

# The Tail Light #5

August 1999

News of the

Western Pacific Railroad Historical Society

## **WPRRHS 1999 Convention Report**

On April 16 & 17 1999, 92 people attended the third annual WPRRHS convention held at the Newark-Fremont Hilton Hotel. Convention directors Jim Dias and Thom Anderson did a great job of putting together a well-received group of presenters that resulted in a thoroughly enjoyable gathering.

Clinicians included John Walker presenting material from the Society archives detailing WP's plans for building their own line up the peninsula into San Francisco. Jim Providenza showed how to make era-specific models of the F-unit fleet. Tom Moungovan and Don Marenzi showed slides from their collections. For an unusual viewpoint, Rich Forst showed slides taken during cab-rides as a WP employee. Bill Decker showed how to modify the Life-Like GP20 into a high-hood WP version. Dave Pires showed several easily modeled WP flatcars, gondolas and tank cars.

Norman Holmes showed slides he took in the Bay Area before his move to Portola. Dave Stanley presented slide shows on the Sacramento Northern, Tidewater Southern and Central California Traction Co. Vic Neves and Wayne Monger showed their ever-popular WP-theme slide shows.

Saturday evening, following a buffet-style dinner, those attending the banquet were witness to a rare treat in the form of Mr. Harold Meeker, who joined WP as assistant to President Christy in 1966. He regaled those present for over an hour with stories about the inner workings of the railroad that only someone who was there when it happened could tell. Mr. Meeker's presentation was thoroughly enjoyed by all present. The evening was closed out with a viewing of favorite slides brought by the attendees.

Norman and Barbara Holmes brought the PRM gift shop to the convention and did very well in sales. Norman also showed two company films he had converted to video, a training film and an introduction to the railroad containing footage shot in the 1950s and 1960s. It is planned to have the videos available for purchase later this year. The member's swap table also did well.



Compared to past years, the modeling displays and contest entries were tremendous! There were over 100 models on display and nearly every contest category had multiple entries. There were also a number of items of WP related railroadiana on display for viewing, including paintings, timetables, passes and lanterns.

The WPRRHS would again like to thank Jim and Thom for their efforts in bringing us all a great convention!

## **2000 Convention Announced**

Please mark your calendars now to join us at the historic Feather River Inn in Blairsden, June 10-12 next year.

The Inn was a favorite destination for travellers on the WP. In fact, the Inn was a flag stop for WP passenger trains for many years. Now serving as a conference center for the University of the Pacific in Stockton, the main lodge has been nicely restored and has a great meeting room and a fantastic dining room where the food is simply excellent!

The grounds are quiet and peaceful, except when a UP train rolls by on the other side of Highway 70! The Inn also has dormitory style lodging in cabins which are just up the hill from the main lodge. As part of the convention package, all meals and overnight lodging will be included. While the initial price may seem much higher than our normal convention registration, please remember that this includes rooms and meals. When you add it all up, it's cheaper than running around trying to find a room or another place to eat. This way, there will be no reason to miss any of the great speakers and presentations on the schedule.

We will be mailing more information as the schedule and prices are firmed up. But please mark your calendars now so you will not miss this great gathering.

The convention committee is also looking to get started on the planning of the 2001 and 2002 conventions. We need suggestions from people who are willing to do the local leg work in finding a suitable site and making the necessary arrangements. The convention committee will help with registration, advertising, finding people to put on presentations, etc. There is money available to handle the deposits and expenses involved in setting up the meeting so please don't feel like you will be on your own. We have guidelines in place and we will be happy to discuss your ideas. The most important thing at this early stage, is to find someone in the local area where the proposed convention will be held who can find the right facilities and draft up a plan for our consideration.

Directing a convention will require a serious commitment of your personal time. You will have to put a few modeling projects aside for a month or two and you will spend a few hours on the phone with the convention staff. But, the results will be well worth the effort and greatly appreciated by your fellow members. Please give it some thought and give John Walker a call if you think you would like to give it a try.

## **Railfair 99 Report**

The Feather River Rail Society and the WPRRHS were invited to take part in the grand celebration at Railfair 99 in Old Sacramento last June. In addition to the operation and display of the museum's WP GP20 #2001 (resplendent in freshly painted safety stripes on the pilots), FRRS Director Wayne Monger asked the WPRRHS to put together a display for our booth.

Instead of just using the booths for fund raising, The California State Railroad Museum (CSRM) wanted the booths to promote tourism, railroad history, our museums, our equipment and organizations. The emphasis was on providing information booths to draw additional members or visitors to our organization or museum. Sadly, (in my humble opinion) some organizations simply could not get past the retail potential of a gathering this size and grossly over-commercialized their booths. It is a sad day for historical preservation when organizations feel that selling a T-shirt with a picture of their locomotive is more important than actually talking to a potential member or supporter.

