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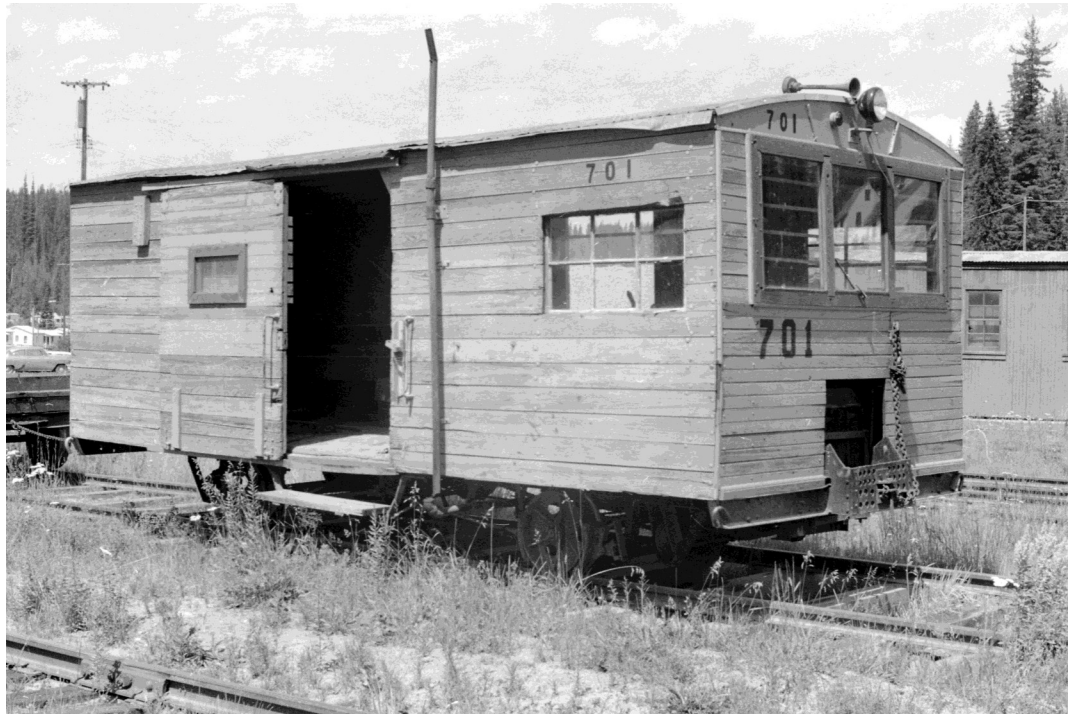
Innovation or Desperation

Did Potlatch Perfect the Art of Re-Purposing?

Wandering through the yards

at Potlatch, Bovill and Headquarters in the 1950's and 1960's, railroad logging enthusiasts like Ivan Ergish, Ken Schmelzer and John Henderson found a lot of "junk" resting, and rusting, in the weeds. Some of the junk was exactly that. But, other items, including speeders, loaders, track maintenance equipment and freight cars, looked ready for service. Fortunately, these men recognized it as more than just junk and took lots of photos. In their eyes, this assemblage of relics represented a quickly vanishing era of backwoods practicality and ingenuity.

My dad grew up in Idaho, and on visits there, I remember him lamenting how much junk could be seen cluttering every mining operation, farm yard and mill site in the state. From what I could see, I had to agree with him. But, I now think he could've cut his native state a little slack. The frugal folks who worked hard to make a living in Idaho had to utilize every available resource, and couldn't afford to throw anything away. The tools and equipment needed to mine ore, raise spuds, or harvest timber had to last as long as possible. And sometimes, with no Sears store on the corner, they had to modify or combine tools to do a dif-



A common subject of photographers visiting the Potlatch operation at Headquarters, Idaho, in its later years of operation was the large and varied collection of gas-powered "speeders" and trailers. The Potlatch shops modified off-the-shelf speeder mechanisms with larger enclosed cabins to increase capacity for hauling men and supplies to and from the various logging camps.

Ivan Ergish photo

ferent job. Years before "going green" became popular, Idahoans were reusing and recycling just to survive.

On both the Bovill and Headquarters sides of Potlatch Forest Industries' rail logging operations, finding creative ways to get the job done with the materials at hand was a daily way of life. When each operation started up, Bovill beginning about 1907 and Headquarters in 1927, each received a full complement of modern equipment. But log-

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.