

## Alberta Historical Resources Foundation Board Visits Big Valley

Led by Irene Nicholson, Chairperson, the Board of Directors for the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation and several staffers made a quick Friday afternoon visit to Big Valley in late May, following their Board Meeting in Stettler. Shawn Smith toured the Board through the Roundhouse Park, the Hall of Fame Pavilion, and the railway depot.

"Big Valley is a very interesting community," remarked Ms. Nicolson, "I only wish that we had more time to see all of the heritage resources it has to offer." Ms. Nicolson also praised both the dedication of the members of the Canadian Northern Society and the Big Valley Historical Society in "keeping history alive" and wished us well in all of our continued efforts.

The Alberta Historical Resources Foundation is a provincial lottery-funded organization that is essential in helping preserve and maintain historic sites throughout the province. Over the last twenty years, the Canadian Northern Society is indebted to the Foundation for its continued support of our efforts. Some of the projects funded by the Foundation over the years include restoration of the station roofs at Meeting Creek and Camrose, window restoration at the Meeting Creek elevator, and eavestroughs and electrical systems at Big Valley.

*The society thanks Shawn Smith for his time to facilitate the tour.*

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to Mike Westren of Calgary, and Carl Leaman of Westport, CT, USA, for their cash donations. Mike writes that he is looking forward to the annual "Free-Mo" model railroading event that takes place each year in Big Valley. Carl recently wrote the society saying, "I really enjoy reading the *Chronicle* newsletter, and I hope that I can visit one day... Would love to see a reprint of a Canadian Northern Railway Time Table sometime— say 1917 era. Anyway, keep up the good work."

Thanks Carl, let's see what we can do!

Sincere thanks to Donald J. McCartney of Toronto and to Don Gillespie of Stettler for their recent generous cash donations.

Thank you to the Big Valley Senior Citizens Drop-In Centre for providing a rent-free venue for the Big Valley Historical Society and Canadian Northern Society Annual Potluck dinner held on May 12. A great time was had—as always—by all who attended. Even with the power outage, NAIT railway conductor trainee Jeff Reiten entertained all with his piano and banjo solos, together with our own Fran Stuber. Thanks also to Fran for her invaluable continuous assistance with organizing the event.

Thanks to the Alberta Museums Association for its annual "Museums Assistance Program" operations grant of \$1500. This is an important contribution to the society and helps offset insurance and utility costs each year.

Thanks again to Don Gillespie for his efforts to make the Meeting Creek washroom facility operational for another year. Your efforts, especially in light of the recent disappointing news on the wagon train, are appreciated.

Thanks to Ab Krauter and the Edmonton Chapter of the Morse Telegraphers for the donation of an all-capital typewriter—used in railway station service. Ab cleaned up this machine and installed a new ribbon, greatly appreciated.

Thank you to Central Agencies of Camrose for their generous donation to the society's Long-term Fund.

Thanks to Donald J. McCartney of Toronto, long-time society supporter, for his recent cash donation.

Thanks also to Fred Walker of North Battleford for his cash donation received with his annual membership renewal.

Sincere thanks for the financial donations received from Gwyn Morgan and Pat Trottier. These yearly donations continue to go towards the upkeep and maintenance of the Camrose Station and Grounds.

Thanks to the Camrose Community Band and the Royal Canadian Legion for their financial donations.

Thank you to Hollis Olstad from Edmonton, for his financial donation and for his help to prepare material on his great-grandfather, Ole Olstad, the first settler in New Norway for the Tribute to New Norway day held at the Camrose Station in July.

# Camrose News

It's been a busy and successful few months with school programs and events, and the summer's not over. Excluding the Tea Room guests (which are difficult to count accurately), we have hosted over 1450 visitors in 2007 as of July 24.

Between April and June 442 children and 93 adults from 13 different schools and kindergartens visited the station. Schools from New Sarepta, Killam, Alliance, Forestburg, New Norway, Gwynne, Roundhill, Rosalind and Camrose participated in the school and kindergarten programs this year. A number of other schools would have liked to visit, but were too late to book, as we were fully subscribed. Five schools have already booked for 2008.

