



FORT SMITH TROLLEY MUSEUM

TROLLEY REPORT

Summer 2006

Number 86

Tom Ross

Thomas F. Ross, 89, of Fort Smith passed away Thursday, August 3, 2006. He was one of the first streetcar operators to volunteer in 1991 when streetcar 224 first began operating. He began riding trolleys as a boy selling newspapers in Nashville before going to school. Tom had also served as conductor on the Arkansas, & Missouri Railroad excursion train from Van Buren to Winslow and had recruited many of the volunteers. With his grandfather and father both working for the Louisville and Nashville Railroad (L&N) he grew up with a railroad background. His stories and experience on rails will be missed.

He is survived by his daughter Linda Ross Olson and her husband John of Broken Arrow, Oklahoma; son Bob Ross of Fort Smith, Arkansas; three grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

FSTM Locomotives Nominated to Register

By David Kerr

Parked forlorn at the Trolley Museum's lower forty for several years, Air Force Locomotive No. 1426 and the Maumelle Ordnance Works Locomotive No. 1, have been nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

In a letter from the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program; "the

State Review Board has approved the nomination of the Air Force Locomotive No. 1426 and Maumelle Ordnance Works Locomotive No. 1 to the National Register of Historic Places. The Nomination will be forwarded to the National Register office in Washington, D.C. where it will be evaluated by their staff. If they concur with the State Review Board, it may be granted inclusion in the National Register."

If the nominations are successful, the Fort Smith Trolley Museum will have four pieces of rail equipment that are on the National Register. They will join Birney Safety Car #224 and Frisco Locomotive #4003 that are now on the Register.

Listing in the National Register contributes to preserving historic properties by providing:

- Recognition that a property is of historical significance.
- Qualification for Federal assistance for preservation.

Hot Springs Street Railway 50 progress

Work is proceeding on the air brake system for the car. We have all the linkage, air tank, and compressor on the car, and we are working on the air piping. If someone likes threading and cutting pipe, we can make you happy and would appreciate your skills. Thanks to Bruce-Rogers Company

who donated all the pipe for the car.

John Furlow has done a lot of machining of parts. His latest project was making the brake shoe keys and boring the brake pull rods. We really appreciate his talents and abilities.

The next step will be the wiring of the motors and controllers. We are currently rebuilding the grids for the control circuit. After the motor circuit is finished we should be able to operate the car even though there is much that will still need to be done to put it into service.

Stop by and see the "50". It is quite a beautiful Streetcar.

John Bell Jr. Prints and Note Cards

The watercolor commissioned by the Trolley Museum of "Garrison Avenue 1926" depicting the Fort Smith Light and Traction 224 on the Avenue was the first watercolor John Bell, Jr. painted in what has grown to be a series of approximately 30 historically accurate water colors of Fort Smith, Van Buren, Little Rock, and Eureka Springs, Arkansas.

The museum now has all the available John Bell, Jr. prints and note cards in stock. Watch our website, <http://www.fstm.org>, for an updated list of all the prints and their details. The prints make excellent gifts and are available at the museum and by mail.

Looking Back

by Becky Meyers

Would you believe that a spoiled rich girl from Carthage, Missouri would grow up to become one of the most famous women of this area? Born Myra Maybelle Shirley, (1848-1889) Belle Starr, not only earned her reputation but may have inherited some of those characteristics. Her father, John Shirley, was the black sheep of his family. While he lived in Indiana, he was married and divorced twice. His third wife, Eliza Pennington, was on the Hatfield side of the feuding Hatfield and McCoy families. There are many stories about Belle Starr, where she lived and with whom. It seems that while she was in the Fort Smith area she had the most trouble with the law. Rumor is that Belle Starr and a relative were among the first to have a Judge Isaac Parker case overruled which angered him greatly. At various times charges like rustling or bootlegging were brought against Belle but she was set free due to lack of evidence. In 1882 Parker finally got lucky and Belle was caught red handed attempting to steal a neighbor's horse. Belle was sentenced to two six month prison terms getting off after nine months for good behavior. Upon release she picked up where she left off.

If you will remember the operation of the first streetcars in Fort Smith began in 1883 with three mule drawn cars.

Belle was back in the Fort Smith area after her release from prison. In 1886 her lover, Blue Duck, stood before Judge Parker accused of murder. The best lawyers in the district appealed the case all the way to the White House and Grover Cleveland commuted the death sentence to life imprisonment. In 1888 her son, Ed, was sentenced by

Judge Parker to seven years in jail for horse stealing. Again, after appeal President Cleveland granted him a full pardon.

Belle's exploits made life interesting for the citizens of Fort Smith. Although her favorite mode of transportation was on horseback can you imagine how nervous the passengers of the streetcars would have been if Belle had joined them? She enjoyed carrying a six-shooter. Would their hearts have been in their throats upon seeing her board the streetcar? There are no stories about Belle harming anyone on a streetcar but just riding with her would be heart stopping enough.

There are instances of robberies on the street cars. An article about this was in the Fort Smith Trolley Museum *Trolley Report*, Winter 2006 issue Number 84.

