



VOLUME 23, ISSUE 4

September 2026

GREETINGS FROM THE GALVESTON RAILROAD MUSEUM

By David Robertson, Executive Director



It was a very busy summer at the Museum and our fall activities are in full swing. This year we commemorated Juneteenth with exhibits, speakers and film and moved right into the 4th of July celebrating the Glen Fee – the Freedom Train – with the U.S. Marines joining us for the posting of the colors and national anthem. It presented a wonderful opportunity to draw attention to our efforts to renovate the Glen Fee and to develop an interpretive display. We received a grant from the National Historic Preservation Trust to support planning and development of the future exhibit.

July 1 kicked off Polar Express ticket sales to members and then to the public on 10 July. We encourage members to take advantage of one of the benefits of Museum membership - early bird ticket purchase – reserved for members only as the event does sell out. Off to a robust start, we continue to break records in sales to date! We are honored to be able to offer sensory rides for neuro-diverse individuals generously supported by donors.

The cars are scheduled for December 15, and reservations are made directly by calling the Museum. Do not delay in securing seats to the North Pole – especially as we move closer to the start date of November 13.

The 5th Annual Rail Baron's Ball, this year called "Soul Train," takes the party to the 70s complete with D.J., dance line, disco decorations and an evening of fun, fun, fun. Practice your dance moves, get your look together and join us October 3 for more action than you can imagine.

A new fall event, CabooseFest: Hootenanny & Hay Rides, October 17, welcomes families and kids of all ages. Gypsy Joynt's Chew Chew Café, will provide all the chicken wings the hungry contestants of the Chicken Wing Eating Contest can digest. Our concession partner, Gypsy Joynt, has taken over the former Whistlestop Café, rebranded, and is open Friday thru Sunday offering some of the favorite dishes from their west end location. Known for real food you cannot beat their smashburgers or colossal cinnamon rolls – stop in and grab a bite.

The pie baking contest has some of the best bakers registered to compete at the event so come hungry and stay for the awards at 4 pm. In addition, there are games for kids, pumpkin patch, depot vendor marketplace, live entertainment and Ma & Pa Kettle on the jumbotron. Come spend the day with us – all exhibits will be open and hay rides on the Harborside Express will run all day.

We have a full schedule of activities that will keep us busy until the end of the year while we plan a spectacular 2027 filled with new exhibits, programs and restoration projects.

We welcome all donations especially the contribution of time and talents. If you are interested in helping us complete Grandpa's Train, PLEASE contact me. It is of special interest to the Museum that we complete the restoration and need model train enthusiasts to join our team so that we can finish the job – we are about 65% of the way there and need you to get us to the finish line.

Please take advantage of your membership and visit the Museum – free to members – and bring friends and family and explore. There is always something new to experience. All Aboard!

David

MUSEUM NEWS

Chew Chew Café

A new vendor, the Gypsy Joynt, is now operating the Museum's café, renamed the Chew Chew Café, facing the Garden of Steam. They spent time and money upgrading and updating the café and held a ribbon cutting on 27 August. Museum visitors are invited to visit the café for drinks and snacks.



Bridal Show

By David Robertson, Exec. Director

A bridal show was held in Galveston on 23 August at the Tremont House. ED David Robertson attended, with an information table featuring the Museum, and booked two weddings and arranged 2 appointments to show off the Museum.



Rail Safety Class

By Remy Steffer, Board Member

Instructors from the University of Tennessee came to Galveston and held their annual rail safety class from 14-18 of September. Sixteen railroaders came to the Museum for the 5-day event held in the Southern diner car. This class, initiated several years ago, brings railroads in from all around the country, and showcases the Museum to a wider audience than just in the immediate area.



Instructor Dr. David B. Clarke, PhD., PE (right) with workshop student.



The class watching a video.

Young Ingenuity Program By Mary Jo Naschke, Publicity

The Railroad Museum has initiated a program called the "Young Ingenuity Program, and invites all students with STEM interests to register for the program. There is no fee to participate and registration is open year round.

The pilot program was initiated in 2022 when Israel Jones, a student, approached the Museum about restoring a semaphore signal that he saw sitting dormant on the railyard. Acting as mentor, his father, Dayton, supervised

the project, and the Museum provided the materials and tools.

The signal was completely restored and placed in the train depot as an interactive display. Another project soon followed and the Museum adopted the educational outreach as the "Young Ingenuity Program." Israel and Dayton attended the official beginning of the program and spoke at the event.

