



Preserving "THE FEATHER RIVER ROUTE"



# The Train Sheet

ISSUE 109

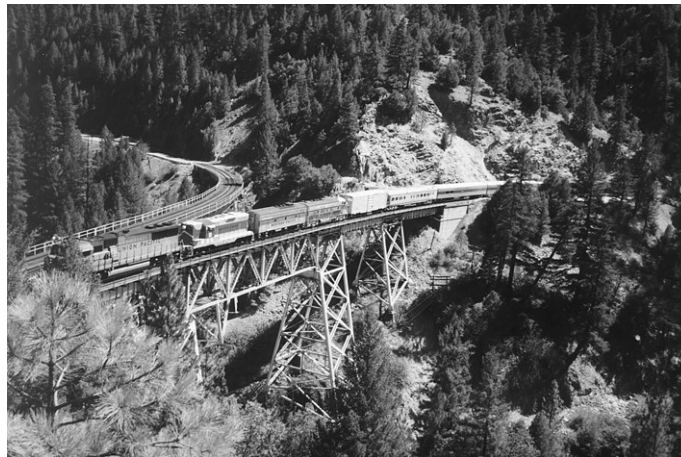
September/October 2001

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

## Truckee Railroad Days 2001

By Rod McClure

Following the success of our journey to Truckee last year and having worked throughout the year on equipment restoration our confidence was high for another successful journey. The difference this time would only be the route to Truckee. Previously, using our own power, we had been routed via the Reno Branch to Truckee. With that branch clogged with stored cars our route this year would take us down Feather River Canyon to Roseville and then over Donner Pass to Truckee. Through many hours of planning and phone calls, we were scheduled to depart Portola for the first leg of our trip on September 1. In preparation our equipment had been inspected and approved for movement according to the movement schedule previously submitted to Union Pacific. At 4:20 pm on August 31 a call was received from Union Pacific regarding our need to obtain a waiver for movement from the Federal Railroad



Traversing the Keddie Wye for the first time in many years our special movement looked great. - Dave Bergman

Administration for the equipment whose age was over 50 years old. While digesting this, a second call was received from Union Pacific stating we would also be required to have a fifty million dollar insurance rider to protect Union Pacific from liability for any fires that may be started by our equipment due to the extreme

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## Santa Trains 2001

By Pat Brimmer

Well, the time is getting near for the Santa Train. This has always been a great time at the museum as we share the Holiday Spirit with our friends and neighbors in the City of Portola and the surrounding areas. I have been asked by Jim Murphy to coordinate the Santa Train Project this year. So, below, you will find everything that I can think of that needs to be done for the Santa Train weekends. The dates for the Santa Train this year are December 1 and December 8. We will plan on running the first train about 5:30pm pending approval from Kerry

Cochran, Superintendent of Operations. We will run until everyone has had a ride. Normally, we conclude operations about 8:30pm. This is always a fun time for museum volunteers and also for the community.

Now, what I really need are lots of volunteers that will take responsibility for each of the things listed below. If you would like to volunteer, please e-mail me at [brimmer@wwdb.org](mailto:brimmer@wwdb.org), ASAP so that we can get started with the details. When you e-mail me, please indicate what area(s) you would like to help in and whether you want to take responsibility for that area(s) or just

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## Santa Trains 2001

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help out in that area.

This is the first time that I have coordinated this project and I'm sure that I may have missed some areas that need to be covered. If you see something that I have missed, please e-mail me immediately so that I can add it to the list and start searching for volunteers to cover it.

**Operations Crew** – Engineer, Fireman, Brakeman, Conductor, 5 car attendants, 2 or more crossing guards, supervisor/dispatcher. **CURRENTLY, THIS AREA IS REALLY IN NEED OF VOLUNTEERS.** Without an operating crew, the Santa Train doesn't run. They will also be responsible for any switching that must be done prior to and after the Santa Train runs. At this time, the following people have signed up for the operating crew:

December 1 – Kerry Cochran, Pat Brimmer, Don Borden, Loren Ross, Ed Wagner

December 8 – Pat Brimmer, Loren Ross

**Charge Radio Batteries** – Responsible for making sure that all radios have fully charged batteries on each Santa Train night.

