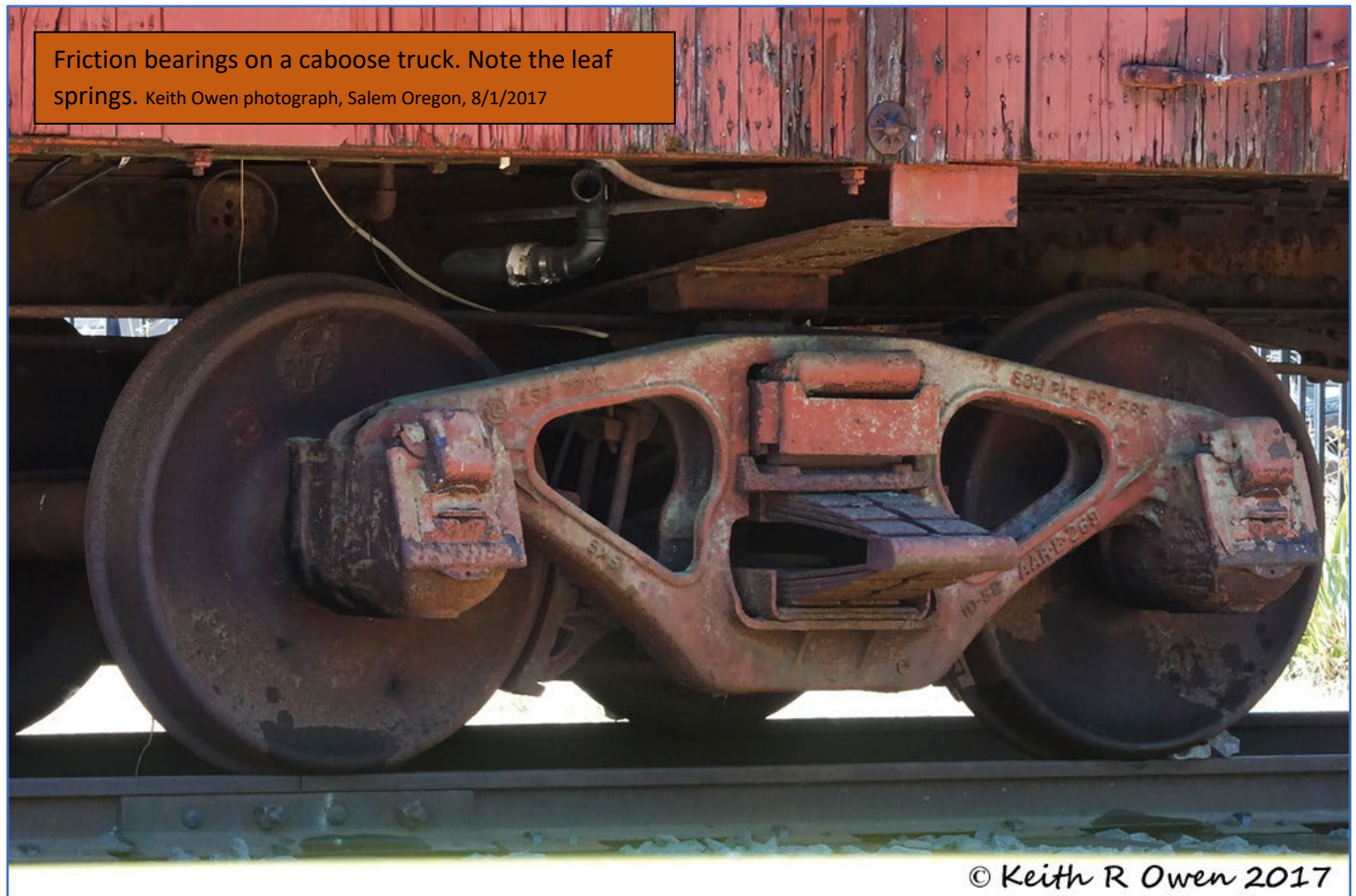


Friction



A railroad museum such as ours, at 34 years of age in May, has to have its share of scares, disappointments, and problems. All in all, we have had a terrific run, but a history of an organization that doesn't mention the not-so-good experiences would be incomplete.

It was scary from the get go when we had the first meeting to enquire about the interest in starting a new model railroad club.

