



# THE TRAIN SHEET

News from the Feather River Rail Society



*Preserving "THE FEATHER RIVER ROUTE"*

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Issue - 190

July/August/September 2021

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## President's Pin

- Greg Elems

The end of the operating season has come to a close. We had a smoky season and many days of high heat. The picture I included was taken the last weekend of operations. While the smoke cleared out, we did have some more fire issues north and east of the museum. Highway 70 was open from Portola to the junction at 395 on to Reno, but 395 north from Hallelujah Junction was closed periodically due to the Dixie Fire. West on Highway 70 from Quincy to Oroville was closed several times for extended periods of time due to the Dixie Fire.

With the fires ever present, we watched with baited breath and so far we have dodged a bullet. The problem is, the fire season is just mid-way through and we'll have to continue to be vigilant till mid-November if the last two years are anything to judge by.

With the danger of fire in mind, we have been working on two things. First, with the help from Phil Schmierer, David Roth and Ethan Doty, fuel for fires has been addressed. Trees were trimmed and others removed. Some fire breaks were cut into the balloon area, but with the crowning of the fires I'm afraid that won't be of much help. This seems to be a summer of wind, as well as no summer thunder storms. So it is drier than normal and really susceptible to wildfires. Last summer Steve Habeck orchestrated a wholesale switching of cars, so our wooden problem-child cars are for the most part in an area where there is little fuel for a fire to consume. Ethan and Phil did a big effort on grass and brush removal also. Unfortunately our rare spring thunderstorm was timed perfectly to get the horsetails growing again.

Second, our 1912 tank cars were brought out for inspection with the idea of using them to make our own fire train. At the moment the preliminary prognoses is they will work but need a lot of work to be ready. Also WP abused them something terrible in their later years, so if they do get pressed into service it has been suggested that we never fill them more than 3/4's full. Also there is a friend of the society that wants to donate a tank car from the mid-west that might be useful for extra water capacity. That car is maybe a year away from arriving at Portola however.

I'd like to say a few words about the RAL program. We had just two engines running this season, the QRR 1100 and WP 1503. The SP 7823 is still out of the program until a few items are fixed. There have been requests for WP 707 and 917D, both are pending repairs before being put back into the program. We probably would have had a few more RALs if they were running. But we did provide RALs this year and will do so until the weather and conditions make it unrealistic to offer them. I want to thank the RAL engineers for stepping up to the plate and giving the customers a great experience.



Smoke from the Museum - Photo by Greg Elems

**-THE TRAIN SHEET-**

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Feather River Rail Society  
All Rights Reserved**FEATHER RIVER RAIL SOCIETY****WESTERN PACIFIC RAILROAD  
MUSEUM at PORTOLA**

PO BOX 608, Portola, CA 96122-0608

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

**The museum is open:  
July-October (until 10/17):  
Thursday - Sunday  
Thur. and Fri. 12 Noon to 4 PM  
Sat. and Sun. 10 AM to 5 PM  
(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, details are inside this issue on the inside of the back cover.

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 in 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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**~ ~ TRAIN OFF NOTICE ~ ~**

**Pumpkin Trains & Santa Trains have  
been annulled for 2021.**

**We expect them to resume next year.**

**- WEB PAGES of INTEREST -**

FRRS Official Site  
CZ Virtual Museum  
California Zephyr  
Western Pacific Pages  
WP Virtual Museum  
Tidewater Southern Pages  
Central California Traction

[www.WPLives.org](http://www.WPLives.org)  
[calzephyr.railfan.net](http://calzephyr.railfan.net)  
[californiazephyr.org](http://californiazephyr.org)  
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[www.TidewaterSouthern.com](http://www.TidewaterSouthern.com)  
[www.trainweb.org/tractionco](http://www.trainweb.org/tractionco)



### **... and then there was LIGHT!**

- Paul Finnegan

While at the museum in August, I was sorting boxes of *Headlights* and *Train Sheets* in the container on the loading dock in the dark. Of the four overhead fluorescent lights, only one was reliably working. Kerry Cochran and I tried replacing the bulbs to no avail. The following weekend FRRS member Eric McKay came to the museum to do some work in the Museum Store and he shed some light on the subject.

Eric had installed the lights in the container 12 or 13 years ago and the ballasts had failed. He reports that nowadays you can get direct-wire LED lamps that don't require a ballast. He picked up a case of them and re-wired the fixtures in the container to accommodate them. And then there was light!

He also relocated and added some plugs in the Museum Store and moved the neon California Zephyr sign to the wall behind the counter. He ran a conduit to a location behind the sign and put in a couple of receptacles. One of them is controlled by a switch so we can turn the sign on and off easily.

I extend my thanks to Eric for bringing his expertise and skills to the museum. All of us working together, we can continue to make progress improving our museum.

### **Museum Store Update**

- Eugene Vicknair

Janet Steeper and I have been reviewing and adding new and long out of stock products to the store, including puzzles and coffee mugs depicting Western Pacific scenes, WP Lives bumper stickers, new pins from Sundance Marketing, new styles of hats, railroad themed children's toys and new artisan beverages. We are also exploring several possible custom products that will be exclusive to the WP Store.

