

High Iron Revisited -- the Trip to Sacramento

Written by engine GP7 WP 707

Back in April of this year, the FRRS was invited to send a WP locomotive to Sacramento for the California State Railroad Museum (CSRM) new annual event called, "Rail Festival." It was decided that I (707) would go. As late May became early June, I found myself being repeatedly stuck in the shop, amongst our hangar queens, and was washed, scrubbed, wire brushed, sanded and partially painted. I got my engine compartment cleaned out with our Hotsy pressure washer; got my short hood cleaned out; had my in-cab first aid kit replaced with a better-looking one from sister 708; and got my cab cleaned up a bit. Most of this work was done by Norm Holmes, with assistance provided by Ken Roller, Steve Habeck, Jim Gidley, Sr., and others.

Finally on June 9, 1992, Norm and Steve finished up some painting details; Gordon Wollesen checked my batteries and pronounced them fit, and I was test-run a last time to charge the batteries, to make sure everything was working right, and to get me out to the UP fuel riser. (Yes, photographic evidence exists of something actually LEAVING the museum.)

The next morning, Wednesday, June 10, 1992, the UP's Dick Trost gave me the once over, and pinned my reverser to prevent damage to my traction motors and pinions during the trip. Later the power for the OGST (Ogden-Stockton) was brought over to the fuel riser and I was added to the consist (Dash 8-40C UP 9144, SD60 CNW 8029, SD60 CNW 8009, GP35 UP 783 (ex-WP 3003), and me, WP 707).

Finally, at 12:05 AM on June 11, 1992, the OGST had a crew called. After much discussion, waiting for trains to clear, and switching in the yard, I was back on ex-WP high iron at 4:40 AM westbound. Since the OGST is not a priority train, we figured on polishing sidings as we headed down the canyon, and true to form we took a siding at the first opportunity, at Blairsden, at 5:10 AM. After 2 eastbound trains with very surprised train crews aboard got by, the OGST was on the move at 5:55 AM, as daylight took over the Canyon from the full moon of the night before. At 6:50 AM, we set out 11 cars at Quincy Junction for the Quincy RR to pick up for loading, and at 7:17 AM the OGST rolled through Keddie, getting second looks from the M of W crews preparing for the day's work over their morning coffee.

After a half hour wait "in the hole" at Paxton for an eastbound, it was an uneventful run down the canyon in the cool morning air, with no stops until we attained the foothills at Elsey, where 2 ballast cars for Green's pit were set out. Then, on short time, we held the main at Kramm for a meet with STSC (Stockton-Salt Lake City) and headed into the yard at Oroville at 11:10 AM, to await another crew.

My dozing in the warm afternoon breeze was broken by the chug-chug-chug of UP 9144 being started up at 1:45 PM. By 2:25 PM, the work in the yard was done and we were on the move again. After taking the siding at Mounkes (west of Marysville) for another eastbound, it was on to Sacramento, going by Haggin at 4:15 PM, where a small group of railfans and FRRS members were waiting, with arrival at South Sacramento yard at 4:30 PM. I was set out behind the yard office, and watched the OGST leave for Stockton.

Attempts were made to arrange my movement to CSRM that evening, but it was not to be, so I spent the night by the

yard office, just like I had done countless times before. FRRS members Jim Ley and Dave Anderson got my cab locked up and left me reasonably secure for the night.

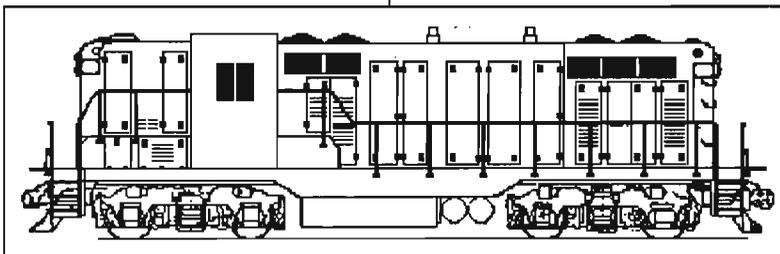
The next day, Friday, June 12, 1992, I made it as far as the CSRM gate, still in the SP yard -- I finally got spotted on CSRM trackage on Saturday morning, the 13th, even as the Rail Festival was starting! But not to worry -- the CSRM people were very good to me. I was spotted across from the turntable, coupled to brand-new Santa Fe Dash 8-40CW 838 (build date 5-92) which gave the visitors a chance to compare locomotives built 40 years apart (I'll be 40 in October).

