

WP 2001 MAKES HISTORY... AGAIN!

- Steve Habeck, Vice-President

Part 2: Railroad Days

It's Friday, August 20, 2010. Railroad Days is officially underway and, although we hadn't planned on it, the FRRS operating department put together a full crew to run caboose trains, which had been advertised in the Railroad Days flyers, but not on our calendar of events. Again, the Willing People came through.

Later in the afternoon, we shifted into the "train arrival and turning" mode, as we had discussed in the job briefings earlier in the day. The caboose train was stored on track 1, leaving track 3 clear for the turning moves, and everyone took up their positions. Rod McClure was running WP 608, with Cody "Noodle" Wilson on board as fireman. This would be the power used to turn the train, and I went with them out to the UP West Pass to meet the train. Working with Operations Superintendent Bill Parker, I had operating department people at the West Pass switch, the Malfunction Junction switches, and the east 3 switch, all of

which would be operated to turn the train. These people included Pat Brimmer, Lew Barnard, Don Nelson, Craig Simmons, Rick Gruninger, Bill Jackson (One Ell), and Bill Parker (Two Ells), and there were others on hand to pitch in where needed (my apologies to any volunteer who isn't named).

Thanks to a concerted effort by our track gang, led by Bill Parker and Rick Gruninger, and a dedicated team of volunteers, the extensive project to repair west Rip 1 and cut in the new switch to Rip 2 was completed the week before Railroad Days. Our Rip 1 track had been cleared down to alongside the shop building, and the Ramp track was also cleared. Along with other cars moved to make room, we had a 43-car, 2700' cut of FRRS equipment out on track 4 of the UP yard!

We eased down to the UP yard office on the West Pass with the 608, and waited for the excursion to arrive (it was late, as expected). Once they stopped, we sent the UP pilot crew home, and held a job briefing with the Amtrak crew, which included Amtrak RFE (Road Foreman of Engines) Mike Richards, and Conductor Amanda Kittirath,



WP GP20 2001 receives work before her Railroad Days mainline run. - Eugene Vicknair photo

younger sister of FRRS Director/Webmaster/
Instructor Tom Carter.

With everyone dialed into our plan, we set up to turn and store the train. WP 608 moved down to the Museum lead off the West Pass and the train was shoved west down the West Pass, past our switch, where the rear three cars were cut off (this was done by the Amtrak people, due to HEP cables, etc). The train then pulled ahead to clear the switch, and Rod coupled into the rear three cars with 608, and headed into the Museum. Only three cars at a time could be handled, due to the length of track from the east 3 switch to the gate. The 608 pulled the three cars past Malfunction Junction, through 3 rail, and onto the east lead.

The east 3 switch was thrown, and 608 shoved the three cars down the east lead, around the balloon, and into the Rip 1 track. (These first three cars, by the way, were the 3 former CZ (California Zephyr) cars on the train, ex-PRR 10 roomette/6 double bedroom sleeper Silver Rapids, ex-CB&Q dome coach Silver Lariat, and ex-CB&Q dome/lounge/observation Silver Solarium.) Then, 608 was cut off, and headed back out on the West Pass lead to get the next three cars. The process was then repeated, taking 3 (or sometimes 2) cars at a time, until the rear 8 cars were in our Rip 1 track, and the head 6 cars were in the Ramp track, all turned for the return trip. We then turned the Amtrak units under their own power, using the same route, and then split the Amtrak units, putting one on each cut of cars, to supply HEP to the entire train. By the time this was all done, it was dark.

We used 608 to get the caboose train staged for the weekend and left it on track 3. Ed Powell and Tim Carter assisted the Amtrak maintenance people in locking out and blue-flagging the two tracks the train was on. I believe it was after 10 PM by the time we got done, but we now had a 14 car Amtrak excursion train, complete with power, tied down and laying over inside the WPRM gates.

Meanwhile, our CZ diner, the ex-WP Silver Plate, was also being featured, with a catered Mexican-style dinner being served to passengers on the train hosted by Chris Skow. Norman and Barbara Holmes acted as on-board host and hostess and over 100 dinners were served in the Plate, which was coupled to our baggage car on track 4, and toured by most of the guests.

Throughout the entire day, Museum Manager

David Epling, his wife Vicki and Debra Reynolds manned the gift shop, staying open past 9 PM to accommodate the passengers off the train. It was a true team effort by everyone involved, and our expertise in doing all these things simultaneously was noted by many of our guests.

All this activity, and the Railroad Days main events (outside of the Museum) hadn't even started yet!

Saturday, August 21. The main event day for Railroad Days, with the parade in town, activities in City Park, all along Commercial Street (closed to vehicular traffic) and, of course, at the Museum. The operating department ran caboose trains all day, with speeder rides mixed in. The shop was full of model railroad layouts, and Sinbad's was there selling those great hot dogs. All in all, it was a fairly "normal" day for Railroad Days, except, of course, that we had an excursion train laying over in the Museum yard.

