

FEATHER RIVER RAIL SOCIETY AGENDA REPORT

DATE: June 3, 2003
TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Director Vicknair
MEETING: June 7, 2003
ITEM: Report
SUBJECT: Tidewater Southern caboose 305

On Monday, June 2, I was contacted by Ryan Barber with information that a Tidewater Southern cupola caboose, TS 305, was for sale. The owners of the land it had sat on have sold their property. They are now seeking to sell the caboose. The new owners take control of the land on August 15 and the fate of the caboose if still on the property is uncertain.

With permission of President McClure, I contacted the sellers to get more information. They report that they have several interested parties in the caboose and expect to receive \$12-15,000 for the car. On his own, Ryan Barber inspected it (including climbing up on the roof and an complete interior and underframe inspection) and called me with details. He reports that the cab is in very good condition with most of its interior in place and intact, original archbar trucks and most underframe components in place. He found the glass in place and saw no obvious signs of rot or damage. According to Mr. Barber and the sellers, the caboose has regularly been kept painted and the sellers have do minor repairs and replacement of missing or damaged items over the years. Mr. Barber's opinion is that the caboose is sound enough to be used in caboose train service with little work required.

TS 305 was one of 3 cabooses purchased by the TS in 1942. It appears that TS 303-305 were rebuilt by the WP for the TS (from WP boxcars and to the standard WP cupola car plan then being used), the only examples of cabooses rebuilt by WP specifically for a subsidiary. The series 303-305 cabooses are reported to have worn silver and orange for a time. Only a handful of WP subsidiary cabs wore these colors, including at least one SN car. The caboose ran behind trains pulled by both steam and electric on the TS in its early years. Diesels began to arrive in 1946 and the electric locomotives were retired in 1948, giving the 305 the distinction of having served with all 3 types of motive power. A story in WP Mileposts showcased the 305's retirement in 1959 and eventual acquisition by TS sectionman Lloyd Flinders after briefly being used as a break room for a Modesto lumber company. Mr. Flinder's and his caboose received several other mentions in the WP company magazine. At some point in the late 1970's or early 1980's, the caboose was sold to its current owners.

The amount being sought by the current owners is obviously high for a WP/SN/TS wood caboose. Except for the 2 surviving TS interurban cars, it is the oldest existing item of TS rolling stock and the only survivor of the 1942 set of cabooses (3 "new" cabooses were acquired from the WP in 1958, TS 306-308, replacing the 303-305. Two of these 3 survive.) It would be in context with our TS Cornucopia boxcar and would fit nicely were the Society to ever acquire a TS 44 or 70 tonner.

I would like to get the feeling of the Board concerning interest in acquiring this caboose and explore fundraising ideas for possible acquisition. Considering the price, I do not feel the Board should approve the use of existing FRRS funds. Ideas I will be consulting with our Funding Chair on before the meeting include corporate donations from TS shippers and direct appeal fundraising via the internet, ala the WP freight car acquisitions last year.

ACTION: Discussion. Possible Board consensus direction.