**Refreshments** – Responsible for making sure that all of our guests and volunteers have a full, warm tummy during the evening. Cookies, Hot chocolate, hot spiced cider, coffee. The hot chocolate and spiced cider come in individual packets. We just add hot water. We need to check on the supply of sugar packets and powdered cream packets. We will use a lot of these.

**Christmas Tree and Decorations** – Responsible for purchasing a nice tree (6 foot minimum) and whatever decorations we need, lights included. They will be responsible for setting up the tree, decorating the tree, and then taking it down and disposing of the tree and putting away the decorations.

**Santa** – Jim Murphy – Santa gives out candy canes to all of the kids. These are about 6 inches long. I think we may have some in the supply room to see what size we need. Santa is responsible for purchasing the candy canes. Check with Norm to find out about how many we need.

**Decorating/Undecorating the train** – Responsible for getting the lights on and off the train. It is the largest effort for the Santa Train. We need to line up generators to run the lights on the train. We need to have one big light on the rear car to act as a headlight during the backing movement. If there was an easy way to do it, it would be nice to have this light double as a red marker lamp on the forward movement.

**Engine Preparation/Winterization** – Responsible for making sure we have a locomotive ready to go each weekend. It has been suggested that we would use the WP 608 (Kerry Cochran will make the final decision on this). They will make sure that the locomotive is drained, etc. for final winterization. Decorating the locomotive will happen on the first weekend of the Santa Train unless someone can do it earlier.

**Initial Checkout of train lights** – We need to get all of the lights out and check each string. We also need to determine if we have enough lights for all of the cabooses and the locomotive.

We need to find the Christmas heralds that go on the sides of the locomotive and make sure that all of the lights are working.

**Caboose heaters** – We need to have heaters in each caboose. These need to be checked out ahead of time to make sure they are working and they are safe during train operations. We don't want any of our customers burned accidentally.

**Gift Shop** – They will be responsible for running the gift shop each evening of the Santa Train. The shop should be open and ready for business by 5:00 pm. They are responsible to make sure that there is plenty of money in the register to begin each evening. When the evening is over, they will count the register and make a note of the amount that they began with and finished with. They will then turn this money and information over to the President who will handle the deposit. If possible, it would be nice to keep a tally on how much of each item we sell, what people wanted that we didn't have and what we sold out of. This will help us in our planning and ordering for next year. **NOTE:** A scanning register sure would be nice to help gather this information. Maybe we can consider upgrading our register next spring.

**Decorate Beanery** – Responsible for decorating the beanery. We will probably need to buy some decorations, etc. depending upon available funds.

**Heaters for the Beanery** – Responsible for making sure that the beanery is a warm gathering place for our customers. If they feel that other heaters are needed in the building for comfort, please contact the President with your ideas.

**Christmas Music inside the main building** – Responsible for setting up a sound system and playing Christmas music each evening. I don't think we have done this before and we may or may not be able to do it this season (time is short).

**Refreshments for volunteers:** – Maybe the President's discretionary fund would have enough money to buy pizza for all of the volunteers and have it delivered to the beanery right after we finish with the last train of the evening (delivery about 9:00 pm ?).

**Snow removal (if necessary)** – They will be responsible for clearing away snow and spreading snow melt if needed.

**Photographer** – They will be responsible for taking pictures of the evenings happenings.

**Publicity** – They will be responsible for getting the word out via newspaper, etc. to the City of Portola and the surrounding community.

So, there it is. Quite a long list of things to do but with a lot of volunteers, it will all get done and we will all have a fun time on Santa Train evenings. As you know, I live in Salt Lake City and will not be able to just come to Portola and do a lot of these things whenever I want to. So, I have agreed to coordinate the project in hopes that everyone will join in and volunteer their time in whatever area(s) they desire. I'm looking forward to hearing from all of you and also seeing all of you on the Santa Train.

