

the railroad after seven o'clock!

It was always a thrill for me to call one of the young recently promoted engineers for his first trip on his own, particularly for his very first passenger run. I remember calling young Tom Rutherford for such a trip and can still see him heading east out of Portola on the big 4-8-4 Lima built 486 with train #40 in tow with sixteen heavyweight coaches and pullman sleeping cars. Some of these young engineers had very harrowing experiences too, for example young Orville Dack sent to work on the extra board down in Oakland. He later told me that his first trip was as engineer on a helper engine east to Altamont Pass and when he cut off and turned on the wye a dense fog rolled in and he suddenly found out that his fireman was brand

new and didn't know where he was either. His account of his return trip back to Oakland would give anyone gray hair.

One night in 1946 Engineer Dick Bacon was called west from Portola on engine 484 on a passenger special with an old boomer fireman named Bernie Newport. Dick knew that his fireman already had the reputation of being somewhat slow and appeared to have poor eyesight so before Dick would leave the roundhouse he had me type up a statement that he would not be responsible for anything that happened on the left side of the engine. I was to hold the signed statement until I knew that the train had arrived safely in Oroville and then destroy it which I did the following day. Then there was the case of Engineer Jess Jacobs who for some reason was

terrified of working out on the main line. He worked constantly as engineer on switch engines in the Portola yard and whenever it appeared that because of the shortage of promoted men he might be called for mainline service he would immediately lay off. But one night before he was aware of what was happening I had to call him as engineer on a Gerlach helper. This meant that he had to run a light engine east for 117 miles and then couple onto a big freight engine for the return trip to Portola. Obviously he made it but was a nervous wreck and I learned that he passed away about two years later while still a comparatively young man. I have always wondered if that trip had something to do with his untimely passing.

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WESTERN PACIFIC'S SKELETON LOGGING FLATS & HUTCHINSON LUMBER COMPANY

By Kent Stephens

In the mid-1920's Western Pacific rostered a fleet of 200 skeleton logging flats numbered 2601-2800. Their M.C.B. (Master Car Builder) designation was FL, class logging, wood underframe. Outside length of the cars was 43 feet, 2 inches, with a capacity of 80,000 lbs. These cars were part of a fleet of logging cars in service out of Oroville for one customer--the Hutchinson Lumber Company.

The name Hutchinson Lumber Co. is not familiar to many fans today but a railroad owned by the successor company is much better known despite being abandoned now for nearly two decades. The successor lumber company was Feather River Pine Mills, Inc., owner of the well-known Feather River Railway.

Hutchinson Lumber Company was a West Virginia lumber firm that entered the West Coast lumber business in 1920 with the purchase of a timber tract northeast of Oroville.

Hutchinson's 21 mile logging railroad was built during 1921-22 from a connection with the Western Pacific 12 miles east of Oroville at the Bidwell Bar into their timber holdings above the present town of Feather Falls. At the same time the company built a large sawmill south of Oroville near the WP yard.

The logging railroad cost over \$1 million to build. Several miles above Bidwell Bar the line crossed the South Fork of the Feather River on a timber trestle in a beautiful canyon setting. Less than a mile above the trestle was the beginning of a stiff 5 1/2% compensated grade that

continued for six miles to Onyett. Hutchinson bought three new Shays in 1921-23. All were three truck; No. 1 was a 70 ton saturated engine, Nos. 2 and 3 were 90 ton and superheated. One Willamette was also on the roster, 70 ton three-truck No. 5, which arrived in 1923. A secondhand 0-6-0T, No. 4, was the mill switcher at Oroville.

The mill and logging operations started in May 1922. By 1924 Hutchinson was in full production, cutting 90,000,000 board feet of lumber during the year. This production required a supply of 300 log cars to transport the logs to

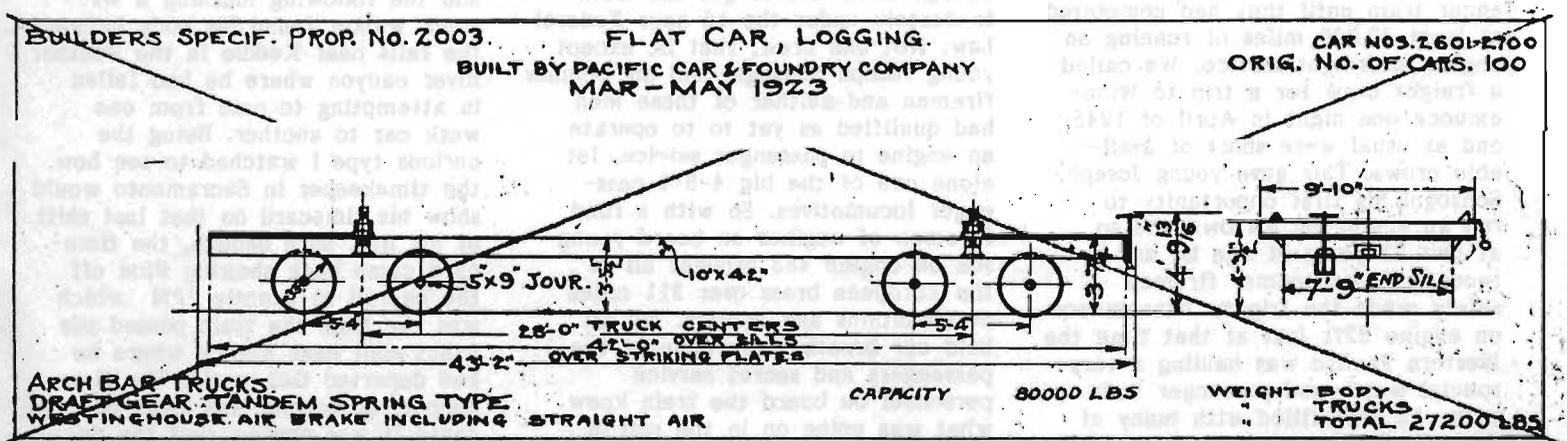
WESTERN PACIFIC LOGGING CARS.....

