Patrick Donahue

Senior Software Engineer, Ruby on Rails

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Founder-engineer of Porchlight (porchlight.ing) · Featured in GeekWire Startup Spotlight, October 2026

SUMMARY

Senior Ruby on Rails engineer. Seven years owning the backend of one production Rails and PostgreSQL SaaS for mobile field inspections that grew from about $4M to $13M ARR: the API, a roughly 1 TB database and its performance work, and the AWS bill. Since June 2026 I have also built and run Porchlight, a live Rails 8 product, alone, from the first migration to Stripe billing. I like being handed the problem nobody wants: the query that has been getting slower for three years, the integration everyone agreed was impossible, the storage bill nobody had read line by line.

EXPERIENCE

Founder-engineer, Porchlight

porchlight.ing · Remote · June 2026 to present · live Rails 8 product, sole engineer

Life-story platform for assisted living and memory care: a resident answers spoken questions on a tablet, staff get a one-page Know Your Resident briefing, family listen and reply by voice note. Bootstrapped; I designed, built and run all of it. Featured in GeekWire's Startup Spotlight, October 2026.

- A Rails 8.1 and Ruby 3.3 monolith with Hotwire, Solid Queue, Solid Cache and Solid Cable on SQLite, multi-tenant by organization, deployed with Kamal to production and staging hosts behind Cloudflare. 258 commits since June 2026; 674 Minitest tests (3,698 assertions) run in 18 seconds, plus Playwright harnesses that drive a fake microphone through the whole resident, staff and family flow against production.
- Rebuilt the tablet recorder so a closed tab or an iOS freeze can no longer lose a story: every utterance uploads the moment it ends, a keepalive beacon flushes on pagehide, and a server-side grouper reassembles the pieces in spoken order into roughly 30-second batches for transcription. 33 of 33 recorder cases pass on production.
- Made the speech pipeline fail safely: Groq Whisper with a Gemini fallback that raises instead of silently dropping text; a three-layer screener (length, exact duplicate, LLM judgement, fails open) that keeps Whisper's hallucinated filler on near-silent audio out of family pages and staff briefings; and a daily API budget so the public staging test cannot spend production's quota, with the audio always kept and re-queueable.
- Built Stripe billing two ways: sales-led Payment Links for communities with test and live keys embedded side by side and the mode chosen per deal, and a card-up-front 14-day family trial, all reported from webhooks into stored columns. Caught that Stripe's $0 trial-start invoice would have marked a trialing subscription as paid.

Senior Software Engineer

Multi-tenant B2B SaaS Platform · Remote · August 2019 to present

Multi-tenant Rails and PostgreSQL SaaS for mobile field inspections in equipment rental and fleet, on a roughly 1 TB database and petabyte-scale media storage. Roughly $4M to $13M ARR during my tenure; two acquisitions. Small senior backend team.

- Found that 0.4 percent of files older than 30 days in a petabyte-scale media library were ever opened, and moved the rest to Intelligent-Tiering and Deep Archive under per-customer archival rules held in Postgres. Cut the bill about 60 percent, roughly $444,000 a year, no regressions.
- When the archive scans then degraded the app, fixed it with compound indexes, replica-side scans in the overnight trough, and a dedicated queue so archive jobs could never block essential work.
- Traced the top queries in RDS Performance Insights to the record counts on every page, one full table count per page load per tenant, and replaced them with a capped 20+ count with click-through.

- Fixed a noisy-neighbor problem where one large tenant evicted everyone else from RAM: read traffic onto PostgreSQL read replicas, hot paths denormalized at write time, p95 restored under load.
- Hunted N+1 queries across a decade of Rails code with Prosopite, fixed hundreds, and attached regression specs so they could not quietly come back.
- Handled a credential-stuffing incident that pushed 40,000 spam emails through our transactional email and got us suspended by Amazon SES. Same-day failover to the backup provider, then rate limiting, login-anomaly detection, and a sweep that closed an arbitrary-code-execution path.
- Integrated a major account's ERP that would only communicate by email, a bridge on AWS SES with a queue and indexed lookups; an account the business had written off became a live integration.
- Designed and shipped the customer-facing API after years of customers being handed internal endpoints that changed under them, paired with a GraphQL schema redesign and a customer-portal rebuild.
- Unblocked a PDF library upgrade the team had deferred for years by rendering every production report template before and after the gem bump and diffing the output.

Software Engineering Consultant

Independent · Remote · January 2017 to August 2019

- Contract Rails work for SaaS startups: major-version framework upgrades on production apps, cloud migrations that cut hosting cost, and REST APIs with React front ends for early-stage MVPs.

CODE SAMPLES AND OPEN SOURCE

Code samples: Private production Rails 8 codebase (Porchlight) available for a screen-share walkthrough or reviewer read access.

Upstream contributions:

- lostisland/faraday #1709, merged September 2026: YARD documentation for the Options struct attributes (fixes #1490).
- hotwired/turbo-rails #786, open: method-based frame layout that removes a method-redefinition warning.

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Ruby and Rails: Ruby 3, Rails 5 through 8.1, Hotwire (Turbo, Stimulus), Solid Queue, Sidekiq, Active Storage, Action Cable, Minitest and RSpec, Kamal

Languages: Ruby, SQL, Python, TypeScript and JavaScript, Go

Data: PostgreSQL query and index optimization, read replicas, partitioning, denormalisation, SQLite in production, Redis, Elasticsearch

APIs and billing: REST and GraphQL design, webhooks, Stripe (Checkout, subscriptions, Payment Links, test and live modes), event-driven and queue-based workflows

Cloud and infrastructure: AWS (S3, RDS, SES, SQS, Lambda, IAM, CloudWatch), Docker, Kamal, Kubernetes, Cloudflare, CI/CD, Linux

AI and LLM: Speech-to-text pipelines, Anthropic and Google model APIs, streaming and tool-calling, MCP servers, embeddings, agentic development workflows

Security: OAuth2, JWT, role-based access control, rate limiting and abuse caps, least-privilege IAM, audit logging

Practice: Fully remote and async, code review, TDD, browser QA against production, decision docs

EDUCATION

University of Washington, Bachelor of Arts, History