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FOX RIVER LINES

m a g a z i n e



Issue 03-3, Fall 2003

Building the Fox River Line



The three span Oswego combination bridge and trestles approaching each side of the bridge provided the Aurora Yorkville and Morris crossing of the Fox River and the Aurora - Streator line of the CB&Q RR.

Editor's Note:

This is part six, of a seven part series "Building the Fox River Line" and covers the Aurora Yorkville and Morris Railway. The series is based upon and includes extensive quotes from the local press, thus giving a different flavor than found in most scholarly texts. This history provides anecdotal information bites for our visitors which can be provided to them by our train conductors as well as more serious reading for casual readers or history buffs in our readership. A history of the Aurora, Elgin and Fox River Electric Company including the street car lines, replete with numerous pictures can be found in Hopkins Peffers' Aurora, Elgin and Fox River Electric Company, volumes one and two. The books are available from the Museum's Gift Shop during the operating season. Again many thanks to Julie Johnson for so graciously providing the photographs accompanying these articles.

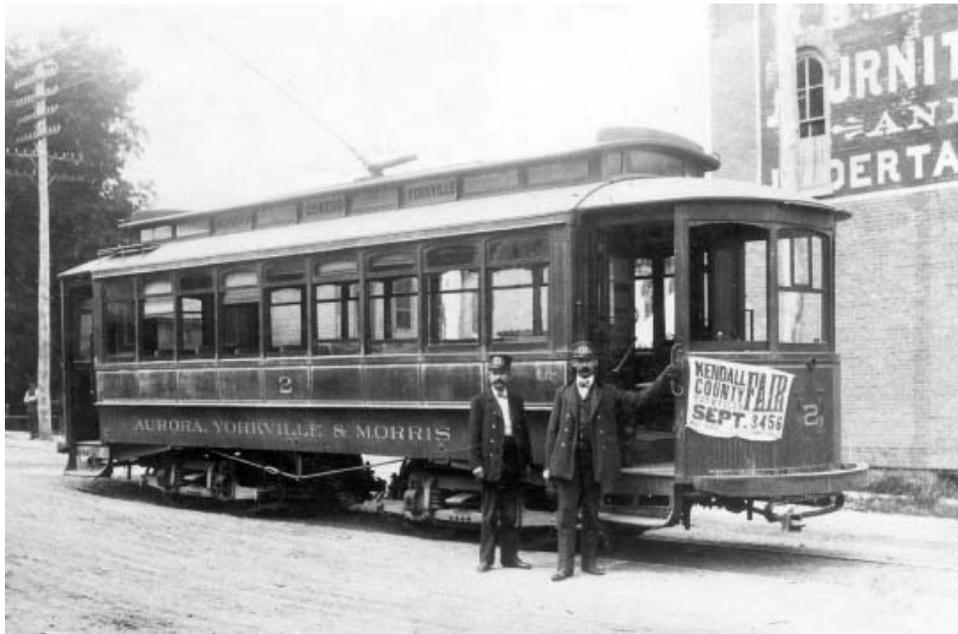
The Aurora Yorkville and Morris

AE&FRE (Part 6)

The electric railway on which our museum operates once extended beyond Aurora to Yorkville. This southern portion of the electric railway is the least known, probably because it had the shortest existence. The Aurora, Yorkville & Morris Railway was created to build an electric interurban line from Aurora to its other namesake towns. However, it built south to downtown Yorkville and never beyond.

There was a lot of organizational work involved in forming the Aurora, Yorkville & Morris Railway. The company began appearing in newspapers in early 1897. The February 19, 1897 Geneva Republican wrote, "According to Mr. Upshaw Hord of Aurora, the proposed Aurora, Montgomery and Yorkville electric road is an assured thing, and cars will be running from Aurora to Kendall's county seat and back to Aurora in another winter. The Village of Montgomery granted the right-of-way through that village on Monday, and frontage permissions are being secured from property owners along the west river road between Aurora and Montgomery. The company's scheme is to locate power houses at Oswego and Montgomery, drawing the power from dams on the Fox River." Mr. Hord was kept very busy through the rest of the spring.

