



Rosebud Railcar History

The Rosebud is a Northern Pacific Railroad Superintendents Coach which was converted in July 1881 from an old car sitting unused at Mandan, Dakota Territory. The car had originally been used in transfer service operations in Bismarck. It was probably named "Rosebud" at the time of conversion.

The building of the Northern Pacific railroad was responsible for the establishment of Valley City and the opening of the northern Dakota Territory for settlement. This car was used by S. R. Ainslie,

Superintendent of the Yellowstone Division which extended from Glendive to Forsythe, Montana. The Superintendents were in charge of railroad construction.

There were no living accommodations for Mr. Ainslie when he traveled to the western part of his division and he had to sleep on the ground, in old box cars or freight cabooses, so he requested a car to live in. It is said that the Rosebud was one of nine fancy cars that carried dignitaries to the gold spike ceremony at Gold Creek, Montana, the celebration of the completion of the Northern Pacific mainline on September 8, 1883. At the Barnes County Museum there is a photo of the Valley City passenger depot decorated for the arrival of NP President Villard's special train on its way for the celebration.

In March 1886 it was assigned to the Idaho Division. The car name was changed to Business Car number 1997 in December 1903. Ten feet were added to the car in 1906 to provide an observation platform. At that time the car was based at Missoula, Montana, where it was assigned to the superintendent of the Rocky Mountain Division. Steam heat was installed in October 1925.

In 1929 the car was transferred to the Lake Superior Division until May 1931. At that time, it was assigned to the Dakota Division out of Jamestown. It was considered in such poor condition at that time that after just a few months it was sent to St. Paul, MN, to be decommissioned.

Rosebud was purchased in February 1932, by John P. Reeve for \$550. Prior to moving to North Dakota, Mr. Reeve had been general manager of the LaCrosse and Southeastern railroad. The car was transported to Beach, North Dakota where Reeve had a ranch where he raised about 300 head of horses and did some farming.

Mr. Reeve was active in state politics and was elected to the State legislature in 1910, serving for one year. During the depression, he was appointed by the State Banking Board as liquidator for state banks that closed in the northwestern part of the state. He lived in Minot at this time and continued in this work for almost 20 years, helping to liquidate close to 50 state banks that failed during this difficult time.

The Reeves used Rosebud as a vacation home where they entertained many friends and celebrities from across the United States. Some were old time actors such as Fred Wright, Charlie "Shackie" Brewer, Ters Everitt, and wild animal trainer Olga Celeste. Noted statesmen also photographed at the coach included Harr Robinson, John Doyle, Cash White, Fred Miller, Charlie Ward and Martin Ellingson.

The coach is also associated with some famous Native Americans in North Dakota. Chief Drags Wolf of the Shell Creek Hidatsas, adopted Clara Reeve as a tribal daughter. A photo of her wearing her war bonnet and the ceremonial party are some of the artifacts included in the purchase of the car. Special thanks must be given to the Reeves and their caretakers, Joe and Florence Pesha, who inherited the car after the Reeves' deaths, for maintaining the car.

The Barnes County Historical Society acquired the car in 1999. In October of that year, a group from Valley City went out and packed and inventoried all of the removable artifacts. They were moved them to the museum for safe keeping. In July of 2000 the Rosebud was moved to Valley City.

On April 10, 2003 groundbreaking ceremonies for the Rosebud Visitor Center were held on the construction site. Construction began 4 days later. Rosebud was moved onto its special foundation within the visitor center on August 4th and the walls went up around it.



Rosebud Renovation

Renovation began on September 8th with the stripping of the asphalt rolled roofing which took a group of volunteers a week to complete. The exterior of the car was then stripped of its paint and rotted wood parts repaired or replaced. The car was in amazing condition for its age and required very little repair. Removal of one of the rotted pieces on the northwest corner revealed a window with original paint that had been covered at some point. The paint removal was done by Mike Bishop, also known as The Wood Doctor. Renovation of the car was done by **Daryl Heise of Heise Maintenance Service.**

(Photo at Left)

The roof was replaced with 40 pound canvas which would have been the material that would have originally been used. The canvas was painted with six coats of special canvas paint. Originally, it would have received over 40 coats to make it weatherproof. The car then was sanded, primed and painted to match the window that had been discovered earlier. Northern Pacific and the car numbers were then applied to the car using gold leaf. This is real gold which has been hammered to a thickness that is less than tissue paper. After the gold leaf was complete, two coats of varnish were applied.

The interior was carefully cleaned and the furniture placed back in it. It is hoped to get reproduction carpets to replace the old as it is very fragile and is falling apart in some places. White glass light shades have been found on the internet. The window shades will need to be reproduced. Two toilet hoppers for the bathrooms, the kitchen range and possibly the copper water tanks which hung from the kitchen ceiling will be manufactured and placed back in the car.