

GENERAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF TRANSPORTATION

The Museum of Transportation was founded in 1944 by a group of individuals dedicated to preserving the past. They acquired the 1870's Bellefontaine #33 mule-drawn streetcar from the St. Louis Public Service Company and they formed a nonprofit organization titled the St Louis Railway Historical Society which later became the Transport Museum Association.

The "Bellefontaine #33 was stored until after WWII when the group was able to locate the present site on Barrett Station Road which was astride the route of the original Pacific RR. This site includes one of the first two tunnels west of the Mississippi River. Thus, the site is as significant as any of the artifacts, which have been brought in.

The mule car was soon joined by a collection of streetcars, an 1869 vintage derrick from the Missouri Pacific Railroad, a 4-4-2 Atlantic type steam locomotive from the Chicago and Northwestern and an 1889 ten wheeler 4-6-0 steam locomotive from the Missouri Pacific Railroad.

John P. Roberts MD and his wife Mary White Roberts handled the daily operations of the Museum. Mary operated the concession stand and group activities and she acted as general greeter and services manager while John acquired additional equipment and artifacts often as the piece was about to be scrapped.

The name was changed to Museum of Transport in 1948, and the Museum opened 7 days a week in 1957. About 1960 the name became National Museum of Transport.

The Museum continued to collect artifacts through the 1960s and 70s, branching out to the automotive area and to aircraft. The upper level (tracks 13-15 area) was expanded in 1968-70 by fill from the Missouri Pacific RR and the first significant building, the Automobile building was constructed by Museum staff in 1969-70. The Museum was not able financially to restore artifacts, the only revenue being the memberships and the gate-gift shop income.

On Sept 1, 1979 St. Louis County Parks took over to operate the Museum, and closed until June 1980 while constructing a visitor's center and adding the 4 tracks on the lower level, along with a new parking lot—in use today. The assets of the Museum were donated to the County in 1983, giving the county title to the collection as well as operation of the site. The first permanent cover of tracks and artifacts was the construction of the donated Abbott Building in 1981-82. The office-archives building was constructed in 1983 and the Trolley barn in 1992. Rebuilding of the Museums track began in 1992. Work began on the Roberts' Building in 1993 and was completed in 1994. It formally opened at the Museum's 50th Birthday Party on July 30, 1994. The Museum has been re-named to Museum of Transportation.

Today, the Transport Museum Association, the continuation of the private not for profit incorporation assists with funding and raising money for new acquisitions and restoration. The TMA is working on a Capital Fund campaign toward the construction of more restrooms, cover over the lower rail yard and a new and larger visitor's center—display building on the lower level, along with a new parking lot and amenities.