

Railroad towns: Tehachapi, Barstow, Dunsmuir, Altoona, PA, Las Vegas before it was the “Entertainment Capital of the World”,

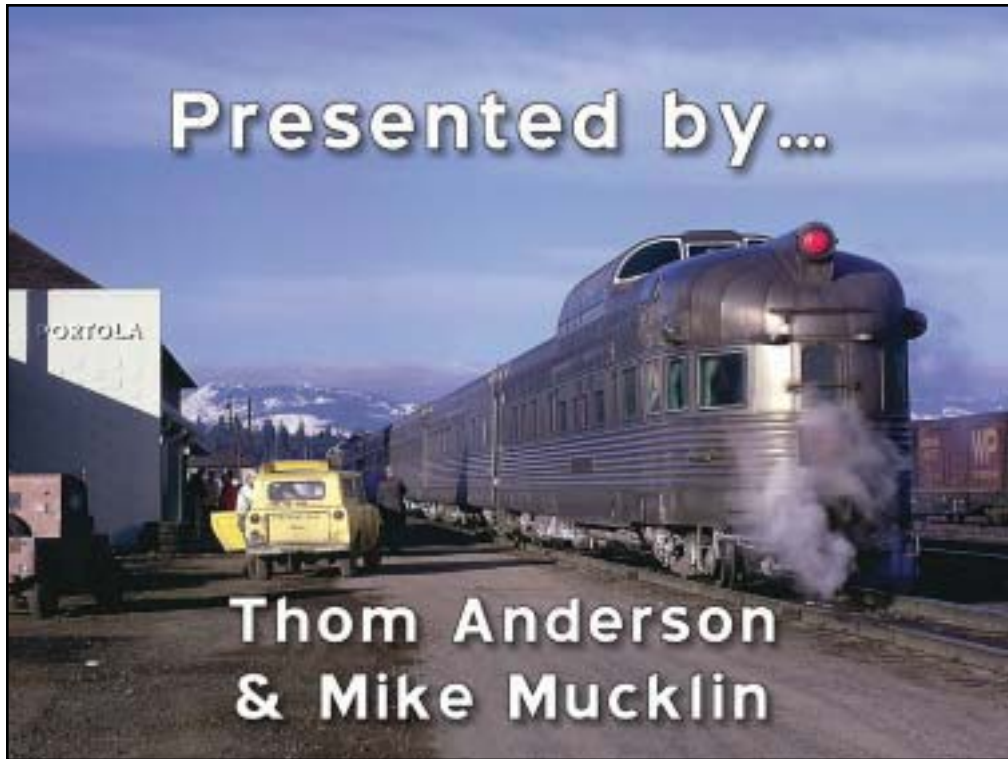
1800s Carmen’s Crossing

Between 1906 and 1909 no less than five different names were attached to the area including:

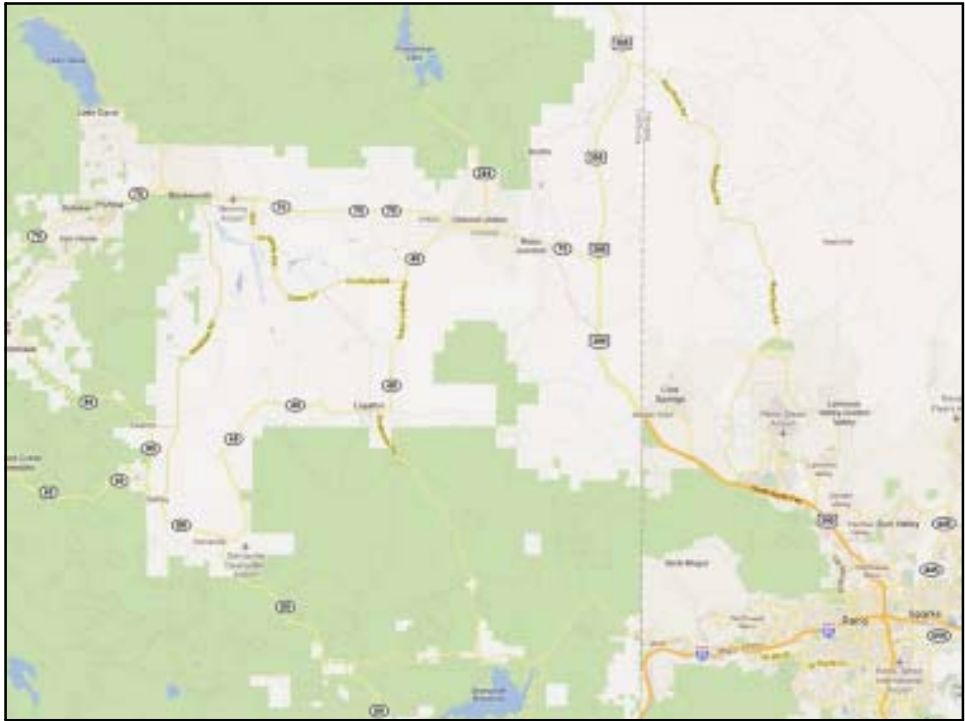
Mormon Junction, Headquarters, and Imola. Reposa was suggested but rejected by postal officials for being too similar with Repressa, the post office at Folsom Prison.

Legend has it that a local resident, Mr. E. I. Lane, after having his suggestion of Reposa rejected, wrote to WP Chief Civil Engineer, Virgil Bogue in San Francisco to solicit suggestions. Mr. Bogue’s daughter, Virgilia, the reigning Portola Festival Queen in San Francisco at the time, suggested the name Portola, which was accepted by the postal service giving the settlement its first official name in 1909. The timeline of this process is murky though, with many historical reference material suggesting this happened in 1908 and 1909. But official internal WP correspondence going back to 1907 always referred to the location as Portola. Perhaps the WP accepted the name long before the postal service made it official.

