

Please Read the Following Safety Regulations Very Carefully
Follow All Directions from the Staff
We Take Annual Safety Tests.
Your Safety is our Number One Priority.

Be Aware That a Train May Appear At Any Time and From Any Direction.

This entire area is on the Main Line of the South Kansas & Oklahoma Railroad. If a train does come, make sure you move back at least 30 feet.

Do Not Approach the Train Even if it Stops.

It may move at any time without warning.

Do Not Step or Walk on the Rail or Between the Tracks.

Cross the tracks only at the designated location in front of the Carona Depot. Remember to look Both Ways and Cross Quickly.

Wear Appropriate Foot Wear. No Bare Feet Please.

Do Not Climb on the Equipment.

Enter ONLY where there are steps, foot boxes or at locations where the doors are open.

Do Not Handle any of the Track Switches or Equipment.

They can cause PAINFUL injury if handled inappropriately.

Do Not Handle Any Displays in the Depots or Museum.

Some are Delicate and could break easily.

Watch for Flying Insects and / or Nests.

They are hard to control in outdoor displays.

We Appreciate Your Cooperation and Hope that you have an enjoyable visit.
Thanks for stopping by and come back soon.

WELCOME TO CARONA AND THE HEART OF THE HEARTLANDS MUSEUM

The Heart of the Heartlands is an IRS 501c3 non-profit corporation founded in 1989 and dedicated to the preservation of the railroad heritage of the four-state region of Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas and Oklahoma through the establishment of a museum, obtaining and preservation of artifacts, educational activities, providing train rides motorcar rides, media presentations and a library of printed and visual materials.

The rail line you see was built in 1886 by the Missouri Pacific Railroad (MoPac) to tap the coal mining region of Kansas and Missouri and was known as the Pittsburg Subdivision. Folsom which is now known as Carona was established in 1886 by the MoPac and once had a population of 1,000. The MoPac was later purchased by the Union Pacific who then sold the line from Coffeyville, KS to near Nevada, MO to the South East Kansas Railroad (SEKR) in 1987.

The SEKR is the first short line railroad created by Watco Companies LLC of Pittsburg, KS, founded by Dick Webb in 1983 it has become the largest privately owned short line transportation company in North America and is still owned by the Webb family. The track is now operated by the South Kansas & Oklahoma Railroad (SKOL) which runs west to Wichita, KS, south to Tulsa, OK and east to Liberal, MO. It connects with two other Watco railroads which stretch through Oklahoma City into southwest Oklahoma and across Kansas to Colorado. It is a very active railroad that hauls a mix of coal, rock, sand, steel, cement, liquid fertilizer, petroleum products and grain.

The Webb Family Railroad Heritage and Educational Center

The 30 x70 pre-engineered building was initially constructed in spring 2003, to house items that deal with the history of the railroads in the four-state region. Construction was completed on another 30 x70 addition in 2014 to house a library, media center, additional artifacts and a large meeting area.

One of the most unique displays in the Webb Center is a collection of wooden model steam locomotives by John Downs of Council Grove, KS - most of which were built after his 75th birthday. Restrooms and a gift shop are also included in the facility which is named in honor of the Webb Family of Pittsburg, KS owners of Watco Companies, LLC.

Empire Locomotive

This yellow and black engine was built by the Whitcomb Locomotive Company of Rochelle, IL, a subsidiary of the Baldwin-Lima-Hamilton Corporation in 1952 as a class 35DM27, Serial No. 40741 40 ton 0-4-0 diesel hydraulic switch engine for the Empire District Electric Company's power plant at Riverton, KS. It was used to move one or two cars of coal around as needed. It was later transferred to the Asbury, MO power plant until it was retired and donated to the Heartlands in 2015.

KCS #1023

The 1023 was built in 1906 as a 2-8-0 consolidation type #488 for the Kansas City Southern Railroad (KCS) by the American Locomotive Company (Alco) of Pittsburgh, PA. Used in freight service over the hilly Ozarks terrain until larger locomotives replaced it the locomotive was then rebuilt in the Pittsburg, KS shops to a 0-8-0 switch engine #1023 in December 1925. After service in several locations, including Pittsburg, Shreveport, LA; and Kansas City, it was retired and donated to Pittsburg, KS on October 11, 1955. Through the enthusiastic support of W. B. Johnson, Superintendent of Machinery, KCS Railroad, it was moved to Schlanger Park in Pittsburg where it was displayed until it was donated to the Heart of the Heartlands in December 2011.

Carona Depot

This former Missouri Pacific depot was originally located on the opposite side of the tracks to the west in 1886. It was near a wooden water tank and a lake that were used to provide water for steam engines. The building was moved north of the present site near the crossing of the Northeast Oklahoma Railroad and reconstructed in 1942 using salvaged material from the original building due to shortages during World War II. It was sold to the John Thompson family in 1959 and moved to their farm on the northwest corner of NW 20th and K102 and used for hay storage. The Thompson family donated the building was moved to its present site and restored by the Heartlands. In 2013, the restoration was dedicated in memory of the late John David Spahn, one of the founding members and whose idea it was to acquire the depot.

SEK Caboose #1716

This bay window caboose was built in April 1964 for the Southern Pacific Railroad and was purchased in 1990 by several individuals then painted for the South East Kansas Railroad. It is on long-term loan and usually open for tours.

Missouri Pacific #3001 Locomotive

The small black engine near the 1716 Caboose was built in 1932 by the Plymouth Locomotive Works for the Missouri Pacific Railroad and is the oldest internal combustion engine used by the MoPac still in existence. The engine uses a chain drive and manual clutch transmission from the engine to the wheels. It saw service at industries located in Louisiana and Kansas City. Retired in 1960 it was purchased by the Mackie Clemens Coal Company where it was used at Mine #22 near Mulberry, KS. When the mine was closed in 1997 they donated it to the Heartlands.

