



# The Train Sheet

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News from the Feather River Rail Society and the Portola Railroad Museum

## Western Pacific FP7 805-A

By Frank Brehm

Purchased strictly for passenger service FP-7 805-A was part of a two unit A-B-A set of F-7 units ordered from EMD in 1950. Builders number 9004 the 805-A was constructed under EMD order number 6043. Each three-unit set cost \$544,615.00. Shortly after delivery the WP found the trailing A units to be of greater value as a leading unit for other locomotive consists so the sets were broken up and retaining their original numbers given letter suffixes. After this breakup of the sets it was extremely uncommon to find an A-B-A or an A-B-B set of F-7s powering the California Zephyr, the preferred lash-up being a FP7-F3b-F3b.

Received in February 1950 the 805-A served faithfully in CZ service until discontinuance. Many of the ex CZ units were renumbered into the freight F unit 900 series. The 805-A is one of the few units to not be renumbered and also sported the Zephyr nose wings until the end. Declared surplus in 1972 the 805-A became trade in material to General Electric as a credit against U23b 2260, leaving the property in September 1972. In turn General Electric sold the unit to the Wellsville, Addison & Galetton. Working for the WAG until September 1976 without repainting or renumbering the 805-A was finally transferred to the Louisiana & North West in September 1976. Repainted and renumbered 49 the 805-A worked



Two months prior to leaving the property as trade-in material to General Electric, the 805-A awaits servicing at the Stockton yard locomotive re-servicing facility.

- Frank Brehm

alongside ex-SP F units until again declared surplus. In July of 1987, WP FP7 805-A returned home to Portola.

Early on, the FRRS had targeted the acquisition of the 805-A as an important goal. At the time, it was owned by and in service on the shortline Louisiana & North West, which had acquired it from GE via the WAG (Wellsville, Addison, & Galetton). GE had of course acquired it in 1972 when the WP traded in several tired F units on new U-23b's, the 805A being credited towards the 2260.

In February of 1987, Mountain Diesel and a number of other parties had contacted the L&NW regarding their small fleet of F units. (Dinner trains were just becoming an "in" thing). At an FRRS board meeting that month, it became clear that the time to act was at hand,

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## FRRS Creates New Department

By Eugene Vicknair

At the May 2000 Board of Directors meeting, the FRRS created a new Restoration/Preservation Department. Previously, the tasks of this department were handled as part of the Mechanical Department, but as our mission becomes more defined and our collection grows, it is felt that an independent group is needed to handle these important aspects of our work.

The Restoration/Preservation Department will perform as a steering committee, managing the progress and choice of equipment for restoration, as well as managing its historical integrity and final appearance. The members of the department are responsible for viewing the collection as a whole entity and determining a course of action on both individual items and the general collection that will best fulfill the goals of the museum and its mission. The department is also expected to act as liaison and coordination entity between equipment advocates, the Mechanical Department, the Board, and any subcontractors or assistance entities.

Membership in the department is open to any member. As much of the work entailed is planning and coordination, not all members need have frequent access to the museum. Many required tasks can be performed by e-mail, phone, and off-site meetings. Decisions of the department requiring funding appropriations and impacting the historical integrity of the collection would require Board approval.

The department will initially consist of a department head and 2-4 members. Anyone with an interest in joining the department, please contact Eugene Vicknair e-mail – [tsry@aol.com](mailto:tsry@aol.com) or Doug Morgan e-mail – [dbmorgan@jps.net](mailto:dbmorgan@jps.net)

Responsibilities of the Restoration/Preservation Department

- \* To coordinate restoration/preservation efforts.
- \* To monitor condition of existing historical equipment.
- \* To monitor progress/condition of ongoing restoration efforts.
- \* To perform research into restoration parameters and appropriate methods/appearance of restoration.
- \* To determine timetables/ranking for equipment restoration.
- \* To work with equipment advocates in applying for internal monies and writing proposals for Board approval.
- \* To coordinate with Mechanical Department on actual work.
- \* To coordinate with subcontractors on work.

The FRRS is also still seeking members to join the Funding Department. This important and innovative department will seek and develop new sources of funding for the museum and its projects. Sue McClure has agreed to become the department head, but we still need willing people to assist her. Please contact Eugene Vicknair or Sue McClure through the society if you are interested.

## Western Pacific FP7 805-A

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and the money was not. The L&NW was asking several times scrap value for the locomotive, while MDT's superficial look at it indicated that it was one tired unit. It had been in the shop for almost 2 years, and four power assemblies were out of the engine. At least it had been in out of the rain. There was no serious body damage, the stainless steel side panels were intact, and there was a new main generator armature. John Ryczkowski talked with the L&NW's CMO, who claimed that "she was always one of our best engines.... real reliable". So why was it in the shop so long? "Well, we set out to work on'er, but then we got real busy. Then we got the Geeps, and we were still very busy. We never got back to her".

After a great deal of serious thought three FRRS members (Steve Habeck, Larry Hanlon and John Ryczkowski), along with the Society, stretched their respective financial resources and shared equally in the purchase. At the time they knew they were "paying too much", but there was only one WP 805A and the L&NW had it for sale. They decided to go for it.

As part of the deal, the L&NW agreed to reassemble the engine; apply protective plywood sheets, which we sent them for windows, portholes, and headlights; deliver the locomotive to the UP at their interchange with the Midsouth and get it to pass the UP's inspection. The UP graciously donated transportation from Louisiana. Despite getting "lost" due to not specifying new reporting marks, the 805A made it to Portola with only minor damage (broken rear door window and backup light glass, missing air horn and, in the engine room, broken water tank sight glass and all of the alarm indicator lights and lenses).

Restoration work began in 1988 and continues today. There is still much to do for a complete restoration. One of the main problems is that there are still some water leaks from several cylinder liners into the oil pan. (Because of their design, 567B engines were notorious for such leaks). Levin Metals in Richmond offered an attractive price on a 567C engine from a SP GP9 (a much more reliable design), so it was purchased shortly after the 805s arrival for future use if the decision is made to swap out the entire engine.

This locomotive, last survivor of WP's power for the California Zephyr, is an essential part of our museum. We are looking forward to bringing the 805A into FRA compliance so as to get the unit "Blue Carded" as we have with the 2001. If you would like to help contact CMO Hank Stiles and express your desire to work on this very important part of our collection. Of course we can also use monetary contributions to help offset costs associated with this restoration.

This article was compiled from various sources including past issues of The Train Sheet.