

WP 1503 Restoration Update

- Greg Elems

It has been a long process of work. Loren Ross and Greg Elems started the removal of the Union Pacific lettering, stripes and numbers in early 2013. Loren Ross spent a great deal of time on the class lights. Cleaning three coats of UP yellow off as well as repairing or replacing broken parts.

Seth Adams put in many hours on the electrical gremlins UP left when they removed the auto-start and shut-off system. Seth Adams did mechanical work plus radiator work with help from David Elems. Rod McClure and David Elems installed the first radiator that was repaired, only to have the second one give up the ghost some time later. David Elems put in many more hours with all aspects of mechanical inspection and repairing. Much work included the radiators and a new radiator was purchased after the tired one had too many leaks to make the repair a viable option.

It is sad to say but Rod McClure passed in 2016, never seeing 1503 in all her glory. To that end, in July 2016 Tom Carter and Eugene Vicknair applied green and orange patches on 1503 for the celebration of Rod's life. 1503 pulled the caboose train for that somber occasion.

In the late summer of 2018, work resumed on 1503 with the sanding of the UP lettering and numbers. Roger Stabler in the fall of 2018 primed the area that was to be painted orange and then put the orange on. Fast forward to July 2019, many hours were spent by several people in the removal and chipping off the flaking paint. To which more time was spent on the sanding of rust and lettering/stripping tape gum. Ethan Doty, Kenneth Finnegan, Jason Peterich, David Elems, Mike Waters, Roger Stabler, Loren Ross and Greg Elems had their hands full with the paint prep for the primer, orange and finally the green. Steve Lee got his hands dirty and ground a rough weld patch on the step on the fireman's side on the front walk way. Roger then put Bondo on it and sanded it smooth. Roger Stabler and Mike Waters then put in 40 hrs of



WP 1503 shortly after arrival at WPRM

February 2012.

- photo by Ed Wagner



WP 1503 almost ready for painting

July 26, 2019.

- photo by Greg Elems



Green again! September 28, 2019.

- photo by Kenneth Finnegan

painting time on the primer, green paint and finally the black on the trucks and fuel tank. Before the primer went on considerable time was spent by Mike Waters, Jason Peterich and Greg Elems applying the masking for the Western Pacific and numbers on the cab. Eugene Vicknair had made the stencils for the lettering. Between the primer and green paint Ethan Doty, Steve Habeck, Matthew and Greg Elems spent 10 hours on the masking of the orange stripes on the pilot. After the green paint was applied, David Elems, Ethan Doty and Jason Peterich masked the frame and steps so Roger and Mike could paint the black on the trucks and fuel tank.

With all the paint work going on, A1 Radiator in Reno was working to no avail on the radiator we had hoped was repairable. 1503 was mostly painted when David Elems, with the help of Phil Schmierer and Ethan Doty, dropped in the new radiator. Water was put into the system, a few minimal leaks were found and taken care of. 1503 was started, there is a video on the web page of that, and the temperature brought up to test the work. It was a success! With the radiator installed, David, Ethan and Phil put the front radiator shutters on with the protective wire grill. The protective wire grill for the radiators was then installed on the top of the engine hood.

The bell and a horn have been installed, with a proper five-chime horn to come after a service job on it. The last of the details were the number boards and the remaining green paint went on the handrails and stanchions on September 25 & 26. The work on 1503 is drawing to a close.

1503 will be the Pumpkin Express and Santa Train locomotive for 2019. On June 20th, 2020 will be the dedication of 1503 to Rod and Jack McClure. With the closing of the museum at 5 p.m. that Saturday in June, all members are invited to come to the dedication and partake in a potluck dinner. Ride the caboose train and remember Rod and all he did for the museum.

Former Morrison-Knudsen Rail Facility Closing

- Frank Brehm & Eugene Vicknair

The locomotive construction and rebuilding facility in Boise, Idaho, originally opened by Morrison-Knudsen construction company and currently operated by MotivePower, will be closing in the next few months. Operations will be consolidated at the former General Electric facility in Erie, Pennsylvania. GE's locomotive division was acquired by Wabtec / MotivePower in February 2019.

The Boise facility originally supported M-K's construction projects, but in 1972 was set up as a separate entity called MKRail. The Western Pacific utilized MKRail for many repair and remanufacturing projects in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Most prominently, WP's surviving GP35 fleet and its first 15 GP40s were all rebuilt at the Boise plant during 1980. This rebuild process was covered in an article by Norman E. Anderson published in issues 5 & 6 of *The Headlight*.

MKRail also handled heavy wreck repairs for the WP during this time, including reconditioning F7As 917-D and 913-A. After the merger, some of the WP GP40s would return to MK Boise for rebuilding again, with some going to Kansas City Southern and others to St. Louis Southwestern (Cotton Belt).



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