

The Singing Wire



The Newsletter of the Pikes Peak Historical Street Railway Foundation

Our Purpose

The Pikes Peak Historical Street Railway Foundation exists to restore and operate historical street and electric railways in the Colorado Springs area. Our goal is to provide a cultural, historical, and educational experience for the citizens of the Pikes Peak region and southern Colorado.

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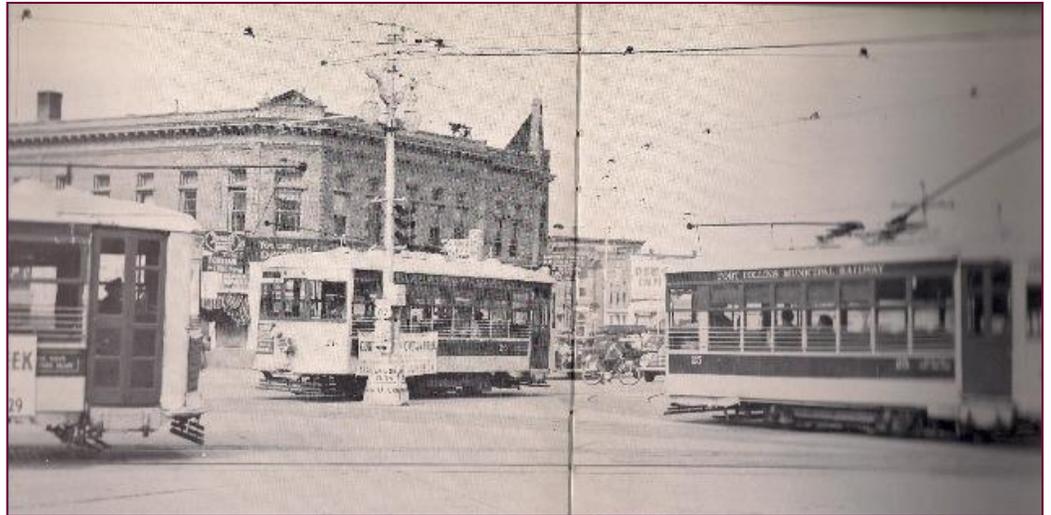


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The Fort Collins Municipal Railway

by Ron Dawson

This article appeared in the July 2011 issue of the EP&SW Flyer, the R&LHS Southwest Chapter newsletter, and is reprinted with permission of the late author, Ron Dawson.



Above: The photo shows the famous three-way meet of single truck Birneys in Fort Collins, Colorado, the last city in the U.S. to operate Birneys in regular service, ending June 30, 1951. The intersection is College and Mountain Avenues in Fort Collins. The car on the left has come down Mountain from City Park and is turning right on College. It will make a counter-clockwise loop and will end up where the middle car is now. The car on the right is turning off College onto Mountain and is running the same loop only in the clockwise direction. It will not visit City Park as will the other two. Photo by Al Rose

The story of the Fort Collins city-owned streetcar line begins in 1918 when the Denver and Interurban needed to divest itself of the Fort Collins city lines. The D&I operated the Denver to Boulder interurban and was not making money using heavy cars on the Fort Collins city service.

The company went into receivership and the Fort Collins city lines were offered to the city for \$75,000. It seemed a good deal and the citizenry passed a bond for the purchase. A more economical streetcar was needed and thus four new cars were ordered at a cost of \$6,000 each. Charles O. Birney, an engineer for the Stone & Webster Companies, designed the single truck Birney known as the Birney Standard Safety Car. The idea was that the cars could be semi-mass produced with a standard design useful on lightly traveled lines in many cities. Interestingly, Charles Birney's brother, James, was a banker in El Paso with a home in present day Manhattan Heights. It appears, however, that he was not involved with El Paso's extensive trolley system.

In a 1947 Saturday Evening Post article "Some of My Best Friends are Streetcars", the author writes "The municipally-owned streetcar system holds two impressive records. It has the lowest trolley fares in the nation, five cents a ride, six tokens for an quarter, and a dollar for an unlimited monthly pass—and it makes money (true at the time of the writing in 1947).

Left: Al Rose photo of Fort Collins Municipal Railway Car No. 22 on part of the original line through City Park. The car in the photo is No. 22, the car now owned by the PPHSRF and under restoration as CS&I No. 135.



