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## Editorial Leadership

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Jim Alexander has researched and written many articles on railroad history and museum operation, including a number of editorials such as those below. He has also served as Associate and Contributing Editor of this publication.

### **What We Have or What We Do?** April 2002 by Jim Alexander

President, Friends of the Railroad Museum

WHAT'S THE KEY TO THE RAILROAD MUSEUM'S FUTURE SUCCESS? Our great collection of railroad equipment and materials, or what we do to address the needs of our visitors and clientele?

The answer is clear -- both! Let's see what the challenges are.

#### **Saving and Collecting**

For several decades, the FRM has worked with the Museum to continue collecting truly priceless locomotives and related materials that represent railroad history at its best. We have put our money and efforts where our hearts lie.

Now, it appears that there's not much left out there to collect. In fact, the marginal value to the Museum for each additional major equipment acquisition tends to be less and less. Why? Because to a visiting public that grew up not seeing or understanding much about trains, much of our equipment looks similar to the next piece. And, the locomotives can't tell their important stories without our help.

#### **Managing the Legacy**

Thus, the second element of our future... what we need to

### **On the Track of Progress** June 2003 by Jim Alexander

President, Friends of the Railroad Museum

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, THE FRIENDS OF THE RAILROAD MUSEUM RECENTLY COMPLETED ITS FIRST TWENTY YEARS.

#### **Since its incorporation in 1983, unimagined progress has been made:**

- Over 230,000 hours of most helpful volunteer work time.
- Countless locomotives and other rolling stock acquired, saved, painted and restored.
- Hundreds of thousands of visitors served by enthusiastic and informed FRM tour guides and docents.
- Millions of dollars raised and spent for the betterment of the Museum.
- Successful advocacy of the Museum's needs, including the construction of Steinman Station, the Rolling Stock Hall expansion, the restoration building and Stewart Junction railway education center.
- Hiring of new staff that led to our acclaimed professional education and restoration programs.
- Major progress in identifying and cataloging tens of thousands of artifacts, photographs, books and other activities in support of our research and archives mission.
- Sponsorship of respected history seminars and development of public programs such as Trains & Troops, Home for the Holidays and other special events.

Thus the second element of our future -- what we need to do with what we already have:

- **Restore It.** Clearly, we need to restore and maintain the substantial amount of equipment we have acquired. We're making progress with our restoration shop and the professional efforts of staff, volunteers and contractors. But it will be many years before all this can be completed. Many more resources, financial and personnel, are needed.

- **House It.** As rehabilitated pieces come out of the restoration shop, they need to be protected. A roundhouse around the turntable will help, as well as providing an attraction in itself. The FRM plans to work with PHMC and the community to seek funds for a roundhouse.

- **Explain It.** For visitors to be impressed enough to tell their friends and make return visits to the Museum, we need to tell them the importance of what they see. Traditional pedestal labels and even the occasional recording player are not enough. Visitors today need:

- **Patterns, trends and relevance.** What did/does all this stuff mean to my family and me?

- **Improved physical layout of exhibits.** The implementation of the long-awaited exhibit plan will make it easier for visitors to find their way around Rolling Stock Hall, with improved vistas and visitor-sensitive groupings.

- **Opportunities to interact.** The success of Stewart Junction attests to this, but it's just the beginning of a philosophy that must permeate the entire museum.

- **Enthusiasm.** Color, excitement, challenges. We're competing with vibrant, successful other attractions. The enthusiasm of many of our volunteers who deal with visitors needs to be supported with additional personnel resources, new programs and new tools for the people of a

new millennium.

- **Expanded use of electronics.** The web, distance learning, videos, simulators. These are the ways in which the new generation is accustomed to relating to the world.

- **Enhanced access to archival resources.** Books, photographs, artwork and memorabilia need to be more readily available to researchers, with modern computer management of our holdings in place.

- Development of a positive membership management system and advanced computer services.
- Hundreds of carefully researched stories of railroad history presented in the very journal you are reading, plus an acclaimed web site.
- And lots more -- just look around the Railroad Museum!



Credit for these accomplishments goes to hundreds of dedicated members, motivated by a desire to preserve the history of railroading.

What a great combination of so many different skills, energies and contributions.

### New Challenges

One of the FRM's earliest motivations was to save rusting locomotives, and the tools often involved scrapers and paintbrushes. That need still exists. Yet over the twenty years, some interesting things occurred:

- **The railroad industry changed**, with consolidations and other actions that took it out of the public's daily observation.
- **Fewer of the Railroad Museum's visitors have actually ridden on a commercial passenger train.**
- **Television, computers, the Internet and Disneyland** have affected the thinking and expectations of our visitors.
- **Government and private funding sources** have undergone periodic stresses, placing great pressure on a Museum that must open its doors every day without fail.
- **The FRM has grown** to become an employer, a publisher of a great journal (*Milepost*), a provider of many programs and services to the Museum, the operator of a successful Museum shop and so much more.



