

What to Save

By Rose Hersted

From time to time the question arises, "Why are you saving THAT?" Usually this question is asked in reference to a piece of equipment that is not a locomotive; although I have heard it asked about our less "glamorous" locomotives, too. This article addresses some thoughts on that question.

The first thing that comes to mind about this question is its inherent bias. Why should any piece of railroad equipment be considered of any greater historical value than any other piece? Although I readily admit that locomotives are of interest because they move under their own power, I do not admit or believe that renders them of more historical significance than non-motive railroad artifacts. To bring this argument to the point of the ridiculous, without rolling stock there would be no reason for locomotives to exist. Railroads were created to move people or things from one place to another - anything involved in this process seems to me to be worth preserving.

The Feather River Rail Society has always been farsighted enough to realize this, and consequently now boasts one of the premiere collections of railroad equipment in the nation. A farsighted person would not be hard pressed to realize that in fifty or a hundred years there will be precious few pieces of equipment such as our WP 11509 (covered hopper), PFE 11454 (ice reefer), WP 19901 (box car), WP 17087 (wood box car), or WP 11012 (hopper car). The museum holds these items in its collection for this reason. One has only to look around today to see the scarcity of items from fifty or a hundred years ago to understand my point. How many Carter Cars, wooden R.P.O. cars, S.P. narrow gauge cabooses, or wooden flat cars are there left now? From this vantage point, it seems a shame to me that we were not around in 1892 to begin saving these items which are all but lost today.

With all this in mind, I would like to caution those individuals who look askance at box cars, or reefers, or outfit cars, or flat cars, or anything else that ran on rails which was not a locomotive, that they might be judging such items a bit too hastily and a bit too harshly. I would much prefer to let our great-grandchildren appreciate ALL that there was to railroading in the "Good Ole' Days," than to decide for them what was or was not worth saving.

Visions of Railfan Day 1992

Both photos by Norm Holmes



Railfan Day Train #11 with F7 921D approaches Milward Switch in a very scenic area of the museum grounds.



Railfan Day Train #3 with GP 30 UP 849 and tank car train has just made a photo run-by.