

A Steamer For Portola

By Norman Holmes

The long search for a suitable small steam engine for our museum ended August 20, 1996 when the Kings County Board of Supervisors approved our acquisition of Southern Pacific 0-6-0 No. 1215 to be removed from Burris Park, near Hanford, Washington. We have the UP 737/SP 216 at the museum, but it is very old and probably would need a new boiler to make it operable; and there are no WP steam engines that are available to us, so this seems like a good acquisition.

I "discovered" this engine several years ago and was impressed with its completeness and overall condition. It took several years to convince the public works department that they wanted to give the engine a new home. When it looked like the engine might become available, we sent an inspection team, Dave Dewey and Hank Stiles, to Hanford to do a thorough inspection to see if we really wanted it. The inspection report was very favorable indicating the engine was in good condition especially considering that it had been in the park since 1958. We were told that it was run under its own power to Hanford, trucked to the park and moved under steam to its display track. It has not been vandalized to any extent, not like some of its counterparts in other locations.

The 1215 is one of 16 SP steam switchers donated by SP and now is one of four that may be placed back in operation. The others are: 1233 restored and running on the Yolo Short Line near Sacramento, 1251 under restoration at Virginia City, NV and 1269 awaiting restoration, again, for PLA at Niles Canyon. The 1215 is also the oldest SP 0-6-0 in existence, being built by Baldwin in May, 1913.

A work party will be organized to prepare the engine for transfer by truck to Portola. We would like to have the engine here before winter. We would be interested to have photographs of this engine in service.

Pacific Limited Report

By Steve Habeck

A complete report of the PLG trips running in August and September will appear in the next TS, as the deadline for this issue was the same day the first trip started.

In mid-July, Norm Holmes and I, representing the FRRS, attended the PLG Board of Directors meeting held in the UP Superintendent's office in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Steve Lee, representing the UP, brought us up-to-date on the UP's handling of excursions and the passenger car fleet, and what the future may hold in that regard, to assist us in our planning for future trips. The PLG Board then analyzed, in detail, the status of the trips scheduled for 1996, including ticket sales, sales projections, advertising, marketing, and response from tour operators. In light of the debt stilled owed to UP from the 1995 trips, and evidence of slow sales, we agreed to cut five cars from the consist of the Branson Scenic trip. We lost much of the tour operator support we expected on this trip. The tour operators claimed they needed even more advance notice than we were able to provide. The cutting of the consist also resulted in cutting about 20 car host positions from this trip, the disappointing aspect of the cuts. However, PLG must operate like a business if it is to stay in business, and the Board determined these actions were necessary. My apologies go to those who were looking forward to participating on this trip, but had to be cut with the consist reduction.

The outlook for the Iowa trips is much better; most segments will probably run at or above 90% capacity, with some segments sold out. Norm will be on most of these trips, and will have a first-hand report.

Plans for 1997 and beyond were only briefly discussed, due to PLG's focus on making enough on this year's trips to retire the debt owed the UP, and provide seed money for future operations. With the UP-SP merger taking effect, we must wait and see what UP's position will be regarding excursions and the passenger car fleet; however, the possible excursion routes added with the SP acquisition are very attractive.

Lady of the Lake

By Norman Holmes

Last May we received a phone call from member Marty Anderson, District Manager for PG&E at Quincy, with the announcement that a locomotive had been found in Butt Lake.

There have been rumors over the years about hunters who found an engine in the woods, but could never find their way back to it and of the engine that fell off a barge into a lake or river, but could never be found. But this time a real engine showed up that no one knew about.

Butt Lake Dam was constructed in 1923 and when the job was completed this little lokey was left behind. Evidently it was not worth the trouble to bring it out of the lake area. After the lake was filled the engine was forgotten.

Seismic studies found a potential for disaster if the dam would break should an earthquake occur in the area. PG&E decided to drain the lake and rebuild the dam. As the water receded the little engine made its appearance. An immense amount of interest was generated with news stories in local, Sacramento and San Francisco papers and on several TV stations. PG&E's archaeologist was called in to evaluate the discovery and to recommend what should be done with the find. Marty Anderson invited Steve Habeck and Norm Holmes to inspect the engine from a boat to see if we were interested in having it for our museum.

PG&E officials, bombarded by requests to obtain the engine, decided to donate the engine to Plumas County. Supervisor Bill Dennison, in whose district the engine was located, wanted it given to the Chester Museum. We agreed that the engine should stay in the area. We also agreed to assist PG&E with the move and to that extent Doug Morgan and Norm Holmes made two trips to Butt Lake to remove the remains of the cab and to oversee the loading and movement. The engine is now stored safely inside a warehouse at Collins Pine Co. in Chester. That move was made on August 2nd.

No serial number has been found to positively identify the engine. The words "EUREKA" appear on the saddle tank in gold leaf. It is presumed to have come from the Eureka Mill Railroad which was located near the V&T in the Carson River Canyon. Its Specifications are as follows: gauge 30", driver dia. 23", cyl. 6"x10", weight in working order 12,000 lbs. A photo appears in Railroads of Nevada and Eastern California, Vol 1, page 164.