

PRESS RELEASE

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JAHA acquires original Johnstown streetcar

Long-term plans include restoration, exhibition

(JOHNSTOWN, Pa.) – One of Johnstown’s original streetcars has made its way home. Car 362 of the Johnstown street rail system, which ceased operation in 1960, has been acquired by the Johnstown Area Heritage Association (JAHA).

“Restoring the car is a long-term project – I expect it will take years,” said Richard Burkert, JAHA president. “It could be displayed as a museum artifact, but it’d be even better to make it an operating trolley.”

Johnstown was one of the last small cities in the United States to use streetcars, which date back to 1883, when a horse-drawn street railway with eight miles of track began operations. In 1891 the system was electrified and greatly expanded – at one point it was possible to take a streetcar all the way to Windber.

The system began a slow decline as buses became more popular and cheaper to operate. When the city went to a one-way street system the decision was made that streetcars would cease operations on June 11, 1960. The newer streetcars from the Johnstown system were salvaged and sold to European streetcar systems still in operation, but many of the 1920s-era cars went straight to museums and other collectors, including Car 362.

Car 362 was manufactured in 1926 by St. Louis Car for Johnstown, and was heavily used before its 1960 retirement. Although the car has been stored inside for the most part, it has been vandalized and is in very poor repair.

The car was most recently owned by the Fox River Trolley Museum of South Elgin, Ill., which ran out of storage space for it and contacted Scott Becker of the Pennsylvania Trolley Museum in Washington, Pa. Becker called Richard Burkert, JAHA president, to see if JAHA was interested in the trolley.

The car has been moved from Illinois to Johnstown, and is being stored in Windber at the former Berwind Rail Car Shop, which is now owned by Ed Metka.

“We’re really pleased to have this as part of our collections,” Burkert said. “It’s not exactly something that becomes available every day. It may take us awhile to do something with it, but the possibilities are exciting.”

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The Johnstown Area Heritage Association is a non-profit, membership-based organization dedicated to preserving and presenting Johnstown’s unique history to the nation through high-quality educational, cultural and recreational experiences. It owns and operates several museums in the Johnstown Discovery Network, including the Johnstown Flood Museum, the Frank & Sylvia Pasquerilla Heritage Discovery Center, Wagner-Ritter House & Garden, and Johnstown Children’s Museum. JAHA also programs regular workshops and other events for children, cultural presentations for adults, and other special events, including the AmeriServ Flood City Music Festival and the First Commonwealth Johnstown Film Festival. For more information on JAHA programs, museums and events, visit www.jaha.org.