



*Preserving "THE FEATHER RIVER ROUTE"*

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*- Eugene Vicknair*

In late 2018, the FRRS learned that the long time Portola Railroad Days organizers were not planning to return for 2019 and that no one had taken up the role. As it looked more and more likely that there would be no Railroad Days in 2019, discussion among the regular museum volunteers turned to what the society could do to maintain an event in August and continue the tradition.

The city council had asked if the FRRS could take over the entire event, but after much discussion, it was decided that we would not have the volunteers or budget to handle the events that occur within the city and off the museum grounds. In years past, it was all we could do to handle the events on the WPRM site. With this in mind, we respectfully declined taking over the entire event.

However, we felt that the tradition of a railroad history event in August, which stretched back 36 years, should be maintained. To that end, Greg Elems and Eugene Vicknair offered to spearhead a Western Pacific themed event in early August. It was dubbed the Western Pacific Celebration to separate the event from Portola Railroad Days and to preserve that name for an eventual restart of the PRD event.

Despite some bumps along the way, the WP Celebration event was held on August 3-4 and proved to be very popular and our volunteers consider it to have been a great success. We received a great number of compliments from visitors and no substantial complaints. The volunteers and crew members on hand talked to several people who had not been to the museum in years, or ever, but heard about the event and decided to come. This included some long time and lapsed members. Portola City Councilmember Pat Morton also attended and was very complementary of the event.

The visual centerpiece of the event was Western Pacific SW1500 1503, which had received new green and orange paint just the week before. Big thanks to Roger Stabler, David Elems, Greg Elems and everyone else who worked so hard to

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**Upcoming Special Events ...**

**Pumpkin Express Trains:**

October 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup>!

**Santa Trains:**

December 7<sup>th</sup>

December 13<sup>th</sup> & December 14<sup>th</sup>

December 20<sup>th</sup> & December 21<sup>st</sup>

*(more details on page 17)*

**...WP Celebration continued from front cover.**

get that project done. We also had performances by the Nevada Gunfighters, Model-T rides and motorcar rides provided by Charlie Spikes, Janet Steeper and Matt Shuman, with assistance from Ann Morningstar and Debbie Shuman. Visitors loved seeing the speeders and our Model T operating and asked if this could happen more often.

Locomotive cab rides proved to be very popular and we sold out on those by 11 a.m. Saturday. Our locomotive crews provided great rides for the visitors. The demand was so great that Steve Habeck had Southern Pacific GP9 2873 added to the trains for Sunday to provide extra cab rider space. This resulted in doubleheaded trains for the Sunday operations.

We raised start-up funds for the event from five sponsors: (Jim Dobbas - \$250, Plumas Sierra Rural Electrical Coop - \$250, Cal-Sierra Title - \$100, Sierra Motel - \$50, Nicole's Café - \$50). We also had several craft and food vendors at the event. The kids face painter was especially popular. Eugene Vicknair and Patty Clawson handled the sponsorship mailing and managed the vendors. A big thank you to Janet Steeper who made phone calls to the potential sponsors who received request letters. Eric McKay did great in the FRRS information booth. He was responsible for 90% of the raffle ticket sales and also got some new memberships.

We also had 1 hour guided walking tours, all led by Eugene Vicknair. These tours took guests around the diesel shop and provided in-depth histories and background stories on about 20 of our most prominent historic pieces as well as information on WP history, the museum facility and our archives collection. Many of the visitors asked us to expand on these tours and make them a regular event feature.

Our store staff (KC Dunn, Jean Danielson and Taj Yager) did a great job handling a lot of visitors, particularly a crush on Saturday morning. David Elems also stepped in to help with the early demand.



*WP Celebration Saturday August 3, 2019*

*- photo by Michael Clawson*

The prep work for this event also involved a lot of hard work. In particular we need to thank the Hansen family who came out and spent a weekend cleaning the diesel shop and several pieces of equipment. Bart Hansen continued this into the first day of operation by cleaning the Union Pacific 105 business car and several of the cabooses on the excursion train.

We are already looking forward to next year and have heard that some local residents are considering a revival of Railroad Days. We look forward to working with them to fold the new and improved WP Celebration into a revived Railroad Days or, if that does not come together, continue the tradition with the Celebration itself.

Thank you to everyone who made this event possible! This includes those who worked on prep before the event as well as during the days it ran. If we missed anyone, please let us know!

WP Celebration Crew: Kirk Baer, Lew Barnard, Vince Bonfiglio, Robbie Campbell, Patty Clawson, Kerry Cochran, Jean Danielson, Ali Doty, Ethan Doty, Kristina Dunn, David Elems, Greg Elems, Matt Elems, Fred Elenbass, Paul Finnegan, Steve Habeck, Bart Hansen, David Hansen, Susan Hansen, Bil Jackson, Ann Morningstar, Don Nelson, Jason Peterich, Debbie Shuman, Matt Shuman, Bob Sims, Charlie Spikes, Roger Stabler, Janet Steeper, Eugene Vicknair, Mike Waters, Tajanae Yager