

WPRM Historical Department

—Rod McClure, FRRS President

At the last convention, I heard comments that the FRRS Board of Directors does not care about the Archives or the Society's Historical Department. This was profoundly disturbing to me and very far from the truth.

The actual fact is that we all, Board and membership, want to see the Archives grow and become a learning and research tool for all. We are very lucky to be one of the few organizations in railroad preservation that has not only a big (in fact, probably the biggest) collection of equipment from a single railroad, but we also have many of its Archives and Artifacts as well. And it is an archive collection that keep growing as more and more material keeps on coming in. Gail McClure, for instance, has received a numerous items over the last year received from visitors in the Museum Store who have dropped in unannounced, or from families that have called the museum number after a loved one has passed on and their wish was for their collection to come to us.

I realize that the WPRM Archives have been a source of confusion and mis-communication for a while, perpetuated by misunderstanding and lack of true knowledge, and I think it is time to make known issues clear.

An Archive Policy was adopted by the Board of Directors in 2013 and it will be followed by all, member or not, who wish to access our collection. This policy also spells out costs and requirements for individuals who want to use our Archives in any of their own publications. If anyone would like to see the policy, it will soon be available for download from the WPLives.org website. Go to <http://policies.wplives.org> (editor's note— Not currently available at the time of printing).

In August of last year, Frank Brehm resigned as Manager of the Historical Department for personal reasons. In September, I contacted Mike Mucklin, our long time *Headlight* publisher, and we met in person at the Museum during the

Steam Work Week. After much discussion, including clarifications, ideas, goals, and basic rules, the following decision was reached: Mike will be the *temporary* Manager of the Historical Department, which includes all of our Archives and Artifacts.

In our discussions, the number one complaint was accessibility, followed by not knowing what we have and where it is located at the Museum. Right now, although we still do not have a complete and detailed inventory of each item in them, the best organized sections of the archives are probably the Virgil Staff collection and the Ken Meeker collection, both of which are in climate controlled, secure storage rooms in Reno. Mike and I agreed that, in accordance with and in addition to the adopted policy, the two main rules for all of the archives are:

- Archives will not be allowed to leave the property at anytime other than for *Headlight* use by Editor Dave Pires and other specific reasons (which are still being specified and agreed upon, but will include scanning for preservation and other conservation work)
- Reporting and Accountability of the Historical Department will be presented to the Board of Directors on a regular basis. That way the information is on the record and everyone can know what is occurring with our Archives and Artifacts.

So, with these items in mind, Mike suggested that we have a Custodian who was close to the Museum and Reno to allow research access by all and who would be accountable for keeping a detailed log of who, when and why the archives were accessed. Mike suggested Kirk Baer for this position and I agreed. To maintain protection of our Archives, Kirk will have the only access keys other than *Headlight* Editor Dave Pires. Kirk has mentioned in the past that he was unhappy with how archives and access were being handled and that he wanted to organize work parties to begin the process of documenting what we have and where. So now Kirk has the responsibility and the tools to improve the archives and provide access to anyone he gets a specific

request from. Mike is working on a document that will be used as a log for Kirk and Dave when they access any of the archives.

After discussion with a few Directors and Mike, we have decided to remake the ex-MOPAC baggage car I acquired from Steve Lee into an on-site location to sort, document and eventually scan all of our archives. This car is well insulated and was used as a mobile office for a concrete tie gang. It has a HVAC system, though we have not tested it yet. It is also set up for computers and phones along with overhead lighting. This car will take a little work to set up, but should be a great place to work in year round once it comes online. We are looking at moving the car to the dock track next to the Office car for easy access.

Thank you to Mike and Kirk for the motivation and enthusiasm they have for our Archives. And I also want to thank Dave Pires for his on-going, excellent work on the *Headlight*.

In my discussions with Mike, the annual historical conventions were also reviewed. For now, they will continue to be coordinated by Eugene Vicknair. He has co-chaired the last two very successful gatherings (along with Scott McAllister in 2013 and Wayne Monger in 2014), both of which received very positive feedback from attendees.

I hope that this clears up any questions and rumors out there regarding the WPRM Archives. Please work with Mike and Kirk to help get the ball rolling in the right direction. I would also hope that those members who have been disappointed and vocal about the way the Historical Department has been handled now come forward and help make it better for all of us.

If you have any questions, or would like to volunteer to help in the Historical Department, please feel free to contact myself or Mike Mucklin. You can find our contact information inside the cover of every issue.

Until next time...

WP Lives
Rod McClure



A light pole stands at the WP shop facility in Portola, California, between three and four rail, ready to illuminate night operations and repairs today just as it did when the facility was in regular use for Western Pacific. Now equipped with an energy-saving CFL bulb, it can do this using less power and with more light.

Starting in 2012, the FRRS began replacing all incandescent light bulbs (about 50 total) in and around the historic Portola Diesel Shop with compact fluorescent light bulbs. They not only gave more light, but reduced power usage by 35 - 45%. Even with the higher cost per bulb, the power savings paid for the bulbs within three months. They also have a longer life in our harsh environment, meaning more savings. Each CFL lasts about 3-5 years.

Similar changes have been getting made to the fleet of locomotives and cabooses, replacing the incandescent bulbs with their newer CFL equivalents as time permits.

—Photo by Matthew Elems