## **One Pullman Sleeping Car’s Rescue and Restoration**

# **O**n March 21, 1911 the Pullman-Standard Car Manufacturing Company completed the 12 section-1 Drawing Room-1 Compartment sleeping car *Lenover*, Plan 2411, Lot 3880, for general service in the Pullman fleet. The construction of steel cars was encouraged by the management of the Pennsylvania Railroad which expressed concern over operation of wooden cars in the newly completed tunnels between New Jersey and Penn Station. *Lenover* was one in a series of eight cars all of which sacrificed lavatory space for the sake of the compartment that was squeezed into a standard 12 section-1 drawing room floor plan. Attired in Tuscan Red, the car was assigned to the Pennsylvania Railroad where it remained until being converted to a 10 section-3 double bedroom car in January 1931.

As the demand for more private room space increased, Pullman responded by rebuilding and reconfiguring many existing standard sleeping cars of the era. Sometimes the rebuilding effort was referred to as a ‘betterment’ program. As the betterment program continued some cars in various series lost one vestibule, mostly as a result of complaints about the cramped layout from the traveling public. Other series of rebuilt cars in the betterment program were those in the *Poplar* and *Clover* series.

# As for *Lenover*, the drawing room, compartment and two sections were removed and replaced with three double bedrooms. The women’s lavatory was enlarged and became the men’s smoking room and lavatory. The existing men’s lavatory became the women’s room. The rebuilding work on *Lenover* was done at the Pullman shops near Chicago and following the rebuilding the car was renamed *Villa Real*. Subsequent cars rebuilt with the same 3411 floor plan were all renamed into the *Villa* series.

*Villa Real* remained assigned to the Pennsylvania Railroad but was painted in Pullman Green with gold lettering like the rest of the Pullman fleet on January 14, 1931. However, air conditioning was in its infancy in 1931 and *Villa Real* was one of 8 (out of 36) rebuilt cars in the Villa Series that had not been so equipped. As the years wore on its non air-conditioned status made the car less desirable for travelers and railroads alike. Occasionally, *Villa Real* would make it to St. Louis for repairs and slight adjustments. A balky berth lock might be repaired at the Jefferson Avenue Yard using the Pullman staff at 21st Street. Electrical problems or heavier maintenance such as truck pedestal replacement would require the car to be taken to the Pullman Company shops on the TRRA’s West Belt a few blocks from Shreve Avenue at 5550 Bircher Street. *Villa Real* visited these shops in 1934, 1936, 1939, 1945 and 1947, for wiring work and similar minor repairs.

After the 1949 break up of the Pullman Company into separate car building and car leasing companies, the sleeping cars were sold to the rail lines and then leased back to Pullman for operation. Some cars remained unsold due to their non air-conditioned status or the undesirability of their room accommodations. These unsold cars remained in the now shrinking Pullman Pool which could provide large numbers of cars upon demand for conventions, troop movements, Boy Scout jamborees and similar large crowd functions.

In November 1950 *Villa Real* arrived in St. Louis for storage, but in February 1951 was sent to the Pullman shops at Buffalo for renumbering and assigned to tourist service as Tourist 5141. Tourist service was a term used to describe cars all of which were non-air-conditioned and utilized to provide a low cost means of transporting large numbers of people. The primary service was troop transport for the Korean War. *Villa Real* was requested by the military for troop movements to and from the Pacific Coast ports as the escalating Korean War demanded more and more soldiers. After the Presidential election of 1952 and the subsequent armistice allowed more and more soldiers to return to the United States, *Villa Real* was once again available for other assignments. They were also used to attract large numbers of family travelers and vacationers looking for inexpensive transportation to California, Florida, and Texas.

For conversion to tourist service many of the normal fittings and décor, such as carpeting, berth lights, and other items were removed. The movable walls between Bedrooms B and C were taken out, and the toilet-wash stands were removed from all the bedrooms, along with the doors opening into the hallway. The berths in the former bedrooms were sold as sections or uppers and lowers.

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After its war-time assignment the car was sold October 16, 1953 to the Wabash Railroad with *Villa Real*, now Pullman Tourist 5141, becoming the Wabash 4318. An examination of the paint on the outside of the car revealed that it had been sandblasted and repainted by the Wabash. The bottom layer of paint is Tuscan Red with white lettering that says “Wabash”. There were also the Wabash “Flag” emblems over each wheel set that indicated that it continued in regular passenger service. The car was then leased back to Pullman to continue their passenger car operating business. Pullman had little use in North America for a non-air conditioned car. So, they sent it to Guadalajara, Mexico. At the time the Mexican railroad system did not own any sleeping cars and depended upon the Pullman Company to furnish the cars necessary to operate a semblance of a rail network. The Pullman porters and conductors in Mexico were Pullman employees, albeit Mexican Nationals, who were expected to conform to the Pullman standards that were implemented company wide.

In June 1957, Wabash once again took possession of the car. It was then that Wabash converted the car into a wreck train’s foreman’s car at the Decatur IL shops. There the car was painted MoW silver but kept the same 4318 number. Wabash floor plan drawings document this. The lettering was painted Safety Red.

The wall between bedroom A and B was removed. These two adjacent bedrooms became the foreman’s office and bedroom; the wall between the Men's Room and bedroom C was removed to expand the men’s room and make room for a shower and wall lockers. Three of the sections were removed to make room for an oil burning furnace and duct work was cut into the walls and hung just under the ceiling to provide forced air heating to all areas of the car. The two windows in the toilets, the one-paired section window immediately in front of the furnace and the window from the former section were plated over on the outside. The doorway to bedrooms C was welded over with steel. The car did retain the three original porcelain sinks in the Men's room.

The car continued as a Wrecker Foreman’s Car after the Wabash merger in 1964 with the Norfolk Western and was renumbered 564318. It continued in that number until it was retired in 1994. In Norfolk and Western ownership, the car was repainted four times in varying shades of MoW light and medium green and lastly black with a silver roof. Norfolk Southern maintained the car and numbers after the Southern and Norfolk and Western merger. Another coat of black paint was applied along with the Norfolk Southern letter board and NS 564318 was applied to the side. The car was resident in several different locations about the system. In 1984 the car received a fresh coat of paint inside and out for an employee excursion special. The car interior was painted gloss white. The sides of the car were lettered ‘Santa Claus Express’ for the excursion. It retained that lettering until it was sold in 1995. In 1991 the car was in Decatur, Alabama and 1992 it was in Decatur, Illinois. The last Foreman to use the car recalls that the car was seldom used and that the two 120 gallon water tanks from the car exterior were moved to the inside roof of the Men's room to prevent freezing in the Illinois winters.

The car ended service in 1994 and was part of the auction in Birmingham, Alabama in 1995 at the same auction where the NS disposed of its entire steam passenger excursion fleet.