

## TROLLEY RESTORATIONS REPORT

**Bullet car 205** - During early spring 2025, Fred Wagner and Fred Haganir worked on Bullet car 205. Inverter 1 performed flawlessly for three sessions each exceeding 1 hour after Fred Wagner replaced the thermal switch on the heatsink for one of the power transistors. However, on a Friday afternoon, it ran for 7 minutes and then failed. The next day it failed immediately upon startup. So a toggle switch that easily shifts from using both inverters to powering all the lights off old-reliable Inverter 2 was installed.

Fred Haganir sanded off paint from most of the A-end letterboard. Fred Wagner removed most of the paint off the left halves of the lower panels of both the A and B ends.

Over Easter weekend, both Freds were back at work on the Bullet car. Fred Haganir removed paint off the last bottom panels of the ends. Fred Wagner flapper-sanded steel rivets at the bottom of the belt rail. Fred Haganir worked on sanding the letter boards on the ends. He decided to demount the marker lenses, which opened several loose-wire cans of worms that Fred Wagner addressed.

Thanks to both Freds for their dedication to this project. You don't need to be named Fred to work on it!

**Johnstown 355** - Eric and Krissy Martin replaced rattan on the worst of the seats for the car. This involved removing some seats in the car to access the seat backs. Nicholas Brightbill varnished the newly installed seats so it would look good for its 100th birthday year. He also applied a coat of varnish to the windowsills on both sides. Nicholas also painted the floor.

*(Report continues on Page 6)*



*Above left: Fred Haganir (left) and Fred Wagner (right) are removing the Septa paint scheme from Bullet car 205.*

*Below right: Amanda and Jeff working on 1875 parts for the grab handles. Note Open car 1875 in the background (upper right of photo).*



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*The Retriever is published four times per year for members and friends of Railways To Yesterday, Inc. to share news and events at the Rockhill Trolley Museum.*

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Visit us online: [rockhilltrolley.org](http://rockhilltrolley.org)

## OTHER MUSEUM NEWS

**Trolley Operations** – We had a good turnout of volunteers for an operations meeting on Saturday April 5, 2025, led by Don Hamilton. There were 27 people attending, including a few brand new volunteers, and a few shop volunteers too.

After the meeting and lunch, there was hands-on training with Johnstown 311, PCC car 2743, San Diego 1019, and York 163. Several new members have been volunteering in the Operations Department as well as helping in the restoration and maintenance shop.

Due to the EBT changing their schedule, we have adopted the following schedule for trolley departures.

Here is the adopted schedule for 2025:

11:45 AM to 12:30 PM Trolley ride

1:15 PM to 2:00 PM Trolley ride

2:15 PM to 2:40 PM Car barn 1 and Buehler shop tour

2:45 PM to 3:45 PM Car barn 2 tour

4:15 PM to 5:00 PM Trolley ride

**Groundskeeping** - Bob Emery has been working hard on the flower beds. He also straightened up the pavilion to have it ready for the season opening. Bob has prepared several lunches for both our volunteers and the Friends of the EBT. Thanks to Bob and Nicholas Brightbill for doing weed control around the property.

**Car barn Two Improvements** - With the new schedule for the 2025 operating season, there had to be some changes at the car barn. Don Hamilton has been working on step platforms across the tracks at strategic points for the tours to take place. Don also built a new safer set of steps to enter the building in the front.

**Museum Brochures** - While the internet and Facebook are one of our best advertising resources, we still have printed brochures for distribution for various venues. Thanks to Shannon Turner, with some input from Zach Rudisill, for designing and having the new museum brochures printed. Anyone who would like brochures to hand out to friends and family may pick them up at the museum.

**Train show** - Thanks to Eric Knepp for making the arrangements and coordinating the displays for the Mifflin County Train Show at the Granville Fire Company Event Center. While patronage was light, we appreciate Eric as well as Richard Freeze and Dennis Braun for their help with promoting the museum.

**Welcome to the following individual** who recently became a member of the Rockhill Trolley Museum. We hope you can visit us soon!

