

## AE&FRE 5 is Ready to Run Again



**Gently and slowly lowering AE&FRE #5 to its truck. Crane operator Frank Bongiovanni is at the controls guided by the watchful eyes from l. to r. of Fred Lonnes, Ken Ward and Chuck Galitz.**

With new wheels, on the south truck of AE&FRE 5 it is ready to roll again! On August 1, 2002 the truck was sent via Sam's 24 Hour Towing Service to Progress Rail Services, Chicago, Illinois. It was one of the hottest days of 2002. See "Fox River Lines" 2002-2 for the humid details. The wheels on this truck were original to the locomotive built in 1946. They developed sharp flanges and other severe wheel wear problems during their 55 years of service. Additionally the truck frame, side rods and axles needed and received mechanical repairs. Wheels on the other truck were replaced while #5 was in service at Chicago Gravel in Elgin.

On July 25, 2003 the truck was again in place on # 5 through the flawless work of members *Chuck Galitz, Fred Lonnes, Ken Ward* and Frank Bongiovanni of Gatwood Cranes. The entire operation took about two hours. It was a cool, dry and breezy day. Chuck completed needed motor maintenance before the truck was placed under #5. Restoration to its AE&FRE 1973 condition will include replacing the engineer's seat, bell, arm rests, gauges, glazing, and other items.



## Surviving Economic Uncertainty

For the past several years, the railroad fan press reported that many train excursion operators have either drastically cut back or eliminated their excursion operations. The single biggest reason was that the excursion operator could not charge a ticket price high enough to cover the cost of liability insurance and the cost of the operation. A recent *Trains Magazine* news item reported the latest incident of eliminating excursions. Ohio's Sugar Creek railroad suspended steam excursions this year, because of unprecedented increase in their liability insurance premium.

Rail Museums, such as ours, have also recently faced significant increases in the cost of liability coverage. First, our previous carrier stopped doing business in Illinois. This caused us to seek a new carrier and select one with the best price and benefits. However, there was a cost. Despite the fact that in 38 seasons of operation, the Museum has never had a claim filed against our policy, our insurance premiums went from a budgeted amount of \$7,500 (based on last years insurance payments plus a cost increase factor) to a total of just over \$18,000 - a 140% increase! Needless to say, this called for some adjustments in our budget and planned improvements for the 2003 season.

The knee jerk reaction is to blame it on lack of competition or on 9/11 or the high dollar value of insurance settlements. But, even though 9/11 required substantial claim settlements, and many other settlements seem quite high to people, this is not the major reason for such substantial increases in the Museum's premiums. Although a complete analysis of the complex issues facing the insurance industry would take many, many pages to review, the major issue facing insurance carriers and underwriters and the reason that our premiums sky rocketed is the poor performance of the stock market and the low interest rates on fixed income investments. Insurance companies invest the money from premiums to generate income to pay claims, provide a cash reserve and provide a return to their stockholders. None of these investments generates much income today. That leaves premiums as the only available source of income to replace the income lost from investments. Consequently, we and everyone else see substantial increases.

What can our Museum do? Continue to run one of the safest operations in the United States; ask our friends and members for assistance in supporting our 2003 season improvements; and look forward to the economic recovery we need.

**Ed Konecki**

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## **Mission**

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 interurban, 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 which help relate the importance of electric transport in and around the Chicago Metropolitan Area, putting them in context with their surroundings and era.

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## **Opening Day 2003, AKA Good News-Bad News**



**Fred Lonnes surveys fallen tree and damage to trolley wire and feeder line at pole 22. Monday, May 12, 2003.**

On Saturday, May 10, the weather maps showed WARNINGS FOR SEVERE THUNDERSTORMS in the Elgin area. Sunday, there was a heavy overcast, light showers, strong winds (in the fifty mph range) and the temperatures were in the fifties. Not nice weather for a Mothers Day. *Jim Gonyo* took 5001 down the track prior to opening, to determine whether there were any obstructions. Finding none, the Museum was opened. A very light customer demand was experienced (about 87 passengers) and the Museum closed at 5:05 pm.

About 5:47 pm. A strong wind gust broke a tree at its base near pole 22 (immediately south of the Woodcliff stop) which fell across the right-of-way, and entangled itself in the ComEd lines plus breaking an insulator on our feeder line and a mast arm for our trolley wire. The picture shows what we found on Monday when Head Lineman *Chuck Galitz*, *Fred Lonnes* and I arrived. ComEd had removed the portion fowling their wires so that they could restore their customers and left

By six pm, the tree had been removed from the ROW and the feeder restored to the pole. On Tuesday, *Chuck* and *Ralph Taylor* straightened two poles that had been pulled out of alignment and installed a new mast arm for the trolley wire.

