

E-TRACKS

A periodic publication for members and friends of
The Florida Railroad Museum

12210 83rd Street East; Parrish, Florida 34219
941-776-0906 frmm.org

Cal Bonnett, Public Information Officer, Editor

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From the Editor's Desk

The response to the August issue has been heartwarming. Thanks for all the kudos!

The publication schedule is not set in stone. In the August issue I mentioned my goal was no less than quarterly, but I am trying for every other month.

We have a lot going on! It's events season! Promotions! New staffers! A lot of activity makes this job easier.

I trust you find this issue worthy of your time reading. Your suggestions are always welcome. Please feel free to email me at cbonnett@frmm.org.

-30-

Cal

FRRM Has a New Conductor!



John Halash, Rules Examiner, congratulates Andrew on his promotion.

The Operations Committee of the Florida Railroad Museum is pleased to announce the promotion of Andrew Graham to the rank of Conductor.

Andrew has been a frequent and hard working train crew volunteer during the past several months, and has impressed us with his railroading skills and knowledge. Andrew had quickly risen through the ranks becoming a Car Host and Trainman.

On September 17, 2023, Andrew successfully completed the final written examinations given by Rules Examiner John Halash. Congratulations Andrew!

FRRM Welcomes New Events Coordinator

Please give a warm Florida Railroad Museum welcome aboard to our new Events Coordinator, Cynthia Bell! Cindy was born and raised in the Lithia area. Yes, she's a native Floridian!



Before coming to the FRRM, Cindy owned a successful small business for eight years in the River-view area. She's a proud mom of five and enjoys time with her family and anything outdoors.

Cindy finds it rewarding to see so many volunteers come together for a purpose. She is looking forward to her future at the Florida Railroad Museum, and is anxious to work with each one of us. Welcome to FRRM, Cindy. We expect great things from you!

Speaking of Events...

Here are the remaining events for 2023!

Civil War Reenactment
October 14, 15

Pumpkin Patch Express (See page 5)
October 21, 22, 28, 29

Von Kessinger's Express WW II Reenactment
November 4, 5

Second Annual Car Show (See page 6)
November 18

Willow Express
November 11, 12, 18, 19

Hole in the Head Gang Train Robbery
November 25, 26

North Pole Express (See page 7)
November 30, December 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21.

Volunteers Are Essential to FRRM!

It has been said that America runs on Dunkin'. The Florida Railroad runs on its dedicated volunteers and employees! Without them, the trains would not run almost every weekend of the year and occasionally during the week.

I have found that FRRM is a great place to volunteer. No minimum hours or days are required. Learn about Railroad operations and rise all the way to Engineer if you have that desire. Meet new friends (We're an extended family.) Have fun interacting with our wonderful passengers.

If you have an interest in volunteering for our non-profit museum, please contact our Car Host Trainer, Debbie Chapman. She's on the train almost every weekend and would love to give you more information and hopefully enroll you in our volunteer program. Alternatively, please email me at cbonnett@frfm.org and I will get her in touch with you. All aboard!

Railroad Trivia Question

Standard gauge in the United States is:

A. 5 feet, B. 3 feet, 7 inches, C. 4 feet, 8 1/2 inches, or D. 4 feet, 6 inches

See answer on page 4

From the Desk of President Pat Masterson

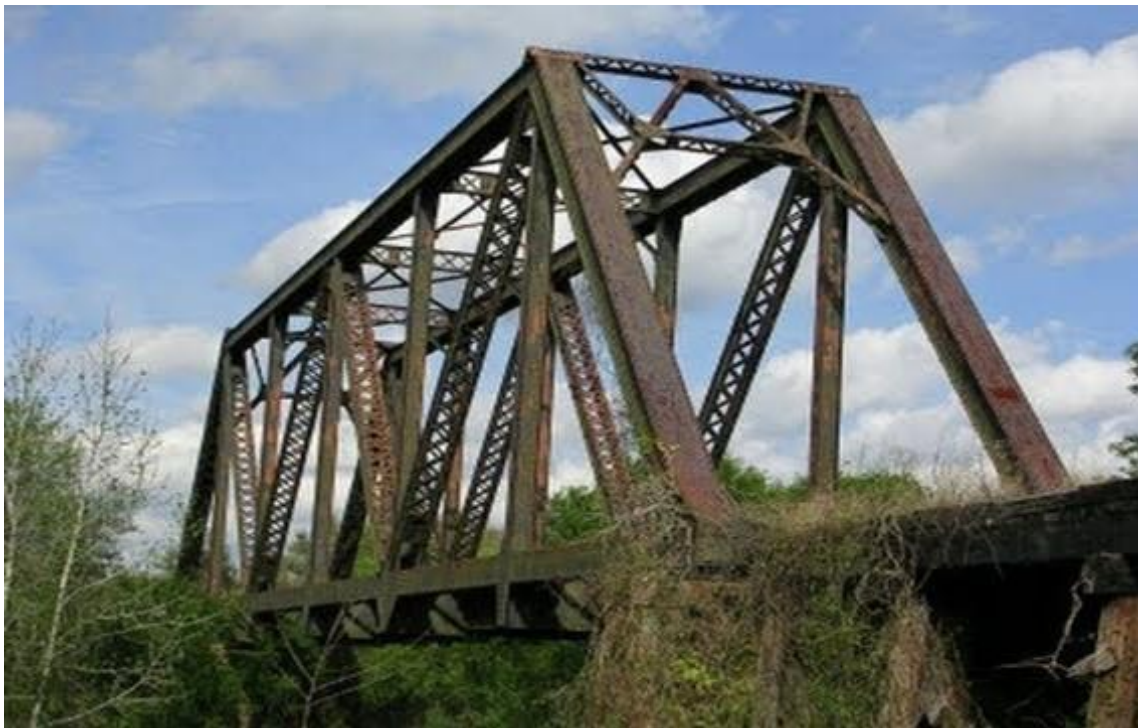


People who are new to FRRM always have a lot of questions to ask. Two of them are “Why don’t we run our trains South towards Palmetto?” and “Why don’t we run trains North out of Willow?” Here is the folklore that goes along with these questions. The first answer is, that we are prohibited by our agreement with FPL to use that track. Additionally, we have been told by the FRA that we are not allowed to do that. Those two conditions could possibly be reversed at some point. But, there are other challenges involved.

One, is the condition of the track and crossings. It would cost many, many thousands of dollars to bring that track up to our standards, and then maintain it all year. We currently spend well over \$100K annually to maintain our running track.

And, that brings up point number two. There is no perceptible financial gain to run our trains South of 301. There is nothing to see along the way, and there is nothing to do at the far end. There just is no payback to spend a bundle on track repair, and then not have the ridership to support it.

This discussion always raises that second question; “Why don’t we run trains North out of Willow?” The rails just to our North are not in terrible shape. We have stored old box cars up there for a very long time. The track goes downhill for about a quarter mile to the South bank of the Little Manatee River. At this point you see a trestle bridge over the river. It was built in the early 1900’s.



This bridge is owned by Hillsborough County, and is in disrepair. The rails have been removed, and the ties set afire. The supporting earth at the ends is eroded. It could all be fixed, but the same situation exists here. Why spend a ton of money on it, when there is no place to go. FRRM doesn’t do any business in Hillsborough, so there is no reason for them to want to restore the trestle to working order. Land North of the bridge is owned by CSX, and there may still be some rails in the ground there. This bridge will someday be an important part of the planning for the walk/bike trail system running through Manatee county.

Pat Masterson

Things You Cannot Make Up

by Peter Mason

(Peter shares some humorous recollections from his 19+ years at the museum. This will be a three-part series. Part one below!)

I began volunteering at FRRM during May of 2004. I have met many interesting characters and had incredible experiences. Some of the experiences fall under the category of “You Can’t Make These Things Up.” I will recall just a few memories now. Names have been changed to protect the guilty. All stories are recounted per my memory, so all facts as related must be true.



There was a very large, I estimate weighing well over 300 pounds Car Host, I will call him James. He was so large the crew had to push him up the stairs into a train car to get him aboard. We used a PA system to make announcements on the train at that time, and James loved to make the announcements. He claimed to be the “voice” of the announcements at a major theme park (the mouse one.)