Under the watchful eyes of FRRS volunteers Jim Ley, Dave Anderson, Dave Unger and Nick Tynan, visitors lined up and tromped through my cab and along walkways all day on both Saturday and Sunday the 13th and 14th, blowing the whistle, ringing the bell, picking up our Portola RR museum flyers, and having a grand old time. Jim had my engine running both days for the public's benefit -- in fact, all the locomotives on display were idling, including Santa Fe 838, UP's display engines, SD60M 6268 and Dash 8-40CW 9480, and CSRM's Baldwin, SP 5208, which was spotted on the turntable. I proudly displayed 2 sharp-looking informative signs made up just for this event which thanked CSRM, UP and SP for their assistance in making my visit possible.

On Monday, June 15, 1992, with Rail Festival concluded, the CSRM crews went about their task of returning us visiting locomotives to our owners. Santa Fe 838 went with the SP to go over to the CCT for the return to Stockton and home rails; UP 6268, 9480, and I went together out on the SP for return to the UP at Haggin.

However, the entire yard at Haggin was blocked by the UP port job, so access to the UP wasn't possible. The CSRM crew locked us up and left, unable to do any more. Later that afternoon, the port job cleared out, and UP's yard job picked us up (and everything else in the yard) for movement to South Sacramento yard. I briefly thought about lending a hand as ex-WP GP35 UP 799 struggled to shove 3 locomotives and 67 cars up hill out of Haggin yard to the UP main line, but she made it on her own (my reverser was still pinned anyway). We got back to South Sacramento yard around 6:00 PM.

Around 8:00 PM a westbound grain train pulled into the yard, cut off his power (SD40-2 3763, C30-7 2476) and tied on to 6268. No problem -- UP probably wants 6268 and 9480 back in Stockton so they can be placed back in revenue service. Air and M.U. connections were made, brakes tested, and -- wait



a minute!! They pulled the pin behind me! Once again I'm the fifth unit in a consist, this time getting my frame stretched as these guys dig in to get the 10,000 ton train moving -- to Stockton! I'm supposed to go back to Portola! Now what?

After the inevitable meets with opposing traffic en route, we arrived at Stockton and threaded the train all the way through the yard, and spotted the entire train in 4 cuts on the leads to one of the large grain handling facilities in Stockton. After returning through the yard to the servicing area near the shop building, my consist was spotted at the fuel riser, where I reacquainted myself with several old WP

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●●● Around the Museum

Television Camera

Last year Bob Stern came to Portola to do a combo locomotive rental (512-921D). While backing around the balloon track with 921D he observed the difficulty the engineer and instructor had of watching the track behind the locomotive. Bob asked if we would be interested in having a TV camera mounted on the rear of the locomotive and a monitor in the cab. We agreed it would be a good idea, but did not want to alter the appearance of the unit. Bob followed through with his offer with flying colors. He came up the first week in June with a camera, monitor, power source and cable. Two days later we had a TV camera set up on the 921D -- probably the only locomotive so equipped. The camera is located above the rear door, the monitor in the cab on the fireman's side in the "glove compartment." This is a great safety improvement for back up moves. This was accomplished at no cost to us thanks to Bob Stern's donation of time and materials. Bob is associated with the PBS station in San Jose. Jerry Todd, a local sheet metal shop owner, constructed a nice galvanized metal cover to protect the camera from the weather and to make it all but invisible on the rear of the locomotive.

Election Results

The results of our Board of Directors election in June are as follows: Gordon Wollesen, Hank Stiles, and Kent Stephens were reelected to the board. Life member Vic Neves is our new board member filling Brian Challender's vacancy. We wish to thank Jim Ley and Sue Cooper for their interest in running for the board. 216 ballots in total were returned.

Conclusion of High Iron Revisited -- the Trip to Sacramento written by engine GP7 WP 707

men still working at Stockton who were glad to see me, to say the least. The roundhouse foreman and his entire crew went out of their way to take care of me, and even moved me into the shop building for the night, for better security. The WP lives in Stockton, for sure!