*IF EVERYONE DOES A LITTLE, THEN NO ONE HAS TO DO A LOT.*

## Truckee Railroad Days 2001

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fire conditions at the time. This of course brought to a halt any departure plans we had and caused many other peoples plans to change as well. This sudden change of events also disappointed the large number of railfans who had gathered along the route to document the movement. After many phone calls, the fifty-year equipment age problem was solved with the FRA but the insurance issue remained a

hurdle that needed quick resolution if the movement was to proceed. Contact was made with a UP Vice President, who was in out of town at the time, and he was apprised of our problems. We were assured that he would be back in his office on Monday September 3 and together we could work through this. The Board of Directors had previously approved an expenditure of up to \$5,000 for insurance coverage and if additional funding had been necessary a special meeting would have had to be called. Thankfully this was not necessary as the Vice President came through for us and supplied a UP locomotive to power the train. Liability issues were therefore taken care of for our movement of equipment.

Early Tuesday morning, we assembled the train in Portola Yard and began the trek westbound. Stopping briefly at Kiddie for photographs and a quick inspection of the equipment we then continued non-stop to Oroville where another inspection of the train was performed. Departing Oroville we soon achieved the speed limit imposed by UP on the fairly flat run to Sacramento and arrived in Roseville about 9 pm. We spotted the entire train next to the main office building under the watchful eye of the UP special agents and in clear view of one of the surveillance cameras. At this point, Steve and I worked with the Terminal Managers to go get GP20 2001 (which had been cared for by the boys on the service track) out of the



Descending towards Oroville our train has just negotiated the horseshoe curve between James and Elsey.  
- Dave Bergman

Roundhouse and placed in our train. This was done with no problems and we were able to put the train to bed and then ourselves around midnight. After getting rested we all met in the morning for breakfast and planning for the days movement to Truckee. Arriving back at the yard office we were informed our train would follow Amtrak #6, which had Vice President Verhaal on board the Union Pacific private cars at the rear of the train for the trip over Donner Pass with a group of foreign business people. While they went by our train, the group was out on the back platform pointing out our train and taking

pictures of our equipment. Unfortunately we ended up following a heavy drag freight out of Roseville. Traffic was heavy and we soon caught up the train ahead of us, which was having power problems (distributed power). This signaled to us that we were in for a long day. At one point between Newcastle and Auburn, there was a brief discussion between the train ahead and dispatcher regarding our tying on the rear end and helping them up the hill. This was vetoed quickly by all concerned, although it would have been real interesting to see a UP SD60 and 3 1950s era Western Pacific diesels as helpers on Donner Pass....

For what seemed an eternity we hit yellow signal after yellow signal following the freight ahead until we finally arrived in Colfax where we stopped for both lunch and another inspection of the equipment. Leaving Colfax about 3 pm anticipating an uninterrupted journey to Truckee we ascended to Switch 9 (Downtown Emigrant Gap) where our hopes were dashed when we received the unpleasant news we would be stuck for at least an hour for the westbound fleet. I headed for the small office to use the phone to call Omaha regarding our fate and future plans at Truckee. During this time, Conductor Habeck arrived from the Caboose looking for a "restroom". Unfortunately the only one available was in the very office I was using at the time. I was still on the phone to Omaha when he occupied the restroom area, but was quickly forced to leave the building and area for health reasons. We now believe that Conductor Habeck may have caused the early demise of ALL foliage growing near the septic system. We finally received clearance to leave and departed Switch 9 at about 6 pm and headed over the hill non-stop to Truckee.



