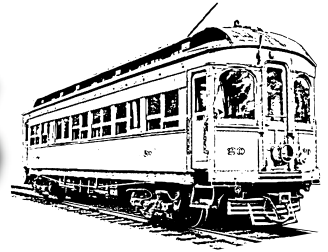


The ELECTRIC TIMES

newsletter



2025-1

Official Publication of the **Fox River Trolley Museum**
Serving The community of South Elgin



**Come Ride
With Us!**

news from
**UNDER
the wire**

RECENT FOX RIVER LINE HAPPENINGS

news from
**UNDER
the wire**



David Peterson

Car Barn Gets an Extension!

In November of 2024, it was announced that the Fox River Trolley Museum car barn (built in 1984) would be getting an extension to house three more artifacts for restoration. This barn extension will include concrete flooring, new doors and most importantly the ability to shield three more train cars from the devastating effects of the weather. Concrete floors will allow us the ability replace the wheel trucks on car #20 by giving us a strong enough surface to place our hydraulic jacks with which to lift up the car. While #20 currently sits in the barn next to our jacks; a car can only be safely jacked up on solid concrete, and the floor of the current car barn is entirely made of gravel. For many, car #20 is a symbol of South Elgin. We would like to see it returned to service soon!

According to the project manager, Jeff Bennett, the barn extension is expected to be completed during the 2025 operating season. As you can imagine, however, a drastic change such as this to the museum's main campus is very expensive! On January 1st, a GoFundMe page was created by museum volunteers Jeff Bennett and Kathleen Jamieson. The dollar-for-dollar matching campaign was made possible by an anonymous donor. This means that for every penny that is donated, the anonymous donor will match that donation up to \$53,000. Many people have already donated to assist in this massive and influential project. Please donate today to this historic project to help to maintain and restore three more trolley cars! No donation is too small!

(Continued on page 2)



From the Desk of Our President

Greetings and best wishes from the Fox River Trolley Museum. Some of you may know me, some of you may see my name and say, "Ben Who?" For those of you I haven't yet had the pleasure of meeting, a little about myself: My history with the Museum goes clear back to my childhood, with my first visit on September 20, 1982 on my fourth birthday. I was enamored as a child, and as much as he could, my Dad brought me out to ride and ask questions. By 1989, I purchased my own Family Membership with paper route money and would ride my bicycle from Elgin to the Museum every chance I got. I recall many volunteers from the 1980's and 90's as the seeds they planted grew within me. The education I received from willing members through my formative years ultimately led me to a career in the railroad industry. There has always been a drawing force in the Museum that, even during the years I was absent, caused me to regard the Fox River Trolley Museum as my "home terminal." I've been here and active again since 2019, serving as our Roadmaster, initially Director at Large, and now as President of our Association. I'm honored to be at the helm of the Association for the bright future I see ahead. We (myself and the Board of Directors along with Committee and Department heads) are working on developing some new and exciting event opportunities, working on the development and growth of our active volunteer base, and are currently full speed ahead on our Car barn extension which will enable us to get 3 more cars indoors and protected. It will also have a space set up for heavy work like the re-wheeling job Car 20 requires. This has been a Herculean task for our volunteers, having done all of the track removal, grading and site prep including excavation in house. Big "thank you" to our friends from the Illinois Railway Museum who have assisted us during the push to prepare the site. As the barn work continues, our Car Department continues to work on car 316. Volunteer opportunities abound, and there's no such thing as too many hands on deck. Our volunteers make our wheels go 'round! Even if we haven't seen you in awhile, please take time in 2025 to pay us a visit. We have been actively raising funds to assist in completion and outfitting of the Car barn extension. Our gofundme.com campaign called "Fox River Trolley Museum MATCHING DONOR Help BUILD THE BARN" has brought us \$11k as of this letter, with a goal of \$53k. These funds will allow us to complete the barn in a timely manner and outfit the workspace for some big upcoming jobs. Please consider a contribution to our barn fund. Our cars will benefit from indoor storage, and we will be better outfitted to face the future. On behalf of our organization, I thank you for your continued support as I leave you with a quote attributed to Helen Keller:

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

Ben Rohling

(Continued from page 1)

On behalf of every volunteer at the Fox River Trolley Museum, we would like to wholeheartedly thank everyone who has already donated to our fundraiser. Your support is the reason we are able to continue preserving these pieces of history.