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The Singing Wire

This newsletter is produced and published collaboratively by volunteer members of the Pikes Peak Historical Street Railway Foundation. We welcome submittal of articles of interest to the membership. All articles are subject to editing. Mail input to above mailing or email address.

The PPHSRF is a Member of:
HeritageRail Alliance
Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce
Coalition of Pikes Peak Historical Museums
Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad

Letter from the President

Hello Members, Volunteers, & Friends:



A Major Change in the Works!

The Foundation has three missions: (1) To maintain a museum that educates the public about the history of streetcars in the Pikes Peak area; (2) to acquire and restore historic streetcars; and (3) to build a system and operate it on the streets again. The first two are situated in our 1888 roundhouse and are intertwined to the extent they can be managed as one, but building and operating a system is completely separate. For the past several years, I have managed both, not always doing justice to either, but now I am pleased to report that one of our talented volunteers and I are working on an agreement wherein he will take total responsibility for the museum and restoration areas, and I will concentrate my efforts on acquiring land adjacent to where we hope to build a system, develop it, and put an in-street system plan before the City Council and the City Administration. As the plan comes together, we will let you know. We also need to let those of you who have been long time supporters know why we have been working on implementing our street system without success since 1997, when our franchise was granted. We plan a special edition of the Singing Wire after the first of the year, that will detail our five unsuccessful efforts and why our current thrust appears to have promise at last.

Stay tuned!

Our 130th Anniversary Celebration of the arrival of the Rock Island Railroad in Roswell (now part of Colorado Springs) was a great success. Our volunteers did an outstanding job of making it all come together. Hope you can join our volunteers in making upcoming events equally successful.

David Lippincott

UPCOMING EVENTS

December 2018: We are planning to decorate our newly spiffed up and rearranged trolley museum for the Christmas holidays. We have decorations on hand and lights galore and are looking for members to lend a hand. Won't you volunteer?

January 12 and 13, 2019: Pikes Peak Trolley Museum information table at TECO Model Train Show at the Chapel Hills Mall. A good way to "get the word out" about our museum and restoration efforts to folks already interested in trains and trolleys. We will be presenting a program entitled "Pikes Peak Trolleys" on both days.

May 2019: In May of 1919, four Birney cars were completed and delivered to the Fort Collins Municipal Railway. One of those cars is our Birney No.135, the former FCMRwy No. 22, historically significant because it was the last Birney car to run in revenue service in North America on June 30, 1951. Join us in planning a 100th Birney Birthday Bash!



John's History Corner

by John Haney

LOOKING BACK: CELEBRATING THE BIRNEY IN 2007

2007 wasn't just in celebration of the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Pikes Peak Historical Street Railway Foundation. This was also a time to raise a toast to what's been done to restore Car 135! With its new paint job, rebuilt seats and wheels, the nearly operable vehicle rode on a flatbed trailer in the 2007 Festival of Lights Parade to the delight of all the thousands of onlookers. What an accomplishment!

A vehicle to forestall declining ridership and rising costs for streetcar systems nationwide, the Birney Safety Car was a very important new vehicle. Designed by Charles R. Birney of the Stone-Webster Corp., it featured a dead man control as well as doors that were interlocked with the brakes and operator

controls, so that doors could not open when the car was in motion nor could cars start moving until the doors were closed. The car could be operated by one man, thus saving the cost of two operators, which the large two-man cars required. Birneys were also cheaper to purchase because they were smaller and equipped with single trucks.

The first Birneys (also referred to as "Dinkeys") were delivered to Colorado Springs in 1918. They were well received by CS&I officials since they operated at considerable savings. They were also something new for those who rode them, but many missed riding on the larger, older cars with their velvet, cushioned seats, birdseye maple interior finish, and smoother ride since they were so much heavier and rode on double trucks.

The Pikes Peak Historical Street Railway Foundation is delighted to have a great variety of equipment, certainly the latest generation represented by Car 135. Soon it will be fully operating on our tracks and will be something you won't want to miss as it leaves the car barn under its own power!

The Fort Collins Municipal Railway *(continued from page 1)*

As traffic increased and parts became increasingly hard to find or make, two more Birneys were bought from the Norfolk, Virginia transit in 1946, were rebuilt, and numbered 24 and 25. The last car, No. 22, ran on June 30, 1951. In 1953, No. 21 went to the Pioneer Museum. No. 25 went to a private owner and was at Victor, CO for many years (where I photographed it). It later went to the Carolinas and is now back at Fort Collins.

