

Butler Connection

Mars Train Station Restoration Chugs On!

Photos and article by
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In 1897, when the modest train station was built atop a crooked foundation in Mars, you can be certain the carpenters never thought the wooden structure would see its' way into the next two centuries.

Yet by summer 2005, the Mars Historical Society hopes to have the train station's permanent home restored. The train station was built on Marshall Way and was literally moved down the tracks about a quarter of a mile to Brickyard Road. It now sits in the evening shadow of the red caboose the society previously restored.

The move was necessitated when the society wanted to restore the station. The owner at the time, CSX Railroad, agreed

to sell the station to the Historical Society for one-dollar, but the future of the land it sat on was uncertain. The Mars Volunteer Fire Company was instrumental in the move. They sold a 1- acre parcel of land to the Historical Society for \$15,000 with great terms: \$5000 down and \$2000 a year for five years.

The station is a work in progress with volunteers showing up every Friday morning to work: sanding, painting, mending. Historical Society president John Watson invites people to stop by to help, take a look around, or drop off any type of contribution.

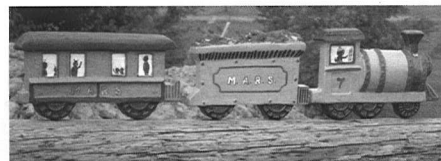
A favorite pastime of the volunteer workers is identifying memorabilia and answering visitors' questions.

"Someone will be able to answer your question - or someone will make up a really good answer," Watson chuckled. People bring various items to stump the volunteers. Someone brought weights designed to cause a bull's horns to grow in a downward direction.

"The camaraderie of the group is great," Watson said. In cold weather, two buck stoves are used to heat the station. "During coffee breaks it looks like it must have a



The Mars Train station, built in 1897, has sat witness to a century of history including the Funeral train of President Harding.



This Martian Train was created by local artist John Clutter. The little green engineer and passengers greet guests as they turn into the Historical Society's parking lot on Brickyard Road in Mars.

century ago with everyone huddled around the stove talking," he said. Watson credits volunteer Rich Ellis' wife for the good turnouts. "If it wasn't for her cooking, we wouldn't get anyone down here."

According to Watson, the interior is about two-thirds complete and credits Bill Swaney, George Lazzo, Howard Meeder, Herb Langdon and father-and-son team Cliff and Clint Atkinson for spearheading the work. He noted that Don Aiken did excavation for the site.

Fundraising for the Train Station project was led by a student at Mars Middle School, Matt Cesare, who went door-to-door collecting for the restoration. Now a high-school student, Cesare, is one of the Society's most active volunteers.

The expertise in brickwork of Ralph and Raymond Jones, both in their 70's, is being utilized in the restoration of the side-walks.

The Historical Society hopes to have the station opened and staffed by volunteers on Saturdays next summer. Anyone who wants to visit the restored red caboose can stop by on Fridays and the volunteers will open it up and answer questions. The caboose is a good example of how early railroaders lived. It features the railroad, bunks, a stove, and Mars memorabilia.

The public is invited to attend Mars Historical Society meetings at 7:30 p.m., the third Wednesday of each month, at the Train Station. For further information or to make a contribution of materials, money, memorabilia, or service, please call John Watson at (724) 625-9575. ▲



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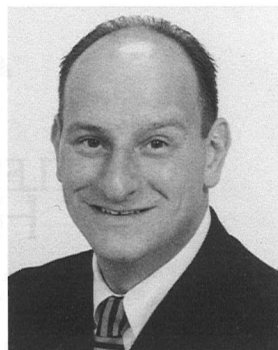


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