Don't get me wrong, I fully understand the importance of fund-raising. Bringing the FRRS gift shop "down from the mountain" to where our members could conveniently pick up a few items was (and will always be) an important consideration in how we designed our Railfair booth.

But there were some organizations present which blatantly violated the directives issued by CSRM and really did a disservice to themselves. Our booth, while severely overcrowded (something we will work to correct in the future), nevertheless, featured a nice display of WP railroad history, photo's of the museum, brochures about our organization and activities, and efforts to promote tourism in Plumas County.



Our operating people did an outstanding job, our locomotive was very well received and our booth complied nicely with the directives while meeting our commercial needs. New members were signed up and we expect an increase in visitors to the museum this summer.

It was great to see so many members drop by and say hello and catch up on old times. For me, this was also an exciting opportunity to speak with members of other organizations and representatives from the State Archives, The Discovery Museum, etc. I believe that these discussions will bring forth some great cooperation and assistance on future projects. *John Walker*

### **Library**

Donations to the Arthur Walter Keddie Railroad Library continue to come in. Recent donations include a track chart from Kerry Cochran (the new FRRS membership chairman) and a color painting of a proposed WP Trucking Terminal in Salt Lake City by Mark Frieberg. Don Jocelyn and Joe Blackwell of East-West Rail Scenes donated a set of duplicate color slides of WP subjects from their collection. The slides are Kodak Extachrome duplicates and are very sharp. I've purchased their slides

several times over the years and can highly recommend them. If your interested in purchasing some for your own collection, send \$3.00 to East West Rail Scenes at P.O. Box 418 Torrance, CA 90508 and get their current catalog and three sample slides (not necessarily WP). This company also has a website at [www.outerstate.com/ew](http://www.outerstate.com/ew). Don't forget to tell them that your from the WPRRHS. Ken Meeker of Roundhouse Hobbies in Stockton has donated two huge boxes of archival photo and document protectors to aid us in preserving the "J.W. Lynch" photo collection of WP derailments across Nevada. This was a very generous gift and we thank Ken very much.

We have just learned that we will soon lose the location where we have been sorting through the archives. After careful consultation with the new FRRS President Andy Anderson and Facilities Director Doug Morgan up at the museum, we will temporarily convert one of the Cotton Belt Insulated box cars at the museum into a "library car" where we can continue this work. The car has wood paneling, a good floor, is fully insulated and does not leak. There is over 100 linear feet of storage along the walls and Andy and Doug are moving rapidly to have 45 feet of eight foot high shelving constructed in one end of the car so we can begin moving the archives back down to the museum. Although I really feel that this is a step backward for the development of the library, we really have no other choice at the moment. But, I deeply appreciate the genuine concern and rapid response of the FRRS and museum staff in helping to make this transition as smooth as possible.

Problems like this illustrate the great need to finish sorting through the archives up at Portola and find a permanent home for these documents. I have spoke with the Plumas County Librarian, the director of The Quincy Museum, and representatives from CSU Chico, CSRM and The Bay Area Electric Railway Association in Rio Vista concerning this problem. It looks like a decision will have to be made soon. But, other libraries are reluctant to consider the possibility of taking over the daily care of the archives until we can accurately determine the size of the collection. If you have any suggestions, please give me a call. If your interested in going up to the museum sometime and helping sort through material. Drop me a note and I'll notify you when we get together. *John Walker*

### **The Headlight**

We know many of you are wondering what held up the latest issue. Well, folks, we went right into the "Big Hole" when we attempted mailing issue sixteen. It seems that when Bill Shippen resigned last October from his duties as Headlight Editor, Train Sheet Editor, Membership Chairman and as our mailing office, replacements were found for everything except the mailing duties. Frank Brehm and John Walker stuffed the magazines into envelopes but there were no labels available to address the envelopes! Even worse, no one had the computer program to print out the labels and a current membership list was not readily available!

We apologize for this oversight (even though the WPRRHS had little control over the situation). Frank now has the software to print the labels and working together with our new membership chairman Kerry Cochran, I don't believe that we will ever suffer from this stupid (yes, I said stupid) blunder ever again.

Frank also reports that issue 17 (the big CZ 50th Anniversary issue) is nearing completion and will hopefully go to paste up in a few weeks. Articles being submitted for future issues include an article on Binney Jct. in Marysville, the WP's proposed but never built San

Francisco peninsula line, an article on the Jeffery Shops in Sacramento, a look at WP's Stockton Yard, an excellent article on modeling WP's U23B's and some other ideas which are still works in progress.

