

Summer 2022 Update from the Steam Department

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CMO Steam



The weekend of July 4th was a busy time for the steam crew at the Western Pacific Railroad Museum. We were running the WP 165 for the first time for the public and doing our first RALs with the engine. The steam crew got busy on Thursday June 30th, getting the engine prepped for our Friday warmup. The warmup of the engine usually takes about 5 hours to get to operating pressure of 180 lbs. from a cold start.

This would be the first test of our rebuilt air compressor on the engine. The engine was fired up on Friday and was used to do some switching in preparation for the operations on Saturday. The steam crew got busy at 6 a.m. on Saturday morning firing up the WP 165. While the engine was be prepped for the day, David Elems and I fixed breakfast for the steam crew and a few friends of the organization who came early on their way home from the steam festival in Carson City, NV.

We had our first RAL at 10:30 a.m. and everything went off as planned, and our guest was delighted at how well the engine ran. Erin Swain was the engineer of record for the day and Hank Stiles was the fireman. Hank's skills at firing are developing well as I did not have to give him nearly as much instruction on Saturday. I was able to get off of the engine and visit with some of the guests while the engine was out on the RAL. The day went off without any problems and we had what was the largest crowd of the year at the museum.

While some of us were busy with the engine on Saturday, Mike Waters and Channing Walker, after prepping the locomotive in the early morning, were busy getting the walkways on our tank car used for the storage of steam fuel oil replaced with new wood. Channing and Mike also worked as hostlers on the engine when the engine crew took a mid-day break.

Sunday the 3rd was a warm day at the museum. We took turns relieving each other on the engine due to the heat. The boiler operates at about 390 degrees and is about two feet from the



Live Steam at the WPRM July 2nd, 2022!

- Photo by Kenneth Finnegan



Channing Walker and Mike Waters putting the running boards on the Steam Department fuel tank car - 6/30/22.

- Photo by Roger Stabler

engineer and fireman when running the engine and has yet to be jacketed. We hope to have the insulation and jacket done next spring. The materials have been ordered and should be on site by the time this publication is put out. Sunday saw another large crowd at the museum and it was nice to see extra volunteers at the museum to help out. I always welcome new members that want to be involved in the operations and maintenance of the steam engine and other equipment, or just to volunteer labor to help where needed. I want to thank all who were present on Saturday, Sunday and Monday to help out at the museum.

In addition to working on the steam engine, Hank Stiles and I have been working on the museum's ballast tamping machine in anticipation of doing track work on the balloon track this fall. Hank and I replaced the bad

vibrating motors on the tamper, replaced the right and left-hand blades that were not in the proper orientation for the machine. We are waiting for a couple of parts to finish the tamper and have it ready to return to service.

I arrived at the museum in early August to do some work on the WP 705 which we are in the process of prepping for a new paint job. When I arrived, I was informed by David Elems that the east end number one and two switches were out of service for bad ties in the switch. When I worked at the Yolo Shortline Railroad, I was the track inspector and in charge of all MOW under the regulations of the FRA for 10 years. I talked to Greg Elems, our Roadmaster at the museum, who has been out with family issues for a few months about the track and that I would inspect the east-end track and see what we needed to do to get it back in service. Phil Schmierer, David Elems and I went to work on Monday and Tuesday replacing 12 ties in the number one switch over a two-day period. I spent the afternoons sorting through the collections of switch ties that we had on hand to find enough to do the needed work. We have exhausted our supply of switch ties and now have a truck load of new ties coming. This is very expensive and donations to the museum are appreciated. David Elems and I, along with the help of Logan Beers, put in an additional 7 switch ties to complete most of the number one switch.



Roger working on the tamper...

- Photo by Kerry Cochran



*90 Yards of Rock for Work on the Balloon Track
- Photo by Roger Stabler*

I had to leave the museum for a couple of weeks for family issues I needed to tend to. I returned on Friday the 26th of August to start prepping for the following week. We had several items on the steam engine that needed attention to be operational for the Labor Day weekend. I did put in one additional tie between the two-switch frog and three switch and tightened up a few ties near the number two switch so the track could be placed back in service for the weekend.

On Monday the 29th, David Elems and I dumped about 70 yards of ballast on the balloon track using our ex-SP ballast car and the WP 1503. We have about 40 more yards of rock coming to finish putting shoulders on the inside and outside of the balloon and enough ballast to bring the track back up to level. Greg is now back at the museum and will take charge of the track work. This will be major project this fall at the museum, if you would like to help contact Greg Elems. We will be tamping from the Edenwold crossing west around the balloon to Malfunction Junction. Needless to say, my plans to work on the WP 705 never happened.

