

UP 1983 (WP) and UP 1989 (DRGW) on display at the Museum; location to be announced later.

Museum Web Page Update – April 2017

–Paul Finnegan, Webmaster

Largely due to the high number of RAL's, including the surge at the end of June to beat the price increase, income through the WP Store has been good. I will defer the details to Director Wesch; but I have been able to allow the Mechanical Department to buy what they need, for the most part, to accomplish the work they're trying to do. Some of that work included shop time for the WP 805-A, in preparation for a special RAL on July 3 by Mark Bluth, a Life Member from Saratoga, CA, and a very generous donor. When tested on July 2, the 805-A performed as expected, but on the morning of the 3rd, with Mark ready for his RAL, the 805-A decided that its brakes weren't going to work correctly. After Fritz worked on it for quite some time, I suggested bringing the 917-D down and MU-ing it with the 805-A, to see if the brake problem would be mitigated with 917-D in control. This was successful, so Mark and his friend did the RAL from the 917-D, with the 805-A trailing, in the afternoon, after the regular caboose trains, and they were happy. After the RAL, Fritz and I put the F's away in the west end of the yard, to be out of the way for the July 4th caboose trains. That evening, Fritz asked me if we were going to run the F's for the 4th; I hadn't even given it a thought. The next morning, however, I had Fritz fire up the F's, and we swapped them onto the caboose train for the day, 917-D flying appropriate flags (see Greg Elems' videos, edited by Webmaster Finnegan). The F's developed a minor MU glitch, but we were able to work through it for the day. Good job, Fritz!

This has been a long report, but there's been a lot going on. In closing, I want to thank everyone who has been spending multiple days at the Museum, working RAL's, maintenance, track work, or whatever needs to be done (or doing what I ask them to do). I'm proud to have this group of Willing People busting their butts at this facility day after day, and, I haven't forgotten the people that are working just as hard from home on innumerable projects. It all counts.

I decided I would use the "off-season" to work behind the scenes on the web site and related topics. I spent most of the January ~ April time frame creating documentation for myself and future webmasters and cleaning up the code on the web site. In creating the documentation system, I wanted it to be essentially auto-updating, so I created a weekly site audit tool that explores all the web pages on the website. In addition to creating the documentation for the webmaster, it does things like making sure there are no broken links, all the photos referenced really exist and it does a spell check on every page. It also checks the syntax of the HTML code that comprises the web site.

As the audit tool developed, it found a surprising number of issues throughout the web site that I have gone back and fixed. The audit tool now reports an (almost) clean web site. It flags a few pages that are still under development, but all the public pages are clean. The web pages were previously rendering and looked OK, so why do we care?

I knew that some of the web pages looked different on different browsers; some of this was caused by the different browsers looking at our mangled HTML code and "fixing" it for us in slightly different ways. Now that we have no syntax errors, the pages look much more uniform on different browsers because the browsers don't have to guess what we really meant to say.

Another advantage of a clean web site is that the various search engines allegedly use a scoring system to rate your web page before displaying search results. A cleaner web site supposedly ranks higher, so people searching may find more results directing them to wplives.org now. That can help our society.

A big side effect for us is since I had to re-code almost every page on the web site, I used this as the opportunity to create the missing mobile friendly web pages for our collection pages. We made significant progress towards being a 100% mobile friendly web site. For the period 4/20/16 to 4/20/17 67.75% of our web visitors used a

desktop, 22.64% used a mobile device and 9.61% used a tablet. The third of our web visitors that don't use a desktop are finding a much more pleasant environment than in the past when essentially none of our web pages were mobile friendly.

Of course I have also been trying to keep the web site current with the museum news and events. We added more material to the web site for the April Crew Training sessions. Material for the Reno convention was used to help promote the event.

Museum Web Page Update – June 2017

–Paul Finnegan, Webmaster

The summer 2017 Season is upon us and things at the museum have been hopping. A major focus of my work on the web site is to promote the museum and our society for the visiting public and our members. This spring, to keep everyone up-to-date on several special events, such as the convention in Reno and the annual members' meeting, many new items came and went on the "*Latest Museum News Update:*" column on the home page and on dedicated event news pages.

The web site's "FRRS/WPRM News Archive" (under the News pull-down menu) and "WPRM Photo & Video Gallery" (under the About Us pull-down menu) pages were frequently updated to reflect the latest events. One of the more entertaining items is a short video created by ABC10 of Sacramento promoting our Run-a-Loomotive program. The video and a look behind the scenes while the video was being made are on the "WPRM Photo & Video Gallery" page.

Over Memorial Day weekend, we rolled out a new web-based Conductor Report for the Operating Department. At the end of any train operation, the crew should fill out a conductor report. Last year, at the end of the season, it was discovered that a few reports were either lost or had never been written. I created a new custom reporting system on our web site. Using the new system, an electronic copy of the report is

permanently kept on-line and is mailed at the end of the day to the Operating Department mail alias. Additionally, individual crew service records are automatically updated with each report. If there was a scheduled train for which no conductor report was created, an automatic email is sent to the Operating Department mail alias at the end of the day advising a report is missing. This will allow for immediate follow-up to ensure we have our paperwork in proper order. The new system seems to be working well with the crews.

Two Train Crew members asked that we set up a reminder email two days before their sign-up date (web ticket 20170-0053.) An automated email system was set-up, tested and put on-line June 10, 2017. An additional request was made to display all recent conductor reports to aid in creating work reports, this feature was also added.

A new web page was created under the Members pull-down menu, "Minutes & Reports." This page has the minutes from Board and Members' meetings along with the written reports submitted. There is currently some missing information, which we hope to find and post. The plan for the future is to post the preliminary minutes as soon as they become available after a meeting. The reports will be added as they become available and then the preliminary minutes will be replaced with the approved minutes after the next meeting. This is meant to significantly improve communication within the society.

A long desired feature was added to the web site in early June. A Google Custom Search Engine widget was added to the home page, just under the menus. (On the mobile home page it is about in the middle of the page.) This powerful search engine is meant to help you easily find things that are somewhere on our web site. Give it a spin and let me know what you think.

I am always looking for feedback, content and new ideas. If you have some, please don't hesitate to contact me at webmaster@wplives.org.