



# FRENCH LICK SCENIC RAILWAY NEWSLETTER

March 2024 A Quarterly Publication

## Lots Of Exciting News Happening At The French Lick Scenic Railway

The first quarter of 2024 has been very busy for the railway. As some of you might have noticed while in town, we have new train cars! The cars came all the way from Miami, FL and have already been put to use on The Easter Bunny Express. The track crew has been very busy working on updates to the track. The gift shop is now open to the public Tuesdays & Thursdays from 10:00 AM EST to 2:00 PM EST, and we have added a lot of new items! More to come later in this newsletter.



## THE POLAR EXPRESS™ TRAIN RIDE

We are excited to share that we have added over 300 tickets to every ride, with our new cars and the use of some beloved cars from the past. This year marks the 20th anniversary of THE POLAR EXPRESS™ Movie, and to celebrate we are bringing back the beloved Spirit of Jasper Car 200 (Club Car) and Car 400 (Parlour Car) for the 2024 season only. We have sold out on a few select train rides. If you haven't already bought your tickets, now is your chance!

## Annual Membership Dinner

The Annual Membership Dinner will be Friday, June 14, 2024. We will start at the French Lick Scenic Railway Train Depot with a short train ride leaving at 4:30 PM EST. Dinner will follow at Abbeydell Hall (7328 W Co Rd 100 N, West Baden Springs, IN 47469) immediately after the train ride. More details to come at a later date. Make sure to check your email for updates!



## 2024 Operating Schedule

January							February						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6		4	5	6	7	8	9	10
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	25	26	27	28	29		
28	29	30	31										

March							April						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	28	29	30				
31													

May							June						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4						1	2
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
26	27	28	29	30	31		23	24	25	26	27	28	29
							30						

July							August						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7						1	2
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
29	30	31					25	26	27	28	29	30	31

September							October						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7			1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
29	30						27	28	29	30	31		

November							December						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
							29	30	31				

### EVENT LEGEND

- Valentine's Tasting Train (6:30p)
- Easter Bunny Express (11a | 3p)
- Field Trip Trains (10a)
- Scenic Train (1:00p)
- Royalty Express (11a | 1p | 3p)
- Wild West \*Cookout (11a | 3p)
- Dinosaur Adventure Train (11a | 3p)
- Summer Splash Bash (11a | 3p)
- THE POLAR EXPRESS™ Train Ride (3:30p | 5:30p | 7:30p)

### TASTING TRAINS

- Beer Tasting Train (6:30p)
- Bourbon Tasting Train (6:30p)
- Chocolate Tasting Train (6:30p)
- Tequila Tasting Train Cinco De Mayo (6:30p)
- Wine Tasting Train (6:30p)



## New Train Rides For 2024

### The Royalty Express



Join us aboard The Royalty Express, a regal event for your prince and princesses! Experience captivating live performances while indulging in a noble treat and a spot of tea, all set against the enchanting backdrop of a charming train journey. Prepare to be swept away on a magical adventure filled with royal delight!

### Beer Tasting Train

Step aboard and embark on a journey through the stunning landscapes of the Hoosier National Forest in southern Indiana, all while indulging in a delightful selection of craft beers! Our Beer Tasting Train offers passengers the chance to explore a variety of brews from local and regional breweries against the backdrop of the picturesque countryside passing by. It's a fun and immersive way to discover new flavors and enjoy the camaraderie of fellow beer enthusiasts!



This is a 21+ event that will delight any beer lover.

### Tequila Tasting Train



Step into a world of exquisite flavors and unparalleled hospitality as you embark on a journey through some of the finest tequilas and local gourmet dishes. More than just a culinary excursion, this journey is a celebration of the finer things in life—good food, great company, and unforgettable experiences.

This is a 21+ event that will delight any tequila lover.

### Wine Tasting Train

A wine tasting train excursion is a unique and delightful experience that combines the charm of a scenic train journey with the pleasure of tasting exquisite wines. Gourmet small plates, prepared by skilled chefs, are paired with carefully selected wines, enhancing the flavors and creating a symphony for the senses.



This is a 21+ event that will delight any wine lover.