Mike Trosino  
Wyndmoore, PA

## WE'D LIKE YOU TO MEET - FRED WAGNER

This issue we'd like to spotlight an extremely dedicated member who commutes 266 miles each way to volunteer at the museum.

### **What got you interested in trolleys and when did you realize you had the bug?**

I grew up a half block from the Ardmore trolley line of the Red Arrow Lines (Philadelphia Suburban Transportation Company), and our family didn't have a car until 1959, so we went everywhere by public transportation. I guess I realized I had the bug when my 3 brothers and I walked (Hans actually in a stroller) down to the Llanerch carbarn and took pictures, probably in 1962 or so.

### **Did you have model trains as a child?**

We had a few Marx and Lionel O-gauge trains that I would occasionally play with. My two older brothers set up an HO layout on an old dining-room table. I was peripherally involved with that.

### **Tell us a little bit about your family if you like.**

My parents were US-born children of eastern European immigrants who graduated from Frankford High School in northeast Philadelphia. Dad taught history at Temple University and Mom taught high school business courses before raising four boys. It was a very non-technical family. However, one uncle supported my interests in science and technology. My oldest brother, Steve, loved and modeled the Delaware & Hudson Railroad. The next-older brother, Rick, was a trolley nut. He did a beautiful repaint of a Tyco HO trolley into Red Arrow colors and a fine kitbashing to make an HO version of a stone Red Arrow trolley station. Steve and Rick were the first fare-paying passengers on the Liberty Liners when they started running on the Norristown line.

My wife, Barbara, and I met at Oberlin College. Barb is a semi-recovered physicist and a civil engineer who has helped out in both trolley restoration and music performance at the museum. We have three grown sons: Craig, a physicist for Intel in Portland, OR; Glenn, a roboticist in Brisbane, Australia; and Mike, an electronic musician in Mexico.

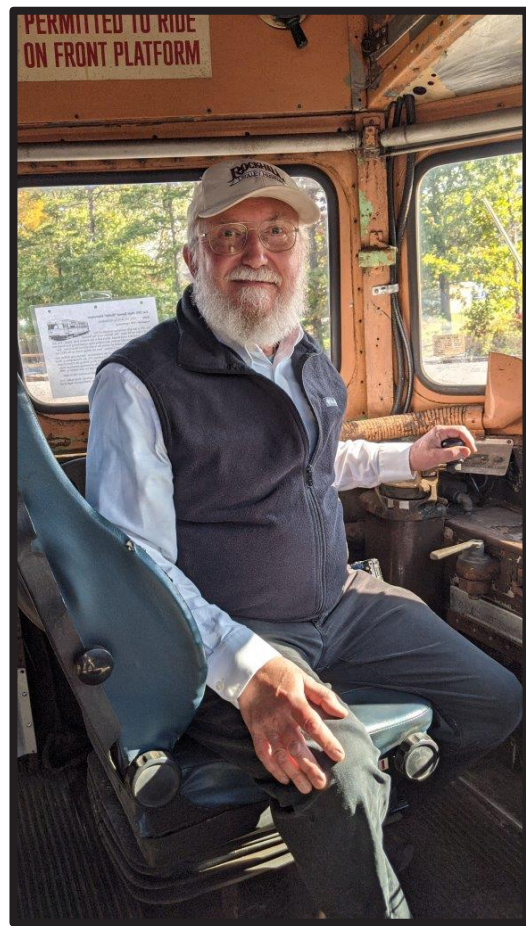
### **Did you ride trolleys or trains as a child either for actual transportation or at museums?**

Until we got a car around 1959 we went almost everywhere by trolley and other transit. Our two sets of

grandparents lived in opposite directions on the 75 trackless trolley from the Frankford El. And the technically-astute uncle and family lived out on the 59 trackless. So we did a lot of trolley-el-trackless trips. I would accompany Mom on the trolley for shopping trips to the department stores at 69<sup>th</sup> Street. I remember one train trip up to Whitehall, NY to go camping on an island in Lake George.

Later, I would ride the Ardmore trolley, Market St. subway-elevated, and Philadelphia Transportation Company route 50 PCC cars every Saturday to attend viola lessons and other music classes at Settlement Music School in South Philadelphia. After the Ardmore trolley was substituted in 1966 I would walk the mile to the Philadelphia & Western Beechwood-Brookline station rather than patronize the victorious opposition. The P&W was so much faster than the bus that the two routes took essentially the same overall time.