The Aurora newspaper reported on May 19, 1897, "The new Electric Line-Right-of-Way About all secured in Aurora: During the past week, Mr. Upshaw Hord had been doing great work in behalf of the new electric road from Aurora to Yorkville. Along the west River street route he had secured the signature of nearly every property owner, consenting to the use of his or her frontage for street railway purposes, and this work so far as Aurora is concerned he expects to finish today. The Village of Montgomery had already granted the right-of-way through its streets, and no difficulty is apprehended from any quarter in securing it down the river. It is not yet settled whether the road will continue down the west side to Yorkville. It will eventually be built, probably to Morris and thus Aurora will tap a region rich in varied resources. There seems to be no opposition to the road, rather anxiety to see it constructed." The Village of Montgomery's village board passed the Franchise Ordinance for the Aurora, Yorkville & Morris Railway to use its street right-of-ways in late June of 1897.



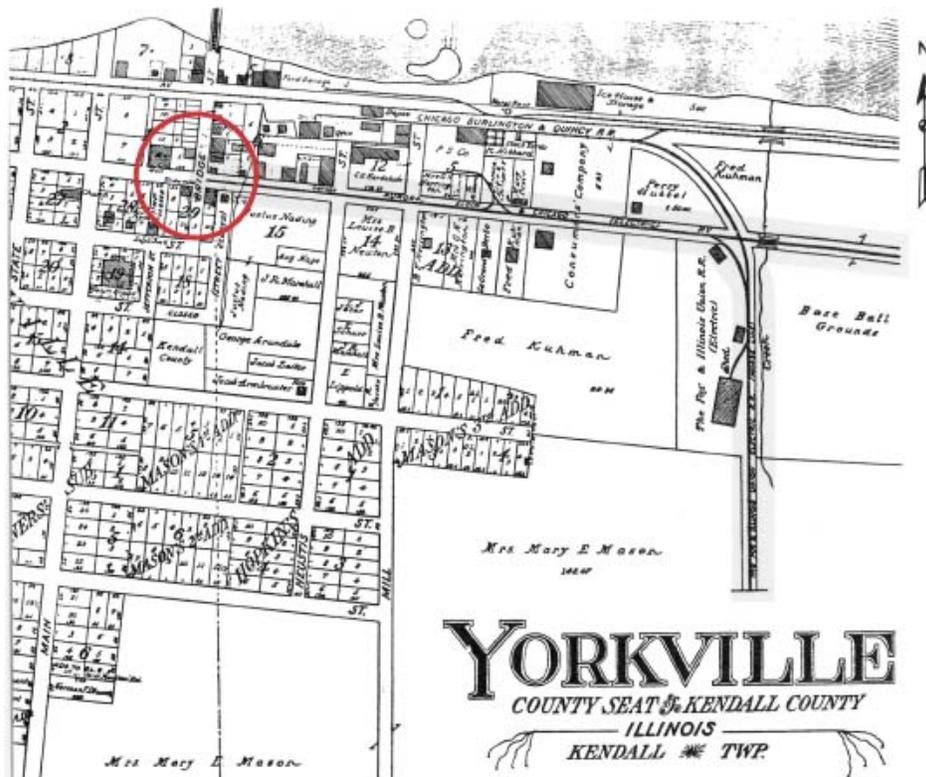
Aurora, Yorkville and Morris No. 2 at the end of the line in Yorkville. The Aurora Yorkville and Morris was operated by the Aurora Street Railway Co. and never went beyond Yorkville. Another line was built later between Yorkville and Morris.