Work continues on improvements to the Museum Store itself. With thanks to Duane van der Veen, Bob Sims, Ethan Doty and others, the Z Scale Western Pacific layout has been relocated and returned to service. Also, the beverage cooler and new soda machine counter have been set up and are all in operation. Bob Sims continues to place tinting on the windows and additional product shelving has been assembled by Greg Elems and Tim Steeper.

Most recently, Eric McKay spent several days at the museum working on relocating and upgrading some electrical systems, fixing the exhaust fan system in the side storage room and moving the "California Zephyr" neon sign to its new home over the new sales counter area. In addition, Kerry Cochran and Kenneth and Paul Finnegan installed a system that includes a flat screen for displaying information such as admission costs, caboose train schedules and announcements for our visitors.

Our new On-Line Museum Store is now available to the public. We now have two ways to shop for FRRS/WPRM & WP products! To check it out, please go to [shop.WPLives.org](http://shop.WPLives.org).

***At the On-Line Museum Store, FRRS members get their member discounts by entering a coupon code and we will check against the current membership roster.***

- Associate, Active, Family get 10% - coupon code: FRRSMember10
- Sustaining and Life levels get 15% - coupon code: FRRSMember15

**Work update on the WP 165 – July 21, 2021***-Roger Stabler*

We attempted the first hydro test in the May work session. It did not go well due to the joint ring in the throttle stand not being properly seated. I retired from UP Railroad on July 1<sup>st</sup> and I now can spend more time working on the 165.

I went up to the museum on July 14<sup>th</sup> and stayed through the 19<sup>th</sup>. I wanted to take a look at each of the problems that showed up in the first hydro test in May. I arrived Wednesday afternoon and went to work getting tools and materials out of my truck and into the shop. We were able to purchase many of the valves we needed to finish the engine on EBay for very low prices compared to buying from the major suppliers of valves. We now have all of the valves needed to finish the project. On Thursday morning, I removed the dome lid and throttle stand for inspection. I found that the leak into the dry pipe was indeed from the joint ring. Therefore, I spent the rest of the day lapping the joint ring into the dry pipe and throttle stand.

On Friday, I went into the smokebox and hand rolled about 12 tubes that were leaking a little more than I wanted on the first fill-up with water. I had to remove several rows of superheater elements to gain access to the tubes, but all went well and the front end is now tight. I spent Saturday morning in the firebox correcting three superheater flues where the welds needed a little attention to completely seal the tubes. I hand rolled a few of the 2 inch tubes to stop excessive leakage. When I was done with that, David Elems and I installed the joint ring and throttle stand.

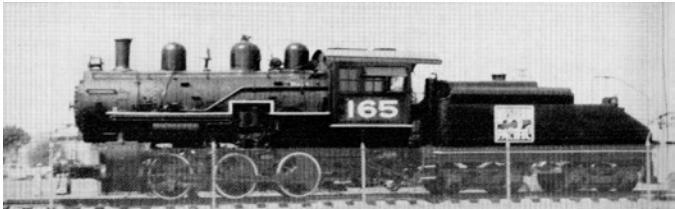
On Saturday afternoon, Dick Couden arrived and assisted with getting the water hoses set up in the shop. We filled the boiler up until the joint ring was covered with water. While we filled the engine, David Elems lapped the throttle valve in. I worked on some new studs that were leaking. Sunday morning we started a little later in the morning. We concentrated on making sure all of the flexible stay bolt caps were indeed tight, as I had found some that were only hand tight. While

I was working on correcting small leaks, Dick Couden cleaned out the lubricator ports and cups on the valve gear and cross head guides. On Monday, Dick and I installed the throttle and hooked up and adjusted the linkage. We then filled the boiler to the top and checked the throttle and all was tight with no leakage in the dry pipe. Dick and I annealed the dome lid ring and installed the dome lid on the engine. We called it a day and headed home. We are now ready to hydro test the engine, which I hope to do in August. If all goes well, we will hydro test for the FRA in September.

**Work update on the WP 165 – August 10, 2021***- Roger Stabler*

The crew of the WP 165 had a most productive week of work between August 2<sup>nd</sup> through the August 7<sup>th</sup>. The following crew members were present and assisted in the work performed on the engine: Roger Stabler, Erik Olson, Channing Walker, Christopher Edwards, Mike Waters and David Elems. We were assisted in setup by Steve Habeck and crew in getting the engine over the pit for work under the locomotive. Mike and Roger worked Monday and Tuesday installing the last of the cylinder lubrication lines on the engine. Channing and Christopher came up Tuesday afternoon and got settled into the bunk car. Channing went to work on Wednesday seal welding the rear tube sheet which took the entire day. While Channing was using one welder, Roger was busy using our other welder to weld up parts of the brake rigging to build up pins and worn hangers. Mike worked on cab plumbing and Chris assisted all of us when necessary. Erik came in Thursday and worked on the brake rigging. Roger, Erik, Chris and Mike worked the next two days installing and adjusting the brake rigging on the engine. Channing was kept busy doing general fabrication of brackets and a plate to cover the firebox opening and support the burners that we use to heat the boiler for our hydro test. Friday saw the installation of the injector piping on the engineer's side of the cab. Friday afternoon we filled the boiler with water and started warming the engine up for our hydro test on Saturday.