**J. Robert Wayman**

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## **Building the Fox River Line**

***Editor's Note:***

*The Aurora & Geneva Electric Railway was dealing with a number of challenges between 1896 and 1901. Part 4 of this article series discussed the railway's difficulties in extending its tracks from the north side of Batavia to Geneva. During this time period, the railway was also dealing with strong competition from the Chicago & North Western Railway (C&NW). The C&NW had a branch line track starting near its Geneva depot and running south along the west bank of the Fox River through Batavia to Aurora. This C&NW branch line was already in operation when the Aurora & Geneva was built. However, the trolley line's management did not anticipate the C&NW would compete so strongly.*



**Car 152 in Batavia on Batavia Ave (now Illinois route 31) just north of Main Street. It was one of the longest cars operated on the EA&S.**

## **Trolley Operations of the Aurora & Geneva Electric Railway**

### **AE&FRE (Part 5)**

The Aurora News reported on August 26, 1896, while the trolley line was under construction, "It is evident that the Aurora & Elgin electric lines will not effect a connection at Geneva without a fight with the Chicago & North Western Railroad. An intimation of what is to come was given when the Elgin road attempted to extend its line a few feet south of the North Western tracks, on railroad grounds. During the noon hour, employees of the North Western company demolished the work of the electric line, and for a time the controversy assumed a sanguinary aspect. Finally, after a consultation between the representatives of both concerns, an agreement was reached whereby hostilities were suspended until an investigation determines the legal rights of the two companies. The Elgin electric line has put into its barns, just north of the North Western crossing, track room to accommodate nine cars, with the intention of housing the cars of the Aurora line."

The Aurora & Geneva began operations between Aurora and North Aurora on October 4, 1896 and to the north side of Batavia on October

24th. The fare from Aurora to North Aurora was five cents and to ride all the way to Batavia was ten cents. A reporter for the St. Charles newspaper wrote on Nov. 6, 1896, "We took a spin on the new Aurora-Batavia electric railway on Sunday. The track is in much better shape than that on which the Carpentersville, Elgin & Aurora Railway Company's cars run, and the A&G cars are larger and more commodious. The North Western is likely to feel very keenly this new competitor's efforts for business."

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**Car 104 was loaded and ready to leave for Batavia. Aurora passengers awaited a southbound car.**



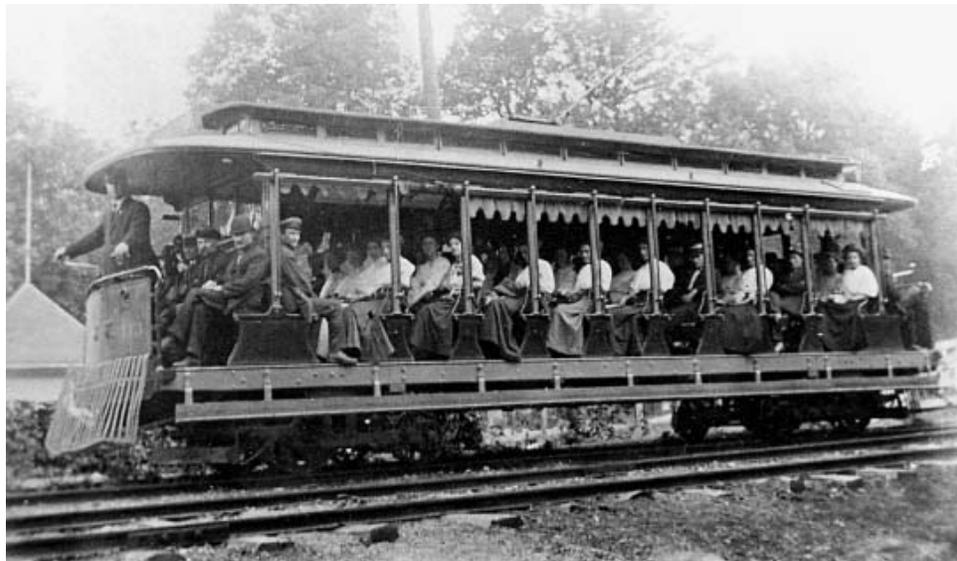
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The electric line had advantages in that its passengers did not have to get themselves and their cloths dirty from steam locomotive smoke and more frequent trolleys to ride. The North Western maintained the advantage of single seat service between Geneva and Aurora since the trolley line ended about four miles short of Geneva. After only three months of trolley operations, the C&NW was losing big business. The Aurora News reported on January 27, 1897, "The up-river electric railway and the North Western have begun to clash. The street cars with a ten cent fare, have knocked a hole big as a barn door in the Aurora-Batavia passenger business of the C&NW and its officials are beginning to move in the matter. On Friday, the North Western placed one hundred-ride tickets on sale at the price of \$7.50 each, or 7-1/2 cents fare for the trip."