Over time, with the help of a group of dedicated volunteers, part of the original route and car No. 21 were restored. The route now runs from City Park down Mountain Ave. to the edge of downtown. It was necessary to overcome the objections of "nimby's", but now the line and the Birney are an accepted and loved part of the Fort Collins landscape. One of the problems with extending all the way into town would be to again cross the Burlington Northern, ex-Colorado & Southern, and to be able to give adequate clearance for double-stacker trains.

References:

Last of the Birneys by E. S. Peyton & R. A. Moorman

The December 1947 issue of the *Saturday Evening Post* contains a story about the Fort Collins Birneys still operating at that time.

On the following page is a diagram of the Fort Collins Municipal Railway, 1918-1951, provided with the article by author Ron Dawson



Cars awaiting duty at the Howes St. barn, 1947.

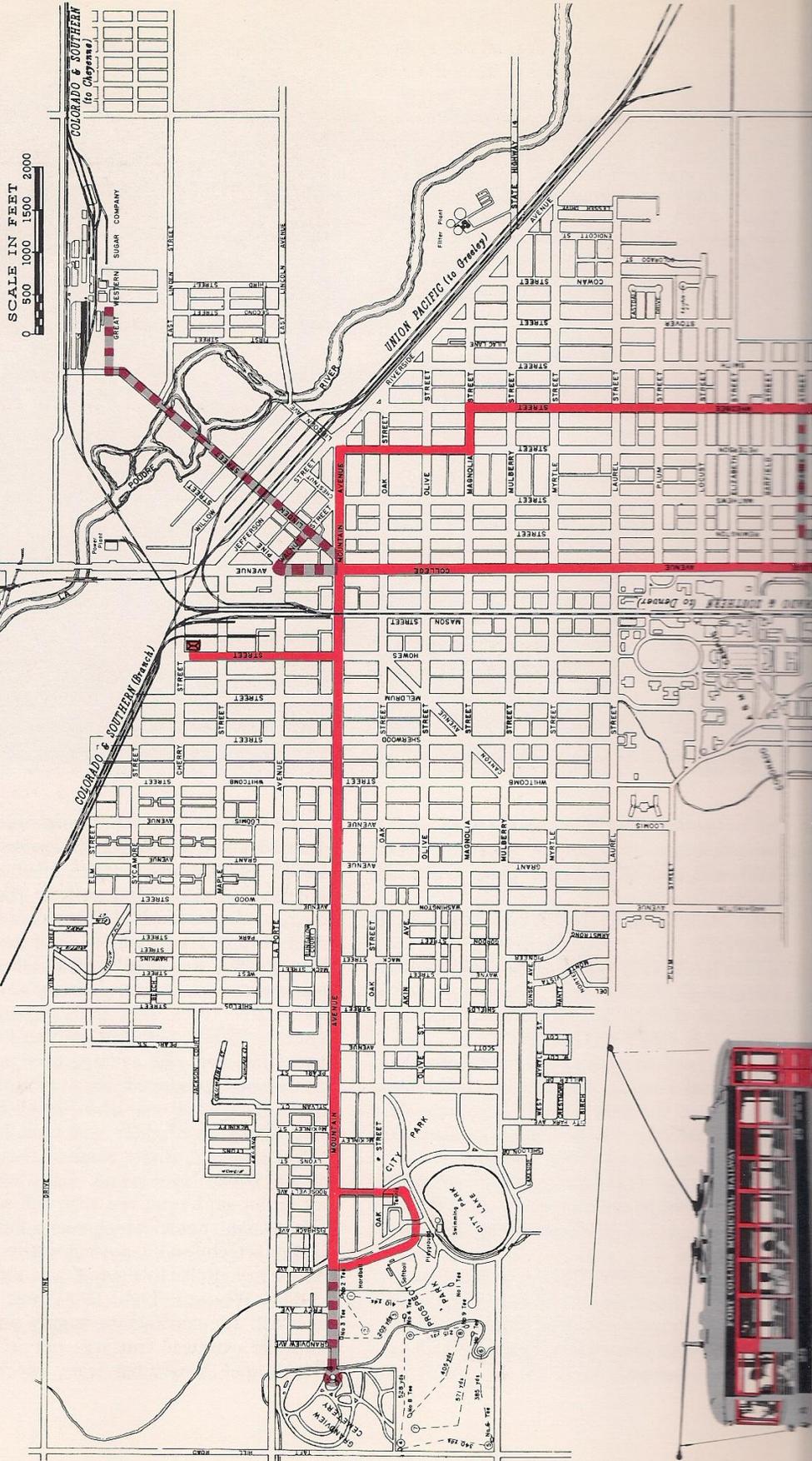
Above: Cars 24 and 22 awaiting duty at the Howes Street barn, 1947