Saturday was the big day; we attempted a hydro test in May, but due to the number of small leaks we could not build pressure. The hydro pumps put out high pressure, but with little volume of water so if we have leaks above 2.5 gallons per minute, we can't build pressure. Saturday morning, we retrieved the engineer's side main rod and brought it into the shop for evaluation. We had to make a new strap bolt for the rod. This work was done while we finished warming the boiler. The boiler must be warmed up before we can raise the pressure. We started the hydro Saturday afternoon. We had a lot of small leaks that we identified. Channing, Roger, and David were kept busy repairing and identifying the leaks. We repaired many of the leaks during the hydro. We could not deal with some of the issues we found while the boiler was under pressure, we will deal with those in September when we



## "IRON HORSE APPRECIATION DAY"

"I give my heartfelt appreciation and thanks to The Western Pacific Railroad Company," Mayor Jack D. Maltester told a San Leandro audience on April 4, which the Mayor proclaimed "Iron Horse Appreciation Day."

A few minutes earlier Mayor Maltester had accepted the railroad's last available steam locomotive, No. 165, for permanent display in the City's park at 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and Clarke Street. The presentation of the engine was made by Walter C. Brunberg, the railroad's vice president - marketing, who in return was presented with a Key to the City of San Leandro.

The dedication ceremonies included a presentation of colors by Troop 608, Washington Manor School, Boy Scouts of America, and brief acknowledgments by civic officials. Public Works

have our next work session and plan to hydro the engine for the Federal Railroad Administration. We were able to raise the boiler pressure to 225 lbs. which is 125 percent of working pressure. This was a milestone for the crew of the 165.



Director Homer Hamlin, a former railroader, whose efforts were largely responsible for old 165's place of honor, told of the engine's history.

The locomotive was built in 1919 by American Locomotive Company at Schenectady, N. Y. She was one of four six-wheeled heavy switching locomotives purchased by Western Pacific in 1927 from the United Verde Copper Company. In the ensuing years she performed nobly, mostly-in switching service at Stockton yard. One of the last steamers in service on the Western Pacific, No. 165 was retired in 1953, but on occasion she returned to duty to furnish steam for busy canneries during the rush season.

Prior to presenting 165 to the City of San Leandro, Roundhouse Foreman C. B. Kirkpatrick and his crew at Stockton restored her to her original shiny appearance. The City of San Leandro provided her with rails and a chain-link fence enclosure where she may be protected and appropriately admired by present citizenry and future generations, young and old alike. Facing the railroad's main line a short distance away old 165 may be seen by passengers on passing California Zephyr trains.

- Mileposts May-June 1962

## FRRS Receiving Support Grants

- Eugene Vicknair

One of the results for the Museum from the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic was a major loss of income during 2020 and into 2021. With the museum shutdown during the prior year and then opening late during a time most people still are not travelling, we saw a sharp downturn in admissions, train rides, store sales, on-site donations and Run-A-Locomotive revenues.

To help mitigate this and keep everything afloat, I took on the task of searching and applying for support grants from a variety of sources. I am happy to report that many of these have proven successful and have helped even out the financial woes of the last 18 months.

Just this year, we have received almost \$100,000 in grant funding from the California COVID Grant program, the SBA Shuttered Venues Grant Program and the SBA Targeted Advance Program. We currently have several other applications in process or being considered.

Most of this money is highly targeted toward necessary operation costs and keeping store employees paid and the facility in operation. These costs include payroll, insurance premiums, utilities and other recurring business expenses that are not glamorous, but required to keep everything afloat.

None of this would have been possible without considerable help and support from some of our staff and outside benefactors. In particular I would like to thank our bookkeeping team of Susan Scarlett and Cheryl Kolb, FRRS President Greg Elems, FRRS Vice-President Steve Habeck, FRRS Treasurer Bart Hansen, Patty Clawson of Big Fish Creations, and Shane Starr and several of the staffers with Congressman Doug LaMalfa's office (CA-1).

**Support the FRRS when you shop at Amazon!**

Use the link on the society web page to join the Amazon Smile Program.



### Things Around the Museum: Oil Barrels

- Paul Finnegan

In America's oilfields, traditional wooden barrels had always been problematic for shipping oil. Despite the introduction of pipelines and railroad tank cars, there remained the need for manageable-sized, durable, leak-proof barrels. Standard Oil Company introduced a steel version of the common 42-gallon oil drum in 1902. It had the traditional cask-like appearance of the previous wooden barrels. Although stronger than wooden barrels, the new barrel could still leak.