When the Aurora & Geneva began operations, the C&NW was operating 18 trains (9 each way) between Aurora and Geneva Monday through Saturday and 4 trains (2 each way) on Sundays. The C&NW began head-to-head competition with the trolley line in April 1897. It was announced that, "On April 25th, the C&NW will inaugurate its new suburban service between Aurora and Geneva, in the endeavor to secure a greater proportion of the local business that at present fall to its lot. Trains will be run on the average as often as once an hour, running as a rule nearly on the half hour from Aurora. Nothing like it is in force anywhere in the west, on a branch line. The fare will be the same as that charged on the electric cars. The total number of trains, in and out, on Sundays, will be 27, and on week days, 34." Week days meant Monday Through Saturday back then since many people worked six days a week. Response to the new C&NW service pleased its managers. The May 1st newspaper reported, "The North Western is doing a great business since the inauguration of its fast service between Aurora and Geneva."

The C&NW did not stop with just its new fast and frequent train service to improve its presence in the Fox River Valley. They rented a large 50 acre tract of land about a ½ mile north of Batavia on the east bank of the Fox River along their east side railroad branch line from Geneva to Batavia, which served a large windmill factory on the northeast side of Batavia. "With the excellent service inaugurated by the North Western, a picnic ground such as they have selected, will prove very tempting to authorities who desire to get away from the city for a day's outing. The place is now being fitted up with modern improvements, including a large dancing pavilion, with band stand and a Georgia 80 by 40 foot pine floor, also a large dining hall, kitchen, ice cream parlor and restaurant, photography gallery, shooting gallery, merry-go-round, swings, tables, benches, toilet rooms, check room and other accessories and amusements to be found in a first-class picnic ground.

"There are excellent boating facilities afforded by the beautiful Fox River on which small steamboats will make regular trips to Geneva and Batavia, a distance of three miles. There will be a large number of first class row boats, and two small steam boats connected their the park that can be hires at any time by excursionists. The steam boats charged five cents for a one way trip. Fishing in this particular part of the river is good during the entire season. They also have artesian well water for drinking purposes.



**Elgin National Watch Co. employees from Carpentersville and Dundee heading to work on a car at Trout Park Siding in Elgin.**

"One of the features will be the hourly train service enabling one to leave the grounds at any hour in the day. Surely the North Western have struck a bonanza in the location of their pleasure resort. The scenery is unsurpassed." The C&NW's Laurelwood Park held an opening ball on the evening of May 31st, 1897. The C&NW brought people to Laurelwood Park by train. One such excursion was a special train for the First Methodist Episcopal Church. The train departed Elgin at 8:00 for the park and charged ticket fares of 50 cents for adults and 25 cents for children.

The Aurora & Geneva electric line rose to the competition by advertising in the Aurora Newspaper that one could also take the trolley to Laurelwood Park (even though the trolley track was on the opposite riverbank). A June 11th advertisement stated, "A grand ball will be given at Laurelwood park, Batavia, Saturday evening June 12. Electric cars will leave for Batavia at 12 noon, to accommodate all Aurora guests who wish to attend." The trolley line quickly devised a way to get a direct connection to the park. A July 22nd newspaper reported, "The Aurora & Geneva Railway devised a novel scheme for carrying passengers directly to Laurelwood park, which is situated on the east bank of the river just opposite the trolley car line north of Batavia. They built a large flat boat to be used as a ferry from the cars direct to the park. The boat will seat thirty people and can be easily handled with the number. A large culvert under the North Western track afford easy walking access from the trolley to the west bank of the river where a broad wharf has been made."

The trolley line also introduced new open-sided summer cars on their route in June of that summer. The Monday June 14th Aurora paper reported, "The new summer cars of the Batavia line were largely patronized yesterday, being full every trip. The trip up and down the line was about the coolest pastime possible, and thoroughly enjoyed."

