

THE SPIRIT

Sept/Oct 2020

NEWSLETTER OF THE
R.E. OLDS TRANSPORTATION MUSEUM

Harvey the Fire Truck

In Terre Hill, PA in the early 1980s, my father, William F. Stirk, rescued and set about restoring a 1938 REO Speedwagon Fire Truck that was originally commissioned by the Bainbridge Fire Department. Bainbridge is located on the Susquehanna River, in Lancaster County, PA. As a high school and college student, "Harvey's" restoration process was not foremost in my mind, but my Dad's love of cars is a trait I picked up unwittingly. Upon completion circa 1982, Harvey the fire truck went to car shows and won ribbons. But his primary mission became hauling the grandkids and their friends all over the town, ringing the bell with glee. When dad passed in 1998, his buddy from the trucking industry helped mom find an enthusiastic buyer. Thankfully, a lawyer in West Virginia wanted him, so we let the truck go and hoped for the best. When we received the news he ended up in a museum, no one paid much attention and we sort of wrote it off as some hobbyist, fire type museum. We could not have been more wrong.

This summer has been strange for all. As my husband and I headed west and passed through Michigan and the UP in our self converted cargo van, my sister was the hero remembering and suggesting we stop in and see Harvey. Stepping inside the R.E. Olds Transportation Museum was literally jaw-dropping. Anticipating a few vehicles, we stepped into one of the finest auto museums available anywhere. Hundreds of world-class vehicles superbly tell the story of what R.E. Olds and company created and the impact they had upon the world. A genuine love letter to Lansing and all those who created that past. With emotions already running high, the museum staff graciously allowed me to step behind the rope and take photos of my a lasting piece of my father's legacy. Perhaps the greatest compliment museum director Bill could have ever given to my father was to tell us that Harvey was always easy to start and runs great. Especially poignant for me was opening the running board compartment and seeing Dad's insulated lunch bag still in there. When I peeked in, the coffee thermos was not there, but a few of Mom's not quite old towels were still in there. Only the best for Harvey the 1938 REO Speedwagon Fire Truck.

Thank you for giving him an extremely respectful final resting place. Harvey is back home in Lansing.

Patti S Stirk
Loving Daughter and Car Nut



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Lansing, MI 48933
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Mission Statement

The purpose of the R.E. Olds Transportation Museum is to collect, preserve, study, and exhibit those objects that will serve to illustrate the part Lansing played in the development of transportation with emphasis on the automobile and its effect on this community and its people.

Museum Hours of Operation

Tuesday through Saturday: 10 a.m.— 5 p.m.
Sundays: 12 noon— 5 p.m. (April— Oct.)
Closed major Holidays & Mondays

Admission

Adults: \$7, Seniors & Students: \$5
Families: \$15
Members: Free
Special group rates and tours available

The R.E. Olds Transportation Museum is a 501(c)(3), non profit organization

Email:

autos@reoldsmuseum.org

Website:

www.reoldsmuseum.org

Executive Director

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Director's Corner

Greetings and Farewell,

I cannot believe it, but this may be my final letter. After nine years of serving as Executive Director and a total of 20 years with the R. E. Olds Museum, I am retiring in November. I can't begin to tell you how gratifying this job has been. I have had the pleasure of serving on the Board of Directors for 11 years, with 4 of those serving as President and Chairman.

The museum has evolved in so many ways. Nine years ago we didn't own the building or any property. Although our car collection was very good at the time. It was not the pristine collection it has grown to be today.

Over the past 9 years we have purchased the museum building, the surrounding property, a second annex building with an additional 8000 square feet of ground floor storage and an additional 2000 square feet of second floor archive storage. Best of all they are free and clear of any mortgage and are tax exempt. Both buildings are in excellent shape. The annex building has a new roof and the heating system has been routinely maintained. The museum building has a new PVC roof and the entire exterior has been tuck pointed and painted. Most if not all the interior has been painted, new lighting was installed 8 years ago, and new displays been erected. Both buildings will be good for the next 25 years with routine maintenance.

Our collection has not only grown, but the quality of vehicles are second to none. With a value of over a \$1,000,000.

None of this was possible without the strength, dedication and hard work from our volunteers. Without question the best thing about this job has been my relationship with all our loyal volunteers. I consider them all my second family, and it has been this camaraderie that has made this job so rewarding. I look forward to coming to work every day because of the positive relationships I have built.

I am very proud of all my accomplishments over the past 20 years in my service with the museum. I feel as if I have made significant improvements in the buildings, the financial status and the public awareness and history of R.E. Olds in the Lansing area. My hope is that the museum will continue to stay strong for many years to come.

My Wife Suzi and I have built a new home in Sarasota, Florida and this will be our new permanent residence. Lansing and the R. E. Olds museum will always have a special place in my heart. I am always a phone call away if you have any questions or concerns.

All the best and be safe.

Bill

Aldermen Argue For Signal Light

Refuse to Accept Traffic Group Recommendation

Traffic commission recommendations that a request for traffic signals at Mill st. and Michigan ave. be denied, met with opposition in the city council here Monday evening.

Several aldermen argued that the light was necessary to provide relief to firms located on Mill st., to enable their customers and equipment access to Michigan ave., without the usual delays caused by heavy traffic on the avenue.

The matter was finally tabled for two weeks while aldermen make investigation of the intersection in question. Merchants on Mill st. in the area had petitioned for the installation of a traffic light there.

Sidney Anger, traffic engineer, told councilmen that 25,000 automobiles pass the intersection on Michigan ave. daily or at the rate of 2,500 per hour, while the traffic coming off Mill st. was relatively light.

