

2007 Memberships

Another Year has passed and the Canadian Northern Society appreciates the renewal of its memberships.

Associate memberships are \$10.00, Full Voting memberships are \$20.00.

Please send your membership to:
Secretary
Canadian Northern Society
P.O. Box 142
Big Valley, Alberta T0J 0G0

Thank you to those of you who have already renewed, and to those of you who have included a donation towards your society's efforts.

Membership dues are an important source of fundraising for the Canadian Northern Society, and contribute to our operation of our sites—covering expenses such as utilities, insurance, and maintenance.

The Canadian Northern Society is preserving prairie heritage through its collection of heritage railway station sites at Big Valley, Meeting Creek and Camrose, the Meeting Creek grain elevator site, and unique interpretive activities and events. The society's efforts provide both community and economic benefits. Operated by volunteers, the society is a registered charity and celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2007.

We appreciate your support.

Volunteer Work List for Big Valley Station

The society is planning a work bee for Big Valley in spring 2007. Hopefully we can get a few members together for a full day of clean up and odd jobs around the Big Valley station grounds, roundhouse, and the railway equipment.

In the meantime, we are always looking for help. Some of the work that needs to be taken care of at Big Valley includes:

- ongoing cleaning and maintenance to the station building
- exterior painting of the bunkhouse and other maintenance of way storage sheds
- Hall of Fame Pavilion maintenance
- Placement of some new signage at the Hall of Fame (contact Shawn at (780) 608-0183 for details).
- repairs to the second-floor staircase in the station
- touch up paint and repairs to walls in the stairway
- spring cleaning of eavestroughs and cleaning of station garden area

If you are willing, eager, and able to help, PLEASE do so. You can work on your own—we can get you a key to the station! Contact Harry Stuber at (403) 740-9356.

Snow Plow in Retirement in Big Valley

Snow Plow ex-CN 55351 is a steel "wedge type snow plow" built in 1928 for service on the CNR by the Eastern Car Company in Trenton, Nova Scotia. Snowplows such as these were used extensively on railway networks across Canada, and while a few remain in service today, they largely have been replaced by alternate methods in snow fighting such as large self-propelled maintenance of way machines. Snow Plow CN 55351 saw service on the CN in western Canada until its retirement a few years back. It was donated to the Rocky Mountain Rail Society by CN and has now been entrusted to the Canadian Northern Society/Big Valley Historical Society for display as an additional artifact to our local railway heritage collection. Thanks to Don Gillespie and his staff at Alberta Prairie Railway Excursions who moved the plow to the Big Valley yard, built the small panel track that this item now rests on, west of the roundhouse, and arranged for the exterior repaint of the plow. We plan to apply a Canadian Northern logo, install an interpretive sign, and restencil the number on the plow this spring.

Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks to the following for their recent generous cash donations to the Canadian Northern Society: Helen Kitchen of Camrose, Shawn, Karen and Liam Smith of Camrose, Ray Taylor of Bashaw, Leslie S. Kozma of Edmonton, and Dean and Lorrie Tiegs of Edmonton.

Thank you to Harrie Pollard of Edmonton for his donation of various Canadian National internal publications dating from the 1970s and 80s for the society archives.

Thank you to Ted and Carol Rawson of Camrose for their cash donation towards the Camrose kitchen improvement project.

Sincere thanks to Cargill Limited of Camrose for their cash donation to the society.

Thanks to Bruce and Glenys Smith of Camrose for the memorial donation in remembrance of John "Pat" McKee of Viewpoint.

Thanks to Mrs. and Mr. Finn Didrichsen of Stettler for their generous annual cash contribution to the society. The Didrichsens are very loyal supporters of the society and their contributions over the past 20 years of the society's history has been greatly appreciated.

Special thanks to Harry Stuber of Big Valley for his work in getting and renewing memberships within the town of Big Valley.

Robbie Burns Night

Celebrating the 248th anniversary of the birth of the famous Scottish bard, the Canadian Northern Society's Camrose committee hosted a Burns Dinner on Saturday, January 27, attended by some 40 local members and guests. With such historic ties between Canada and Scotland—the theme for the evening was our "collective" Scottish heritage, fitting for the Canadian Northern Society to celebrate.

A secondary objective of the dinner was to create awareness of

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CPR *Holiday Train*

Breaks Three Million Dollars for Food Banks

The Canadian Pacific Railway *Holiday Train*, which has been rolling across Canada, the Northeastern and Midwestern United States since 1999, raising food, money and awareness for food banks in more than 110 towns, cities and First Nations ended its 2006 run in mid-December with final shows in Agassiz, Haney—Maple Ridge and Port Moody, British Columbia.



©L. Tiegs

CPR Holiday Train, Edmonton, December 12, 2006.

