

The Western Pacific Railroad Museum at Portola

Effective January 1, 2006, the public museum operated by the Feather River Rail Society in Portola, California has a new name.

In the past several years, the FRRS Board of Directors has been leading an effort to refine the mission and collection of the FRRS. At the overwhelming request of the members, the Society has refocused on the Western Pacific and its related roads. A new mission statement was adopted, new collections policies and procedures enacted and the Society has staked its place as the premier historical resource for all things WP. Many other events have resulted from this new mission, including major changes in the roster, from the acquisition of California Zephyr cars and the trade with the Bay Area Electric Railway Association, to the sale of our Southern Pacific

steam locomotive and RS-32 diesel.

Now, the Society has taken this new focus to a more public phase. The name Portola Railroad Museum, which has served us for 22 years, no longer fits well with our future goals. After much review, the FRRS directors voted to adopt a new name for the museum:

The Western Pacific Railroad Museum at Portola

Look for our new image to begin taking its place in our operations in the coming months. And watch for news about new achievements in our goal of preserving and restoring the Western Pacific. 2006 is shaping up to be an interesting year already. Won't you join us in making it an even bigger success?

Santa Trains 2005

- David Epling

This was my third year as part of the operating department crew for the Santa Trains, it was my first as a qualified Conductor. I must say that seeing the look of joy on the passengers faces makes it all worth standing in the cold and with the way the weather was looking, we were wondering if our new rotary would get pressed into service. Fortunately the weather cooperated and it stayed idle. FRRS VP/WPRM Yardmaster Steve Habeck began prepping the equipment 3 weeks before as he usually does. The results as usual were spectacular.

Operations on the 3rd began with the customary safety meeting an hour before train time. Present were Ops Supervisor Kerry Cochran, Ops Dept. Supervisor Pat Brimmer, Asst. Yardmaster/Student Passenger Engineer Loren Ross, Conductors David Epling and Charlie Spikes, Brakemen Craig Simmons and Spencer Walker, and Car Attendant Duane.

With train departure only 10 minutes away, Conductor Epling walked the train in the customary airbrake test. Lady Luck laughed at us a freshly repaired ATSF 999197 chose to not release her brakes. Supervisor Cochran came over, Conductor Spikes came over, Brakemen Simmons and Walker came over. We tried turning valves. We tried everything. The Brakes would not release until...Yes...Yardmaster Steve Habeck came over and glared at it. Talk about one intimidated caboose. The brakes released

and the night was underway and we completed the event with no further problems. The event was well attended with full trains right up until 8pm and actually with a run made after 8pm.

Operations on Dec 10th was a little less staffed. Ops Dept Supervisor Brimmer and Student Yard Engineer Ross again manned the cab of the SP 2873. The train was understaffed with a crew consisting of Conductors Epling & Spikes, Brakemen Simmons and Ed Powell. Decorations disaster almost struck the beginning of this train when the lights kicked out on the SP 4107 caboose. Quick work by Habeck had them up and running shortly after the 5pm train was scheduled to depart. This night went well but included a slow order over the ramp track frog and a pair of SUV's parked on the Right of Way at the west end of the chain link fence. Like the previous weekend, the event was well attended and we had riders right up until 8pm.

Overall it was a well attended event. The FRRS Board, at the January 7, 2006 meeting, voted to continue the Santa Trains in 2006 so for next December, if you can, make time to come up and help out or even just to visit the museum. Steve Habeck starts 3 weeks in advance to decorate the train and the facilities. He usually does this with very minimal help. The Operating Department can always use more crew and your membership allows you to join the Operating Dept. at no extra cost so we hope to see more of you at Crew training on May 6-7, 2006.

Oh, one more thing....WP LIVES!