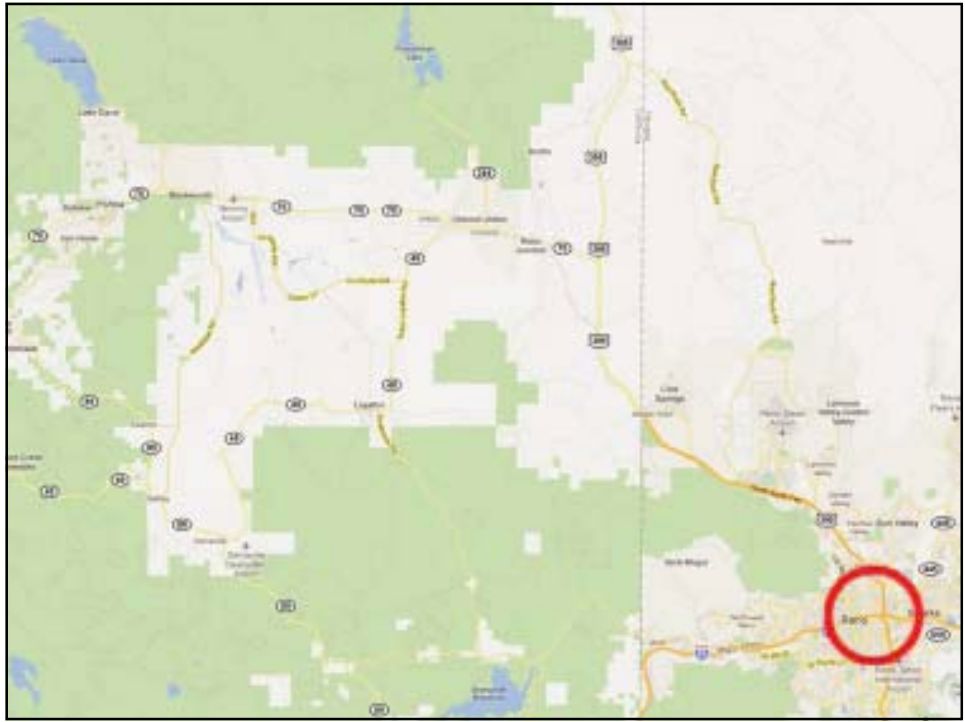
**Presented by...**



**Thom Anderson  
& Mike Mucklin**



Overview of region



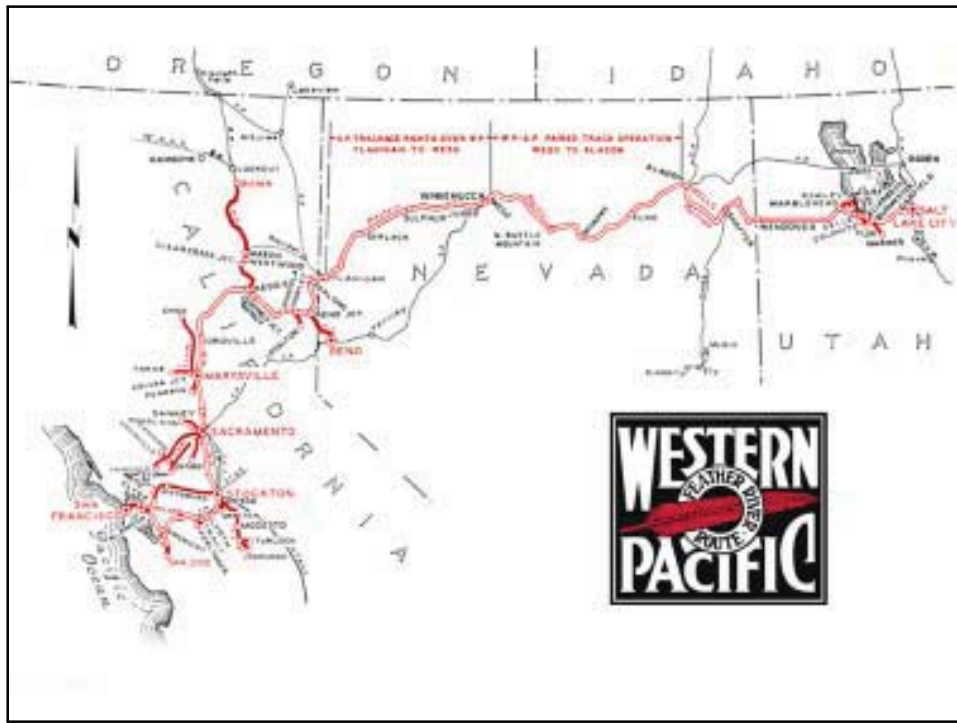
Reno Nevada



Portola California



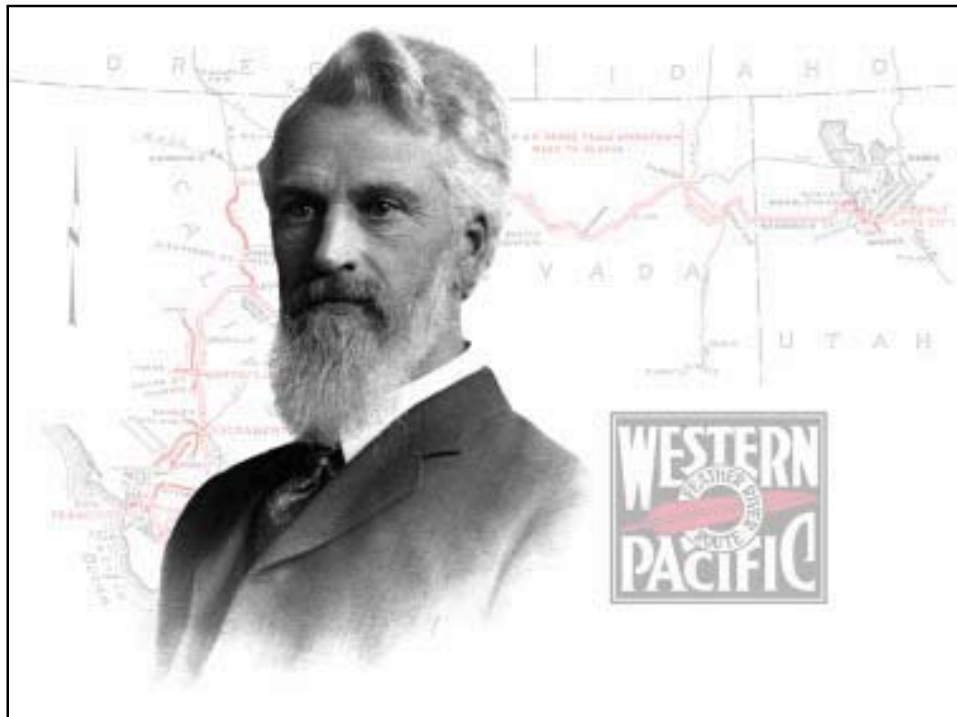
Portola is 50 miles northwest of Reno



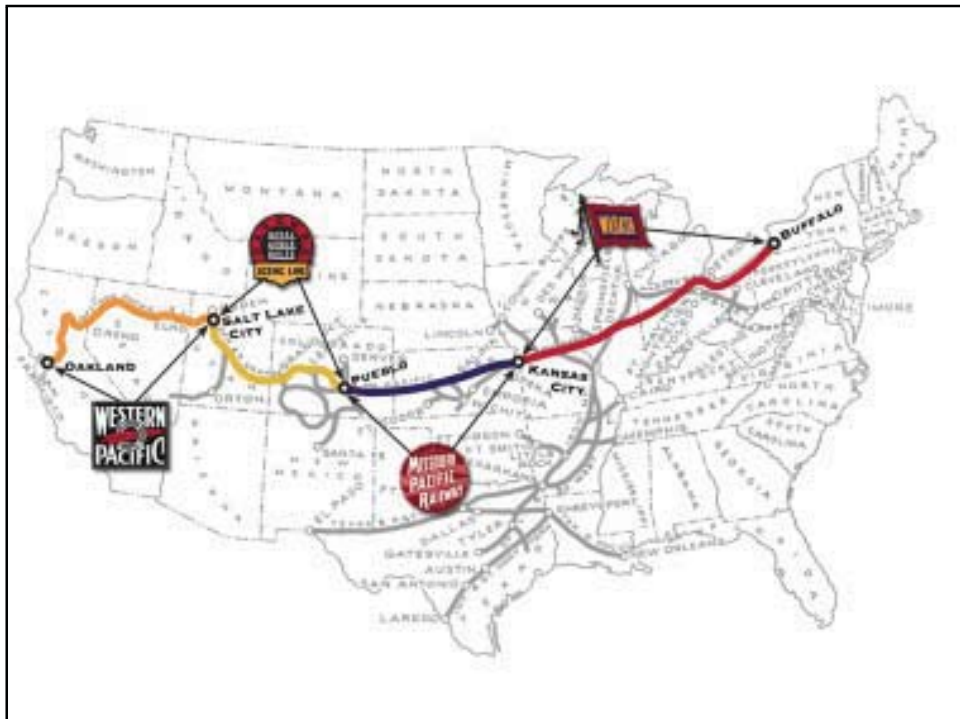
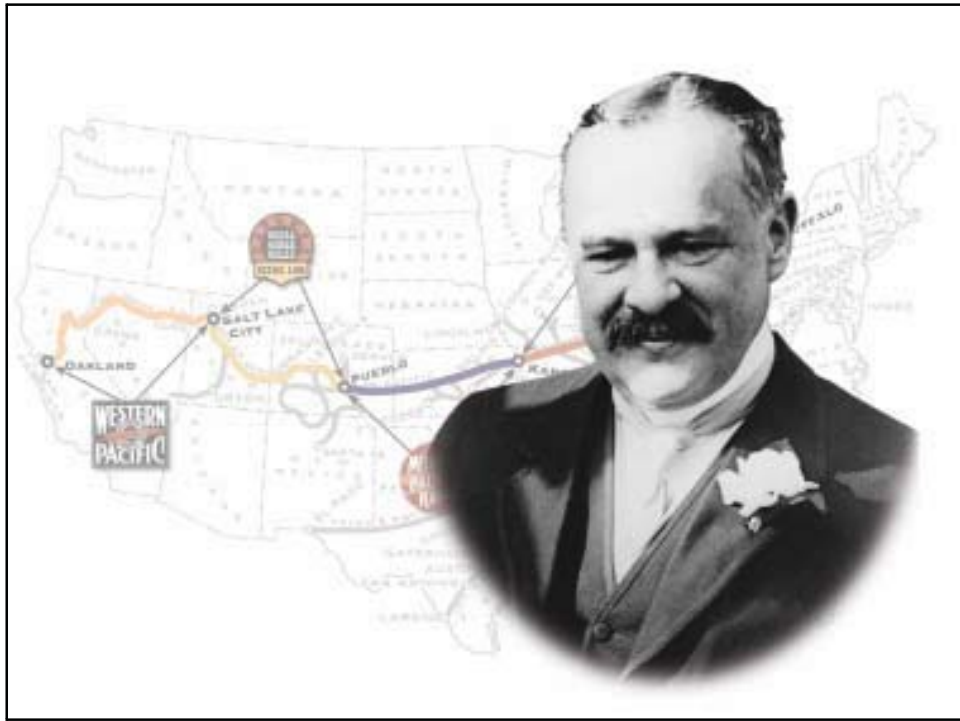
System map showing the WP route from California, through Nevada, and into Utah.

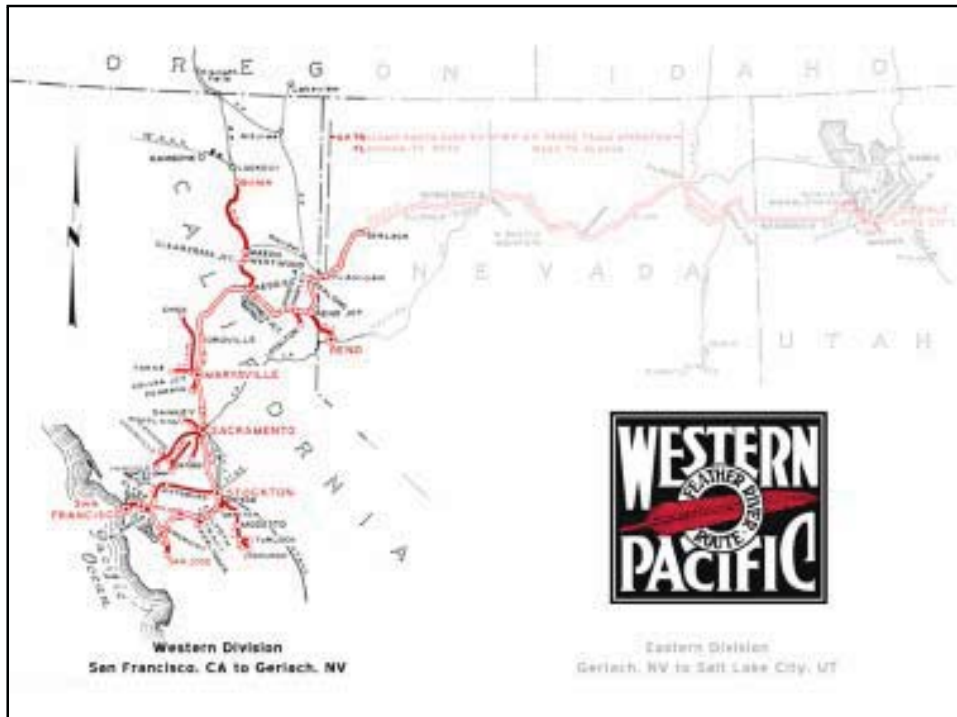
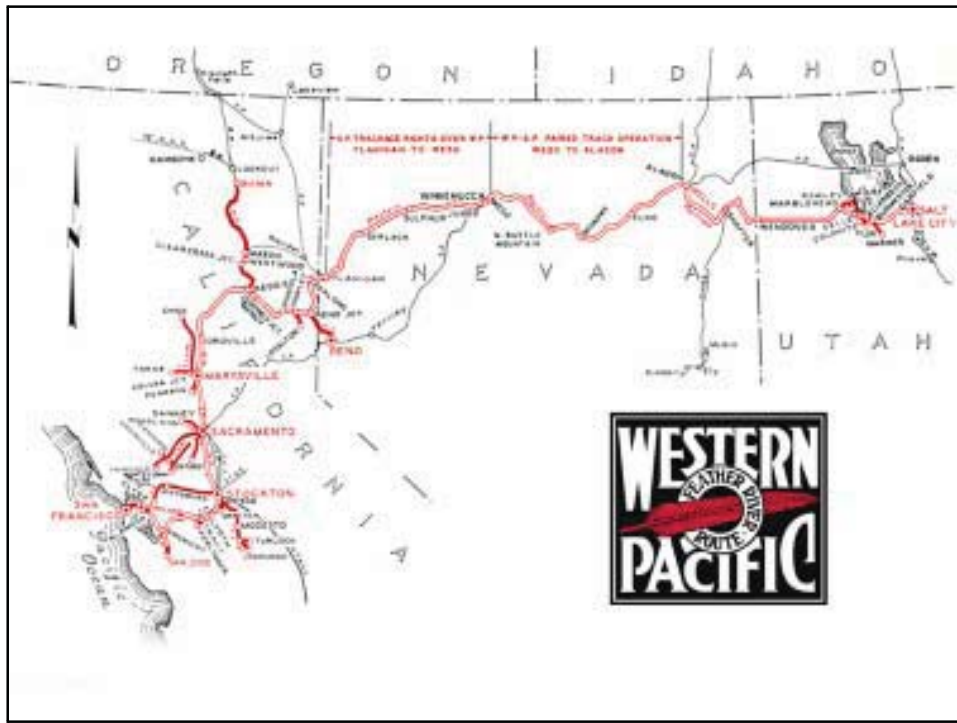
Main FRR features:

- Beckwourth Pass is the lowest crossing of the Sierra Mountain range at 5,200 feet (Donner is at about 7,000 feet)
- Maximum ruling grade of 1%

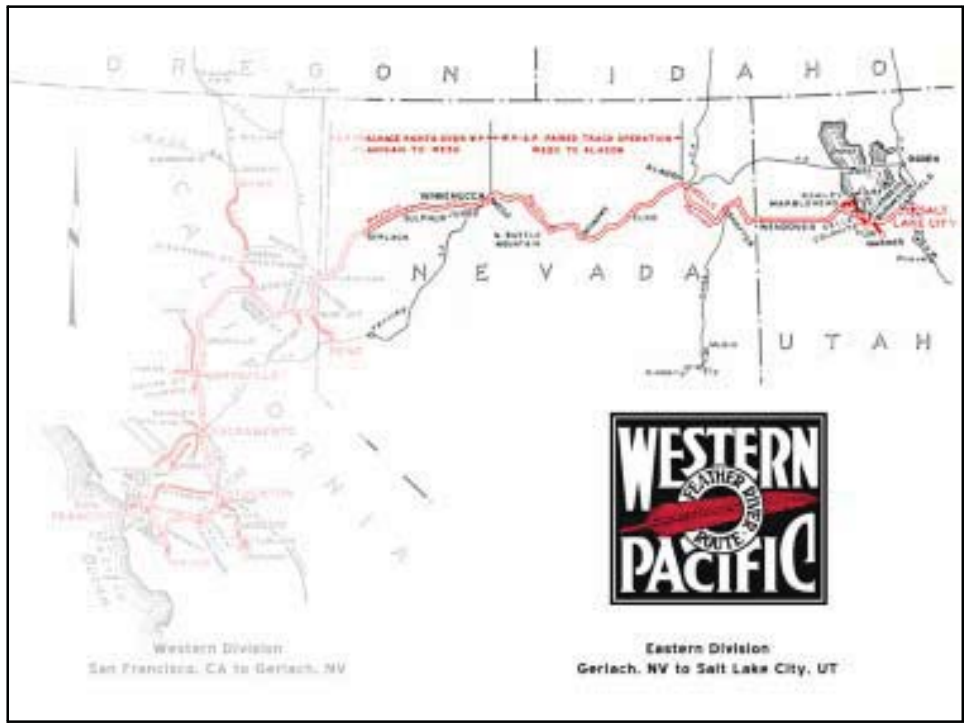




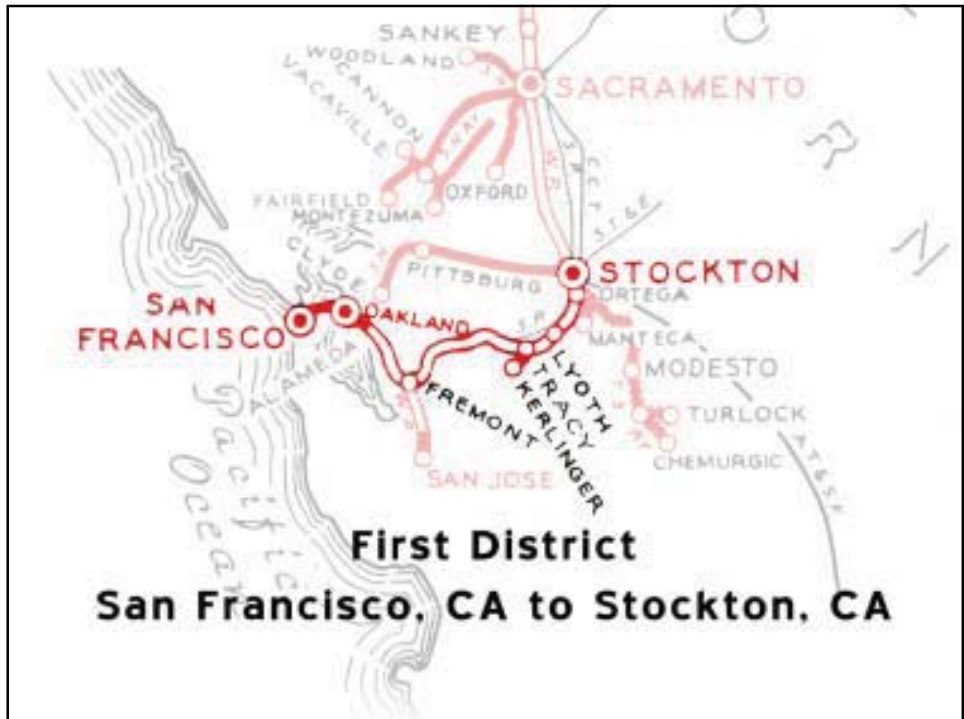




The original Western Division ran from San Francisco to Gerlach, NV

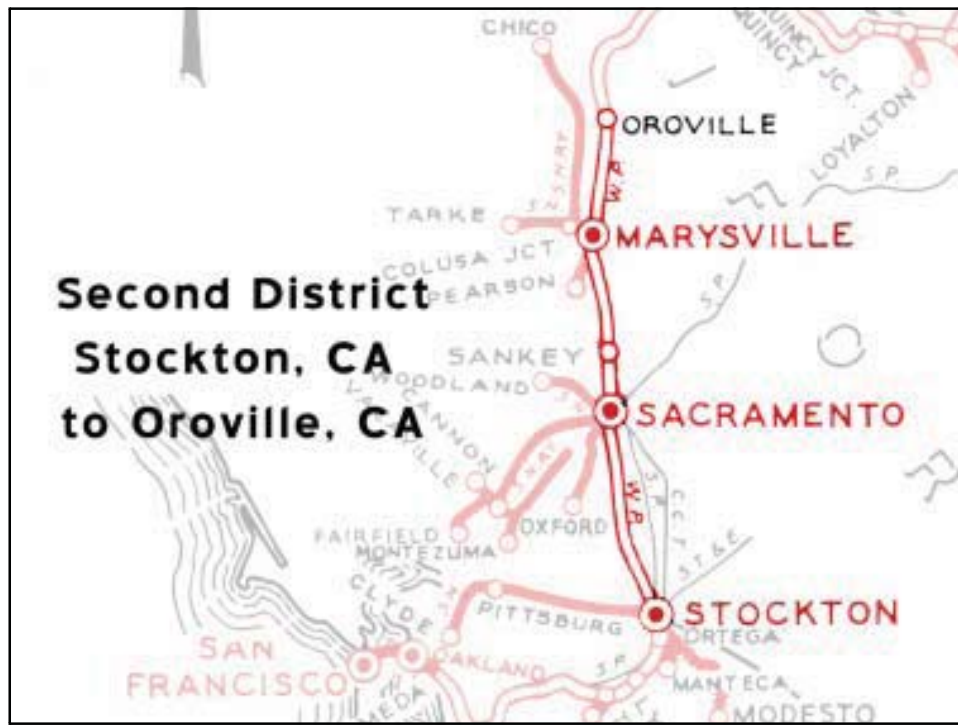


The original Eastern Division ran from Gerlach, NV to Salt Lake City, UT where the WP connected with the D&RG. Western Division was divided into four operating districts.

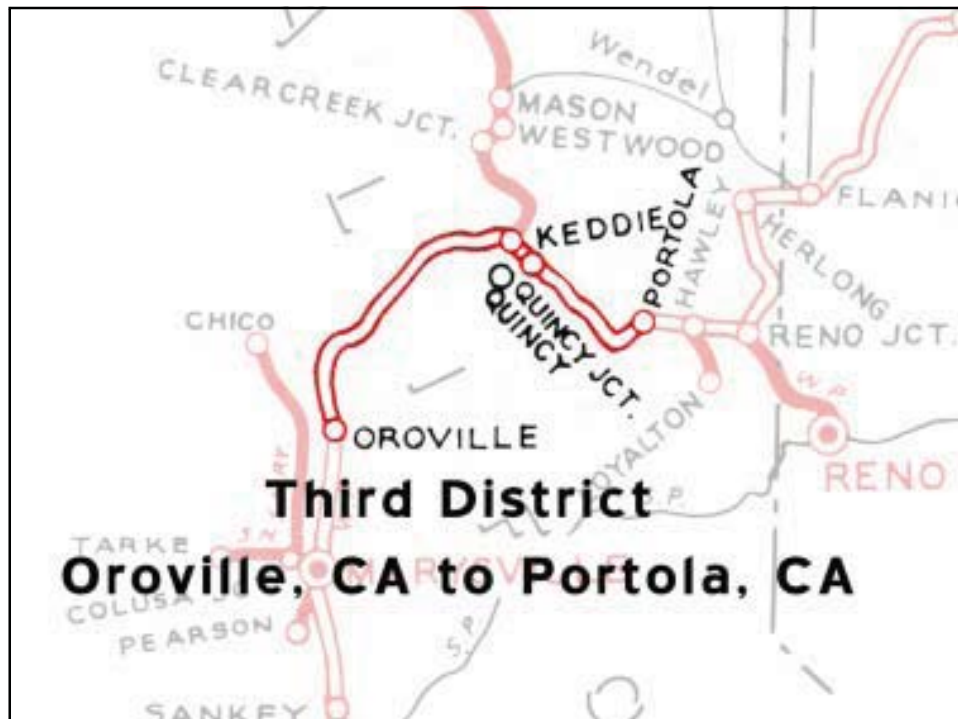


Original First District on the Western Division, San Francisco to Stockton.