## Train Depot/Gift Shop News

In January, the retail team went to the Atlanta Market and connected with vendors to bring new merchandise to the gift shop. Market has everything from new apparel, toys, scented home gifts, books, and holiday themed items. We can't wait for you to stop in and shop with us!

The Gift Shop/Depot is now open every Tuesday and Thursday from 10:00 AM EST to 2:00 PM EST. You can stop in and shop at the gift shop as well as purchase tickets for upcoming events.

## Follow Us

@Frenchlickscenicrailway



## Meet Our New Train Cars- Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU)



One of the newest additions to our fleet of railroad rolling stock is a fleet of six modern Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU) double-deck passenger cars. Standing at 19 feet 9.5 inches tall and 89 feet long, these cars feature a design that maximizes the largest envelope possible for rail vehicles in order to provide the most comfortable, high-capacity commuter rail cars available on the market. Four of the six units were built with self-propulsion and cab controls while the remaining two are simply trailer cars. Originally manufactured by Colorado Railcar between 2004 - 2008, these units were built as two sets of three cars bound for service in Miami, FL on the Tri-Rail commuter rail system. After nearly 10 years of service in Florida from 2004 to 2014, all six cars were eventually parked on a siding until 2023. We worked with the individuals who purchased them from Tri-Rail to arrange a lease-purchase option at IRM.

Although constructed nearly 20 years ago, the technology and electrical engineering that went into these cars is still considered state-of-the-art today. Fortunately, we are in contact with multiple of the original designers and engineers who created these cars, and they have expressed a high degree of interest in assisting us to bring these cars into service for our operation. While we do not have any interest in immediately returning any of the units to self-propelled service, we do not intend to remove any of the components until or unless an assessment can be made (with the help of the experts who built these cars) as to whether or not it would be feasible to do so.



The process of obtaining this equipment was not without its challenges. Initially, our team had to ensure that the cars would fit through Burton Tunnel by taking measurements and utilizing templates that represented the profile of the car. Once we determined that the cars would (most likely) fit (we knew it would be within 12 inches), we had to assess the cars in Miami, Florida. Our General Manager and Chief Mechanical Officer, as well as board members Alan Barnett and Brian Small each had an opportunity to inspect the cars prior to negotiating with the owners.

Eventually, the decision was made to relocate the cars to IRM for further inspection and analysis. The saga of shipping these cars began in mid-July 2023 by coordinating with more than nine local utility companies to have them inspect and raise their overhead utility lines, and continued until the cars were delivered by Norfolk Southern at the interchange in Huntingburg, IN on September 18, 2023.



These new cars were an obvious choice for IRM because they offered what no other passenger cars could; more passenger capacity in fewer train cars. With our extremely popular THE POLAR EXPRESS™ Train Ride operating at full capacity for nearly all of the last 14 years, and the train set filling up all of the available track space at the depot, our only option was to find train cars with more height for increased capacity. The DMU's fit the bill perfectly. Not only did we expand capacity with these cars, but we've added more scenic views with extra large curved glass windows, comfortable coach seats, ADA accessibility, and much more. We invite you to take a trip with us this year to experience the modern comfort and extraordinary views that these new-to-us cars offer. Of course, renovation work will be ongoing as we bring more of the DMU's into service.

## Maintenance of Way

While it takes many different departments, teams, and equipment to make a railroad operate, the most essential and fundamental component is the track structure and right-of-way. Without it, there would be no trains. In the simplest terms, the purpose of the track structure is to accomplish two essential functions; (1) evenly disperse the weight of trains from the wheels to the rail, from the rail to the ties, from the ties to the ballast, and from the ballast to the ground; and (2) to provide good drainage so that the track structure stays in tact. To that end, a strong track maintenance program aims to achieve both of those objectives in the most efficient and cost-effective way possible. 2023 was host to a multitude of track projects along IRM trackage, ranging from significant vegetation control to track rehabilitation and reconfiguration. In the first part of 2023, railroad maintenance contractors completed two major track renovation projects.

