

RESTORING A SHAY

By Jerry Hansz

In August 2010, a friend presented me with a 2-truck shay he had been given. "Don't need this, you may want it", he said. It was a mess, with a heavy coat of paint on, in, and under every part of the machine.





BOTTOM VIEW OF 3 TRUCK SHAY AS RECEIVED.

Restoral seemed a daunting task! I attacked the project with a soaking in paint thinner. After a week, a little paint came off. I tried another brand of thinner, with mixed results. Three weeks into the project, I resorted to a biodegradable thick paint stripper. At last, results! After being slathered with the stripper for over a day, a tooth brush removed most of the paint. I re-applied the stripper, and again, more paint came off. A few hours with various tools gave me a very clean locomotive. The headlight wire came off in the stripping process, leaving the bulb solidly in place. A bashing with various size drill bits removed the glass and glue. The stack screen was sacrificed to the paint removal. I'll have to find a suitable replacement. The headlight and stack were loose, and wouldn't tighten on their screws, so applied some "super glue" to them. They are solid now. One loose handrail received the same treatment.



VIEW OF SHAY SUPERSTRUCTURE RIGHT SIDE AFTER REMOVAL OF HEAVY COAT OF PAINT.

The superstructure and chassis are clean, but discolored. I'll give them a shot of flat black, which (hopefully), should make them presentable. Painting the trucks doesn't seem practical. I may try a metal blackening solution.



After success with the superstructure and bare chassis, slathering, scraping, and probing of the trucks gave similar results. After a thorough washing, the chassis and trucks were reassembled. What a maze of gears! One set operates the trucks, another the cylinders. Very stiff! I lubed the entire mess, and tried it by hand. It seemed to move.



With the motor re-installed (It was a replacement can motor from Wayne Lemle's store sometime in the past, for \$17.95) I placed the chassis on the track and tried it out. Motor ran, mechanism tried to move, but jammed. Then the tubing started slipping on the drive gear. A shot of "super glue" stopped the slipping, but the mechanism still didn't want to turn. I banged on it some more.



After extensive working, the chassis moved on DC. Application of "Darken-it" didn't darken the chassis parts, so I resorted to brush painting. I applied paint to the top of the chassis, the cylinders, truck frames, and any other parts that wouldn't interfere with operation. The result is shown here.



The superstructure was missing the front bolster and steps. I found a plastic one in the junk box and glued it on. Kadee couplers were added. A rear headlight was purchased from Custom Railway Supply. I still haven't done anything with the headlight or stack screen. Careful application of flat black from a 'rattle can' produced good results. I also painted the interior to eliminate brass shine. The locomotive was reassembled, and runs well. Shays are NOISY! Don't think I'll try to install DCC.





This was an interesting, labor intensive project. It was rewarding to see the old unit run again. I don't think Santa Fe had shays, but I applied the numbers and lettering anyway! It will go nicely with my Heisler (also lettered for Santa Fe)!