With a smile that would take a surgeon to remove, Steve Habeck, riding in the traditional Conductors spot, had a warm greeting for all along the way.  
- Dave Bergman

Our arrival in Truckee was met with broad smiles, waves

## Truckee Railroad Days 2001



Saturday morning found “early birds” touring our equipment and letting us know how good it looked.

and the sight of people coming out of restaurants and stores to view our colorful consist first hand. We placed the train on one leg of the balloon track, tied it down, and bid farewell to Frank Brehm, who volunteered to stay in Truckee with the train and watch over things until Friday. Those members who had followed the train from Roseville then began the task of removing builders’ plates, horns and other “easily misplaced items” from the equipment. We were then “asked” to take our UP engine to Sparks as it was needed there. After sliding in right on our 12-hour limit, we headed home. Thursday found a flurry of activity as the cars for display were cleaned and tidied up for the weekend event. Friday found us switching the equipment into proper display position while volunteers continued cleaning and setting up the gift shop and display area. This took about four hours to do with about 50 plus people watching and photographing our movements. We also took possession of the UP 6936, which had arrived Thursday evening, at this time and were forced to “borrow” the services of a fire truck to wash the unit, as it was covered with road grime and animal remains from its journey to Truckee. We finally tied things up around 8 pm and went home to rest and prepare for the rest of the weekend.

We returned Saturday morning to find a huge amount of people already viewing our equipment so we opened the gift shop and equipment for public tours. There were in excess of 3000 people through and around our equipment that day alone. We took turns manning the cab of the 6936 as it was running and set up with steps for the public to easily get on and off. For most of the day, the entire length of the engines running boards were full of people lined up to see the engine up close with the 2001 and 707 enjoying the same amount of attention. The event ended at 5 pm but the crowd of visitors did not clear out until about 6 pm. After securing things for the night, all the members involved got together for a quick pizza and either went home or to the Hotel for the night.

Sunday started with another full house and contin-

ued that way for most of the day. At 4 pm, Steve and I along with the rest of the volunteers began the task of packing up for the movement home. We switched the equipment back into the form of a train while the stairs and other equipment brought along was reloaded onto the train. Just before departure, we were “asked” by the dispatcher to take the Truckee Helper Engines with us to Roseville. We added those to the motive power consist and proceeded with our air test and final inspection. We knocked down the signal at West Truckee at about 6:30 pm and with the UP 6936 and 1 of the two SD-40 helpers in Run 8, blasted up the hill towards Norden at track speed. While climbing the hill, I listened to the Dispatcher talking to someone about a derailment ahead of us. With a sinking feeling, I contacted Steve in the caboose only to learn he had heard the same thing. We were stopped at Switch 9 again and remained there for about two and a half hours while things were sorted out ahead of us. We departed at about 10:30 and headed down the hill. We were

allowed to “walk” past the derailment and continue non-stop for Roseville arriving and securing the train with our watches showing 5 am. After some much needed sleep, we departed Roseville for Portola at 1 pm on Monday September 10. We ran non-stop to Oroville but before arrival, I was instructed to call the Dispatcher on the phone ASAP. At this time we were notified that another derailment had occurred ahead of us in the Feather River Canyon at Belden and they were unsure of when the track would be opened so they were going to take us up to James and call a relief crew. At this point, I talked with Steve and decided the best thing for the equipment was to park at Oroville for the night and try again in the morning. Once Omaha realized that we were a “free” crew, they agreed to our request and once again we tied the equipment down for the night. Steve and I, along with Vic Neves and John Walker, made a couple of trips down to the yard that night to make sure our train was safe and the “free riders” had not made



Visitation of the equipment thinned somewhat during lunch but quickly picked up shortly after on both days.

- Dave Bergman

## Truckee Railroad Days 2001

homes in our equipment. No problems were encountered.

I was awakened on the morning of the 11th by the insistent ringing of the phone at about 6:45 am with the message from my wife instructing me to turn on the TV. Of course, the events in New York City were live and in color. This made for a day we would never forget no matter what happened on our trip up the Canyon. I checked with Omaha and was assured we would be allowed to depart, but there was a lot of traffic to deal with and that in light of the unfolding events, all facets of operations were being inspected quite closely and that in itself would affect our trip home. We departed Oroville at about 1 pm for our journey through the canyon. During the trip we met quite a few trains, arriving in Portola at about 9 pm. We put the train away inside Museum grounds and said farewell to the 6936 which was returned to the UP.