Unlike Belle Starr who did get arrested for crimes (but was usually released for lack of evidence) most of the robbers of the streetcars were not caught. Could any of those bandits have offspring who inherited those characteristics of lawlessness and gun wielding with bootlegging, rustling, or robbery in mind? Let's hope not!

Sources: "PageWise, Inc."
<http://ok.essortment.com/bellestarrout-rzfh.htm>: Article from *Wild West Magazine* by Richard D. Arnett: *The History of Fort Smith* by J. Fred Patton.

Help Needed

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 prior experience is necessary. We will provide on the job training by highly qualified instructors. Excellent benefits: enjoy a four-hour work week, meet interesting people, work in a friendly atmosphere, and operate an authentic Fort Smith Trolley.

To take advantage of this opportunity today, call:

Dr. Art Martin at 783-1237

Or David Kerr at 783-6384

or 783-0205 to leave message.

We are an equal opportunity employer—everyone has fun!

New Entertainment Neighbor

West End Park is a vintage amusement park developed by Phil White. The park is located on Second St. adjacent to the Arkansas Oklahoma bridge. This just happens to be across Garrison Avenue from the western stop for the trolley. Phil's park is an easy walk under the bridge from the stop. Plans are for the trolley track to eventually go under the bridge with a stop at the park on the way to the Fort Smith Visitor's Center.

This beautiful permanent park makes an interesting addition to what people can do in Fort Smith. The most noticeable feature is a beautiful 54 foot-tall Ferris Wheel that is visible over downtown. It also has a merry-go-round with calliope music. Food is available in a double-decker bus concession stand and also in the Nickel and Dime Diner, located in a beautifully restored 1957 Pullman dining car with a bar from the original Pete's Place restaurant. Food in the diner is provided by Taliano's, a local favorite. A "Dollar Arcade" has vintage pinball machines.

Phil has collected several architectural artifacts from former local landmarks. The Second Street entrance to the park came from the 1800's Jewish temple that was demolished in the 1960's.

Now some the locations of interest along the trolley route are the Fort Smith Museum of History, the National Historic Site, the National Cemetery, the Trolley Museum, and the West End Park, Phil's pocket park of the past. Welcome to the neighborhood.

Memberships & Contributions

David Armbruster
 Jay C. Martin
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 Mack Barry
 Carolene Barry
 Frank Hug
 Robert Chester
 Don & Helen Kleiner
 Becky Meyers
 Anna Greve
 Robert Still
 Edythe M. Jakiun

Memorials

Carlton Plunkett
 by Stephen & Diane Plunkett
 Tom Ross
 by Iris Breed
 and by Gene Rapley
 Donald Peer
 by Eric & Elizabeth Sheffer

In Honor

Irvin Sternberg
 by John Lehnen

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

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.
 100 S. 4th St.
 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 _____
Street City State ZIP

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.

The Wind Did Blow

By David Kerr

Summer weather holds many surprises. Sunday, August 20th, downtown Fort Smith suffered a moderate wind storm.

The wind blew tree limbs over the Fort Smith National Cemetery wall and across the trolley overhead wire pulling down about 200 feet of wire. If that wasn't enough, the weight of the tree limbs bent two trolley wire support arms; the vertical poles were not damaged.

After the storm, we were left with a big mess to clean up. Waiting for the National Cemetery to remove the tree limbs was not an option as the trolley could not operate with a down wire and limbs across the track.

City Director, Gary Campbell, heard of our plight and showed up with his chain saw. In the fashion of Paul Bunyan, Gary had the tree limbs removed from the trolley tracks and off the wire in a short time.

Trolley Museum personnel replaced the two bent support arms and other broken pieces. The overhead wire was pulled into place and secured. The trolley was back operating just five days after the wind storm.

It is interesting to note that we had two tornadoes in the past that did no damage to the trolley overhead wires. Luck can only hold out for so long.

Thank you, Gary Campbell for helping us in a time of real need.

Trolley Report

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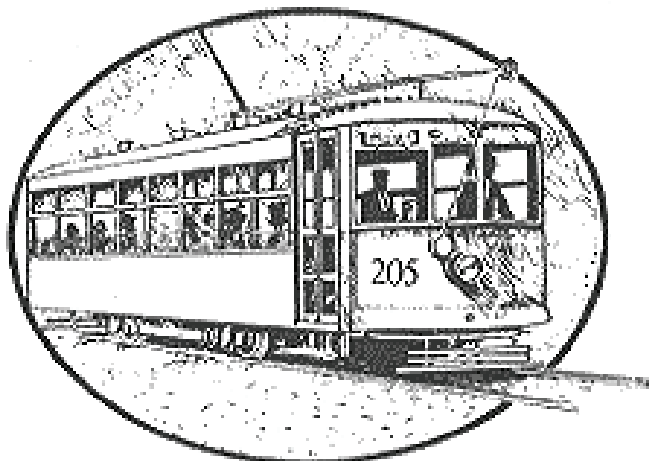
Association of Railway Museums, Inc.
Founded 1961

Promoting The Railway Museum Movement!

FORT SMITH TROLLEY MUSEUM

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