### Track Project #1

The first project was managed by Associated Railroad Contractors and was focused on approximately three (3) miles between MP 48.5 and MP 51.6. This project saw more than 6,000 “relay” quality ties installed, with the aim of achieving 100% in-tact cross-ties under this portion of track. After tie installation, a tamper was used to level and align the track, then followed by a regulator which spreads and levels the rocks and stone (called “ballast”). Together, all of this work significantly improved a key portion of the southern segment of our railroad used for both freight and excursion passenger trains under the Spirit of Jasper name. The end objective of this project was to significantly improve the stability and longevity of the track while also increasing the freight capacity to the industry standard of 286,000 pound compatibility. This track work was partially funded by an Industrial Rail Service Fund grant from the State of Indiana while the remainder was paid for utilizing internal IRM funds.



### Track Project #2

The second significant track rehabilitation project was managed by All Track Inc. and focused on an approximately 1,200 feet of track between MP 62.8 and MP 63.1 in Dubois, IN. This track traverses between the facilities at the Wabash Valley Produce plant. The project was a total removal and reconfiguration of the mainline and adjacent siding tracks to consolidate from four (4) tracks across a wide area, down to two (2) tracks - the main line and a single passing siding - narrowed to a tighter envelope to allow for an expansion project underway at Wabash Valley Produce. This project was funded by Wabash Valley Produce and also included a land sale, the proceeds of which helped to fund track project #1 above.



## Vegetation Management

Perhaps the most daunting task we undertook in 2023 was regaining control of the vegetation that had overtaken many lesser-used portions of our line between Jasper and French Lick. Some weeds had grown to over 6 feet tall between and adjacent to the tracks - more closely resembling a jungle than a railroad. Our mechanical, track, and operations teams worked together to trim the overgrowth by utilizing everything from chainsaws to an excavator with a brush cutting attachment. Eventually, we were able to reclaim the overgrown portions of the railroad and immediately follow up with an effective application of herbicide to stunt any further growth. In addition to the anticipated vegetation control required to tame the overgrowth, our team was faced with the unexpected cleanup of tornado damage across approximately 1.5 miles of track, centered around our North Pole site at MP 74 in August of 2023. A massive, "all-hands-on-deck" effort was launched and took nearly four days to clear the line for resumption of train traffic.



Overgrown weeds are shown nearly covering the tracks as seen during a hi-rail inspection. Photo taken by Brian Small.



Staff members Kaleb Webster, Emma Albright, and Shane Denu are working to clear limbs and branches from the tracks around MP 74.

## 2024 Track Maintenance

2024 is poised to be yet another year of significant track maintenance progress. We've already initiated several track maintenance programs such as joint bolt tightening across the most utilized portions of our line, guaging to measure for proper gauge measurements, as well as tie insertion in Crystal near MP 66.5. With the introduction of the new-to-us DMU cars, our team has acknowledged that additional preventative maintenance will be required in order to extend the longevity of our railroad. We are working to hire and train a track team of four people in order to implement a year-round track maintenance program. Our primary objectives are to further strengthen the most utilized portions of our railroad between Jasper - Huntingburg as well as French Lick (MP 79) - Gradman Station (MP 70) and rehabilitate the long disused section between Cuzco and French Lick in order to offer longer, cross-county trips capable of servicing tourist interest between Jasper and French Lick.



Track Foreman trainee, Bobby Tincher, and long-time lead track maintainer, Steve Hobson, work to insert relay ties near Crystal at MP 66.5.



Steve Hobson places a tie plate between a newly installed tie and the foot of the rail in preparation for spiking the rail.



Chief Mechanical Officer, Caelib Qualkenbush (orange shirt), and mechanic, Dave Knieriem work to replace a broken compressor on the tie crane.

## Donations & Equipment

We want to continue to express our thanks to all of the individuals and organizations who have graciously donated to our organization. Whether it is cash or in-kind donations, every contribution, no matter the size, helps us to further pursue our mission.

As a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, the Indiana Railway Museum, Inc. is a perfect place to make your next tax-deductible contribution. Our organization supports multiple full and part time staff, a vibrant piece of the hospitality industries within Orange and Dubois counties, as well as a developing cultural and historical program to enrich the railroad history in Indiana and the U.S. Our programming, spanning from weekly scenic to themed rides, to the licensed THE POLAR EXPRESS™ Train Ride event, we reach thousands of families from across the nation.

