

Feather River Shortline Locomotive #8

This information is primarily from informal or secondary sources and is not authoritative. Please send any corrections and public-use photographs or copies of documents to:

info@goldhillnv.org.

Locomotive #8 is a Baldwin 2-6-2 Prairie, builder's number 32160, built in November of 1907 and sold to the Sierra Nevada Wood and Lumber Company, Hobart Mills, California. This company became the Hobart Estate Co. in 1917. Since the company's lines into the woods were narrow gauge, the engine was used on the Company's standard gauge connection between Hobart Mills and Truckee until 1937. This connection became known as the Hobart Southern in 1932. In August 1938, #8 was sold to the Clover Valley Lumber Co. of Loyalton and was used as a woods switcher by them. [Hart Corbett]

Some time after 1938, it changed ownership again, this time to the Feather River Lumber Company. It was retired from the Feather River Lumber Company on November 30, 1956. It was then donated to the non-profit Plumas County Fair Association in the spring of 1958, with the intention of putting it on static display at the Quincy Fairgrounds.

The Fair Association lacked the funds to move Locomotive #8 from Loyalton, California to the Fairgrounds at Quincy. The Fair Association arranged with the Quincy Railroad Company to move the locomotive under its own power over the eight miles of track from Quincy Junction to Quincy on March 28, 1958. It was placed on the Quincy Railroad siding where the last inspection report was recorded on March 31st of that year.

The Feather River Shortline Railroad (FRSL) was organized as a non-profit corporation at the instigation of the Plumas County Fair Association. The purpose of the FRSL was to preserve and display the locomotive, and initially to raise enough money to move the locomotive to the fairgrounds from the siding.

Fundraising was slow, and the locomotive remained on the siding until May 19, 1962. The secretary of the Northern California Railroad Historical Society arranged with the Fair Association and the FRSL to make Locomotive #8 operational and to move from Quincy to Quincy Junction and back under steam. Jimmy Boynton was the engineer and William Dessert was the fireman. This movement was being conducted as part of an excursion arranged by the Western Pacific Railroad, which included a six mile steam run by Quincy Railroad's locomotive #2, for which a nominal fare of one dollar was charged. The passengers were accommodated on benches put atop four gondola cars provided by the Western Pacific. Jimmy Boynton was an engineer with the Western Pacific at the time of the excursion (but was not paid for his operation of #8 that day).

At one point in the excursion, Quincy Railroad #2 and FRSL #8 double-headed the consist of four gondola cars for about 300 ft. for purposes of allowing photographs to be made by the excursionists.

The funds raised by this excursion and by earlier fund-raising efforts were sufficient to allow a temporary track to be built to the fairgrounds and #8 was moved there at the end of March, 1962.

An observer at the May 19th, 1962 excursion filed a complaint that caused the United States Federal Railway Administration to file a complaint against the Quincy Railroad Company on December 26th, 1962 asking that a \$250 penalty be imposed.

The Quincy Railroad Company prevailed at trial, and prevailed on appeal. The theory of the complaint was that #8 was operated with an expired inspection certificate, on a line that was a common carrier or otherwise regulated by the Interstate Commerce Commission. However, it was not used by the Quincy Railroad Company *per se*, even though it did run over its line.

It was this last technicality upon which the appeals court found in favor of the defendant (the Railroad).

But, this case was critical in putting the owners of the locomotive, the FRSL, on notice that they could not operate in the future over rails belonging to a regulated railroad. [The United States of America vs. Quincy Railroad Company, United States Court of Appeals Ninth Circuit, November 18, 1964].

After that time, the FRSL looked for opportunities to run over private rights-of-way. It was eventually moved to the Portola Railroad Museum and operated there. [David Epling].



Around 1989, the owner of the Virginia and Truckee Railroad (Tom Gray) permitted Jimmy Boynton and the FRSL to operate over the V&T, including special runs, double-headers, and periods of time during which #8 became the primary motive power in revenue service. (Specifically while #29 of the V&T was having tires and bearings replaced). It was during this time that the V&T was being extended from Tunnel #4 down to the Gold Hill Depot. The primary caveat in the early days of operation on the V&T was that Jimmy Boynton be the engineer or at least be in the cab.

Initially, the V&T was being operated under the legal theory that the locomotives would not be subject to FRA inspection since the V&T was not connected to a regulated railroad and was not itself a regulated railroad. This theory was

abandoned in the mid-1990s and the V&T started operating under FRA safety rules. (Since it did not connect with a regulated railroad, it need not comply with the 1,200 pages of Title 49, Federal Railway Regulations that do not deal with safety.)

Jimmy Boynton passed away around 1993 (date uncertain) and his wife took over as the primary decision-maker as to the operation of the #8. Some time thereafter a lease agreement was entered into between the Virginia and Truckee Railroad and the FRSL. The lease provides for #8's continued operation, maintenance and therefore certification. In the late 1990s, the FRA inspector insisted that #8 undergo extensive repairs prior to recertification, based primarily on age, and not any obvious defect.

In about 2006 the FRSL threatened litigation to either repair, certify and operate the locomotive, or to return it to the FRSL.

A test coupon cut from the firebox walls showed that almost no corrosion at all could be seen. The boiler was completely sound. The locomotive was re-assembled in August and September of 2008 and the V&T consented to return it to the FRSL.

The FRSL arranged with Storey County to store the locomotive on county property at Gold Hill. The Gold Hill Historical Society agreed to construct a house track and/or a team track, connected to the V&T, onto which locomotive could be placed and preserved. [Stough, personal recollections]