*(Interview continues on next page)*



*Above: Longtime RTM volunteer Fred Wagner at the controls of Bullet Car 205.*

## MEET FRED WAGNER (Continued)

### **What were/are some of your favorite trolley systems?**

The Philadelphia & Western (now SEPTA's Norristown High Speed Line) was and remains my favorite ride in the world. The ramshackle original P&W 69<sup>th</sup> Street terminal seemed truly exotic to a young boy. The Red Arrow broad-gauge Media trolley is also very nice. I'm more fond of interurbans and private-right-of-way operations than of streetcars, per se. I also like the Pittsburgh Library Line and the Boston Riverside Line. The Staten Island Rapid Transit has considerable charms. And the third-rail S-Bahn in Berlin, Germany impressed me as the P&W on a quadruple dose of steroids, at least when I was there for two months in 1990 when cars from the 1920's were still running around with doors opened by passengers for ventilation past stations with varying levels of ghostliness.

### **How did you hear about the museum?**

I first heard about, and visited, the Rockhill Trolley Museum around 1967 when my across-the-street neighbor, my younger brother, Hans, and I (and perhaps some other neighborhood kids) were taken to Orbisonia/Rockhill by the neighbor's uncle (a delightful railfan monk often referred to as Father Choo-Choo) and the proprietor of Terry's Delicatessen (source of the world's best hoagies) to ride the East Broad Top and the Shade Gap Electric Railway. I think we rode in the parlor car Orbisonia, and the trolley ride was a lot shorter than it is today.

### **When did you join the museum?**

I can't recall in what year I joined but my member number of 1470 should establish the date. We moved from Michigan to our present residence near Rochester, NY in 2001, so it was probably rather soon after that. A cousin still living near Philadelphia told me that Rockhill had a P&W bullet car that still occasionally ran, and I was anxious to experience its operation.

### **How often do you usually volunteer at the Museum?**

It probably averages out to about once a month, but it varies tremendously. Arthritic hips and weather unsuitable for shopwork have led to occasional months of absence. The former condition has been half-corrected, with the other half due in December.

### **What projects have you been involved with as a member of the museum?**

By now, the majority of my time has been spent keeping P&W bullet car 205 in operating condition. When wiring problems in the interior lighting system caused the car to be quarantined, I assisted two museum leaders in pulling down the aluminum ceiling panels. When then nothing else happened for a year or so, I took a bit of initiative to move things along, finding a source of 600V DC 120 V AC inverters. We (primarily with Fred Haganir and Fred Walter) rewired the lights in parallel and rebuilt the 12V emergency light system. After the artisan we had planned to refinish the ceiling panels was sadly cut down by COVID, we gained excessive experience with chemical paint stripping to prepare the panels for beautiful powder coating by local craftsman T (Edward) Kester. Exploring the full range of fasteners available in stainless steel, we then reinstalled the ceiling.

More recent work has involved stripping the peeling SEPTA-and-earlier layers of paint from the exterior of the car and repainting it into its original P&W Tuscan red scheme. This work is to honor Dr. Thomas Conway (who brought the bullets to the P&W and made other changes that enabled the line to continue running, as well as reorganizing two other electric railways), and William Butler, the engineer responsible for the design of the bullets and the earlier Cincinnati and Lake Erie red devil high-speed cars. Other 205 work has included diagnosing and fixing short circuits in the control system and lubrication of running gear.

In addition to working on 205, I stripped and applied paint on the bunkhouse caboose, aided the restoration of York 311, stripped paint in vestibules and cleaned up windows and doors on AE&C 315, and helped a bit with repairs on Newark 6 and San Diego 1019. I have helped with both decorating and undecorating the museum for holidays. After allowing my facial hair to grow in for about 5 months I have played a performative role on Christmas trolleys.