Fort Collins Municipal Railway

1918-1951



-  Lines abandoned 1919-1922
-  Balance of system until abandonment
-  Car Barn



The Rolling Spotlight featuring Birney Car 135

In this issue, we continue the series of articles in which we share photographs and interesting information on one or more of our historically significant pieces of rolling stock in the museum's collection.

The Birney Streetcar

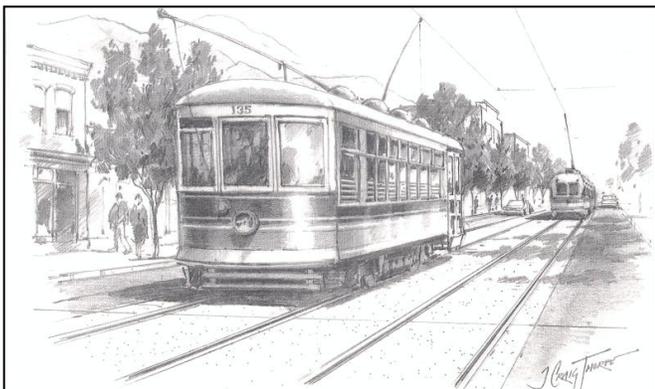
You oughta be in pictures! Below are some memorable photos and a drawing by PPHSRF members.



The late Vince Morris, a longtime member and volunteer, caught this shot of Car 22 and Vince's son at the Colorado Railroad Museum ca 1950s. It is painted in the silver and black with red trim paint scheme.



PPHSRF Director Ron Oatney took this photo of Denver & Intermountain Railroad No. 25 and Fort Collins Municipal Railway No. 22 at the Colorado Railroad Museum in 1970.



Birney Car 135 on Colorado Springs streets with PCCs in the distance as envisioned by Seattle artist T. Craig Thorpe

"Our Birney" is a one-of-a-kind! In 1918, after the City of Fort Collins purchased the Fort Collins city lines for \$75,000, a more economical streetcar was needed. Thus four new "Birney" cars were ordered at a cost of \$6,000 each; they were numbered 20, 21, 22, and 23. The single truck, one-man operation Birney known as the Birney Standard Safety Car was much less expensive to produce. It was light weight, included safety equipment, and was ideally suited for service in less populated areas.

The American Car Company completed the Fort Collins Municipal Railway (FCMR) Birneys in May of 1919 under order number 1184. They would serve Fort Collins citizens for 32 years. Then, on June 30, 1951, it was Car 22 that ended streetcar service when it pulled in for the last time at 10:45 p.m. with Motorman Charles O'Laughlin at the controls. This not only ended Birney car service in Fort Collins, it ended Birney car service in Colorado and in North America. Only a single Birney in Brazil ran about another year in revenue service. Today, you can find Birneys at a number of railway museums.

Ownership of four of the Fort Collins Birneys went to the Electric Railroader's Association Southern California division, who bought the cars to preserve them and in turn to sell them at a profit - they netted a total of \$80. All had been built by American Car Co. Car 20 was bought by Harold Warp's Pioneer Village in Minden, Nebraska. Car 21 went on display outside the Fort Collins Museum/City Park, was restored, and is operated on summer weekends and holidays by the Fort Collins Municipal Railway Society. Car 23 was scrapped in 1957.

The Rocky Mountain Railroad Club (RMRRC) purchased No. 22 from the ERA-SC in 1953 for \$115. Moving the car to Denver cost an additional \$133. No. 22 remained at the Golden Waterworks until it was moved to the Colorado Railroad Museum (CRRM) and put on static display.

The CRRM focus is on narrow gauge railroading, and traction did not fit their mission. It was time to find a new home for Car 22. Consequently, the RMRRC leased the car to the PPHSRF in 1994 with the intent that the museum's volunteers would undertake its restoration. At the end of the ten year lease, during which volunteers had extensively restored the car, the Club agreed to sell the car to the foundation. Over \$125,000 in contributions funded the restoration efforts.