Organizational work securing the right-of-way for the new railway continued through the rest of 1897. The October 27, 1897 Geneva newspaper reported, "The Aurora parties interested in the Aurora, Yorkville & Morris electric road state that the road will be in operation before spring. The survey having been completed, prints and maps will be prepared at once, after which the directors will meet to contract the material for the road. Water power at Oswego will be utilized to generate power at this end of the road and a steam power plant will be erected at Morris or Lisbon." However, this proposed construction schedule did not come to pass.

Progress on the new electric road came nearly to a halt throughout 1898 and into 1899. There is practically no information on the railway in the local newspapers during this time period. One big item that was in the newspapers for most of 1898 was the Spanish-American War. The war could have been one reason that progress on the new electric railway was minimal. The railway finally reappeared in the August 23, 1899 Batavia newspaper which reported, "Aurora, Yorkville & Morris Road: The Aurora news says an organization has been perfected, officers elected, stock subscribed, bond issue in sight and the contract for part of the line practically let for the Aurora, Yorkville & Morris railway, and that the cars are promised by the promoters to carry people down the Fox River as far as Montgomery before October. The officers of the new road as elected a few days ago are: President and Treasurer - Senator Evans, Vice-President - Upshaw P. Hord, Secretary Senator Case, Directors - the above named officers and Mr. F. D. Winslow."



Passenger-baggage combine No. 106 had just arrived at the end of the line at Bridge and Van Emmon Streets. The motorman was raising the trolley for the return trip. In front of him was the ever-present motorman's stool. Motormen were permitted to be seated except during the periods when they were in the downtown areas of Aurora or Elgin, or when they were crossing a railroad track. Note "hitching posts."



Progress on the railway apparently continued behind closed doors for the rest of 1899. Progress on the new railway was not printed at all during 1899 in the local newspaper, the Kendall County Record' (printed in Yorkville). The new railway finally appeared in the Kendall County Record on April, 25, 1900 which stated, "The electric road is now supposedly an assured fact. It has been agitated long enough to become a

want. Many of us have come to believe that upon it depends the integrity of the Village (of Oswego) and our industrial prosperity. The company of course assured us that they are doing the best thing for Oswego that ever happened to it." The railway company apparently had some financial difficulties which could also explain why it took so long to build the railway. A newspaper reported that one of the financial supporters backed out there was not enough money to complete the construction. "No money was in sight and where to get it was a question." Senator Evans resolved the funding shortfall by using some of his personal diamonds as security a bank loan to purchase the rail needed to complete that last six miles of track into Yorkville.

The eventual 12.39 mile route of the new electric road was to follow the west river road south out of Aurora to Montgomery and run on Main Street in Montgomery. Heading south out of Montgomery, the line would continue south along the west river road, past Riverview Park, duck under the CB&Q railroad's Fox River Bridge and continue down the west side of the river to Oswego. At Oswego, the new railway would cross the river on a new combination railway/road bridge, climb over the CB&Q track and turn south onto Main Street. After leaving Oswego, the railway followed the side of the road for about 2-1/2 miles and then curved away from the road toward the river and CB&Q track. The railway then paralleled the CB&Q south into Yorkville, ending at the corner of the town's main north-south road (now IL Route 47).

The June 13th Geneva newspaper reported, "The rolling stock for the Aurora, Yorkville & Morris railroad is beginning to arrive. Of the four open cars ordered, two have already arrived and the others are en route. They are open cars painted a dark color of about the capacity as the largest open cars on the Aurora Street railway. They were made by the Brill people of Philadelphia, and are unusually strong and well built. They are being set up at present." The electric road also purchased two 36-seat fully-enclosed trolleys to be used in winter and inclement weather train operations.

On Wednesday June 20, 1900 the Kendall County Record reported, "The letting of the contract for the new bridge at Oswego was not completed at the adjourned Saturday's town meeting. Six bidders were present. Authorities want a little more time to examine the bids. Streetcars will be running to Oswego next Saturday, June 23rd. The work of laying the track is getting along rapidly and it will be pushed ahead to Yorkville in double track time. The contract for the new bridge at Oswego will be let next Saturday and as soon as the bridge is ready the line between Oswego and Yorkville will also be nearly complete. It is reasonable that it will take in the neighborhood of 90 days to construct the new bridge. Half of the bridge expense will be paid by the railroad and half by the town and county."