During the trip to Truckee, there were at least twenty railfan vehicles chasing us through the Canyon with many others out to see us and wave. We had about ten vehicles follow us to Truckee the next day with MANY local residents out taking pictures and waving as we passed. Returning home I was surprised at the large number of postings on the Internet to the different railfan boards keeping track of our movements and that quite a few pictures had been posted of our equipment along the way. With the UP supplying the engine, and covering any liability, our crew for movement was myself, Steve Habeck, Jerry Williams and Lindy Klock (all UP employees donating their time). This was a rule imposed by the Vice President and that was that. The actual event in Truckee was larger than I expected and provided great exposure for the FRRS. I personally signed up five new members and as reported elsewhere, we did over \$2000 worth of business in the gift shop and raffle tickets. We completely sold out of RAL raffle tickets, which equates to \$750 worth of income for three rentals. Many of the people I talked with all said mostly the same thing. Either they did not know anything about Portola or us, or had been to Portola some time ago and were now going to make sure they visited us next year. We gave away many "free ride" tickets for next years operating season and I will be curious to see how many surface next year. The baggage car got rave reviews by all I talked to in its capacity as a mobile gift shop/display area and looked fantastic with our also newly painted lounge car. The train itself could only have looked better without the UP engine on the point; solid WP power verses the days of pool power. With this trip we learned some real important lessons regarding what is needed for us to go "outside" the gate next time. As far as financially, cost to the FRRS for this trip was close to zero if anything at all. We used a tiny amount of fuel in the 707 and other than that, no other FRRS monies were spent.

The derailments and the Terrorist Acts on our great country overshadowed the trip home. Due to those events, we did not have the Railfans chasing us as on the way over, but we did have a few. Also, due to schedule conflicts, Steve and I were the crew on the way home with the help of my Wife and Vic Neves driving the chase vehicles. There were still large amounts of postings and pictures on the Internet of our movement and not a one was negative. Many members and non members commented to us that

they would like to see us participate in more events like this and how nice our equipment looked. I am proud to say that we did not have ANY equipment failures throughout the trip. FRRS equipment performed flawlessly and this is due to the fine work of MANY FRRS volunteers and employees. I have talked with the people at the UP who helped make this happen and they were very impressed with our professionalism and our equipment. They have stated that they would like to see us do this again and would support us fully. This alone, stands out for the FRRS as in today's world of Railroading, Museum equipment moves are rarely allowed because of failures. We have begun building a good reputation with the UP and I for one, would like to see it foster into a great relationship that will go far in helping the FRRS in the future. Investigation into the FRA 50 year rule that was a problem for us has begun and a report of findings issued when I am finished. An inquiry has been started concerning the fire issues and what it will take to resolve them for the future.

There have been comments from some FRRS members that this trip was nothing but fun and a big party for those involved. I can say that nothing can be farther from the truth! I can only speak for Steve and myself, but the hours we alone put into the movement of the equipment were huge. I cannot begin to count the hours spent by many other members that were also involved. A very big Thank You to all who assisted in the preparation, movement, display, return, and cleanup of our equipment.

Next year will be even better!

## Zephyr Project Update

By Eugene Vicknair

### *Late Breaking News*

Just as the deadline for this issue of the Train Sheet rolled around, I received a call from the company doing the replica dome interior pieces for the Silver Hostel. They were requesting an inspection to see how they were doing on matching the parts I had given them.

The Hostel's dome had several interior trim and wall pieces removed, odd shaped items that would be difficult to replace. Luckily, Eclipse Metal Fabrication in Redwood City, CA offered to reproduce the parts even though it was a run of, in some cases, only one part. They also offered to produce some extras for future replacement, all for a very low bid considering the complexity of the jobs.

I am pleased to report that I inspected the parts are they are looking really good. Two very complicated ones are being reworked by Eclipse at no cost as they were not up to spec. While the parts will need fitting and some modification when we go to install them (it is very difficult to do this kind of custom work when the car is about 300 miles away), they should blend right in with the original pieces.

When they are finally delivered in late November, the Silver Hostel will have all needed parts for the interior dome walls, including the ceiling lights. About the only things missing for the dome now are the stairwell railing and the windows.