

THE SCOTIA LOG CARS

By Kent Stephens

The focus of this article is the background and the work involved in acquiring two wooden log flat cars from The Pacific Lumber Company at Scotia, California. It is indicative of what is involved for an all-volunteer railroad museum to acquire historic equipment. As I had instigated this acquisition, it became my project to see it through.

I first learned that the cars were available on November 5, 1992 while reading an article in FLIMSIES Issue #146, a month after the cover date, which I had received from a friend. It stated, "The Pacific Lumber Company in Scotia is selling 44-foot wooden log cars... The cars are converted flat cars with arch bar trucks and AB brakes." My immediate thought was, "Wow, what an opportunity to acquire several log flats that would be perfect to go behind our "hoped-to-be" acquired Shay steam locomotive!" Even if we do not acquire the Shay, it would be prototypical to put the TPL log flats behind one or both of our O&NW Baldwins -- those Baldwins hauled trainloads of logs for Edward Hines Lumber Company over the O&NW for a number of years.

This would undoubtedly be our only opportunity to acquire old log cars, as virtually all of this type of equipment, once widely used on logging



Log Flat TPL 580 is shown in the museum's parking lot waiting to be retrucked and ultimately to be loaded with logs. The collection of arch bar trucks that came with it is in the background left. Photo by Ed Warren.

railroads, is now gone. Opportunity only knocks once.

The next morning after reading the article, I phoned Mike Eglin of Pacific Lumber Company as directed by the article. I was told: Yes, they had old wooden log cars for sale; they had placed an ad in the Eureka newspaper with only a few calls from local residents; no one had followed through with money to back up their inquiry.

In our conversation, Mr. Eglin said that TPL (The Pacific Lumber Company) had held onto the remains of their logging railroad for years after closing it during the late 1960's, thinking that they might need it again. Company officials, however, had reached a decision in 1992 that they were never going to use the logging railroad again, and stated the disposal process.

Since TPL didn't receive any response from their ad, company officials decided to go ahead and start scrapping the remaining railroad equipment. The survivors included two GE 80-ton centercab units, a yard full of log flats, a few tank cars, several cranes, plus a large stock of track material. Only the GE diesels are being spared from being

scrapped; TPL is attempting to sell them.

TPL's reason for disposing of the railroad equipment was that they needed the several acres of space on which the equipment was stored for a plant expansion.

Mr. Eglin pressed me for an immediate decision right then on the phone. I told him I would need approval from the Board of Directors, and I would report back to him quickly. He agreed.

The Board authorized me to proceed. I was to ask first for a donation, and if TPL refused then we would buy two log cars. We agreed that we would insist on a mechanical inspection first, and that we should obtain several additional arch bar trucks for future use.

TPL declined the request for a donation, and held firm on the asking price, on which we finally agreed. They agreed to select the two best cars and hold them for up to two weeks pending our mechanical inspection for acceptance; they said that we had to follow through quickly or the cars would be scrapped; once they were purchased, they would

hold them for up to one month pending transportation. Mr. Eglin pointed out to me that the cars were too old and too antiquated to be able to be shipped by rail to

Portola, and would have to be either trucked or loaded on flat cars. They were willing to load the cars and some extra arch bar trucks at no charge.

We were informed that they had selected TPL #411 and #580 for us. Jim Ley and Hank Stiles made the mechanical inspection a week later and agreed that these were the best two cars.

Norm Holmes handled the transportation details of the project, contacting a trucker who had hauled equipment for

us once before. The cars arrived in Portola on December 22, 1992; the four extra arch bar trucks arrived on December 24. This was just before the heavy snowstorms that hit the Sierras. Norm Holmes

TPL #411 and #580 are of all wood construction and were reconstructed in 1977 with all wood components renewed at that time; and they appear to never have been used afterwards. The only steel in the cars are the trucks, couplers, AB brake components, end sills, truss rods and four cross pieces of light rail on the wood deck that the logs rested on. The weight of the cars without their trucks is a low 16,000 pounds. The arch bar trucks weigh 6800 pounds each. These log cars are fairly typical of the cars used from the early 1900's for half a century into the 1950's by many West Coast lumber companies.

unloaded everything using the Little Giant truck crane and the rail mounted Burro crane. Because of so much snow on the ground, the two flats and the arch bar trucks were unloaded onto the visitor's parking lot. They will be moved and retrucked on our trackage. This will complete the project, as they don't require much at all in the way of overhaul or restoration.