If you or your business would like to make a contribution to our organization in order to assist in the continued pursuit and fulfillment of our purpose and mission, please contact our Business and Financial Manager, Joanie Dingman at 812-307-4648 (office) or email us at [donate@frenchlickrr.org](mailto:donate@frenchlickrr.org).

***A specific need of ours is to update some of our track maintenance tools, equipment, and vehicles which will allow us to keep our track to the highest safety standards. If you or anyone you know would like to make a cash or in-kind contribution to our track department, please reach out as we are very interested in speaking with you.***

## Indiana Railroad Museum Membership & Volunteerism



Have you ever desired to find a unique and interesting way to contribute your time and talent to a local non-profit? Did you know that you can become a volunteer and learn to become a train Conductor or Engineer?

A key component to our organization's success has been the support of our committed volunteers. Whether you serve as a car attendant greeting our passengers, a volunteer train crew member, or someone who participates with projects behind the scenes, volunteer have always been a staple and mainstay of the success of our non-profit organization. The first step to becoming a volunteer is by obtaining a membership.

Membership in the IRM is available in three categories. (1) An Annual Membership is for an individual member and is continued on a yearly basis until it is discontinued by the Member. (2) A Family Membership is an Annual subscription which includes immediate family members as part of the family package. The family members have all the rights and responsibilities as an individual member. (3) A Lifetime Membership is for an individual and is valid until the member is deceased.

There are two classes of Member Categories. Each member, in any category, joins the IRM as an Associate Member. An Associate Member does not have voting rights in the Corporation. Each year the Nominating Committee may select any Associate Member(s) who requests nomination to become an Active Member. The requestor must have shown an interest and involvement in the workings and business of the railroad to be considered for inclusion as an Active Member. The Requestor may become an Active Member upon approval by a majority of the Board of Directors.

All Active Members shall be of equal rights without preference, limitations or restrictions. Each Active Member shall be entitled to one vote upon all questions coming before the Active Membership. Any Active Member shall be eligible to hold office in the Corporation.



## Meet the Board of Directors

**Ralph Baker:** Ralph joined the IRM in 1973 in Greensburg, soon became a Board Member and then relocated with the IRM to French Lick in 1977. After working on (mostly) locomotives and especially steam locomotives at IRM, Ralph had the opportunity to join Amtrak (Beech Grove) as an electrician in 1979. Ralph retired in 2012 as a Senior Locomotive Technician attached to Engineering. He has been a Board Member for nearly 50 years.

**G. Alan Barnett:** Alan joined the IRM in 1962 and has been the corporate face of the IRM since becoming Board President in 1965. He started with the railroad in Westport and was running a steam locomotive before he could legally drive a car. He was the General Manager from 1978 until his retirement from that post in 2012. Alan's years of involvement spans over 60 years with the railroad, including 59 years as President (a position he currently holds) and 34 years as the General Manager. Alan keeps his railroad dream alive by staying active as an Engineer for both FLSR and DCRR.

**Roger Brown:** Roger became involved with IRM because his son wanted to ride on a train many years ago. Roger has been a Board Member for 29 years and is a certified Conductor. Roger has built cabinets, repaired coach seats and window sills, and provided repair welding on various items of rolling stock. Roger is a certified Conductor and has experience with past IRM steam operations.

**John Bush:** John grew up and has lived on a farm most of his life. He is a private pilot as well as a certified Conductor for FLSR and DCRR. He has served as an Engineer for the museum. He has also been involved as a track inspector, as a brush clearing and mowing volunteer and has spent some time helping out in the shop area. John started with the railroad around 2007 and has been a board member for several terms.

**Lou Capwell:** Lou has been a Board Member since 2014 and resides in Owen County. Professionally, Lou works in the exciting world of private passenger railcar management and spends much of his time traversing the Amtrak System for various clients. Additionally, he is a photography and marketing consultant both in and out of the rail industry.

