

2018 Western Pacific RR Historical Convention*- Eugene Vicknair*

For 2018, the FRRS brought the WP Convention to the eastern end of the railroad for the first time. Held at the DoubleTree Inn near the Salt Lake City Airport, within sight of former WP connection the Salt Lake, Garfield and Western Railway, the convention spanned four days of events, from Thursday, April 19th to Sunday, April 22nd. In addition to the volunteer staff, vendors and presenters, over 80 WP devotees attended the convention.

The opening event was a special excursion via the UTA Frontrunner commuter line on Thursday morning. A tour bus departed the hotel for the North Temple Frontrunner station for a fast train ride to Ogden and the Utah State Railroad Museum, where the group enjoyed a guided tour. The return bus ride stopped at the Frontrunner Maintenance Facility in Salt Lake for another guided tour before returning to the DoubleTree and the start of the convention shows.

Thursday and Friday featured two layout tours and a guided tour of the DRGW-WP Salt Lake Depot. All events were held both nights to give everyone a chance to enjoy them. Rob Spangler and James Gronwald kindly opened their home layouts for visits, while Don Hartley, lead architect with the Utah State Office of Historical Preservation, gave a presentation on the depot's history then led visitors on a guided tour of this great structure.

The layout of the Golden Spike Train Club, located in historic Wasatch Hot Springs Building in North Salt Lake, was open to convention goers on Saturday and much WP and DRGW equipment was run. Our final layout tour took place on Sunday at the home of Allen McCallum just south of Ogden.

Many compliments were received on the breadth and quality of the convention shows this year. After opening with part 1 of a newly scanned set of Virgil Staff films from the FRRS Archives, the organizers of the 2019 NMRA National

Convention, being held in Salt Lake City next year, gave everyone a preview of what to expect. Closing out Thursday was Frank Brehm's extensive documentary show of WP's first through passenger trains between Oakland and Salt Lake City.

Friday began with a special presentation of the video made at the 100th Anniversary Rededication of WP business car 106, the "Charles O, Sweetwood". Kerry Cochran gave us a look at WP's Maintenance of Way fleet and how to model these unique cars. Former WP mechanic Ed Smith shared his experiences working for the Western Pacific. Mr. Smith also donated to the FRRS Archives the toolbox and tools he used during his years on the railroad. These included several special and handmade tools, including one build by the WP blacksmith at Portola. Friday's closing shows were a history of WP's Mixed Trains and the cars they used by Eugene Vicknair, and Daniel Kuhn's look at the entire Feather River Route.

On Saturday, Jeff Pierce shared his memories of Growing Up Along the Rio Grande, while WP modeler Rob Spangler presented his knowledge and techniques for building scenery. Following the lunch break, everyone saw the second half of the Virgil Staff films, then an in depth history of WP connection Tooele Valley Railway by Jacob Wayne Lyman. Our closing show was a fascinating look at the murals painted by artist Mary Lawser for the California Zephyr, researched and presented by Allan Huskins Jr.

Saturday night, after a little confusion as to where the banquet room had moved to, everyone enjoyed a lavish feast and the giving out of the raffle prizes. The event was closed by our special guest speaker: former head of the UP steam program and current volunteer and advisor on the WP 165 restoration, Steve Lee.

Our vendor and exhibit room was well attended. Convention goers got to see a large selection of artifacts and photos from the FRRS Archives. The museum store did a good business as well in both merchandise and raffle tickets. Many other vendors and exhibitors also joined us

including Brad Lomazzi, the Rio Grande Modeling and Historical Society, ExactRail, the Tooele Valley Trackers Model Railroad Club, Ron Mitchell, Bob Jarvis and artist Marc Desobeau. Several of these vendors also donated to the raffle drawing, while Mr. Desobeau debuted a fantastic new painting in progress and put it up for silent auction to benefit the FRRS Archives Fund. FRRS and RGM&HS member Jeff Pierce was the winner of the painting depicting WP GP9 732 at the shop building in Salt Lake's Roper Yard. Finally, the Ophir, Tintic and Western model club from Orem, Utah brought their N scale modular layout and put it on exhibit in the vendor room. Everyone seemed to enjoy the layout and a lot of compliments were given to the OT&W crew.

So many people contributed to making this convention as success. First of all a special thank you to Jeff Pierce who was our point person for so much in Salt Lake. Derrick Klarr of UTA / Frontrunner helped set up the excursion and tours on Thursday. Mike Murphy helped organize the layout tours and lined up some presenters. Kerry Cochran aided in planning and organization while Paul Finnegan kept the website up to date with registration and show details. A big thanks to David Elems, who ended up handling the Society sales table for most of the event. Thanks also to Mike Carlson, Alicia Johnson, the Utah State RR Museum, Don Hartley and the Utah State Office of Historical Preservation, our fantastic home layout owners, the Gold Spike Train Club, the national NMRA, the RGM&HS, the numerous door prize vendors (with particular thanks to Kadee, Bowser and Accurail), Marc Desobeau for his generous donation, the FRRS convention volunteers and everyone who attended this great convention!

The 2019 Convention will be a joint event with the Pacific Coast Region NMRA and will be held in Sacramento May 2-5, 2019. Not only will we be celebrating 70 years of the California Zephyr, but it will also be the 75th anniversary of the PCR. Registration is now open! Go to the website at convention.wplives.org.

Museum Sponsors

We ask our members and visitors to support our business sponsors, companies who have generously contributed to the museum and its mission to preserve the Western Pacific family.

If you are a business owner, see how you can support the WP Museum, your community and improve your advertising and networking outreach through our sponsorship program.



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Seth Adams started WP 501 on October 11th, she ran for the first time in years. There will be more information about the WP 501 project in the next issue of the Train Sheet.

- photo by Bob Sims