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A TALE OF TWO RECORDS

We recently added another

true WI&M artifact to the HPG's collection. No, this time it's not a station, freight car or other heavy object that will cause Jim West to mutter under his breath trying to get it restored. Instead, it's a book, a "call record" book for lack of a better term. It's simply a ledger book showing the time that each train was "called"; meaning the time the assigned crew was expected to arrive and begin prepping for their run. Often, this would be a half-hour to an hour before the scheduled departure listed in the timetable.



What does a 95-year-old ledger book (right) have to do with an early seventies Milwaukee Road freight train (top)? Not much, except that keeping track of when and where trains run, and how long they take to get where they're going, is essential to efficient operation on any railroad. John Henderson photographed the train at Potlatch, and Barb Coyner took the book photo on her kitchen table.



The first entry in our book is from Sept. 1, 1915 and it maintains a daily record through June 11, 1917 with a short accounting of March and April, 1919 trains tacked on to the end. It also looks as though the register, when no longer needed at the depot, became a sketchbook used in the shops - the last few pages are covered with hand drawings of tools and parts that needed to be fabricated.

When we first got our hands on this book (from a seller on eBay) we weren't sure what to expect. We hoped, of course, that it would provide many tidbits of new informa-

tion helping us to better understand how the WI&M functioned in its heyday. Tom Burg examined the book first, and he was somewhat let down that more detailed information had not been recorded. Many days simply list two or three trains that ran with a call time associated for each. Many more days simply have a single entry reading "Same". A few days offer additional notes, but these are pretty sketchy.

The non-profit WI&M Ry. History Preservation Group, Inc has been organized for railroad historians, enthusiasts, and modelers interested in gathering and sharing information on the Washington, Idaho & Montana Railway, from its origins in 1905 through it's operations of today.