In addition to students, mentors and volunteers are encouraged to share their skills through the program. Projects are assigned based on the student's interest and ability. The focus of the projects is STEM-based and the projects may range from signals to radios.

The program helps build confidence in using skills for educational, professional, and everyday purposes through firsthand experience, builds critical thinking skills, and connects the student to career paths.

Students may work on their project at the museum or at home at their own pace. There is no competition or grading and brainstorming sessions are encouraged at scheduled meetings at the Museum. Materials and supplies are provided by the Museum and completed projects become permanent displays at the Museum.

The program is supported by grants and contributions - there are no fees. To learn more, visit the education web site at: GalvestonRRmuseum.org/education, or call 409-765-5700.

Corliss Engine Arriving Soon

The 30-horsepower Corliss Steam Engine No. 3663, built in 1912 by Murray Iron Works Co., Burlington, Iowa, was the only effective power source for all mills and factories of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The engine is fitted with rotary valves and variable valve timing was patented in 1849 by and names after US engineer George Henry Corliss, Providence, Rhode Island. Corliss assumed the original invention from Frederick Ellsworth Sickels (1818-1895), who held the 1829 US patent.



A Corliss engine in use.

The Engines fitted with Corliss valve gear offered best thermal efficiency of any type of stationary steam engine

until the refinement of the uniflow steam engine and steam turbine in the 20th century. Corliss engines were about 30 percent more fuel efficient than conventional steam engines with fixed cutoff. The increased efficiency made steam power

The engine was donated to the Museum by the Houston Museum of Natural Science. The engine, now part of the permanent collection, will be on display in the Garden of Steam.

The engine has been generously transported from the Houston Museum of Natural Science by Admiral Transfer and Rigging, Houston, Texas, to their facility where it will be uncrated, painted and assembled for exhibit, and then transported to the Galveston Railroad Museum, under the supervision of Duke Ensell, owner, Admiral Transfer & Rigging.



The Corliss engine flywheel in the shop.

**The Harvey House Exhibit Hall
By Mary Jo Naschke, Publicity**

The current 'Map Room' has been renamed in honor of the legendary Harvey House Restaurant that operated at the depot until the late '60's. Located adjacent to the depot, the space will be utilized for exhibits.

Initiated by board chairman, Dr. John Bertini, David Robertson and Mary Jo Naschke are currently collaborating with international collector and curator, Claudio Boccherini, to develop a substantial exhibit featuring select artifacts from his collection, and are actively seeking funding for the exhibit as the space is in need of renovation – including paint, flooring, light fixtures, and display cases in order to bring it up to museum standards.

The exhibition will commemorate the train not only as a means of transport, but also as a powerful symbol of encounter, blessing, faith, memory, solidarity, and hope. Components of the display will tie into the 250th United States celebration and the 200th anniversary of the railroad. Exhibition content will include railway models of various scales, and historical displays featuring period uniforms, documents, medals, and other original artifacts. The goal of the exhibit is to not only explain trains but also to introduce their historical and social

context, allowing especially younger audiences to leave with a richer cultural awareness and a better understanding of the past. Three distinct themes, each tied to a different historical context, the exhibition will offer a historical perspective as well as a selection of anecdotes, curiosities, and lesser-known details that will bring the narrative to life.



Claudio Boccherini

Highlights of the educational exhibit includes "Pope Pius IX's Personal Train" Pius IX, the first Pope to travel by train, marking a symbolic moment of great significance in the relationship between the papacy and the modern world. Thanks to rail travel, the Pontiff not only introduced an innovation but was also able to reach the faithful and bless them with greater closeness.

Another component will be "The Pullman Train for the 1926 Chicago Eucharistic Congress." This train was organized by the Pullman Company for the first Eucharistic Congress in the United States, held in Chicago in 1926. In this instance, the train becomes a collective journey of faith, designed to support a major national religious event. The train journey represented more than just a means of reaching a destination; it became an integral part of the experience itself, transforming the travel into a shared expression of devotion and participation.

The display features scale models of the train as well as photos and documents.

The third piece proposed for the exhibit is "The Friendship Train Organized by PCA and then POA for Orphaned Children After World War II" and focuses on trains promoted in 1945 by the Pontifical Relief Commission. Initially the trains were used to bring refugees home and later was dedicated to assist-ing orphans.

