

# Campaign to save old Alton Train Station reaching end of the tracks

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer  
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**ALTON** - Alton Area Landmarks Association President Terry Sharp warned time is running out for any chance to save the old Alton Train Station, currently still operating off College Avenue.

When the new train station opens sometime next month, the old one will be abandoned, Sharp said. His organization has been working with a Facebook group, Save the Alton Train Station, to find a way to save the building, which was built in 1926.

Unfortunately, however, the building's owner, Union Pacific Railroad, will not allow it to stay as it is due to its proximity to the tracks. Therefore, the railroad company agreed to donate it to a non-profit for a sum of \$1 with the condition that group moves it and pays for the expenses.

Sharp inquired about the cost of the move with a St. Louis-based building moving company. He asked what the cost would be to move the train station to either Gordon Moore Park or Rock Springs Park. The two are nearly equi-distant from the current location. The estimated sum of the move was \$150,000, which is not counting the new foundation required once it has found a new home. Also, both of those locations were hypothetical, for the city has not approved such a move to either.

In fact, the hypothetical move has presented Sharp, and the rest of the station's advocates with what he called a "circular problem."

"We've been working together and doing our research and contacting people," Sharp said of his partnership with the Facebook group. "Up to now, there is no plan in place. It has to be moved to be saved. It's kind of a circular problem. We have to figure out a place to put it, who will pay for it and what it will be used for. It then goes back in a circle. We don't have anything. We have no place to put it, no money to do it and no proposed use for it. It may even be too late now."

Saving the train station is important to Sharp and many members of that Facebook group due to the amount of memories stored inside of its brick walls. Sharp said people would leave for war and come home from it at that train station. He said the same of students going to college. He said the train station is a nearly-100-year-old storage building for memories.

Also, saving old train stations is an important thing to do for many towns, he said. The loss of an even-older train station shaped sort of like a locomotive near Alton's Riverfront Park is something many people still lament, Sharp said. Another train station and warehouse in Godfrey was also cited by Sharp as a missing tooth in the area's smile.

"We will always have one train station - the high speed one," he said. "But the old one is a piece of our history. It looks and functions like a train station, and it can't stay where it is. It must go some place."

Some ideas for the station include a new club house for the golf course at Rock Springs, being incorporated into the renovations at Gordon Moore Park and even being integrated into the area around the new train station. Sharp said the city has not been

"enthusiastic" regarding these possibilities, and has not done much besides writing a marketing brochure for anyone interested in undertaking the Herculean task of moving it to a new location and finding a use for it.

Anyone who has an extra \$150,000 or a good business plan for the building is invited to contact Sharp at (618) 463-5761.