

WESTERN RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Dedicated to preserving the skills and artifacts of our western railway heritage

The Electronic Newsletter of the WRPS

E-News Issue - 2
January 2010



President's Report

Happy New Year everyone and welcome to the second E-Newsletter produced by the Western Railway Preservation Society. I would like to start this issue by announcing some great news. The Preservation Society has had its non-profit status confirmed by the IRS. We are now a fully registered and approved 501(3)(c) organization which means all contributions to the Preservation Society are fully tax deductible and of even more importance, we now qualify for many of the grants available to the historical preservation community.

We already have a list of granting agencies that will be hearing from us in the very near future. One of the first projects we will be funding is the establishment of shop building in which to carry out the restoration work.

On the subject of shop buildings, I'm sorry to report that we have had a set back in the efforts to preserve the original Sumpter Valley Railway shop buildings in South Baker City.

As you may remember from our last issue, we have been talking with the owner of the South Baker Shop buildings and discussing a proposal to lease the shop buildings with an option to purchase the buildings and property out right as soon as the funding could be arranged.

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However, while we were involved in these negotiations, the owner received a cash offer from a third party and the property was sold to them for \$140,000. However, this does not finish our efforts to preserve the SVRy shop buildings. It just means that the "players" have changed and we will be talking with the new owners about the possibility of saving the S. Baker Shop Buildings.

However, we still need a shop building to continue our restoration work so we have been considering other possibilities. We have also been looking at other, original Sumpter Valley Railway buildings with an eye towards purchase and preservation of these historic structures. Look for Jerry Huck's multi-part article in this newsletter for more on this project.

Also, in this issue we have the second part of Mike Robert's article bringing up to date on the restoration of West Side Lumber's tank car #5.

In other news, the WRPS completed its first annual meeting last October. The meeting was held at Barley Brown's Brew Pub in Baker City. During the meeting we held the elections for the Society's directors and after the votes were counted it turns out that for 2010 we will have the same directors and officers that were appointed in July when the Society was formed. These people and their positions are listed on the first page.

In closing, I would like to give my personal thanks to the members that have already contributed funds to the Preservation Society. Without their support, we could not have completed our IRS filings and seen the Society develop to the point where we can now pursue grant funds to continue and expand our work. We will have tax deduction receipts in the mail to these members within the next few days.

I wish you all a great new year and we'll talk again soon.



Tim Bain – President
Western Railway Preservation Society

Along the Right of Way

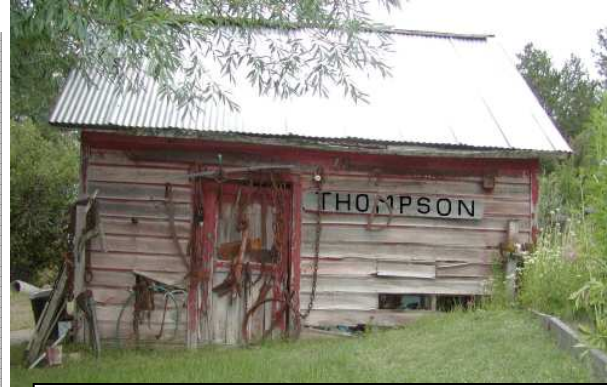
By Jerry Huck

Question; How many structures survive from the original Sumpter Valley Railway?

The answer may surprise you. Most people know of the depots at Baker City and Prairie City and then of course the shop buildings in South Baker. We'll even count the Oregon lumber Co. water towers currently in McEwen and Sumpter for a total of six structures Right?

Well, there are a few others left along the right of way.

Back in October, I started doing some investigation into the remaining SVRy buildings. My first stop was to check out the remains at Thompson, Oregon. As you leave Baker City and drive up Hwy 7 towards McEwen you'll be traveling along the original right of way of the SVRy. Thirteen miles



This photo of the old Thompson section car house was taken in 2002 and shows the Thompson station sign board. The name has been weathered so much that most of the letters are now hard to read. So the lettering was enhanced with a photo editor to make it stand out. Photo by Clifton Woolman from his "Sidings of the SVR" website.

into your journey, you will pass the old siding that was once called Thompson. On your right you will see the remains of the old grange building that served for many years as a meeting hall for the local area. On the same side of the highway are the remains of the Sumpter Valley Railway depot.