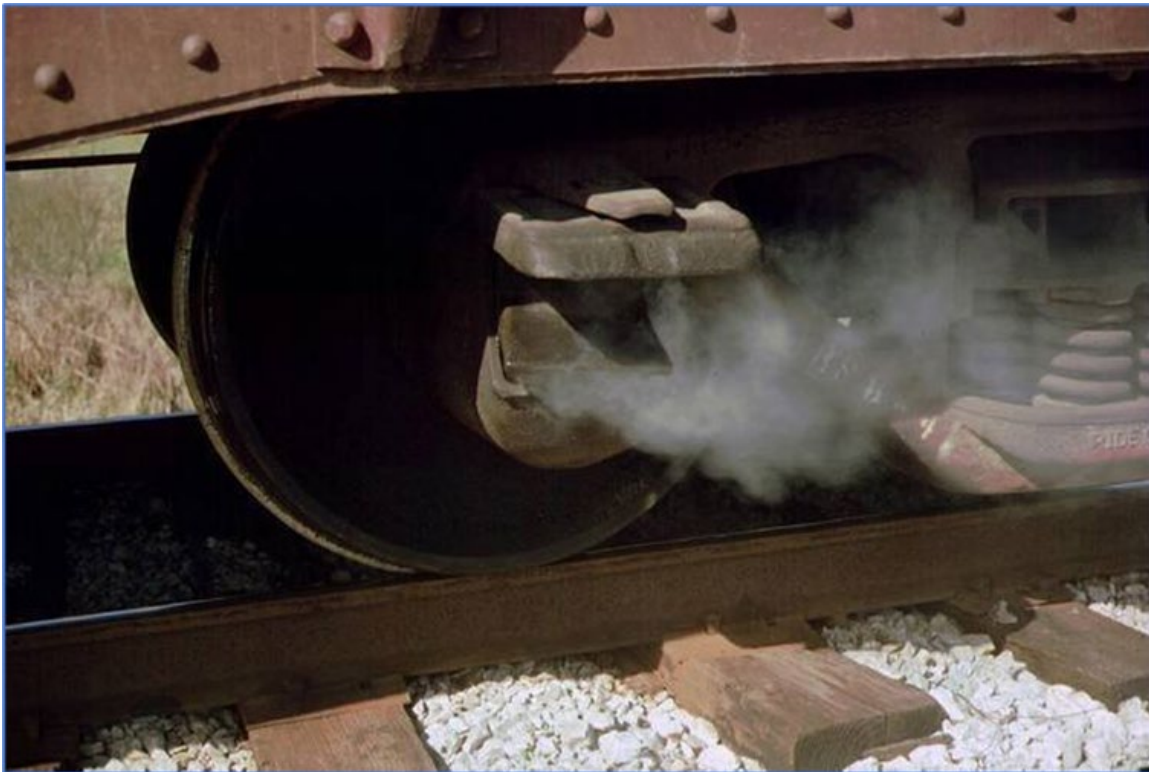
It was scary when we took a chance that we could produce custom cars that would sell.

It was scary to put on train shows that required merchants, regional clubs, and the public to support us make them a success.

It was really, really scary to see the money we invested in mutual funds for our future building evaporate during the 2008 financial recession.

It was disappointing to see our attendance and support drop off after our fifth train show. Perhaps we had exhausted the interest of the public. We and our merchants and regional clubs tried our best, but it was obvious that big public shows were not going to be profitable.

It was disappointing to come to the conclusion that our first property purchase was a big mistake. Everything seemed good; reasonable price, sufficient size, and nice location just south of the Santa Fe and Burlington Northern maze at 3rd and Roberts streets. But



no city utilities and an absurd requirement to pay \$60,000 for curb and gutter additions made it untenable. In the long run, however, we were able to sell the property to an neighboring company for a profit.

Kevin Piper Photograph

When we moved out of Western Plaza, where we had our modular railroad cozily in place, it was disappointing that a number of members left because they weren't going to be able to run trains, but only saw a future of hard work. There was no animosity, but it was disappointing, nevertheless.

Having 'gremlins' show their dirty faces at an open house has always been a disappointment.



faces at an open house has always

The decrepit Southern Pacific narrow gauge archbar truck, **below**, with friction bearings is a fitting visual depiction of our most serious past and present problem.

LOCAL POLITICS

Brian Bear photograph. Nevada County Narrow Gauge Railroad Museum Nevada City, CA. 6/26/2006.