Our barrels came out of one of Hap Manit's box cars. Hap went to work for the Western Pacific Railroad in 1937 and retired in 1976. Hap joined the Feather River Rail Society in 1983, soon after the organization was formed. Hap was a collector. Anything that he or we might want to use in the future or just want to save for whatever, Hap saved. After his passing in 1999, we opened a couple box cars in the back of the museum and found all kinds of treasures. These oil barrels were among them.



They are marked as property of Standard Oil Company of California with a patent date of June 3, 1902. One is marked "4-17". When we found them they still had an organic liquid in them that we put into our waste-oil car and then set up the barrels up by three rail for display.

## Wildfire Mitigation at WPRM

- Phil Schmierer

Bil Jackson and I started this project in 2019. We were at the museum doing another project and got to talking about how things were really in need of some tree trimming and brushing. So, we got started on those trees on the outside of the balloon track where the big cut bank is from Milward all the way to the far gate on the west end of the balloon.

We made a good nick in that fire ladder so it would not go up in the neighbor's trees in case we started a fire with our equipment. Come spring of 2020, I came back up to the museum and, I think it was Dave Roth, helped out and we made more progress. In the fall of 2020 we had another work session and chipped away at it some more. Then this spring we hit it again and cut firebreaks with the backhoe in all the tall sagebrush and scraped a wide firebreak around the city's yard. We also fell some more trees and limbing the remaining. I will be coming back up in October and keep chipping away at it.

Ethan Doty has been out there too; with weed eating and cleaning up with the backhoe, picking up and hauling brush.

My main goal is I don't want fire to get near our equipment from brush. If we do have a fire visit us, all we'll have to worry about is spotting onto the wooden equipment which has been moved away from the forest side of the property. The weeds have been knocked down between the tracks out there too.

I figure it's going to take at least 5 years total to really fireproof the grounds. I personally want our grounds to serve as a firebreak. Our equipment may get some ash on it and if spotted, maybe a little burnt paint, but that's it.

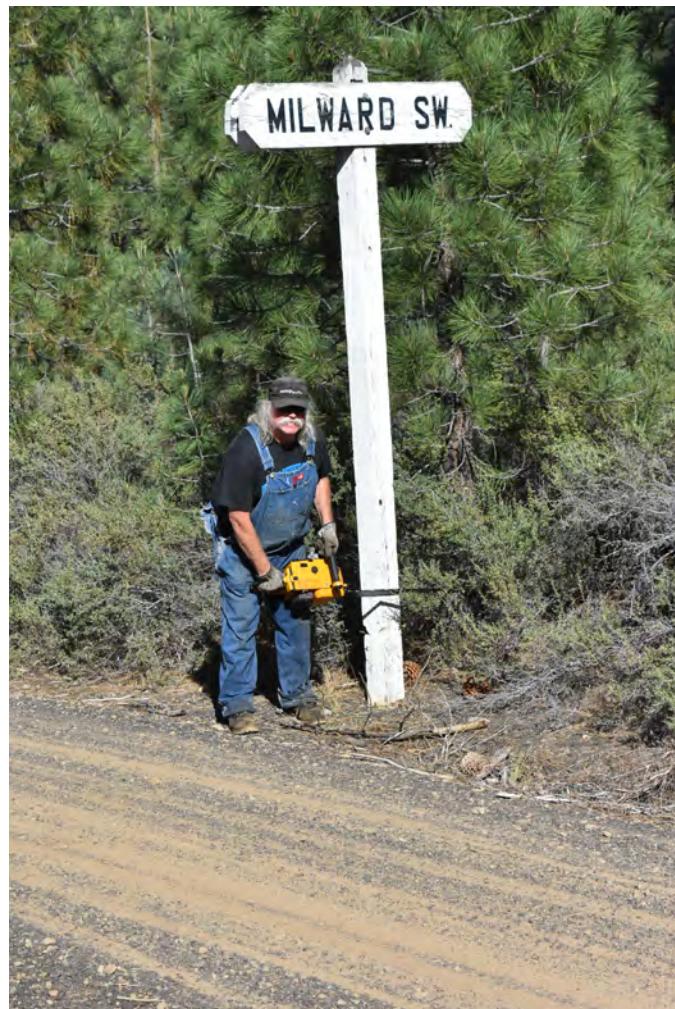
I have more chores in the fall for the inside of the balloon. Then I want to go outside the balloon to the west and scrape that down to bare dirt at least 100 feet from our tracks. I also want to take the mower out on the north basin of the balloon and mow that down to the ground. In addition, there's more "Pecker Poles"

that need to be radically thinned out by the far west gate along that cut as there's a nasty potential for a fire ladder out there too.

The goal is no accidental fire gets out of our property, nor will a wildfire get in, except for spotting and with no internal ground fuels, it will have no place to go.....ballast rock doesn't burn!

So there you have it! That's pretty much what I'd like to see accomplished!

We all know that it's not fun, but if a fire visits our surrounding area, maybe our work and effort may prevent a fire from getting into the buildings of Portola from that way, and our priceless equipment won't get destroyed.