Anderson Pries



To Donate
Scan Here

The GoFundMe page can be found at the following link:
<https://www.gofundme.com/f/double-your-impact-help-preserve-historic-trolleys>

FOX RIVER TROLLEY ASSOCIATION INC.

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 Ben Rohling, Patrick Storm, Douglas Rundell,
 James Tarbet, and Chris Nelson

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Vice President: Patrick Storm
Treasurer: Douglas Rundell
Secretary: Chris Nelson
Director at Large: James Tarbet

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Asst. Trainmaster: Chris DeAngeles
Crew Caller: Damin Keenan
Museum Store Manager: Damin Keenan

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Membership Secretary: Laura Taylor
Assistant Membership Secretary: Vacant
Membership Activities Coordinator: Jasmin Carlson
Membership Development Coordinator: Vacant

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Asst. Chief Car Officer: Dave Peterson

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Asst. Webmaster: Edward Konecki
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Capital Development Coordinator: Kathleen Jamieson
Curator: Joseph Hazinski
Newsletter Editor: Kathleen Jamieson
Fox River Lines Magazine Editor: Joseph Hazinski
Archivist: Vacant
Education Coordinator: Fred Biederman

Museum Safety Department:
Safety Manager: Ralph Taylor

Success of the 2024 Polar Express! ❄️

As many museum volunteers and members know, the Polar Express is one of the Fox River Trolley Museum's largest fundraisers every year. The 2024 sold-out season included many great and trail-blazing moments for the Polar Express at the museum. Some of these moments included: all-new Friday runs of both the regular and premiere Polar Express, hosting the South Elgin High School Best Buddies Program, and hosting of a United States Marine to support Toys For Tots.

The Polar Express excursions were also the first FRTM events to utilize the newly revived and refreshed parking lot at Blackhawk Station. The project to rehabilitate the parking lot, picnic shelters, and more at the Jon J. Duerr Forest Preserve, in which we operate our trains. This project was announced by the Forest Preserve District of Kane County on July 8th, 2022. Tearing up and then repaving the parking lot was started in mid summer of 2024, and was completed in early November that same year.

During the December 20th, 21st, and 22nd editions of the Polar Express, the museum operated these trains in the freshly-fallen snow for the first time in many years, and this white blanket contributed greatly to the general merry atmosphere during the 2024 Polar Express. We all look forward to an exciting new year!

Anderson Pries



Jasmine Carlson



Jasmine Carlson



Progress on the Restoration of Chicago Aurora and Elgin #316

In 2024, a large portion of the CA&E #316's top-to-bottom restoration was completed by a phenomenal and extremely dedicated volunteer force. On the exterior, the car has been painted in the color scheme it would have worn in the 1920's on the Chicago Aurora and Elgin line. The color design has been aptly dubbed "The Coffee-and-Cream Scheme" by railfans due to its likeness to coffee and cream. Painting the car was prioritized to areas that would be lettered and numbered first, and the rest of the paint will be finished when the weather warms up. Also on the exterior, after countless hours, the roof of the car has been ENTIRELY rebuilt. When we say top-to-bottom we really mean it; a large amount of effort has also been put into the underbody of the car by museum volunteers Eric Zabelny and Jeff Bennett. This work includes the repairing of the reverser, the rebuilding of the electrical power controls, the general maintenance of the high-voltage equipment ("high voltage" means the standard 600-volts of electricity that most trolley cars operate with across the country).