The SVRy depot at Thompson has seen better days. However the main framing of the building is still sound so there is still hope that this historic building can be saved.



[Along the ROW – continued from p.3](#)

While the depot at Thompson siding still exists, it is in rather decrepit condition. However the building is not beyond repair.

It's a single room building with cabinets on the front wall by the main door. The walls and ceiling are covered in the same siding the SVRy used on their Caboose #3. The interior also has several layers and shades of green paint.

According to SVRy records provided by J.B. Bane, the depot measures 14'x 16' and was built in 1912. After the railway was abandoned, the depot was purchased by the Miles family that owned a large ranch in the immediate area and was used as a cabin for the hired man. The building was later moved from its original location a number of yards up the hill when the road that later became state highway #7 was improved following abandonment right of way by SVRy.

Less well known is the Thompson siding section car house, also

purchased by the Miles Family ranch and then used as a garage. Built in 1922 this building exists in reasonably good condition and is kept painted and maintained by the ranch.

Also at the Miles ranch is the Thompson bunkhouse that was used by the SVRy section crews. In an interview with Keith Miles, he informed me that the bunkhouse was purchased when the SVRy was abandoned and relocated a couple of hundred yards away by the Powder River to serve as the ranch house.

The current owners of the Miles ranch are willing to allow the Western Railway Preservation Society to document these old SVRy buildings in 2010. If you would like to assist in the documentation of these structures then please contact me (Jerry) at 509-540-7306.

[In part 2 of "Along the Right of Way", we will take a look at other surviving railway structures of the old Sumpter Valley Railway.](#)



[Located just on the other side of the Powder River from Thompson can be found the old Thompson bunkhouse that was used by the SVRy section crews. The Miles family moved this building to its current location and it served as their family home for a number of years.](#)

West Side Lumber Company Tank Car #5

A Short History and the Resurrection

By Mike Roberts

Taken in the late 1960's, this shows Tank #5 at the Roaring Camp & Big Trees railway in California. The car was still complete at this time, but starting to deteriorate.

Dr. Nick Muff photo, Dave Squire collection.



We restart the West Side #5 tank car story as it was prepared to leave the Roaring Camp and Big Trees Railroad in Felton, CA, October, 2000.

SVRR members Jerry Huck and Matt Mattioda were there to help with get things loaded onto a flat bed trailer, but soon found themselves dealing with badly rotted cars literally falling apart. The last item loaded was Tank # 5, craned onto the top of the remains of the two SPNG flat cars for its trip to McEwen, OR. By now the rotted hose/tool box and platform had disintegrated, and nylon straps around the tank and frame were keeping the car in one piece. To add insult to injury, the long fill tube on the tank was deemed too tall for road travel, and had to be cut off by Jerry Huck. Luckily, a lot of pictures were taken during this process, and some are

invaluable. For example, Jerry and Matt took the only known pictures of the inside of the hose/tool box before it fell apart.

Upon arrival at the SVRR shops at McEwen, it was soon obvious that Tank #5 was not going to make it onto rails. The trucks were pulled, and the frame and tank were allowed to settle onto the parking lot gravel. Tank #5 sat in this sorry state for five years.

After the restoration approval by Tim Bain, the SVRR Restoration Manager, some time went into what steps and goals had to be taken to glean the most information from the tank car remains and make for a successful rebuild. A plea was made to West Side fans and historians to see if plans and measurements were available. Noted WS fans and historians Russ Simpson

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and Dave Squire, both from CA, came through with pictures and an amazing amount of documentation. A very important phase was completed.

The project started as an archeological dig. Using small trowels, shovels, and rakes, the perimeter debris was slowly gone through. Anything that had any significance – from bolts to washers to bits of wood with drilled holes in them - were photographed, tagged, and cataloged onto scale drawings of the frame. In November 2005, the tank was cleared for removal, and was placed on cribbing. The fact it was so stable, in spite of the rust issues, was a very good sign. Deconstruction work restarted in April 2006, and stopped in June, waiting for the project to progress until the need for the new draft timbers.