*Phil hammering it up after a long day of tree trimming at the museum.*

*- Photo by Greg Elems*



## 2020 Western Pacific Photo Calendar

- Eugene Vicknair

The 2022 Western Pacific Photo Calendar will soon be available! This 14 month calendar features a mix of black / white and color photos from the FRRS archives, plus a few photos from around the museum in 2021. The calendar features a total of 29 photos, plus historic events from the history of the WP system are noted in each month.

To order your calendar now, go to the new Western Pacific On-Line Store. You can find it at [shop.WPLives.org](http://shop.WPLives.org). Retail price is \$18.95 each plus tax and shipping. Supplies are limited so order yours today!

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## FRRS Officers for 2021-2022

- Eugene Vicknair

Elections for FRRS Officers were held at the August 2021 Board Meeting. All sitting officers were nominated for their positions and were reelected. Therefore the officers for 2021-2022 are:

President – Greg Elems

Vice-President – Steve Habeck

Treasurer – Bart Hansen

Secretary – Eugene Vicknair

## CANCELLED: 2021 Western Pacific Convention and Special Events

- Eugene Vicknair

Due to the ongoing uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the FRRS Board has made the difficult choice to once again cancel the Western Pacific Railroad Historical Convention, which had been scheduled for September 2021 in Reno, Nevada. We are hoping to schedule a new date, keeping the location in Reno, for spring of 2022.

In addition, it was decided to not hold the Pumpkin Patch or Santa Trains in 2021. With COVID infections rising in Plumas County and neighboring regions, we felt that the uncertainties and liabilities were too much to ask our volunteers to participate in these events. Since making these decisions, we have also seen the devastating Dixie and Beckwourth Fires ravage the surrounding areas, adding further impediments to visitorship in Portola.

The regular museum volunteers are working their hardest to continue improvements to the museum and restoration projects such as the Western Pacific 165 work are still ongoing. Our plan is to enter 2022 ready for a full slate of events, if possible.

**Headlight Update**

- Paul Finnegan

**THE WESTERN PACIFIC**

*Headlight* is the society's journal of WP history and includes articles of interest for modelers and those wishing to know more of the historical aspects of the Western Pacific and subsidiary roads. It is available for purchase in the WPRM Museum Store and is mailed as a member benefit for active and above memberships.



Long-time editor David Pires resigned this summer. *Headlight* Production Manager Mike Mucklin has also decided to take a break from the *Headlight* staff.

After several discussions with Kerry Cochran, I have agreed to utilize my experience as *The Train Sheet* editor and the production of the Special CZ 70th Anniversary Celebration publication for the 2019 WP Historic Convention to be the acting editor for the *Headlight*.

I am very pleased that Thom Anderson has agreed to continue his role as Associate Editor and look forward to working with him. We have formed a team consisting of Frank Brehm, Kerry Cochran, and Eugene Vicknair to jointly work together on future issues.

We produced issue #52 that went to press in August. The team wants to thank this issue's contributors: Norman Holmes, Chris Skow and Darrol Stanley. We also thank the Western Railway Museum for use of one of their archive items in the issue.

We plan to produce two issues in 2022, one in the spring and the other in the fall. Everyone is invited to submit materials for our *Headlight*.

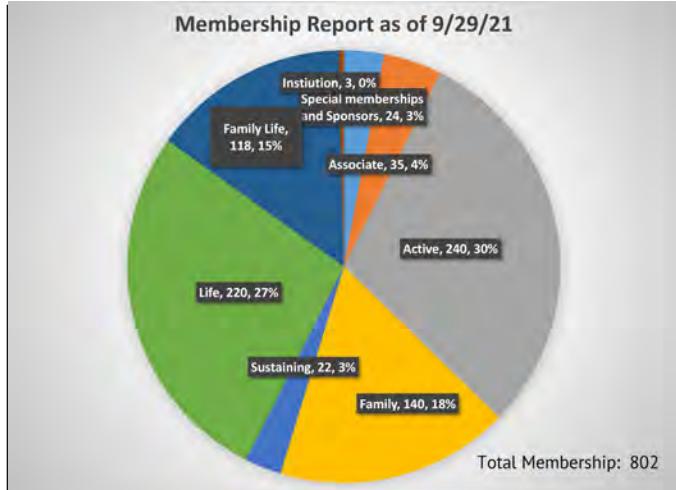
**Social Media Update**

- Paul Finnegan

For a long, long time, the FRRS has had a Facebook presence. This summer we added an Instagram account and a Twitter account. The Instagram account is being maintained by our public relations firm, Big Fish Creations. The Twitter account is being managed by Kenneth Finnegan. Links to all three accounts are on most of our web pages on the society's website.



- Photo by Greg Elems



## Archive Work & News - Jul-Sep 2021

- Kerry Cochran  
H/A Department Manager

Over the last couple of months, work in the archives has continued since we opened the museum back on July 1<sup>st</sup>. With the help of Greg Elems, Kenneth and Paul Finnegan, along with remote help from Eugene Vicknair and Frank Brehm, we have been working on several projects for the archives.

