



N.C. Transportation Museum News Release

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THOMAS BUILT DONATES 1940 SCHOOL BUS TO N.C. TRANSPORTATION MUSEUM

High Point, N.C. – Thanks to a donation from Thomas Built Buses, the North Carolina Transportation Museum will add a new mode of transportation to its collection: the school bus. The company donated a restored 1940 Thomas Built school bus that will take its place next to other historical trains, planes and automobiles.

“This 67-year-old vehicle is an excellent example of an early school bus and is sure to be of interest to both adults and children,” said Robert Hopkins, exhibits manager of the North Carolina Transportation Museum in Spencer, N.C.

The bus was manufactured just four years after the company—then called Perley A. Thomas Car Works—switched from production of streetcars to school buses. The all-steel bus, an important safety feature in its day, features a 6 cylinder gasoline engine and has four long bench seats where children sat facing each other, rather than facing forward as they do today.

Thomas Built Buses president and CEO John O’Leary said the 1940 bus, though unsophisticated by today’s standards, was actually quite advanced for its time. “Whether manufacturing streetcars or school buses, Thomas Built has always been known for being on the cutting edge of technology and safety,” he said.

Elizabeth Smith, executive director of the North Carolina Transportation Museum, said that Thomas Built has played an important role in the history of transportation. “As our country progressed from tethered streetcars to free-moving buses, Thomas embraced the change and successfully adapted to become the largest school bus manufacturer in the country,” she said.

Perley A. Thomas Car Works was founded in 1916 and originally manufactured streetcars and trolley buses. It transitioned to production of school buses in 1936 and changed its name to Thomas Built Buses in 1972. In 1998, the company was acquired by Freightliner LLC, a DaimlerChrysler Company. Perley A. Thomas, the company’s founder, was inducted into the North Carolina Transportation Hall of Fame in 2005.

The North Carolina Transportation Museum is located approximately 40 miles north of Charlotte, N.C. on a site that was once the Southern Railway Company’s largest steam locomotive repair facility. The site features an authentic train depot, antique automobiles and a 37-bay roundhouse that houses 25 locomotives, dozens of rail cars and other exhibits. The museum receives about 100,000 visitors each year. See the Museum’s web site (www.nctrans.org) for directions, exhibit hours and special event information.

After more than 90 years in business, Thomas Built Buses (www.thomasbus.com) is the leading manufacturer of school buses in North America, with more than one-third of the market. Since the first Thomas Built bus rolled off the assembly line in 1936, the company has focused on delivering the smartest and most innovative buses in North America.

Thomas Built Buses is a member of the Freightliner Group, the leading heavy-duty truck manufacturer in North America and a leading manufacturer of class 3-8 vehicles. Freightliner LLC produces and markets commercial vehicles under the Freightliner, Sterling, Western Star and Thomas Built Buses nameplates. Freightliner is a company of DaimlerChrysler the world’s largest commercial vehicle manufacturer.

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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, www.ncculture.com.

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.