



# THE TRAIN SHEET

News from the Feather River Rail Society



## Preserving "THE FEATHER RIVER ROUTE"

Issue - 181

April/May/June 2019



### 2019 Western Pacific Historical / Pacific Coast Region Joint Convention

#### Recap

by Eugene Vicknair



May 2-5, 2019 saw the second joint convention between the FRRS and the Pacific Coast Region of the NMRA. The first was 2016's Modesto convention. Dubbed "Diamond Rails Forever", the event was held at the McClellan Conference Center in Sacramento. It jointly celebrated the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Pacific Coast Region and the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *California Zephyr*, which started operation on March 20, 1949.

As a result of the Zephyr celebration, many of the WP / FRRS convention presentations were focused on this storied train and related topics. Perhaps the most exciting aspect was the presence of nine former Zephyrettes who held their reunion at the convention. They were:

- Fran Ryan Tanti
- Cathy Moran von Ibsch
- Merrilee Harter Mitchell
- Katie Storrs Pittman
- Linda Hein
- Joy Eldridge Parker
- Helen Justin Webb

Organized by Cathy Moran von Ibsch, the ladies held several meet and greet sessions where they shared information and stories with convention goers. Many expressed how much they appreciated the thank you and attention they received from the convention attendees, with many stating that they "felt like rock stars". In addition to the meet and greets, the Zephyrettes participated in various presentations and a *California Zephyr* roundtable that was held on Saturday, following a presentation by Cathy von Ibsch on the history of the Zephyrettes. The

Zephyr roundtable also included CZ conductor Ernie von Ibsch, noted photographer and Zephyr historian Ted Benson, author of the *California Zephyr* mystery books Janet Dawson, and CZ engineer Jim Atkins. Ted Benson, joined by Tom Taylor, also presented a show on their photographic adventures with the Western Pacific, while Janet Dawson also did a program on her books and the research she has done to recreate the Zephyr in fiction form.

Other WP-centric presentations included:

- Kerry Cochran with the third in his series on modeling WP MOW Equipment
- A look at the last years on the Tidewater Southern before the UP takeover by Greg Elems
- A history of the Quincy Railroad by Eugene Vicknair
- A photo tour of the WP's First Subdivision by Ken Rattenne
- Jeff Moore's history of the McCloud River Railway and its related logging lines,
- Jeff Asay's "How To Make A Small Fortune" which explored George J. Gould's role in financing the Western Pacific
- A history of WP's Dining Car service ware by Loren Dunlap
- Warren Haack sharing *California Zephyr* films including interviews with former employees
- Two shows by Mark Williams, with one covering the history of the

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**-THE TRAIN SHEET-**

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News from the Feather River Rail Society and the Western Pacific Railroad Museum at Portola

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FEATHER RIVER RAIL SOCIETY

WESTERN PACIFIC RAILROAD  
MUSEUM at PORTOLA

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Museum Phone: (530) 832-4131  
Fax: (530) 832-1854

**The museum is open:**

April: Thursday - Sunday

May - September: Daily

October: Thursday - Sunday

Hours: 10 - 5, weather permitting.

If you wish to visit during the closure period, it is advisable to call in advance and find out if the museum will be open.

Entrance to the museum for members is free. Non-members are required to pay an admission fee.

The Feather River Rail Society, a tax-exempt public benefit California corporation, is the historical society for the Western Pacific Railroad and operator of the Western Pacific Railroad Museum at Portola, California.

**The FRRS is not associated with the Union Pacific Railroad.**

FRRS Tax ID number is 68-0002774  
Member of the Heritage Rail Alliance



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**Membership Report as of 6/28/19**

Associate	32	Life	223
Active	240	Family Life	120
Family	126	Special/Sponsors	37
Sustaining	16	Total	794

Renew or change your membership information on the FRRS website! Go to: <https://membership.WPLives.org>

**- WEB PAGES of INTEREST -**

FRRS Official Site	www.WPLives.org
CZ Virtual Museum	calzephyr.railfan.net
California Zephyr	californiazephyr.org
Western Pacific Pages	www.WPLives.com
WP Virtual Museum	wpmuseum.railfan.net
Tidewater Southern Pages	www.TidewaterSouthern.com
Central California Traction	www.trainweb.org/tractionco

**Spring Steam Work Party****May 1<sup>st</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup>***- Roger Stabler*

I am back home after a week of work at the WPRM. The steam crew had a very productive week, although when we started the 1<sup>st</sup> day was kind of frustrating since tools were missing and my air motor had a broken mandrel. I went up to the museum on Sunday the 29<sup>th</sup> to get settled in and ready to go on Monday with a plan to paint the WP 1503. Monday was nice and warm for Portola so the primer was applied to the areas that will have stripes and lettering. Tuesday it turned cold, and even snowed, but I was able to get the orange on the engine. I will now wait for the July work week to attempt to have the engine ready for the green.