The Wednesday June 27th paper stated, "Operation of the electric road from the bridge will commence this Tuesday afternoon at 3:20 pm by a free ride of the town and village officials to Aurora and back. Yorkville will have to wait about three months longer before enjoying such privilege. The DeKalb Chronicle reported that the cars of the Aurora,

Yorkville and Morris electric road went as far as John Wormley's place on Saturday. This farm is located just north of Oswego."

The Saturday June 30th Geneva newspaper stated, "When the connecting of the Aurora-Geneva line between Geneva and Batavia is completed, there will be a through line from Carpentersville to Oswego, one of the longest electric lines in the west. The road south from Aurora was opened this week, and it is expected that cars will be running into Geneva from Aurora within three weeks time." It is interesting to note that the newspaper stated that the electric railway in the Fox River Valley was one of the longest outside of the eastern cities. With the initial start-up of electric streetcar operation on July 4, 1890 in Elgin, the Fox River Valley electric railway system was also one of the first outside of the eastern cities.

From the Wednesday July 4th newspaper we find out that construction for the Oswego to Yorkville segment on the west side of the river had begun. "Grading for the electric road with quite a force of teams and men was commenced this Monday morning on Main Street in Oswego. Eight big horses, pulling on one plow shows hard work. Up to the present time there has been received at the Yorkville station for the electric road 23 cars of ties, eight cars of rails and one car of poles." This newspaper also stated, "The electric road was open for business on Saturday June 30th. Sunday, however, was its booming day. The Montgomery Woodmen were having a picnic at Riverview Park. That initiatory and free ride on it to Aurora and back Tuesday was very enjoyable. On the initial ride for officials on Tuesday, a large delegation of Aurorans came down to receive the Oswegoans. A stop was made at Riverview Park for going down to the gushing well to get a drink, also to witness shooting the chute into the river. The running of the cars was as smooth as cream." As anticipated, people were pleased and quick to ride the new trolleys. The July 18th paper printed that Riverview Park as become a very popular place for Oswegoans. Young and old frequently spent the afternoon there on fine days.



No. 103 had arrived at the Riverview Park station. In 1906, when the EA&S was consolidated with the "Third Rail," the latter line had cars numbered 101, 103, 105, 107 and 109. So the summer cars of the EA&S were changed to 141, 143, 145 and 147. No. 109 of another make and size - a 12 bench - became EA&S No. 149.

The new bridge over the Fox River at Oswego consisted of a new steel through-truss bridge over the main river and a 900-foot wood-pile trestle bridge over the low-lands connecting the steel spans to higher ground east of the river. Progress on the construction of the new road and trolley bridge was reported on September 5th stating that "It takes a lot of material for the trestle from the river to town. The road is covered with stone and timber. One span of the old bridge is removed and the new span in place is partially constructed." By September 26th, bridge work was reported as "The new bridge is progressing toward completion. The iron parts are most all in place. The trestle from the bridge to town is nearly ready for being raised." The October 17th newspaper reported some complaints about the new bridge. "Oswego folks are not at all happy over the new river bridge. It is too narrow and the electric car will take up ten feet of it, leaving eight feet for public traffic. And the big timber trestle-work looks like the Escanaba, Michigan ore docks."

The new bridges at Oswego were opened to the public in mid-October. The Wednesday November 7th newspaper stated, "The strength of the wood trestle bridge was fully tried Monday evening. The 6:30 trolley car was packed snug as sardines inside, and all that could hang on the outside, with people who were attending the Alschuler rally in Aurora."