Competition between the two railways remained strong. The October 17, 1897 Aurora newspaper reported, "The North Western has no reason to complain of the business done between Aurora and Geneva since the ten-thousandth ticket to Batavia was sold yesterday. For some reason, more tickets are sold from Geneva and Batavia to Aurora than are sold here in Aurora. Then there are two conductors running from Aurora to Geneva and back and they each turn in ticket receipts each month from cash fares. On November 9, 1897, the C&NW passenger train running between Aurora and Geneva collided with a freight at 5:40 pm. The newspaper reported, "The accident occurred just as the train was pulling out of Aurora. Each engineer thought the other would clear the junction and as a result they came together, lock wheels and both left the rails. The passenger train consists of but tow coaches and the engine, the passenger coach on this trip being next to the engine and the combination smoker and baggage car at the rear." The C&NW had turntables next to the Geneva and Aurora stations for turning the steam engines. According to the account of accident, the passenger coaches did not change ends and apparently only the coach seats were rotated (or flipped) to so riders could face forward on each trip. The steam locomotive and tender would be rotated on a turn-table so that it faced forward and placed on the head end of the train for each trip.



**When the AE&C had a strike in 1918, Moosehart employees were not greatly inconvenienced as the C&NW completed a line between Geneva and Aurora in 1883. It paralleled the electric line within a short distance almost the entire nine miles. In this photo workers were boarding a two-car train - including a baggage car for the trip to Aurora.**

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The Aurora and Geneva Electric Railway made attempts to please its customers. A major snowstorm hit the area in late January 1898. The Geneva newspaper reported on Saturday January 29th, "At Aurora, work was done by the street railway company with plows all last Saturday night and at 4 a.m. Sunday Manager Belden started with a plow toward Batavia, getting there at 10 a.m. A carload of Batavia people, snowed in, were entertained at the Bishop Hotel Saturday night, at the expense of the street railway company. The West Aurora streetcars did not run until Sunday night and it was Monday morning before the regular time table was resumed." The Aurora & Geneva also made adjustments to be a strong competitor to the C&NW for Batavia and Aurora passenger from Geneva. On June 6, 1898 they announced, "Hereafter the Batavia Bus will meet the 10:30 trolley car and on the night of an attraction at the Aurora Opera house will wait until 11:00 o'clock p.m. and will meet the 11:37 p.m. train on the North Western at Geneva from Chicago. This will allow Batavia and Geneva people a chance to remain an hour later in each city and assures parties coming out of Chicago on the late steam train a mean of getting to Batavia the same night." In December 1899, the Aurora & Geneva announced on the 22nd, "The electric car will leave Batavia at 11 o'clock in the evening, holiday week, to accommodate those who wish to attend the Fair, at the Music Hall."

The C&NW was not bowing to the competition by any means. A June 1, 1899 announcement stated, "The Chicago & North Western has added two additional trains between Batavia and Chicago. The North Western now had over 40 passenger trains a day serving Batavia."

The Aurora & Geneva increased their competitive edge when they extended their track to the south city limit line of Geneva in the fall of 1900. (One then had to walk or ride a carriage into town.) The Batavia newspaper reported, "After years of litigation and meeting all kinds of trouble, the first Aurora & Geneva no runs electric cars to Geneva, the first passenger car running on September 1st. This will be a great

convenience to the trading public. An extra car has been put on, and the cars leave Batavia every 40 minutes. There is also a late night car coming from Aurora and Geneva."

The construction of the trolley line tracks to Geneva gave the trolley line an additional advantage over the C&NW passenger trains. Over a short period of time, which included the completion of track for one-seat trolley rides between Elgin and Aurora, the C&NW lost many riders to the trolley. The Batavia newspaper printed a C&NW timetable effective November 23, 1902 indicated they operated 13 weekday and four Sunday trains between Geneva and Aurora. Thus, the C&NW operated fewer trains on the line than before the trolley line was built. A four year battle for passengers was won by the electric railway.

**Andrew Roth**

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## Museum Calendar Update

At its July 19, 2003 meeting The Fox River Trolley Association Board of Directors set the following dates:

### **Annual Members Meeting**

South Elgin Village Hall 1:30pm, Saturday, November 8, 2003

### **Annual Members Day**

11 am - Saturday, October 4, 2003 - Museum Grounds

**Don MacBean**

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## Trainmaster's Report

Operations began May 11, 2003 with three members achieving their motorman status during the first half of the year. They are *Dan Kelly*, *Hiroaki Miyagawa* and *Dan Zedan*. Please give them your support by acknowledging them during your next ride at the museum.

