

The Tail Light #1

News of the Western Pacific Railroad

Historical Society for October 1997.

From WPRRHS Administrator John Walker.

Since FRRS Historical (WPRRHS) members do not receive the FRRS's newsletter, *The Trainsheet*, we wanted to send out a little newsletter of our own to try and help keep everyone informed of our progress with the Western Pacific Railroad Historical Society. We hope to send out notices like this from time to time as needed, and hopefully, maybe it will become a quarterly, mailed in advance of *The Headlight*.

Historical background of the FRRS/WPRRHS.

There is still some confusion regarding the WPRRHS and its relationship to the FRRS and how we will work together. Since we are a historical society, let's review some history.

Back in 1983, a group of railroaders and railfans formed a new organization called the Feather River Rail Society. Their immediate goal was to build a small railroad display in the Portola area. Over the next year, the organization expanded its objectives by acquiring the former WP diesel shops in Portola and began establishing a working railroad museum. As I (and others) understood at the time, the name Feather River Rail Society, was chosen because the original intent of the group was not specific to the Western Pacific Railroad, but rather to all railroads in the greater Plumas County area (hence the name *Feather River* instead of *Western Pacific*...). More specifically, the original intent of the FRRS was to try and preserve the history of railroads like the Sierra Valley & Mohawk, The Feather River Lumber Company at Delleker, the Boca & Loyalton and NCO, etc. along with the Western Pacific and current Union Pacific operations over the Feather River Route.

In an early membership application (circa 1984), the purpose of the FRRS is stated as follows: "primary purpose of preserving local railroad history in general and Western Pacific Railroad history in particular." Additionally, property improvements to be made include a "library", "replica WP passenger depot, freight depot.....section house, water tank...". Issue #7 (1984) of *The Train Sheet* stated "The FRRSis doing restoration and collecting of WP equipment and data." Issue #9 of *The Train Sheet* states: "At this time we are going to grow into the Western Pacific Historical Society. We have a yard full of WP equipment and members overflowing with WP history and information. So starting with this issue *The Train Sheet* will also be the publication for a Western Pacific Historical Society as in fact The Feather River Rail Society is a Western Pacific Historical Society". Issue #10 of *The Train Sheet* continued this theme with a note from then FRRS Director John Ryczkowski that states "Just to clear up any confusion about the WP Historical Society it is not any new group, but that the FRRS is now the official organization to disseminate info on the Western Pacific and the FRRS is the WP Historical Society".

Over the years, the FRRS continued to promote themselves as the Western Pacific Historical Society in their newsletter and by initiating publication of *The Headlight*, a professional looking historical society publication. Since *The Trainsheet* had become too congested with museum and organizational news, a separate publication was needed to meet the obligations of the historical interests. John Ryczkowski and his staff did a wonderful job of developing a first class publication dedicated to the Western Pacific and the Feather River Route. But unfortunately, as more and more equipment came into the museum, the historical aspects of the WP and the Feather River Route were diluted by the continued transformation of the Portola Railroad Museum into a "first & second generation Diesel" museum.

With the publication of Issue #10 of *The Headlight*, the magazine was not published for the next two years. In addition, there had still been no work begun on a library or any historical

displays at the museum. Some directors of the museum even began to denounce the notion that the FRRS was even a historical society at all. It was even argued by some that the sole purpose of the FRRS was strictly the operation of a generic railroad museum and that the establishment of the WPHS had been done without the authorization of the FRRS Board of Directors. Apparently, there was nothing in the FRRS charter concerning the establishment of a historical society as a function of the FRRS.

In March 1996, several current and former FRRS members decided that the FRRS needed to do something to reaffirm its original objective; fulfilling the role of being *The Western Pacific Historical Society*. Several of the FRRS directors agreed with our argument that the historical aspects of the FRRS had deteriorated badly over the years and have allowed us to form a new WPRRHS subsidiary to help the FRRS meet its historical society obligations. The new WPRRHS agreed to take over publication of *The Headlight*, begin development of a library and archive storage facility and sponsor some social gatherings for the good of the entire FRRS. The FRRS Board of Directors has been very cooperative, planting seed money for conventions, underwriting the cost of producing *The Headlight* and establishing a financial account so that we can raise money for a library.

