

Published May 1st, 2019

## Workin' on the (transcontinental) railroad - history comes alive in St. P's new community center

By Pippa Fisher



Photos provided

growth and development in the U.S.

For four decades Giroux has worked with Kiewit Corporation on a wide variety of notable heavy civil engineering projects including the new Bay Bridge. He has presented more than 200 lectures, both in the U.S. and internationally, and has won many awards. He was inducted into the Iowa State University Construction Engineering Hall of Fame in 2018.

Giroux explains, "Seeking opportunity, adventurous Americans began migrating to the west coast of North America in the first half of the 19th century. With the first wagon trains of settlers leaving Independence, Missouri in 1836 they would embark on an arduous five-month journey." Giroux explains how interest in safe and speedy passage to the Pacific Coast grew, and with the discovery of gold in California at Sutter's Mill east of Sacramento in 1848, California became the 31st state admitted into the Union in 1850.

Giroux continues, "Exploratory surveys would need to be performed to find a feasible route through a terrain many said was impossible to cross. Even as the United States was embroiled in a Civil War (1861-1865), Abraham Lincoln had the courage to start building a transcontinental railroad that would help unite all of America in 1862. There would be two mighty forces; the Central Pacific Railroad marching east from Sacramento, and the Union Pacific Railroad marching west from Omaha, building a 1,776 mile-long railroad of unprecedented scale through rugged and hostile country, to a meeting point not yet known."

Earlier this year, Giroux was a featured speaker at the Transcontinental Railroad 150th Anniversary Symposium in Sacramento and has spoken at several other milestone celebrations over the years, including as the American Society of Civil Engineering Chairman and featured speaker for the Brooklyn Bridge 125th Celebration in New York and at the 75th anniversary of the Hoover Dam.

The brand new St. Perpetua Community Center is hosting a unique, free presentation to mark the 150th anniversary of the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad. Highly accomplished and awarded engineer and public speaker, not to mention former Lafayette resident, Paul Giroux will be giving his presentation at 3 p.m. on Sunday, May 5.

In a written description of his presentation Giroux describes the significance of the engineering feat. "The Transcontinental Railway, completed in May 1869 is an important chapter not only in civil engineering but in the history of the United States."

Giroux's presentation will cover the challenges of building the Transcontinental Railroad, means and methods used in building it, the contributions it offered the civil engineering profession and its importance to



Photos provided

Reach the reporter at: [pippa@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:pippa@lamorindaweekly.com)

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA