

Vintage Pullman Car Visits Paoli



Pullman car *Hickory Creek* at Paoli Station 5 June 2016. RIGHT: Detail showing 20th Century Limited logo. Photos © 2016 John O. Senior

At 2:42 pm on Sunday 5 June 2015, while crossing the North Valley Road bridge, something unusual was spotted at the Paoli train station. A long, gray vintage Pullman car was stopped on the eastbound track, attached to the end of an Amtrak train. There was only time to take several quick photos before the train departed from the station. The name of the car, “Hickory Creek,” could be seen below the windows on the side, and on the rounded end, the famous “20th Century Limited” logo was prominently displayed.

A little research revealed that the *Hickory Creek* Pullman car is owned and operated by Star Trak, Inc. (startrakinc.com), a premier passenger car rebuilding, restoration and travel firm. Their cars are conveniently based out of New York City, with easy access to the entire Amtrak system, and are available for charter excursions (visit www.luxuryrailvacation.com for more information). The following background is based on information found on their website:

The *Hickory Creek* is the only Amtrak-certified Pullman Car from the New York Central's famous *20th Century Limited*. Plush crimson carpets were used to direct people as they boarded this all-Pullman first-class train, and this use is believed to be the origin of the modern-day phrase “red-carpet treatment.”

The *Hickory Creek* was built in 1948 by the Pullman-Standard Car Manufacturing Company in Chicago for the New York Central System. The unique Sleeper/Lounge/Observation configuration by renowned industrial designer Henry Dreyfus, originally included 5 double bedrooms, buffet, and observation lounge. The lounge was divided into two sections, an upper and lower, with the upper being raised approximately 12 inches higher than the rest of the car. This area had comfortable New York club seating with oversized windows. The current configuration has four bedrooms, a kitchen and dining area with seating for eight in the lower lounge, and the rear observation lounge with seating for 14.

The Pullman companies, in various forms, operated from 1867 through 1968, initially building and operating high-quality (in some cases luxury) sleeping, dining, and lounge cars for the railway industry, and later equipment for commuter rail and subway operations.

The opportunity to experience the luxury of private Pullman car train travel is a very appealing prospect, and it is good to know that it is still a possibility.