### WP Equipment Books

Back in late July, I started working on a project to get some of the old WP Equipment Drawings books out of the archives and get them reprinted. Between the end of July and the August Board of Directors meeting, with the help of Paul Finnegan, we had 7 equipment books reprinted and samples were taken to the FRRS Board for approval to reprint 10 equipment drawing books from the Western Pacific, Sacramento Northern and Tidewater Southern. The equipment books include freight cars, work equipment (MOW), passenger cars and locomotives (steam and diesel). Originally, these books were going to be released at the 2021 WP Convention, however with the continuing virus issues, the convention was postponed (yes, again). The weekend of the September Board of Directors meeting, I had all 10 books in hand and with the help of Kenneth Finnegan and Ann Cary, we set up new shelves in the museum store to display the books and entered them into the Museum Store's Point of Sale system.

These books are now for sale in the museum store and online at [shop.wplives.org](http://shop.wplives.org).



*One of the new Equipment Book Reprints*  
- Photo by Paul Finnegan



*Equipment Books in Museum Store*

- Photo by Kerry Cochran

### Archive Materials

On-going work on archive storage boxcars, to sort and move some archive materials for inventory and to get a better idea of what collections are in each of the boxcars. (We do have a listing of the boxcars and most of the collections in each car.) The Delozier slide collection that was in one of the other archive boxcars (PFE FRRS 100468) has been moved into the Archive Car. This takes them out of the boxcar that was not suited for the slides to be in. This is a rather large collection and will need to be looked at as there is an unknown number of boxes that contain several other boxes of slides within the boxes that were moved. Kenneth Finnegan helped me in moving these slides the weekend of September 11<sup>th</sup>, as well as trying to sort through some of the other materials that need to get inventoried. Thank you Kenneth.

The Delozier slide collection will be about second or third in line, as we are working on Norm Holmes collection and Garth Groff's collection right now.

Frank Brehm has completed scanning Garth Groff's collection and Paul Finnegan has processed them and they are now on the website for viewing. Thank you Frank and Paul.

We worked in the JRSX boxcar (Simplot) to organize some archive materials for inventory and to get space to move RR magazines in from other locations into this car. It is an on-going projects to get all magazines into one place.

## Signal Department Work & News - Jul-Sep 2021

- Kerry Cochran  
Signal Department Manager

Over the last couple of months, the Signal Department has started work on several projects to improve the overall network and telephone systems at the museum and add new systems to provide more information to the general public.

### Museum Network and Telephone Infrastructure

Since mid-2020 we have been experiencing trouble with our AT&T phone service. The main telephone line was not working very well, or not at all. The problem seemed to be very intermittent.

On the weekend of July 1<sup>st</sup>, I was able to trace the trouble back to the AT&T line coming into the museum. Once I was able to get a trouble ticket issued by AT&T, an AT&T repair person met me at the museum and he made repairs to the AT&T incoming line from county road A-15 into our building. Once this repair was made, our main telephone line was returned to service.

After the AT&T repairs, with the help of Kenneth and Paul Finnegan, we traced out the existing telephone wiring and removed and replaced several old cables. This has improved the telephone service into the museum grounds. During this time we also installed new network and telephone cabling to the remodeled Museum Store sales desk and counter.

Working on the network, we have extended the hardwire and the Wi-Fi into the archive car on a permanent basis and it has improved the coverage of the museum network.

### Wig Wag Display Signal

A proof-of-concept design system to operate the Wig Wag signal at the museum front door was installed. This coin operated controller was designed, built and installed by Kenneth Finnegan.

This has become a very good attraction to the general public. Dropping \$0.25 in coin into the coin controller operates the Wig Wag signal for about 30 seconds and so far has been a big hit.

## Screenly Display Room, Store & Entrance

- Paul Finnegan  
Signal Department

A new display system called Screenly, was deployed in the Display Room over the July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend.

This system is an electronic stored screen display with content that we create to display various items and information. It is an automated system that will come on and go off with the museum public hours.

Within the first 15 minutes after it was turned on, a visitor was standing in front of the new system and watching the information provided.

This system is intended to expand our historical/archive information and be able to display to the public without having to have any volunteers or Museum Store staff turn it on and off each day.

Based on the successful deployment of the Display Room Screenly, the FRRS Board approved funds to deploy two additional systems. They were deployed August 14<sup>th</sup>. One is a big display in the Museum Store to replace the old letter board sign that hung above the sales counter. The second system is mounted just outside the Museum Store to the left of the entrance.

The display in the store rotates through slides of admission/fares, train schedules (there is one for normal operating weekend and one for three-day holiday weekends), museum hours and RAL information. The entrance Screenly has similar information, but also will display special upcoming events (e.g. Pumpkin Trains).

All three systems are administered over the WiFi by the Signal Department, which can be done remotely.



## Version Two of the WPRM Online Tour

- Kenneth Finnegan

Anyone who has visited the museum property this year probably didn't make it very far before noticing one of the distinctive black and white chevron signs hung on just about every other piece of rolling stock in the FRRS collection. These signs are the physical part of a second generation of the WPRM Audio Tour built several years ago by Paul Finnegan, which I felt deserved a more focused user interface and experience as its own dedicated website.



