



# ***FORT SMITH TROLLEY MUSEUM TROLLEY REPORT***

**Fall 2005**

**Number 83**

## **Help Wanted**

The Fort Smith Trolley Museum is seeking reliable, friendly and outgoing persons to fill part time positions as operators for the museum's vintage trolley. No experience necessary. We will provide on the job training by highly qualified instructors. Enjoy excellent benefits: a four-hour workweek, meet interesting people, work in a friendly atmosphere, and operate an authentic Fort Smith Trolley.

Take advantage of this opportunity today. Call now:

Dr. Art Martin 783-1237

David Kerr 783-6384  
or 783-0205 to leave message.

We are an equal opportunity employer—everyone has fun!

## **Mark Your Calendars**

Friends Of the Trolley Museum — Mark your calendars for **Saturday, June 10, 2006**, as the departure date for the next dinner train excursion to Winslow, AR. We are working on some really good entertainment for our layover in Winslow, and as always, our cuisine will be superb. In our Spring 2006 newsletter, we will

have more details available, but our entertainment director has some really unusual things lined up for our journey. Departure time will be at 5:00 PM from Van Buren, AR. Tickets will go on sale sometime in April. We hope to see you then.

## **Hot Springs 50 Restoration**

The Hot Springs Street Railway 50 is progressing, however never as fast as one would like. The interior wood work is nearly complete. This car is a real jewel. In searching for additional information needed for accuracy in restoration, it is apparent that restored or even surviving all wood 100+ year cars are very rare. Few bodies have survived to be restored. We are lucky to have this car.

The seats are completed and ready to be bolted in the car. The controllers are restored and waiting for installation. Our next major challenges are the wiring of the motor circuit and the design, fabrication and installation of the brake system.

The steps to the car will have to be reproduced. We have a sample and photos to use as patterns. The metal parts are forged steel. We welcome volunteers to help reproduce these parts or help

with any other part of the project.

Work is performed from 6:30 to 10 pm Mondays, 6-10 pm Tuesday, Thursday and Fridays, 8 am to 5 pm on Saturday. For information call Bradley Martin at 650-5456.

## **Fort Smith Light and Traction 205**

Thanks to the generous donations of our members, a grant from the 20th century foundation, and our 2005 fundraiser, we now have the Milan truck purchased from Gomaco Trolley Company at the museum. The axels, wheels, motors and gears will be used in fabricating the Cincinnati 39 truck for the 205.

We will be using patent drawings, photos, measurements from the car, and drawings from various sources to reproduce a truck that has no surviving examples.

The 205 car body was the first restoration the museum completed. Many have seen the car in parades and on exhibit at other sites. We will build the truck for this, the 3rd car in the Arkansas Collection, after completion of the Hot Springs 50.

We estimate donations of \$35,000 will be required to complete this truck.

## Looking Back

by Becky Meyers  
*Continued...*

In August of 1933, electric power production and marketing of the Fort Smith Light & Traction Co. became the O.G. & E.'s Arkansas Division. Citing heavy financial losses of the subsidiary Fort Smith Traction Co., management announced that all operations would cease on Nov. 15, 1933, to be followed by complete dissolution of the corporation.

On cessation of streetcar operation, a few of the younger carmen secured jobs as bus operators with the company taking over Ft. Smith and Van Buren transit service. Operation of O.G.& E. electric service absorbed some of the workers. Other carmen of advancing years retired when streetcar operation ended.

Beginning Nov. 16, 1933, a bus company headed by a local attorney, and called the Twin City Coach Co., began operation on essentially the same routes used by the former streetcar lines. The car barn and shops at North 11<sup>th</sup> and Kelley Highway remained for use by the O.G. & E. as a shop and garage. The streetcars made one final trip northward to the Frisco connection adjacent to former Electric Park. Following track removal along the private right of way in the median strip extending out north 11<sup>th</sup>, the thoroughfare became Midland Boulevard.

Following careful movement on the Frisco to a site located at South 3<sup>rd</sup> and Garland Ave. junk dealers began removal of salvage metal from streetcars. Some car bodies were purchased by individuals for use as makeshift dwellings, tool sheds, sandwich shops, and many other uses. With passage of time these relics of Fort Smith's splendid transit system vanished. (The remains of seven

of these cars have been located.) Open track work on private right of way was removed immediately and most of the rails were removed from street pavement during the 1930's.

Light & Traction was a victim of the times. America of the 1930's, despite the Depression, was already well along the way toward becoming an automobile-petroleum-highway oriented society, destined for and dedicated to a concept of immediate and personal mobility. Both the automobile and the Depression contributed toward the demise of public transit and the first streetcar systems to be scrapped were these situated in the smaller and medium cities.

Although Light & Traction operation could have extended for several more years, involving no further capital investment, and would have produced substantial profits during the war years of the 1940's, still the system would have perished with the ending of the wartime transit boom. In cities where streetcars survived into the 1940's, operations produced substantial profits during wartime gasoline and tire shortages. However, streetcar systems surviving the depression to operate through the war years were scrapped almost immediately following the cessation of hostilities. Few streetcar systems remained by 1950 except in some large cities, and most of those have vanished.

While control and the making of major policy decisions by a holding company in distant Chicago must have appeared as unreal and autocratic to Ft. Smith critics of the Light & Traction, it must be noted that patrons enjoyed the advantage of frequent service on a well maintained transit system, in cars that were modified to suit special and particular

demands of service in the area.

It may be said that Ft. Smith enjoyed the advantages of a streetcar system that was, for its day, well planned, constructed and managed. Transit service extended to practically every home in the city, servicing as many patrons as possible.

