

road and transportation museums, the FRRS Site Committee began issuing a series of recommendations on the final form of a Site Master Plan.

As currently envisioned, the plan represents a build-out of the PRM facility that includes restorations and replicas of buildings that span the entire history of the WP system, from the Portola Hospital, which began construction in 1914, to the Diesel Shop itself, built in the 1950's. The final piece will be a modernist visitor's center located on the bluff above the main museum and housing our artifact collection and historical displays covering the WP system and its context among the nation's railroads. Display and restoration buildings will be patterned after WP, SN and TS prototypes and create the atmosphere of a working railroad.

Careful attention was paid to placement of both buildings and public access. Development is concentrated in the eastern end of the property, leaving the tree-studded balloon loop area relatively natural. Walkways allow visitors multiple paths through the facility and different vantage points to observe operations. In the museum's main heart, the area between the proposed depot, the Diesel Shop and the replica roundhouse, one will experience locomotives being serviced, crews prepping trains and general the environment of a vibrant railyard. Moving toward the western end of the property, visitors can watch trains roll by while enjoying a walk among the trees or a picnic in a sheltered grove. Inside the balloon loop, near Malfunction Jct., will be a grassy family play area, isolated from the movement of equipment but located to allow good visibility of all operations.

Equipment display is spread among four distinct buildings. The largest will be the Jeffrey Building, a 310' long, 4 track structure that will allow display of representative trains from different eras. The Portola Diesel Shop will continue as a running repair and display facility and provide visitors a change to see and explore our rolling stock as it receives regular TLC. The Whitman Building, located adjacent to the Depot, will hold some of our rarest equipment, those which present a unique, individual story and require special storage and care.

The final display building is a replica of a WP roundhouse. Patterned after the structure that once stood in Winnemucca, NV, this 8 stall roundhouse will be capable of storing a maximum of 16 locomotives, both steam and diesel. The highlight of this building will be the restored Oroville Turntable, which is now owned by the Society. Tracks lead to different service areas for steam and diesel motive power, both easily visible to visitors.

A replica WP depot will house the Gift Shop and ticket office, located in the current parking lot next to the proposed Whitman Building. Patterned after standard WP plans, the depot will be a nice entry into the main heart of the museum. The restored Magnolia Tower will anchor the other end of the facility. Located along the balloon loop, the tower will be returned to functional operation and serve as the dispatching center for the PRM in addition to providing an interactive lesson in the role of interlocking towers to our visitors.

Up on the hillsides above the museum will be the oldest and newest structures in the plan. The WP Hospital will be completely renovated and eventually house the FRRS' library and archives, as well as the Society's business offices and meeting rooms. Additional space will be devoted to displays explaining

the workings of the Hospital and galleries where photos and artwork relevant to the museum's mission can be shown.

The Beckwourth Visitor Center will be the new entrance to the museum. As visitors enter the building, they will find themselves in a great hall with full size locomotives and cars on static display. These will be interactive exhibits that display the technology of railroading and provide a basic understanding of the artifacts they are about to see. The south wing of the building will present artifacts of the railroads in a timeline fashion, allowing one to walk through the complete history of the WP and gain a context for the people and events that coexisted with it. The north wing will house a snack bar/restaurant and another gift shop. Additional space within the visitor center will include an upstairs gallery for temporary exhibits, a children's activity room and meeting rooms that will be open to the community. Visitors will exit the building into a large amphitheater that overlooks the main museum. Tours can start here and open air programs can be held, including historical talks and slide shows.

These are ambitious plans. While they may take years, or even decades, to reach completion, the end goal is the creation of a true experience that showcases the people and history of the Western Pacific and its corporate family and allows the visitor to immerse themselves in the environment, allowing them to gain a better understanding of the role the railroad plays in our lives.

Sacramento Northern 712

GP7 locomotive, built Electro-Motive Division, 1953

By Eugene Vicknair

SN 712 is the second locomotive we are receiving from the Bay Area Electric Railway Association as part of the groundbreaking trade between our organizations in 2003. It also brings another subsidiary locomotive into our collection, one with a long and interesting history.

WP 712 was built in 1953 as part of the road's second order for narrow hood road diesels. The arrival of GP7s 710-713 signaled the completion of full dieselization of the WP and the last steam locomotives were removed from active service that year. The WP's GP7s and their later kin quickly found jobs in every aspect of WP service, from switching to road freights, while the more numerous FTs and F7s were confined mostly to the mainline. Even as the streamliners were replaced by later high horsepower roadswitchers, the small GPs soldiered on and remained an active part of the roster right up to merger day.

In the 1950's, the Sacramento Northern had decided to abandon its carferry across the San Jouquin River. Heavy trains of steel for the plant in Pittsburg were pounding the mainline and bottleneaking at the venerable carferry "Ramon". With the collapse of the Lisbon Trestle, the SN began detouring over the WP and Santa Fe from Sacramento through Stockton to Pittsburg. To power these trains, the SN purchased F3As from the abandoned New York, Ontario and Western. By 1971, these two engines were wore out and the road needed replacements. The F3s went to WP as trade-in fodder and two GP7s, WP 711 and 712, were transferred to the SN. Along with NW2u 607, transferred from WP in 1973, these were the last locomotive's acquired by SN.