The original audio tour was the result of a series of brainstorms where we tried to figure out how to improve the level of interpretation around the museum and make our remarkable collection of rolling stock more engaging for the new visitor. Printing and mounting long form signs has been done in the past, and those efforts are still a valuable part of the museum interpretation, but each of those signs require quite a bit of effort to typeset and proof-read the content, and are relatively expensive to have each sign made. So making literally hundreds of these signs to cover the museum collection has been a sisyphean effort for the society to grapple with.

Inspired by the "audio wand" systems used at some other museums where you're handed a device which will narrate the exhibits as you are looking at them, we realized that we could avoid the prohibitive expense of the hardware and the logistical challenge of trying to prevent visitors from

wandering off with our rather expensive audio players by leveraging the audio player that practically all visitors to the museum already bring with them; their smartphones! By recording 30-60 second long MP3 files interpreting each piece of equipment in our collection, we could post them on the WPLives.org website and guests could access the content on their phones, but not need to depend on being able to read their phone screen while standing outside next to our exhibits by playing the recording.

Generating the original set of over 100 short two paragraph descriptions of our equipment and recording a dictation of each one was a substantial amount of effort on Paul Finnegan's part, and the resulting feedback from visitors about the content was interesting and a valuable addition to the museum. Unfortunately, the usage statistics from those same visitors was less encouraging, in that relatively few of the tour pages on the main website were getting accessed, and practically no one was accessing the pages for equipment not displayed immediately next to the museum entrance and signage promoting this tour system.

After a year of experience with how guests interacted with the original audio tour system, I took on the task over the remarkably long 2020 off-season to build a more dedicated and mobile-first user experience to present the same content in a clarified manner while encouraging users to continue looking up information on new pieces of rolling stock as they walk around the museum. The initial inspiration for this new tour framework for the society was the tour system I experienced at the Illinois Railway Museum, where they had an Android application that you installed and they had three digit numbers in big blue circles scattered around the museum grounds. I liked the experience of being able to pull up the exhibit by typing in a short code, but felt that it being an installed app wasn't justified versus just being a mobile friendly website, and this allowed the same content to be available on any platform with a web browser with little to no additional effort on our part.

To accomplish that, I created the dedicated [tour.wplives.org](http://tour.wplives.org) subdomain, which is separate from the main FRRS website and focused entirely on guests pulling up information for the piece of rail equipment

they're standing in front of while holding their phone. I then assigned an "exhibit code" to each piece of equipment, which is short like the 3 digit numbers at the IRM, but based on the actual road number of the equipment when possible, so it is rather easy to guess when you haven't found the exhibit code sign for the piece yet.



The screenshot shows a mobile-style website for a tour. At the top, it says "WPRM Tour". Below that is a search bar with "Exhibit Code (e.g. wp501)" and a "Find" button. The main content area features a large image of a silver and orange locomotive with "WESTERN PACIFIC" and "2001" on its side. Below the image is a caption: "This locomotive is part of our [Run-A-Locomotive program](#), where you get to take the throttle and experience running one of these historic pieces of equipment." At the bottom of the page is a table with the following data:

Builder	Electro-Motive Division of General Motors
Built	December 1959
Type	GP20
Horsepower	2000
Serial number	25623
Original cost	\$212,793.00

There are three principle ways that guests are encouraged to navigate to the piece of equipment they're interested in:

1. Each of the exhibit code signs has a QR code, or "Quick Response" two dimensional barcode, which contains a URL pointing at the page for that piece of equipment. Guests can then scan this barcode with their phone's camera, and with one tap they've opened the web page for that piece of equipment.
2. Once the visitor has a browser open to the tour.wplives.org website, every page has a navigation bar at the top to type in any other exhibit code that the visitor is interested in. This navigation bar uses client-side javascript to try and offer autocomplete options based on what the user has already typed, so even if the user doesn't start at the beginning of an exhibit code and just starts typing "2... 0... 0..." the navigation bar will suggest "WP2001" and selecting that will take them to the desired page without needing to open their QR scanner or walk all the way over to the next QR code to scan it.
3. Each exhibit code sign has the full URL at the bottom of the sign in plain text, in case the visitor is unfamiliar with or unable to get QR codes working with their specific device. The URLs were all designed to be as short as possible to make typing them in easier.

The heavy reliance on QR codes as part of this tour system was designed in before the COVID-19 pandemic, but it's obvious that

the pandemic has helped introduce lots of people to QR codes. This was a fortunate alignment which only seemed to help encourage guests to scan these QR codes on the museum property and learn more about what they were looking at. On a typical day the museum was open in 2021, we saw about 4-8 visitors using the tour system, and some of those visitors clearly found the system highly engaging; visitors were regularly seen scanning practically every QR code they saw while walking around the grounds.