Our magazine staff is constantly looking and developing new material months, even years in advance. This magazine is an all volunteer effort, none of the staff gets paid for any of this. This is YOUR magazine...We need YOUR contributions NOW! Don't wait for someone else to write an article, they're waiting on you.

We desperately need cover photo's, "Portrait of a Feather" shots and modeling articles for the magazine. A new feature, the Collectibles Corner features short articles and photo's of unique WP items like lanterns, china, service awards, etc. Please consider sharing some of your items with us in this column. Contact Frank Brehm at 916-334-7476 for more details.

### Equipment notes

WPRRHS Member Robert Forren reports that WPMW #6 was recently cut up in Oroville where it had sat for many years. Although it was not saved by the museum, thankfully, Robert took extensive photographs of this Jordan Spreader which we will share with you in more detail in a future Headlight article.

Robert was also able to get a run down on the WP's fleet of 7701 series high side scrap gondolas. As of June 30 1999, the cars were located as follows:

7701 The Dalles, OR.  
 7702 Alexandria, LA. bound for Waukegan, IL  
 7703 Adelaide, ID. bound for The Dalles, OR  
 7704 Hallawell, OR. bound for The Dalles, OR  
 7705 No information.  
 7706 Not in Equipment Register  
 7707 No information.  
 7708 Not in Equipment Register  
 7709 Not in Equipment Register  
 7710 North Little Rock, AR bound for Valley, NE  
 7711 Not in Equipment Register  
 7712 Pebble, ID  
 7713 No information.  
 7714 No information.  
 7715 Not in Equipment Register  
 7716 No information.  
 7717 Planeport, TX bound for Newman, NM  
 7718 The Dalles, OR  
 7719 The Dalles, OR  
 7720 North Platte West, NE  
 7721 Chicago, IL bound for The Dalles, OR  
 7722 Not in Equipment Register

7723 Not in Equipment Register  
 7724 Not in Equipment Register  
 7725 Not in Equipment Register  
 7726 Not in Equipment Register  
 7727 No information.  
 7728 No information.  
 7729 Not in Equipment Register  
 7730 Not in Equipment Register  
 7731 The Dalles, OR.  
 7732 Not in Equipment Register  
 7733 Not in Equipment Register  
 7734 Not in Equipment Register  
 7735 Not in Equipment Register  
 7736 The Dalles, OR.  
 7737 Beaumont, TX. Air brakes inoperative.  
 7738 Fields, OR. bound for Beaumont, CA.  
 7739 Not in Equipment Register  
 7740 Pocatello, ID. B/O Brake Rigging.

It appears that these cars are now being used to transport ties from the UP's tie plant at The Dalles Oregon to different points on the system.

### Museum Display Room

As part of our agreement to take over the development of the Arthur Walter Keddie Library at Portola, the WPRRHS also assumed control over the "Display Room" at the museum. FRRS Charter member Chris Skow initially cleaned up this room and turned it into a display room for some of the museums artifacts back when the museum was first getting underway. Chris also donated a lot of great color prints to decorate the room. Norm Holmes and others have graciously loaned bits and pieces of their collections for viewing in this room over the years.

Museum volunteers have always tried to keep the room clean and organized. But since the museums inception some fifteen years ago, the room has seen very little improvement. There has been a water leak under an outside door, display material has been scuffed over the years and many of the pictures and artifacts have been damaged from diesel smoke, dirt and temperature extremes. Some items on display in this room have little or nothing to do with the FRRS, the Portola Museum, the WP or the Feather River Route. There was even an empty picture frame which hung on the wall for two years with nothing in it! Needless to say, this was the first thing removed when the WPRRHS took control of the room.

I have met with Facilities Director Doug Morgan and he assures me that the room will be completely renovated over this next winter. A window and two doors



will be framed in, a break in the sill along the north wall will be filled in (eliminating the water leak), the roof will be repaired and the masonry walls will be studded, insulated and sheet rocked. We may also elect to lower the ceiling a bit after installation of some insulation. An electric heating system is proposed and possibly a new door on the entrance to the room. Doug says he has the money allocated in this years budget and it should be completed over the winter.

I've also proposed to the FRRS Board of Directors that we allocate three to five dollars from each "Rent a Locomotive" (RAL) donation to a special fund for the continuing care and maintenance of this room and other educational and interpretive displays around the museum. This room should be the crown jewel of the museum and should be equipped with nice, new display cabinets, showcases and wall coverings. Now that the museum volunteer accommodations are nearing completion, I can't think of a single thing which could be done at the museum to improve our overall appearance and again boost our claim as a bonifide educational museum.

