

## *Shelburne Falls Trolley Museum*

# **News**

*January 1996*

## **1995—The year in review**

*By A.H. Jewell*

1995 has proven to be a pivotal year for your trolley museum. The big news was the grant for \$200,000 given by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (DOT) for the restoration of our car number 10. At the same time, a number of other events came into play that bode well for the future.

We started 1995 by negotiating a successful three-year lease with Norm Sessions for the exclusive use of the tracks in the Buckland/Shelburne Falls railroad yard.

Also in January, Monsanto Chemical Corp. and Novacor from Springfield contributed significant amounts of track materials, all of which were trucked to and stored in the Buckland/Shelburne Falls yard.

In February, Al Barten braved a winter blizzard to once again supervise our participation in the Amherst Railway Society's railroad extravaganza at the Big E in West Springfield. We continue to enjoy our opportunity to interface with the railfan community at this show—the biggest in New England. We displayed our N-scale model of the Shelburne Falls Yard, constructed by Joe Albano. The model gave visitors a first clue as to what we are hoping to achieve at the yard

Also in February, your president was invited, as co-chair of the Shelburne Historic Commission, to submit a worthy idea for ISTEAF funding by the Franklin County Commission. It took me some time but it eventually dawned on me that the Number 10 Restoration project just might in fact be a worthy idea!!!

This set off a frantic effort to put together a winning proposal. Seashore Trolley Museum was invited to make a thorough inspection of Number 10 and to provide an estimate for restoration to operable condition. When the dust had settled in mid-April we,

through the Shelburne Historic Commission, had put together a hundred-page proposal asking for \$200,000 dollars to accomplish the restoration.

In the meantime, early April that is, W. J. Riegel and Sons., an Albany, New York railroad contractor, donated two weeks' worth of track rehabilitation services in "our yard." Working with our Jimmy Bragdon, 6 broken rails, 40 defective switch timbers, 3 defective switch stands, and 300 defective ties were replaced using the materials donated previously by Monsanto and Novacor.

In May, our bubble got popped for a minute by the announcement from the Franklin County Commission that our proposal would not be supported within the context of the "County's" ISTEAs funding application. Although the setback was disappointing, it didn't seem to hamper any of the appetites at our Annual Dinner put on by the Shelburne Grange. Dave Bartlett continued his after dinner series entitled "Humor and Trains, the Divine Elixir," much to the delight of the attendees. Linda Barten continued her winning ways by stealing the jackpot of a Dinner Train for two in Newport. How she manages to win every year is reportedly being investigated by our internal security unit.

In June, the Franklin County Commission, apparently shaken by the sight of so many grown men crying, agreed to at least submit our proposal to the State Department of Transportation for the state-wide ISTEAs lottery.

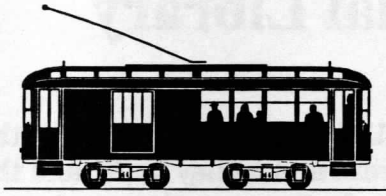
On July first, the Museum, with no gift shop in operation this time around, reopened. Our jolly core of volunteers, including but not limited to Ryan Strong, Ida and Ernest Sloan, Flo Reynolds, Brian Carr, Ann Needham, Marshall, Grace, Peter, and Mary Johnson, Irene Lively, Alden Dreyer, and Polly Bartlett, not to mention Nancy Dole, did yeoman duty in presenting the museum to native and tourist visitors alike. We entertained approximately 2000 people in 1995, including a goodly amount of fans from the British Isles.



In August, in co-operation with the Art Bank of Shelburne Falls, the Museum sponsored a youth activity—painting the Museum's box car in the yard. Although not all of our people view the results as either art or railfan politically correct, no one can say the car is just another drab face in a sea of weeds.

And, while we're in the yard, I might mention the fact that yours truly along with Ryan Strong performed an abundant amount of preventive maintenance in the yard, including switch cleaning, switch stand painting, joint tightening, brush clearing, and garbage pickup.



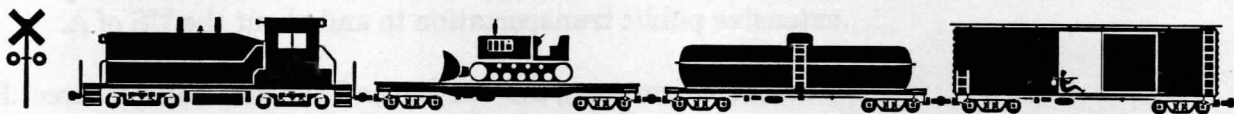


In September, the State DOT (EOTC for you pc acronym sport fans) in conjunction with the Franklin County Commission Transportation Group, announced that—dadada da ta ta ta!!!—the Museum was one of three winners in the statewide lottery (read ISTEA Enhancements) and that we would be receiving the entire \$200,000 asked for.

