

More Car Restoration Information

from FRRS Car Dept. Foreman John S. Walker

Newest Addition

The newest addition to our freight car collection is 42 feet long, stands some fourteen feet high and weighs (with trucks) 49,700 pounds. The object in question is Western Pacific outside braced wooden cupola caboose #614.

This caboose was built in 1937 from a Pullman-Standard-built 15001-16000 series WP boxcar which was built in October 1916. This boxcar is one month older than the boxcar used to construct our SN 1632 caboose. SN 1632 was built into a caboose one year after this caboose.

This was one of the first series of cabooses that the WP began constructing from former boxcars and features "Veranda" style ends with cast iron tender type steps.

This caboose saw it's last servicing in Sacramento in June 1953. It was retired sometime after that and ended up in Smartville, California. Later, the caboose was moved to a small ranch in Loma Rica (Northeast of Marysville in the foothills) where it was used as a guest house in the middle of a beautiful garden that included lots of tropical plants.

Unfortunately, the house on this property burnt down and the property was abandoned several years ago. The caboose was left mounted on concrete blocks and located in dense overgrowth.

The museum was approached to purchase the caboose and after several months of negotiations, Norman Holmes was able to secure the purchase by the museum. Previously, Norm asked me to inspect the caboose. Amazingly, this caboose is in better shape than our SN 1632! Painted in silver and orange, the caboose still has all of the old original ladders and grab irons, stove, bunks, and interior.

Once we had made arrangements to purchase the caboose, I began seeing about getting it moved. We found a company in Oroville that agreed to let us set the caboose up on their property while some of the local members in the Chico, Oroville and Paradise area worked on it during the week. When it's finished it will be brought up to our museum.

FRRS member Robert Forren of Gridley, and a couple of other railfans in the area helped us cut through the underbrush and other obstacles. Because of this dense overgrowth, there was a big fire hazard there; and there wasn't any water available nearby. Also we were all very apprehensive about the possibility of rattlesnakes in the area, but we never did see any. We worked for a couple of weeks cutting through the underbrush and cutting in a road.

On August 2, 1993, Amos Heavy Hauling Company of Gridley, came to move the caboose. The temperature was only about 107 or 110 degrees. At the last minute, despite all of the work to clear the underbrush, after the caboose was loaded, we couldn't pull it out because there were still obstacles in the way. Luckily, a nice neighbor had a backhoe that was able to clear the last obstacles so we could get under way. Half of the cost of the transportation was donated to the FRRS by Amos Heavy Hauling for which we thank them.

Work has already begun to restore the caboose in its silver and orange paint scheme. We hope to have it completed and moved to Portola by the end of the year.

A Request

Earlier this year, I was asked to take over the freight car restoration department. Since then, I have been examining our collection with an eye toward speeding up our restoration efforts. I've discovered that a lot of our freight equipment could be put in very good shape over the course of a couple of weekends! Some will require a little more work and a few pieces will undoubtedly require some outside help. But overall, we could easily restore 6 to 10 cars this year.

But, we need your help. Many people who would like to volunteer have no idea where to start or feel that they have no skills to offer. Well folks, we don't need experts! Ideally, we need people with metalworking, auto body repair and painting experience. But there are thousands of small jobs that don't require such advanced skills. What we need right now are people to help wash cars, do a little painting by hand, trace some lettering and make a template, drive nails and cut boards, work a screw driver and scratch off some old paint. If you would like to help, give me a call at home (916-671-9584 and leave a message) or see me at the museum.

Engine 608 Rolls Out of the Shop Fully Restored

WP 608, our 1940 NW-2 recently received its finish coat of WP orange paint and it really does look good. David Dewey did the final prep and completed the paint job using Centari paint which should keep it looking good for many years. It looks just great and shows that we are serious about turning out fully restored pieces.



The newest addition to our freight car collection is WP caboose #614. Amos Heavy Hauling Company of Gridley, who donated half of the cost of the transportation, moved the caboose on August 2, 1993 from Loma Rica to Oroville where volunteers are restoring it before moving it up to Portola. Photo by John S. Walker.