*(Interview continues on next page)*

## MEET FRED WAGNER (Continued)

### What's your favorite part about volunteering at the Museum?

Probably the most rewarding thing I have done as a volunteer is to play old-time fiddle on the cars and to get passengers (mostly but not exclusively youngsters) to try playing the fiddle. On our dearly-departed pumpkin patch trolleys I would often play the theme from "The Addams Family" as we approached the pumpkins. I was particularly delighted once when a young lady sang along with words of "The Days of the Week", apparently from a Vampira kids' TV show. I had never heard those lyrics before. I've also fiddled at the boarding zone; and my wife, Barbara, and I have played Christmas carols on violin and keyboard on cars and in the pavilion.

In the shop, I particularly enjoy how every day brings up new challenges and the interactions with colleagues of good will who bring a wide range of skills and opinions to the work.

### Do you have a favorite trolley at the museum, restored or unrestored?

Hands down, Philadelphia & Western bullet car 205. A big part of my youth, and a significant step forward in the technology at the time.

### Do you have a favorite trolley not at RTM?

Tie: Philadelphia Suburban Transportation Company 78 at Pennsylvania Trolley Museum and 80 at Electric City Trolley Museum. These were the occasional treats of an older car running in my youth (once decorated with colored lights on Christmas eve), and they sound like the P&W. In general, I particularly like the last generation of lightweight metal cars made just before the PCCs.

### Do you have any long term goals you would like to see the museum achieve in the future?

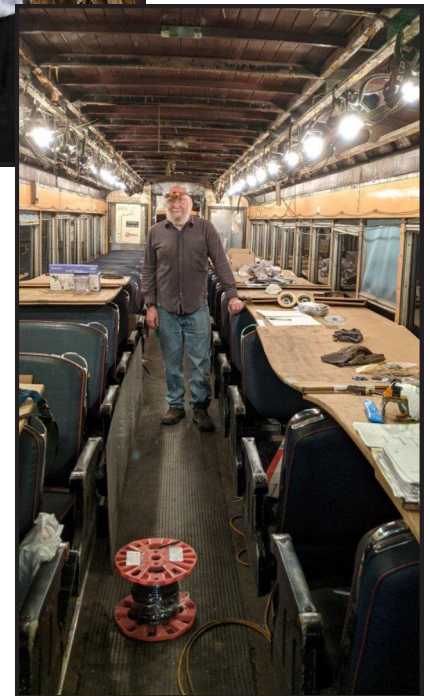
I would like RTM to own the property that it operates on, or at least to have a respectful long-term lease from the East Broad Top Foundation, including enough space to turn around the cars on a loop or wye.

### What was/is your occupation?

I was a research physical chemist at General Motors Research Laboratories, then with the GM fuel cell program. My work ran the gamut from fundamental studies of molecular adsorption on well-defined single crystal surfaces, through fundamental and applied

corrosion studies and the improvement of the durability of corrosion protection in engine coolants and brake fluids, to onboard generation of hydrogen-rich gas streams from gasoline-like fuels, and to the development of advanced fuel cell catalysts to decrease the need for precious metals in hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles. Along the way I got to run experiments in test tubes, in ultrahigh vacuum chambers, in automotive components, in cars, and in complete automotive assembly plants. While working for one company, I got to play with the big kids in a number of areas of fundamental science and applied technology. While I had professional experience with electric modes of transportation, none of it was directly relevant to the care, feeding, and operation of electric trolley cars. Therefore I am deeply grateful for the tolerance of me by my skilled museum colleagues.

*Top photo: Fred Wagner playing fiddle for Pumpkin Patch Trolley guests.*



*Bottom photo: Fred inside the Bullet Car in 2022. Fred led the rewiring project starting in 2019.*

## TROLLEY RESTORATIONS REPORT (Continued)

**Open car 1875** – Over the winter of 2025, Jeff and Amanda Morgan were working in the shop on 1875's wooden post parts, sanding and varnishing them in the clean room, which is heated. They also sanded the entire car body so it's ready for a second coat of varnish when it warms up. Nicholas Brightbill sanded two seat backs and applied a coat of varnish.

Joel Salomon got five sets of side post grab handles installed onto the polished brass pieces. One of the projects to be accomplished was to install new propulsion wiring underneath the car.