He explained that a traffic signal at the intersection would tend to cause traffic tieups which might extend back across the Michigan ave. bridge into the downtown area. The cost of installing a light at Mill st. and Michigan ave. would be \$3,000, which the commission thought would be an unnecessary expenditure, Anger told aldermen.

Mill Street Outlet Set

New York Central Railroad Offers Cooperation in Removing Tracks

An outlet for the south end of Mill st., to Cedar and Kalamazoo streets, will be made possible through the co-operation of New York Central rail authorities, it was revealed here Monday night.

Railroad officials informed the city council Monday evening that it would remove one of two spur tracks now running under the Kalamazoo st. bridge, to provide for a crossing outlet from Mill st.

Glenn P. Manz, director of the department of public service, said the railroad volunteered to remove the track at its own cost so that the city can establish a roadway under the bridge and across the main track to connect up with a city-owned driveway at the south end of Kalamazoo st. bridge leading up to Cedar and Kalamazoo streets.

Mr. Manz said that the railroad's co-operation will result in relieving a big traffic congestion problem which now exists at Mill st. and Michigan ave.

Mill st. at present is a dead end thoroughfare, and motor traffic using the street is forced to come back out on Michigan ave.

When the new outlet is constructed, it will provide for one-way traffic south on Mill st. under Kalamazoo st. bridge, thence east to Cedar and Kalamazoo streets, Manz revealed.

To Open Up Mill Street

Council Votes to Enter Into Contract with New York Central

City council Monday night voted to enter into a contract with the New York Central railroad which will allow the city to construct a crossing over railroad property and under the Kalamazoo st. bridge to afford an outlet for Mill st.

Aldermen said the railroad's co-operation in making the crossing possible, will tend to relieve traffic congestion at Michigan ave. and Mill st.

Mill st. which is presently a dead-end thoroughfare, will be provided with an outlet at the south which will cross New York Central tracks, then pass under Kalamazoo st. bridge to a driveway at the south side of the structure, which will carry traffic east to Cedar and Kalamazoo streets.

The outlet will be restricted to one-way traffic coming out on Cedar and Kalamazoo streets, officials said.

Councilmen also voted to allow the railroad company to install automatically-operated safety gates at the Shiawassee and Saginaw street crossings, thus eliminating the use of watchmen at the two points.



Mill street was the former name of Museum Drive. Up until 1949/50 the road only went as far as providing access to Hill Diesel (the Museum). It terminated into main railroad along Mill St. and several spur lines into the factory grounds. By October of 1949 business on Mill St. had increased to the point that traffic had become an issue. With the City refusing to put a light at Michigan Ave. an alternate exit was sought to the south. When an agreement with the railroad cleared a path, Mill Street was extended to connect with Cedar Street just south of Kalamazoo. Just when Mill Street was shorten back to where it is today is not clear.



Our newly remodeled aeronautics and war effort display area . The upgrades include a new custom built display cabinet, new knee walls and tile flooring. You also need to check out the new video that features information on Abrams Aerial and Talbert “Ted” Abrams. All of this was made possible with money donated by the Abrams Foundation.



The Ledoux-Jennings Company was an agent in Montreal Canada for Reo motor cars, trucks, and buses. By using components of REO busses they supplied the needs of several Canadian railways for gasoline motor rail car equipment from 1921 to 1923.

Their first product was Canadian National 501 (later 15811) which was used for some time on the Brockville to Westport branch in Ontario. This was a self-propelled car very much resembling the REO motor bus but equipped with railway wheels. The driving force was provided by a standard Reo bus engine.

In 1922 three somewhat improved cars, using even more REO bus components, were furnished to the Canadian National, and one car each to the Canadian Pacific and Quebec Central.

In 1923 a group of three more or less similar cars were furnished to the Quebec, Montreal & Southern. When this rail line was taken over by the Canadian National in 1929, these cars were sold to the Temiscouata Railway.

Overall, these primitive self-propelled passenger cars did not have long or successful lives. They were an early effort on the part of railways to cut expenses on sparsely used branch line services without eliminating these services. History has shown that these efforts were neither successful in the main, nor were the agencies, through which it was hoped to achieve such savings, too reliable. The rail busses did, however, represent the first inroads of the internal combustion engine into the field of revenue train operation.



43455 CNR GAS-RAILBUS #15812 PT. MANN B.C. MAY 19 1927 PETER COX COLL. - JIM PARKER COLL.



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Honoring our founder's legacy through community philanthropy

Founded in 1914, the R.E. Olds Foundation is the oldest family/private foundation in the state of Michigan. The foundation began as the Ransom Fidelity Company, founded by automotive pioneer by R.E. Olds to support his growing philanthropic efforts in his hometown of Lansing, Michigan, and globally. In 2004, the fourth generation of family members renamed it the R.E. Olds Foundation to honor the founder of Olds Motor Works and the REO Motorcar Company.

The foundation continues to reflect the philanthropic ideals of Ransom Eli Olds, and it maintains the legacy of the family name for the tri-county capital region in Michigan.

Did you know that you can also help support the Museum when you make purchases on Amazon? Go to [Smile.Amazon.com](https://www.smile.amazon.com) and select **Re Olds Museum Assoc Inc** as your charity of choice; .5% of every purchase you make on [Smile.Amazon.com](https://www.smile.amazon.com) will be donated back to the Museum! While we try to support buying locally, there are times when Amazon is the only place you can find what you are looking for. AND.... Don't worry! Item prices are exactly the same in [Smile.Amazon.com](https://www.smile.amazon.com) as on normal Amazon (but make sure to sign in through Amazon Smile)!

