

## SOME THOUGHTS ON THE BASIC CONCEPT OF A RAILWAY MUSEUM

What should a museum be? Should a museum be just a collection of interesting pieces of old railroad equipment? Many museums are just that. But ask yourself, could it not be something a little more than that? Something living, something people will come time and again to see, and perhaps go away with the feeling that they really did take a step backward in time.

Fine, you say, but how do we accomplish this? Obviously not by just having a piece of track that the members can run an engine up and back. No, that would hardly be of interest to the general public, our bread and butter to be.

What type of motive power do we want? We know we want steam. A steam locomotive, probably more than any other machine ever conceived by the mind of man, seems to be a living, breathing thing. Yes, we want steam. Yet the ring of a trolley bell brings back memories too. For many this nostalgic sound brings fonder memories than the sound of a steam whistle.

What type of rolling stock should we try for? Plush passenger cars? By all means. But think back, how many of you have stood watching, heart in throat, through steam and thick smelly smoke, an old rattler rolling by? A few freight cars and an old crummy might be easier to come by.

How about the station? Picture the two possibilities in your mind. First an empty, dead building with a few people waiting to catch the next train or trolley. Next, picture a building alive with the sights and sounds of early day railroading, telegraph clicking, station agent writing out flimsies for the next train, coffee pot simmering on the old pot bellied stove, a few beat up boxes on the platform (with fragile stencelled all over them). Get the picture? In which would you rather place yourself?

Let's say we should get an old boxcar or two. A fine place to store tools and junk you think. True, but might they not have another use? Again use your imagination. How about a few old artifacts in these cars, packaged in open crating so that they might be seen, and addressed as if they were in shipment. Let's go way out and picture an old flat with a steam tractor chained on it. Do you think our public wouldn't like that?

Members, give this some thought. So what if we do have to act a little. If Elvis can do it, so can we!

I wish to thank our Master Maniac, Chuck Gerdes, for putting the germ of this idea into the hard heads of your Museum Operations Staff.

Walter L. Hayward  
General Superintendent

R E P O R T

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