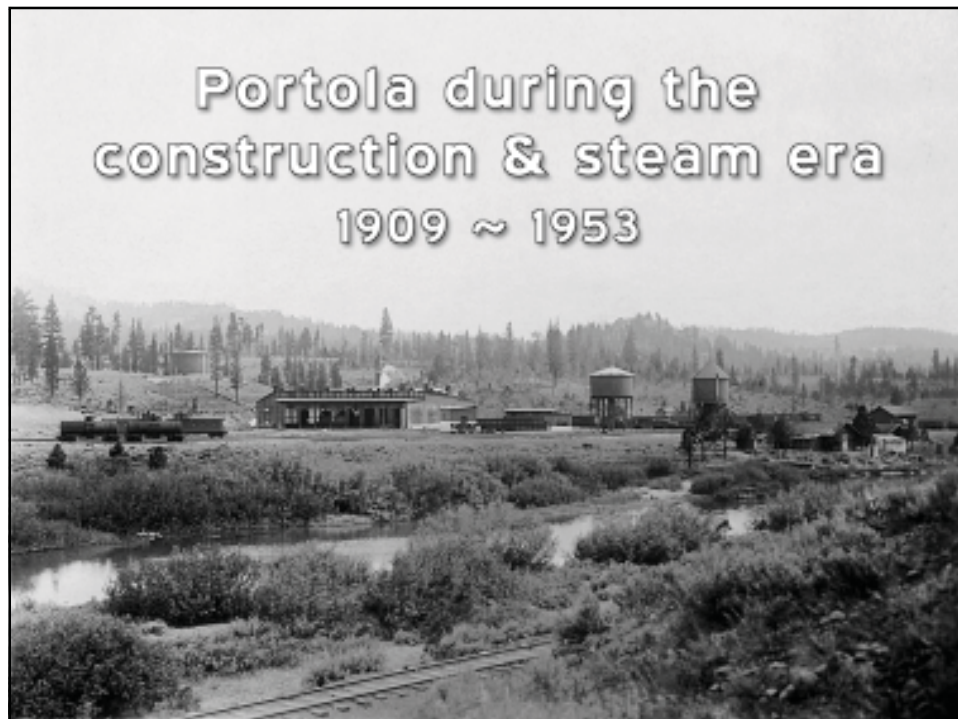
Original Second District on the Western Division, Stockton to Oroville.



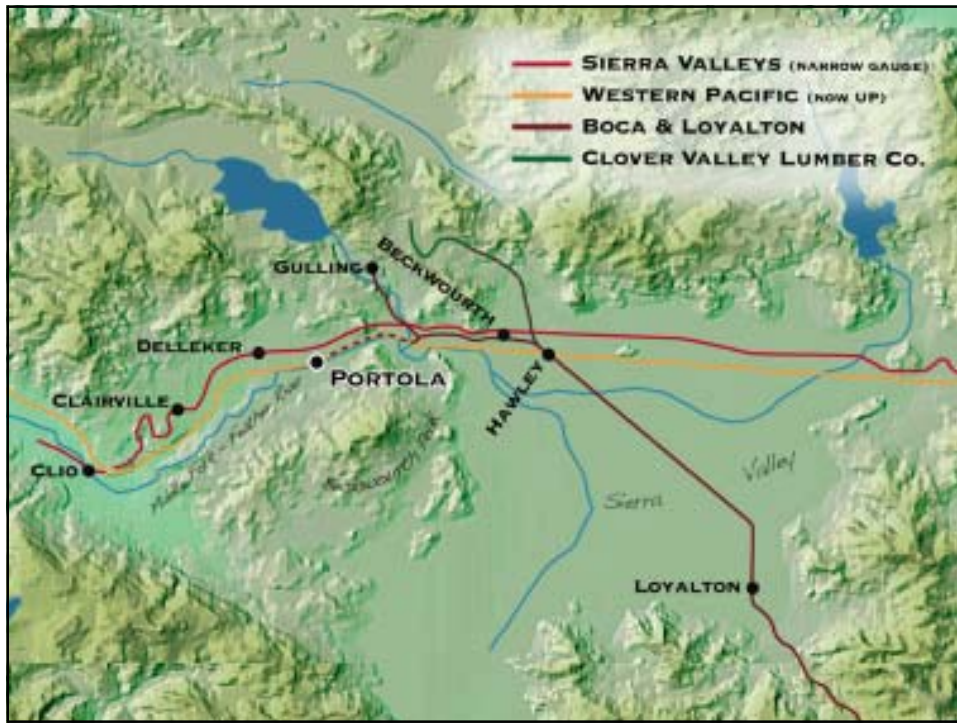
Original Third District on the Western Division, Oroville (beginning of the Feather River Canyon) to Portola.



Original Fourth District on the Western Division, Portola to Gerlach Nevada.



1910 or 1911 view of Portola roundhouse facility from the north side of the middle fork of the Feather River. Note the narrow gauge Sierra Valley's Ry tracks in the foreground, the ROW which was eventually developed into what is now State Route 70.



Relief map of the general Portola region to explain the railroad scene in historical context. Landmarks are Beckwourth Pass (lowest RR pass across the Sierra range), the Sierra Valley, headwaters of the Feather River, the narrow gauge Sierra Valleys Ry, B&L, and CVL, which all preceded the WP.



Rebuilding B&L ROW at Rocky Point.





Widening ledge at Rocky Point



More construction at Rocky Point. Sierra Valley's ROW on right a cross river. Now Rocky Point Road.



Looking east at Rocky Point. Sierra Valley and town of Beckwourth just beyond.



Westbound passenger train at Rocky Point in 1915.





West of Rocky Point as tracks enter the Portola area.



Eventual approximate location of Portola depot. Looking west, Feather River on right with Portola Heights just beyond.



Further west, a bout where museum is now. Turnout will go to roundhouse facility.



Roundhouse construction August 1909





Roundhouse construction August 1909



Roundhouse construction August 1909. Roundhouse had concrete pits with a dirt floor.



North side of roundhouse later during construction. Boiler room and machine shop attached to rear of roundhouse.



Original Stores Department building nearing completion in October 1909.





Early view of turntable, original water tank, fuel-oil tank, oil house, and sand bin. WP 124, former B&L 2-8-0 oil burner.



From title slide - 1910 or 1911 view of Portola roundhouse facility from the north side of the middle fork of the Feather River. Note the narrow gauge Sierra Valley's Ry tracks in the foreground, the ROW which was eventually developed into what is now State Route 70.





1913 view from Portola Heights south towards Portola Depot. Sierra Valley's NG tracks in foreground. Beckwourth peak in background.



Similar view. Footbridge over Feather River in foreground.



Early view of depot in winter.



Passenger train stopped in Portola in 1915.



WP 173 stopped at Portola with EB passenger train. Dunscomb photo.



Reefer icing platform in east Portola circa 1915. Cars of ice came off the B&L from Gulling and were unloaded on the high track on right. Reefers spotted on ice deck rail next to main.





WP Hospital built to serve WP employees, families, and community. Opened in September 1912.



Westbound coming into Portolayard in 1947. Power was getting bigger, pushing the original facilities to the limit.



2-6-6-2 Baby Mallets came along in 1917 then more in 1924 pushing the original 80-foot turntable into obsolescence. By 1931 when the first six 2-8-8-2 Mallets came along, even the “new” 110-foot turntable was at its limit.



110-foot turntable to replace original 80-footer being installed in 1925.





WP 319 takes a spin on the 110-foot turntable in front of the expanded 12-s tall roundhouse. View likely taken from the top of the fuel-oil tank.



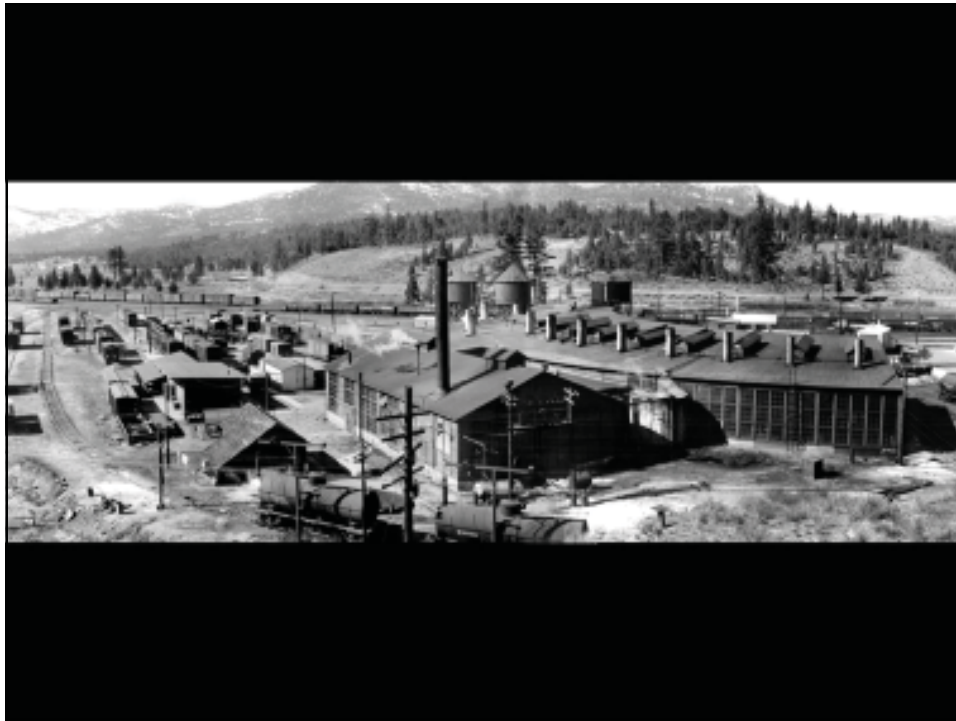
View of the turntable and whisker tracks.



