

Preliminary Restoration Analysis of Northwestern Pacific Railroad Caboose No. 6101

SPCRR, The Railroad Museum at Ardenwood
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Northwestern Pacific Railroad "Ten-Wheeler" locomotive No. 145 with NWP caboose No. 6101, posed with train crew and bystanders at Monte Rio, California, summer 1910. J. B. Rhea, photographer. Courtesy of NWPRRHS Archive, Raymond J. Roix Collection.



The former Northwestern Pacific Railroad caboose No. 5591, nee-6101, enduring the elements and passing decades as a privately-owned cabin and storage shed at Point Reyes Station, California circa 1950. Courtesy of Jack Muzio.

Table of Contents

<i>Report Goals & Objectives</i>	3
<i>Historic Milestones—NWP Caboose No. 6101</i>	4
<i>Timeline—NWP Narrow Gauge Caboose No's 5590 & 5591, nee-6100 & 6101</i>	5
<i>Foreword</i>	8
<i>A Northern California Narrow Gauge Scenario</i>	17
<i>Operations of the NPCRR</i>	19
<i>A Caboose is Built</i>	22
<i>The North Shore: Radical Railroad</i>	26
<i>Paying the Piper</i>	33
<i>Caboose Repairs—Summer 1906</i>	34
<i>NWP's "Shore Division"—1907 - 1912</i>	42
<i>Historic Paint—Graphically Charted</i>	47
<i>Transitions</i>	51
<i>Mandated Upgrades—1913; Fresh Identities for the Narrow Gauge Caboose—1914</i>	52
<i>More Alterations—1916 & 1920</i>	59
<i>The 1920s—Destination: Survival . . . Or Doom</i>	60
<i>Requiem</i>	63
<i>From Slumber to Salvation—1958 -1969</i>	64
<i>Enter, Stage Right: "Old Sacramento"</i>	68
<i>Sacramento Bound</i>	70
<i>The Caboose Comes to Ardenwood—2007; Red Light, Green Light—2015-2016</i>	73
<i>A Structural Reassessment of Frame, Body and Appliances—2015 - 2016</i>	78
<i>Potential Restoration Periods Assessed</i>	86
<i>Exhibit & Interpretation Recommendations</i>	94
<i>Appendices</i>	100
<i>Acknowledgements & Sources</i>	124

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A kingpin cover plate cast in brass by or for the North Shore Railroad in 1902 for use in one of the road's electric motor suburban cars built in the Sausalito Shop. Two replicated plates might also be considered as worthy additions to Northwestern Pacific Railroad caboose No. 6101 if it can be proven to have been built or finished by the North Shore in the same general time period.

California State Railroad Museum, Frank Saarni Collection.