Since that time, your president has devoted many hours to work with the state to ensure the money becomes a reality. At the present time, it appears that the car restoration will be done in the “yard” in an enclosed car house designed gratis by Architect Joseph Mattei, using a select concoction of Museum employees and volunteers along with some paid consultants from Seashore and Warehouse Point trolley museums. The source for the mechanical components is not clear at this point but it would appear that equipment will be coming from overseas and not the West Coast as we had originally hoped.

In November, we took a jaunt with the Shelburne Falls Business Association to the Warehouse Point Trolley Museum. The purpose of the visit was to enlighten the village business community as to the issues surrounding a trolley operation. Quite frankly, the Shelburne Falls business community has not always been exactly convinced that we are manna from heaven. This trip to Warehouse Point at least presented some of our vision in a favorable light and will go a long way toward solidifying our community support. In the meantime, we are participating in a \$10,000 study to determine the best use of the yard. Unless we see something else that is pretty damn amazing, our position is that a trolley museum in the yard is the best use and anything else is an unqualified also-ran.

Did I tell you that we are in line to get, possibly in my lifetime, a \$1.2 million grant to acquire and refurbish the yard??? And there’s a number of other items like trackmobiles, and locomotives, and the library, and of course the upcoming show at the Big E (February 3 and 4). But no sense overloading you all with a lot of boring news. Instead, I’ll wish you one and all a very trolley happy New Year and express the hope that as many of you as possible make yourselves involved with “your” museum in 1996.



# The Museum's John Keep Memorial Library

By Nancy L. Dole

Located on the second floor of the 12 Water Street museum, the library is a resource for students, train and trolley buffs, and the general public. Although cataloging is far from complete, we have a healthy collection of train/trolley related material, much of it historical. Students on occasion, when doing historical and/or transportation reports, make use of the wide variety of material on hand, which includes books, magazines, videos, maps, and models.

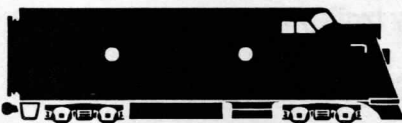
The Museum is looking for people to assist in the organization of the library; computer expertise is welcomed but not a requirement. Time is the needed key ingredient.

When doing spring cleaning this year, should you find any ephemera of any sort in connection with Colrain, Shelburne Falls, Conway (West County in general) that relates to transportation, including but not limited to schedules, old clippings, post cards, booklets, magazines, or books, the Museum would welcome them as a donation or would welcome the opportunity in some cases to purchase them to add to our growing library collection.

We welcome, as you can see, your time, additions to, and use of "our library" at the Shelburne Falls Trolley Museum.

## Union Station—this way out!

By A.H. Jewell



Imagine if you will, with closed eyes, luggage at the ready, as a slightly nasal voice announces: "Chicago, Kansas City, Montreal, New York City, Buffalo now loading. Please have your tickets ready before boarding." Sounds like Logan Airport or Bradley Airport today, right? Would you believe Shelburne Falls, 1908?

Well, folks, the truth is that in 1908 if you didn't own a car or a horse, you could still go by rail from Shelburne Falls to just about anyplace your little heart desired. For, you see, Shelburne Falls boasted a Union Station with three, that's right three, railroads providing extensive public transportation to and about the US of A.

Our electric railroad, the Shelburne Falls and Colrain Street Railway, was a trolley line offering 14 round trips per day between Union Station and Colrain. Granted the SF&C didn't go to Cheecago,

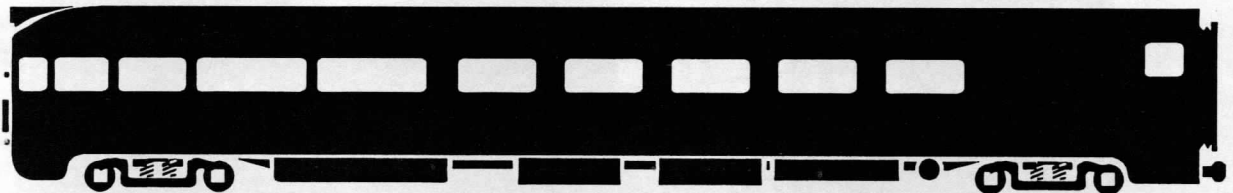


Baltimore, or Philadelphia but it sure made tracks to Grand Central (a nickname given to a way station here in Shelburne Falls) not to mention Griswoldville, Shattuckville, and Colrain City. At the Union Station, the SF&C connected with two steam railroad lines.