Since this would result in a change in the FRRS Bylaws, the FRRS membership was asked to vote on the idea and wholeheartedly endorsed the concept in June of 1996. The FRRS Board of Directors accepted a proposed WPRRHS charter later that year and a board of officers was selected to administer the new organization. Hopefully, this will clear up some misconceptions and help explain how the WPRRHS was formed and how it dovetails into the FRRS. Think of the WPRRHS as the "Historical Wing" of the FRRS and the Portola Railroad Museum as the "Operational Wing" of the FRRS.

WPRRHS (or Historical only) members receive *The Headlight* since they are primarily interested in just history and modeling. FRRS Active members receive both *The Trainsheet* and *The Headlight* because they are also involved with operations at the Portola Railroad Museum. All FRRS Active members are considered to be WPRRHS members and all WPRRHS members are considered to be FRRS Active members with the exception that they do not receive *The Trainsheet* nor do they vote in FRRS elections.

WPRRHS one year anniversary!

I guess it's true, "time fly's when your having fun!" The WPRRHS has three primary objectives. The acquisition and dissemination of Western Pacific and Feather River Route historical information, the development of a library to store this information and promoting an annual convention. Here is a progress report on what we have accomplished over the last year:

Library

We have begun some work on the library in Portola. Previously, all of the items which have been donated to the FRRS have either been used for display at the museum or have been stored in reefer cars. Since the FRRS and museum management had made no plans to do anything with these materials, we have taken on the task of developing a more permanent repository for these items. The biggest challenge at the moment is to sort through what the FRRS has already collected and begin the process of storing it properly so that it may be saved for future use.

To facilitate this, Lolli Bryan has offered us a place in Portola where we can temporarily sort through the material and begin storing it. Lolli Bryan, Robert Forren, Steve and Norma Hayes, Mike Mucklin and John Walker have installed some metal shelving racks and begun sorting and separating all of the maintenance manuals, general railroad books, model railroad magazines and other railroad papers from the WP papers, photo's and artifacts. We are continuing to sort through material and have begun putting some of the sensitive WP historical items into archival protection.

We are in need of more metal shelving racks and especially some metal filing cabinets and metal map or blueprint drawers.

If you know of a company going out of business or changing over to newer storage materials that might have some cabinets that we could have, please contact John Walker or Lolli Bryan at 530-832-1641. Hopefully, we will have a new computer installed at this location soon. We have had volunteers ask to help sort through the material but, we are not quite ready to use these people yet. After we install more metal shelving, filing cabinets, tables, chairs, and other items we can begin taking advantage of these offers of assistance. Please be patient with us until then.

Since the FRRS had not established any guidelines for the development of the Library, FRRS President Steve Habeck instructed John Walker and Kent Stephens to form an advisory committee to draft a plan for how we are going to develop and administer the library. On October 19th 1997, the Library/Archives Committee submitted a proposal that covers what we are going to collect, what we will do with the items that we are not going to save and how we will allow access to the collection. The proposal was very fundamental in its objectives and will of course be modified and revised as needed. But, it does establish the basic framework needed to continue our work, conforms with the standard operating practices of other libraries and gives us a good foundation for future development. The FRRS Board voted to accept the proposal 6-0.

The most important aspects of the proposal are as follows:

- 1) The name of the Library will be The Arthur Walter Keddie Railroad Library.
- 2) All material now in the possession of the FRRS/WPRRHS becomes FRRS/WPRRHS property effective immediately.
- 3) The WPRRHS Conservator Lolli Bryan, now has complete control over the material in the FRRS/WPRRHS's possession. This also includes the display room at the museum, which has been in need of a good overhaul for some time.

Now that we have established these operating procedures, we are going to need volunteers to help move, sort, clean up and protect these items. Give Lolli Bryan a call if your interested in helping. We hope to organize some regular work parties soon and announce the dates in upcoming newsletters.

Convention

Our preliminary convention in Portola last September (in conjunction with the annual Railfan's Day event) went pretty well. The first stand alone convention last April in Oroville was a large success despite the awful notification to potential attendees. Several attempts to notify the membership broke down and we had to rely largely on word of mouth to publicize the event. Still, nearly 80 persons attended and we enjoyed lots of great slide shows and movies, clinic's and great food at The Depot Restaurant in Oroville.

