

The Washington, Idaho & Montana Railway HISTORY PRESERVATION GROUP, INC. (WI&M HPG)



THE POTLATCH, IDAHO WI&M RAILWAY DEPOT RESTORATION AND RENOVATION

Five years before its 100th birthday, the Potlatch, Idaho WI&M Railway depot is succumbing to old age and decades of neglect. Saved until now by the craftsmanship of its construction, the depot was designed by Spokane architect C. F. White and built of clear lumber atop concrete foundations. The first commercial building in the company town of Potlatch, it was erected by the Weyerhaeuser interests in the spring of 1906. Nearly a century later, it is the only Potlatch Lumber Co (PLCo) industrial structure that remains.

By 1905, the Weyerhaeuser group had purchased 4 billion feet of Idaho timber. To convert this timber into lumber, they built the largest white pine sawmill in the world. The company town of Potlatch was designed to encourage generations of sober, family-oriented, mill workers. The Washington, Idaho & Montana (WI&M) Railway Co. was built to supply the PLCo mill with logs and provide a common carrier connection with regional railroads. The 49-mile WI&M was operated and managed from the depot's first floor. However, the Potlatch depot's second-floor offices may be of greater historical significance.

Potlatch was the first mill constructed by the Weyerhaeuser's in the Pacific Northwest, and marked the beginning of large-scale wood products operations in the Inland Northwest. The Weyerhaeuser group went on to acquire controlling interest in what is now Boise Cascade and to develop another industrial giant—the Weyerhaeuser Corporation. The Potlatch Lumber Company, Weyerhaeuser's first large-scale wood products operation in the Pacific Northwest, was briefly supervised from the Potlatch depot's second story.

The summer of 1906 saw completion of the sawmill construction and operations began in September 1906. The PLCo mill and woods department were moved to a sparse building nearer the mill. Management of the railroad and company town continued from the Potlatch depot. In the mid-1950's, the town was sold and WI&M passenger service was discontinued. For three-quarters of a century, the Potlatch mill rode out economic storms and adapted to changing markets. Shut down in 1981, the mill was dismantled in 1982.

The Potlatch depot must be converted to 21st century needs if it is to survive these precedents. No longer a mill town, Potlatch serves as a bedroom community for the University of Idaho at Moscow and the Washington State University at Pullman, WA. The area now embraces tourism and small business to supplant the timber industry from which it was borne. The depot will be renovated to compliment the modern Potlatch community.

The corporate mission of the WI&M Ry HPG is to preserve all things WI&M. The Potlatch depot was not only the headquarters of the WI&M Railway, but remains as the last tangible monument to an Idaho white pine wood products industry begun nearly a century ago. As of this writing, the following progress has been made:

- ✓ March 2000: The Palouse River & Coulee City Railroad [PCC], current operator of the WI&M, moved all railroad property items from the depot (except from the freight room and annex).
- ✓ July 2000: Ingress/Egress and Indemnification Agreements were signed between Watco Companies, Inc. and the WI&M Ry HPG. This allowed access to the depot for HPG and its restoration estimators and consultants.
- ✓ October 2000: Initial cleaning of depot completed; donated tarps secured to roof by Clearwater Power crews.
- ✓ December, 2000: The University of Idaho College of Architecture students presented four modern proposals for the depot, including food and beverage services, a business center, and a wood products technology center.
- ✓ January 2001: The Potlatch Depot Business Plan and acquisition request was submitted to depot owner, Watco.
- ✓ February 2001: Application is made for an Idaho Transportation Dept. (ITD) administered FY2004 Enhancement Grant to restore the depot's exterior; install new electrical, plumbing, glazing, and HVAC; and, 1st floor finish work.
- ✓ March 2001: Watco Companies, parent corporation of the PCC, announces its intent to sell the Potlatch Depot to the WI&M Ry HPG, Inc. for \$1000 and to donate the adjoining house track property (approximately 3 acres).
- ✓ May 2001: Operational considerations are finalized, allowing the PCC occupancy of the Annex and service pit on the southwest acreage in exchange for HPG title to the historic depot Annex at a date to be named later.
- ✓ July 23, 2001: The HPG purchases the Potlatch depot and 3 acres of adjoining property from the PCC.
- ✓ November 2001: The Idaho Transportation Board approves a \$471,000 Enhancement grant for the HPG's Potlatch Depot project. This reimbursement funding will become available beginning in October 2003 (FY2004).

Foundation rebuilding, leveling of the depot, and replacement of the depot roof must be accomplished within the next two years. Partial funding will be secured from small community and historic preservation grants, but primary funding must come from donations of time and money by benefactors like you!

We need your help! We're saving the history of the Inland Northwest's large-scale woods products industry. Aid us in restoring the traditional community center of Potlatch. Join us in developing this museum-quality monument to Idaho's unique WI&M Ry and the railroad logging operations of the Potlatch Lumber Company. (To volunteer for the Potlatch Depot R & R effort, please request a Depot Donated Work Skills form below.)

Your tax-deductible donation will make a difference!

Please check all that apply.

Yes, I'll donate to the Potlatch Depot Restoration & Renovation! I've enclosed a <input type="checkbox"/> personal check <input type="checkbox"/> money order in the amount of:		\$	
Yes, I'll donate to the Washington, Idaho & Montana Ry History Preservation Group, Inc! I've enclosed a <input type="checkbox"/> personal check <input type="checkbox"/> money order for:		\$	
Yes, I'd like to pledge my donation to the Potlatch Depot R&R! Please bill me for the personal pledge amount I've entered at right.		\$	
TOTAL DONATION		\$	
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Make checks payable to:

**Potlatch Depot R & R or
WI&M HPG and mail to:**

**Washington, Idaho & Montana Ry
History Preservation Group, Inc.
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