

UNIQUE

Ingersoll-Rand Locomotive Is on Its Way to Portola

By Norm Holmes

The Acquisition...

We learned of the existence of a 1929 Ingersoll-Rand/General Electric 600 horsepower diesel-electric locomotive located in Billings, Montana from a photo and caption in "The Short Line" issue 94, September, 1988. We wrote a letter to the unit's owner, United Industries, Inc., asking if a donation would be possible. Other organizations also inquired and it was donated to Phillipsburg Railroad Historians of Phillipsburg, NJ, near where the locomotive was constructed. Last April we received a letter from the Phillipsburg group advising that they were unable to move the unit and offered it to our organization. We contacted the owner again about a donation to our museum. Mr. Joel Long, president of United Industries stated it had been promised to a local man who wanted it for display. Not wishing to take no for an answer for this very rare historic unit, Bruce Cooper volunteered to visit the owners in Billings on a planned vacation trip to Montana in August of 1993. A favorable impression was made. Joel Long and Jim Swenson, their attorney, flew to Reno, rented a car and came to Portola to view our museum. They were impressed with the scope of our collection and donated the locomotive to our Society.

On September 10, 1993, Norm Holmes flew to Billings to make arrangements for the locomotive's shipment to Portola. The locomotive has been out of service for over 20 years and until recently was complete and in operational condition except for batteries. However, since the gravel plant closed the unit has been sitting in an open field and thieves have stolen one headlight, bell, horn, builders plates, gauges, some electrical relays and cable and from the engines, push rods, injectors and governors. The wooden window frames will have to be replaced as will the doors. The body is in remarkably good condition with very little rust present. It is still lettered for its original owner, Foley Bros. FRRS member Bob La Force, who lives in Billings met Norm and at Norm's request made some signs to put on the locomotive to hopefully prevent further theft of copper and other items.

Prior to last year, the locomotive sat at the end of a spur track. When the gravel plant closed the area was cleared and the connecting track removed. It would be necessary to come up with a plan to move the locomotive to the nearest live rail which was about one-half mile distant. A crane company was contacted as to the availability of two heavy duty cranes and a trucking company came up with an idea to move the unit to the live rail.

After returning to Portola, letters were sent to Union Pacific, Montana Western and Montana Rail Link requesting rate-free transportation. A favorable response was received from the carriers. Because of its age and friction bearing axles, it would be necessary to load the locomotive on a flat car for movement. We placed rails on one of our DODX flat cars and it was sent to Billings.

On October 16, 1993, Norm Holmes and Clyde Lippin-

cott drove to Idaho Falls and on October 17, 1993 arrived in Billings, about 1,000 miles from Portola. October 18, 1993 was a day used to check with the crane company and the truckers and to pick up a small supply of spare parts the company had for the locomotive. The area around the locomotive was higher than where it was situated, so a loader and grader were called upon to make an apron on one side and to make a level spot for the cranes to set up.

October 19, 1993 was the big day. All equipment was ready at 9 AM, the locomotive trucks were chained to the track and the locomotive and track was lifted so that the two low bed trailers could back under the locomotive. More ground leveling work was needed because the very low trailers would "high center." The trailers were placed side by side with the locomotive across the two trailers. They would have to be no more than 23 feet wide at the outside because of a need to cross a bridge that was 23 feet wide. A guard rail company removed the bridge railings and guard rails so the load would not have to be any higher than necessary. The locomotive is 40 feet long so there was an eight and one-half foot overhang on each side of the trailers.

After the trailers were located under the locomotive it was lowered and chained to the trailers. The trailers were chained to each other and the drivers coordinated their speed. After three tries, the locomotive was moved from its 20 year resting place. The cranes preceded the load to the nearest railroad crossing, and positioned themselves. The trucks proceeded down the street in tandem with the locomotive across the trailers. It was all quite a sight. At the track, the cranes lifted the locomotive off the track on the trailers, the trailers were moved out of the way and our flat car pushed under the locomotive. The 110 ton locomotive was lowered onto the flat car, the crane's rigging was removed, the locomotive was blocked and the flat car was pulled off the street crossing. It was 2 PM. The entire operation took five hours and went off without a hitch. Strong Crane Service, Whitewood Transportation and United Industries all cooperated to make a very difficult move successful. United Industries furnished the grader, loader, welder and paid for the bridge railing removal. We could not have asked for more.

On October 20, 1993, Clyde and Norman worked all day securing the locomotive to the flat car with blocks and one inch cables. The MRL approved our tie down and moved the car to their yard that evening. After returning to Portola, we were notified of a problem; the load measured 19' 9" above the rail, nine inches more than expected. A tunnel on Montana Western would accept only a 19' high load. After some discussion, it was decided to have a contractor remove the offending air cleaners from the roof so the car could proceed on its selected route. This work has now been completed and the car departed Montana on October 29, 1993 en route to Portola.