

HISTORICAL PRESERVATION

'ALL ABOARD!' FOR DEPOT MOVE

Historic depot to gain new life as museum of Remington and railroad history

By James Ivancic

FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF WRITER

If you like speed, watching the old Remington train depot being moved from alongside the tracks off Main Street to a new home less than a quarter of a mile away was like watching a glacier move.

Still, moving day last Wednesday drew a crowd of townspeople watching from sidewalks and fields, standing, sitting on lawn chairs or atop roofs of buildings.

And it was a testament to the efforts of the crew from Ayers House Movers of Fredericksburg, the company that stepped in to do the job in place of a mover that dropped out two weeks ago.

Ray and Mary Root could breathe a sigh of relief on Friday morning when the 128-year-old depot was on its new foundation off U.S. 15 next to the recycling center.

They had beaten a "move it or lose it" deadline of midnight Thursday to get the depot off the old site. Norfolk and Southern Railroad had donated the station to the Roots' Remington Community Partnership at no cost with the understanding that the partnership would pay to move it to a site donated by the town. Other deadlines had come and gone but Thursday's was final.

And the Roots may have won over some who may have wondered if the years-in-the-making project would ever literally get off the ground.

The couple was standing by Wednesday as the depot began its move at 9:30 a.m. across Main Street, where traffic had been stopped to allow the depot to go across where it was then inched forward between the tracks and former farm co-op building.

Then it moved through a grassy area behind it, through a lumber yard, into a soggy field, over a ditch and over to the new site where the crew of five plus moving company founder Jason Ayers left the building next to the foundation at 3:30, six hours after the move started.

"He firmly believed this building was worth saving," Mary Root said of Ayers, whose company has moved other old structures, including train stations in Bealeton and Harpers Ferry.

They returned the next morning to position the depot over concrete supports positioned to fit into slots in the building foundation in place of original supports. Some remedial work was required to fix areas where Slot A didn't fit into Slot B and they returned Friday to finish the job of getting the depot resting comfortably on the new foundation.

The Roots plan to restore the depot to its 1919 appearance and reopen it as a museum celebrating Remington's history and its railroad heritage. The building sat unused for about five years. The farmers co-op stored fertilizer in it after the building stopped functioning as a freight depot.

Moving day on Wednesday was a day of "great excitement. I'm trying to keep it all in," Mary Root said.

It was a big day for those with ties to the depot.

Kermit Cubbage's dad, Paul K. Cubbage, was a freight agent in the depot for 12 years until retiring in 1967.

"I'm glad they're saving it," said Cubbage, who lives in Midland. He noted the two doors on one end of the depot. One was for white visitors, the other for black, he said.

The depot used to have a bump out in the wall so that the agent could see down the tracks.



FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF PHOTOS/RANDY LITZINGER

The 128-year-old Remington Depot slowly makes its way across town to a new location where it will become a museum of town history and the railroad. Below, the Remington Depot looks a lot different in this turn of the century photo.

Cubbage noted there was a water tower near the depot that would service the train engines back in the days when they were steam-operated.

"We both are crazy about the railroad," said his sister, Eulalie Graham, who was also there to watch. She said she and her brother used to visit their father in the depot when they were kids.

The depot served a post office function in the days before the town had a post office.

"I've been so worried about this," said architect James Tucker of Warrenton, who donated his services to draw up the depot renovation and site plans. He was present for moving day. "I've got my stopwatch," he said as he timed the move of the building across Main Street, which took less than the five minutes expected.

Before Wednesday's big move, the depot had already been lifted off its original foundation using jacks. It was placed on a platform atop wheels. A diesel engine provided the propulsion power that Jason Ayers activated using a control device. Dollies underneath the depot could be raised or lowered to adjust for the terrain.

A Bobcat would lift and move sheets of metal to position in front of the rig carrying the depot.

Going down Main Street would have been a more direct route, and smoother one, but the overhead power lines would have posed a problem and then there was the issue of the 40 tons of depot plus the weight of the rig underneath it and what that might do to the road surface.

Last week's move marked the end of Phase I of the project to repurpose the depot as a museum. Building a new foundation for the depot, the site work, moving costs, and "cleaning up any mess" cost \$123,000, Mary Root said. A federal transportation grant picked up 80 percent of the cost.

In-kind donations, like the donated architectural services, covered the remaining 20 percent.

First phase costs induced a "sticker shock" reaction from the Roots. Accepting federal dollars came with inevitable paperwork and meeting wage requirements.

Town Administrator Sharon Lee, who was there watching the move and noted "people worked very hard to make this happen. It's been a real cooperative effort."

The town will own the museum when it eventually opens. "There should be no cost to the taxpayers," she said.

The recycling site will eventually be moved and a parking area created for the museum. The Roots have already received offers of artifacts to display in it.

The restoration work and opening of the museum may be some time away, but the Roots, who are both land surveyors by profession and history lovers by interest are dedicated to seeing it through.

"Now we can begin the fun part," Ray Root said.



Rappahannock Station becomes Remington

By James Ivancic
FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF WRITER

A history of the Remington train depot prepared by the Remington Community Partnership called the building "the most popular place in town."

The depot was a gathering spot for townspeople to exchange news and pick up mail.

A station agent sold passenger tickets, arranged freight shipments, distributed mail and maintained the depot.

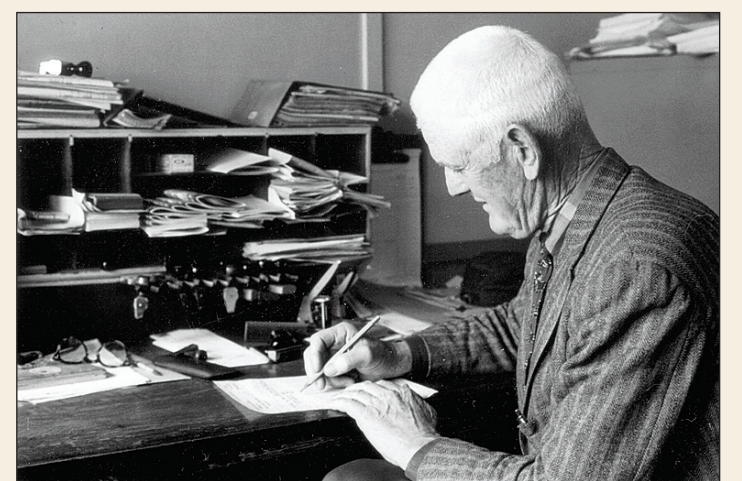
He also operated the telegraph and could pass along information to train crews.

In the days before radio communication, he would signal a train crew by using a lit semaphore

Sometimes a train crewman would just reach out and grab the paper instructions held out on a bamboo hoop. "If you didn't grab the message just right, your hand would get a painful smack

from the hoop," Remington resident Alton Willingham, a fireman for Southern Railway in the 1940s, was quoted as saying.

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF PARTNERSHIP FOR REMINGTON

Paul K. Cubbage was a freight agent in the depot for 12 years until retiring in 1967



Remington residents came out to watch the depot make the historic move.