I spent Tuesday afternoon in the shop working on the brake system of the WP 165, which although working, just wasn't working as intended. I finally took the distributing valve off the engine and to my clean room to inspect. While I was inspecting the valve and preparing to lap in the actuating slide valve, I found the shaft that the slide valve sits on was bent and causing the valve to stick and not move freely. I straightened out the shaft, cleaned the valve

and put it back on the engine and now the brake system works as intended. The other item that needed attention was the power reverser. The reverser was working but had developed air leaks at the heads on both ends. I made new head gaskets and replaced them on Wednesday. There is another small air leak in the reverser in the rotary valve and shaft that we will work on after we are done running the engine for the year.

The rest of the steam team came up on Thursday morning. Erik Olson finished up some machine work for me on two new tri-cocks for the cab. Once installed, we will have all right-hand valves on the engine. Channing, Mike and I worked on oiling the engine and inspecting the boiler before the engine was moved to the oil pan later in the evening which was done by the crew of Steve Habeck and Ethan Doty.

Friday morning the steam crew topped off the tender, we did a mud ring boiler wash as we are not yet due for a full wash. We wanted to see after the number of times we have run the engine this year how much scale was accumulating in the mud ring. There was some old scale removed during the wash, but our chemical treatment is working as it should and the boiler is cleaning up nicely. After the wash and the plugs were put back in the boiler was filled with water and treated with chemical. We lit the fire at 12:30 p.m. and we were up to pressure lifted the pops and topped it off around 5:30 p.m.

Saturday morning the steam crew was up at 5:30 a.m. to light the engine at 6 a.m. to be ready for an RAL at 10:30 a.m. This was the first time since we have started running the engine that we had enough steam pressure in the morning to light the engine off without the use of an air compressor to get the engine going. Mike Waters, Dick Couden and I greased the engine while Erik Olson and Channing Walker tended the fire. Charlie Spikes was our engineer for the day and Don Nelson fired the engine. Our first RAL went well. Needless to say, we had another satisfied customer. It was extremely hot over the

weekend in Portola with highs in the upper 90's. We had good attendance at the museum over the weekend. We all survived the heat.

Steve Lee was not at the museum this time around; Steve is in Hartford Connecticut accepting on behalf of the museum an award presented by the Heritage Rail Alliance for our completion of getting the WP 165 back in Service. Steve will be out in October for the pumpkin trains.

We will be running the engine again for the Pumpkin Trains the weekend of October 22nd and 23rd.

I hope everyone has a great fall and I look forward to seeing many of you at the museum in October. Till next time, full steam ahead.



W 165 on three rail with the museum's demonstration caboose train on July 3rd, 2022.

- Photo by Kerry Cochran

Seneca Healthcare Donates Boxcar WP 56059 / WP 61180 to WPRM

Those who have been to Seneca Healthcare District in Chester may have noticed the old train car that had been sitting in the back parking lot since the 70s and used for storage. With it no longer being needed and recognizing it had "a history", Seneca recently donated it to the WPRM.

The car was built and delivered to Western Pacific in December 1957 in the 56001-57000 series by Pacific Car and Foundry. The car was delivered in the mineral red, yellow and orange "Rides Like a Feather" scheme. It had the 8-foot 2-inch wide PC&F plug door and 50-ton Barber S-2 roller bearing trucks. In October and November 1972, it was sent back to PC&F for re-manufacture, it came back with new 10-foot 6-inch plug doors to effect larger loading.

The car's first road number was WP 56059. After the rebuild in 1972, it was renumbered as WP 61180 as most of the Western Pacific cars were when returned to the carrier. It apparently derailed in Chester at Collins Pines on its first revenue run. WP then probably refused to take it back after it was on the ground. Collins Pines had no use for the boxcar, so they donated it to the hospital in Chester. It sat on the hospital grounds and was used for storage for almost 50 years. On June 23rd 2022, it was loaded on a lowboy trailer by Bragg Crane and moved to the museum. Once at the museum, it was set on a set of trucks and rolled to its new spot on one rail. It will be used for archive storage after some repairs are made.

This car is different from others in our collection and is set up with shelves and power. The car has a man door that was added at some time while at the hospital for easy access. The plan is to use it as an additional archive storage facility in the near future.

The car has been restencilled on both sides of the car to the WP 61180 car number by Greg Elems.