

The Electric Times Newsletter

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



The Electric Times Newsletter is proudly all volunteer run and produced. For our members, by our members.

Let's Get The Season Started!

Have you been missing the museum over the winter months? The wait is almost over, as the return of trolley service on the Fox River Line is just around the corner.

On Mother's Day, May 10, 2026, the Fox River Trolley Museum will officially begin its 2026 regular operating season, welcoming visitors back for another exciting year of history, rides, and memorable experiences. This season marks an especially exciting milestone for the museum. For the first time ever, trolley service will be offered on both Saturdays and Sundays throughout the operating year. This expanded schedule gives visitors even more opportunities to ride, explore, and enjoy everything the museum has to offer. Whether you are a longtime member or a first time guest, there has never been a better time to plan a visit.

Opening Day will also feature a truly special celebration. Chicago, North Shore, and Milwaukee car #715 will officially enter its 100th year in operation. This historic railcar first entered service on May 10, 1926, making this year's opening day exactly one hundred years since it began carrying passengers. A century later, it still stands as a



remarkable example of electric railway history, carefully preserved and operated by the museum.

Visitors will have the chance to see and ride this historic car while learning more about its long and storied past. Celebrating this centennial is not only a tribute to the car itself, but also

to the generations of people who built, operated, and preserved it over the years.

As the 2026 season begins, the museum looks forward to another year of growth, new experienc-

Upcoming Events

April

Bunny Train

Saturday April 4

Open House

Saturday April 25

Sunday April 26

11:00am to 5:00pm

See page 3

Renewal Grace period Ends

Thursday April 30

May

Opening Day (Mother's Day)

Sunday, May 10

Board meeting

Saturday, May 23

2:00pm @ Elgin Township
Offices

Memorial Day

Monday, May 25

June

All Aboard Days

Sunday, June 14

Father's Day

Sunday, June 21

See page 4

All events take place at the main museum campus unless otherwise stated.

es, and continued preservation efforts. Join us as we kick off the season, celebrate a once in a lifetime anniversary, and welcome the return of trolley rides along the scenic Fox River Line.

Get To Know Your Museum

These are the people who help keep each of these departments running. If you have questions, need support, or would like to get involved, they would be happy to hear from you.

Departments & Roles

2025 Board of Directors

President: Bernard Rohling
Vice President: Patrick Storm
Treasurer: Douglas Rundell
Secretary: Jeff Bennett
Director: Chris Nelson

Operations Department

Operations Superintendent:
Patrick Storm
Trainmaster: Chris DeAngelis
Crew Caller: Damin Keenan
Museum Store Manager: Damin Keenan

Membership Services Department

Membership Services Manager:
Kathleen Jamieson
Membership Activities
Coordinator: Jasmine Carlson
Membership Development
Coordinator: Vacant

Car Department

Chief Car Officer/ Manager:
Jeff Bennett
Asst. Chief Car Officer:
Andrzej Jurek & Dave Peterson

Fixed Plant Department

Chief Engineer/Manager:
Ralph Taylor
Chief Lineman: Vacant
Roadmaster: Bernard Rohling
Asst. Roadmaster:
Patrick Storm
Buildings and Grounds
Superintendent: Ron Ruhl

Electrical Supply & Signal: Ralph Taylor

Museum Services Department

Museum Services Manager:
Bernard Rohling
Media & Social Media Relations
Coordinator: Ryan Prusinski
Webmaster: Jacob Goldberg
Asst. Webmaster:
Edward Konecki
Chief Technology Officer:
Edward Konecki
Community Relations Manager:
Jeff Bennett
Capital Development
Coordinator: Eric Zabelny
Curator: Joseph Hazinski
Publications Manager:
Kathleen Jamieson
Newsletter Editor:
Kathleen Jamieson
Archivist: Jasmine Carlson & Dave Peterson
Education Coordinator:
Fred Biederman

Museum Safety Department

Safety Coordinator: Ralph Taylor

AE&FRE Company Railroad

President: Art Lemke
Treasurer: Ralph Taylor
Secretary: Edward Konecki

Mission Statement

Education Through Demonstration

The Museum's mission is to preserve and interpret Chicago's electric transport era that began in the 1890s and peaked before 1950. The electric transport era is significant because electric railways, including inter-urban, 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 that help relate the importance of electric transport in and around the Chicago Metropolitan Area, putting them in context with their surroundings and era.