Steve Hayes has investigated possible convention sites in the Stockton area for a convention May 8-10 1998. Possible tours include the old WP shops in Stockton and maybe some side trips to other railroad museums and operating model railroad layouts in the area. We are thinking about a two day, Friday and Saturday convention with some optional activities on Sunday so that people who have to get home for Mothers Day on Sunday will not miss any official activities. We realize that the second weekend of May...the Mothers Day weekend, might be a problem for some folks. That is why we are hoping to leave Sunday as a free day for those of you who may have motherly commitments that weekend.

Please let us know if your interested in helping with this event. Steve has already rounded up an impressive line up of WP authors and historians but needs modeling clinics to round out the programs. We also want to encourage people to finish up those WP/SN/TS models so that you can show them at the convention. We also need memorabilia displays. If you have some unique items in your collection, please consider sharing these items with us. The convention also has a black & white and color photo contest, modeling contest and a chance to show some of your Feather River Route subject slides and photos. More details on the convention will be made available as we firm up the schedule. Please contact Steve Hayes directly at 209-536-1847 about the convention.

The Headlight

Issue 13 was mailed out in April. Issue #14 was mailed out in late September. If you have not received yours by now please let us know. John Walker has completed gathering information for Issue 15 while Bill Shippen is organizing issues 16 and 17. As always, we welcome your contributions to *The Headlight*. We have several projects in the development stages but are always looking for more contributors. If nothing else, tell us what you have in the way of photo's, paperwork or other items that we can draw from for more information. We are looking for information on the Jeffery Shops in Sacramento, especially anyone who may have worked there. WP Intermodal operations and equipment is another future article and we always need modeling articles, pictures and short stories. Please do not feel inhibited by your writing or picture taking skills. Our staff would be more than happy to work with you to help polish up your article. Really, give it a try-it's fun! We also need people to look into the archives of your local museums and libraries to ascertain what WP/SN/TS material may be there. The WP records have been spread to the winds and we need your help to find out where it ended up.

Headlight Production Delays

As you have no doubt already noticed, we are having trouble publishing four issues a year. This is of paramount concern to us as publication of *The Headlight* remains the core function of our organization. *The Headlight* is the method in which we share the WP history that we collect. Without it, our efforts to establish a library and promote historical functions is severely curtailed.

I have spoken with Editor Bill Shippen about this and conferred with the FRRS Board of Directors. Here are the facts of the matter:

The Headlight is produced by an all volunteer staff. Every member of the staff has a regular nine to five job that requires most of their attention as does their personal and family commitments.

The WPRRHS does not have (as of yet anyway) a huge library of information to draw future material from like the UPHS or the SPH&TS. Neither do we have a huge membership to draw on for potential articles (like the C&NW Historical Society which has some 3,300 members). The WP archives were spread to the winds long before the merger with the UP and what records remain are divided between at least a dozen different libraries, museums and individual collections.

The WPRRHS is not alone when faced with these problems. Some organizations have been successful in maintaining their publication schedule, while others have had to resort to larger, fewer issues or a paid full time staff; something which is not an option for us at this time.

One fact remains above all the others: The new staff has continued the tradition of founding Editor John Ryzkowski in steadily improving *The Headlight* into one of the finest publications of it's type anywhere! I would gladly compare it with any other railroad oriented publication on the market today including Trains, Railfan and Rail News! The quality is remarkable and the content is superb! This is without question due to the hard work of the magazine staff. We are blessed with a very talented staff of writers, researchers, modelers and graphic design people who have graciously donated a lot of time and effort to make *The Headlight* a great looking magazine!

Along with this progress comes a problem. It is very easy to fall into the "each issue must be bigger and better" trap. Just like a long distance runner...eventually, you're going to run up against "the wall". You simply can't do anymore without causing injury to yourself. You might punch through the wall occasionally and achieve a new level but...you will not be able to maintain that level of performance consistently. Seasoned athletes and publishers know that they must pace themselves if they are going to continue at a consistent rate. We've seen a lot of historical society and railroad news magazines that have hit the wall and are now only producing an occasional issue or fewer yet bigger "double issues, semi-annuals" or reference manuals devoted to a single subject.

We don't want to resort to that. But unfortunately, we inherited a magazine which fell into that trap and now that we have established a new standard....we can't go back.

In reality, given our staff, resources, finances and circulation we should be publishing a 16-24 page magazine....which was the size of *The Headlight* back when four issues a year was originally projected.

It seems to me, that at best, we might be able to publish three issues a year of the current size and quality. But in reality, two is probably more realistic given our resources at the moment.