Still in planning and development, funding is currently being sought to support the exhibit. If you would like

to contribute please contact the Museum directly.
(4090) 765-5700

UPCOMING EVENTS

Soul Train Gala

The annual Gala, whose major purpose is to provide funding for educational programs at the Museum, will be held on 3 October.

The theme this year is "Soul Train."

The event will be held in the 1932 Union Station and out into the Garden of Steam. Seated dinner, dancing, silent and live auctions. Don't miss the train.

Board the Soul Train, October 3

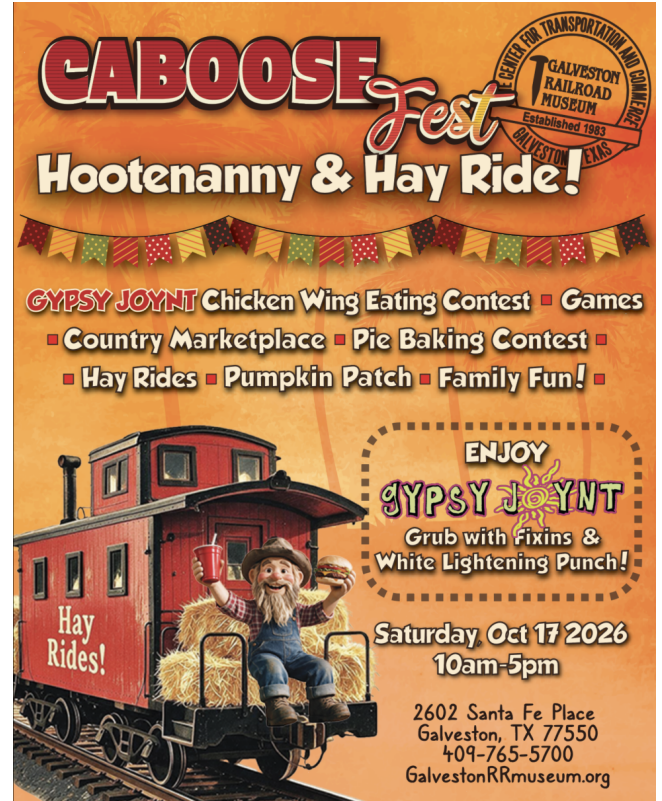


Caboose Fest, aka The Hootenanny By Mary Jo Naschke, Publicity

The Caboose Fest is a new event for the Museum, conceived by Executive Director David Robertson and Publicist Mary Jo Naschke. The event will feature caboose rides, a chicken wing eating contest, a pie baking contest, and many other events.

Caboose Fest celebrates fall with a family friendly, fun, event to benefit ongoing educational outreach, support the museum's general operations and create awareness that the Gypsy Joynt restaurant provides onsite food and beverage services at the museum.

Tickets are: \$15-adult; \$12-senior; 12 & under, and Museum members - \$10; military - free. Parking in the Museum lot - \$5.



Polar Express

This year's Polar Express event will be held from 13 November through 23 December. Tickets went on sale on 1 August and sales are far ahead of sales in 2025, so if you plan to attend and have not purchased tickets, do so as soon as possible, as the rides may be sold out.

The Museum has partnered with several hotels in Galveston. The Tremont House in downtown Galveston, the Holiday Inn Resort on the beach, The San Luis Hotel on the beach and the Hilton Hotel near the beach all offer package deals. The Holiday Inn, the San Luis and the Hilton all offer free transportation to the Museum.

This year, the Museum has set aside 3 passenger cars for children with sensory issues. All three have been funded by donations. Two cars are already filled and the third is partially booked.



DONORS

Individuals are encouraged to add a donation when they become members or renew their memberships. Many have done so. The donations mostly are earmarked for General Operations, Polar Express Sensory Rides, Memorials, Educational Outreach, Exhibits, Programs, and In-Kind, but a new category allows donors to adopt a rail car to assist in its restoration or preservation. Two such cars are the Glen Fee, a member of the 1947 American Freedom Train, and the Northern Pacific box car. Both are being restored as funding permits.

The Center for Transportation and Commerce, The Galveston Railroad Museum, has continued to thrive despite setbacks from natural disasters, pandemic, and inflation. To continue developing educational outreach we are asking for your support.

To present relevant programming, sustain our audience, and nurture membership, it is now necessary to prioritize the restoration and renovation of the museum's permanent collection that was heavily impacted by Hurricane Ike, September 12, 2008. Consisting of artifacts and rolling stock, more than 12 feet of damaging flood waters overwhelmed the entire museum shutting down operations for one year. To reinstate income, priority was given to saving the 1932 Union Station Depot and opening the facility as soon as possible.