Construction on the remaining portion of the railway south to Yorkville continued at a fast pace. A passing siding was built on the east side of the Fox River and north of the Oswego bridge to allow northbound and southbound trolleys to pass each other. A triangular-shaped "wye track" was built 1/4 mile north of the end of the line in Yorkville so single-ended trolleys could be turned-around for the trip back north to Aurora.



Car 150 had just covered the 690 foot western portion, while in the foreground was the 300 foot eastern slope.

The Wednesday December 26th Kendall County Record printed a big article about the electric road. "First car for passenger traffic came down to Yorkville Saturday-opening exercises. The management of the Aurora, Yorkville & Morris anticipated opening the road and began running on Saturday instead of on Monday as had been previously arranged. The car arrived at 10:45 am Saturday December 22, 1900. The word passed around town quickly of the surprise early arrival of the trolley. People quickly gathered and a small band was hastily put together to welcome the guests. Two cars came down from Aurora, one with Aurora guests and one empty to return with people from Yorkville. An Aurora newspaper reported on the event, "The people cheered, dogs barked, horses shied, a

band played and the people stood in open mouthed amusement at 11:00 am this morning when two cars that left Aurora nearly two hours earlier came to a stop. There were two drums and six horns in the welcoming band and approximately 200 Yorkvillians on hand."

The Kendall County Record printed the new electric road's schedule. "Time Card for winter is a car leaves Aurora at 6:00 am and arrives at Yorkville about 6:50 am. Leaves Yorkville at 7:00 am and every hour thereafter on the hour. Car leaves Aurora same. The last car leaves Aurora at 9:00 pm leaving Yorkville at 10:00 pm to go to Aurora—except Saturday when the last car leaves Aurora at 10:00 pm — leaving Yorkville at 11:00 pm to go to Aurora." The competing CB&Q train service at this time consisted of two daily round-trips between Chicago and Streator, IL. The CB&Q trains had one north and one southbound train each in the morning and again in the evening. Therefore, the hourly service by the new electric road made the Aurora, Yorkville & Morris very popular with the traveling public.

Andy Roth



Serving our Purpose?

I opened the November 2003 Board Meeting by reading our Corporate Purpose, which is, "educational and shall be to preserve, advance and disseminate knowledge of the history of railway transportation. Accordingly, the Corporation shall operate and maintain a museum, which features historic railway equipment. The Corporation shall engage in those activities necessary for the successful management of the museum, these activities including acquisition, preservation, display and operation of historic railway vehicles for the public."

Some key phrases: "educational...", "advance and disseminate knowledge...", "...engage in those activities necessary for the successful management of the museum...", and "...for the public."

What have we done so far?

For 44 years, we acquired and preserved historic railway vehicles. For 37 years, we displayed and operated historic railway vehicles for the public. For the last 5 years, we labored mightily to make one of our goals come true - running trains into the Blackhawk Forest Preserve. We have survived. We have even grown. How? We changed ourselves. We radically changed our organization, management structure, membership model and group dynamics to fit the times and fit the need. First, we were a group of friends wanting to "do something about the loss of the Chicago Aurora and Elgin. We ran on a shoestring. We then evolved into Railway Equipment Leasing and Investment Company (RELIC) "to preserve cars and give trolley rides". We ran on a shoestring

How are we doing today?

Today, we are a membership-based, Illinois Not-for-Profit Corporation, created to better serve our purpose, to "operate and maintain a museum". This last change gave us the credibility to be able to now run into Blackhawk. Never the less, we still did not behave like a museum. Not until November 2003, did we even change our organization to create a Museum Services group. Before that, we were a railroad club that maintained and operated trolleys. We still run on a show-string.

Where should we head tomorrow?

We need to stop thinking like a club and start thinking like a Museum. Both types of organizations have members. However, clubs are insular with insular goals and group agendas. Museums are different. A Museum drives itself to educate their members and the public. A Museum is a community-integrated organization. It has a relationship with the entire community. A Museum welcomes and wants community participation in its management. A Museum welcomes and wants partnerships with the public they serve. Community integrated Museums do not run on a shoestring.

