



This modified PFM prairie comes pretty close to the prototype TS No. 132. Main differences are in pump, running board positions, and "arch" over pump as supplied with

model. Also, the headlight, whistle position, and shape of pilot just under the coupler differ somewhat from the prototype.

# WESTERN PACIFIC'S LONE PRAIRIE

## An Easy Conversion In Brass

by Ron Kuykendall

Back in April, 1940, the Western Pacific purchased the No. 32, a 2-6-2, from the Sierra Railroad. The little prairie was bought with service on the light rail of subsidiary Tidewater Southern expressly in mind. The TS had begun life as a traction line back in 1912, and has been with the WP since March, 1917. Still very much alive, the line consists of 33 miles from Stockton to Modesto, Calif., with an additional 16 miles to Turlock.

The 132 joined a handful of other steamers for TS service, and ended up as the last steam engine on the short-line. When new to the WP, the engine was still the 32, but confusion with the already-existing No. 32—one of the standard consols—caused the new number of 132 to be applied as of June, 1941. Late in December, 1952, while inside the Stockton roundhouse, she was hit hard from behind. Severe damage to her tender caused it to be replaced with that of the Sierra's famous movie engine, 2-8-0 No. 18. In the later years—the early 50s—No. 132 was mainly used for the summer and fall fruit rush. Tiny though she was, the little pot served well until she was finally cut up at the late date of Oct., 1955.

The vital statistics:

Builder—Baldwin

No.—57018

Date—1923

Drivers—46"

Cyl.—16" x 24"

Weight—106,000#

T.E.—20,000#

Steam—180 psi



Little 132 simmers at Stockton on a fine day in June, 1951. When first acquired by the WP in 1940, the tender sported the usual handsome rectangular herald. This was soon discarded in favor of the Tidewater Southern lettering as seen here, while normal WP numerals graced the cab all along.



Prairie No. 132 squats in the Stockton deadline, early in 1952. Rather fresh striping could indicate recent fantrip service—just about the last kind of action she was to see as of this late date for steam.

No. 132 was the only 2-6-2 on the entire Western Pacific roster over the years.

Doing the replica: The basis for my model of the 132 was to be the Long-Bell No. 105, an import brought to our country by PFM in the early 70s. I found the model to be quite close for doing No. 132; a real boon for WP fans. Come to think of it, Sierra fans can rejoice, too, as it could model that road's 32 and join replicas of their 3, 18, 24, and 38 which have already been offered. Conversion of the Long-Bell engine is easy since all modifications are small ones. This also could be considered a good beginners' project in modification of a brass locomotive in that none of the changes need be too drastic.

The locomotive: Do a stack "lid" of styrene or card, then do the same for a number plate for cab numerals. That's it! Because I hate to tear into fine craftsmanship of such a model, certain details were left unrevised which the purist might like to tackle. This would include replacement of the pump with a single-phase type, removing the running-board "arch" from over the pump, changes in running-board positions, change in whistle location, and a different pilot. The headlight could be altered to a non-visor'd Pyle, though the one supplied with the model is right for the 132 in its earlier years.

The tender: Like the engine, the tank is quite close to prototype. Remove the hose reel and water pump and smooth over their locations. I used thin panels of card to do this. Remove the oil filler cap and raise it with a "goose neck" of plastic or brass tubing, something like 3/16" dia. Add a loop-over handrail to the outside of the rear ladder. That's all! Again, the purist could continue with a



Stockton, 1950, from a different angle. Speaking of the latter, those huge numerals just couldn't be missed regardless of the angle! Western Pacific may have been unique in its handling of cab numerals, as each digit was individually done in baked enamel on sheet steel plate. These plates, in turn, were then bolted directly to the cab side sheets. Nice view of a typical WP water plug, too.

change in front steps, widening of the oil bunker out to the sides, and adding of horizontal handrails around the rear portion of the tank.

Finish: Standard WP finish was black, with graphite smokebox and stack, and white markings and striping. In the prototype photos, note use of white on footboards, ends of coupler lift bars, and endsill handrails—an oddball treatment.

Cab numerals are from Champ decal set EH-33, and tender lettering is "built up" from Champ alphabet set LW-6, Railroad Roman, white, 1/16". At the

time this model was done, this lettering was the closest thing available for Tidewater Southern, as well as the Sierra, for that matter. The HO field still needs such lettering to be offered, though, as the real letters were more vertical rather than the squared proportions seen on my replica. In the time since my revision of the 132, it's possible that Micro-Scale has had something to offer close to the prototype. Union Line (dry transfers) has done an alphabet set which includes letters of accurate size and style but at this writing they are very hard to find!