In addition to both the exterior and underbody work that has been done, the car would not be complete without the work being done to the interior! This work includes: the pinstriping and gold leaf lettering that has been done inside of the car, the stained glass work that was done on the inter-urban-style arched windows, the elaborate woodwork, and the Italian marble that was installed in #316's bathroom. The beautiful Italian marble was kindly donated by Stonecrafters INC of Lakemoor, IL. It seems the Jewett Car Co. and the Fox River Trolley Museum are in the business of creating the fanciest train bathrooms in town! It is the Car Department's intention that the #316 will roll out of our Fox River Line car barn fully restored during the 2025 operating season.

Anderson Pries



David Peterson



David Peterson

2025 Bunny Burrow Express Ride With the Easter Bunny!

It's that time again! Get ready for 2025's first revenue runs at the Fox River Trolley Museum! FRTM's Bunny Burrow Express will be running April 5th, 12th, and 19th of 2025. Tickets for this train will go on sale February 1st, 2025 so don't miss your chance to ride from Castlemuir to Coleman with the Easter Bunny onboard a 1959 Chicago subway car! Make memories that will last a lifetime.

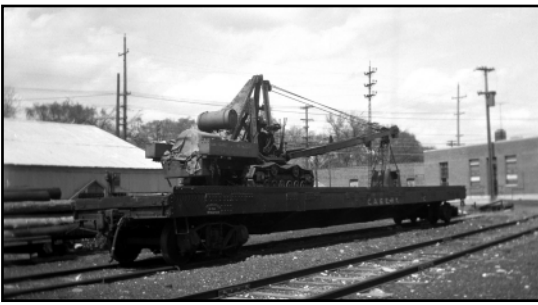


Jacob Goldberg



Jacob Goldberg

Farewell to the Aurora Elgin and Fox River Electric Company #7



David Peterson

For over forty years, AE&FRE #7 has sat behind our current museum car barn. In November of 2024, the car was given to railroad and traction history artifact collector Bob Harris of the South Shore Line Museum Project based in Michigan City, IN. As we mark this car's departure from our collection, let's take a look back upon its history.

In 1927, AE&FRE #7 was built by the Standard Steel Company or the Chicago North Shore and Milwaukee Railroad (CNS&M or North Shore Line) as CNS&M #1504. It was constructed for use in interurban\ piggyback service carrying two truck trailers on its bed, and the CNS&M train that it was a part of ran from Montrose, IL, to the CNS&M's famed terminal on Harrison Street in downtown Milwaukee, WI. "Piggyback service" was the term for when semi-truck trailers were put on top of railroad flat cars to enable them to travel faster, as rail lines were faster than roads. The truck trailers were loaded onto the flat cars with a ramp on one end of the car, and carried around the cities that they were loaded on and off of by trucks.

As many railfans know, both the North Shore Line and the Chicago Aurora and Elgin Railroads traveled in and out of the City of Chicago via the Chicago "L" and the Chicago Transit Authority. With this in special consideration, the North Shore Line decided that the "Ferry Truck" (which was what the North Shore Line called their piggyback train) service would leave the Montrose Avenue ramp at night to avoid the "L" train service.

In 1947, highways were improved and the WW2-era fuel rationing was lifted. This prompted the North Shore Line to stop their Ferry Truck service as it was no longer profitable. They then disbanded the former piggyback fleet, with CNS&M #1504 going to the Chicago Aurora and Elgin Railroad (CA&E) in Wheaton, IL. While it was here, the car was numbered as maintenance car "C," CA&E used car C as a platform for a crane with tracks that was used to clear drainage ditches along the side of the CA&E's mainline.

In 1962, it was renumbered to the Aurora Elgin and Fox River Electric Company #7 and was moved to the AE&FRE at Coleman, IL. Car #7 was utilized for a short period of time on the AE&FRE before coming to the Fox River Trolley Museum.

In 1984, the current car barn was constructed, and the AE&FRE #7 was moved to the end of the only continuous track through the barn and placed behind the car barn where it stayed until the end of 2024.