All of us have shown extraordinary courage in changing our organization and our group dynamics to serve our Purpose. Now is the time to be a Museum.

Serving our Purpose...

Ed Konecki



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.

Operations End of Year 2003

We are in need of people to work in the depot and motorman to operate the trains. If you desire to be a depot agent or motorman and conductor, please give me a call to start your training program. You will find this to be both a challenging and rewarding experience in giving people and children a fun and rewarding time at our museum.

If you are interested in this program of working at the depot or operating the cars, please give me a call so that we can start your training. Either call *Jim Gonyo* at (630) 964-4366 or give your name at the depot if interested in being part of this great program. As always, crews will continue to be courteous and safe.

Jim Gonyo

Museum Board Announces Tentative 2004 Calendar

The Fox River Trolley Museum's Board of Directors at its November 15th meeting announced a tentative Museum 2004 calendar.

Sunday, May 9: **Mother's Day - Opening Day**

Monday, May 31: **Elgin - South Elgin Day**

Sunday, June 6: **Spring Caboose Day**

Sunday, June 20: **Father's Day**

Saturday, June 26: **First Saturday operation for June, July and August**

Saturday and Sunday, August 21 and 22: **Riverfest Express - Trolley Fest**

Sundays October 3 and 10: **Fall Caboose Days**

Saturday and Sunday, October 16 and 17: **Pumpkin Trolley**

Saturday and Sunday, October 23 and 24: **Pumpkin Trolley**

Saturday and Sunday, October 30 and 31: **Ghost Story Train - By Reservation**

Sunday, November 7: **Last Day**

Don MacBean

Car Department Report

The car department closed the 2003 season and cars were placed for off season work and preparation for 2004 including work to make them more reliable and better looking. North Shore 715 and CTA 4451 have taken quite a beating and there is considerable work needed on them before next year.

CNS&M 715 has at least six cushions which need upholstery repair. Four upper windows need to be reinstalled and about eight more requiring rebuilding or replacement. Only one side door has been hung and the other three need to be fitted this Winter so that a volunteers can take them home for edge priming and painting. *Ralph Taylor* used the Snow-Roof system to repair gaps in the canvas and give the whole roof a finish coat. *Pat Doyle* is working on replacement tack moldings. Pat promises that he can save the museum between 75% and 90% on most of our lumber needs by going to Wisconsin to get the right timber needed, cutting it into lumber in his shop and then drying it until it is ready to work for various projects.

CTA 4451 has one air gauge requiring cleaning and re-calibration to complete *Don MacCorquodale's* efforts on cleaning every major air component. The brake cylinder packing cup was replaced by *Fred Lonnes* and myself. The floor repairs of many years ago need priming and painting while *Don MacCorquodale* and *Bill Minerly* are planning to ring out the interior light system placing it in working condition. Potential sources of replacement material for the side door leading edges are being secured. A trial on a 4288 door will lead the way to replacing all four on 4451. There is also some interior painting to be done.

CA&E 20 has a number of its seat cushions re-caned by *Jeff Anderson* as a scouting project, and they look good. Some jump seats need to be recovered as well as few backs and frames. Woodwork repairs are planned for 2004.

CTA locomotive L-202 needs a new packing cup in its brake cylinder and a replacement is now on order. Through the assistance of Dave Johnston of the Western Railway Museum in Rio Vista, California they have ordered a number of repair parts from WABTEC (the current successor to Westinghouse Air Brake) for us. Wooden cab doors need priming and repainting.

In the last report we indicated that *Harry Raynis* had agreed to become Car Cleaning Coordinator. Harry had to step back from this task although he may be available on weekends next season. Besides keeping our cars cleaner, part of the idea was to start a pattern of regular weekday maintenance and repair activities at South Elgin. The task is to vacuum out, clean windows and dust all the in-service and display units. One car per week would get a floor washing and extra attention as needed. The main purpose of this is to put the Museums best foot forward for every weekend visitor by using the skills and labor of those who can work at the museum when it is closed. Are there any other recently retired volunteers out there?

