

FEATHER RIVER RAIL SOCIETY

DATE: August 2019
ITEM: Event Report
FROM: Eugene Vicknair

WESTERN PACIFIC CELEBRATION

First off, a huge thank you to everyone who participated and helped with making the Western Pacific Celebration happen. There were some bumps along the way, but overall everyone I talked to ruled the event a success. Kerry Cochran has the complete list and gave out thank you certificates. I will call out some specific folks in this report, but everyone did a fantastic job.

From a financial standpoint, it was a shot in the arm. We raised \$700 from 5 sponsors (Jim Dobbas - \$250, Plumas Sierra Rural Electrical Coop - \$250, Cal-Sierra Title - \$100, Sierra Motel - \$50, Nicole's Café - \$50). We also received \$160 from our vendor tables. Gross sales were just under \$4,000, while the raffle contributed about \$400 and donations were about \$200. All together, the gross income was over \$5,200. Advertising costs were \$770, which was covered by sponsors and vendors before the event even started. With cost of goods in the store, our net income is probably around \$4,300. Big thank you to Janet Steeper who made phone calls to the potential sponsors who received request letters.

The visitors seemed to have a good time. I heard no real complaints and a lot of complements. All the vendors want to come back for future events and Patty and I are already tagging them for Pumpkin Patch Express. The Nevada Gunfighters also want to come back.

The locomotive cab rides were a surprise hit, with Saturday selling out before the first caboose train run. Steve Habeck had the idea to doublehead with SP 2873 on Sunday and that provided extra cab seats. The motorcars and model T were also a hit with several visitors asking when we were going to run them again. I received a lot of complements on the guided tours. Estimated that about 85 people took the tours over the two days. Eric McKay did great in the information booth. He was responsible for 90% of the raffle ticket sales and also got some new memberships.

Based on rough count and caboose train ticket sales, estimated attendance was between 400 and 500 people. Talked to several people who had not been to the museum in years or ever but heard about the event and decided to come. This included some long time and lapsed members. Portola City Councilmember Pat Morten also attended and was very complementary of the event.

Probably the biggest snafus were the initial rush for Model T / Motorcar / Locomotive cab rides overwhelming the store staff on Saturday morning and getting the motorcars and T running first thing Saturday. Thanks to David Elems who stepped it to act as scheduler for that first hour and took some pressure off the store staff.

I had a post mortem call with Greg Elems and Patty Clawson on Thursday to discuss the event. Also received feedback during the event from several members. Here are some thoughts going forward:

Things needing improvement:

- Special ride tickets and scheduling
 - Need person on hand at beginning of the day when we do special operations like Model T and Motorcars
 - Do not pre-date / time tickets, too hard to manage
- Have motorcars and Model T ready to go ahead of start time
 - Have single, early prep / safety meeting and ensure everyone is properly equipped and ready before gates open
- Make more locomotive cab seats available when promoting those
- If possible, fix gang speeder to have more motorcar seats available
- Have more people pushing raffle tickets
 - Store staff can also sell, but they were occupied running store and selling ride tickets
- Have haybales / benches for seating during gunfighter show
- Have picnic benches / tables for food area
- Stagger event start times during the day

Things to expand and build on:

- Have more motorcar operations during season and more seats available
- Promote locomotive cab rides more heavily during season
- Bring in more model train layouts for events
- Add more self-contained attractions for events (WWII vehicle exhibit, model layouts, etc.)
- Secure help from scouts and community groups, particularly for set-up and cleaning
- Work with gunfighters to allow larger set for next year
- More promotion of memberships
- Train group of volunteers to act as tour guides / docents to expand guided tour program (could draw from local community groups in addition to regular volunteers)
- More active seeking of sponsors for events

What worked well:

- Information booth
- Vendor set-up
- Gunfighters
- Food vendor
- Model layout
- Motorcars / Model T
- Locomotive cab rides
- Guided tours

Changes:

- Swap drive lane and gunfighter location so gunfighter show is between whitcomb locomotive and fence along rail lead, making gunfighters more prominent