Foreword

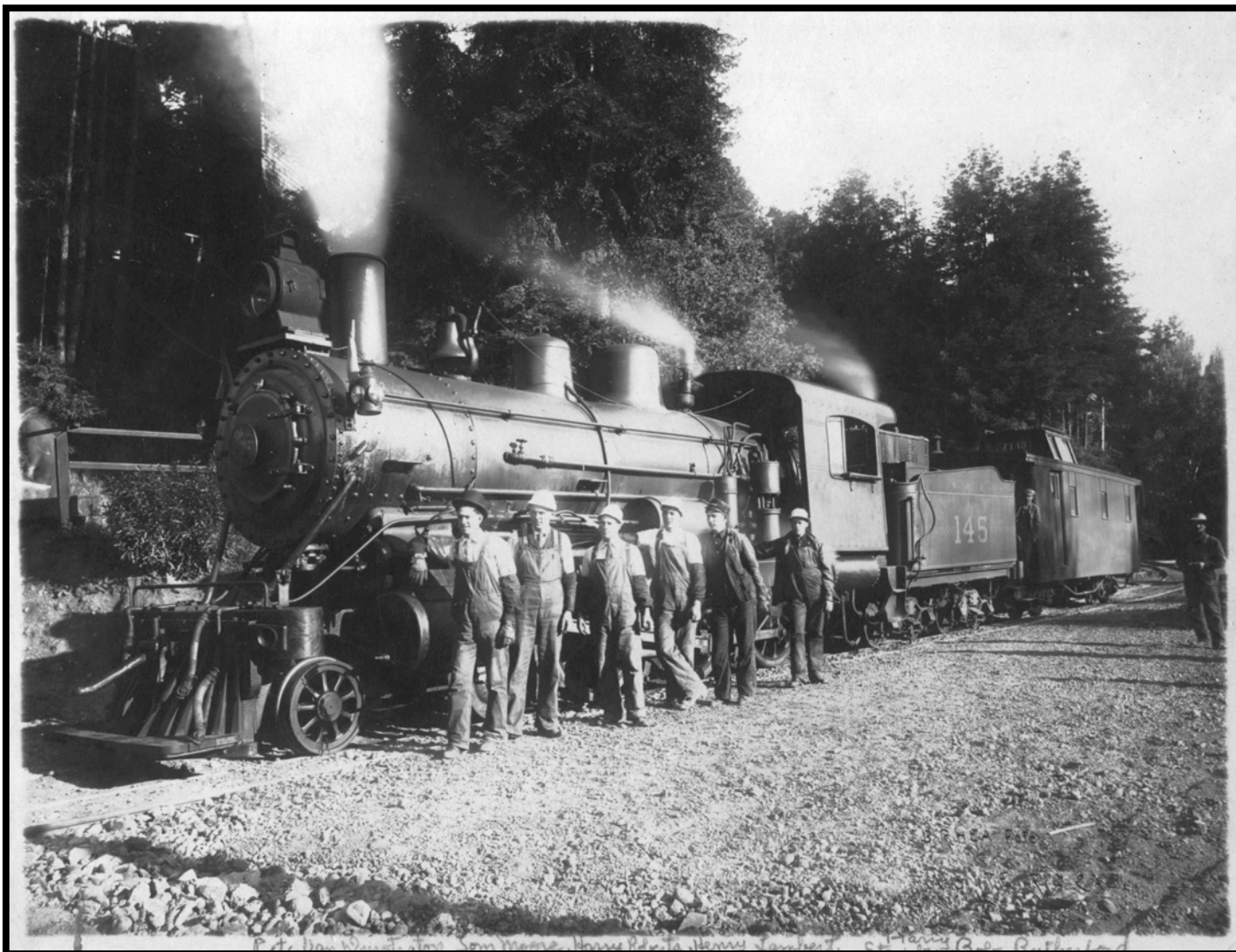
In 2008, when our museum was granted ownership of this Northwestern Pacific Railroad (NWP) narrow gauge caboose—No. 5591 was its identity at the time—from the California State Railroad Museum (CSRM) collection, we saw it to be a very worthy addition to our historical collection of rare California-built 3-foot gauge rolling stock. We also understood it to be in need of some additional work in order for the caboose to become a usable and more authentic artifact. This detailed analytic report fully outlines the work required and also serves to clarify why the initial restoration effort was halted by the Board of Directors in early 2015. This record echoes, corrects and expands my 1978 analysis for CSRM. It also draws upon and corrects some preliminary reports and opinion papers drawn up by former SPCRR Curator Randy Hees.

