

FEATHER RIVER RAIL SOCIETY

DATE: July 2023
ITEM: New Business Item 2
FROM: Eugene Vicknair

MULTI-PURPOSE BUILDING NAME

A few days ago, we received the following email from member Darrol Stanley concerning the proposed name of our soon to be built Multi-Purpose Building. Currently, it is designated the Frederick Whitman Building:

“It was suggested that I contact the both of you as intermediaries to my recently posed question. I noted that FRHS has obtained a grant for a building. I noted that the group is going to use Frederic Whitman as the name of the new building. I must strongly suggest that I do not think this is correct. I suggest that the name of the building should be The George J. Gould Building. While Whitman was a good railroad man and a good WP President (though it has been suggested that he loved the CB&Q more than the WP), he in no way deserves the nameplate over Gould. Gould was an entrepreneur and visionary; without him there would never have been a WP. Financially it would have been better for him and his family not to have built it due to the first of two bankruptcies of the WP and the immense cost to the D&RGW.

I do not know how the name was selected, but I think the membership should vote on the name! What do you think not only about the name but the naming process?

Regards,

Darrol J. Stanley, DBA

Luckman Professor of Finance and Accounting”

To provide background on how the current name of the building was arrived at, I put together the following review:

“A long time ago we had a debate about naming things / structures / railcars around the museum. One of the things that came out of it is we had already set a precedent of naming things for WP Presidents with the Mike Flannery Room in the Diesel Shop. (In fact, it was suggested by some that we rename the whole Diesel Shop in honor of Flannery.)

The Whitman Building was originally called just Display Building. At one point, Frederick Whitman's name was tagged to it to differentiate from another building concept in the master plan: the Jeffery Building. This is the larger building shown north of the Diesel Shop in the master plan and was originally called the Timeline Building because the concept was each track would represent a distinct decade. Since the idea was to have it use architectural details from the WP's Jeffery Shops, named for President Edward T. Jeffery, it seemed logical to use the same name for

the "Timeline" Building. Then it just followed to use a President's name again for the "Display" Building. Frederick Whitman was president for the most successful years of the WP, taking over in 1949 and retiring in 1965. His watch saw the end of steam, the start of the California Zephyr, increased traffic, new freight car designs and many improvements to the railroad. It is true he started his railroad career on the CBQ (on the Fort Worth and Denver specifically) and was a fireman, brakeman, car repairman, shop foreman, trainmaster, superintendent and many other jobs. He left the CBQ as a General Superintendent and came to the WP as an Executive VP and Director. Since he is considered one of the more significant WP president's, it was felt he should be honored with a building, thus his name was appended to the "Display" Building when the Board accepted an update to the Master Plan.

The overall idea was that any other buildings on the site would be named after other WP Presidents. Some other concepts that have been kicked around over the years included a dedicated repair shop named for Walter Barnett and a paint shop named for Charles Elsey."

Also, I was recently reminded that Frederick Whitman's family has made donations to the FRRS, including his official portrait, and they remain interested in our activities.

REQUESTED ACTION

The Board determine how they want to approach / respond to this suggestion. If a vote of the membership is chosen, we could do an online poll or a more formal vote via the next ballot. Or the Board could also table this until a future meeting to get time to post online and in the Train Sheet a poll of the membership to get feedback. Or the Board could make the decision on its own.