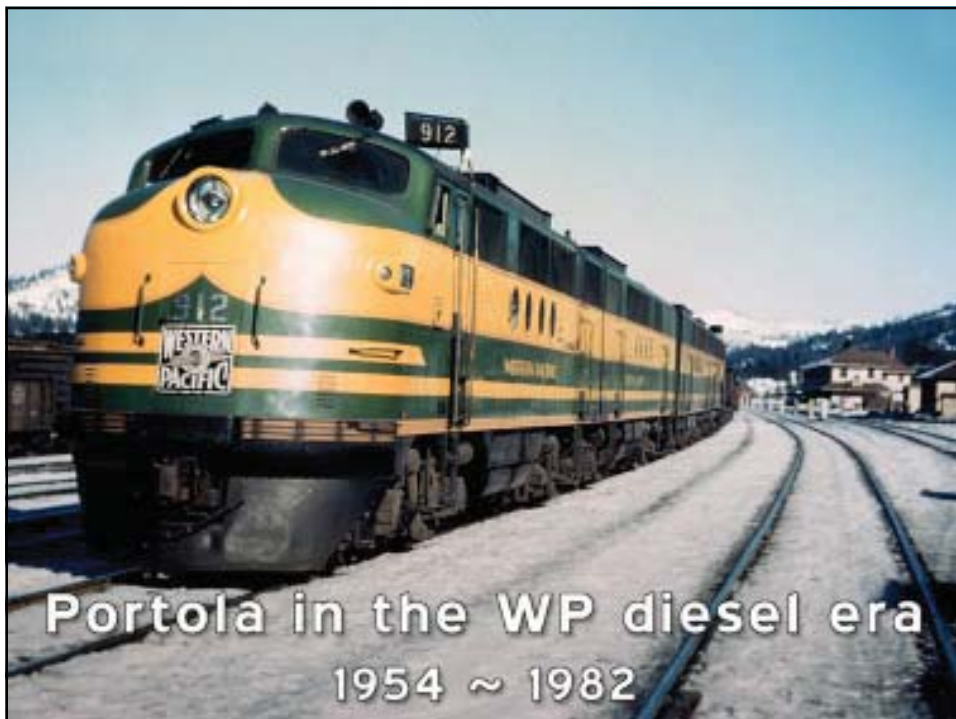
Portola roundhouse facility from bluff where hospital was located.



Rare 1946 color view of facility from hospital bluff.



Panorama showing steam-era facility in 1953 just before most of it was decommissioned and dismantled to make way for a new diesel shop.







View of Portola yard and Beckwourth Peak in the 1950s.



Aerial view of town of Portola in 1950s showing growth of town. View is looking southeast. WP depot, yard, and main in lower-left corner.



Another early 1950s aerial view looking northwest. Roundhouse complex and hospital can be seen in the top left corner. Depot and yard top center to top right.



Hospital complex in the mid to late 1950s showing original 1912 building in center, and additional east (1926) and west (1930) wings. The hospital remained in service until 1972 when the Eastern Plumas District Hospital was opened in Portola to serve the community. The hospital was then sold to a private individual who used it as a residence until the year 2000.





By the 1950s times were changing and diesels were here to stay. Here in front of the ice deck is the Gerlach Local with a FT set in September 1950.

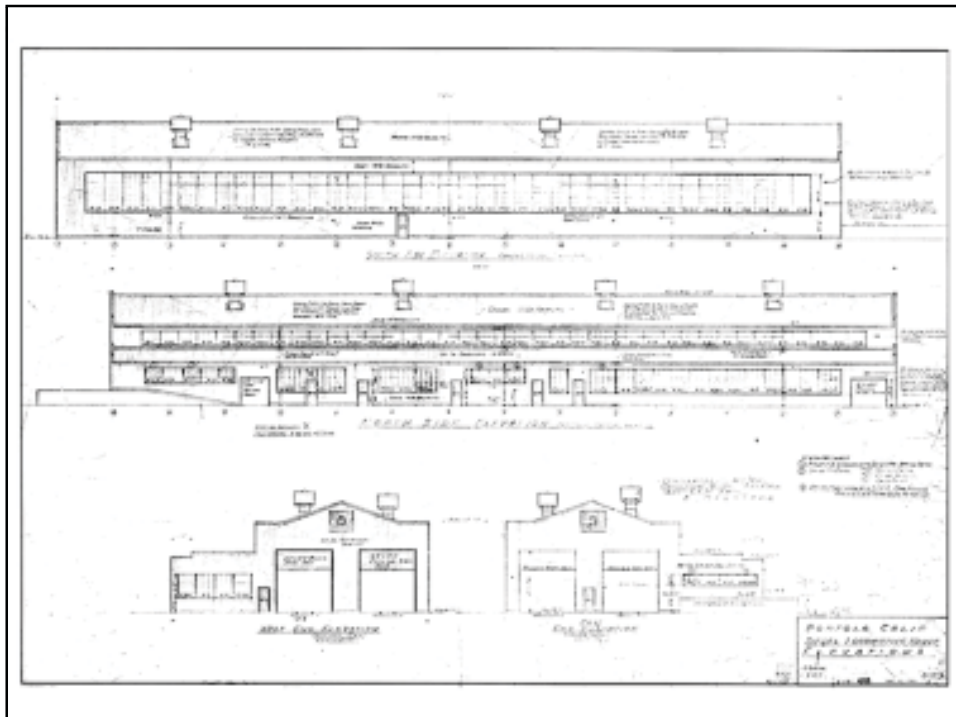


Set of FTs arrives in Portola.





WP Geep sits in a steam-era facility shortly before the roundhouse was dismantled.



225-foot two-bay diesel shop proposal drafted in 1953.



Pouring the cement foundation for the new diesel house. Machine in background is called a Jiffy Batcher for mixing concrete.



New diesel shop during construction with turntable and whisker tracks still in place.



Note height difference between top of rail in diesel shop and on turntable. After the turntable was removed, the pit was filled in and a massive amount of soil and rock was used to level ground before new tracks were laid into the shop. Turntable pit is still there buried under museum tracks and the loading dock.



West end of new diesel shop with the wheel hoist, which was moved from the original RIP track area, getting installed in its new location.





1955 view of east end of diesel shop and loading dock.



1970s view of east end of diesel shop.



1955 view of west end of diesel shop, wheel hoist and spare wheel sets.



1970s view of west end of shop.



Another 1970s view of west end.



Waste oil tank made from the oil bunker from a retired steam locomotive tender.





Power on the diesel house lead in the mid 1970s.



Looking west from the Gulling Street overpass. Yard on right. Freight house on left. House track off main just west of freight house. Depot in background to left of main,



Westbound CZ 11 hours last on July 3, 1966. Original depot nearing the end of its service life. Note how upper floor of depot has been expanded west over time.



Old depot coming down with new depot just east of it.



New depot built in 1966.



As seen in background, new depot was painted jade green like many immobile objects and appliances on the WP.





918-D in front of "new" Portola depot in August 1970.



Aerial shot of Portola showing the WP yard and dieselservice area in the early 1960s.



Close up of balloon track and diesel shop.



Mid to late 1950s view of east end of diesel service facility with hospital complex above on the bluff.



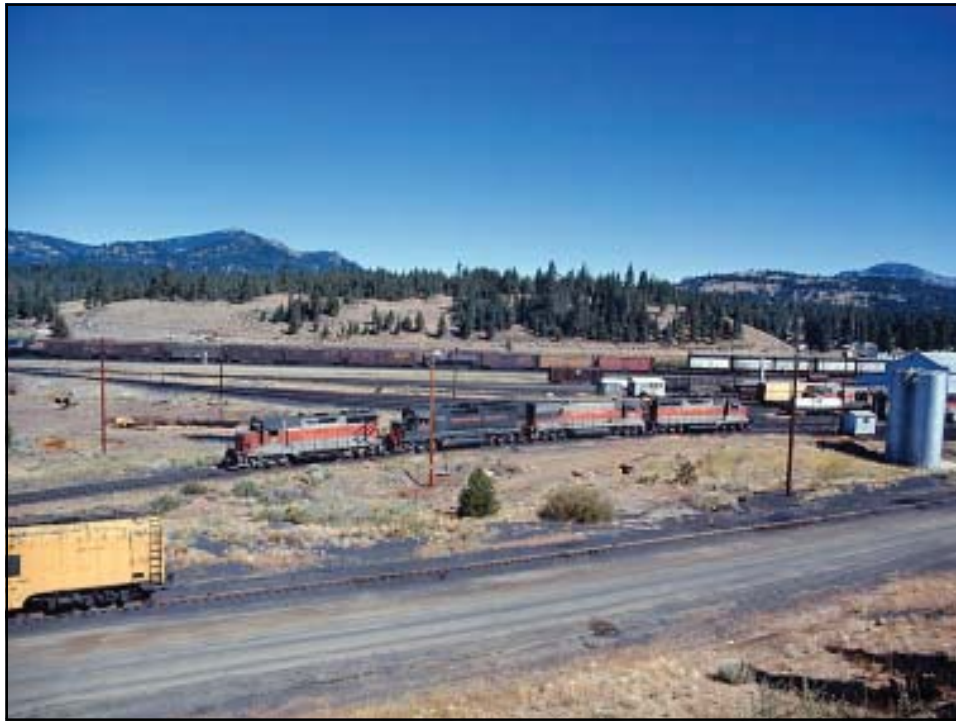


Close up of diesel shop.



Looking northeast from bluff at diesel shop. August 1970.





Power coming off balloon. August 1970



Dis used CZ car washer five months after discontinuance of CZ.



Last westbound CZ enters car washer. Power was not washed as a water-saving policy. Spray was turned on after power passed through.



Last WB CZ gets a wash March 22, 1970.



Budd dome-obs Silver Sky gets washed in May 1964.



Moving on to the post-merger museum era.





Union Pacific absorbed the WP with the MP on December 22, 1982. Portola remained a crew base but diesel facilities were no longer needed.



The idea of a railroad museum in Portola came from museum founder, Norman Holmes. Norman is a former WP and UP locomotive engineer living in Portola.



Norman's accomplice in the creation of the Portola Railroad Museum was none other than WP President Robert G "Mike" Flannery, who himself became President and Chief Executive Officer of the Missouri Pacific Railroad after the merger. Norman and Mr. Flannery shown here during the donation ceremony of WP 921 in Portola on August 27, 1983.



Official grand opening of the Portola Railroad Museum in May 1984.



WP 921 in a nearly empty Portola RR Museum diesel house.



Some of the early members of the museum on either side of Norman.





Work began immediately to connect abandoned track and lay new tracks. A fence along the property line between the UP yard and the new museum was also constructed.



The "Dandy Glancers" track laying crew in 1984.



Track laying and maintenance continues to this day. Here volunteers fix a low spot on the balloon.



With the 921 in its new home, new diesels were acquired through donation or purchase. The last remaining California Zephyr locomotive, WP FP7 805-A was tracked down to the Louisiana and Northwest Railroad in Louisiana where it was stored unserviceable.



Joining the 805-A WP GP20 2001 and NW2 608 were reunited in Portola and were soon receiving cosmetic and mechanical restorations.