Official totals are still being tallied but an estimated 230,000 pounds of food and more than \$400,000 (Cdn) were donated to local food banks at over 70 communities in Canada this past Christmas season and, 76,000 pounds of food and more than \$190,000 were donated to local shelves in the U.S. Northeast and Midwest. In its eight years the *Holiday Train* program has played an important role in collecting more than three million dollars and over 1.6 million pounds of food to help feed North America's hungry.

For its 2006 visit to central Alberta, the *Holiday Train* rolled north out of Calgary on Tuesday, December 12, 2006, on the storied historic route of the Calgary and Edmonton Railway. Early afternoon brought the train's first stop of the day at Lacombe, where around 300 people came out and enjoyed perfect weather and a great show.

Next stop was Ponoka, where over 1000 people watched another outstanding show. All along, the CPR Police shadowed the train on the highway, getting ahead to ensure the safety of those gathered at each of the scheduled stops.

Following a stop at Millet, the visit to Leduc marked the highlight of the day. When the police tried to get to Leduc to control the crowd, they were slowed by a parade of cars that were watching the train from the highway. Nevertheless, they arrived in time to see an eager crowd of over 2500 people that were ready to party.

Finally, the train rolled in to CPR's South Edmonton terminal for one last show with a smaller, but no less excited crowd. After an evening in Edmonton, the *Holiday Train* and its crew and performers were on their way back to Calgary the next day with 4

more stops at Hobbema, Red Deer, Olds, and Airdrie. CPR generously recognized two volunteers from the Canadian Northern Society—Murray and Carol Roy of Camrose—who were rewarded with special passes from South Edmonton to Red Deer aboard the *Holiday Train* in honour of their contribution to the community of Camrose and their work with the Camrose Railway Park.

This year's performers on the *Holiday Train* were Canadian rock band Wide Mouth Mason and singing star Lisa Brokop. Their mix of upbeat songs, rocking Christmas tunes and special moments with children at each stop made for glowing reviews from more than 150,000 people between Montreal, Quebec, and Port Moody, British Columbia.

A second *Holiday Train* visited 40 communities in the Northeast and Midwest United States in support of hunger relief in America. U.S.

Camrose News

Holiday Train entertainers included: Tracey Brown, Willy Porter and Kelly Prescott. An estimated 80,000 Americans took in the spirit and magic of the fundraising events as the train with its hundreds of thousands of lights rolled through the U.S.

Since its launching, the *Holiday Train* magic, with its two trains that are each decked out with hundreds of thousands of bright lights and decorations, continues to grow as more communities request it to stop and perform. Given the enormous effort and corporate investment involved by all of those at CPR who ensure the *Holiday Train's* safe and successful operation each year, and that of the many community volunteers who participate, one can only marvel at this wonderful example of a Canadian corporation giving back to its communities.

Thank You, CPR!

Robbie Burns Continued

our society's work locally, and to raise some funds. Thanks to the work of those who put together the wonderful meal and those who participated in the program, the event was a resounding success.

Prior to a delicious dinner, the "King o' Foods"—that being of course the haggis—was piped in to the station tea room by Alex Oliver of Camrose, who together with Nansee Hughes did a great job of entertaining. Special guests included LeRoy Johnson, MLA, and Mary Durant—councillor from the City of Camrose. Dean Tiegs and Shawn Smith were co-masters of ceremonies, and Dean's excellent presentation on heraldry was well received and very informative. Thank you to Lorrie Tiegs for her wonderful job in designing the bill of fare as well as to Glenys and Bruce Smith for organizing and serving at the event. In addition, we thank Gordon Clanachan for his donation of some of Scotland's finest—an 18-year-old single malt—to the proceedings. A good time was had by all!

Although closed for the winter season, it has been busy:

The inside of the new kitchen has been completed, and changes made to the beverage counter in the Tea Room. Carol Roy has done wonders in making the new curtains for the cupboards and in decorating. The project will be completed in the spring—siding, roof and landscaping. Thank you again to Murray, Bruce, Bill, Kurt, Wayne and Ted.

Christmas—catered to one workshop and four Christmas parties. Thank you to Judy Ross and the volunteers who assisted with preparation, decorating and hostessing.

The station has been thoroughly cleaned and displays reorganized ready for the coming season.

Global TV filmed part of their piece on Camrose at the station, and there has been a lot of positive feedback. The program has been repeated several times since, which continues the positive exposure.

We are also holding the first of our series of gardening classes, which has been very well attended—an intake of 20 on the first class last week, with an additional 3 expected for the remainder of the 'Seeding' series, weekly to the end of January. 'Gardening Fundamentals' will hopefully be just as well attended in March. Gary Taylor, the master gardener who is giving the classes and workshops, was delighted at the turnout.

There are still plenty of events planned for the winter season:

I will be facilitating two workshops February 3 and 10 to celebrate First Nations Cultural History. Thank you to the Wetaskiwin District Heritage Museum who will be loaning display items. This workshop is meant to acquaint Aboriginal foster children with their roots.

The annual Victorian Valentine's Supper is planned for February 14 and will boast a gourmet meal. Lyndee Olson will play classical

guitar through the dinner.