James installed a wireless microphone system in the Kentucky Club (K.C.) lounge car, so he could be seen by the passengers while he narrated. The system was for his use only, as use by an amateur might ruin it. Every day James would declare the Engineer running the train as “Freight or Passenger” depending on how smoothly the train was started and stopped and would announce his decision during the trip to the passengers. One day, James, in his most professional and stern voice announced: “All passengers must remain seated while the train is slowing to stop at Parrish, as unexpected motion could occur causing you to fall.” James was proudly using the wireless microphone while standing in the middle of the K.C. at the time. Suddenly, the train lurched, and James fell flat on his face (only his pride was bruised). It took the entire train crew to get him upright again after the passengers had to step over his prone body to detrain. I guess we had a “Freight Engineer” that day.

The 250 Lounge Car was new to us, obtained through a convoluted three-way trade involving FRRM, the Kentucky RR Museum, and the FRA, which I still do not understand to this day. Cars traded were the Kentucky Club, the Cape Tormentine, and the 250. The North Pole Express train was about to depart, and the Conductor, I will call him Billy, was making announcements on the PA system from the “Conductor’s Office” in the new 250. This “office” was no more than a very narrow closet with shelving. I was Trainman. Shortly after the train departed Parrish, Billy, sounding urgent, called me on the radio requesting my presence in the 250. I entered the 250 but did not see the Conductor, a fellow who would be hard to miss. I got on the radio to Billy and asked his location in the 250 and he replied: “Conductor’s Office”. I walked to the door of the “office/closet” and opened it to find the Conductor smashed between the closet door (which had swung closed as the train started to move) and the shelving. Billy was locked in the closet. He made me promise to never tell anyone about this embarrassing incident, so you did not hear it from me.

Answer to Trivia Question: C. 4 feet, 8 1/2 inches

The standard gauge in the US is 4 feet 8 1/2 inches. This measurement refers to the distance between the inner edges of the two rails on a railroad track. It is the most common gauge used in the US and is based on historical reasons. The 4 feet 8 1/2 inches gauge was originally used in England and was brought to the US by British engineers who constructed the early railroads. This gauge became standardized and is still widely used today.



PUMPKIN PATCH EXPRESS

All aboard our Pumpkin Patch Express! Come enjoy great food, hayrides, hay maze, trick-or-treat lane, bounce house, crafts, sack race and more! And don't forget that every child gets to pick a pumpkin from our patch!

October 21, 22, 28, 29

Train departs the Parrish station at 11am and 3pm
12210 83rd St East Parrish FL 34219

Get your tickets www.frrm.org/pumpkin-patch-express/



Join Us for a Day of

Old Cars & Old Trains *at*

2nd Annual
Show



12210 83rd St. E., Parrish, FL 34219

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18TH

9AM - 3PM



**FEATURING
DJ JOEY**

*Train Rides Departing at
11AM & 2PM*



REGISTERED CAR OWNERS SAVE \$6.00 ON ALL TRAIN RIDES!

Contact: Pat-Masterson@tampabay.rr.com

And our premiere event of the season!

NORTH POLE EXPRESS

Join us this holiday season for a 35 minute ride from Parrish, Florida to the North Pole. Upon arrival, everyone will detrain at our special North Pole station where Santa awaits to visit with every child. During your stay a variety of entertainment, activities, camp fires and all the hot chocolate and cookies you care to eat are included with every train ticket.

Additional food and beverage will be available for purchase at the North Pole.

We travel to the North Pole twice nightly on 16 nights in November and December. A variety of seating options are available including First Class cars, Excursion Class cars, Open-air Coach cars, and Private Caboosees. *At press time a limited number of tickets were still available!* Don't procrastinate and be disappointed. Visit www.frrm.org and click North Pole Express under the Rides & Events tab. See you at the North Pole!



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Staff Photographer

Operating Hours

Train Schedule

Saturday and Sunday Only

(excluding some special events)

<u>Station</u>	<u>Departure</u>	<u>Arrival</u>
Parrish	11:00 AM	12:30 PM
Parrish	2:00 PM	3:30 PM

Ticket Prices

(excluding special events)

Adults 12+ \$18.00

Children 3-11 \$14.00

Under 3 Free

Office Hours

Wednesday through Sunday

10:00 AM to 4:00 PM

(extended for special events)

Contact Information

Kay Powers, Stationmaster

kpowers@frmm.org

941-776-0906

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A big FRRM thank you to Eric Hilton, and Pat Masterson, Cindy Bell, and Cal Bonnett for supplying the photographs used in this issue.