The 805 was moved into the shop for the final prep and paint work.





The 805 back in the aluminum and orange CZ livery and fully operational on WP rails.



NW2 608 in solid orange and fully operational.



2001 poking out of the west end of the engine house to greet 805. The WP is alive and well in Portola.



Pretty soon more locomotives came to Portola.



And more.



And more.





More still



And even more.



More



More





And a few more.

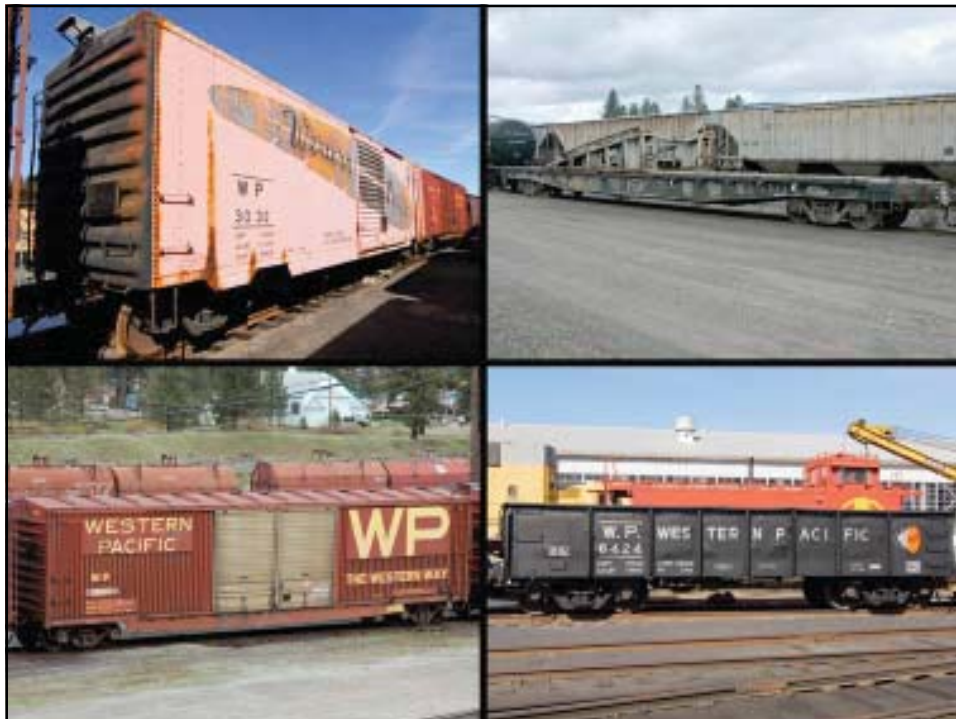


Then we needed some freight cars. Every few days, as WP cars were being retired in droves, the UP sent some over.





Then more showed up.



And more.



More

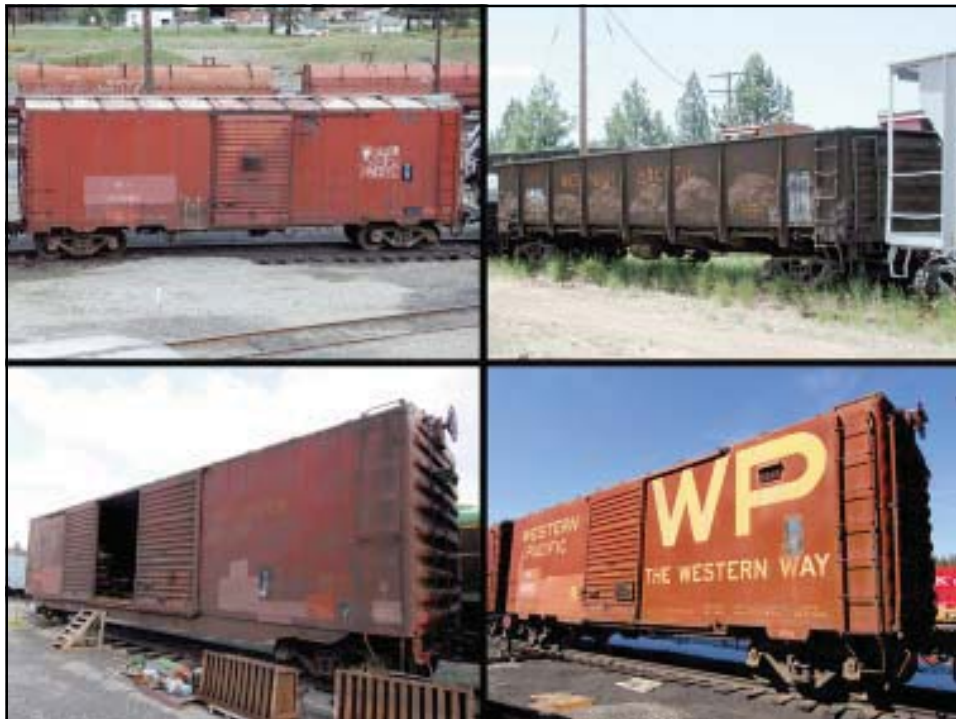


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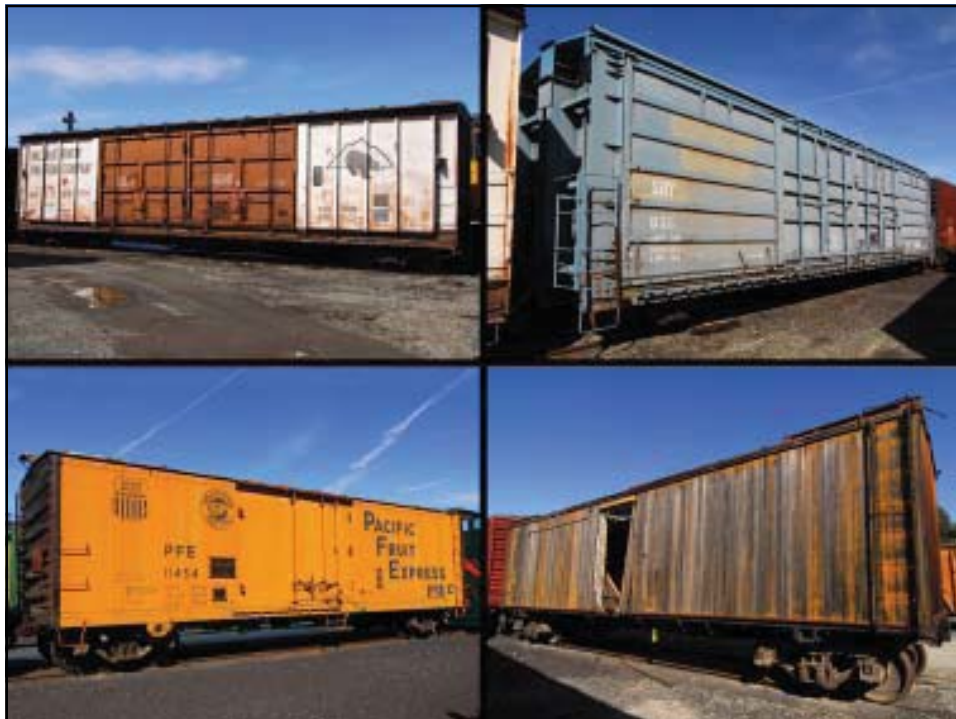
More



More



More



More



More



And a few more.





What's a freight train without a ca boose? WP 428, in remarkably original condition as built in 1955 was donated by the UP.



Them more ca booses found their way home.



And they just kept coming.



And coming.





Until we had enough cabooses to make a solid caboose train.



Let's not forget passenger cars. Here's WP dome Silver Hostel from the California Zephyr.





More cars made their way to the museum.



And more.



And more.



And a few more.



Then there is the maintenance-of-way equipment.



Which there is a lot of...





More



More



SP rotary 208 is fully operational.



More MOW





And a few more MOW cars.



We have a steam locomotive too. WP 165, a 0-6-6 is undergoing a full operational restoration.

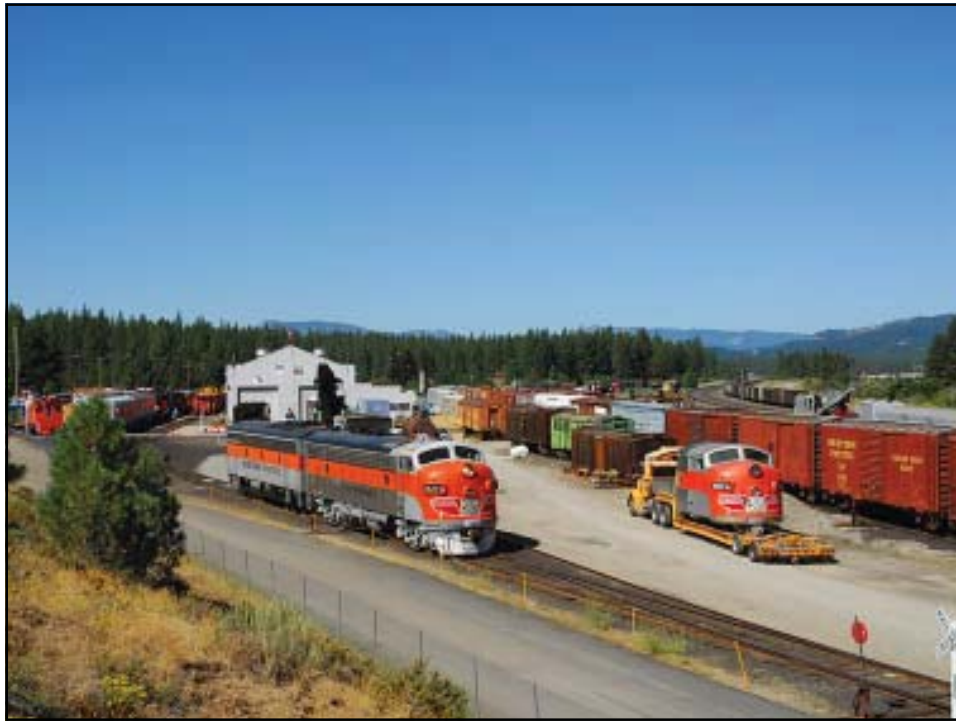




Disney recently got into the act by donating the cab from fake CZ FP7 804-A from a California Adventure exhibit to the museum where it will be used in an interpretive display telling the story of the Silver Lady.



So after several years of an active acquisition phase, the 37-acre museum site was stuffed with over 30 locomotives and 80 pieces of rolling stock. Here's a view from 2005.



