

WP 165 SPRING PROGRESS

- Chris Allan, Steam CMO

I soon realized that one benefit of my new gig fixing a steam engine in Fillmore, California was the ability to be on the correct side of LA when I began my trip north for the spring workweek. Having gotten in one whole day of work on the Duluth and North Eastern 14 on Monday, April 5, 2010, I awoke in my palatial digs in Santa Fe superintendent car 409, got dressed and got out. I was soon over the Grapevine for points north. After arriving at my parent's house in Concord I relaxed a bit, and loaded up what remained of poor Dana's life in the bed of my truck. Thanks to Craig Ferguson and Martin for bringing it all over to my folks' house. I think my Dad was glad to have the floor space in his garage cleared up.

Hank Stiles and Steve Cope started cleaning up Wednesday, April 7, in preparation for the work. Steve spent a good deal of time cleaning the pit, which doubles as the cats litter box. By the time Roger and I arrived that afternoon the engine was accessible and the floor was clear of detritus. Thanks to you guys for the effort and sorry again about the small mix up as to when I was going to get to the property.

Roger set about chipping a great deal of scale and rust from the roof sheet under where the rear sand dome sits. This is one spot where the jacket rusted through and water seeped into the insulation. The result was a good amount of wastage on the boiler sheet. Roger's handy ultrasonic tester confirmed that there were pitted spots well in excess of what could be built back up. We decided to remove two sections of the sheet for renewal. This stayed area amounts to approximately two by three feet of shell.

In the meantime Hank started the removal of flexible staybolt caps, which is required at intervals by the Federal Railroad Administration, or FRA. Removing the caps allows the railroad to inspect the bolts for breakage or any other condition that would require replacement. There are a large number of them, so Hank was at it for a couple days with Roger's impact gun. Sadly the gun gave up the ghost and is back in Woodland for repairs. Happily, Hank was able to remove enough caps to fill a five-gallon bucket

to overflowing. Steve helped out Hank and kept the area clean and safe, which we greatly appreciate.

For two evenings Roger primer painted the new cab and tender plates that will replace the originals on the locomotive. Thanks to Roger for the donation of the paint and thanks to Eugene Vicknair, Bob Sims, James Mason, Norm Holmes, and Steve Habeck for their donations to the fundraiser. We were able to meet our goal, and the plates will be going to the sign shop next week. All of these gentlemen embody the spirit that will allow us to get steam up in Portola again one day.



The original 165 cab numerals, which will be placed into the archives for preservation.

- Mike Mucklin photo

By Friday it was the proverbial beehive of activity. Dave Wallace showed up ready to work. He and I set ourselves upon removing the steam dome studs in preparation for replacing them with new. These being quite numerous, it took a great deal of time to slowly worry each one out with an accursed heavy pipe wrench, first one way then the other. By the end of the exercise we were both feeling our age. Dave and I, back in the 80s at Rio Vista could do stuff like that all day, but sadly those days are behind us. My hope is David's twin boys, Patrick and William, will take a shine to working on this old stuff when they are older, and we will only have to supervise from our easy chairs.

The ever affable Matt Parker joined the fray, and needleguns rang out like angry hornets for the remainder of the weekend. I would like to

welcome William "Burr" Wilson and his son Alex to the party. They arrived Saturday and made great progress needle scaling the front pilot beam, coupler and pilot deck. I was impressed by their tenacity and hope they can come back and join us in July.

Eugene Vicknair was the loneliest of our lot, banished to outside the shop documenting the cab woodwork. The wood headliner, window rails, etc. need to be removed prior to sandblasting. Eugene has graciously offered to complete an exhaustive study and draw up what needs to be replaced at a later date. A sandblasting contractor showed up to look at the cab and the interior of the boiler shell. The quote is forthcoming. With any luck sandblasting will save many hours of painstaking needlescaler work, if we can secure the funding.

Saturday night at the board meeting we were visited by Charlie Spikes, who seems to be

healing nicely. We look forward to having him back and wish him a speedy recovery. Maybe he can cheer us on, or just yell at us to work faster, at the next work session in July.

News of an impending snowstorm on Saturday night spooked me, so I was out and back down to Concord by 10:00 PM. Negotiating Donner Pass with the storm clouds ripping across the sky at sunset was spectacular. At dusk you could just make out the snow sheds above Donner Lake, a dark stripe on a snowy field of white. The view brought to mind thoughts of those men who pushed their 4-4-0s, and later the massive Cab-Forwards through those sheds and back down into Nevada. Moving the fruit blocks and Limiteds of old while keeping their massive shiny engines in motion were huge endeavors to be sure, but not as big as the men that braved that hill on a daily basis, and still do.

Roger Stabler working inside the 165's boiler.

- Eugene Vicknair photo

