



VOL. 21 - NO. 2 SHELBURNE FALLS TROLLEY MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2012

DEDICATED TO PRESERVING THE HISTORY OF THE SHELBURNE FALLS & COLRAIN STREET RAILWAY

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Some of the work at SFTM is so obvious that even new visitors cannot miss it. A lot of the work at SFTM is barely noticeable, but just as important. Here are two examples. In the barely noticeable category, we did get Pole 6 replaced, and installed two more poles at the top of Depot St to allow us to (eventually) string a wire over the House Track, leading to the proposed car barn. Thanks to Mitchell Excavating and John and Dick for their help.

Most folks won't notice the new poles, or especially the work involved in getting the wire rehung at Pole 6. But everyone is noticing the new porch project as it moves toward completion. We started the season with the old porch removed, and had to use the existing ramp exclusively for access for a few weekends. Then Mitchell Excavating donated machine time to dig the footings, Valley Concrete & Construction and Graves Concrete donated their services and we had footings in place. With help from Dave D, Bill, Dick, John, Jordan, Marie, Jeannie, Dave G, Rowan, Steve, Stephan and Chris we got the framing in place, the cedar deck down, the support posts up, the guards installed and the roof sheathing on as of this writing. Additional thanks to Vreeland Design Associates and Kehoe Builders for their donated services, and Greenfield Cooperative Bank, Simpson Strongtie, Walter's Propane and Austin Trucking and members Harvey and Rembert for donations.

We still have a lot of work to do, so we can use your help and donations. Remember this is not just a porch, it includes a ramp from the porch to a new loading platform so that people in wheelchairs, or with bad joints or balance issues can easily ride on No. 10 with everyone else. Make a donation, lend a hand, or come by for a ride!

As usual, we barely have enough trolley operating crew to cover our schedule. If you, or someone you know, has a

few days a month to help us out, please let me know, we can do all the training to get you to the point where you can run No. 10 and tell her story to the visiting public.

We had a nasty shock this spring when our liability insurance jumped without warning from \$3200 to \$9500 per year. SFTM was not unique in this – most rail museums and tourist operations were hit with this as well. There were a variety of reasons for this, none of them related to our actual operation, which has had no claims or injuries in all our years of operation. Your donations to help meet this challenge are appreciated. We may have to raise fares next season, but we hope to be able to find a better deal for insurance.

The porch is the obvious current project, but the new car barn project is still our long-term priority; as always, your donations specifically for the car barn will be kept in our car barn fund and we will start the work once we have enough money saved up.

Our new porch is large enough for a picnic table, anyone feel like making one for us, or donating a good one? It would also be nice to have a baby changing station in one of the bathrooms, a \$200 donation would allow us to buy and install one.

Ridership is keeping pace with our average for this point in the year. If we don't get any hurricanes or blizzards we are on track to meet our expectations.

A lot has happened but it isn't too late to get involved. We always want more operating crew, and we have plenty of projects to work on. Contact me at sam@sftm.org or 413-624-0192 if you can help!

Sam



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CONTACT US

Shelburne Falls Trolley Museum
PO Box 272
Shelburne Falls MA 01370

Phone: 413-625-9443 Email: trolley@sftm.org

Web: www.sftm.org

TRANSFER is a publication of the Shelburne Falls Trolley Museum Inc., produced for the enlightenment and entertainment of our members and special friends. Spring, Summer, and Fall issues are planned for each year. Comments, contributions, and letters to the editor are welcomed.

David C. Bartlett - Editor
dbartlet@crocker.com

GUEST BENEFITS FOR MEMBERS

Individual and **Junior** levels (IN) (\$15) and (JR) (\$10) - card is valid only for named member. No additional guests.

Family (FA) level (\$25) is as follows: your card covers rides for up to two adults and all related children under age 18. There are no additional guest privileges for the Family membership.

Beginning at the **Friend** (FR) level, additional guests may accompany you whenever you ride the trolley:

Friend (\$35) - 2 guests, plus Family privileges.

