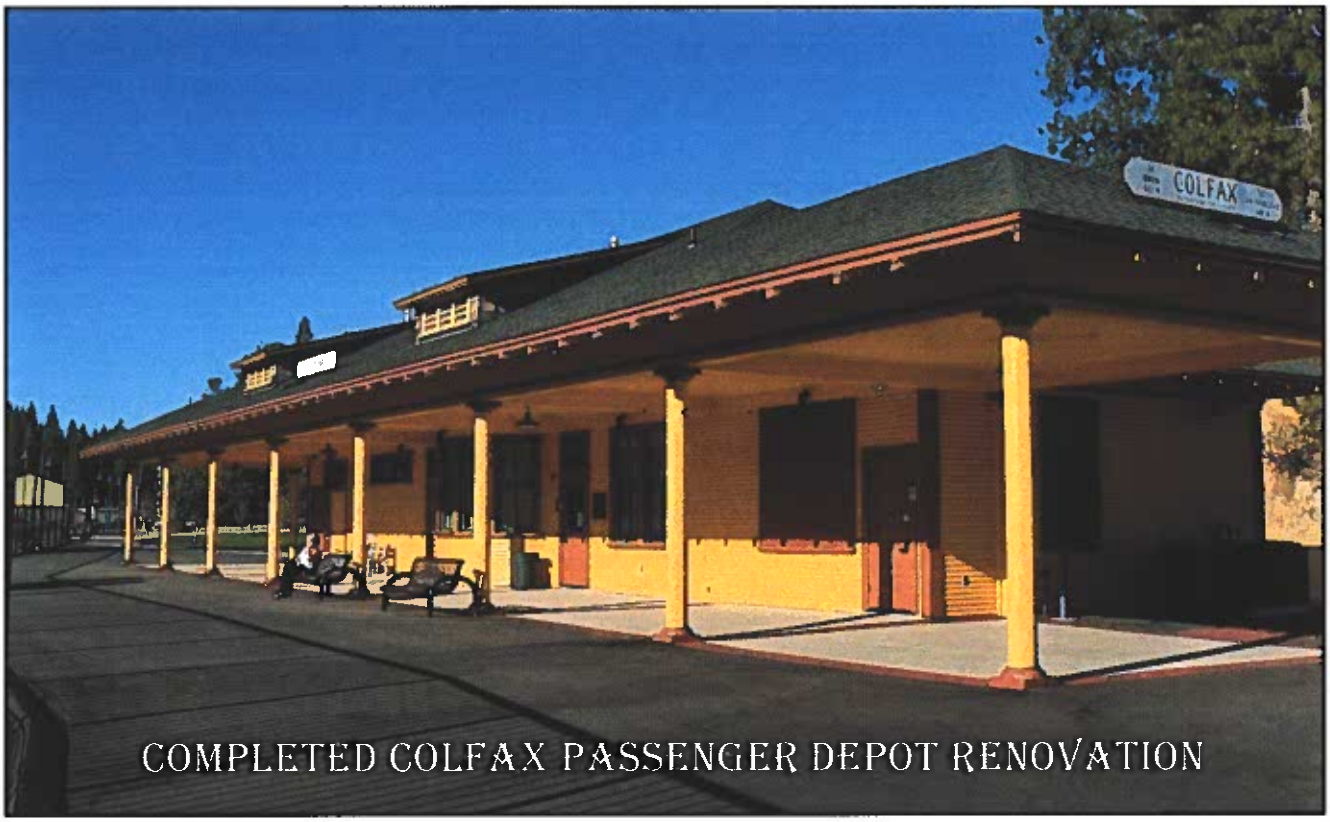


Contractor performing grading and asphalt installation in the area surrounding the depot.

As a final finishing touch, the project paid to have the asphalt under the colonnade treated with street print, a process that imprints the asphalt with a segmented and colored appearance, in this case mirroring the construction details in the underside of the colonnade above. Benches were purchased to provide a place next to the building where passengers could relax in the shade of the colonnade while waiting for the train. Tables and chairs were also purchased for the waiting room.

On November 16, 2006 the California State Parks' Office of Historic Preservation awarded the Governor's Historic Preservation Award for 2006 to the Colfax Southern Pacific Depot project. A grand opening for the renovated Colfax Passenger Depot was held on May 5, 2007, with speeches giving thanks to all the volunteers and contractors who contributed to its completed renovation. A plaque was placed on the building recognizing its historical significance, and a framed poster hangs inside the waiting room listing all who contributed to the project's successful completion.

The renovated 1905 Colfax Passenger Depot houses the Colfax Heritage Museum in the former baggage room, staffed by Colfax Area Historical Society volunteers; the Visitor Center in the former SP business and telegrapher's office, staffed by Colfax Area Chamber of Commerce volunteers; and the passenger waiting room and restrooms that are available to the public when the building is staffed.



COMPLETED COLFAX PASSENGER DEPOT RENOVATION

A framed poster mounted in the depot waiting room honors the many volunteers, contractors and donors who helped make the depot renovation project a success.

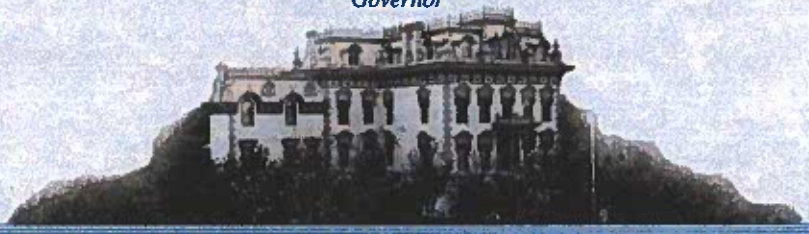
On the next page is a copy of the Governor's Historic Preservation Award given to the Colfax Depot Renovation Project in 2006.

Governor's Historic Preservation Awards

November 16, 2006

Colfax Southern Pacific Depot Rehabilitation

Since 1986, the Governor of the State of California has annually presented the Governor's Historic Preservation Award to organizations, groups, and federal, state and local agencies whose contributions demonstrate outstanding commitment to excellence in historic preservation.

This 1905 depot, owned by the City of Colfax, was restored thanks to the advocacy of the Placer Sierra Railroad Heritage Society, which also provided volunteer labor. The project, utilizing the pooled resources and talents of the City of Colfax, the Colfax Area Historical Society, the Colfax Depot Restoration Committee, and the Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society, represents the kind of public-private partnership required in preservation work in small communities.

Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor