

## WESTERN PACIFIC IN Z-SCALE

- David Epling and Matt Parker

The year is 1983. The corporate identity of the Western Pacific Railroad is quickly disappearing as the WP has been swallowed whole in a merger with Union Pacific. Model railroad manufacturer Kadee is making the tooling for its soon-to-be-released F7 locomotive in Z-scale. Two staffers from "Model Railroader" magazine visit the Kadee plant and, upon seeing this tooling, the seeds are planted in their minds that will produce a layout representing the "Western Pacific in Z-scale." Construction of the layout was completed in 1985, and a seven part series of articles detailing the planning, design, and construction of the layout began running in the magazine in February 1986.

Fast-forward to 2007. A committee spearheaded by FRRS members David Epling and Tom Carter is planning construction of a new demonstration model railroad layout for the WPRM. This layout is envisioned as a traveling tool to give viewers a taste of the Western Pacific. In studying how to create this proposed layout, Dave and Tom trace the history of the "Western Pacific in Z-scale" layout and find its last known location to be a railroad museum in the upper Midwest that has gone defunct. Presuming the original layout to be lost, Dave and Tom bring to the Board of Directors a proposal to recreate the original layout in N-scale. The Board approves of this proposal and requests that the committee prepare a budget proposal for the project.

Then, the unexpected happens. On August 27, 2007, Tom finds that the original layout is up for auction on eBay! He and Dave quickly confer with FRRS President Rod McClure, who authorizes them to contact the layout's owner on behalf of the FRRS. The owner agrees that the WPRM is the ideal home for the layout and cancels the auction. At the following meeting, the Board is apprised of these developments and unanimously supports pursuing purchase of the layout, authorizing the Model Railroad Committee to begin seeking contributions for this acquisition. The purchase was completed and the layout was picked up on October 23 by member Merrill Thurman, who transported it to

the museum from Friesland, Wisconsin free of charge. Upon picking up the 22 year old layout in Wisconsin, Merrill is happy to report that it is in great condition. Only minor damage is found despite its years of use by "Model Railroader" and then even more years of storage and movement.

This 4' by 10 1/2' layout consists of three "shadowbox" sections, each representing specific areas of the Western Pacific Railroad. One section presents the Feather River Canyon, while another showcases both the Nevada Desert (this portion based on the picturesque Palisade Canyon area) and California Hill Country (WP First Subdivision). The final section is dubbed the "City Terminal Section" and draws its inspiration from the urban environments WP traversed on the east side of the San Francisco Bay. The three sections break out into individual pieces, allowing for easy transport of the layout, making it ideal as a portable interpretive display. Its size will also allow it to fit into our display/baggage car, permitting it to be easily included in off-campus events such as Dunsmuir Railroad Days.

Financial donations are still being sought to help offset the costs of purchase and acquisition of rolling stock for the layout. The layout includes no rolling stock, save for a F7 locomotive and two cars graciously donated by the former owner, so donations of rolling stock would be appreciated as well. The FRRS has already received a pledge from Mr. Joe D'Amato of MicroTrains, who has offered to donate a few custom painted for WP GP-35 locomotives; other pledges of rolling stock are beginning to come in from the membership as well. Member support of this acquisition would be most appreciated. For further information, Model Railroad Committee Chairman David Epling can be contacted through the Museum or by e-mail at david\_epling@wplives.org.

We would like to thank everyone who made this possible, particularly Merrill Thurman and everyone who donated to the cause. This historic model layout will be a great tool for getting people involved in the story of the WP. Look for the Z-Scale Western Pacific at some of our events starting in the summer of 2008!