

FEATHER RIVER RAIL SOCIETY AGENDA REPORT

DATE: February 24, 2003
TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Director Vicknair
MEETING: March 1, 2003
ITEM: New Business 2
SUBJECT: Report on PFE/WP Ice Reefer 55742

Equipment Inspection Report

subject.. **Western Pacific/Pacific Fruit Express 55754**
Wooden Ice Reefer

specifications..

built 1923-24, further examination required to correctly date
built by American Car and Foundry
PFE class R-30-13
Steel underframe, wood body construction
Rebuilt by PFE 1953-54 to modernized R-30-13-9 standard
Original number unknown
Retirement date unknown, but between 1958 and 1965

inspected by Eugene Vicknair, Eric Stephens and Christopher Kapreilian

inspected on February 15, 2003 in Manteca, California

PFE 55754 is currently located at a horse ranch approximately 5 miles east of Manteca, California. It is unknown to the current owners when the car arrived on the property, but it is estimated to be in the early 1960's. The car is resting on a cribbing of concrete blocks and railroad ties, set on a roughly east-west alignment. For clarity, the ends will be referred to as east and west and the sides as north and south.

Overall the car is in very good condition, with the ends and the north side exhibiting very little if any degradation of the wood. The south side has the most damage, mainly rotting of the lower ends of the external sheathing, typical for older wood body cars. The most severe degradation is on the east end of the south wall with board showing some degree of rot for about 50% of their length.

Both doors are present and all hinges and latches in good condition. In common with the exterior sheathing on that side, the south doors have the heaviest wear and damage, but it is relatively minor except for one corner of one door. Damage is limited to the wood components. The north doors were not opened, but appeared to be in excellent condition.

All ladders and grab irons have been removed from the car with the exception of one ladder on the east end. This ladder was found to be solid and easily held the weight of one of the inspectors. Mountings for the brake stands are in place, but the stands and associated linkages have been removed.

While all wood on the roof showed signs of severe rot or were simply not present, the metal components of the roof appeared sound and most were found to be present, including hardware associated with the ice bunker hatches. The hatches themselves, while rotted, were in place and appear to have remained reasonably sealed against the weather. An inspection of the interior showed no indications of major water leakage from the roof.

The interior was found to be in excellent shape with two major exceptions. While one ice bunker appears to be completely intact, including the metal grilles for the ventilators, the east end bunker has had a portion of its interior wall cut away. This can be replicated using the existing bunker. The most severe damage to the car is a rot hole at the south side doors. This hole seems to be the result of water damage and is approximately 2-2.5 feet in diameter. While some other soft spots in the flooring were noted, these seem to be limited to the particle board top surface of the floor and not the underlying material. The meat hook rail is intact in the car and appears to be about 95% complete.

Due to the way the car is supported and items around it, a complete inspection of the underside was not possible, but one section was accessible. While the steel crossmembers and truck bolsters are no longer present, the main wood supports of the frame appear to be sound and have no obvious rot present. The perimeter steel sill and coupler pockets are present and look to be solid.

While the decayed condition of our PFE 55333 makes its restoration a difficult task, it does have many parts that could be used to restore our PFE 52138 and this car to serviceable condition. All decayed wood found on PFE 55754 is replaceable, either with new material or parts from 55333. The major task will be fabrication of the missing underframe and brake components. For the underframe, PFE 52138 can be used for patterns. Brake components can be replicated from our WP boxcar and cars in other collections, primarily that of CSRM.

It is our opinion, based on this examination, that PFE 55754 is in better condition than either wood PFE reefer currently in the PRM collection. Considering the current state of PFE 55333, the 55754, being an identical car, would be a suitable replacement for it in the collection, allowing the 55333 to be salvaged for usable wood and parts. This would allow us to retain two authentic wood ice reefers in our collection.

The owners have indicated they are receptive to an outright donation with a tax receipt and public recognition of their donation. While they have not discussed any performance guarantees on its donation, they have discussed a strong desire to see the car well cared for and restored in the near future. The owners may be able to assist with transportation of the car. The primary difficulty in transporting the 55754 will be loading on the Manteca end. Two large trees, which appear to be dead, are located right next to the car. One very large branch has

actually grown partly resting on the roof. While this branch does not seem to have caused any damage, the branch, or perhaps the entire tree, will need to be removed to lift and load the car. Transport will require a low-boy trailer and a pilot vehicle.

This car falls under previous A&D directives concerning acquisition of WP equipment and, as such, can be referred to the committee, but this is probably not required.

ACTION: Discussion. Possible Action.