The Electric Times Staff

Publication Manager—

Kathleen Jamieson

Columnist—Anderson Pries

Layout and Graphics— David Peterson

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Submissions: Submission of stories from members and others is necessary in order to publish the Electric Times. Feature length articles are welcome and considered as are photographs and illustrations. Please contact the staff before undergoing a project. Contributors submit materials with the understanding that no monetary compensation is provided.

Changing your address? Send address changes to the museum's mailing address: Box 315, South Elgin, IL 60177 or Login online to update contact information.



April Open House

April 25 & 26

The Fox River Trolley Museum is opening its doors and inviting the public to step behind the scenes during a special Open House event on April 25-26 from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. each day. This is a unique opportunity for visitors of all ages to experience the inner workings of the museum and discover what it takes to keep history moving.

Guests will have the chance to see firsthand what goes on beyond the scenes, from the daily efforts of dedicated volunteers to the skilled trades that keep the railway operating. The Operations Department will be in action, offering a closer look at how train movements are safely coordinated and executed. Ever wondered what it is like to operate a trolley car? This event provides the perfect opportunity to learn more and explore how you can get involved.

Visitors are encouraged to meet the volunteers who power the museum, ask questions, and gain insight into the many roles that make the organization run. Whether your interests lie in mechanics, history, operations, or simply learning something new, there is something for everyone to discover.

For those who have walked past a building and wondered what is inside, now is your chance to find out. The Open House offers access to areas not typically open to the public, giving a rare and exciting look at the museum's facilities and ongoing projects.

Whether you are considering volunteering or simply looking for a fun and educational outing, the Fox River Trolley Museum's Open House promises an engaging and memorable

Kathleen Jamieson

Department News

Operations Department

The Fox River Trolley Museum will be offering Spring Training Sessions to anyone looking to requalify or join as a new volunteer. Sessions will be held during regular operating days at the Museum Grounds. Anyone who is interested should email trainmaster@fox-trolley.org to schedule a date and time.

Chris DeAngelis
Trainmaster

Guess The Artifact

Can you guess what this is?



Rules:

- Members may only submit ONE entry
- The first correct correct entry wins
- Submit guesses to Anderson@frtm.org

Winners will be mentioned by name in the next newsletter

Good Luck!

Last Winner: Fred Lonnes

The last artifact was our very own CTA L-202, and the winner of last issue's Guess the Artifact was Fred Lonnes! Fred served the museum as our vice president for many years until retiring in 2024, and has been with the museum for more than 60 years now! In addition to volunteering and being a part of the membership of the museum, Fred also had a decorated, almost 40-year long career with the Chicago Transit Authority, where he worked as an Assistant Chief Rail Equipment Engineer, among other positions

Correct Answer:



Soo 130 Restoration

The Restoration Dream Team is at it again, this time with our oldest car

Have you ever wondered what the oldest car at our museum is? It is SOO Line #130, built in 1887 by the Missouri Car and Foundry. It is also the oldest caboose in the state of Illinois and was constructed two years before the famed Eiffel Tower in France. This remarkable piece of railroad history stands as a testament to early freight train operations and the craftsmanship of the late nineteenth century.

In stark contrast is our Soo Line steel caboose #117, representing one of the final iterations of the North American caboose. Looking ahead, it is our hope that, once both cars are fully restored, they can be displayed together to illustrate the evolution of caboose design on the Soo Line Railroad, from early wooden

construction to later steel designs.

Restoration work on #130 has been steadily progressing in our car barn. Volunteers have been energized not only by the uniqueness of the car, but also by a generous \$1,000 donation from the Soo Line Historical Society, which has helped support ongoing efforts. Caboose #130 is a rare surviving example of a wooden cupola caboose, making its preservation especially important.

Work on restoring this car actually began several decades ago. Following the expansion of our car barn in 1992, #130 was moved indoors for protection. At that time, two dedicated volunteers, experiencing a slowdown in their construction

Below is a picture of the interior main caboose compartment. It features a stove, dining table, seating and more. Come visit and take a look!