In July of 2006, the PPHSRF was able to purchase the Birney. No doubt, the RMRRC could have received considerably more from another buyer. We are grateful for their assistance and generosity.

Portions of the above were adapted from prior issues of the *Singing Wire* and from the FCMR Society website.

The Rolling Spotlight

(continued from page 5)



Car 22 is pictured above entering City Park in the late 1940's where the restored line now ends at the FCMR depot. The website of the Fort Collins Municipal Railway Society notes that Birney Car 21 has carried over 200,000 riders along this route since restoration work was completed.

The photo below dates to June 2013. It should be noted that most of the restoration work was accomplished by the "original" Birney Crew: Gary Harrison took the lead in these efforts, assisted by Jeff Smith, Neal McElrath, Wayne Russert, Paul Fiebing, Jim Shaw, Mike Walker, and the late Vince Morris,.



No. 22 is a single-truck, four-wheel, safety car with double end operation. The body has a single front two-leaf folding door and no rear door. Safety equipment, designed for one-man operation, consists of a combination brake, sander, and door opening device with "dead man" features.

Built as a "standard" car, it seats 28 passengers. The wooden slat seats and cane backs have all been restored and all wood surfaces newly varnished. The canvas roof is new. Rebuilding the controllers and completing electrical work are on the "to do" list for volunteers.



Interior photo of Birney car 135 by Alice Armstrong, December 2010

Right: Car 135 as it exited the car barn in December 2007 to be decorated for the Festival of Lights Parade



Looking Back: 2007 Festival of Lights Parade

It was a splendid sight. Soft lights warmed the interior of the car. A third-grade choir sang Christmas carols. Volunteers wore their motorman and conductor uniforms and period costumes. Almost fully restored, our 1919 Colorado Springs & Interurban Birney Car 135, the former Fort Collins Car 22, proudly rode down Tejon Street atop a flat-bed trailer.



Years of dedicated restoration work by the "Birney Crew" culminated in this "coming out" of the Birney as the Pikes Peak Trolley Museum's entry in the city's annual Festival of Lights Parade. It was the volunteers' way of wishing the people of Colorado Springs a Merry Christmas, and the wide-eyed stares of the parade watchers made it all worthwhile.

Our sincere thanks to all the volunteers who restored the Birney so magnificently and to Chet's Trucking & Grading, who interrupted work to transport the Birney. The IBEW and NECA provided financial support for the restoration efforts and the costs of participating in the parade.

Museum Operations and Restoration Updates

Operations

August 15, 2018 - November 15, 2018

Ron Oatney is the Director of Museum Operations; he welcomes your ideas and participation. The following update details recent activities by volunteers, members, Workfare, and Front Range people.

- All items that did not sell at the trolley barn sale have been taken to Goodwill and the conference room is now home to the fridge and all commissary items -an indoor break area.
- **Tom Levy** has worked on the lighting in the caboose and installed a timer so they cannot be left on inadvertently.
- We now have a table of wood Brio trains and accessories in the museum. It was a hit with kids at the 130th celebration. Thanks, **Tom Levy**
- We no longer have free pick up by Bestway, so we are asking that we only put trash in the dumpster, (No wood, brush, weeds, or recycle stuff) and compact everything as much as possible.
- Work on the PCC No. 2129 car body has been on hold as **Chris Sailor** injured his right arm. He made a good start before the injury. Heal fast, Chris!
- **John Caulfield, Paul Fiebing, and Tom Levy** have installed a new transformer and fixed and cleaned the track on the G gauge layout. It now works well and ran most of the day at the 130th celebration.
- We have increased the gift-shop products for sale and moved them to the large slope-front glass case, and sales have increased dramatically.
- The changes in the museum and restoration shop are many, ongoing, and noticeable to our visitors. The staff has had many favorable comments recently.
- Would you be willing to train as a supervisor, trolley car operator, tour guide, or do restoration work? To apply, please contact Ron Oatney at 719-650-5605 or Wayne Russert at 303-660-3799.

Volunteers – Always Needed, Always Welcome

Restoration

August 15, 2018 - November 15, 2018

Wayne Russert is the Director of Restoration; he is always looking for volunteers with the kind of skills to restore our historic cars. The following is an update on recent activities.

