

N.C. Transportation Museum

News Release

Contact: Misty Ebel, Public information officer
704-636-2889, ext. 233

Release: Nov. 18, 2004

N.C. Transportation Museum supporter garners preservation award

SPENCER, N.C.— Elmer Lam, the past president and current vice president of the North Carolina Transportation Museum Foundation, is receiving a prestigious state historical preservation honor.

Lam, who has served on the Foundation's board since 1990, more than 10 years of which he was president, accepted the Gertrude S. Carraway Award of Merit from Preservation North Carolina Saturday, Nov. 20 at the YMI Cultural Center in Asheville.

The Carraway award is named in honor of the late Dr. Gertrude S. Carraway, a noted New Bern historian and preservationist. A maximum of 12 awards have been given each year since 1974. The award honors individuals or organizations that have demonstrated a genuine commitment to historic preservation through extraordinary leadership, research, philanthropy, promotion, and/or significant participation in preservation.

Preservation North Carolina is a private, non-profit, statewide organization with the mission of protecting and promoting buildings, sites and landscapes important to the diverse heritage of North Carolina.

Lam was nominated for the award N.C. Transportation Museum Historian Walter Turner because of his efforts to preserve Spencer Shops, once a Southern Railway repair facility for steam locomotives and now the site of the N.C. Transportation Museum.

"The initiatives of one man have helped save two enormous railroad buildings at the North Carolina Transportation Museum in the past decade, further preserving a century-old industrial site and allowing the museum at Spencer, N.C., to gain national recognition and affiliation with the Smithsonian Institution," Turner wrote of Lam in his nomination essay.

Lam's consistent support of the museum and legislative lobbying on behalf of the site helped secure a \$4.5 million enhancement allocation from the N.C. Department of Transportation in the early 1990s for the restoration of the Bob Julian Roundhouse, completed in 1996. The 37-stall Roundhouse, once the site for steam locomotive maintenance, now houses the Museum's railroad exhibits and its collection of antique locomotives and rail cars.

After completion of the Roundhouse project, Lam began to push for restoration of the Back Shop, the mammoth building once used to do engine overhauls and major locomotive repairs. His influence led to another DOT allocation for \$6 million. Those funds allowed for the stabilization of the Back Shop and replacement of the roof, skylights and windows. When renovation of the Back Shop is complete, it will house an exhibit hall that showcases the state's chronological transportation history. The project will cost an estimated \$32 million.

The son of a Norfolk and Western Railroad worker, Lam lives in Charlotte and is retired from a career in marketing and sales for duPont.

#

The North Carolina Transportation Museum, located in historic Spencer Shops, the former Southern Railway repair facility for steam locomotives, is part of the Division of State Historic Sites, a division of the Department of Cultural Resources. The museum offers free admission and is conveniently located just a few minutes off I-85 in Spencer, N.C., and about an hour from Charlotte, Greensboro or Winston-Salem.