At this point, we have decided to *try* and produce four issues a year with a 32 page count with really in-depth articles and lots of color, with the understanding that *we can not* realistically meet this schedule at this time.

Our only other choice would be to reduce the page count down to possibly 16-24 pages with two to four pages of color. We do not have to cut into the quality of the material published but there would be less articles in every issue. Either that, or throw in the towel and produce two 48 page issues a year.

The question really boils down to what you want and expect out of *The Headlight*. Do you want a large issue with 4-6 articles every five months or would you be satisfied with a smaller 2-3 article issue four times a year? Perhaps we could compromise. A single large issue at the end of the year after we have produced the three regular issues on time.

Since WPRRHS memberships are based on the number of issues received (you get four per membership no matter how long it takes to produce them) instead of a calendar year, I don't see much difference in the relative cost to the membership. However, dealer sales and increased memberships from the sale of more issues would have a positive effect on our library funding (\$5.00 of every WPRRHS membership goes directly to the Library Fund).

As we consider this situation, give us your feedback. Please drop me a line or contact Bill Shippen at 530-892-9609 and tell us what you think. And please consider writing up a few pages for us. A modeling article, your memories of the WP, a relative or friend who worked for the WP/SN/TS or a series of photo's will help fill up the magazine.

Membership

The FRRS changed over to a new membership secretary last winter and as will happen with any change over, some records will be lost or mixed up. The society then changed over to another membership secretary this summer and again the records had to be revised once again. So just to be on the safe side, we have begun keeping a copy of Historical membership information in a separate data base and will send you a WPRRHS membership card and welcoming letter when we learn of your membership through the FRRS or when you join or renew through this office. We will also keep track of how many issues you are supposed to receive (note the number on your mailing label) and send you a renewal notice when your membership is about to expire. If you have not received a membership card from the WPRRHS, please contact me and I will try to get your membership and information caught up to date. Hopefully, by maintaining this data base separately from the FRRS records, we can build a list of names for potential volunteers and magazine contributions.

We currently have 43 dedicated WPRRHS members out of 1158 total FRRS members. Due to the unique relationship between the FRRS and the WPRRHS it is difficult to determine how many members are rejoining the FRRS as Active members due to our efforts to improve the historical aspects of the organization. But, I'm confident that we are having a positive overall effect on the entire FRRS and I know that some people who have an interest in operations at the museum have rejoined the FRRS in part due to our renewed publication of *The Headlight*, our convention and our work in establishing the Library. One of *The Headlight* staff members even rejoined as a Life member!

I'd like to see each and every member personally recruit at least one new member. Each of us has at least one friend who should join the WPRRHS, even if it is just to receive the magazine (which is a good value at \$22.00 for four issues. A savings of \$2.00 over the cover price). Please use the membership form enclosed to sign up a new member today!

Upcoming events

Although there is nothing on the schedule for the moment, we need volunteers to drop off membership applications in hobby shops and railroad tourist attractions. Please contact us if there is a show in your area where you might be able to solicit some members or sell some WPRRHS T-Shirts. We have sold out of hats but will run another batch soon. We still have T-Shirts in Large, X-Large and XX-Large sizes for \$12.00 each. Once these are gone, we plan to run a batch of polo or pull over shirts for those who don't normally wear T-shirts.

WPRRHS Homepage

Mike Mucklin has established a WPRRHS home page for us at <http://members.aol.com/wprrhs> We will be updating the site from time to time with news of the historical society. If you have some nice WP photos or photos of WP models, please forward them to us for possible use on the WPRRHS Home page. You can also post questions for the WPRRHS staff here that we will try to answer as soon as possible.

How we are doing

Overall, the WPRRHS has had a slow, but steady start. Some people are still confused as to how the WPRRHS is related to the FRRS and what we are trying to accomplish. We are making progress in each of the three primary goals that we set out to achieve. Most importantly, I feel that we are moving forward on a clearly defined path. Instead of wandering aimlessly or stepping into pitfalls that could ruin the organization forever, we have clearly established our goals and are steadily working together to achieve those goals.

We have survived the critical first year. This is especially important when you consider that the WPRRHS was essentially formed from the broken promises made by the FRRS many years ago. Some will argue that specific promises were never made, but clearly there was an expectation that was never achieved.