Railroad Signals

Located on the grounds are various railroad signals used to control train movements. There are also signals that were used to alert public motor vehicle drivers at railroad grade crossings of approaching trains. All of the signals on the grounds cover a wide time frame with some being rather old and others being a bit more modern. Some of the signals came from the collection of the late Johnny Marietta, but most were donated by Watco Companies and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway.

Boston Depot

This former Missouri Pacific depot was built in 1882 and located on the line from Nevada to Carthage, MO. The Boston depot was taken out of service about 1938 and moved to the Greene family farm one mile south and one mile west of its original location. It was moved from the farm in Missouri to Carona on October 6, 2005. The building has three rooms which include a waiting room, agent's office and a freight room. All the rooms have high ceilings and large windows for cooling purposes. The depot was heated by coal stoves and never had electricity.

Motor Car Sheds

Located north of the Carona depot are two motor car sheds used to house vehicles railroad employees used when working on track maintenance. One of the sheds was located in Chetopa, KS and the other was at 11th and Broadway in Pittsburg on the Missouri Pacific Railroad that ran through Carona. Both of the sheds were donated by the Webb family.

REA Delivery Van

This 1950's Chevrolet delivery van was built for the Railway Express Agency, the original door to door delivery service. Used in the Tulsa, OK area and painted in the recognizable REA green, it was the precursor of the brown vans of United Parcel Service (UPS).

Passenger Cars

Depending on the time of year, three railroad passenger cars are located on the siding north of the Carona depot. These three cars are used to offer public train rides in communities along the tracks owned by the various railroads which make up Watco Companies, LLC. The cars were built in 1956 by the Budd Company of Philadelphia, PA as model RDC-9 (Rail Diesel Car) coaches and saw service on the Boston & Maine Railroad for commuter service out of Boston, MA. The service was later taken over by the Massachusetts Bay Area Transportation Authority who used the cars into the 1980's when they were retired.

Watco Companies acquired the cars in April 1992 and refurbished them for use in excursion service. The cars are numbered and named for Dick and Kaye Lynne Webb's first three grandchildren –Kaleigh Ann, Afton Leigh and Fallyne Marie. (NOTE: If the cars are not on the siding, they are being used for community rides in the area.)

Good Times Caboose #1990

Built in April 1970 for the Southern Pacific Railroad and retired by them in the 1980's. It was purchased by Watco in 1990 and converted at their Coffeyville KS car shop into a small business car with dining tables, chairs and a mini bar. An observation platform was added complete with drumhead. It is used for special occasions by Watco.

South East Kansas #1000 Locomotive

It was built by Electro-Motive Division (EMD) of General Motors for the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway (ATSF) December 1, 1949, as a Model F7A #218C. Rebuilt by the ATSF at their Cleburne, TX shop into model CF-7 #2542 in Nov. 1973 and was retired on January 16, 1987. Along with three other locomotives, the #1000 was acquired by the South East Kansas Railroad (the first Watco Short Line) in April, 1987. These locomotives were the first four of many locomotives which make up the Watco fleet. In 1990, it was assigned and lettered for the Osage Railroad and eventually renumbered WAMX 7104 and used in many locations. It was retired by Watco on June 18, 2009, and donated to the Heartlands. The locomotive was restored and dedicated on October 9, 2010 in memory of Dick Webb, founder of Watco and the Heart of the Heartlands.

Santa Fe Ice Bunk Refrigerated Box Car

Originally built in the 1950's for the Milwaukee Railroad, this ice bunk refrigerator car has been painted to resemble one for the Santa Fe Railway with the famous map and Super Chief logo applied. This car was originally used to ship meat, fruits and vegetables that needed to be kept cold. Chunks of ice were loaded into bunkers on each end of the car and fans were used to circulate the air around inside the car with insulated walls to keep the products cold.

Missouri Pacific Box Car #780699

A 50 foot plug door box car was built in February 1973 and assigned to move beer for the Anheuser Busch Company of St. Louis, MO. It was purchased by the Heartlands to use for storage.

Frisco Covered Hopper Car #84184

Built in November 1959 for the St. Louis-San Francisco Railroad (Frisco) as a two bay covered hopper used mainly to transport bulk cement. Later owned by the South Kansas & Oklahoma Railroad who donated it to the Heartlands upon its retirement.

Missouri-Kansas-Texas (MKT) Caboose #103

Built in May 1966 and retired by the Union Pacific Railroad (UP) in 1989 after they acquired the MKT. Later acquired by Watco who donated it to the Heartlands.

Santa Fe Caboose #999810

This Caboose is known as a cupola style and was built by the International Car Company in Kenton, OH in September 1981 for the ATSF Railway.

The caboose was the office for the conductor and was where he and the rear brakeman rode while watching the train for problems and lining switches. Many years ago cabooses were assigned to a conductor and he and the crew used them as their home when out working, sleeping there if necessary. It is equipped with a stove for heating and cooking plus a crude restroom. This caboose is even equipped with a generator and batteries for electric lights and a refrigerator. It was donated to the Heartlands by Watco and the Kansas & Oklahoma Railroad (K&O).in 2001.

Watco Caboose #2000

This bay window type caboose was built for the Southern Pacific Railroad (SP) by International Car of Kenton, OH. It was acquired and painted by Watco in 2000. It is on long-term loan to the Heartlands and is currently used for storage of passenger car parts.

We hope you enjoyed your visit to Carona. Thank you for stopping by and come back soon!

The Heart of the Heartlands would like to thank the Webb Family, the Watco Companies and its Team Members for their support throughout the years. Without them, this organization could not accomplish its mission!