And the view today (taken last month).



Another recent view.



The 225-foot, 16,000 square foot diesel shop is still the centerpiece of the facility.



Over time, more and more volunteers joined and showed up to participate in the operation of a working railroad museum.





People can be found in every corner of the facility working on something. Here is work being performed on the tube sheet in the 165.



Volunteers spend the day installing a new turbo into UP GP30 849.



A gang of volunteers converged on the museum one day in October of 2009 to wash and wax the 805 in preparation for the arrival of a trainload of guests on a chartered "Mini CZ" special train coming to Portola.



Someone is always working on something,





Special events are part of the museum's history. Most years Railfan Photographer Day is held in August where period "theme trains" are put together and run a round the museum for photographers to watch and photograph.



It's also a good day to blow the accumulated soot out of some of the old work horses that don't get out much. The fans love the show.





In 1994 the museum organized a “Circle the Wagons” event which included WP F7 913 which was brought up from the California State Railroad Museum in Sacramento for the occasion.



The museum frequently hosts school and scout groups of various ages who come to learn about railroads and railroad safety. Here’s a group from the Chester Preschool in 1986.



Every once in awhile Uncle Pete sends something special to represent in Portola.



Many of the locomotives in the museum roster are fully operational and sometimes they even venture outside of the museum. Here's a set of F units and WP NW2 608 in the background waiting to intercept the incoming Mini CZ charter train for a layover on the museum property in Portola.



The 608 waits for the special to back down to the depot while a WB freight pauses for a fresh crew before heading down the canyon.



The Mini CZ overnights next to the diesel shop on the museum property in 2009. UP Centennial 6936 occupies the adjacent track as it often does in the winter at the request of the "boys in Cheyenne", who are equally short on trackspace.





As the good Lord intended, 805-A pulls a string of former CZ and other varnish around on WP rails for the first time in decades.



The museum is famous for its Rent A Locomotive program, where visitors can take the throttle and learn how to run various types of locomotives on the museum grounds.



The RAL program is a hit with kids of every age.



Big s miles a fter giving SP 2873 a workout.





Some of the museum's locomotives are even FRA Blue Carded, allowing them to venture off the property and onto the high iron of the Union Pacific system. Here is the display train with a number of museum pieces at the Dunsmuir Railroad Days celebration in 2010.



Here's the Dunsmuir RR Days train in 2011.





Museum unit on display in Dunsmuir in 2011.



Getting ready to depart Dunsmuir and head back to Portola in with the 2011 Dunsmuir train.



Last month, in August 2011, WP GP20 2001 was tacked onto the front of the special Feather River Express charter train for its westbound trip to Emeryville. Here's the train at Spring Garden.



FRE at Spanish Creek Trestle near Keddie.





FRE at Pulga.

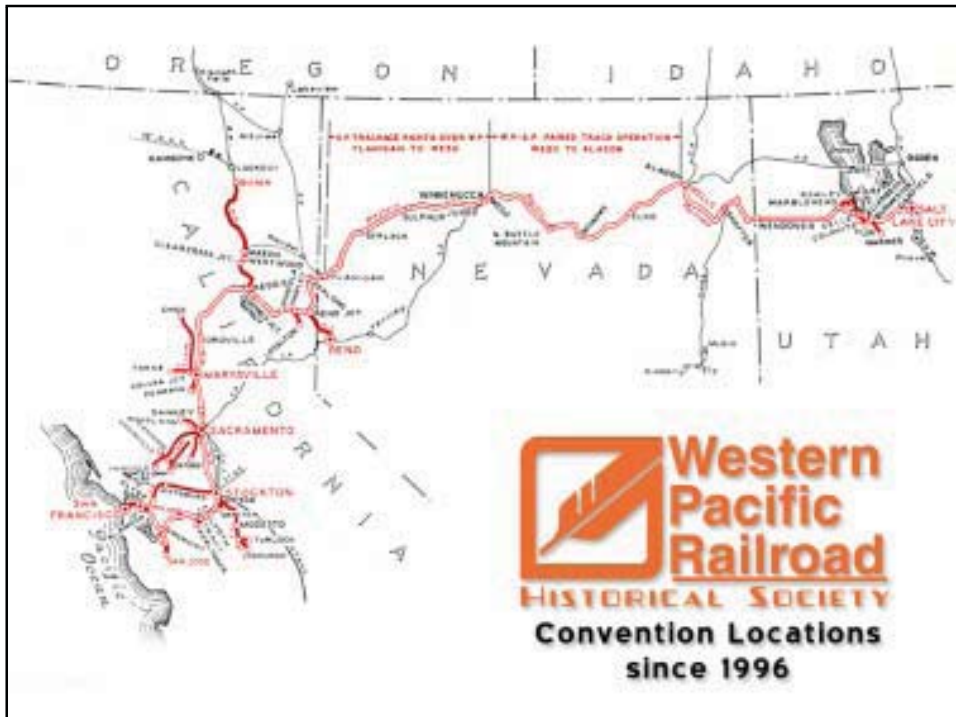


At James

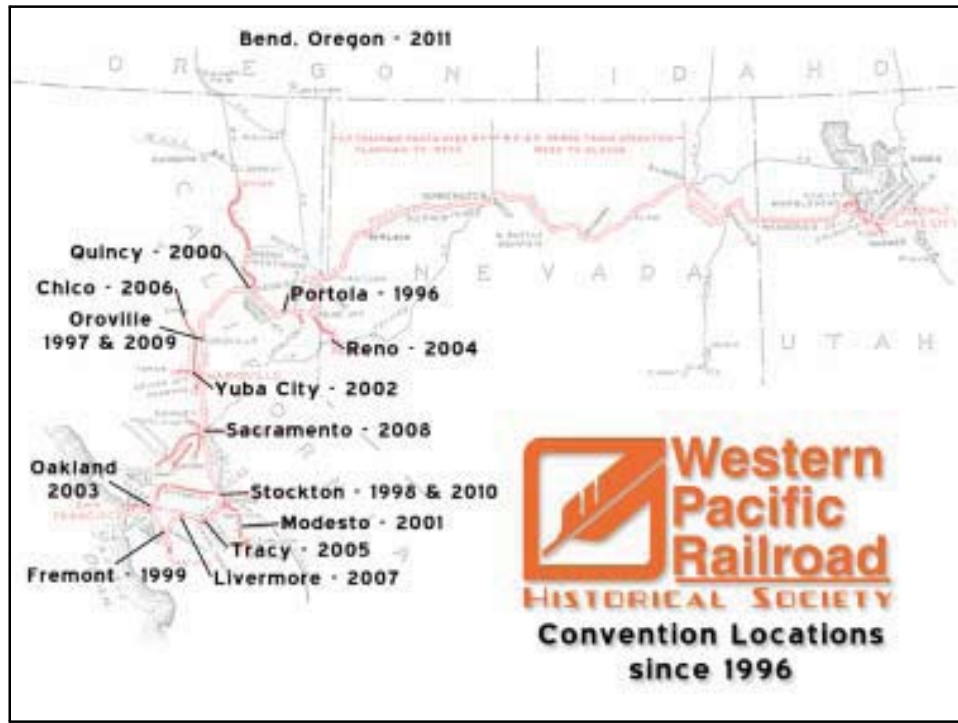




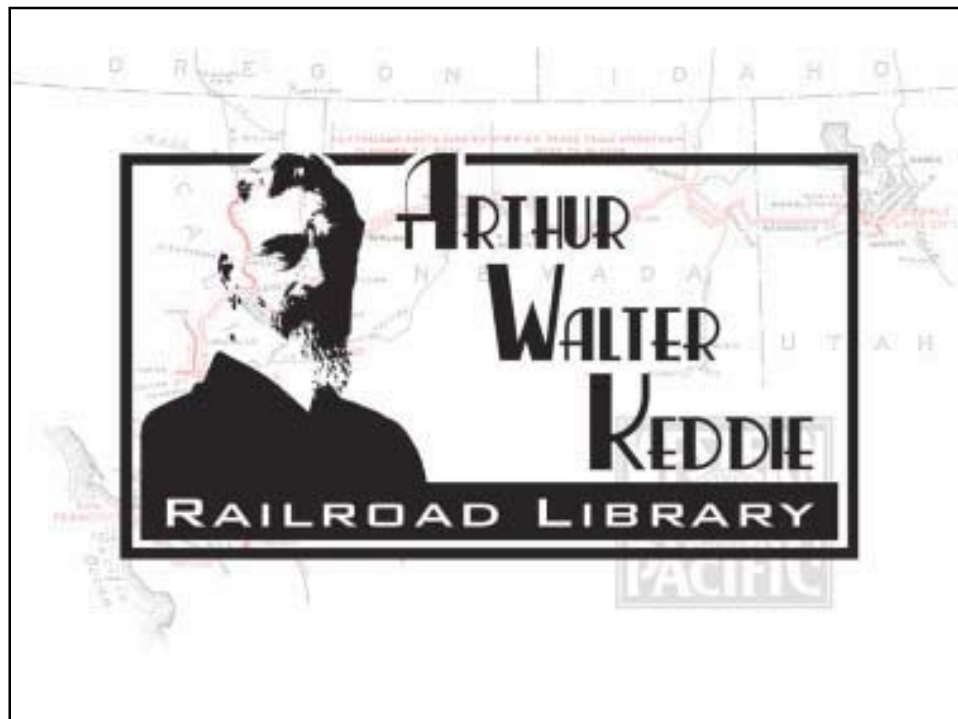
2001 returning to Portola light on the Spanish Creek bridge near Keddie.



In 1996 the Feather River Rail Society created a historical department to create and maintain an archive of small artifacts, paper, company records, and photographs. The department also produces the society's publication, and hosts an annual off-campus convention, generally in locations along the original route of the WP, SN and TS.



Here are the convention location for the past 15 years.



Proceeds from the conventions go into a restricted fund to build and maintain the Arthur Walter Keddie Railroad Library.



The conventions are very popular, often attracting between 120 and 200 WP fans from all over the world.



The banquets are always sold to capacity since they always include good food, an interesting keynote speaker, and an auction of some neat stuff after the main presentation. This was the 2007 banquet in Livermore.