To avoid making this mistake again, we have a written record of everything the WPRRHS does or is attempting to do. We have carefully defined and published our goals and objectives. We have a charter which was approved by the FRRS Board of Directors which defines and insures our finances, organizational structure and obligations. The long term success of any organization will be founded on establishing a firm organizational and fiscal foundation. Much of our time these last eighteen months has been dedicated to establishing this foundation. Hopefully, with the passage of the Library Proposal we can now spend more time working on *The Headlight*, the Library, conventions, fund-raising and increasing the membership (and build a few models <grin>) instead of drafting proposals and legal documents.

We appreciate your cooperation and your patience as we continue to develop and refine the organization. We are on the right track. We've built up some steam. Now we can notch out the throttle a little more and grease the squeaks as we highball into the future by bringing up the past.

News of the old SN

The Yuba City branch of the SN from Colusa Jct. to Sutter has been abandoned and two groups are in the process of dismantling the line. The Nevada County Narrow Gauge group in Nevada City will remove one mile of line with the aid of the Jim Dobbas Company of Roseville. A&K Materials has already ripped up several miles of rail. This is the portion of line west of Colusa Jct. towards Sutter. The Sutter depot is seeing some fixing up from the nearby Close Lumber Company which owns the building. Plans for the old depot are unknown.

Grain is also being loaded on the old Yuba City branch at the Harter Cannery. I believe this is Comet Rice from Maxwell which is trucking rice over to Yuba City to ship out on the UP. Lots of old grain cars have been passing through town as a result. The UP switches Yuba City on a near daily basis due to this traffic. The cars are shuffled by a backhoe when the switcher from Oroville is not in town.

Caboose Notes

Robert Forren reports that WP caboose 486 has been sold by the Jim Dobbas Company in Antelope (next to the Roseville Yard) to an asphalt facility nearby. The caboose still looked pretty good on the outside although the interior had been stripped out some time ago. John Walker found former WP caboose 441 in Elm Creek Nebraska while on vacation in July. The caboose has been painted in UP colors (no markings) and is used for storage at the local school. WP caboose 468 is now at Chiloquin Oregon across the street from the Train Mountain Live Steam operation. WP caboose 446 is at Westwood California and may be for sale. WP caboose 463 is still in Quincy.

BNSF Buys the Highline

The BNSF has finally bought the former WP Highline from Keddie to Bieber and began operations July 15th. The BNSF is currently running at least one train a day each way sometimes two. The schedule seems to vary from day to day but the trains are meeting at Halls Flat, Almanor and Greenville. Crew changes are being made at Keddie. The train approaching Keddie will call the crew van approximately an hour and a half before arrival at Keddie so if your looking for them set your scanner on 160.100. BN has also announced that they plan to tear down the Bieber depot and take down the semaphores on the north end of the line. Other BNSF trains are also running through the canyon as a result of trackage rights gained as a result of the UP/SP merger.

The canyon is very busy again since the UP is running a lot of trains through here while they rebuild Roseville Yard. This should continue for at least another year so now may be the time to revisit the Feather River Canyon. Hwy. 70 is open and in great shape. There are a few restrictions near the Serpentine Canyon area while improvements to the road continue so be prepared for a possible delay of 20+ minutes in this area. Otherwise, Hwy. 70 is in great shape!

Well, we hope you enjoyed this little newsletter. If you have any thoughts, questions or suggestions please drop us a line. And remember, we need your contributions to the library and *The Headlight*. We also have a members swap section in this newsletter. If you have some WP related material that you want to sell or trade, give Pete Solyom a call at 310-691-4139 and we will try to get it into the next issue. If you have news of the old WP or Feather River Route or have spotted some old equipment running around on the railroads, give John Walker a call at 530-671-9584 and we will try and get it in the next issue. Hopefully, we will also have a little more room for photo's next time.

Please note that 530 is the new area code for northern California (north of Sacramento and Roseville). This change effects the museum, many FRRS directors, Bill Shippen and John Walker.