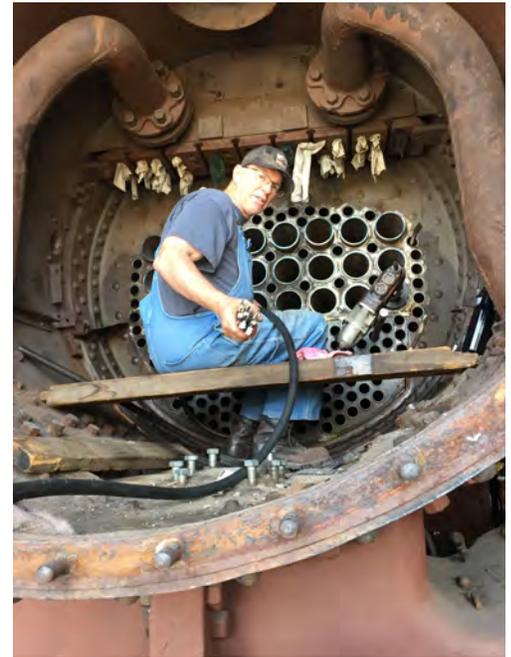
Wednesday was the day that the Steam Team started arriving, I was joined by Hank Stiles. We spent most of the day getting tools set up for the various jobs to be completed for the week. Hank and I hunted the shop for some hand tools that were missing and never did locate them, so I had to make a quick order with McMaster Carr to get them for the shop. On Thursday and Friday Hank Stiles, Dick Couden and I rolled the 5 1/2 inch tubes. We finished the job Saturday morning. In the evenings I prepped and manufactured tools to get the throttle joint ring ground into the dry pipe. Thursday night David Elems stayed late and machined the dome lid for a pipe fitting to be welded in for the vent pipe. David is also making adapters so that our safety valves will fit the old fittings on dome lid.

While all of the above work was going on, Channing Walker was busy installing the oil and steam piping for the air pump and tender connections, much of the pipe had to be custom bent for the locomotive. Erik Olson and Eddie Chase, along with Mike Giarritta, assisted as needed and lapped in the numerous valves that were taken from the vapor Clarkson boiler that was scrapped. Dick Couden, Hank Stiles and I ground in the throttle joint ring and Charlie Spikes, Steve Lee, Channing Walker and Hank Stiles installed the throttle stand in the boiler. Bob Sims installed the missing wood supports for the sand box and oil tank tie downs on the water tank.

The tender draw bars were installed, and with Steve Lee at the throttle of the SP2873, the WP165 was moved to the fire hydrant to fill the boiler with water for the 1<sup>st</sup> time to start the sealing process on the installed tubes and check for unknown leaks in the engine. In the inspection process, we found four broken staybolts on the fireman's side and some old welds that were weeping. We also found some open stud holes that we had missed after they were removed. The boiler was washed out in the mud ring and plugs were left out to allow the boiler dry out.



Steve Lee and Hank Stiles put the engine back into the shop, final adjustments were made to the tender drawbars and the cab apron was installed. This was a very productive week on the WP 165 and I thank all those who attended and helped to bring this machine back to life. I really need to thank James Muller who taught me the boiler craft.

*Photos by Dick Couden and Bob Sims.*

## What the heck is an AUTOMATIC AIR BRAKE?

*WP Operating Department Training Manual - 1974*

Every locomotive unit and car is equipped with automatic brake equipment. With this train brake system, an application of brakes occurs when the pressure in the brake pipe is reduced. The brake is not truly "automatic" as it requires knowledgeable and skillful manipulation by the engineer. The only time it is really automatic is when an accidental separation of the train and brake pipe occurs. An application of brakes will then come about due to the "fail-safe" characteristic of this system. The heart of the system is the "control valve" which performs three basic functions: 1. Apply brakes, 2. Release brakes and 3. Charge auxiliary reservoirs.

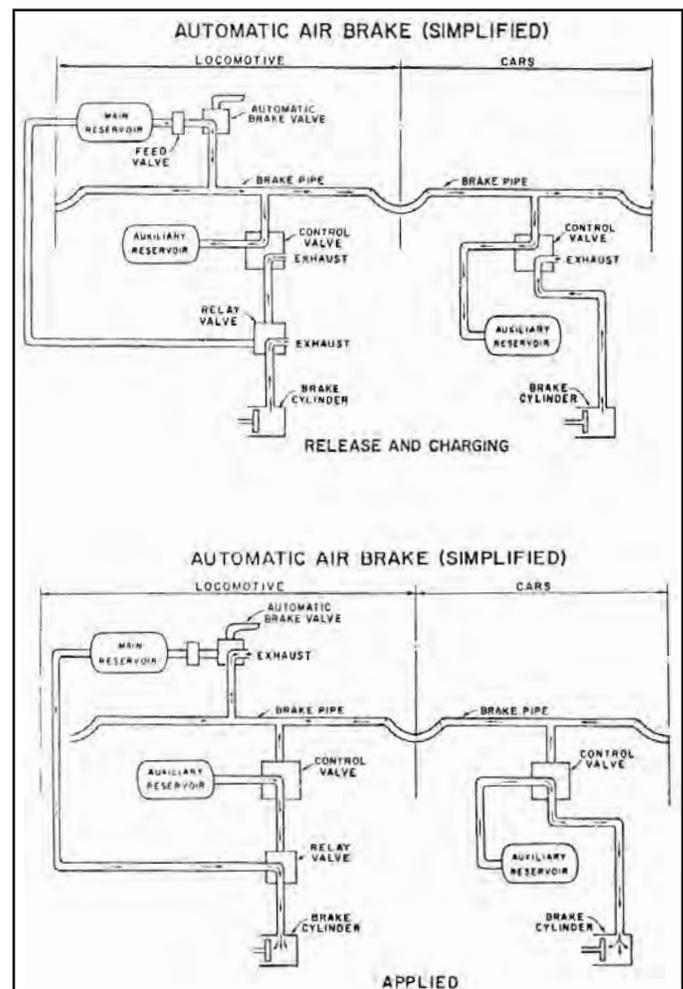
On freight cars, the control valves are known as AB valves, or an improved version as ABD valves. On locomotives with #24 equipment, the D-24 control valve is used; locomotives with #26 equipment, the 26F control valve is used. On older locomotives, the distributing valve serves the same purpose. In the figure, you will note that auxiliary reservoir air is used to apply the brakes on a car. On locomotives, air is admitted by the control valve which pilots a relay valve admitting air from main reservoir supply to the brake cylinders. Brake applications using the automatic brake are caused by reduction of pressure in the brake pipe.