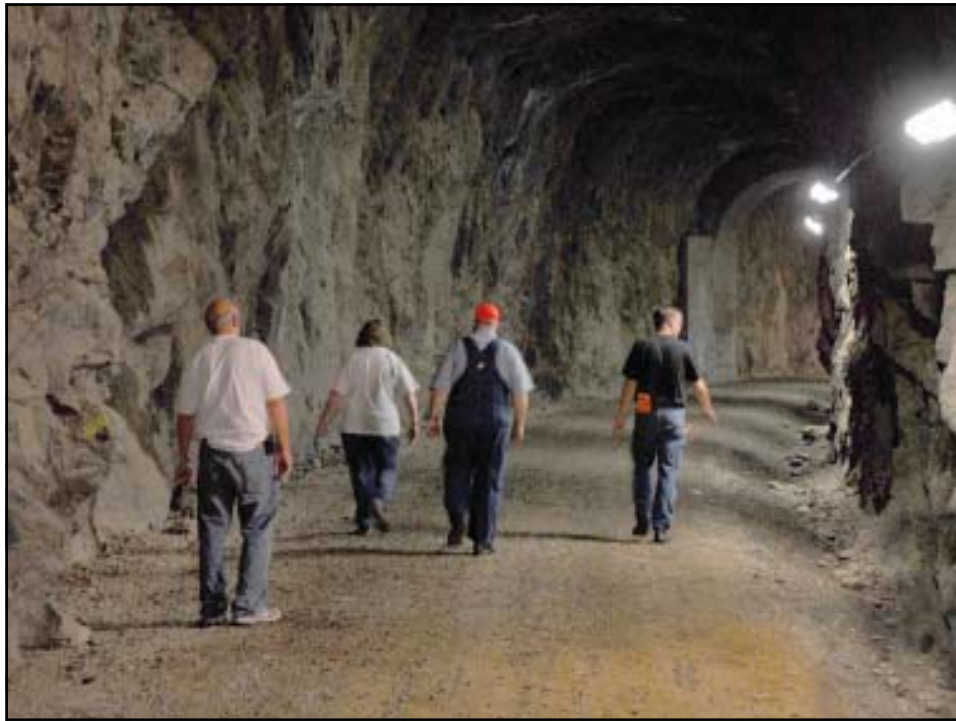




Another view of the 2007 banquet.



Some years the convention includes some sort of interesting off-site tour. In 2009 at the Oroville convention, the California Department of Water Resources provided guided tours of some of the former Oro Dam Railroad facilities. Here's one tour group walking through what was originally WP tunnel No. 4 and which carried the rails of the Oro Dam Constructors Railroad until the dam project was completed in the late 1960s.



More in the tunnel.



Our guest keynote speaker at the 2007 convention was Art Lloyd.

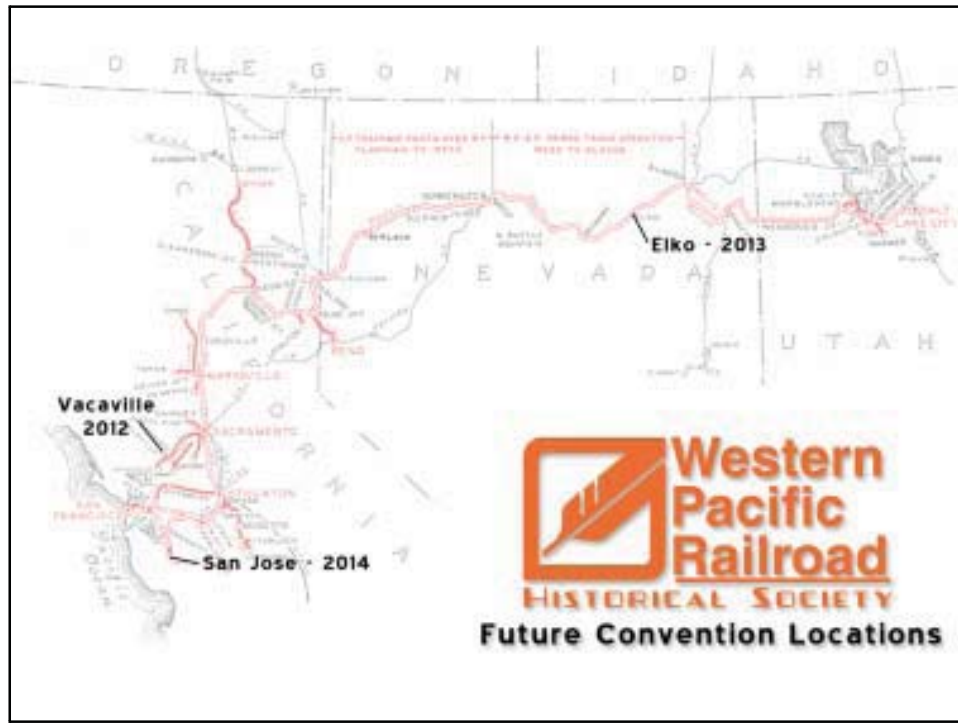


At the 2008 convention in Sacramento, former WP veteran Andy Kinicki entertained banquet guests with his stories from the inner workings of the WP.



Every year a number of WP “old heads” show up to share and enjoy memories from the “wobbly”. Recognize anyone?





Tentative convention plans for the next three years, Vacaville, Elko, and the San Jose area.



Meanwhile in Portola, the town recognizes and embraces its railroad heritage. From photos and paintings hanging in restaurants and business in downtown Portola, to the town's Railroad Days celebration every August, Portolans are proud of their railroad roots.



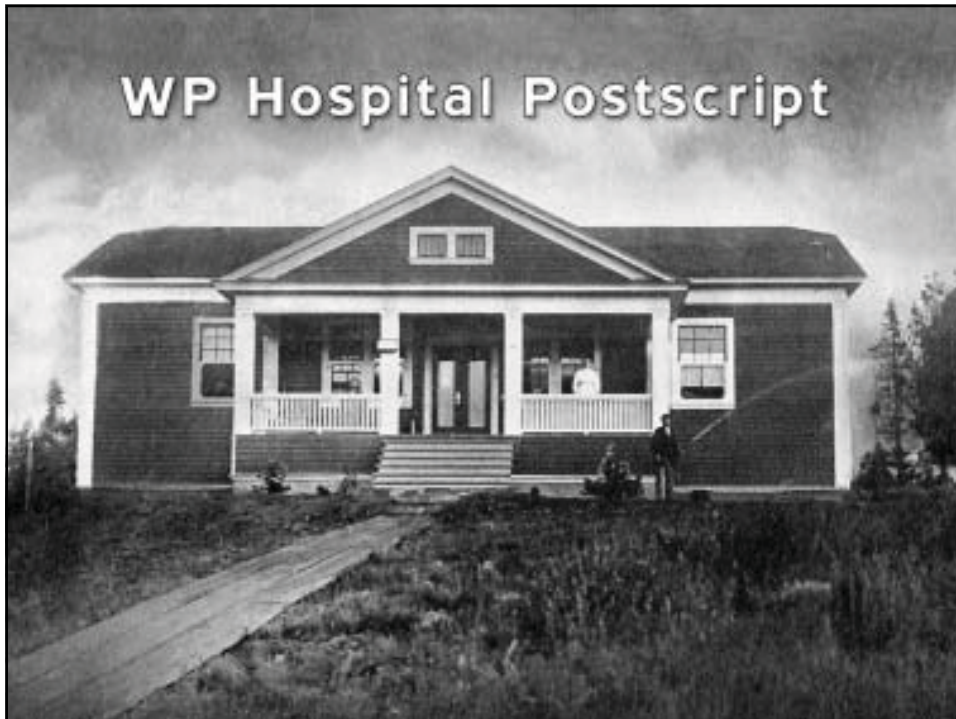
The UP still call Portola a crew change point, although much traffic has been diverted to Donner in recent years.



Every winter UP stations snow fighting equipment behind the Portola depot to make sure the line stays open. When Donner gets snowed in, it gets busy on the Feather River Route.



While tonnage trundles by on UPs Canyon Subdivision, across the fence the Western Pacific Railroad Museum keeps the memory of the WP alive.







Original 1912 hospital building on August 6<sup>th</sup> of this year, just before the annual summer's-end brush clearing by the California Conservation Corp.



The view of the UP yard from the front porch.



The entire complex awaits a new future as a visitors center and library.



One month later, in the early morning hours of September 7<sup>th</sup>, some thoughtless individual deliberately set fire to the building. It was a total loss.







The fire department had to demolish it to extinguish any remaining hot spots. There is nothing left.

**Man arrested in connection with Portola arson fires**

**San McDonald**  
Staff Writer  
8/16/2011

**BREAKING NEWS**

An 18-year-old Portola man was arrested Thursday and charged with two counts of arson for two recent fires, including the blaze that destroyed the old Western Pacific Hospital in Portola.

Harold Ellis Johnson was arrested by Plumas County Sheriff's deputies and booked into the county jail, where he is being held on \$100,000 bail.

Sheriff's Investigator Steve Peay said his office acted on information received over the past several days that led to Johnson, Johnson, who lists his address as 421 Nevada Street in Portola, was picked up by deputies Thursday afternoon.

He was arrested at the sheriff's office in Quincy at 4:38 p.m.

"He basically admitted his involvement," Peay said. "He said he acted alone."

Peay's case has been submitted to the Plumas County District Attorney's Office.

Johnson is charged with starting fires on Sept. 7 and Sept. 8. Both fires were set about 1 a.m. The Sept. 7 fire burned the 120-year-old Western Pacific Hospital to the ground.

The following morning, another fire was spotted in a small grove of trees below Feather River Middle School and along the electrical substation on Colling Street in Portola.

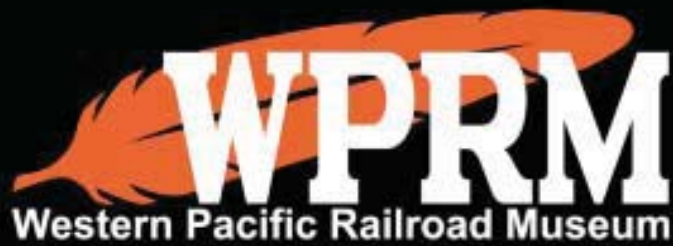
A patrolling deputy spotted the Sept. 8 fire, and the Portola Fire Department responded in time to put out the blaze before it could spread to the vacated school building.

Recently posted articles



Arson suspect Harold Ellis Johnson

18 year old suspect arrested Thursday September 16<sup>th</sup>, Harold Ellis Johnson



Please visit [wplives.org](http://wplives.org)  
for more information

**Thanks to the following  
presentation contributors**

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