While intended for the *SN Detour* steel trains, the two

geeps actually roamed much of the SN and even back onto the WP, just as their predecessor F-units had done. By the late 1970's, WP power was common on the steel train and the 711 and 712 spent much of their time working the SN lines north out of Marysville, including the *Chico Local*. With the coming of the merger with UP, the SN GPs hung around a little while with a few WP stragglers, then were set aside. While SN 711 was scrapped in 1984 (after being repainted in UP colors and suffering a major mechanical failure shortly thereafter), SN 712 was donated to the BAERA in 1985. When the Association decided to return their focus to electric railroading, the 712 was deemed surplus and became part of the trade with the FRRS.

With the 712 heading to Portola, the FRRS now owns 4 Western Pacific GP7 locomotives and its first SN road unit. The 712 will remain in its SN Perlman Green paint as part of the FRRS collection.

Reference:

Garth G. Groff, "US Steel and the SN Detour" and "All-Time Diesel Roster", *Sacramento Northern On-Line*
Joseph Strapac, *Western Pacific's Diesel Years*

Sacramento Northern 2129/2346



40ft wood boxcar

By Eugene Vicknair

In early 2004, the FRRS completed a trade with the Santa Maria Valley Railroad Historical Society that brings Sacramento Northern wood boxcar 2129/2346 into the Portola collection. These cars had a long history on the SN and the WP and the 2149/2346 fills a major gap in our preservation of WP subsidiary equipment.

In 1918, the Sacramento Northern Railroad was formed from the reorganization of the Northern Electric Railway. Owned by the Western Pacific, the new SNRR was severely lacking in viable freight equipment, being equipped with a small fleet of obsolete, truss-rod equipped 36' boxcars. The next year, the road purchased 25 steel underframe wood boxcars from Mt. Vernon Car Manufacturing Company. These 40 ft cars were nearly identical to a design Mt. Vernon built for WP starting in 1917. These cars featured an 8 ft interior height and a capacity of 2723 cubic feet. They rode on arch bar trucks and were equipped with K-brakes and Murphy galvanized metal roofs. Numbered as SN 2129-2153, they became the only SN freight equipment (along with steel underframe auto boxcar 2100) allowed in interchange service after wooden underframe cars were banned in 1928.

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Both the SN and WP fleets would prove to be incredibly long-lived, although WP began tinkering with their own Mt. Vernon cars (WP 16001-18300 and 30001-30200) by the late 1920's. The most prominent change WP made was rebuilding its own cars with steel ends. SN's original cars retained their wooden ends throughout their service lives. Starting in the 1930's, the WP cars began receiving Andrews trucks, although some kept their archbars into the late 1950's. Some in the WP fleet survived in revenue service into the 1960's and many continued in MOW service even longer.

The SN's own fleet had a few more twists and turns in its history. These cars were not included in the conversion to Andrews trucks and were restricted to on-line service after the 1941 archbar ban went into effect. As such, they could only be used on the WP system, which of course included the SN and Tidewater Southern. They were often used in Less than CarLoad (LCL) service on the SN. In 1947, SN received 28 of the WP's rebuilt Mt. Vernon cars, featuring Andrews trucks, AB brakes and steel ends. These cars were numbered 2301-2328 and eventually received the same arched roadname paint scheme as the SN 2129 series.

The 22 surviving original cars were retired from service and an Authorization for Expenditure (AFE) issued in 1947 reports them retired and scrapped. However, they were actually just stored for a year. In 1948, they were unretired and shopped, receiving AB brakes, and renumbered (out of sequence) as SN 2329-2350. Some also received Andrews trucks, although a handful continued to ride on archbars into the 1970's.

As WP's fleet of wood cars dwindled, the SN fleet continued in a variety of services. In 1954, several were transferred to MOW service. By the beginning of the 1960's, many were sold for scrap and most others were transferred to company service. Amazingly, three, SN 2326, 2337 and 2350 were still listed in revenue service in 1969. The last Mt. Vernon car, SN MW02335, was sold in January 1976, having served the SN for 57 years.

SN 2349 became a workshop in Santa Maria, California, minus its trucks and brake gear. In the late 1990's, she was acquired by the Santa Maria Valley Railroad Historical Society with the intent to restore the car to operation. Kept in a sheltered location, the car survived in very good condition, still featuring its original SN paint scheme and a beautiful, varnished wood interior. Car loader marks are still evident chalked in the interior, along with notations of cargos from days gone by. In 2002, a proposal was made to trade one of our Southern Pacific sugar beet gons to SMVRHS in exchange for the 2346. An inspection of the car revealed its original number: SN 2129, the first car of the series.

Spring 2004 is the planned target to transport the SMVRHS' beet gon to its new home in Santa Maria (near the site of the Betteravia Sugar Beet Mill where the car saw service) and bring SN 2129/2346 back to WP rails. A restoration will occur in the future than will reequip the car with appropriate trucks and brakes and return her to service, joining our own WP Mt. Vernon car and looking right at home behind WP 0-6-0 165 or one of our early WP diesels.

Reference:

Garth G. Groff, "40' Wooden Boxcars on the SN", *Sacramento Northern On-Line*

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