After some initial confusion the next afternoon, all was sorted out and I got OK'd by UP's computer to be placed in the consist of the STSC (Stockton-Salt Lake City) for return to Portola. I wound up as the third unit, behind SD60M 6243 and Dash 8-40C 9227, on a lengthy and heavy train. Departing on the main line at Stockton yard with 84 cars, we met the first of a long line of opposing trains at Charter Way. Then it was 35 minutes at Hammer Lane as 2 more westbounds went by. Underway again at 6:50 PM, we stopped at Thornton to pick up 2 cars, then went on to Sacramento, where much yard work awaited.

Departing South Sacramento at 9:45 PM with 114 cars, including many that came in from Haggin with me the day before, I was amused as the horn and the engine throbbing of lead unit 6243 set off automobile alarms repeatedly as we proceeded through Sacramento. At Marysville, a High Line detour train was waiting to get on the SP for the run to Klamath Falls -- tunnel 2 near Keddie would reopen soon.

We spent 1 1/2 hours in Oroville yard changing crews and switching, departing at 12:15 AM with 106 cars. The "Fast Track" of the Oroville Dam line relocation wasn't fast for the STSC, as the best we could make was about 22 mph. Tunnels 4,5,6,7 and 8 were very hot and very smoky as the 2 working locomotives had their work cut out for them. Grime and soot from the 4 1/2 minutes it took to traverse tunnel

General Membership Meeting

Our general membership meeting was not too well attended because of several conflicting events. However, for those who attended, we had a nice BBQ steak and chicken dinner provided by Sue Cooper, cooked by Bruce Cooper and served by June Anderson.

Shop Improvements

After talking about it for a year or more, we finally got to work improving our work shop. Brian Challender and several others used a rented air jack hammer to remove the old concrete pads. New concrete was poured to give us a smooth floor. Then divider walls were built by Jim Gidley, Sr. to separate the wood shop from the welding shop from the machine shop. The plywood walls were painted silver by Eddie Chase to match the concrete walls of the building. Dave Anderson built a work bench on top of one of the SP auction tables for the wood shop. This shop now has three radial arm saws and a small table saw. We now need a band saw, a larger table saw, a wood lathe and a shaper to make this shop complete. The machine shop has the nice lathe from the SP, a drill press and a power hack saw. Other metal working tools would be welcome.

Free Poster

A free 30 x 40 poster titled "City of Melbourne" is available through a special offer from our Australian member, Peter Martin. The "City of Melbourne" is a magnificent 4-6-4 locomotive that now runs regularly on the Victorian Railway System. The only cost is \$6.00 for shipping. Please use Master Card, Visa or American Express (no personal checks). This is a limited time offer available only to our membership. Send your request (by air mail for faster arrival) to: Peter Martin, Plan "R" Lot 36 Vista Grove, Sherbrooke, Vic. 3789, Australia.

8's 8856 feet would be found all over my cab and carbony when we got to Portola.

Breaking out of the hell of tunnel 8 and onto the North Fork Bridge, and the splendor of the Feather River Canyon under a full moon are hard to describe. I had forgotten how impressive this can be. The reality of more business under UP's guidance soon took over, though, as we took sidings at Poe, Camp Rodgers, and Keddie to let 4 westbounds pass -- and don't forget the meet we had at Elsey, below the tunnels, where the parade of westbounds started.

Setting out 4 cars at Keddie and picking up 6 loads at Quincy Junction filled us out to 108 cars, and long enough that at Williams Loop, as I passed over the overpass, the rear end of my train was still west of the highway overpass! The OGST was squeezed into the siding at Spring Garden for us as we headed into Spring Garden tunnel at a blistering 18 mph, which made the tunnel another hellhole (7343 feet). After this, continued retirement in Portola looks pretty good!

My time in the spotlight came to a close as we arrived in Portola at 6:55 AM, and I was unceremoniously set out over on 6 rail by the offgoing crew. After allowing 2 more westbounds by, the oncoming crew moved me across the yard to the fuel riser, and shortly thereafter, Norm Holmes and Steve Habeck descended on me and had me fired up and ready to go in no time. After a short delay to remove my reverser pin, Steve ran me westward down the west pass to Malfunction Junction, where Gordon Wollesen was waiting with the gate open. By 8:00 AM on Wednesday, June 17, 1992, I was back at home at the Museum.

It was a good trip -- good P.R. for the FRRS and the Portola RR Museum, and a morale booster for the ex-WP men along the route that saw me go by.

When is the next trip? I'm ready!