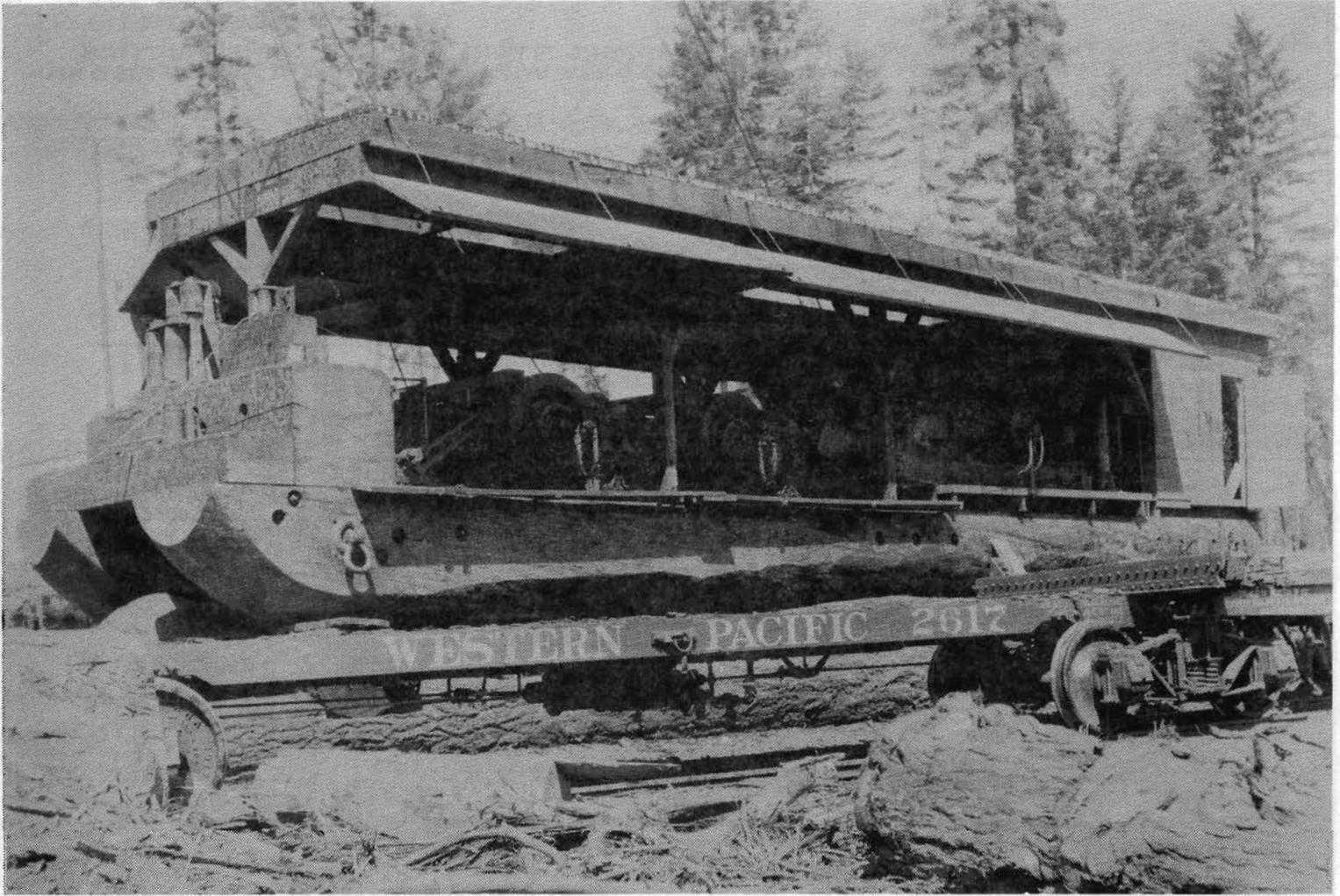
2601-2700...Blt 1923

2701-2800...Blt 1924

3101-3200...Conv. 1941 from Org 1-700 Flats Blt 1906

In July 1947 35 in series 2701 in service and 70 in series 3101.....gone by the Fifties.....





Western Pacific skeleton log car #2617 near a log landing on Hutchinson Lumber Company's logging railroad in the early 1920's. Behind is Hutchinson Lumber Co. #4, a Willamette electric logging donkey. American Lumberman photo, Kent Stephens collection

the sawmill. According to several former employees the ownership of this car supply was apparently divided between WP and Hutchinson. The lumber industry journal, THE TIMBERMAN, mentions the cars in several articles on Hutchinson between 1922 and 1924. In 1922 it was stated that, "...standard

Western Pacific flat cars (are) being used for the transportation of the logs. These cars are all equipped with both straight and automatic air and the latest improved type of logging bunks." An article a year later specified that it was "...Western Pacific flats and 100 skeleton Pacific Car

\$ Foundry Co. cars" all equipped with both straight and automatic air. The lumber company's portion of the fleet may have been the 100 PC&F skeletons, Hutchinson's cars MAY have been lettered for Western Pacific due to usage on the WP. (to be continued next issue)

BUILDERS SPECIF. PROP. NO. 2200.

FLAT CAR, LOGGING.
BUILT BY PACIFIC CAR & FDY. CO.
1924

CAR No's. 2701 - 2800
ORIG. NO. OF CARS 100
No. OF CARS IN SERVICE 35
AS OF MAY-1-42