Each crew member should have received your new schedule by July 24 for the remainder of the year. If not, please give me a call and I will see that you receive yours. We continue to need more people to make this operation a success. If you desire to be a motorman and conductor, please give me a call to start your training program.

We also are looking for people that would like to work in the depot. We need people that would like to help with the ticket sales and selling the merchandise.

Any one wanting to be part of the operation either in working at the depot or operating the cars, please call me so that we can start your training and testing. Call *Jim Gonyo* at (630) 964-4366 or give your name at the depot if interested in being part of this great program.

Continue to be courteous and safe this year.

# First Half 2003 Financial Statement

At the July 19, 2003 Fox River Trolley Association Board of Director's meeting, Treasurer *Chuck Galitz* issued the following first half financial statement through June 30, 2003.

## **EXPENSES**

ADMINISTRATION	\$21,155.00
OPERATIONS	\$6,104.56
MEMBER SERVICES	\$754.12
MUSEM SERVICES	\$798.19
CAR DEPARTMENT	\$2,136.29
FIXED PLANT	\$7,933.62
DEVELOPMENT	\$10,220.45
OTHER	\$2,823.00
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$52,644.16</b>

## **FUNDING**

REVENUE FROM OPERATIONS	\$14,660.89
CASH DONATIONS	\$12,404.56
TRANSFER FROM SAVINGS	\$10,000
MISCELLANEOUS INCOME	\$129.88
TICKET SALES	\$14,693
<b>TOTAL FUNDING</b>	<b>\$37,195.33</b>
<b>BALANCE</b>	<b>(\$15,448.83)</b>

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## 2002 and the Future at FRTM

What a good year 2002 was at FRTM! It is a real credit to FRTM President Ed Konecki, the Board of Directors, and all of the active FRTM members to accomplish this. I have reviewed the numbers over the past nine years and the results were that ticket sales, dues, and gift shop revenues were at record or near record levels. The donation drive had excellent results and the extension into Blackhawk Park opened. But most importantly were the changes in the FRTM by-laws that increases participation by all members.

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This last change opens the door to grow the membership and increase the number of FRTM active participants. I think that Robbie Taylor's Master program is a good start in this direction, but FRTM will need more than this. To grow FRTM into the organization that it can be we need more members to run trains, help in the gift shop, maintain the equipment and property, act as docents, help solicit donations, and bring in additional members and volunteers.

Where do we get these new people? "The best of all possible worlds" would be a trolley fan who lives in the South Elgin area. There maybe one or two of these types and FRTM should be looking for them. But most people do not fit into this group. They are housewives, students, retirees, teachers, business men, government employees, etc., who like to work with their hands, brains and be with other people. I will bet you that there is a housewife in South Elgin who would be a good motorman.

But what is FRTM going to look like in ten years? What do we want it to be? Since FRTM came into existence it has increased the possibilities that were not available to RELIC. My vision is that FRTM become a World Class Museum. It would not have to be as big as the Museum of Science and Industry or IRM but it would fit a niche with quality facilities, equipment, right-of-way, static displays, library and an operation that would fit into the South Elgin community and area. The emphasis would be on the electric railroads of the Chicago area. It would have professional museum management and a staff doing maintenance and restorations. It would be an attraction that could bring people in from not only the

Chicago area but nationwide and worldwide as well. It would become a seven day a week operation and be available to schools, senior citizens, service clubs, governmental units, etc.

If the vision is a World Class Museum, what do we need to get there?

Luckily, most of the parts are already at hand but what we need is money. The money would be used for construction and maintenance of facilities and equipment. And I think we should set up an endowment fund for FRTM to become financially self-sustaining in the long term. How do we get the money? We use our long term capital improvement group.

What do they need? They (and we) need a "Master Plan" to show possible contributors what we are, what we do, and what we want to do.

How do we put a "Master Plan" together? We already know most of the "nuts and bolts" part but we still need to increase our membership in numbers and in diversity. With a larger and more diversified membership, FRTM will be able to come up with a better Master Plan that not only can be accomplished but lead us to sources of money that we cannot obtain now.

Finally we need to engage with all of the governmental units as well as some Non Government Organizations to discuss our plans and their plans. There are probably some synergies that we can take advantage of.

**Fred Crissey**

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**Correspondence:** Comments, suggestions, and corrections relating to Fox River Lines should be directed to Managing Editor Don MacBean at the address listed above. The editorial staff appreciates your feedback.

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