For at least 15 years we have tried to convince the local powers-that-be that our development, growth, and potential is a valuable part of telling the story of Amarillo and its railroads. For the most part, our efforts have been ignored.

Beginning in 1992 the Amarillo Chamber of Commerce's Convention and Visitors Council, now an independent bureau, helped fund the 2nd through the 5th Tri-State Train Shows with grants that paid the rental charge for the Civic Center. These grants were greatly appreciated, but they represent the sum total of help from the city.

No doubt our leadership has been naïve. We expected to work cooperatively and in good faith with the Amarillo and Potter County leadership, but we were quickly taught

that under-the-table deals, false promises, and moneyed interests had the attention of local politicians. Our leadership has spoken at numerous city and county meetings, and we have had visits by local leadership, but feedback from them has been nil. Rather than writing down a laundry list of problems, two examples will suffice the extent of the lack of cooperation. First, the aborted establishment of the Santa Fe Railroad Museum. Second, the ongoing debacle to preserve and restore Santa Fe steam locomotive 5000, the Madam Queen, which was gifted to the city in 1957.

The Museum That Never Was

The Santa Fe Historic Railroad Museum, Inc., as a paper organization, was formed in March 2006 to “. . . create a first-class museum relating to the history of railroads and their impact on the City of Amarillo and the Panhandle-Plains.” The Vision Statement reads as follows: “The Museum strives to preserve through collections and education, the history and impact of railroads on Amarillo and the Panhandle-Plains.”

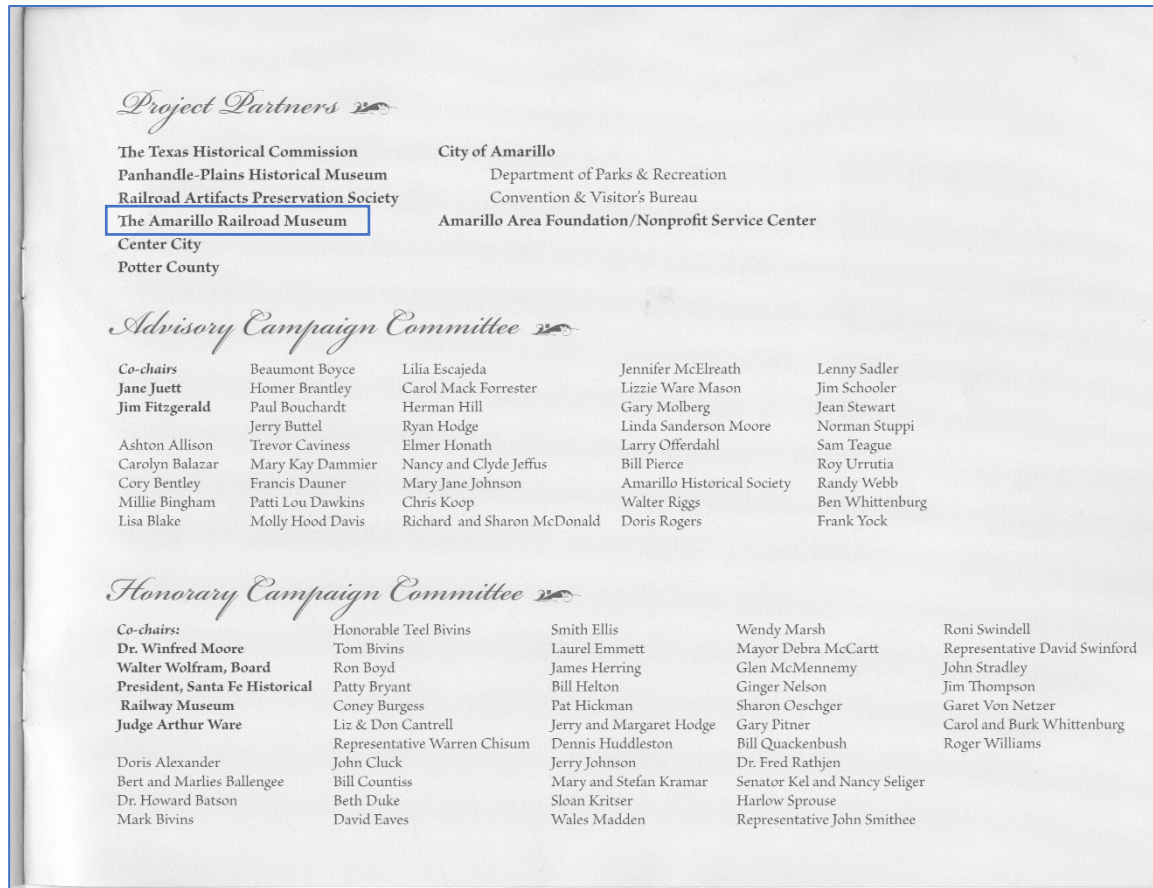
The Board of Directors consisted of:

Walter Wolfram, Board President, Sloan Kritser, Ginger Nelson (future Amarillo mayor), Dr. Fred Rathjen, Roni Swindell, C.P.A., Jim Thompson, Amarillo National Bank

Roger
Williams, Bell
Helicopter
Textron, Inc.



What is odd is that the Amarillo Railroad Museum was listed as a project partner in the brochure, but other than an invitation to a brief open house at the proposed museum location in the Santa Fe office building in downtown Amarillo, at which no business was discussed, there was no communication with any person or organization on the page pictured above other than Walter Wolfram, who was always non-comital and held his



cards tightly to his chest.

Long story short, use of the Santa Fe building fell apart, the next plan was to put the museum in the Santa Fe depot and to have Amtrak service. "Wolfram said the estimated cost of renovating the depot is about \$3.5 million. He is asking the city to kick in around \$2 million. Wolfram vows to raise the rest of through private donations."

<https://www.newschannel10.com/story/29763260/santa-fe-depot-may-become-a-museum-soon/>

The city bought the depot for around \$2.6 million in 2013. Another \$102,870 was spent in 2022 for the demolition, site preparation, security and installation of water and electrical utilities. We have not heard of any plans the city might now have regarding a railroad museum. Perhaps they have none. Regardless, we are very concerned about what happened to the donations Walter received. Before he passed in 2017, he stated, "I've got some real interesting things in there," Wolfram said, ticking off a list of items.

"We have a 1903 surveyor's transom," he said, describing the device used by surveyors to measure tracts of land. "We've got pristine paperwork, photos of train wrecks, tons of uniforms, hand tools and tons of technical journals on how you run a railroad," he said.

Where did it all go? Perhaps a hint can be found here:

<https://www.amarillo.com/story/news/local/2013/12/30/auditors-sort-out-museum-finance/13288042007/>

The Madam Queen



Delano Photograph

“On April 17, 1957, after several years of storage and 1,750,000 miles (2,820,000 km) of service, Santa Fe 5000 was retired and donated to the city of Amarillo, Texas. It was placed on outdoor static display at the Santa Fe station. In August 2005, 5000 was moved by the Railroad Artifact Preservation Society to a new location in Amarillo, 500 SE 2nd Avenue, where it plans to construct a building to house and preserve the locomotive. In July 2016, the city of Amarillo proposed selling the locomotive.”

The recent history of the efforts to preserve the Madam Queen are detailed and complex. Page upon page could be written to detail the twists and turns over the last 15 years. Too much to put down here. To get an idea of the complexities, try the URL's below.

<https://www.amarillo.com/story/news/local/2016/08/05/controversy-surrounds-trains-future/13078598007/>

<https://www.amarillo.com/story/news/local/2016/07/22/amarillo-officials-plan-sell-historic-madam-queen/13079857007/>

Interest even reached England!

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3709037/Texas-town-sell-historic-locomotive-local-preservation-society-spent-800-000-1800-volunteers-hours-restoring-train-former-glory.html>

A comment needs to be made regarding this URL and other statements regarding the Madam Queen. The URL article states:

“Texas town will sell historic locomotive after local preservation society spent \$800,000 and 1800 volunteer hours restoring the train to its former glory”

It must be pointed out that the ‘local preservation society’ is now defunct, there are no records of \$800,000 being spent, no information has been filed with the IRS. no form 990s can be found in the IRS database. Unless time spent talking about the future is considered working hours, there is no record of 1,800 volunteer hours being spent. The Railroad Artifact Preservation Society perhaps had good intentions, but the society’s vision seemed to be grounded in political derring-do and schemes that never came to fruition; e.g. <https://www.amarillopioneer.com/blog/2017/11/22/raps-new-model-railroad-project>