The fact that each exhibit code is only a pointer to a web page means that the printed sign hung on each piece of equipment can always stay the same, but it makes correcting mistakes and updating pages for recent events low effort and extremely low cost compared to needing to print a whole new sign to hang on the piece of equipment when the content of the exhibit needs to be updated. Offering the content as both text on the web page and as an MP3 audio recording has made the content more accessible for guests depending on how they're more comfortable consuming the content.

#### ***Inside the Engine Compartment***

- The tour web pages are built using the Jekyll static site generator framework.
- The navigation bar autocomplete is driven by custom javascript written for this project based on the JQuery javascript library.
- The Liquid template system is used to populate the navbar autocomplete list and the site index page with all the exhibit codes.
- The sign artwork was all generated automatically from the exhibit code database using the Unix 'qrencode' and ImageMagick tools.
- The first round of signs were made with laminated 65# cardstock and VHB double-sided tape, and held up quite well for the summer.

## 2021 Operating Season Ends

- Loren Ross

*Superintendent of Operations*

This year, we suffered through the continuing drama and headaches of the COVID-19 pandemic. We were able to open to the public with a shortened schedule on July 1<sup>st</sup>, and train rides began that weekend. We also opened the RAL schedules and began accepting reservations, but due to maintenance issues, we only had the use of two locomotives, the SP 1100 and the WP 1503. And, because the SP 1100 was having air pressure difficulties, the WP 1503 became our flagship train-ride locomotive for the entire season.

Overall, attendance at the museum could best be described as "spotty", as there were days when 30 visitors would come in, and others where we were lucky to have 8 people on the premises. By the Labor Day Weekend, our visitors were just not coming in.

We did host a large group of Cub Scouts in August, and on September 11<sup>th</sup> we hosted a Boy Scout Troop from Paradise CA that took the Railroading Merit Badge class. The Boy Scouts spent a couple of hours in the classroom, and after lunch and some free time, participated in an RAL with the WP 1503. That evening after dinner, the scouts attended a campfire session led by Vice President Steve Habeck. Because open fires were not permitted in Plumas County, the scouts brought out a propane fire pit and we

used that for the fireside chat.

It was also nice to run on our newly reconstructed Balloon Track. In June, over 350 ties were replaced on the balloon, and the entire outside rail was replaced with new sticks of rail. There is still a lot of tamping left to do to complete the track, so the speed limit remains at 5 MPH at this time. Because we have cancelled this year's Pumpkin and Santa Trains, we have plenty of time to conduct track work sessions, which will be announced by the Roadmaster. Once the track is tamped, the yard limit will be reinstated to 10 MPH.

My one concern is the apparent lack of participation of our Operating Department. This year's operating season was run by the same 7 people every weekend. Where are all the operators? Is there something we are or are not doing that is causing this lack of participation? Fully half of the department did not show up for even one day of work this season, and that puts a huge strain on everyone else to make sure someone is there for the visitors. If you have something to share that will help us get people back to the museum, please let me know. If you want your comments/concerns to be confidential, I can guarantee that they will remain that way.

Dates for the 2022 Crew Training will be announced just after the first of the year, please check the website for additional information.



*Opening Day July 3, 2021  
Caboose Train*

*WP 1503 served as our workhorse for the 2021 WPRM Caboose Trains*

*Opening Day Crew: Greg Elems, Fred Elenbaas, Loren Ross and Charlie Spikes*

*- Photo by Kerry Cochran*

## Museum Sponsors

The Western Pacific played a major role in developing the economy of Plumas County and the surrounding region. The Western Pacific Railroad Museum is proud to be a part of that heritage and to hold a position in supporting the ongoing economic health of our community. We welcome the support of that community in return. Helping to preserve the Western Pacific is good for tourism, good for our regional culture and good for business.

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. See [www.wplives.org/sponsors\\_how\\_to\\_become.html](http://www.wplives.org/sponsors_how_to_become.html) to learn how.



**H & R Block - David Hansen**  
2850 Main St Ste 7, Susanville, CA 96130  
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**XELECTRIX Electrical Contractor Sacramento RV & Mobile Home Park Electrical Service**  
7250 Auburn Blvd. PMB #201  
Citrus Heights, CA 95610  
Website: [xelectrix.com](http://xelectrix.com)  
Email: [service@xelectrix.com](mailto:service@xelectrix.com)  
916-967-1922

## Catch the Early Train!

*Get your Train Sheet by email and you will get it before the post office even receives it and it is in COLOR! (and you save the FRRS money too!)*

*Send an email requesting email delivery to [membership@wplives.org](mailto:membership@wplives.org) with your name and email address.*



## The Train Sheet

Feather River Rail Society  
P.O. Box 608  
Portola, CA 96122-0608

PRESORTED  
STANDARD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
San Jose, CA  
PERMIT # 10

Change Service Requested



We had a visit from Cub Scout Pack 127 out of Cold Springs, NV. on August 15<sup>th</sup>. We also ran an extra 2:30 pm caboose train for the pack. Here is a group shot at the end of the visit of the pack and parents. April Mendoza was the den mother who set the visit up.

- Photo by Greg Elems