This is in two wiring harnesses under the car. The project was started by putting the old harnesses, which were removed last fall, on a makeshift table of extension ladders. Since the car will have only two motors rather than four as previously, some of the wires were not needed. The unneeded wires were removed, and then new wires were inserted and labeled properly at the tap. The taps are all crimped and insulated, then installed in fire hose loom.

Still to be done is taping the joints in the loom sleeve, putting on the motor lead knife locks, and then reinstalling under the car. Thanks to Fred Walter and Keith Bray for doing this work.

Fred Walter, with help from Fred Haganir, finished removing the original resistors from 1875 and disassembled one of the four banks. With the knowledge gained, they managed to remove the other 3 banks in just a few hours. The resulting pieces will be used for patterns. Fred Walter is working on the design for the "L" brackets to support the new resistors so that Keith can fabricate them in his shop.

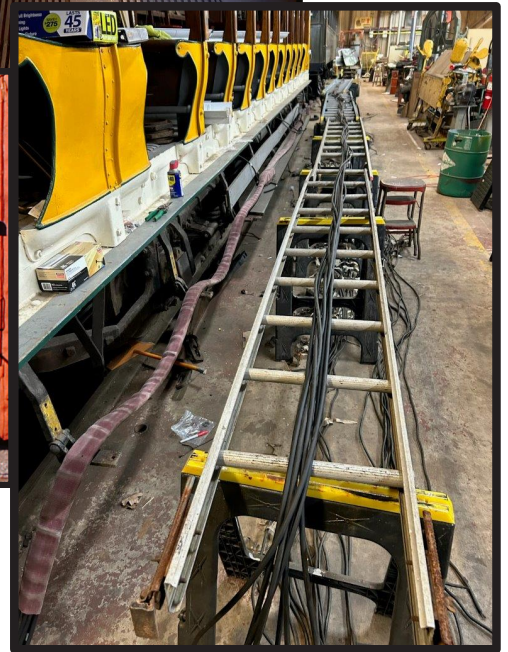
New shop volunteer Kevin Nolish has been needle scaling the underside of the car, removing the rust off the steel portions. Thank you everyone for your help with these projects!



*Top: Johnstown 355's seats and windows after a new coat of varnish.*



*Bottom left: Throwback to December 8, 1990, when Bullet Car 205, still in Septa livery and nearly operable condition, was unloaded at RTM.*



*Bottom right: 1875's new wiring harness.*

# FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Thank you to the following donors that have recently made contributions to the development and operation of the museum.

## General Fund

- Mike Trosino
- Matthew Bender
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- Fred Walter
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## Johnstown 355

- Russell Doll

## York Railways 162

- Ken Leiberher
- Russell Doll
- Rick Hoffmeister

## Open Car 1875

- Mark Sylvester
- Russell Doll
- Ed Springer



*Photos from top: Strafford Car 162, Eric Martin refurbishing a Car 355 seat, 1875's grab handles ready to be reinstalled onto the car sides, RTM's table at the Mifflin County Train Show.*

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**WE NEED YOUR HELP!** As you read in the articles about the progress made at the museum, all of it is possible only because of the dedication of many volunteers. We are always looking for additional volunteers to ensure this progress is maintained. Think about the fun that you would have helping to accomplish great things at the trolley museum. It is truly a special feeling of satisfaction that you can only get by volunteering! Contact any Department Head to learn how to participate.

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#### PROJECTS IN NEED OF VOLUNTEERS

- **Maintenance and restoration of our trolley and internal combustion fleet - mechanical, electrical, machining, painting, upholstery etc.**
- **Trolley operators - Our trolley operators are the face of the museum and tell the story of the electric trolley car and our museum collection of trolleys and interurbans. No prior experience needed! We will train you!**
- **Museum store staff - Welcome our visitors to the museum. Make sales in the store and help with museum projects.**
- **Video production - We're looking for someone with video editing skills to help us promote the museum.**
- **Gardening - Have a green thumb? We have numerous flower beds that always need attention to keep them looking good.**

- **Building Maintenance - If you are handy with home repairs, we could use your help keeping our infrastructure in good repair and helping with some wiring and plumbing projects.**



*Join our volunteers with any of these projects or our many other activities.*