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Perseverance was the key to train station's restoration

By MARY ANN GREIER

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LISBON — When potential contractors attended a meeting for the P.L. & W. Train Station restoration project, they walked through a hole in the wall to survey the mess inside. When visitors walked through the door on Thursday, they saw the end result of patience, persistence and painstaking attention to details — a beautiful step back in time to the late 1800s and early 1900s when the trains pulled through Lisbon carrying passengers and freight. “I wish my grandfather was here to see it,” Canfield resident and Lisbon native Harry Byers said, clad in a P.L. & W. Railroad T-shirt. His grandfather, who bore the same name, served as a conductor for the P.L. & W. Railroad, riding the rail from Negley to Lisbon and back. He noted that he also rode what he referred to as a bus, a single car which rode on the line and was placed on a giant turntable at another building within sight off Maple Street and turned around for the return trip. Byers noted that he and his father, Francis, also worked for the railroads. He worked for the Erie Railroad, with that station moved to its present site on Washington Street where it's a museum. Byers also rides the Little Beaver Creek Greenway Bike Trail on a regular basis. The restored P.L. & W Train Station will serve as a staging area for the bike trail, with restrooms in an attached building; meant to resemble the freight building. He saw what the station looked like before and said he “never thought they would be able to fix it up.” Columbiana County Engineer Bert Dawson recalled the “I Have a Dream” speech of Martin Luther King and said the project for many of those involved was a dream. The building when it was built in 1886 was somebody's dream, to build a railroad to get from Lisbon to Pittsburgh. At one point, the bike trail was somebody's dream, now reality, and the two dreams are coming together as one, with the restored train station and attached pavilion and restrooms serving as an endpoint for the trail. There's also a canoe launch near the South Market Street site, an air machine, plenty of parking and picnic tables. “We all know the quality of life we have here in Columbiana County and we would like to share that with others,” Dawson said. The building was first known as the Pittsburgh, Marion & Chicago Railroad Train Station, then became the Pittsburgh, Lisbon & Western Railroad Train Station in the mid-1890s. The trains ran until 1944, then the Columbiana County Farm Bureau purchased the property in 1945 and the station became a feed mill for many years. The county bought the property in 1996 and Dawson and company began searching for funds in 2004 to restore the building, securing a Transportation Enhancement Grant from the Ohio Department of Transportation for \$570,054. The grant could only be used for a historic restoration of a building related to travel and had to be placed on the historical register. Bob Durbin, Dawson's chief deputy engineer, said they almost lost the funding because the Ohio Historical Society didn't believe it was an old train station. Someone with an old photograph of the building with a train in front of it convinced them. He referred to the project as one surprise after another, from the funding to the discovery of the 48-star U.S. flag. State Rep. Linda Bolon, D-Columbiana, secured \$145,000 from the capital fund through the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and Commissioner Penny Traina secured \$100,000 from the Appalachia Regional Commission through OMEGA, the Ohio Mid-Eastern Government Association. Contracts were awarded to Jim Santini Builders, Tri-Area Electric, Tolson Comfort Systems and Ellyson Plumbing, with the total project cost at \$815,008. Dawson made comments about all the contractors and gave them framed photographs of the restored building, with Santini and Bill Leone of Tri-Area both present. Terry McCoy of Strollo Architects and Project Inspector Gary Merrick also received photographs and thanks. McCoy called the project a “labor of love,” giving a lot of credit to Jim Santini's crew for their craftsmanship, from the stained glass windows to the maple leaf detail in the moldings. Dawson also thanked the county commissioners, Bolon, the county Park District, Lisbon village officials and the Lisbon Chamber of Commerce, whose members provided refreshments. Lisbon Mayor Michael Lewis read a proclamation congratulating Dawson on the grand opening. Dawson also gave a nod to Community Action Agency Executive Director Carol Bretz, noting she's going to help with the maintenance. Bretz explained they'll be assigning someone from the senior aide program run by John Krotky to the engineer's office to work about 20 hours a week taking care of the restrooms, some outside work, dusting and general maintenance. Now that the project is finished, Dawson has already set his sights on another historical project: taking an old 105-foot steel bow bridge that used to be located on South Market Street and moving it to the county fairgrounds. He said the bridge hasn't been used for 50 years. mgreier@salemnews.net

Article Photos



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Lisbon Mayor Michael Lewis reads a proclamation congratulating and commending Columbiana County Engineer Bert Dawson, right, on the grand opening of the newly-restored P.L. & W. Railroad Station on Market Street in Lisbon. Dawson secured \$815,054 in grant funding for the project.