Bob Wayman supplied a spreadsheet proposal for keeping track of the condition of our rolling stock. The spreadsheets will permit making field checks confirming the information contained. An explanation of electric railway car nomenclature can be produced allowing everyone access to information as to how industry described the location of windows, seats, ends, etc.

Joseph R. Hazinski



To Be A Museum or Not To Be A Museum

These "Observations" are a paraphrase of Mark Bassett's, the Executive Director of the White Pine Historical Railroad Foundation, operator of the Nevada Northern Railway Museum. Used by permission.

With apologies to William Shakespeare, as the Fox River Trolley Museum moves forward we need to answer this very basic question, "to be a museum or not to be a museum, that is the question." Sounds simple doesn't it. After all, we call ourselves a museum, so we must be one, right? Not quite, it doesn't really work that way. To be a museum there are certain obligations that we must recognize.

The starting point would be with the definition of a museum. The American Association of Museum's definition of a museum contains twelve points; let's see how we stack up.

1. A museum must be a legally organized, not-for-profit institution. We meet the requirement. The Fox River Trolley Association is a 501c3 non-profit organization that manages the FoxRiver Trolley Museum .
2. A museum must be educational in nature. We meet the requirement. The Museum trains allow the public to experience travel by trolley or interurban during the first half of the 20th century. Then there is the behind the scene maintenance and repair where skills are passed on to the next generation.
3. Have a formally stated mission statement. Ours is, The Fox River Trolley Museum is dedicated to the restoration, preservation, interpretation and operation of the Aurora, Elgin and Fox River Electric Company historic facilities, yards, and rail collection. This evolving museum gives people the opportunity to experience a world class historic working trolley line.
4. Have one full-time paid professional staff person who has museum knowledge and experience and is delegated authority and allocated financial resources sufficient to operate the museum effectively. We don't meet the requirement.
5. Presents regularly scheduled programs and exhibits that use and interpret objects for the public according to accepted standards. We don't meet the requirement.
6. Have a formal and appropriate program of documentation, care, and use of collections and/or tangible objects. We don't meet the requirement.
7. Have a formal and appropriate program of maintenance and presentation of exhibits. We don't meet the requirement.
8. Have been open to the public for at least two years. We meet the requirement.
9. Be substantially open to the public at least 1,000 hours a year. We do not meet the requirement.
10. Have an appropriate annual operating budget of at least \$25,000. We meet the requirement.
11. Have accessioned 80 percent of the permanent collection. We don't meet the requirement.
12. Demonstrate the characteristics of an acreditable museum. We don't meet the requirement.

So how did we do? Well, out of the twelve points we met only five. This now becomes the basis of developing a road map for the development of reaching the full potential of our museum.

Does implementing all twelve points mean that character of the Fox River Trolley Museum will change? Short answer, yes. Does this mean we will become a bunch of stuff shirts with Locomotive 5 displayed to the public behind glass? Short answer, no. For the public to truly understand the role of the Fox River Trolley Museum in the development of Illinois, Kane County and South Elgin, the equipment and right-of-way must be preserved, interpreted and operated. We must inventory what we have in such a way that we understand what we have. A case in point is C A&E 317. It was damaged in the restoration process. It is a 'pretty' CA&E interurban car. Should the car be RESTORED or PRESERVED in a TIMELY fashion? The project could cost about \$100,000. Does the museum want to invest this much money in one piece of equipment?

The decision becomes easier to make, when you realize that 317 is one of the last 4 motor CA&E Jewett built interurbans left in the world. In addition, to its uniqueness of spending its entire life serving the Chicago, Aurora and Elgin Railroad transporting hundreds of thousands of passengers in Chicagoland and the Fox River Valley; it has a story to tell.

Don MacBean

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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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