There are two general types of brake pipe reductions:

- 1. Emergency Reduction:** An emergency reduction is an extremely rapid reduction of brake pipe pressure to zero. The rate of reduction cannot be controlled once the application is initiated.
- 2. Service Reduction:** A service reduction takes place at a slower rate and is controlled by the locomotive engineer. A minimum service reduction is 6 to 8 lbs. With 90 lb. brake pipe pressure, the maximum effective service reduction is 26 lbs. This 26 lb. reduction is called FULL SERVICE. With a full service reduction, the pressure will equalize between the auxiliary

reservoirs and the brake cylinders. With a 90 lb. brake pipe, the pressure will equalize at about 64 lbs., giving approximately a 64 lb. brake cylinder pressure. Since the pressure has equalized, it can be seen that any further service reduction cannot bring about more braking effort. The only way to increase braking effect beyond full service is to go on to an emergency application. With an emergency application, the pressure will equalize between the brake cylinders and the auxiliary and emergency reservoirs giving a higher brake cylinder pressure (approximately 77 lbs. with a 90 lb. brake pipe pressure).

Automatic train brakes incorporate separate reservoir sections and separate control valve portions for use in emergency applications. This is done so that an emergency application is available regardless of previous service applications that may have been made.



## Member Spotlight – Janet Steeper

I was asked to introduce myself to the society. I am a life member here at the FRRS. The first time I came to the museum, I wrote out my check. I felt in my bones, it would be a natural fit for some of my abilities and personality. I am still feeling my way trying to find my niche in the museum. Other members know so much, it can be a little intimidating, but they are wonderful about sharing their knowledge. Now serving on your board for the next three years, my job title is currently “den mother.” I just try in my way to keep folks communicating with one another, and helping out where help is needed. A bit of an ombudsman, if you will. I am glad that the membership feels it can come to me with questions and concerns, and I will try to direct those to the right place. Overall, I am a pretty good sounding board, and am happy to be so. On many weekends you will find me in the Operating Department running trains with all my buddies. Yes, like many of you, my social life IS the museum. We always welcome new volunteers, and would welcome our old ones back with open arms.



I am from Aiken County, South Carolina (my accent is pretty pronounced), I hold a B.S. and M.S. in Geology and a Master of Arts in Teaching and an Education Specialist in science education. I taught geology for the University of Georgia, Augusta State University and most recently for the University of Mississippi. I am a master jeweler and owned a successful jewelry business with twelve employees for 22 years. I became a certified locomotive engineer and worked two and a half years for the Mississippi Delta Railway, a short line with 60 miles of ex-Illinois Central track. I am a member of NARCOA and own a popper railcar, an ex-1946 M-19 from the Seaboard Coastline where my aunt, uncle, and great grandfather worked. My cousin and I had a rail passenger car repair shop in Atlanta, Georgia for thirteen years. It was a two-person operation (two 30-ton cranes helped) and we repaired Budd and ACF cars to Amtrak standards, doing everything from truck rebuilds to shower installations. We also ran charters.

I have filmed and chased Steve Lee through the plains as he piloted the UP Challenger. I have been



*Janet headed to Swan Lake, MI in a leased Canadian National unit in summer 2016. All three of the MS DR engines were down for major repairs at the Mississippi Delta railway. MS DR was in the middle of a massive movement of storage cars, and had to lease an engine from Canadian National for about \$800 a day. The engine was very much like our QRR 1100. Temperature that day was over 100° humidity in the 90s.*

privileged to ride and operate steam engines all over the world. Most notably QJ's in China on Jin Peng pass in Inner Mongolia, Garratts in Zimbabwe (the most comfortable engine you will ever stand on the footplate of) and NC-25's in South Africa where I owned a home.

Currently I live in Dayton, NV and commute 90 miles each way to the museum, which I love doing by the way, (Hey it's the old NCO along US 395!) I serve on the boards of the Historical Society of Dayton Valley and the Mayo Educational Foundation, spend time riding the rails in my popper car, working at the WPRM museum, ripping through the desert at top speed in my convertible mustangs (no ticket yet, subject to change) and rock bashing on my ATV. Hope to see you all (y'all) at the museum. Again, volunteer, it's a blast! All the required information can be found on our easy to use website.

**Volunteer “Get Ready for Opening Work Party”***- Eugene Vicknair*

The museum held its annual “Get Ready for Opening” work party on April 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, however volunteer participation was very disappointing. At the February Board Meeting, Eric McKay apologized that he would be unable to attend this year, but generously donated \$100 to fund the breakfast. (Thank you Eric!) Eugene Vicknair made the arrangements and was prepared to cook an excellent breakfast to be held in the historic “Silver Plate” dining car, but only three additional volunteers were present at breakfast time. Janet Steeper, Charlie Spikes and non-member Christopher Kapreilian enjoyed a nice breakfast and were later joined by David and Greg Elems for the day’s work.

They team worked on the Troop Sleeper and Board / Crew Meeting Room. Charlie focused on sweeping and cleaning in the Troop Sleeper, which recently received new mattresses donated by a Boy Scout troop in Reno. The rest of the crew tackled the Meeting Room where they found old food as well as utensils, paper plates, and other materials that were contaminated and all needed to be thrown away. Eugene and Greg hauled both refrigerators / freezers outside and Janet joined them in completely scrubbing and sanitizing the units inside and out. Chris scrubbed and mopped the floor in the Meeting Room and everyone pitched in to throw out all the trash from the cleaning work. The room was reorganized and reset to improve space use and access to the storage areas and refrigerators.

Following the cleaning session, several issues with food storage and contamination were noted. New rules on food storage will be determined and covered in crew training.