## Fort Smith Streetcars

Very few of Fort Smith's original streetcars remain in existence today. Four of these cars have been acquired by the museum. Cars #205 and #221 were found on a farm near Mulberry, AR. Car #224 was used as a diner in Ashville, AR, and has been restored and operating for 14 years. Car #205 is mounted on mobile home wheels to make the car mobile for parades and other exhibits. This car will soon be mounted on trucks and become the second operating Fort Smith Birney car. Car #221 was used as a residence. Car #10, a 1902 open platform car found at Turner Bend of the Mulberry River, will be the third Fort Smith car to be restored.

Three other known cars do not belong to the museum. A Birney body located near Dequeen is currently being used as a hay barn. A Birney frame that had been a hay barn is located in a ditch near Lavaca, AR. Another Birney frame is located near Booneville. No one remembers why it was there.

There are no remains of three other cars that were known to be in this area. A larger car body was behind the high school in Greenwood to sell school supplies and refreshments. Paris, AR had a car used as a diner. Cedarville, AR had a car converted to a barbershop.

We would be interested in information about any other of the 58 streetcars the Fort Smith Light and Traction Company owned.

# Memberships & Contributions

M/M Rogers Moore  
 Ira & Linda Roseberry  
 Tim & Joan Mason  
 John Ashman  
 Vernon Stewart  
 M/M David Butler & Linda  
 Velvet Medlock-Graham  
 David & Marilyn Rains  
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 David & Jan Whitt  
 Jeanne & Wendell Johnson  
 Arthur L. Ross Sr  
 Thomas & Sandy Lowe  
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 Dr. Charles Lane  
 Raymond W Toler

## Reminder

The date on your mailing label is the date of your last monetary contribution to the trolley restoration and serves to keep your membership up to date. A current membership card is your pass to ride the trolley.

## Discussion Group

The museum has a Yahoo group to facilitate distribution of information and encourage discussion of equipment, events, and work at the museum. You are invited to join. Log on to <http://groups.yahoo.com> to join. Just type fortsmithtrolley in the search block and follow directions.

## World Wide Web Page

Visit our website for current news or to view past newsletters.  
<http://www.fstm.org>  
 E-mail [info@fstm.org](mailto:info@fstm.org)

## Membership application

Check appropriate type of membership and send this form with check or money order to:  
**FORT SMITH TROLLEY MUSEUM**  
 c/o Fort Smith Streetcar Restoration Association, Inc.  
 2121 Wolfe Lane  
 Fort Smith, AR 72901

___ Annual Individual	\$10.00	___ Annual Benefactor	\$500.00	(Receive 224 Plaque and Lifetime Pass.)
___ Annual Family	\$15.00	___ Life	\$1000.00	(Receive Certificate and Lifetime Pass.)
___ Annual Sponsor	\$25.00	___ 224 Club	\$224.00	(Receive Plaque and Lifetime Pass.)

### MEMBERSHIP CARD SERVES AS AN ANNUAL PASS

The Fort Smith Streetcar Restoration Association, Inc. is a non-profit organization under Sec. 501©(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954. GIFTS AND LEGACIES ARE DEDUCTIBLE.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

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Additional Information on the Fort Smith Streetcar System is printed in "The Streetcars of Fort Smith, Arkansas" by Charles E. Winters. Available from the Association for a donation of \$7.50 plus \$1.00 mailing cost.

## Year End Donations

Please remember the Trolley Museum as the year ends. We have many ongoing projects needing funds to progress. When we started operating in 1991, our insurance was approximately \$1500, and by 2005, insurance costs had risen to almost \$10,000. As a result of the increase, a lot of funds previously available for restoration projects must now be used to pay for insurance.

In addition to restoration projects, the museum now has a mortgage of approximately \$22,000 on the property west of the car barn that was purchased for the future

Visitor's Center, Library, Archives and Engine House for the Frisco 4003.

Our next project after the HSSRR50 will be restoring the Fort Smith Light and Traction Co. car 205. We still need approximately \$35,000 to complete the car.

You might consider that donations of appreciated stocks or property allow you to deduct the current value from your taxes.

Many employers will match employee donations. Check with your company's human resources personnel. Your donation may be doubled or tripled by your employer.

All donations to the Fort Smith Trolley Museum are tax deductible and greatly appreciated.

## Trolley Report

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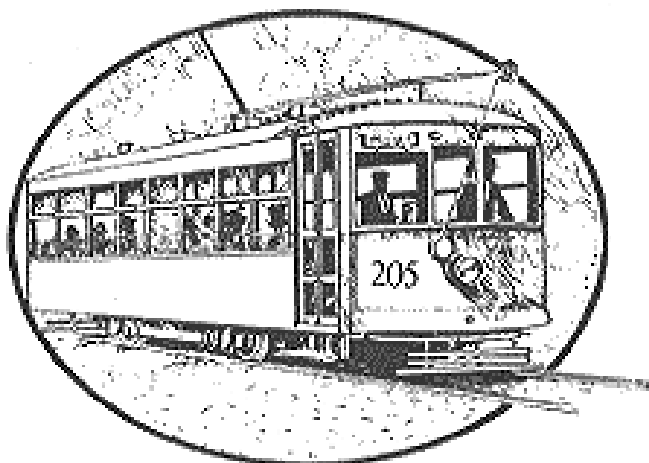
Association of Railway Museums, Inc.  
Founded 1961

*Promoting The Railway Museum Movement!*

## FORT SMITH TROLLEY MUSEUM

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