Contributing (CO) (\$60) - 4 guests, plus Family privileges..

Patron (PA,BP,SP,GPLM,HL) (\$100 and higher)
No set limit to number of guests you may bring when you visit SFTM.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

At this writing, SFTM has **120** current active memberships.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Maureen Moore – Shelburne Falls MA
Basil and Barbara Hoffman – Shelburne Falls MA
Brody Family – Brookline MA
Liam Logan – Keene NH
Mark and Sylva Menard – Troy NY
Amber Davis – Amherst MA
Bruce MacCullagh - South Hadley MA
Ed Dzialo – Shelburne Falls MA
Sue Samorski – Buckland MA
Boden Bubb – Mt Kisco NY

THE CARBARN FUND

Donors since the previous report:

Kinsley Goodrich -Dalton MA
Paul Lewis - Higganum CT
Harvey Allen - Amherst MA
Gerhard Postpischil – Bradford VT

SIGNING UP FOR eTRANSFER

As a convenience to our members, and as an attempt to control costs, **TRANSFER** is available on line as a pdf file. This will give you the option of filing your copies of **TRANSFER** on your computer, in case you want to refer back to them at some later time. What's more, **eTRANSFER** comes out in **full color!**

If you wish to receive your future **TRANSFERS** by email, here's how to do it:

- Send an email to: dbartlet@crocker.com
- In the Subject line, please enter **eTFR**.
- In the body of your message, please enter just **your name** - that's all.

Your address will be entered on a mailing list, and the future issues will come to you by internet instead of by snail mail, thereby saving printing and mailing costs. Save a tree, too!!

Please note – if you are an eTFR subscriber, and subsequently **change** your email address, please be sure that you let us know.

VOLUNTEERING - HOW TO DO IT

Simply contact the Museum (see **Contact US** on this page). Indicate what your interests are - operating, painting, building stuff, selling, or what. We need you!!!

THE STREETCAR IN MASSACHUSETTS

(Editor's note: While many of our longer-term members might not find anything new here, please keep in mind that we have an ever-growing contingent of newer members who might want to know more about the world that SFTM's trolley inhabited. Note also: sometimes we just have to fill in white space).

Our fair state was an early enabler of the concept of railroad for transportation, starting with the Granite Railway in 1803, and by 1830, with the introduction of the steam locomotive, was a leader in the explosive growth of railroads to everwhere.

Things were different in the cities, however. Steam-belching monsters didn't seem like a good idea on city streets. And everybody knew that those monsters would terrify the hundreds, and even thousands, of horses necessary to the movement of commerce. So the stage coaches continued to be hauled through the mud, snow, and ruts. Business as usual. Slow and miserable.

In 1832, however, New York City sprouted the first practical street railway, using coaches fitted with flanged wheels, and rails made of wood with strap-iron secured to the top. No more battles with mud and ruts. A much smoother ride. And powered with much less effort by the same horses as before. More miles per horse – sound familiar?

Our state looked on, but didn't bite until 1856, when Boston built the first of many miles of horse railways, and then the landslide hit all the rest of the cities and a great many towns literally overnight. The Streetcar in Massachusetts was ready for prime time. Of course there was an increase of the ever-present horse manure for milady to have to step through while crossing the street, the tremendous demand for hay, and the occasional epizootic which left the entire city's motive power sick in bed at times.

But help was on the way. As noted before in these pages, in 1888 the city of Richmond VA sprouted the first really successful large-scale electric street railway. The electric revolution took over faster than the iPhone, and Massachusetts was in the forefront again.

Boston was first. Already having the largest network of horse railways, with many miles of tracks already in place, it wasn't long before a forest of poles holding a canopy of wires was found on all those tracks. And while we're at it, let's add more routes. These critters go a lot faster than Dobbin did, so now we can really reach way out into the 'burbs!!