Thank you to everyone who came out and helped with the cleaning!

While cleaning goes on throughout the year, these spring sessions have been effective in the past at getting a good start for the opening of the public season. While it is dirty work, it is needed to allow the museum to be presented to

the public and members in its best light.

Another session will be scheduled for next April. Please help out if you can!

**Crew Training Report***- Paul Finnegan*

We added a new feature for this year’s crew training. We created an online rules exam. The new system sends a customized invitation to the volunteer when they register for training to take the exam before class online. This allows crewmembers to have more time available when they come to the museum for training, or to do something other than taking the written exam. This year Loren Ross took some of the members who had taken the exam online and did additional on-the-job training. It is important to remember that all crewmembers must attend crew training and the online exam does not replace the class-room material.

We had two crew training classes this year. The first class had seventeen attendees and was held on Saturday April 27<sup>th</sup>. We had no new members in this class. Returning members Lew Barnard, Kerry Cochran, Ali Doty, Ethan Doty, David Elems, Greg Elems, Fred Elenbaas, Paul Finnegan, Michael Giarritta, Bil Jackson, Bill Parker, Jackson Parker, Loren Ross, Craig Simmons, Charlie Spikes, Janet Steeper, and Duane Vander Veen attended the first class.



The second scheduled class for 2019 was held on Sunday, May 26<sup>th</sup> in the Board Room at the museum. Loren Ross lead both training classes and David Epling, Kenneth Finnegan, Donald Nelson, Edward Powell and Kevin Ross attended the second class.

Kevin Ross is a new member of the Operating department and joins as a student brakeman.

**Things Around the Museum: Wig-Wag***- Paul Finnegan*

When visitors enter the museum, they pass by our operational wig-wag crossing signal. The "MAGNETIC FLAGMAN", and other similar warning signals, were used extensively at grade crossing throughout the United States during the early-to-mid 20th Century. Our Wig-Wag was donated to the Feather River Rail Society by Dr. Cheryl Meeker in memory of Ken Meeker.

Our wig-wag was made by Magnetic Signal Company of Los Angeles and the base was made by Union Switch & Signal, Swissvale PA.

**Restoring WPRM's Wig-Wag***- Sam Herschbein*

WPRM's wig-wag has represented the museum at Dunsuir's and Portola's Railroad Days events. At Portola the wig-wag was placed at the pedestrian walkway leading from the parking lot into the shop. Whenever the caboose trains would come by, the wig-wag would run. Young kids love noise, they delighted in turning it on and off. I think it rang more while kids were playing with it than when trains crossed!

First, a little bit of signal history. Old railroad signals were designed for 10 volts, which came from a series of Edison batteries. Edison batteries were large glass or ceramic jars with a ceramic top that submerged two sets of plates in the special "Edison Caustic Soda." Both the solution and the plates wore out, a jar made it easy to dump the contents and replace the plates.

I've restored many signals for display. The old 10 volt motors and electromagnets have no problem running on a car battery which provides 13.2 volts at peak charge. But, 10V bulbs will

burn out quickly on 13.2 volts. The easiest solution is to substitute a car light bulb.

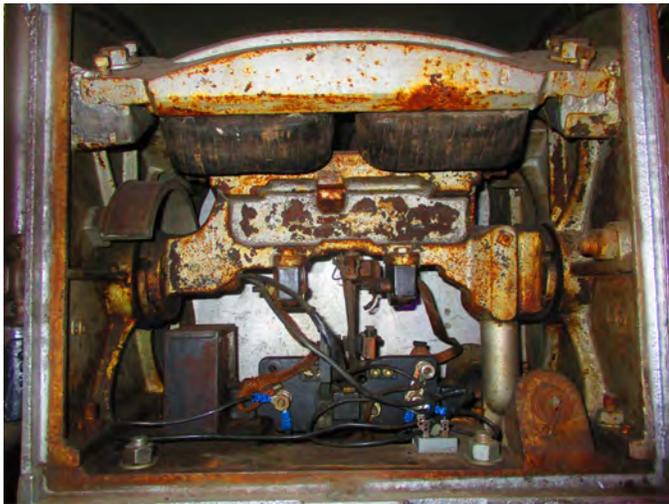
I found some solid 4x4 wood beams straight enough to hold the signal. We used a forklift and bolted the signal to the beams. This gave it a sturdy base that wouldn't tip over if someone decided to climb on it. Steve Habeck put a truck battery in the wig-wag's bottom case. I went to work on the motor unit which sits on top of a short standard signal mast attached to the bottom case. I found that the bearings needed greasing and the contacts needed cleaning and re-timing. Timing a wig-wag? Some explanation about how a wig-wag works makes this easy to understand.

The wig-wag has a horizontal axle. The target is the large sheet metal circle with the red light in the center. It attaches to and sits above the axle. Below the target is a heavier weight to provide counterbalance. Together the two act like a pendulum in a clock. If you push the weight when there's no power, the assembly should go back and forth smoothly.

But how does it move? The wig-wag is powered by electromagnets, wired to first pull one way and then the other, hence the name wig-wag. OK, how does it start moving? When it's at dead-center bottom, one set of timing contacts must already be closed to get it moving in one direction. As it nears the end of one direction these contacts open. As it swings back, but just before it hits dead-center bottom, the other set of contacts closes. This guarantees that one set of contacts will always be closed when the pendulum has completely stopped moving. Within 3 or 4 cycles, it is up to full speed.

The timing was so far off that one set of contacts was not closed when it was at dead-center bottom. Therefore, it couldn't start if it stopped when those contacts should have been closed. With the timing off, the electromagnets were not pulling long enough in one direction to give it the oomph it needed to keep running. The added friction from years spent outside in all

*(continued next page...)*



*Views inside Wig-Wag head and base.  
- photos by Paul Finnegan*

types of weather made things worse.