It is now time to address saving the vintage railcars that distinguish us as a Living History museum. We have allowed visitors to step inside and by doing so have challenged their imagination to view through the damage to visualize the golden era of the railroad. It is now time to step up to the plate and restore the rolling stock and to fulfill our mission to become a world class museum. It is an ambitious and expensive project that needs to be undertaken, and we are up to the task. It is time to move forward and bring the museum up to the vision of founder Mary Moody Northern as a respected and relevant organization.

We could not have traveled the distance without support from grants, membership, and contributions from our members and donors, however, to meet the demands of our task at hand and to continue our momentum, we need to have you on board.

If you are a member, we thank you for your kind consideration and support. If you are not a member, we invite you to join forces with us while enjoying the benefits of our upwardly mobile organization.

Membership and donations are valuable contributions toward our mission and 75% of the museum's annual budget goes directly to programming and general operations. The museum currently operates on a 'no frills' budget and 75% of income is allocated for programs.

The annual budget is supplemented by revenue earned including museum admission, RailHotel, special events, Polar Express Train Ride, and weekly Harborside Express Train Rides. Though these necessary activities support general operations, it is not enough to fund exhibit renovations and restoration.

As a non-profit organization, your membership/

donation is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Thank you for your kind consideration of the Galveston Railroad Museum as a worthy recipient for your donation. Your generosity is appreciated.

Below is a list of donors so far this year. Many thanks to everyone who donated to help the Museum achieve its goals.

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Keeping the Museum's tracks operational

By Remy Steffer, Board Member

Over the past three years, the Galveston Railroad Museum has made a deliberate commitment to improving one of the most important—and sometimes least visible—parts of our operation: our railroad infrastructure.

As both a member of the Museum's Board and a railroad professional, I have had the opportunity to see firsthand how consistent inspections, preventive maintenance, and targeted investment can make a meaningful difference. Three years ago, we began implementing a more structured track inspection program designed to identify developing issues before they became larger operational problems. Just as importantly, the Museum has continued investing in the rehabilitation and upgrading of our existing track infrastructure.

That work has included replacing deteriorated ties, improving track surface and alignment, addressing switches and other track components, and correcting deficiencies identified during routine inspections. Rather than waiting for problems to occur, our goal has increasingly become to identify them early, prioritize the work, and steadily improve the railroad year after year.

The results have been significant. We have experienced a substantial reduction in derailments and track-related interruptions, providing a safer and more reliable railroad for our employees, volunteers, equipment, and visitors. Greater reliability has also helped our operating team deliver higher-quality events with fewer disruptions—particularly important during major Museum activities when thousands of guests may visit the property.

While visitors may never notice a newly installed tie or a properly maintained switch, they do notice when trains operate reliably, events run smoothly, and their overall experience improves. The positive reviews and feedback we receive from our customers and event attendees are a reminder that infrastructure investment ultimately translates into a better visitor experience.

There is still work ahead. Railroad infrastructure requires continuous inspection, maintenance, and reinvestment. However, the progress of the past three years demonstrates what can be accomplished through a consistent program rather than a reactive approach.

For a historic railroad museum, preserving the past also means maintaining the railroad that allows us to bring that history to life. Every tie replaced, switch

rehabilitated, and section of track improved helps ensure that the Galveston Railroad Museum can continue doing exactly that for many years to come.

A Bit of Railroad History The Rails Upon Which Trains Ride By Don Harper, Editor and Board Member

The modern railroad track consists of a pair of T-shaped steel rails affixed to wooden or cement cross-ties, with the cross-ties being embedded in rock ballast.



Railroad rails were not always made this way. What would become the modern rail began as far back at the early 1500's. Germans pioneered the rail concept by creating wooden rails on transverse wooden "sleepers" or cross-ties, over which horse-drawn wagons were used, often to move ore from mines. These wooden trackways were introduced to Britain in the late 1500s or early 1600s.

The next improvement was the invention of L-shaped metal plates that were fixed to wooden rails. The wheels were still unflanged, so the L-shape kept the wheels on the rails.

Another method that was used was to attach strips of iron (strap rail) to the wooden rail. These thin strips tended to deform and come loose from the wooden base with use.

There are stories of the strips penetrating wooden passenger car floors, the jagged ends of which were termed "snake heads." There are newspaper accounts in the 1840s about such incidents, resulting in passenger injuries.