FRRS Director Eugene Vicknar has also proposed that RAL customers be allowed to donate five dollars from each rental to any specific fund raising project at the museum that they feel best needs the contribution. The board as not acted on these proposals yet, but they will be discussed in greater detail at the September board meeting. Please write a short note to the museum directors at the museum address of P.O. Box 608 Portola CA. 96122 and let them know how you feel about the importance of presenting a first class impression with this room.

We are also looking for ideas and suggestions on how the room should look. If any of our members have some interior design expertise, or just a good eye for designing a professional looking display, please send us your suggestions. Even if you have just seen a nice display used someplace else and want to pass along the idea.

Contributions and donations can be made specifically for this project as well. Please mark your donation as a gift for the Display Room.

### **News of the old WP**

David W. Epling reports that the old WP Feather River main line from El Pinal to the UP East Yard in Stockton is history. Crews have pulled out the El Pinal Diamond and straight railed the double track SP main. Feather River trains now go onto the SP at a switch which takes trains off the Feather River line and onto the SP's Elvas line at a switch connecting the lines about a quarter of a mile South of the former El Pinal diamond. The control point which formerly controlled the old WP crossing of El Pinal is already off the dispatchers board. Some of the signals on the Feather River line in the area of Flora Street, 1 mile South of El Pinal, have also been turned to the side.

According to Dave, there are still trains on 9th street in Modesto, but recent information says that won't be for much longer. The Stockton Tower has been demolished as has the former WP mainline between the Tower and El-Pinal, but the WP depot still stands in Stockton.

Mike Tisdale reports that at the former tower site, it was an eerie feeling to see the UP crossing gone. Construction crews have been busy at work cleaning the Tower area up. The [parking] lot has been completely weeded and graded, the containers immediately next to the BNSF main have been pulled out, all of the poles, rails,

and ties on both sides of the BNSF tracks have been removed. The interchange tracks on the South side of the Tower have also been torn out and removed. A BNSF MOW crew removed the 2 Turnouts that have been sitting just west of the tower, loaded them onto a flatbed truck, destination unknown.

When railfanning at the Stockton Tower...err crossing, and you hear the horns blow to the North...there is no longer any question as to which (SP or UP) track the train is on. Trains coming into Stockton on the Canyon Sub, now have to call DS56 to enter the Fresno Line, so with a scanner, you have plenty of warning to set up your cameras

The only train activity [that day] was all Santa Fe, the first having 8 units on it, including a SD45B (MKM but still in SF blue and yellow and the old 70's style nose logo) and a GP60B. Following that was a departing BNSF Sacramento local, and after that was a BNSF port job, all units in ATSF blue and yellow.

In Yuba City, a few SP locomotives have ventured into town to serve the businesses left on this remaining segment of the old SN. Former WP #3553 has recently showed up in the form of UP #908.

### **Product Review**

When I was at Winterail last month, at ICON Video Production's table I picked up a new video on the CZ. Cost is \$30, however you also receive a CD ROM that includes sounds of the train, station announcements, conversations by the crew from the cab as the train gets under way — complete with run-up of those sweet sounding 567s inside the F-units! There are also plenty of sounds of the CZ's horns.

The video includes some really nice footage of the CZ — most of it shot by Virgil Staff, much of it not seen before. Perhaps the greatest treat are the interviews with Arthur Lloyd (WP Public Relations), Ernie von Ibsch (CZ Brakeman), Kathy Moran (Zephyrette, who later married Ernie von Ibsch) and Virgil Staff (WP Company historian). Narration is very professional, and most everything is very well put together. I compare it to a high quality documentary. There are a few images showing freight trains, several captured in the Feather River Canyon. There's plenty of coverage showing numerous locales along the CZ route, Oakland receives plenty of footage, as does Fremont, along with other locations. Running time is 55 minutes.

I highly recommend this tape to any CZ or WP fan. It is far and away the best yet covering this beautiful train, and of course is on the WP!

You can find more info, along with ordering information, at <<http://www.trainorders.com/shop/zephyr.html>>. *Robert Sarberenyi*

### **Zephyr Web Page**

As most of you should know, this is the 50th Anniversary of the start-up of the famed California Zephyr. Issue 17 of The Headlight will be a tribute to this beloved train. Until then, check out Alan Redeki's California Zephyr Virtual Museum at <http://calzephyr.railfan.net/>

Well, that's enough for now. If you need to contact me, I'm available at 530-671-9584 in the evenings and weekends and at [run8john@thegrid.net](mailto:run8john@thegrid.net)

John Walker  
WPRRHS Administrator