The first step to restore our wig-wag was taking it apart enough to lubricate the bearings so it moved easily. The next step was cleaning the contacts and making sure all the connections were solid. The red light had to be re-wired.

The tricky part was timing it. After some trial and error, I discovered it was hitting the rubber stops that prevent over-swing. The 13.2 volts gave it more oomph than it originally had. The bell on the wig-wag is mechanical, its clapper is activated by the motion of the pendulum. Of course, I adjusted the clapper so the bell made as much noise as possible.

The control part of the circuit was easy. An 89-cent light switch from the hardware store with a chain and string was ideal. That way someone could sit 10 feet or more away and turn it on and off. Using a cheap switch meant anyone at the museum could replace it when it broke (which it has, at least twice).



*Charlie Spikes, Loren Ross, Greg Elems, Bil Jackson and Ethan Doty pose with new panel track at William House Museum 11/14/18.*

### Williams House Display

*- Paul Finnegan*

Last fall, the society approved the sale of the FR&W Plymouth for operational restoration. As part of this agreement, a small engine was to be provided and set up on the east entrance to the city. A small panel track was created and the locomotive placed there. After the recent collapse of the agreement with the City regarding placement of the small engine at the Williams House, it was moved to the museum parking lot on 5/31/19.



*A museum sponsor*



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**Archive Car Work 5/29/2019***- Kerry Cochran*

While work continues on the MP archives car to get it ready for electrical power and the new HVAC unit, we needed to complete several things prior to some of that work being started.

On Wednesday May 29<sup>th</sup>, Paul Finnegan, Phil Schmierer, Vince Bonfiglio, Ethan Doty and Kerry Cochran spent most of the afternoon moving the old desk partitions, refrigerator and various left over lumber and insulation out of the car.

The desk partitions were stored in one of the other archives cars for use at a later time, the refrigerator was loaded into the Dodge pick-up for disposal and the reusable lumber was moved to the lumber rack inside the engine house.

Other loose items, lumber scraps, insulation and junk that we deemed unusable were placed into the dumpster for disposal.

A set of lockers was moved into the east end of the car along with one of the tall metal cabinets for storage of materials.

I want to thank all the members that helped get this work done as we progress into preparing this car for the next steps in its renovations.



*Vince Bonfiglio and Phil Schmierer helping remove partitions from the Archive Car to be moved to another archive department boxcar.*

*- photo by Ethan Doty*

**WP 1503 Restoration Update***- Paul Finnegan*

Progress is continuing to be made for the restoration of WP 1503. Greg Elems has worked on doing sanding work in preparation for painting. The plan is to restore the horn to a five-bell style, as originally delivered to the WP. All bells pointing forward mounted on the face of the cab, close to the roof, instead of on the roof as it currently is.

Roger Stabler shot orange paint on the sides and ends just before the Steam Work session in May. Stencils need to be cut for the lettering and Roger plans to shot more paint in July.

The Mechanical Department has an aggressive plan to restore WP 1503 to service this summer.

**Annual Members' Meeting***- Paul Finnegan*

The FRRS held its annual Members' Meeting at the museum on Saturday June 1<sup>st</sup>. Directors Kerry Cochran, Steve Habeck, Charlie Spikes and Janet Steeper were present. Eighteen additional members attended. President Steve Habeck gave an overall summary of events and plans for the museum. The election report was given by Matt Shuman. We had a "white ballot" this year so the three incumbents who were nominated will all be reelected. Additional comments were made by other directors, staff and members. A very nice pot-luck dinner was provided and the evening went very smoothly.

Minutes of the meeting are available on the Minutes & Reports web page under the Members pull-down menu on the society's website.

**WPRM BSA RR Merit Badge***- Loren Ross*

On Saturday June 1, 2019, Boy Scout Troop 341 from Carson City, NV came to the WPRM to receive a merit badge training class for the Railroading merit badge. The troop arrived with fifteen young men and six adults and were met by Superintendent of Operations Loren Ross who was the instructor for their class. It turns out that this was the second time this troop has come to the museum for this merit badge, having last been here in October 2015. In fact, five of the Scouts on this trip were present on the earlier training and already had their Railroading merit badge.

Rather than sit in on the class again, those five scouts offered to help out with some “community service” type projects around the building. Taking advantage of free labor, they were first assigned to enter the Pullman Troop Sleeper and install the new mattresses on the bunks. Since they were going to spend the night in this car, they all agreed that it would benefit them to help with this project. Once that was completed, these five scouts then assisted Board member Janet Steeper in setting up tables for the Membership Meeting that was to be held that evening.

Meanwhile, the merit badge class was conducted in the board room where the scouts were exposed to a plethora of railroading information ranging from types of trains and railroad signals, to Operation Lifesaver and passenger train schedules. While this class at the museum is helpful to the scouts, there is a substantial amount of work they must do away from the museum to complete the requirements of this merit badge. If the scouts apply themselves, they could complete the requirements in 2 to 3 weeks.

After the class, the scouts went to the picnic area for lunch, and then re-grouped for a guided tour of some of our most popular equipment including the Centennial locomotive and our rotary snow plow. After the tour, the scouts had free time to explore on their own and to ride the passenger caboose trains.

Later that afternoon, after caboose trains were finished, the entire scout troop (including adults) boarded a caboose pulled by the SP 2873, and were treated to a Run-A-Locomotive adventure. Every scout, and every adult received some “throttle time” while pulling the Southern Pacific caboose around the balloon track. The reason for adding the caboose to the train is to keep the scouts all together until they each get their turn at the throttle. Keeping them in the caboose means we don’t have to look all over the museum to get everyone together for their turn. All in all, the RAL lasted two full hours to get everyone through.