All of this suggests that the next twenty years won't/can't be simply a repeat of the first twenty. We'll face new challenges.

To stay faithful to our commitment to aid and promote the Railroad Museum, we're planning for the bends in the track

ahead, which calls for increased deliberation on future policies, an FRM that accepts the inevitability of change, intelligently planning for growth and managing resources responsibly.



The best is certainly yet to come, and it's all because of the foundation that you have helped to build.

Congratulations!

• **Keep Up With History.** Railroading is alive and changing, and our recording of it needs to stay apace. That means watching for new(er) equipment to acquire, portraying to visitors how *today's* railroads work and pondering how youngsters think about things like Thomas. Failing to do so, we will lose relevance in our visitors' eyes, no matter how great our collection.

• **Market It.** Great promotion and development. Professional publications, organized outreach to the broader community, attracting new types of visitors and backers -- these are all essential, as is support for the impending accreditation process. We need to continue to market the great treasures we have.

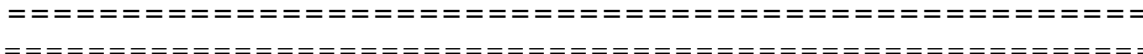
• **Manage It.** An organization that has grown to over 1,600 members, raising and spending hundreds of thousands of dollars a year for the museum, needs sound management as an integral part of the mission. It's a measure of our great progress that our business affairs now require more formal attention.

A real challenge? It certainly is, but efforts are underway on each of these fronts, and your Board of Directors is working closely with the Museum Director and staff to provide the best support possible. I encourage you to be a part of making as well as preserving history!

All this is vastly more complicated than what we had in mind in 1983 when the FRM started out, but it's this century's implementation of the mission that has guided us so well in the past -- *save the trains and educate the people!*



Jim Alexander, with Pennsylvania Railroad No. 460, dubbed the "Lindbergh Engine" for its successful race against a plane in 1927, when it set a speed record between Washington, DC and New York City, carrying the films of Charles Lindbergh's triumphal arrival in Washington following his historic transatlantic flight. Jim researched and [wrote](#) about the thrilling events of the time and their impact on American railroads.



## Helping Ourselves & the Railroad Museum

by Jim Alexander                                      December 2003  
 President, Friends of the Railroad Museum

MANY OF US SOON WILL BE PACKING HOLIDAY DECORATIONS AWAY FOR ANOTHER YEAR. You know what comes after that—gathering together financial records and thinking about the impending annual encounter with the IRS.

The New Year also brings the chance to think about where we've been and where we're headed, not only financially, but also in our trip through life. For those of us who love trains and what the Railroad Museum stands for, and also have a need to provide for future personal financial stability, we have some suggestions.

### Building a Museum Endowment

As we've preached before, the FRM needs to build a long-

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### Professional Financial Planning Available

Since this is a complex business, your Board of Directors has made arrangements with The Financial Network, a respected national financial planning firm based in Lancaster, to provide free advice on how to establish financial investments involving annuities that benefit you -- and contribute to the FRM's long-term endowment needs. It all involves the skilled understanding of IRS regulations, careful planning and partnership with a strong national provider of annuities. You'd be surprised about some short-term tax benefits, as well as future assured income from your savings.

**More to Come**

term endowment to support the Museum's world-class status. Those old locomotives may no longer be moving, but they do take money for preservation and interpretation!

### **Smart Financial Planning**

Current IRS regulations, coupled with historically low interest rates on secure savings like CDs, would seem to present a negative impact on many who have worked and saved. Actually, experts suggest that some simple and legal opportunities exist to assure you a steady income stream from your savings, plus achieving some savings on your annual taxes that can make the IRS people weep!

No, there are no get-rich-quick schemes that the FRM Board would ever suggest, but some careful financial planning can really help both you and the Railroad Museum.

[Continued in next column](#)

more to come

In coming months, we'll be presenting information and meetings at which you can hear the experts explain all this, at no cost or obligation to you. We encourage you to watch for the announcements! To start the ball rolling, we're pleased to present the following article in this edition of Milepost by James E. Connell, a respected charitable estate and gift professional.

### **With Hope and Appreciation**

The potential for win-wins is a happy note on which I personally express my appreciation for the great work of the membership as my term as President of the FRM Board ends this month. I'll continue to be active with you in the great work of this wonderful volunteer organization at this very fine museum!

*Jim Alexander*

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