For Sale:

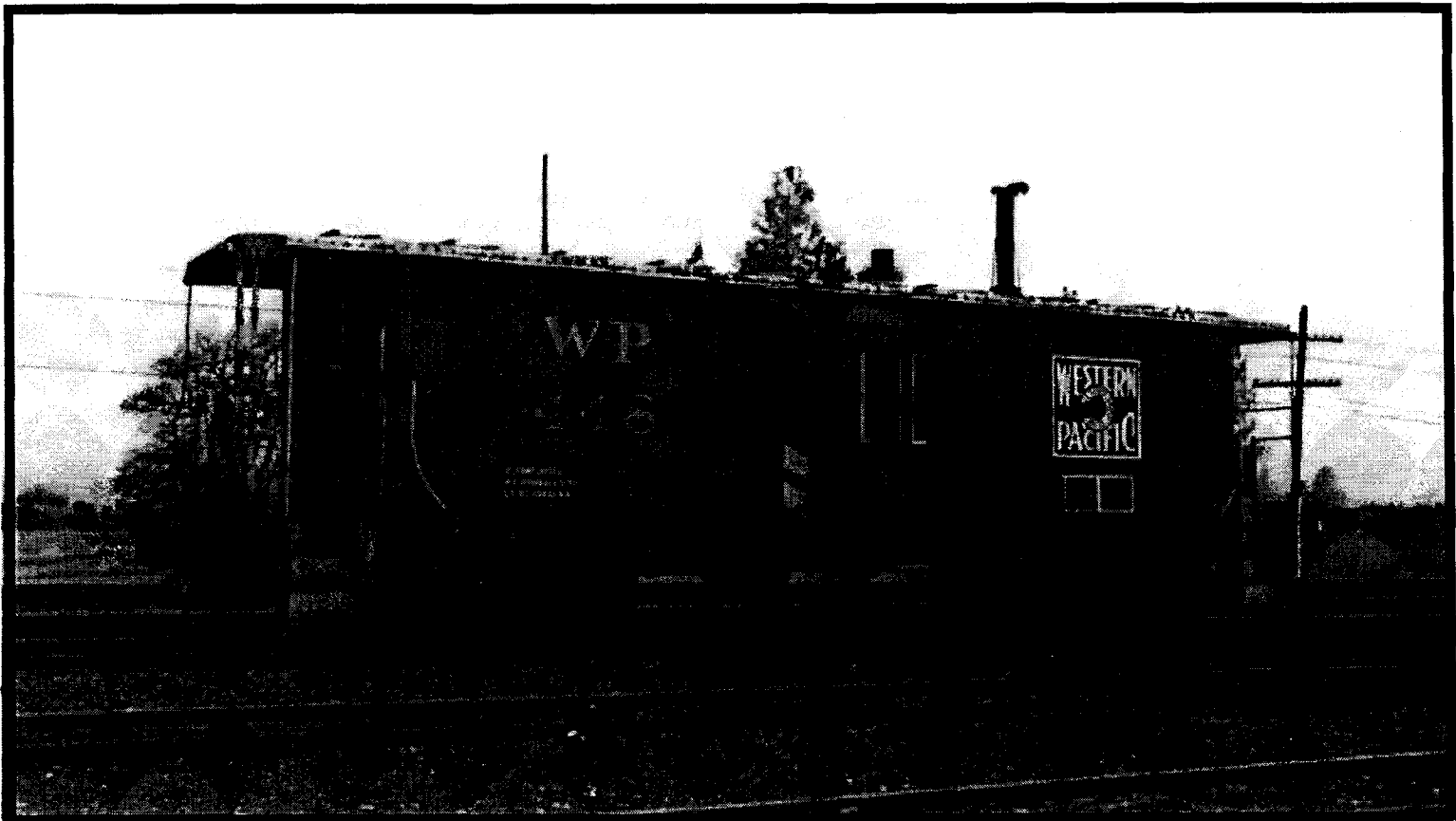
1) HO Scale California Zephyr Train. 10 Oriental Cars + 1 Oriental WP Steam Generator Car. Cars come with couplers, are fully decaled and have window glazing. Steam Generator Car is painted, decaled with couplers. \$2,000.00 for complete set.

2) Atlas FP7A with can motor and Athearn/Kato F7B power set for above. Painted and super detailed \$225.00.

3) PFM WP 4-6-0. Painted, decaled with constant lighting \$280.00.

Call or write Pete Solyom, 440 Portola Ave, La Habra, CA 90631 562-691-4139 for items 1, 2 or 3.

4) WP Boxcar diagram book. Copied from original WP drawings. Shows every boxcar on the WP circa March 1971. Each drawing shows car numbers, number of cars, builder, lot number, general dimensions, trucks, brake equipment, door sizes, capacity and other dimensional data, draft gear and loading devices. Great for modelers! \$20.00 Each (with \$5.00 of every purchase being donated to the library fund!). John Walker 530-671-9584 evenings.



WP Caboose 448 at Oroville. J.S. Walker Photo