The scouts cooked an amazing jambalaya meal in the parking lot, and then spent the night at the museum. While the scouts bunked in the troop sleeper, the adults took over the caboose bunks. The next morning after a quick breakfast and final tour of the grounds, the scouts left for home. At this time, we are holding Boy Scout merit badge classes 3-4 times during the year. There are at least two more troops from the Sacramento area working on scheduling a class this summer.



*Loren Ross poses with his class of scouts from Troop 341 from Carson City, Nevada on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019 at the museum for a BSA RR Merit Badge session.*

*- photo by Kerry Cochran*

(Convention...continued from front cover)

California Zephyr and the other looking at the “Zephyrette” Rail Diesel Cars.

- A showing of Virgil Staff Films from the FRRS archives focusing on the California Zephyr

Janet Dawson and Jeff Asay also held book signings at the WPRM Museum Store table. Janet’s Zephyr mysteries and Jeff’s book “*The Iron Feather*” were big sellers, along with a special 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary CZ publication reprinting material from long out of print *Headlights 17* and *18*. This was put together in time for the convention by Paul Finnegan and the archives department volunteers with special thanks to Frank Brehm.

Several of the modeling and photography presentations also paid homage to the Western Pacific, including Neil Fernbaugh, whose Hands-On Weathering clinic featured photos of WP prototypes for inspiration. The modeling contest featured some amazing work that showcased the breadth of both subject matter and capability found in the modeling world. There were many vendors on hand as well, in addition to the WP Museum Store, sharing a large hall with three model layouts that were on hand for display.

The closing banquet featured great food, the door prize raffle and an entertaining keynote speech by Charlie Getz, outgoing NMRA President. Door prizes were donated by:

- Bowser
- Kadee Quality Products
- Kalmbach Publishing
- White River Publications
- Catenary Video
- WPRM Museum Store
- Marc Desobeau, Railroad Artist
- Bob’s Trains and Toys
- David Adams
- Jere Ingram

Even a month later, many positive comments about the convention itself, the quality of programs and the special guests are still being received. Everyone felt that the blending of PCR

and WP focus worked well and both groups complemented each other, a fact also shown in the high number of attendees who hold joint membership in both organizations. At final count, about 265 people registered to attend.

I want to thank Steve and Mary Habeck, Greg Elems, Kerry Cochran, Scott McAllister, Jim Collins, Cathy Von Ibsch, Paul Finnegan, Frank Brehm and all the PCR folks who helped make the convention happen. Thanks to Eric McKay for good food and moral support. And huge thanks to all the presenters! Everyone did fantastic jobs on their shows.

I have decided that this will be the final convention I coordinate as there are several other projects on the horizon that will demand my attention, so let me take this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped me with planning and execution of the WP conventions since 2013.

- 2013 - Sacramento, CA (with co-coordinator Scott McAllister)
- 2014 - Fairfield, CA
- 2015 - Elko, NV
- 2016 - Modesto, CA – joint with PCR-NMRA
- 2017 - Reno, NV
- 2018 - Salt Lake City, UT
- 2019 - Sacramento, CA – joint with PCR-NMRA

There are photos and other material from the 2019 convention on the society website at [www.WPLives.org/news\\_items/2019\\_Convention\\_News.html](http://www.WPLives.org/news_items/2019_Convention_News.html).

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### **Support the FRRS when you shop at Amazon with Amazon Smile!**

In June 2019, the Feather River Rail Society, received a quarterly donation of \$76.88 thanks to customers shopping at smile.amazon.com. To date, Amazon Smile has donated a total of \$662.02 to Feather River Rail Society.

There is information on how YOU can support the FRRS when you shop at Amazon on the society web page, [WPLives.org](http://WPLives.org).

## Saving Western Pacific PFE Reefer 55069 Part II, A Lesson in Trucking!

- Eugene Vicknair

As discussed in the previous issue of the *Train Sheet*, the undertaking of moving WP PFE 55069 was a major one and had to move fairly quickly. Lisa DaFonte and her family had plans in place to begin an extensive home remodeling and the old reefer was in the way. While rain also delayed the work, the reefer had to move or else push the project even farther back in schedule and budget.

While the lifting and securing situation was moving along and funds were coming in to cover costs, trouble began to creep in on the transport side. A trucker had been contacted early on (some two months before the move would happen) in order to determine how they would need the car lifted and secured. A quote was given and the cost programmed in. All seemed well until Friday, February 15, when a quick message was received that the company would be unable to do the move. During a call, the reason given was a realization that their equipment would not fit down the residential street, but they recommended a different company to call and gave a listing on proper equipment. No problem, right?

What happened over the next 6 days was a repeating scenario of a trucking company either refusing the job outright, or saying they could handle the move, giving a cost, checking out the situation, then backing out. The situation came to a head on Wednesday, February 20, when a trucker went to inspect the car and called me repeatedly during a business meeting, literally yelling at me that we were crazy to move the car, that it would fly apart as soon as it hit the road and that no one would move such a thing for less than \$12,000. He outlined a need to add bracing and cribbing that would take days, if not weeks, and thousands of dollars. I later learned he had made a similar set of statements to the house movers, who had pointed out they had been jacking up the body and walking on the roof for days and found no issues with the



*Lifting the 55069 off the trailer.*

-photo by Eugene Vicknair

structure. Their advice to him: "If you don't want the job, don't take it!"

While I had confidence in our assessment of the structure and the house moving team's experience, this encounter just three days before the car HAD to move was rattling. I discussed the predicament with some other members and was given a very helpful piece of advice: call Taylor Heavy Haul.