Late that afternoon, Rod and I got together with Amanda, Mike, and some of the car owners, and we discussed whether we should put the train together on Sunday morning (the original plan), or start getting it put together and out on the West Pass that evening. Knowing that things always take longer than planned, we decided to put the train together and get it ready as soon as Museum activities would allow (two special Run-A-Locomotive sessions, using WP 917-D/WP 707/WP 2001, were scheduled after the caboose trains were done, so I had to wait until Bill Parker completed these runs). By the time Bill was done, we had people staged to begin the process.

First, we had to stash the caboose train on track 1 again. On the trip up to Portola, the excursion train had many problems with HEP. Since both Amtrak units were facing the same way (nose to tail), there was no access to the second unit from the first unit while the train was underway (the Amtrak units have no nose doors) to make changes to the HEP setup. We had already turned both Amtrak units on Friday night, so both were facing west. So, the first order of business was to turn one of them so that it was facing east and the two units could be coupled back-to-back, allowing access between them via the rear doors.

With that accomplished, we then staged our WP 608 on the West Pass lead, and had the Amtrak units couple to the cut on the Ramp track, then double to the Rip 1 cut, and pull the train out on

the balloon. The rear three cars (the CZ cars) were then cut off at Malfunction Junction, and the Amtrak units pulled the rest of the train in the clear on the balloon, allowing 608 to back down to the rear cars, couple up, and take them out to the West Pass. Once 608 cleared, we shoved three more cars past the Junction, cut off, and pulled ahead again. The 608 came back, got those three cars, and took them out to the West Pass, building the train three cars at a time. This process was repeated until the rear 12 cars were on the West Pass. While we were working on this, I worked with Bill Parker and Cody "Noodle" Wilson to cut WP 2001 away from the 707, after the special RAL's. This occurred at the east end of the yard, so as not to interfere with building the outbound train. I then brought 2001 around the balloon and coupled to the lead Amtrak unit.

Connections were made, air brakes were tested, and all was in order. Amtrak Mike and I then took 2001, the two Amtrak units, and the two head cars out to the West Pass, coupled up to the 12 cars already there, and we were done! We shoved the train east a few car lengths for good access to most of the cars for loading in the morning, and tied it down. Mike and the Amtrak mechanic then went about connecting all the HEP cables, and getting the HEP up and running. I shut down the 2001, and locked it up for the night.

It turned out that it was a good idea to build the train on Saturday night, because with all the work involved, it took over 4 hours to complete (about twice what we had estimated). By the time we restored the yard to normal for Sunday's caboose trains, it was well after 10 PM. This would have definitely delayed our departure in the morning significantly.

On a humorous note, two ladies, passengers on the train, who obviously had been partying in town, stumbled into the Museum some time after 10:30 PM, looking for their car. Finding only empty track, they displayed a combination of anger, fear, and confusion. Fortunately, I was just leaving the Museum, and was able to direct these ladies to the train out on the West Pass via our little-used personnel gate on the north side of the property. I made sure they found their car and were safely aboard before I headed home for a short nap, and to prepare for what would surely be a grand day for the FRRS (and me, too).

continued in the next issue....

WP 165 SPRING PROGRESS

- Chris Allan, Steam CMO

Spring has sprung, an unusually long, wet winter is over, and we are ready to get back to work on the WP 165. Leaving Los Angeles for a few days seldom requires an excuse, but in this case the cabin fever made it imperative. I arrived in Portola on Wednesday, April 27th ready to get something accomplished. Upon arrival we met up with Steve Lee, recently retired from the Union Pacific Steam Department. Steve came out from Cheyenne to help out for the week, and we were very happy to see him on the property. In anticipation for the "big pick" the following Saturday, Rod McClure, Steve Habeck and Cody Wilson were adjusting the drum brakes in derrick 37, a beastly machine. Built for the WP as a steam derrick, it was converted to internal combustion sometime in the 1970's. We ordered pizza in, and called it a night.

Thursday morning dawned clear, cold and windy. Breakfast at the Station Café with Charlie Spikes is always a good way to start the day. Charlie, Bill and Duane had spent the previous week getting our parts cleaning tank cleared away and functional so we could start degreasing locomotive parts. A 55 gallon drum of the cleaning solvent only gave us a few inches in the bottom due to the tanks enormous size, more is on order.



Steve Lee helps move a big lathe donated to us by the Union Pacific.

- Debra Baer photo

The big task facing us on Thursday was getting the pedestal binders ready to come off. This proved to be another colossal task given the amount of crud clogging the holes, damaged studs, etc. Luckily by this time our friends from the Golden Gate Railroad Museum in San