The contagion caught on, and by 1920 the state boasted 3000 miles of electric street railway. Boston to Worcester was a piece of cake. Change in Worcester, continue on the Springfield, change there for Greenfield, or change there instead, during one brief period, to Pittsfield and all over the Berkshires.

A list of MA street railways in 1916 shows an amazing variety of route lengths. The Bay State system in the east weighs in with 762 miles of line. Boston Elevated has 229 miles. Then, Worcester Consolidated lists 251 miles. Those were the really biggies. At the bottom is the Linwood. 2.2 miles. Might as well walk. Our own SF&C at least has 6.95 miles, and Conway lads claim 5.9 miles. Add all the route miles in the state together and

you'd have a line stretching all the way to California!

There were very few street railways in the state where you couldn't transfer from one company to another. But even they were accessible by the "steam cars" on the railroads. Two such orphan lines were our own Shelburne Falls & Colrain Street Railway, and neighbor Conway Electric Street Railway.

How could the longer-distance street railways compete with the typically faster trains? Much cheaper to build, being able to climb hills and take sharper curves much better than the larger and heavier trains. If you had plenty of time, you might save a bundle by taking streetcars from, say, Boston to Springfield. Be advised, though, that a large lunch bucket should ride with you.

A map of all the MA streetcar lines ca 1916 would lead one to wonder if there was any place where you could go for a walk without being hit right and left by streetcars. The 3000 miles of track in MA gave the State the distinction of having the densest coverage of any other state.

But, like the traction empires in all the other states in the USA, everything fell apart as fast as it had arisen. It was the fault of one man: Henry Ford. (We probably should toss in a few oil barons here too, and those cursed bus builders).

By the late 1920's, many of the long distance interconnecting lines, and many of the secondary lines, (SF&C and Conway Electric among them) had become bike-trail ready, and every year thereafter it just became worse. The vast webs of streetcar lines shrank back into the cores of the bigger cities, and most of the rest were gone before WW 2.

Boston hung on with a few lines, even to this day. Springfield closed all their routes in 1941. Worcester petitioned the State do do the same in that year, but their paperwork was a little late going in, and somebody bombed Pearl Harbor before the appeal worked through.

On a very personal note here, your editor could not have been more delighted by this turn of events (no, not the Pearl Harbor bit). The service lasted, with very little route-shrinkage, until December 31, 1945, and as a student in Worcester at the time, there were those extra years of watching and riding, along with all the rich train-watching at Union Station thrown in. We thought it could never end.

It did, abruptly. It was a sad day when that last car made a 1 am departure from the end of the 19 line in Cherry Valley to the Market Street carbarn in the city. Transport logistics prevented this writer from being present on this last run.

But we digress. An ever-shrinking, but never quite vanishing, Boston system remains even now, and the Green Line's Riverside extension was added in the '50's. So it's not all over after all. And it's coming back! (Sorry, Colrain. You won't get lucky).

The renaissance began in San Diego CA., in the early '80's, and there is an ever-expanding street railway there now. That fever has spread, not swiftly as in the Gay '90's, to a large number of American cities. In most cases, passengers agree that the streetcars are much more civilized than the jerky, smelly buses they have on many routes replaced.

◇



This is what you see of the new porch and its new loading ramp. The porch is much wider than the old one, which was in advanced stages of decrepitude, and needed to be replaced anyway. The new porch is a pleasant place to sit, with plenty of shade in the afternoons.



A different perspective. Obviously there is still work to be done. All loading is now done from this ramp. Plans call for the former loading platform to be moved to the other end of the line.

TRANSFER

Questions? Ask Here.

One thing we pride ourselves on at SFTM is in being able to make up very convincing answers to frequently-asked questions. Less well-known is that we handle seldom-asked questions with the same consummate skill.

Question: Is a Trolley Car and a Streetcar the same thing?

Answer: Maybe.

Question: That's a lousy answer. Can you do better?