The information for this article was based on research that was done by the museum's curator, Joseph Hazinski.

All of us here at FRTM are sad to see AE&FRE #7 go. However, to stay true to our mission statement and be good stewards of history, it was necessary to give this artifact to a better home.

Anderson Pries



Left to Right: James Tarbet, Doug Rundell, Ben Rohling, Patrick Storm
Not Pictured: Chris Nelson

The Fox River Line Gets New Leadership

The Fox River Trolley Association would like to thank Mr. Ed Konecki and Mr. Fred Lonnes for their years of dedicated and selfless service to the Fox River Trolley Museum. Mr. Konecki was on the board of directors for 40 years (26 of those years were spent serving as the president), and Mr. Lonnes retired from the museum just 20 days short of 60 years with the museum. Both Mr. Konecki and Mr. Lonnes served the museum for almost 100 combined years. Mr. Konecki and Mr. Lonnes led the museum through landmark and huge events in the museum's history such as the acquisition of CA&E #458, as well as many more historic developments. The new president of the Fox River Trolley Museum is Mr. Ben Rohling, and he has been our roadmaster for quite some time. Mr. Rohling has been a member and a volunteer at the museum since he was a boy. Joining Mr. Rohling as new members of the FRTM Board are: James Tarbet (Director), and Chris Nelson (Secretary). Doug Rundell (Treasurer) and Patrick Storm (Vice President) will continue to be directors with Mr. Rundell maintaining his position as treasurer and with Mr. Storm now as Vice President. We wish the board well in 2025!

Anderson Pries

GUESS THAT ARTIFACT!!

Introducing a new newsletter feature! This is a game where YOU guess which one of our historic artifacts is portrayed in the photo here!

What artifact do you think it is?
Send newsletter contributor
Anderson Pries an email with your answer at
Anderson@frtm.org now!

Rules:

- Members may only submit ONE entry
- The first three correct entries are the winners
- Winners of the game will be mentioned by name in the next newsletter, as well as a small bit about them (so please submit a 1-sentence short bio about yourself with your submission)



Kathleen Jamieson

March Membership Rally!

The Fox River Trolley Museum would like to welcome our members to an evening of camaraderie and education at our March Membership Rally!. The highlight of the evening will be video footage from the collections of David Peterson and Bruce Moffat. Bruce will be showing his movies of the early days of our Museum, originally known as RELIC, and a fan trip on the AE&FRE utilizing the original electric freight equipment.



Pizza will be provided, so we ask you to RSVP by Wednesday February 26 in order to ensure nobody goes hungry.

Date & Time: March 1, 2025 at 7pm

Location: 7n851 Woodcliff Dr., South Elgin IL 60177

**"RSVP: to Jasmine Carlson via phone (224) 428-8446
(text anytime, call between 4pm-10pm)
or email Jeff@FRTM"**

See you at Woodcliff!



**FOX RIVER
TROLLEY
MUSEUM**

MISSION

To preserve and interpret Chicago's electric transport era that began in the 1890's and peaked before 1950. The electric transport era is significant because electric railway's, including interurban, rapid transit, and streetcars, helped the Chicago region grow to be one of North America's great metropolitan areas. The Museum strives to show that electric railways were more than convenient, they were and are a way of life for generations of people from all walks of life.

The Museum fulfills this mission by preserving, interpreting, and operating historic railway vehicles on its demonstration electric railway, over the Aurora, Elgin and Fox River Electric route at South Elgin, Illinois. Furthermore, the museum preserves, displays, and interprets smaller artifacts, photos, oral histories, and documents which help relate the importance of electric transport in and around the Chicago Metropolitan Area, putting them in context with their surroundings and era.

Electric Times Staff

Publication Manager—Kathleen Jamieson

Columnist—Anderson Pries

Layout and Graphics— David Peterson

Thoughtfully proofread by Hilary Pries

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Please contact the staff before undergoing a project Contributors submit materials with the understanding that no monetary compensation is provided.

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