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Potlatch Forests Incorporated: the Association of American Railroads'

Public Enemy Number One?

Possibly the most colorful freight cars

to ever call the WI&M their home road were the two PFI Pres-to-logs cars.

In 1930, Mr. R.T. Bowling, Chief Engineer for Clearwater Timber Co. at Lewiston, ID, invented and developed the process for manufacturing Pres-to-logs, logs made from sawdust compressed under high temperature and pressure. This was not only an outstanding product for making use of discarded material, but actually solved a problem with disposing of the sawdust. Pres-to-logs could be burned everywhere, from people's living room fireplaces to the dining car cookstoves of name trains like the Milwaukee Road's Olympian. PFI also shipped them up to their many lumber camps for heating and cooking.

In the Fall of 1935, PFI purchased two regular wood boxcars, number 426 and 456, from the WI&M to be repainted in PFI colors for hauling, and advertising, these "sawdust briquettes". Almost immediately, they fell into trouble with the Association of American Railroads (AAR) and the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC).

Just the year before, the ICC had issued a ruling



Potlatch Forests Inc. obtained a "plain vanilla" boxcar from the WI&M in 1935 and repainted it in this bright, attention-getting scheme. Excited about their new consumer fuel product – "Pres-to-logs" – PFI managers thought they'd found the best way to deliver and advertise them locally with their very own boxcars. Unfortunately, the Association of American Railroads had other ideas. C. L. Tilbury Sr. photo, HPG Collection

prohibiting the reproduction of any trademark or reference to any article manufactured or distributed by a shipper on the sides of freight cars. In essence, a shipper could display its company name on its rolling stock, but not advertise any of its products. For its part, the AAR refused to issue reporting marks - the set of initials and numbers identifying an individual freight car - for cars not complying with the ICC directive.

At first, the WI&M, acting on its parent company's behalf, obtained temporary AAR recognition of the PFI reporting marks. However, when the WI&M

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 its operations of today.