The New Haven Railroad offered "Express" (read faster than walking) service direct to New York City via Northampton, Westfield, and New Haven. The New Haven also offered connecting service to our other West County trolley line—the Conway Electric Street Railway—at Conway Station, about one mile east of the Bardwells Ferry Bridge.

The Boston and Maine Railroad was the primary steam line, providing all manner of connections west, via the Hoosac Tunnel naturally, with sleeping cars, parlor cars, and dining cars as well as coaches to just about anyplace you cared to go West of here. A not-to-be-forgotten connection was with the Hoosac Tunnel and Wilmington Railway (a.k.a. Hoot, Toot & Whistle), a narrow gauge steam line which connected with the B&M just West of Charlemont near the Hoosac Tunnel. To the East, the B&M offered a similarly rich array of premium and not-so-premium trains, accommodations, and connections to the Conway Electric line at South River Station as well as to Greenfield, Brattleboro, Montreal, Fitchburg, Boston, Portland, and Bar Harbor, Maine.

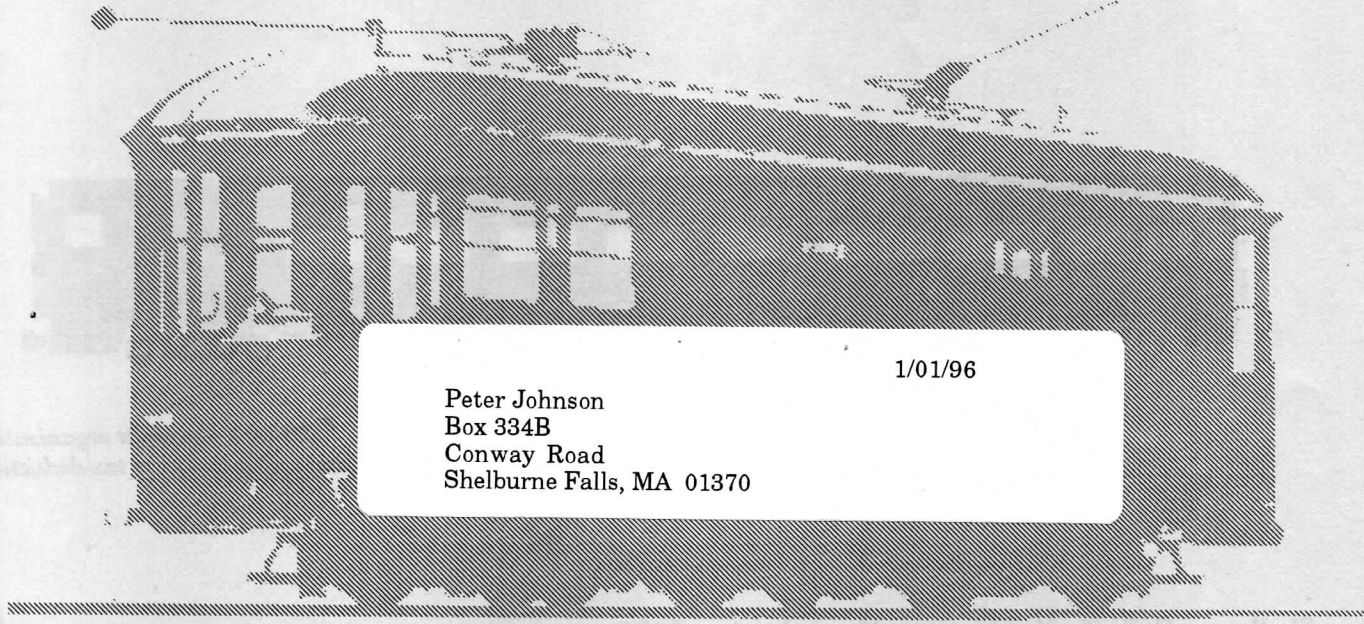
Walking up to Salmon Falls Market and seeing the remains of the old station platform along the track, it's hard to believe that the forty-odd passenger trains and trolleys a day of 1908 has dwindled down to five or six freights a day today. It's nice to know that once upon a time, when Ford was possibly a crackpot and Vanderbilt was a force to be reckoned with, rail was king and Shelburne Falls was one of railroad's principalities.



*The Shelburne Falls Trolley Museum is a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit organization.  
Gifts and membership dues are tax-deductible.*

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