As a former curatorial staff member at CSRM, I was the researcher assigned in January 1978 to perform a similar (if lighter) survey of this same caboose. That museum was then considering how best to use NWP No. 5591 as part of the core collection destined for exhibition inside the Museum of Railroad History in Old Sacramento. As my initial survey proved, the caboose was in need of more structural and cosmetic corrective attention than earlier presumed. Given CSRM's time crunch and restorations budget in 1979—another half dozen pieces of rolling stock were still to undergo work, some already in its Restoration Shop and consuming funds and man-hours in excess of expectations—led to the choice to set No. 5591 aside. There were also political sensitivities underlying the decision. The Pacific Coast Chapter, Railway & Locomotive Historical Society had rescued the hulk of this same caboose at Samuel P. Taylor State Park in western Marin County, where it had been an outdoor display. “The Chapter” (as it was affectionately known) then spent close to \$15,000 on having it pieced back together by Bethlehem Steel's shipyard in San Francisco. Once CSRM reached its curatorial decision to leave well enough alone, the caboose was trucked to one of California State Parks' collections warehouses in West Sacramento and locked away. Thereafter it was rarely exhibited before the public. Ultimately rendered excess to a much enlarged CSRM, it deserved a better home where its core worth—and potential—could be appreciated and managed. In this way it came to SPCRR and The Railroad Museum at Ardenwood. Its historic ties to the California State Railroad Museum and the now-largely gone Northwestern Pacific Railroad and its forebear companies will herein be explored.

A great deal more very useful reference information has turned up over the last 30-plus years, and a dedicated preservation group, the Northwestern Pacific Railroad Historical Society (NWPRRHS), was formed to gather and preserve the railroad company's legacy. We have consequently forged a friendly bond with that volunteer-run organization. As the NWPRRHS volunteer archivists worked, they discovered some truly remarkable photographs of our caboose as it appeared circa 1910-12 and one more taken late in its operational life. These images have proved to be of inestimable value to our museum and the caboose restoration effort.

Since 1981, CSRM's publicly accessible research library and archives has gained a wealth of technical drawings, fiscal and other business records formerly owned by the Southern Pacific Company (SP). Because the NWP was initially formed by SP—in half-partnership with the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad (AT&SF)—we had to spend many hours combing through those portions of CSRM's SP “MS-10 Collection” to find data that was wholly unknown and inaccessible in 1978. Within that records group are the invaluable financial records of the North Pacific Coast Railroad (NPC), North Shore Railroad (NS) and the Northwestern Pacific (NWP). While not complete, the Cash Books, Journals and Trial Balance volumes of the NPC and NS yielded some heretofore unknown data on this caboose and other pieces of rolling stock in which our museum takes interest, including the series of Carter Brothers-built flat cars such as the one we earlier restored as North Shore No. 1725.

CSRM's MS-10 archival records group also includes stunning (and beautiful) original ink-on-linen engineering drawings from SP's Sacramento Shops. That factory complex, instituted in 1864 by the Central Pacific Railroad (CP) and expanded into permanent quarters in 1868-69, had oversight of much of the CP-SP system—(collectively and officially called the “Pacific Lines”). Hence, all rolling stock and motive power, whether standard or narrow gauge was, in one way or another affected by Sacramento Shops and the companies' Motive Power & Machinery Department, which also governed the drafting office and all shops operations.



The 2015-2016 effort to more fully restore the former NWP caboose No. 5591 into its earlier guise as 6101 was aided 150% by the discovery of this astonishing photograph made in 1910 at Monte Rio. The first version found was soft and grayed out. In July 2016 the original photographer-made print surfaced, with his rubber-stamped “card” verso, along with his handwritten identifications of the entire train crew, all of them his personal friends. Rhea also shot the scene that graces the cover of this report, that one also taken in 1910, and once again with the train crew’s names listed!

Courtesy of NWPRRH Archive, Raymond J. Roix Collection.





“A funny thing happened on the way to the Forum . . . or, more accurately, on the way to the Patterson Ranch. The truck rig hauling the caboose from West Sacramento took an unauthorized detour and passed beneath a restrictive overpass, the cupola taking the hit, literally and fully. Fortunately, the mostly replica assemblage had been fastened with wire nails (rather than wood screws and lag bolts). The cupola surrendered surprisingly neatly, or so it was found after the off-loading at the ranch was finished. The cupola was then repaired at a subsequent Rail Fair as part of a hands-on demonstration of vintage car repairs.

