

Along the Feather River Route

WESTERN PACIFIC'S STEEL CABOOSES WHERE ARE THEY NOW???

by Wayne Monger and Ken Meeker

In the 27 years prior to the merger with the Union Pacific in 1982, the Western Pacific purchased a total of 61 steel bay-window cabooses for their freight operations. Beginning with the 426 which was built in November 1955, and ending with the 486 which was built in May 1980, International Railway Car Company constructed all of the WP's cabooses over the span of 5 different orders. Now that we are 3½ years past the day of the merger, and in the era of cabooseless trains, it is very surprising to find that there are currently 20 of these cabooses still in various active service around the Union Pacific System. This is even more amazing considering the sheer size of just the UP cooosie fleet, which numbers in the hundreds. It appears that there still will be an active future for a vast majority of these cabooses on the Union Pacific, in spite of the widespread use of the new electronic "FREDS"....

Between November 1955 and Feb. 1956, International Railway Car Co. delivered to the WP 35 new steel bay-window cabooses, numbered from 426 to 460. These cabooses were the first new cabooses to come to the railroad since the years following the completion of the WP in 1909, and were meant to replace these dangerous old wooden cabooses. This order of 35 cabooses also allowed the WP to place the 58 homemade cabooses that were built between 1942 and 1945 by the Sacramento Car Shops from 15001-series outside-braced boxcars, into secondary freight and branchline service over the entire railroad. It wasn't until Oct 69 when the WP made an order of 5 new cabooses from IRC Co. These cabooses, numbered from 461-465, were very similar in appearance to the cabooses that had arrived on the WP 14 years before.

In 1973, the Western Pacific was forced by increasing safety standards for cabooses to retire the remaining members of the homemade cabooses, which were numbered between 643 and 700, and included both bay-window and cupola types. As a result of this forced retirement, the WP ordered their third set of steel bay-window cabooses from International Railway Car Co. This time, 10 were ordered and delivered numbered 466 through 475. Just over one year later in May 1974, the WP

ordered 5 more cabooses from IRC Co., being numbered 476 through 480. These were needed due to a cooosie shortage caused by both the retirement the year before of those homemade cabooses, as well as the increased use of "run-through" trains with both the Burlington Northern and the Union Pacific. These two orders of cabooses were fairly similar in appearance to the first two orders of cabooses, but were painted in a shade of red with white lettering, as opposed to the "boxcar" brown the first two orders were delivered in.

As the increased use of run-through trains became standard policy toward the end of the 1970's where locomotives and cabooses were not changed whenever a train changed railroads, the WP still had problems keeping enough cabooses on hand for every day operations. So, in May 1980, the final order of 6 cabooses arrived from IRC Co., these being numbered 481 to 486. These 6 were still bay-window, but are subtly different in appearance from all of the others. These too were delivered in red paint with white lettering.

The 447 was sold to Doug Peterson of Lodi, California where it is on display next to his house. The 458 was involved in an accident, and is now part of a railroad-theme restaurant/bar in Rocklin, California, along with a SP dome-lounge #3606. From the second order of cabooses, the 465 can now be found being used as an office for a scrap dealer in Newcastle, Calif. And from the third order of cabooses, the 466 is off of the roster, but we have no details as to its fate.

Of the 20 cabooses that were still in service as of March 30, 1986, 12 of them are from the very first order of steel cabooses that were delivered in 1955 and 56. These cabooses are 429, 431, 435, 442, 443, 446, 448, 451, 453, 457, 459, and 460. A major contributing factor to this series still being the majority of active cabooses was a short lived rebuilding program. From 1981 until the merger in 82, the Stockton and Sacramento shops operated a cooosie rebuilding and repainting program. The most noticeable outside appearance of if a cooosie had gone through the program or not, was a redical departure from past painting and lettering practice. Centering around the use of bright red paint, and medium or large size "FEATHER RIVER ROUTE" medallions, cabooses 430, 440, 441,



So far in the history of the WP steel cooosie fleet, only 8 cabooses have left the active roster for new homes and uses. Six of the 8 are members of the first order of cabooses. The 427 was sold in an auction by the UP at Pocatello, Idaho in mid-1985. The 428 is, of course, our example of this kind of WP cooosie at out museum in Portola. The 437 has been donated to the city of Elko, Nevada, and is displayed with WP GP-9, 727. The 445 has been donated to the Sacramento Valley Live Steamers for display.

442, 443, 444, 446, 448, 450, 451, 452, and 462 from the second order of cabooses, all emerged from this rebuilding with paint and lettering schemes that were individually unique. Of these rebuilt first-order cabooses, the 442, 446, 448, and 451 were in general freight service on March 30, 1986, along with unrebuilt cabooses 435 and 453. The 429 and the 443 were in work train service along the former WP main on that same day. Cooosie 460 is restricted to use on the Long Street Local in Oakland, and is sten-

A TRIP TO SOUTH AMERICA, IN SEARCH OF STEAM

Chris Skow is in the planning stage for a trip to South America a 2 week or 3 week trip in Sept. Write Chris..

ciled "Long Street Cab". Caboose 457 was to have gone through the rebuild program, but never made it. It is now painted silver and is dedicated for use on the Oroville Derrick train, where it replaced wooden caboose exSN 1632, which is now preserved at our museum at Portola. Caboose 431 and 459 are now wearing a coat of UP yellow, nut are still lettered "WP". The 431 was one of 6 WP cabooses that were painted yellow by new parent Union Pacific in the summer of 84, but has been restricted to yard use only at Stockton Yard since. The 459 was recently returned to active service after sitting since 1984 awaiting repairs, but in yellow paint.