Just a few of FRTM's Restoration Dream Team. (From left to right) Joe Caliando, Jeff Bennett, Kathleen Jamieson, Fred Beiderman, Dave Peterson, Andrzej Jurek, and Dan Braun

business, took on the project and completed a full roof replacement, a major accomplishment. Thanks to the quality of that craftsmanship, along with years of indoor storage, the car remains in excellent structural condition today.

Current efforts are focused on preparing both the interior and exterior for repainting, as well as addressing minor repairs. Some reconstruction work is also needed on the ends of the caboose to return it to its original appearance. Progress continues at a steady pace, with volunteers

carefully working to ensure historical accuracy while maintaining the car's structural integrity.

With continued effort and support, SOO Line #130 is on track to once again carry museum guests along the rails of the Fox River Valley. Its return to service will not only mark the completion of a long-term restoration but also provide visitors with a unique opportunity to experience a true piece of nineteenth-century railroad history firsthand.

Kathleen Jamieson

Fathers Day Car Show

You won't want to miss this!

Celebrate Father's Day at the Fox River Trolley Museum on Sunday, June 21 from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Treat Dad to a day filled with vintage charm, featuring a classic and antique car show with a "Best in Show"

award. Stroll among beautiful vehicles, enjoy local flavors and refreshments, and take in the sights and sounds of transportation history. Whether it's on the road or on the rails, give Dad an experience he won't forget with a

trolley ride along the scenic Fox River Line. Bring the whole family and make lasting memories while celebrating Dad in a truly unique way.

Kathleen Jamieson



The Good, The Bad, and The Car Shuffle

Slowly but surely, the Fox River Trolley Museum has been improving and organizing the railyard at our Castlemuir Campus as we continue working toward presenting ourselves as one of the finest railroad museums in the Chicagoland area, if not the nation. Since the start of the new year, equipment in the main yard has been rearranged, and select pieces that no longer aligned with our museum's mission, or had become safety concerns, were removed. While the decision to scrap equipment is never easy, it allows us to better focus our resources, volunteer time, and funding on preservation efforts that support our mission and long-term goals.

As part of this work, the cabooses were relocated to the north end of Track 3, where diesel locomotive #73 was previously stored. Locomotive #73 and Muni PCC streetcar #1030 were ultimately scrapped after it was determined they were beyond our repair capabilities and, despite being offered to other interested parties at no cost, no new homes could be found. Their removal has freed up valuable space in our yard, where capacity is limited.

Additionally, Chicago Transit Authority locomotive #L-202 was moved inside the shop. Although indoor space is limited, protecting this car was a priority due to its wooden decking and the need to preserve it from further deterioration.

Anderson Pries

CTA 45 Restoration

As many of our members and patrons may know, Chicago Transit Authority #45 has been sitting in our train yard for some time with no real use. In late 2025, it was repainted and used as a warming car for Santa's Trolley Express 2025, and it is now painted in the CTA's "alpine white and mint green" scheme that the car wore in 1966. After sitting on display for the winter, Car 45 is now undergoing a full restoration by the Fox River Trolley Museum Car Department. The car is being completely restored and backdated to its 1966 appearance, and work has begun with the removal of the seats and the sanding of the interior in preparation for repainting. Be sure to visit and ride this car when it operates as a single car this operating season. Email info@foxtrolley.org if you would like to donate to the Car 45 restoration project.

Anderson Pries



Kyle Kunzer, out at the museum, has been hard at work.

Car Card Sign Restorations

Have you ever wondered why our car advertisements look so nice?

Have you seen the vintage advertisements inside Car 316? They are called "car cards," and they were used to advertise many products inside our vintage trolley and interurban cars. Last year, a stock of original car cards was found in one of our storage boxcars behind the car barn. The car cards, however, were in bad condition, with many of them torn in multiple places or badly stained. Dave Peterson, a volunteer from the Car Department and an avid digital designer, helped physically clean them before scanning them, then digitally restoring and recoloring them. The original copies of the car cards were moved to the Fox River Trolley Museum archives, and new copies can now be printed as needed if one becomes damaged



Dave Peterson at work in the studio digitally re-creating trolley car cards

or worn. The reproduced car cards were first used on Car 316 after its restoration, where they completed the car's historic look

and wowed guests with their historical accuracy.