- **Car #135: John Cusack and Tom Levy** are re-plumbing and testing the air receivers prior to reinstallation. **Jeff Smith** will be assessing the wiring status. **Larry Overstreet**, a new volunteer, has experience with controllers. Rollout is planned for December 2019!
- **PCC #2129:** The car is running well, and **Tom Levy** is installing the back-up camera.
- **In the Carbarn: Car #59** restoration is on hold; there are no current plans for **Car #48** restoration.
- **On the grounds: Car #3101, LARy War Baby:** in need of roof repair. **Pittsburgh Interurban Car #4002** and **Denver Tramway Cars #724 and #770:** No current plans. **Roswell Rock Island RR Museum in RI 4363, exSP6777:** Exhibits are being maintained for museum tours.
- **Trolley Museum Displays:** Displays will be upgraded during the winter months. Many items have been donated for the Roswell Depot Agent's Office display. **John Caulfield** has installed a large photo display in the former break area and has also improved access to **Car #59**.
- **Don Wick** has donated a large porcelain KATY sign and a Burlington sign, displayed on conference room west wall.
- **Bob and Mary Manley** completed the woodworking shop rebuild and have fabricated an access ladder to the upper storage deck; a safety cable is being installed around the deck perimeter. A local **Boy Scout Troop** painted the interior and exterior of the shop in one day! Wiring and lighting are underway before moving machinery and tools inside.
- **John Caulfield** has repaired and weatherproofed the south doors over tracks 1 & 2.
- Volunteers are needed to remove the obsolete radio antenna from the roof and seal any leaks before snow season.
- Needed before winter: left-over or broken bundles of asphalt shingles to cover the exposed wood on the north wall of the roundhouse. **Don Gage** has donated 4 bundles.

Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec Car 470 Restoration

Update by John Engs

With the work sessions completed on the railroad for 2018, we now have time to concentrate on the Car 470 project. However, the last couple of weeks Craig McMullen has been busy constructing a white oak wood pilot for the restoration of engine 168, the engine leased to the Cumbres & Toltec, where it is being restored to operation. Meanwhile, on the car, we have received the balance of the double seat castings and are busy grinding edges on the castings which will soon go for sand blasting and powder coating. A few weeks back, surface coating was applied to finish the interior red oak of the car. Next, the finished floor is to be installed whenever the necessary bolts are received for the coupler pocket and top center plate.

Right: Wood Pilot for Engine 168



Come see the progress for yourself! We work on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Saturday of the month from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Your continuing support of the Pikes Peak Historical Street Railway Foundation is vital for meeting operating expenses and funding restoration costs. Please consider additional contributions for the restoration of the "Laclede" and the "Birney." **Please mail checks to PPHSRF, PO Box 544, Colorado Springs CO 80901-0544 or indicate below payment by credit card or PayPal.**

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION (Please print)

Name(s): _____
 Address: _____
 Home Ph: _____ Cell Ph: _____ Email: _____

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES (Please check one)

- | <u>Individual</u> | | <u>Family</u> | | <u>Corporate</u> | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|---|----------|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend | \$40.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Up to 5 members | \$60.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Friend | \$100.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor | \$55.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Up to 7 members | \$75.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporter | \$250.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron | \$75.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Unlimited number | \$100.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor | \$500.00 and up |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor | \$100.00 and up | <input type="checkbox"/> PLEASE CONTACT ME ABOUT VOLUNTEERING! | | | |
- Check enclosed. Please mail to the address at the top of this form.
- Please charge my credit card: _____ Exp. Date: _____ MasterCard ___ Visa ___
 Name as it appears on card (please print) _____ Signature: _____
- "PayPal" Send funds to csstreetcarfdn@aol.com
- Additional Contribution: \$_____ to be applied to (please check one):
- Car Restoration Museum Displays General Operating Fund

Note: For contributions of \$250 or more, please consider making your donation through the El Paso County Enterprise Zone. Call the PPHSRF office at 475-9508 for more information.

Many thanks to our volunteers, members, and donors — a Merry Christmas to all and a Most Happy New Year!



Left Waiting on Monument Avenue for the start of the 2009 Colorado Springs Festival of Lights Parade.

2018 Museum Hours
Open Wednesday through Saturday
 Museum opens at 9:30 a.m.
 Last tour at 3:00 p.m.
 Adults \$5, Active Military & Seniors \$4
 Children 3-11 \$3