There are currently only one member of each of the next three orders of cabooses still in general service. From the October 1969 order, the 462, which was the caboose for the SN's Chico Local for over 2 years, is active, usually in work train service. From the March 2973 order, only the 471 is in service. It was in Columbus, Nebraska on March 30th. And from the May 1974 order, only the 480 is active, and is about as far from its former home rails while staying on the UP system. On March 30th, it was being used on a Missouri Pacific local out of Avondale, Louisiana.

Five out of 6 of the last order of cabooses are still in active service on the Union Pacific. The only one from the 481 through 486 series that is out of service is the 482, which was wrecked at Pittsburg, Calif. on July 8, 1984. The others are scattered far and wide. On March 30th, 481 was in Alexandria, Louisiana, the 483 was in SLC, Utah, the 484 was in Laramie, Wy., the 485 was in local service in Batesville, Ark., where it has been for over a year now, and 486 was in Nampa, Idaho.

As we mentioned earlier in this article, there appears to be a bright future for the majority of the remaining WP cabooses still on the UP. Besides the 20 that are still active, the UP is currently holding 30 others in "Stored Unserviceable" status. It is planned to take these 30, as well as many of the 20 that are still in use, and run them through a caboose rebuilding program that is to extend from 1986 through 1989. Many of these 30 cabooses are currently stored on the "dead caboose" tracks in Pocatello, Idaho and Omaha, Neb., while the rest are scattered among stored freight cars on many unused branchlines and spurs in Idaho. The caboose rebuilding program will be

done at the giant UP Pocatello Car Shops. Six of the 30 "stored unserviceable" cabooses have been in storage since 1984, most of them from accident damage. They are the 444, 450, 452, 463, 469, and 482. 19 of these cabooses entered into storage during 1985.

They are the 426, 432, (Reno Local) 439, 441, 454, 455, 456, 461, 464, 467, 468, 470, 473, 474, 475, 476, 478, and 479. Of these, the 463 and the 478 were painted into UP yellow in 1984. Between Jan 1st and March 30th this year, 5 more WP cabooses have been put into "Stored Unserviceable" status awaiting rebuilding. These are the 430, 433, 438, 440, and 477. We need to make note that the 438 is painted yellow and until the 459 was returned to active use, it was the only one of the 6 that was painted yellow in 84 that has been used in general service, having been seen all over the Union Pacific System during the past two years.

There are three cabooses we have yet to account for here. Listed as retired and awaiting disposition are cabooses 434, 436, and 449, all three having been retired in 1984. The 449 was one of the 6 that was painted into UP yellow in mid-1984, but was retired soon afterwards, and still sits in Stockton Yard.

(449 now in Reno and being donated to the Nevada State Railroad Museum in Carson City, Nevada....Ski)

FREIGHT CARS

LETTERING and MARKING

This is the first of several articles on the lettering and marking of Western Pacific and others rail equipment.

The markings on freight cars have three principal purposes:

To provide a uniform marking system for reporting the car on way bills, consists, and for billing.

To give specific information about the physical characteristics of the car.

To display dates that are important to assure compliance with maintenance requirements.

The Association of American Railroads (AAR) was organized in 1934, and thru this group a standard of car marking was established for all cars interchanged in the US. AAR MANUAL OF STANDARDS AND RECOMMENDED PRACTICES. and the FIELD MANUAL OF THE AAR, Interchange Rules (Rule 80) has the

standard specific types of info for interchange cars, plus the format, size and location on a car for each item of information.

REPORTING MARKS

Used to identify the owner of a car, no two owner can use the same sequence of initials.

- WP...Western Pacific
CNW..Chicago and Northwestern
RBOX.Railbox Company
Reporting marks ending in X mean that the car belongs to a private car owner not an operating RR.

The number identifies one specific freight car in a fleet.

Minimum of 9" letters and numbers on side of car.

Minimum of 4' on ends

Minimum of 1 1/2 on each truck

LOAD CAPACITY and WEIGHT

Nominal Capacity.....CAPY

Load Limit.....LT LMT

Light Weight (empty).LT WT

The capacity of a freight car is a number which to the nearest, 1000 lbs, the intended carrying capacity of the car. This is part the strength of the underframe and the journal bearing size. The load limit is the number to the nearest 100 lbs, the max weight that can be loaded into the car. It is determined by subtracting the light weight from the total allowable gross weight on the rail for a given journal size. The following table is assuming adequate structural strength.

Table with 3 columns: Journal, Capacity, Gross weight. Rows for 8", 9", 10", 11", 12" journal sizes.

Example,

WP 1952 (see photo) was reweighted at Oroville on 2-68 and weighted 47600 LT WT with friction journals in size 10" 47600 - from 177000 = 129400 LT LMT....

CAPY 110000

LD LMT 129400

LT WT 47600 ORO 2-68

WP 3408 (see photo) was reweighted at Sacramento 5-78 with a LT WT of 53800 will give a LD LMT of 123200, and a CAPY of 120000.

Note the capacity of a car can never be greater than it's load limit so reduce the figure to less than the load limit.

A star is used when the load limit is reduced below the journal capacity due to structural limitations.