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FLAGLER'S ROLLING 'HOME' RETIRED IN ELEGANCE

By HAMPTON DUNN

PALM BEACH --- The bright yellow railroad coach with the appropriate name "Rambler," is quite a showpiece the way it's been painted up, polished up and renovated. But this private car of Henry M. Flagler almost ended up as a tenant farmer's cabin.

The famed Florida developer who laid progress, mile by mile, as he laid his Florida East Coast Railroad down the oceanside from St. Augustine to Key West regarded this coach as his home away from home and it was luxuriously equipped.

It was made to his specifications in Wilmington, Del., back in 1886, and cost some $70,000. Flagler and the Rambler almost were inseparable for 25 years. They shared the developer's supreme delight when he arrived in Key West with the special car coming in first. This set off a great celebration marking the overseas railroad completion in 1912.

Flagler died a year later and the Rambler didn't rate anymore. It was swapped, traded and sold between several railroads. Stripped of its splendor, the car wound up in Harrisonburg, Va., and served as a tenant's cabin on the farm of Jesse Lam. When Flagler's heirs decided to turn his beautiful mansion "Whitehall" into the Henry Morrison Flagler Museum, they searched and found The Rambler, bought it back for $1000 and a promise to move it off Lam's property, and brought it "home" to Whitehall. It's one of the most popular mementos at the museum.