Answer: If you insist. The term "streetcar" goes back to the horse-drawn car era. Any passenger conveyance mainly running on rails on a street qualifies as a "streetcar". (However without a municipal charter to be there, it qualifies as "illegal", so don't try this yourself). In order to be a trolley car, it must be an electric streetcar which collects its energy from an overhead wire, and the collection device must consist of a pole which holds a wheel against the wire. Anything else is a shameless fake.

Question: In my city, we have a new streetcar system which claims to be a trolley line. I don't see any wheel. I'm confused.

Answer: In these troubled times, everybody is confused. Live with it. What you are seeing is a streetcar with a modern improvement on the old trolley-wheel scheme. Basically, the wheel is replaced by a sliding collector, which seems to work much better. But your city is living dangerously in billing the line as a trolley line. Our suggestion: Move away before it's too late.

Question: I grew up in the middle west a long time ago. We had exactly what you guys describe as trolley cars, but we never called them anything but streetcars. Might we have violated some local statute by doing that?

Answer: No. You are covered by the Regional Dialect Act. Example here it's soda; out there it's tonic. Same thing with trolley cars. You people talk funny, that's all.

Question: What is High-speed Rail?

Answer: As used in this country, it's whatever you want it to be. It's really a political term used by either those factions who promote it, or those others who want to kill it extremely dead forever. Neither faction is believed to have any kind of real understanding of the term, but they sling it around with reckless abandon. In this country, it is used solely as a vote-getting trick.

In the rest of the world, High-speed Rail is a very effective, earth-friendly way of moving huge numbers of people very quickly over medium and very long distances. Did you know that Tibet (not a typo) has it? Saudi Arabia is building it? Europe is laced with it in a huge way? China? Japan?

It's endemic. But Not IN America's Back Yard. Stay tuned.

Question: When will passenger rail service return to Shelburne Falls?

Answer: This is a joke question, right?



SF&C No. 10 has just arrived from its long journey from Salmon Falls. Arriving passengers disembark, while departing passenger await, sheltered from sun or rain by the porch roof. It makes a fine 'waiting room' on a hot day.



Another view, another crew

Photos - DCB

Test Drive

SFTM's young member Henry Mulvey, a serious fan of all things trolley, but completely disabled, recently tried out the route between his father's van and our No. 10. His Dad wheeled him in his chair on the round trip, and Henry gave our total access project a big Thumbs UP.

If Henry says it's good, then we know that we have done the right thing. Thanks, Henry!



2012 OPERATING SCHEDULE

OPERATING EVERY SATURDAY, SUNDAY, AND
HOLIDAY, FROM MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND
THROUGH THE END OF OCTOBER.

HOURS OF SERVICE - 11 AM TIL 5 PM.

LAST DAY OF OPERATION – SUNDAY OCTOBER 28

COME CATCH THE LAST RUN!!

MEMBERS' DAY SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 9, 2012

LUNCH AT NOON

Yummy for Your Tummy Luncheon!

A traditional home-cooked meal like Grandmom used to make, for Grandparents Day!

**American Chop Suey, "Indian Cornbread"
Casserole, Highland Harvest Green Salad, Fruit
Salad with mint, and a variety of desserts.**

Coffee/Beverage.

\$10 for adults, \$7 for 12 and under.

Find out who the Volunteer of the Year is.

**Ride the Trolley, the Pumpcar, and anything else
that SFTM can dig up that runs on rails.**

**Or just hang out on the Great Porch and watch all
the Pan Am Southern's new oil trains whip by.**

Sound like fun? Sign up for all this by Sept. 5, at:

members@SFTM.org

Or leave message at 413-625-9443

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Check out the new book about No. 10, *The Little
Yellow Trolley Car*, a true story of the SF&C by trolley
operator Marie Betts Bartlett. See sample pages and
order online at www.thelittleyellowtrolley.com

Shelburne Falls Trolley Museum
PO Box 272
Shelburne Falls MA 01370-0272

413/625-9443 www.sftm.org/

