

# Pullman Train



Photo by Craig Cochran

*A pair of giant cranes lifts the vintage Pullman Dining Car from the grounds of a Missouri train yard before beginning its trip to the A Philip Randolph Pullman Porter Museum in Chicago, IL.*

**T**he historic link between labor and the civil rights movement was renewed recently when the Machinists Union and the A. Philip Randolph Pullman Porter Museum joined forces to acquire a vintage rail car

for a "Living History" exhibit to honor the legendary Pullman Porters.

During the so-called golden age of rail travel, Pullman Porters worked as valets and attendants in cars built and operated by railroad baron George Pullman.

In 1937, the porters,

under the leadership of A. Philip Randolph, overcame tremendous obstacles to become the first black labor union to win a collective bargaining agreement with a major U.S. corporation.

The search for a vintage Pullman car that could be restored and opened to the public as an educational exhibit began last August during the seventh annual "Honoring the Brotherhood" ceremony on the museum's grounds in Chicago.

International President

*Cutting torches freed the wheels of the 56-year old car built less than a mile from the museum grounds where it will serve as a "Living History" exhibit honoring Pullman Porters.*



Photo by Craig Cochran

# To Ride Again

Tom Buffenbarger and museum founder Lyn Hughes discussed the proposal in great detail. Before the weekend was over, the idea was a step closer to reality.

The IAM would join the search to find a Pullman car for the museum, pledged President Buffenbarger. "We'll issue a call for help among our rail members and, if one exists and if it's for sale, we'll do what we can to get it on the grounds of this worthy museum."

## A Part of Labor History

The name Pullman is a part of U.S. labor history as far back as the 1870's. In the early days of rail, company founder George Pullman built the world's first industrial community. Workers from the nearby Pullman train yards and foundries could live in comfort and conditions very unlike the teeming slums of nearby Chicago.

The utopian idea quickly crumbled following the depression of 1894 and the experiment named Pullman became just one more company town where workers fought back, turning to unions for the dignity and respect previously denied them.

In the years that followed, the company's passenger cars, sleepers and

dining cars continued to roll behind nearly every locomotive in the U.S. The last Pullman rail car was built in 1958. The factory later closed despite a bitter struggle by unionized workers to keep the facility operating.

## All Aboard the Internet?

From his office in Chicago, Ron Watkins, the director of business development for the museum, began searching for a

on hard times and was about to close its doors.

Following a thorough examination by train technicians dispatched by IAM District 19 President Bob Reynolds, the car was found to be in remarkably good condition. A price was agreed to and welders set to work to free the car for the trip to Chicago.

When the restoration is complete and the dining car is joined by a companion

Photo by Craig Cochran



Heavy steel cables were used to hoist the car, which was thoroughly checked out by IAM railroad experts prior to its journey to Chicago.

Pullman by scanning the Internet. It wasn't long before he was talking with the owner of a small train museum in Springfield, MO.

Yes, they had a Pullman car – a dining car in fact. And yes, it was for sale. It seems the rail museum in Springfield, like the Pullman company itself, had fallen

sleeping car, visitors to the Pullman Porter Living Museum exhibit will experience sleeping and eating in Pullman cars.

Actors will reenact the role of Pullman Porters and relate the epic story behind the storied company and the porters' impeccable manners and quiet strength.