

A word from...

The Museum Executive Director

Barbara and I attended the TRAIN convention in Louisville the first week in November. This is always a very interesting and informative event. Networking with counterparts from other tourist railways and museum groups always increases one's knowledge of operations and maintenance of our equipment and facilities.

We flew to Indianapolis a few days early to visit the Amtrak facility in Beech Grove and to visit some of the tourist railways and museum operations in the area. In visiting the eight locations it is interesting to compare them with what we have here at Portola. Most tourist railways are just that - a train to ride. Little or no thought is given to an accessible display of equipment not in current use for their operation. Others who call themselves museums do not have much in the way of display or identification of what they have on site. Weather is a definite factor in the preservation of equipment stored outdoors in the midwest and east. Rain and high humidity cause rust on steel equipment and rot on wooden cars. We are fortunate, in that respect our area is dry most of the year with only occasional spring rain and winter snow.

Visiting other operations always gives us ideas to improve our museum and to understand why visitors say we have one of the best railroad museums.

We wish to thank all who have sent Christmas cards and hope all have had a wonderful Christmas Season.

Norman W. Holmes

Western Pacific's Bicentennial Locomotives

By Norman Holmes

Twenty years ago, Western Pacific, along with the majority of the nation's railroads, painted two of its locomotives in a "Bicentennial" paint scheme. WP assembled a train of bicentennial painted cars and toured the system. The flyer reproduced here and included with this issue of the Train Sheet, was distributed wherever the train was placed on display. Following the display period, the 1776, along with 1976 were returned to regular service.

On its inaugural run from Oakland to Salt Lake City, stops were made en route for photographs. One of our charter members, Bob Larson, was the engineer on the portion from Oroville to Portola. On another occasion on May 18, 1976, WP Public Relations representative Paul Gordenev "arranged" to have 1776 and 1976 arrive at the Keddie Wye at the same time to pose for their famous portrait at that location. The 1776 was on a BN train from Bieber, 1976 was held at Portola and put on the point of a westbound train and with the dispatcher's cooperation arrived at Keddie at the same time as the BN train. With the sun slowly setting, cameras clicked for a once in a lifetime photo. Only a select few were informed of this event: Henry Brueckman, Jim Boynton and of course Paul Gordenev and myself.

1776 and 1976 continued to operate in regular freight service during 1976 and beyond. 1776, repainted back to its 3540 paint scheme met a tragic end as a result of a derailment at Hayward in April 1980. 1976 was the first EMD unit painted into the "New Image" paint scheme. The unit was retired by UP in 1986 and is still in operation on the Wisconsin Central Railroad as No. 3023.

A part of either 1776 and 1976 lives on at our museum. A cab window visor fell off one of the units at Doyle, east of Portola. I saw the visor laying along the right of way and retrieved it to place on my Plymouth locomotive.

We have several locomotives in our collection that were once painted in a bicentennial paint scheme, including the Plymouth mentioned above, Kennecott RS-3 No. 2, USS No. 16 and Kennecott electric No. 778.

Telling the Whole Story

Preservation Column

By David Dewey

I am going to start this month by assuming that the Museum exists to tell the "Story of Railroadng" to the general public, especially people who might have no knowledge of railroadng, except for waiting for one to pass at a grade crossing. What is the "Story of Railroadng?" This is a dangerous question to ask, as the answer can be elusive. To the conductor, it is waybills and other reports; to the signal maintainer, it is battling the elements to keep the signal system in safe working order; to the engineer, it is resetting the Ground Relay one more time to get over-the-hill; and to the gandy dancer it is spikes and bolts. The answer changes with each craft.

Within all these answers is what many believe is the "Story of Railroadng" -- but take note that each of these answers is about people and their tasks. The big picture is how they all relate to one another to move goods or people across the country.

Now let's look at another group. For this discussion, let's call them "buffs" so as not to accuse them of being Foamites (Functionally OverActive Mentally Incompetent Train Enthusiasts) or railfans. Buffs like trains enough that they collect parts of trains, look for places to keep trains and start museums of trains. Buffs already know how important trains are and what they look like and do; so they tend to concentrate on locomotives, 'cause they can do THINGS. Locomotives are neat, there are many different kinds of them, many colorful paint schemes, and they tell a story of the technological changes that have happened over the years. Without locomotives, trains wouldn't go anywhere!

But it is also true that without the many varieties of railroad cars, there would be no reason for the locomotives. Without the ability to move goods (including people), there would be no railroads.

Portola is fortunate in having saved many different freight cars, so we can tell much of the story, at least of the goods transport. The WP had a proud heritage of passenger transport, too, and we are trying to tell some of that story with our California Zephyr engine, 805A. But few of the passengers rode in the engine, and no meals on china were served there. To tell the complete story we need a CZ style passenger coach (preferably one with a Vista Dome, one of the hallmarks of a CZ train).

But I didn't write this just to lobby for the acquisition of a CZ car. It is only one example of what we could be doing to really tell "The Story." We need to constantly keep our feelers out for different kinds of things to show at the museum, and different ways of showing what we have, so others may understand what real railroadng is all about. If we are willing to commit \$30,000 to save a locomotive, we should also be willing to make similar commitments to save other parts of the railroad story, and to budget our resources so we may make such commitments. Ahh, budgets -- that's a whole 'nother story.