

The Christmas Train

Each year, a magnificent wooden model train magically appears at the entrance to the town of Signal Mountain. This train heralds the approaching Christmas season, and is a delight for both visiting children and those local kids who never quite get enough of Santa Claus.



The Train

The wooden masterpiece was originally crafted in 2002 by **Stanley Crewe** and **Glenn Showalter**. They were both Signal Mountain craftsmen well-known for their work with the Signal Mountain Playhouse. They wanted a unique holiday decoration on Signal Mountain; one that would make the town a special destination for citizens of Hamilton County as they ascended the mountain.



For almost a decade the train was a fixture at the entrance to the town, but After Stan died ten years ago, the train wasn't erected the next Christmas season. Its customary location, just across from CVS on Signal Mountain Boulevard, sat vacant.



Above is Stan Crewe with his beloved Santa Express No. 12-25.

Early in the fall of 2012, a member of the Signal Mountain Lions club, **Phil Johnson**, issued a challenge to our club. Signal Mountain still had a Christmas train, but it had been left unprotected over the winter months for several years and had deteriorated in the inclement weather. It was no longer suitable for display.

Phil asked the Signal Mountain Lions club board to authorize the labor and funds to rebuild and restore the train to its prominent site in the park. The project was quickly approved, sight unseen. A number of Lions met in **Dick Gee's** garage that year to survey it's "deteriorated condition". It was sad to see what several winters of prolonged exposure had done to the train, but work began immediately.

With a sense of urgency, some donations and a devoted crew of craftsmen, we poured a sizable amount of elbow grease into disassembling rotting wood components. Every piece we tore apart disclosed further damage, and we manufactured many, many new components. The spectacular paint work was only one of the challenges.

The entire train could not be rebuilt for that first Christmas, but we rebuilt and painted the engine and enough cars to make it a Christmas train, and a team relocated it to James Park for that holiday season.

One year, the locomotive's large wheels and tie rods were replaced, along with touch up paint to this unit. The bottom trim was added to the station house and all trim work repainted. Another year the focus was assembling a trailer for the station house, and making the station mobile. Yet, another year, the Police Car was replaced. Each year, we make progress on replacing/repainting structural components, and new projects wait in the wings for the time and materials planned to make the train an even a greater joy. With only some confusion about ownership, storage siting and funding, the train has been returned to the grandeur of its early years.



Great care was taken to keep the design, size, and colors the same as the originals by **Mr. Crewe and Mr. Showalter**. They have been replaced by our current Lion master craftsmen, **Ken Able, Mike Hargadon and Gary Lowder**. They

are ably assisted by other volunteer Lions, but are the heart and soul of the current train.



There are always projects remaining for the train, but we continue to make progress, and each year the train is returned to James Park, a delight for kids and kids at heart.