

Pumpkin Patch Express Returns!

Eugene Vicknair

After a two year hiatus due to COVID-19, the Western Pacific Railroad Museum returned to operating our annual Pumpkin Patch Express event. Slightly scaled down from 2019, it none the less turned out to be a big success, with attendance figures higher than we have seen in years.



Operating over two weekends, October 15-16 and 22-23, the event featured caboose train rides from the Diesel Shop out to the Pumpkin Patch, located in the museum's picnic area where visitors could purchase pumpkins. On Saturday nights, trains operated after dark and were lit up to the delight of visitors.

The October 22-23 weekend featured restored Western Pacific steam locomotive 165 as the motive power, adding an extra dimension to the event. Or highest attendance numbers were on Saturday, October 22. Almost 100 cars paid for admission to the event and the first evening train carried 160 riders!

Admissions totaled over \$2,450 for the event and visitors also donated food to the EPCAN food bank in exchange for discounted admission. After the event, member Duane van der Veen delivered 40 bags of food to EPCAN, earning us a delighted hand-written thank you letter from their director.

The Pumpkin Patch was run by Breckyn Shirley, one of our Museum Store staffers, along with help from her sister Bryn, Erica Waldeck (daughter of museum store lead Ann Cary), and several volunteers from the Portola High School. Bart and David Hansen, along with Eugene Vicknair and Greg Elems, handled the gate and admissions, while Bart and David also picked up the pumpkins and hay bales for delivery to the museum and handled prep of the parking lot. Eugene and Patty Clawson of Big Fish Creations took care of advertising and led the decorating



Spooks on the train...

- Photo by Greg Elems

team to prep the train and diesel shop for the event with help from Breckyn, Ann, Steve Habeck, Greg Elems and additional volunteers from Portola High School. The second weekend, Yngshi Feng did free face painting in the store to the delight of the kids who attended. Ann Cary handled much of the store duties with some help from various volunteers and did huge business.

Our fantastic train crews handled the very busy operations and the steam crew was on hand the second weekend to run WP 165. Roger Stabler, Steam CMO was on hand along with Steve Lee who was engineer for many of the steam weekend runs.

Much thanks also to David Elems, who was everywhere making sure things got done, Charlie Spikes who arranged for the pumpkin purchase, and the staff of We Cook For You from Chico, CA, who brought their food truck to the museum the



Pumpkin Patch 10/15/2022

- Photo by Greg Elems

first weekend. Paul Finnegan kept everything up to date on the website and helped with information and promotion. Michael Clawson of Big Fish Creations was roaming around taking photos and video to help with our documentation and advertising both weekends. Also on hand was Jack Sutton of Reno News channel 2, who recorded segments for “Nevada Back Roads” about the Pumpkin Patch Express to air on Reno 2.

Ron Berriesford and Eugene Vicknair donated a large number of decorations to help fill out the look of the event.

Also, while it was not part of the event, I want to thank everyone who helped unload Western Pacific Pullman coach 302 (first), which arrived right in the middle of the final weekend, adding complication to an already packed event. Thanks to the skill of our volunteers and the Bragg Crane crew, we were able to safely unload the car without impact to the Pumpkin Patch Express event.

Thank you to everyone who worked the event (and apologies to anyone I missed):

- Logan Beers
- Ann Cary
- Michael Clawson
- Patty Clawson
- David Elems
- Greg Elems
- Matthew Elems
- Fred Elenbaas
- Yngshi Feng
- Paul Finnegan
- Steve Habeck
- Bart Hansen
- David Hansen
- Steve Lee
- Amber Louise
- Baily Raney
- Breckyn Shirley
- Bryn Shirley
- Charlie Spikes
- Roger Stabler
- Duane Vander Veen
- Eugene Vicknair
- Erica Waldeck