

This has been one of my best locations to visit. If you love trains or you would like to learn more of the California history this is the place to visit. Be ready for a full day's entertainment. The staff are very informative and love their work.

Jeremey Barclay – 5 star
Awesome Hands on Museum. Lots of trains to see and play with. For the right price you can even drive one. Highly recommended for anyone seeking adventure

Bill Jackson – 5 star
What a great place to take your kids for an experience to touch and enjoy diesel locomotives from the fifties and ride in one and learn to operate.

Reflections of The Western Pacific – Part 2

—Jack Palmer

In September 1964 I took my family camping for a few days at a Forestry Service campground across the river opposite Portola. My son and I went fishing and my wife and daughters were entertained by the Blue Jays and chipmunks. Whenever a train appeared we all ran down to the edge of the river and waved to the crews (naturally) as they ran by. Sleep was difficult at times because of the noise caused by the switching crews in the yard when switching and making up trains, much less the ground-shaking caused by the arrival and departure of the trains on the main.

My son and I, together with my Brownie camera in hand, went over to the Portola Depot and Yard one day and discovered that this is a modern Diesel facility, unlike the yards at San Francisco and Oakland. The most interesting photos taken that day were of the WP Rotary Snow Plow #4 with Water Tender #82 and other equipment spotted outside the west end of the shop plus FT set 911A-D on #3 rail next to the shop with a huge orange snow plow on its nose. We also caught a four unit set of FT's switching the yard with WP 908A on the point and the CZ No. 17 going through the washer so she would have nice clean windows before her run down the canyon.

Following that trip I made several visits to the Oroville Yard and its Roundhouse area. I was aware that the WP's diesel fleet received their routine maintenance here and I was expecting to see a number of F units. (How wrong I was)

On my first visit I was awed by the sight of the huge 18 stall roundhouse and the number of miscellaneous orange and silver units in the immediate area and fascinated by the bee-hive of activity

The roundhouse was filled with diesels and others were spotted on all the whisksers around the turntable idling away. Several new GP-20's were spotted outside the entrance to the roundhouse idling away with their high-pitched turbos singing a new song for the WP. (On later visits GP-20's, 35's and 40's would also be seen here.)

The steam powered derrick WP37 and its crew was working on a project in the yard. (It was later converted to diesel power and now resides at the Western Pacific Railroad Museum.)

The Feather River Railroad Shay #2 was seen a short distance from the side of the roundhouse sitting in a huge dried-up mud puddle in mud up to its side-rods.

An old wooden Pullman car was found behind the roundhouse with much of its ornate stained-glass intact, and WP Emergency Car #0635, which at one time was assigned to a work train and was used to replace wheel sets.

Although the Sand Tower was intended to serve WP power, at different times I would also see power from other roads, i.e. Burlington (Chinese Red), BN, SP&S, D&RG all as a result of Pool Power which originated in 1953.

On another visit I saw a few F-Units together with more GP-20's and nice shiny new orange and silver GP-35's, 40's and U-Boats shortly after their arrival on the WP and again later when they appeared in orange and green.

How fortunate I was to have taken those photos and to have witnessed all that – never to be

seen again, because the roundhouse was completely destroyed by fire September 10, 1976, caused by a careless welder.

With the loss of the imposing roundhouse, the appearance of the entire facility had changed dramatically. My visits after that were totally different until I met Mr. Al Hill, the Trainmaster, on the morning of April 25, 1980, which led to another unforgettable experience.

Some Lights for the Darkness

—Eugene Vicknair, Director

For many years, the FRRS had a great friend in Jay's Feather River Rentals. Jay's often rented us equipment at discounted rates and assisted the Society when needed. Most often, we would rent a portable light generator towers to illuminate the grounds during Santa Trains. Unfortunately, Jay's left the business a few years ago and we have been renting light towers from Reno and Truckee. This has been at a higher cost and our volunteers need to travel farther to pick up these units.

With recent plans to increase the number of night time events at the museum (including the Pumpkin Patch Express Trains, evening work parties and other late events such as the Light The Fire fundraising dinner in May 2018), it was

realized that the cost for renting these light towers would become very high.

Therefore the Board made the decision to purchase a pair of used towers. Brand new such units sell for over \$12,000. Even used, low hour units can run over \$6,000. After a lot of searching and many dead ends, we were able to purchase a pair of Magnum MLT3060 light towers with low hours for under \$10,000 total.

Our volunteers checked and serviced the units and pressed them into service almost immediately for the first Saturday night Pumpkin Patch trains on October 14. They performed flawlessly.

Based on our use schedule and the prior rental costs, the purchase of these units will pay for itself in about 2 years, a very good return on investment. They also allow us to expand our night operations, creating more opportunities for events and income. We have already discussed being able to loan them to the city of Portola to assist in emergency work when needed, helping enhance our cooperation with the city.

Thank you to everyone who helped with this acquisition: Eugene Vicknair, Charlie Spikes, Bil Jackson, Frank Brehm, Roger Stabler, David Elems and the staff at Blue Line Rentals and Equipment Time Rentals.