The annual St. Patrick's Day Supper is planned for March 17, and dinner with an Irish theme is planned. Delores Schultz and Friends will provide the musical entertainment for this event.

Additionally, we are preparing and planning the children's programming. Brochures will soon be sent out to the schools. There are also amendments to the self-guided tour required since the reorganization of the displays.

Grants and donations:

Thank you to Carol and Ted Rawson for their generous \$200 donation.

Thank you to Mr. Archie Heather from Edmonton who donated his 5 uniforms from his 35 years as a trainman and conductor with CN and VIA. The uniforms date back to 1948 and are in excellent condition. He is planning to donate more items as he comes across them.

We also received \$1000 from the Battle River Community Foundation for the upgrade to the sprinklers. Publicity for this grant is happening in the next few weeks.

Other news:

Sarah Ross joins us as our new administrator. She has made a huge difference in the time I spend on upgrading and organizing administrative tasks. Thank you Sarah.

Glenys Smith

One hundred years ago, on January 20, 1907, at the peak of one of the worst snowstorms to ever hit southern Alberta, 10,000 cattle seeking food and shelter went on a stampede through Lethbridge!

On February 4, 1897, federal approval was granted for the construction of the first bridge across the North Saskatchewan River in Edmonton. The "low level bridge" would bring the first train into Edmonton in 1902, over the Canadian Northern Railway's "Edmonton, Yukon and Pacific Railway."

Train Wreck at Canoe River

by Norm Corness

A major train disaster in the west occurred 57 years ago this coming November, half a mile from Canoe River, BC. CNR *Continental* No. 2 with No. 6004 at the point met a passenger extra troop train with No. 3538 at the head end at mile 82.3 or 8 miles west of Valemount. Both enginemen and firemen were killed along with 16 soldiers on their way to the Korean War.

A combination of events contributed to the misfortune beginning with the 2.5 hour delay at Jasper to thaw out the troop train. It was a bitter cold day and consequently the steam line froze—the soldiers were freezing. After Jasper, the steam line worked well; almost too well as the soldiers felt they were in a sauna bath. They opened the end coach door that was next to the tender, since no buffer car, express or baggage, separated the coaches from the engine, contrary to proper procedure. This contributed to the scalding deaths of the soldiers.

In the meantime, running orders had to be changed and the dispatcher, Atherton, did so by notifying No. 2 of a meet at Ceadarside, 4 miles west of Valemount, and No. 4 of a meet at Gosnell, 39 miles west of Valemount with the passenger extra. As required, this order was repeated. A follow-up order went out to verify the times only this time when notifying the passenger extra, he omitted the word 'Ceadarside' and did not ask for a repeat back verification. The 3538 crew assumed both meets were at



Photo and caption as it appeared in the *Edmonton Journal*, Thursday, November 23, 1950.

Crane Untangles Crumpled Mass of Train Wreckage in Mountains

The tangle of steel that resulted when two C.N.R. trains collided head-on near Canoe River Tuesday is evident in this air view of the wreckage as railway cranes moved in to clear the tracks. The locomotives are discernable only by their larger drive wheels and by the steam that rose from their shattered boilers. Twenty were killed and 61 injured in the wreck, one of the worst in Canada's railway history. Sixteen of the dead were soldiers, part of the west-bound troop train complement that met the eastbound transcontinental head-on while rounding a mountain curve. C.N.R. officials declared the line cleared for traffic at 4:00 a.m. Thursday.

Gosnell and so passed the Ceadarside siding. If the repeat order had been received, the dispatcher would have caught the omission. This came out later in the investigation.

John Diefenbaker, later Prime Minister of Canada, was the lawyer defending Atherton, the dispatcher, and his efforts greatly enhanced his future recognition. As a result of the investigation, automatic block signals were introduced into that area, which led to centralized traffic control throughout the entire region. The engineman on No. 3538 was Harvey Church of Jasper and his body was not found until April 6, 1951, 4.5 months later, having been frozen and preserved in the snow bank.

A cairn was built, much like that at the Hinton wreck site, at mile

80.8, 1.5 miles east of the wreck site. It is accessible 6 miles south of Valemount and just down the track west across the Canoe River Bridge.

On February 28, 1914, the first Grand Trunk Pacific train arrived in Calgary. The Grand Trunk had built a branch line from its mainline at Tofield, south through Camrose, Bashaw, Mirror, Delburne, Trochu, Three Hills, Beisker, and Irricana, using a portion of the former Fort Calgary site for the location of their freight yards and a spartan passenger depot.

On February 15, 1965, the controversial but now revered new Canadian Maple Leaf flag was raised over the Dominion for the first time.

The *Canora Chronicle* is the quarterly newsletter of the Canadian Northern Society—a registered charity dedicated to providing community service through heritage tourism initiatives. The editors may be contacted through the Canadian Northern headquarters (see page 1) or directly at their home:

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