**John Dolezal:** John is the current Treasurer of FLSR and DCRR. Growing up in Omaha, John spent many Sundays at the Union Pacific roundhouse with his father and uncle and so, of course, became a railfan. John discovered IRM in the '80's and has been Board Member and a certified Conductor ever since.

**Kathy Fox:** Kathy has been involved with IRM since 1996 when she met (and later married) David McClure. David was a member of the railroad from the 1970's and when he passed away in 2019 Kathy was asked to fill his remaining term on the Board. She was then elected to her own full term and is currently serving in that capacity. "Getting to know the Board and Staff is one of the great perks of being involved in the railroad. It has been very exciting to see all the positive changes since I have been around IRM."

**Brian Harp:** Brian has been attracted to railroads since his youth. Having moved into the area Brian rode the IRM excursion trip many times until finding volunteer opportunities as a signal maintainer for IRM. In 2016 Brian became involved in Operations as a Car Attendant on Polar Express. That has led to continuing involvement as a certified Conductor, signal maintainer, electrician, and mechanical and maintenance of way support. Brian's wife and daughter have become heavily involved in railroad events so his interests have become a family affair.


**Steve Kimbley:** Steve became involved with the railroad in 2008 after learning of volunteer opportunities and was elected to the Board in 2011. He is currently the IRM Vice President and is also certified as an Engineer and Conductor on both FLSR and DCRR.

**J.R. Lacy:** J.R. came to the IRM as a volunteer in 1984. J.R. is an Emergency Medical Technician and has served in that capacity for many of our special event trips. He is also a Structural and Wildland Firefighter. He is currently a certified Conductor for the IRM and has previously been an Engineer.

**Brian Small:** Brian became a volunteer with the railroad in August of 2014. Brian is a lifelong rail enthusiast and is a certified Engineer and Conductor for both FLSR and DCRR. He is a retired Civil Engineer and as such has been instrumental in track and bridge inspection and maintenance.

**Mike Stout:** Mike has been a railfan since childhood. He and his wife Jenny first rode the FLSR for their wedding anniversary in 2016, at which time he learned of volunteer opportunities at the railroad. Starting as a Car Attendant on the Polar Express, he became a certified Conductor in 2017 and a certified Engineer in 2022. He brought the role of the Polar Express Hobo to life in 2018 and has been hobbing for each Polar Express ever since. Mike has been a Board Member since 2021.

**Terry Thomas:** Terry came from a railroading family but did not work as a railroader himself. He saw an article in a newspaper about the IRM looking for volunteers. There was a mention of a steam locomotive which drew his interest and he worked as a fireman and spent some time as an Engineer prior to the Museum discontinuing their steam operation. Terry is a certified Conductor and has been the recording Secretary of the IRM for over 35 years.



# In Loving Memory

**Lonnie F. Tuell**

**July 8, 1965 — March 22, 2024**

**West Baden Springs**

**Lonnie F. Tuell, 58, of West Baden Springs, Indiana entered into eternal rest on March 22nd, 2024.**

**He was born at Paoli, Indiana on July 8th, 1965 to Lawrence and Lula Marie (Campbell) Tuell.**

**Lonnie married Pure Gold (P.J.) and she survives.**

**He was preceded in death by his Father and Sister – Mary Scott.**

**Lonnie was a 1985 graduate of Springs Valley High School, had worked for the Indiana Railway Museum for over 30 years and last worked for Meyer Distributing in Jasper.**



**First you should know Lonnie was loved, so much words can't contain it. He was always the first to help family, friends and strangers alike. He was beyond selfless and generous, and his wife and children are incredibly grateful to have had him as a husband and father. He loved trains from Thomas the Tank Engine to the real-life locomotives, which he ran and maintained while working for the Indiana Railway Museum. He also enjoyed attending auctions, collecting antique train memorabilia and spending time with family and friends.**

**Lonnie is survived by:**

**Mother – Lula Tuell**

**Wife – P.J. Tuell**

**Sons – Jarin and Hunter Gold and Ramsey Tuell**

**Daughter – Chantilly Tuell**

**Niece – Jamie Lynn Hopper**