If you move railcars in California, there are two names that come up frequently and Taylor Heavy Haul in Roseville is one of them. They have moved equipment, including 85 ft passenger cars and big steam and diesel engines for museums, railroads and private individuals. They have moved many things for the FRRS over



*With the crowd watching, 55069 continues its reverse move.*

-photo by Eugene Vicknair

the years. Why I did not call them first is explained by the budget and nature of the car: a 40 ft long wood railcar that needed to move only 8 miles. It was thought that a local firm could do this easily and save the cost of bringing a truck all the way from Roseville.

Well, shoot.

Taylor not only had the equipment and the experienced crew, they sent a driver down the Friday before to assess everything and assure me that they would handle the move no problem. Saturday morning dawned with a threat of rain, but the Taylor crew was on hand and immediately worked with the house moving crew to figure out a quicker, easier way to load the car: in contrast to the expected sequence of events, which would have had the house movers rolling the car on big casters into the street for truck loading, Ricardo, the driver from Taylor, asked them to lift the car just a couple more feet and he would back the trailer into the confined space alongside the house and right under the 55069.

Turned out Ricardo had quite a few rail jobs under his belt, including moving equipment into and out of Portola for us. And he knew his guys and his gear. As everyone watched with some nervousness, especially Lisa and her family, and several folks took pictures (including excellent photographer Alex Ramos who came to watch the adventure), the Taylor team threaded the long trailer right under the reefer with just one readjustment.

The securing went swiftly and the crews inspected the carbody. The numerous power and cable wires crossing the street were a concern, but with one of the Taylor crew on the roof with a push stick, Ricardo BACKED the whole rig down the block about ¼ mile, then headed for the main roads. Contrary to the doom and gloom from the one trucker, the Taylor team felt good enough about the structural condition of the 55069 that they took the freeway most of the journey, leading to some folks having emailed me to ask if they had really seen a wooden Western Pacific railroad car doing 60

MPH down interstate 280.

With the car finally clear of its long time resting place, Lisa expressed feeling a bit emotional that her long time companion was gone. But a new chapter was beginning for both her home and WP 55069.

The car arrived at the fairgrounds restoration site with no problems and everyone, including volunteers from California Trolley and Rail Corporation, set about getting it off the truck and settled into blocks. Within an hour the car was in the air and the Taylor truck and crew departed back to Roseville. Many thank yous were given for their last minute save of the entire project.

The house moving crew finished their work on Monday, February 25 and WP PFE 55069 was in its temporary home, ready for some needed TLC. The car is level and secure and keeping company with Southern Pacific 4-6-2 2879 and some other SP equipment. One wonders if they have all passed each other before and what stories they are sharing after so much time.

The move events finally ended on a rainy Sunday a week later when my friend Christopher Kapreilian helped me finish replacing the fence that had been taken down to allow access to the car.

The Western Pacific Historic Convention consumed my schedule and attention (along with several other FRRS members) over the next few months, but some inspection and assessment work was done on the car during that time. Also, it was decided to agree to a request from the Santa Clara County Fairgrounds and paint one side of the car in a temporary scheme to dress it up and generate interest for the county fair in August. Luckily, the car was placed with its best face toward the fairgrounds, so this will be getting a coat of yellow and graphics depicting the original Western Refrigerator Lines scheme in tribute to the WP's audacious plan.

As assessment and measurements wind down and a work plan is finalized, work sessions will

be announced. It is hoped to have the first one in late June or early July. Also, based on a suggestion from a member, we will likely add an informational and fellowship meeting to these work sessions to inform local FRRS members of things going on with the Society and Museum, similar to the old First Sub Club from years ago. Please keep an eye on the Facebook page and website for information, or email [info@wplives.org](mailto:info@wplives.org) if you want to be part of the 55069 work team.

This restoration will be an interesting experiment for the FRRS. In years past we have tried similar ventures, including having WP GP20 2001 get worked on in Woodland prior to an appearance at one of the Sacramento Railfairs, but doing a restoration of this scope away from Portola is a new step. Our hope is to generate interest and opportunities to participate for members in the Bay Area.

Please join us in helping restore this historic reefer to operation. Even if you cannot help with the work, your donations are vital to making this happen. Please donate to the WP PFE 55069 Fund through the Go Fund Me page (accessed through [WPLives.org](http://WPLives.org)), through our online donation page (<http://donate.wplives.org>) or by mail to FRRS-WP 55069 Fund, P O Box 608, Portola, CA 96122.

And again we must offer our thanks to Lisa DaFonte and her family, whose generosity and patience allowed all this to happen. A plaque will be placed with the car acknowledging their role in its history and preservation.

Thank you also to Ken Middlebrook, the California Trolley and Rail Corporation, the Santa Clara County Fairgrounds, the team from Kelley Brothers Housemoving, Jerry Estruth for his donation to the move, Sal Pizarro and the San Jose Mercury News, Kerry Cochran, Paul and Kenneth Finnegan, Christopher Kapreilian, Alex Ramos and everyone who donated to help promote this project. And of course a huge thank you to Ricardo and the team at Taylor Heavy Haul.



*The visitors had LOTS of questions, the crew made sure they were all answered!*

*- photo by Regine Rogers*

### **Tahoe Expedition Academy Visit**

*- Paul Finnegan*

WPRM has a long-standing tradition of supporting our local schools in the spring by hosting railroad field trips. As an example, on Friday April 26<sup>th</sup>, we were visited by seventeen students and adults from Tahoe Expedition Academy in Truckee. WPRM volunteers Kerry Cochran, Greg Elems, Paul Finnegan, Bil Jackson, Loren Ross and Charlie Spikes ran a charter caboose train for them. The children were delightful and clearly had a wonderful time.