Anderson Pries

Fun Fact

Do you know where the name Castlemuir, which adorns our depot and refers to the location of our museum campus on the north end of our line, comes from? It comes from the Castle family farm that occupied the property during the days when our line was an active interurban mainline. The name was given by the museum in the 1960s, and it is in the true tradition of railroads naming locations after former farms that once occupied the area, i.e., our very own Coleman, IL. As a bonus fun fact, two of the only remnants from the days as a farm flank our Castlemuir Depot: our famed oak trees which are calculated to be between 350 and 500 years old.

March Membership Rally Success

Members coming together to have a good time!

This March, many members came out to Woodcliff on the banks of the Fox River to gather in camaraderie and watch vintage train films from the private collection of member Bruce Moffat. Members shared a meal, swapped stories from around the museum and beyond, and took time to get to know one another ahead of our 2026 operating season. Overall, the membership rally was a huge success once again, and we very much hope you will join us next year.

Anderson Pries



Electrify the Barn

Learn what it takes to get our overhead electric back up and running

Starting last year, the museum undertook one of its most comprehensive projects to date: the extension of our current car barn to house three additional vintage railroad artifacts for preservation, maintenance, and restoration. This expansion will help protect these historic pieces from the elements for many years to come while also improving our ability to care for and present them to the public.

A key part of this project involved removing all existing overhead wire and poles in the work area to make way for the new extension and updated track layout. This was a significant effort in itself and was com-

pleted entirely by our dedicated volunteers, whose time and expertise continue to make projects like this possible.

Now that the building extension has been completed and the new track has been installed, the focus has shifted to rebuilding the overhead system along the "car barn lead." This step is essential to allow our vintage trolley cars to move in and out of the car barn under their own power and return to service on our demonstration main line. Volunteers have already installed the necessary line poles along the barn lead and are preparing to attach the guy wires and span wires that support the overhead



The line crew has picked a beautiful day to use the bucket truck to dig their holes



Jeff secures both poles to the truck after the team has picked them up. They will then dig two holes and place their poles.

system. Guy wires anchor and stabilize the poles by connecting them to the ground, while span wires run between poles to carry and support the trolley wire above the track. Together, these components form the backbone of a safe and functional electric railway system.

As work has progressed, it has also become clear that several existing poles along the line require replacement. In response, the line crew has been actively installing new poles, removing aging ones, and beginning the process of integrating these improvements into the

broader overhead network. This ensures not only compatibility with the new construction but also the long-term reliability of our operations.

This is a large and ongoing effort, made possible entirely through volunteer support. If this project interests you and you would like to get involved, we encourage you to reach out. We would love to have you join the team.

Anderson Pries



Don't Forget to Renew For 2026

Museum Regular Membership Renewal & Application Form

Please Mail This Membership Renewal Form and Your Check to:

Fox River Trolley Museum
P.O. Box 315
South Elgin, IL 60177

1. Please fill out the following contact information:

2. Check the appropriate membership level and calendar year for which you would like to apply or renew below:

I would like to renew my membership for calendar year **202[]**

First Name

Last Name

Address 1

Address 2

City State Zip

Home Phone

Mobile Phone

Email

Price	Please Select	Membership Level	Description
\$35.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	General Member	A single person (18+)
\$50.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	Family Membership	A general member & family
\$25.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	Youth Member	A single person (13-17 years old) with parental consent
\$45.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	Qualified Member	A single person (18+) with ≥200 Museum hours
\$50.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	Qualified & Family Membership	A qualified member & family
Optional Sponsorship Donation			
\$100.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sustaining	
\$500.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	Contributing	
\$1,000.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	Benefactor	
\$	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other amount	
Total =			

Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$_____ payable to **the Fox River Trolley Association**.

Please Mail This Membership Renewal Form and Your Check to:

Fox River Trolley Museum, P.O. Box 315, South Elgin, IL 60177