Two of the project goals made were that restoration would focus on subassemblies, and that it would also start at ground level. So, the next phase was reconstruction of the original 3'7" w.b. West Side trucks. This part of the project started in July of 2006, and ended in August 2007.



Lowering a rebuilt truck bolsters into place on the rebuilt frame.

SVRR member Dave Sellars provided the northern CA. old-growth fir for the new spring planks and truck bolsters, and every piece of iron was sandblasted, checked for damage, rethreaded, and primed. Old techniques had to be dug up on how to install the straight 1" iron truss rods into the new truck bolsters to form a 'V' shape (a story in itself). When needed, new square-headed nuts were bought or scavenged, and bolts were purchased or fabricated to match the damaged originals. Temporary wood bearings were made for axle support until the originals could be rebabbitted. The rebuilt trucks rolled very well – even on the wood bearings.



Here are the two rebuilt trucks and bolsters are now all competed and ready to go under the tank car



Here we see the tank being removed from the remains of the badly deteriorated car body.

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The biggest project requirement was a complete set of beams and planks – nothing was salvageable. A donation of fine-grained fir and hemlock logs by Jerry Cave from Zig Zag OR. provided the end beams, car bolsters, needle beams, and all of the parts for the new tool/hose box and platform.. .A trip by good friend Ken Hittle (Portland, OR) and myself to the famous steam-powered Hull-Oakes sawmill in Monroe, OR. netted us the donation of the long 8” X 8” rough-sawn main beams, decking, and tank support beams. A successful completion of another goal!

During the next months, and ending in May 2008, the car bolster subassemblies were fabricated, and placed on the trucks for storage. Needle beams were next. Four missing truss rod pad replacements were donated by Jeff Petersen (Ridgefield, WA). These were beautifully machined replicas, and it was a tough call to make to roughen them up



In the end, none of the original car body's wood was salvageable. So, now the team had to documentate the remains of the car and then carefully removed all the metal parts so they can be used on the new carbody.



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to look more like cast iron. End beams and draft timbers followed. Again, every bit of iron was sandblasted, inspected, and repaired/replaced as needed. The time spent measuring way back in 2005/2006, and the donated documentation was paying off big time, too.

June of 2008 was an important milestone. All of the subassemblies and donated beams and planks were staged indoors. Big steel sawhorses fabricated by SVRR member Arnie Lipchetz (Kennewick, WA) felt the weight of the six long main beams. The big push to reconstruct the frame could now begin in earnest.

With the rebuild of the trucks now completed it was time to start building the new carbody. Here we see all the beams and lumber all lined up ready for the next work season to begin.



Next time I'll finish the Tank #5 story-to-date, going through the exciting (and sometimes very stressful!) reconstruction of the frame, the frame flip, test runs, and discuss the upcoming second-to-last subassembly – the steel tank. Thanks for reading – *Mike Roberts*

WRPS Membership Information

The Western Railway Preservation Society is *dedicated to preserving the skills and artifacts of our western railway heritage*, with particular attention given to the narrow gauge railways such as the Sumpter Valley Railway in northeastern Oregon.

If you have not done so already, please consider joining the Western Railway Preservation Society. Until this summer, it's free to join. All you need to do is send your e-mail address to; svwiper@hotmail.com and we will place you on the e-mail list. Then, we will be sending you our e-mail newsletter, where you can stay informed on the progress of the Western Railway Preservation Society's restoration projects including the efforts to save and preserve the Sumpter Valley Railway's right a way buildings as seen in this issue.

Of course, if you would like to go that extra step and purchase a membership, you will not be asked to renew your membership until the summer of 2011. Membership levels are;

General \$20
Sustaining \$35
Life Membership \$250

Membership fees and donations for the Western Railway Preservation Society can be mailed to;

Western Railway Preservation Society
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If you have any questions or comments about the WRPS or any of our projects, please feel free to contact Tim Bain at svwiper@hotmail.com or Jerry Huck at lmcx@eoni.com. We would be happy to share more details of this new venture with you and hope you will consider being a member of the new Western Railway Preservation Society.

In the next issue, see how Mike Roberts and his crew turn the West Side Lumber tank car from;

THIS

into

THIS

