WP'S CENTENNIAL
                                                    - Norman Holmes, Director

Western Pacific's celebration of the completion of the railroad was November 1, 1909. A small group of workers and townspeople attended the event that was held on the Spanish Creek bridge near the town of Keddie. An iron spike was driven in a pine tie and the work went on. This was no lavish event like the joining of the rails at Promontory, Utah in 1869, however the completion of the Western Pacific was very important since this upstart railroad broke the monopoly held by the Central Pacific.

As the Preservation Organization for the Western Pacific, the Feather River Rail Society had great plans to celebrate this important event. As early as February 2006, plans were being made for a major celebration. This was not only for Western Pacific's centennial, but for the 100 years since the founding of the town of Portola, 60 years since the inauguration of the California Zephyr and 25 years since the opening of the Portola Railroad Museum.

To celebrate the event, some of the ideas floated included the operation of a reconstructed California Zephyr train that would make an excursion trip in the Feather River Canyon. The train would be powered by our California Zephyr FP7 No. 805A, our replica F9 B unit 926C and our F7 921D. Passenger cars would include our 3 CZ cars and a number of CZ cars that are privately owned. Then with the cooperation of the Union Pacific we would have another passenger train powered by UP's Challenger steam locomotive, No 3985 renumbered WP 408. These trains would meet on the Keddie Wye bridge to hold a spike driving ceremony.

A Railfan Photographer Day was proposed for the Spring with an invitation sent to various museums holding Western Pacific, Great Northern and Santa Fe locomotives.

Feather River Railroad Days in August would be a major WP themed event. We would request Union Pacific to repaint former WP 3559, WP's last purchased locomotive back to its WP color scheme and donate it to the museum. A freight train of WP cars with several of the Society's diesel locomotives and a WP caboose could be set up and possibly run on the UP tracks.

A "gold spike" ceremony would be held on the Keddie Wye trestle November 1, 2009 to mark the exact date of the driving of the last spike which marked the completion of the last transcontinental railroad. Locomotives from the UP, BNSF and WP would be in attendance.

Proposed facility improvements included reassembly of Magnolia Tower, completion of walkways around the Diesel Shop, a track extension to Old Town Portola, new signage, new rest rooms, additional storage tracks and a WP employee memorial grove with plaque. To fund the celebration, a major fundraising effort was to begin targeting major businesses that had strong ties to the WP. A higher level of engagement with government representatives and agencies was recommended.

Had these plans come to pass, a grand celebration could have been held. However, after a number of attempts were made at fundraising and a cool reception from the railroads and businesses, the major parts of the plan had to be abandoned. The economic slowdown during late 2008 and extending into 2009 certainly played a role in our inability to raise the necessary funds.

Still, the Society would not give up on giving the WP its due. New plans were put into play.

In April 2009, Union Pacific ran its steam locomotive, No. 844, with a passenger train to California, calling the trip a Western Heritage tour. Stops were made in Sparks, Roseville, Stockton, Oroville and Portola. Three trips were made to benefit the Society. A round trip was made between Oakland and Stockton, a one way trip from Oroville to Portola and another from Portola to Winnemucca.

On the Oroville to Portola segment, which ran on Saturday May 2, a stop was made on the Keddie Wye bridge and a ceremonial spike was driven with UP 844 looking on. Passengers were allowed off the train to witness the ceremony. FRRS President Rod McClure, Vice President Steve Habeck and UP Steam Boss Steve Lee took turns wielding the spike maul. Incidentally, the maul came from our collection, having been presented to the Society by then UP President Mike Flannery and was the one used by WP for the Ruby celebration at Keddie in 1949. UP had added UP 1983, EMD SD70M, to the consist to

run behind the 844 to Portola. The 1983 was taken off at Portola where it remained for several days. The UP train remained in Portola two full days drawing large crowds.

FRRS charter member Chris Skow contacted private car owner Bert Hermey to see if his CZ cars could be available for a trip on that weekend. Although it was on short notice, a three car mini California Zephyr cars pulled by an Amtrak locomotive was approved by Amtrak and Union Pacific. Three cars, Silver Rapids, Silver Lariat and Silver Solarium with an Amtrak GE locomotive left Oakland on Thursday October 30, at 8AM. It travelled south to Niles Junction where the train entered onto original WP trackage for the journey to Portola. Even with the short notice, this 100th Anniversary excursion sold out with 48 passengers, which gave everyone a guaranteed dome seat at all times. Arrival in Portola was 6PM. The train was pulled into the museum by WP 608, turned on the balloon track and parked alongside the diesel shop for the next two nights.

On Friday, October 31 these three CZ cars and the museum's CZ collection were all coupled together, pulled by the ABA set of F units for a run around the balloon track for the cameras. Indeed, for a short period of time almost a full CZ train set with the F units were together again at the Western Pacific Railroad Museum. Saturday November 1, the train departed Portola at 8:30AM for its return to the Bay Area.

FRRS founder Norman Holmes did not want to let the day go by without a recognition of the event at Keddie. Norm and wife Barbara drove to Keddie Wye where Norm ceremoniously drove an old small sized iron spike with a very old spike mall from the Quincy Railroad. The mini-Zephyr stopped on the wye to comme-morate the date. Meanwhile back in Portola, not to let the day go unnoticed a group of FRRS members held a last spike driving ceremony at Malfunction Junction on the museum grounds.

Despite setbacks and the economy, the FRRS can be proud of the efforts so far to celebrate the WP Centennial. As we head into the end of this year, we will close out with more celebration and plans for the next 100 years.

MUSEUMS LICENSE PLATE

The FRRS is supporting an exciting opportunity to bring the world's favorite beagle, Snoopy, to license plates in California and support our state's museums at the same time.

Snoopy is a singular beagle and a proud Californian. Those are two good reasons for him to be featured on his own California license plate. But to make it even more worthwhile, the proceeds from the official Snoopy license plate will support California's museums. Each plate will feature a reproduction of an original Snoopy drawing by Charles Schulz, doing a happy dance, probably in anticipation of suppertime.

So how do we make it happen? If we can get 7,500 California drivers to join in, we can be the first state in the union to feature Snoopy on an official license plate. Note that you are simply registering interest at this point. Once we have enough interested people, the state will collect a $50 fee from anyone who wants to get their own Snoopy plate. When we reach the magic number of 7,500, they will go into production, and voilà, a Snoopy license plate is yours.

Registration proceeds from the plate will go into a fund to help our state's great museums, such as the FRRS. As you know, museums are truly special places, community forums where families, friends and neighbors can meet, learn and discover together. We're lucky in California, because our state has an incredible variety of great museums that serve a truly diverse range of interests and specialties.

So, don't hesitate! Go to www.snoopyplate.com today to sign up for your Snoopy license plate. And, tell your friends and family to help us achieve our goal. Help support the FRRS and California museums.