The only reported fatality from a snake head was in the the 22 Aug 1843 issue of the Baltimore Sun when a young man named Staats was struck by a snake head:

"The bar entered under the chin of this young man, and came out at the back of his head. He was instantly killed, but no other person injured. The cars went back to Boundbrook, left the body, and then after an hour's delay, started for the city."

These incidents were typically accompanied by derailments, which injured passengers.

The most recent snake head incident I can find occurred in 2014, in Australia when a rail penetrated a carriage, narrowly missing passengers.



Rail that penetrated the bottom of a coach

Then came the edged iron rail and the flanged wheel. The L-shaped plate rail and the edge rail co-existed in to the early 1800s until the latter was proved superior and was adopted by railways.

Early iron rails were made of cast iron, which turned out to be unsatisfactory because it was brittle and tended to break under heavy loads. Cast iron was replaced by wrought iron. Wrought iron was ductile and could be considerably deformed by the weight of rail cars before breaking.

The first steel rails were made in the mid 1850s, with rail lengths increasing from 30 feet to 60 feet. The sections of rail had holes in the ends and joint bars joined the ends of two sections of rail, held in place by heavy bolts and nuts. Modern practice is to weld sections of rail together.

The distance between rails (the gauge) has and does vary. The standard in America is 4' 8 1/2 inches between the rails. This was used by an early innovator, George Stephenson, on his railways, and was imported from Britain.

Broad gauge track is 7 feet between rails. Narrow gauge track is 2 feet for some streetcar lines, to 3 feet, on several railroads in the U.S. Probably the most famous narrow gauge lines are the East Broad Top in PA and the Denver and Rio Grande in Colorado.

VOLUNTEERS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME

The lifeblood of any non-profit organization is the volunteers who give their time and money simply because they love what the organization stands for. There are many great volunteer positions available for **YOU** at the Galveston Railroad Museum. Check out the types of jobs listed below and see which one (or ones) interest you, and contact the Museum for more details - 409-765-5700 or info@galvestonRRMuseum.org

Archives Volunteer: Assist with cataloguing and care of materials located in the Museum's archives. Create new displays for artifacts. Some prior experience helpful. Times needed: weekdays and weekends. Excellent opportunity for internship.

Docent: Assist with conducting guided tours of the Museum grounds and watch over Museum displays. A one-day training session to familiarize the docent with railroad history and the Museum equipment and grounds is required prior to beginning tours. Times needed: weekdays and weekends.

Education Volunteer: Assist in presenting educational material to merit badge classes, and school groups. Should enjoy interacting with children ages 4 through 17. A one-day training session to familiarize the volunteer with railroad history and the Museum grounds and equipment is required. Availability year around is a plus.

Grounds Volunteer: Assist the groundskeeper with cutting grass, and planting, watering and weeding flowers, and picking up trash and leaves. On the job training is available if needed. Times needed: flexible to fit your schedule.

Publicity Volunteer: Assist Mary Jo Naschke to generate publicity notices for local newspapers and provide copy to same. Assist in keeping the Museum's mailing list for special events and newsletter mailings up to date. Assist in preparing and mailing newsletters. Times needed: flexible to fit your schedule.

Model Railroad Volunteer: Assist Stephen Duncan keeping the model railroad display in Theater 4 running by cleaning tracks, engine and railcar wheels, replacing worn out parts, and keeping structures on the layout clean. Also act as a docent and answer questions from visitors while working on the layout. Times needed: flexible to fit your schedule.

Car Knocker Volunteer: Assist Jeff Gilyani in restoration, conservation and maintenance of rail cars and engines. Includes painting, woodworking, and upholstering, as well as metal, mechanical, and electrical work. Should have suitable work clothes and work shoes. Safety equipment can be provided. Times needed: weekends and weekdays.

Gandy Dancer Volunteer: Assist Chris Tate in railway track maintenance and in keeping the Museum yard and right of way clear of weeds and grass. Should enjoy heavy work. Should have suitable work clothes and work boots. Safety equipment can be provided. Times needed: weekends and weekdays.

Conductor. Assist with passenger control during rides on Saturdays and during Polar Express events. Must be able to repeatedly climb on and off the engine, caboose and rail cars.

Special Events Volunteer: Assist during events such as the Annual Train Show, Polar Express, Mardi Gras, and other such events. Volunteers need only to enjoy interacting with people.

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