*Loren Ross gives a safety briefing.*

*- photo by Kerry Cochran*

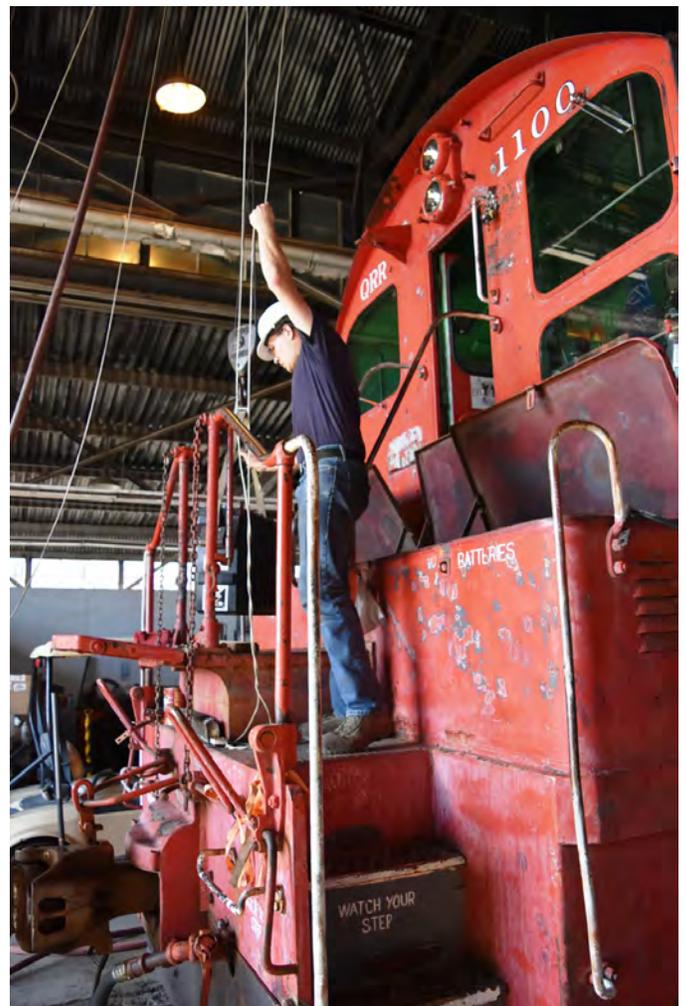
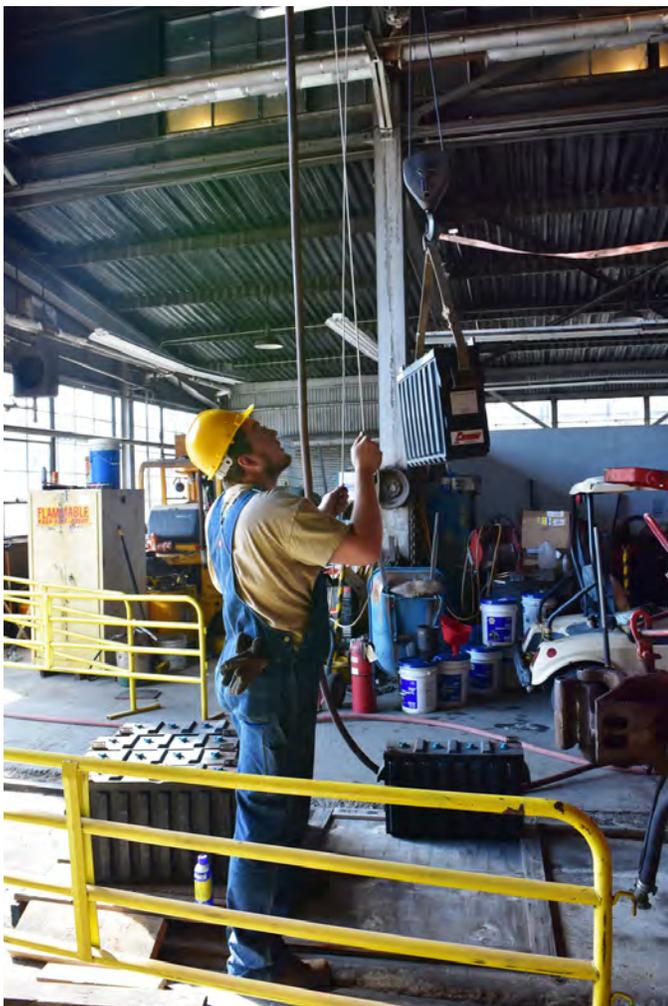
## The Great 2019 Battery Swap

- Steve Habeck

The Great 2019 Battery Swap project has been completed. We took the batteries out of 2001 and put them in QRR 1100, to replace its failed batteries; then we took the batteries out of WP 917D and put them in WP 2001. QRR 1100 is now back in service, although it still has some issues awaiting attention, and 2001 starts fine with 917-D's batteries. With servicing, weather delays, and charging time, this process took over two weeks to accomplish, and kept David Elems, Ethan Doty, Bil Jackson, Vince Bonfiglio and Steve Habeck busy.



- photos by Greg Elems



### **The Train Sheet needs your photos and articles!**

If you are working on projects for the Society, volunteering on restorations, performing archives work, helping out at off-site events, etc., or if you get some nice photos of FRRS or museum happenings that you want to share, please contact us to have them printed in *The Train Sheet*.

Photos should be at least 5" high by 7" wide and 300 dots per inch.

Articles should focus on FRRS related events, people or your own personal experiences with the Society.

To contribute, contact the editors - Matt Elems & Paul Finnegan, by email at [trainsheet@wplives.org](mailto:trainsheet@wplives.org).

## **The Train Sheet**

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