The Tribute to New Norway outstripped the Canada Day Teddy Bear Picnic and the Old-Fashioned Garden Party in terms of Tea Room receipts; however, all events have been particularly well attended.

The Canada Day Teddy Bear picnic was our first major event of the summer, and the station was filled with teddy bears. Most of our visitors—young and old— brought their bears with them for the picnic. Some even took the bears for a ride on the pumper car.



The annual Old-fashioned Garden Party and Chocolate Festival was blessed with fantastic weather, and our 1920s flapper dresses were perfect for the warm temperatures!



*L-R: Carol Roy, Glenys Smith, Karina Cross and Sarah Ross in front of the new kitchen extension at the Old-fashioned Garden Party in their 1920s attire.*

The Swing Band of July played “The Charleston” and Glenys Smith was up on the dance floor teaching us all the dance. The Chocolate competition had 14 entries with variety ranging from cookies, cakes, squares and candies. It was a while before we could eat any more chocolate after that day!

As previously mentioned, the Tribute to New Norway was a particular success, partly due to the weather, but perhaps more due to so many former New Norway residents who now live in Camrose. Many people also came down from Edmonton to meet up with old school friends and reminisce about New Norway; the town, Ramsey's General Store, the school, the Community Club, and significant events in the town. Descendants of the first settlers loaned us many wonderful items for our displays, and the New Norway Community Club loaned us their scrapbooks, which dated from 1939. Copies of all the stories and pictures will be retained in our archives.

We are now preparing for the remaining summer events. In particular for the readers, the 20th Anniversary event for the Canadian Northern Society. This celebration will be held on Saturday, August 25, and all society members

are invited to the event. Additionally, we will be part of the Big Valley Jamboree parade on August 2. Our Tribute to the War Years event on August 4 and the Camrose Founders Days event on August 18 should both be busy days.

We have such generous supporters. Non-financial donations include two telegraph poles donated by CN via Dave Steiner, about 80 telegraph insulators by

Maxine and Howard Norstin, gift shop items, eight sets of Tea Room china, a braided rug for the watchmen's shed and “bubbles” by Robbie O'Riordan (our stalwart volunteer who works tirelessly to keep our gift shop looking great), manure and bonemeal for the gardens and materials for costumes donated by Glenys Smith, a CN conductor's uniform and other CN memorabilia by Shirlee Burke of Edmonton, whose father's effects these were, yet more railway memorabilia have been received from Wolf Kirchmeir in Ontario, a variety of useful kitchen utensils, some antique kitchen tools for display, and white elephant items from Charlene, daughter of our volunteers Carol and Murray Roy, marigolds and a roaster from Bill and Gladys Douglas, and a couple of history books on New Norway and the Olstad family donated by Eldon Olstad of Edmonton (cousin of Hollis Olstad, mentioned below).

We cannot end without specific mention about our volunteers. This has been a particularly busy summer, and our volunteers have been called upon much more this year to help out at the 18 schools events and nearly a dozen other events in addition to the Saturday events. We are extremely grateful to each and every one of them who answer the calls to assist. We have also had volunteers from Centra

Cam and Open Door projects come and clean the museum and in the park, and yet other volunteers come to help with the gardening. We are always looking for more volunteers, and we wish to welcome two new volunteers, Aaron Befus and Matilda Fleck.

Last but not least, our two summer students have had to work very hard for their pay this year. Penny Nelson, in her third (and final) year as a summer student, and Karina Cross, her first year, have baked, served, researched, talked, cleaned, painted, weeded, and hopefully had some fun along the way.

Sarah Ross, Administrator,  
Camrose Railway Station and Park

## New Members

*The society welcomes the following new members:*

- Jim Grieg, Trottier Trucking, The Barber Shop, Ryan Pietrucki, Chris Hennel, and Kathy and Russ Evans of Big Valley, AB.
- Don Gillispie, Terry Sisson, Stan Wesner, Stan Eikhorn, Dave Woods, and ATB Financial of Stettler, AB.
- Patty Steen of Rumsey, AB.
- Larry Klaus of Sherwood Park, AB.
- Jack Hayden of Byemoor, AB.
- Dave Armitage of Innisfail, AB.
- Jeff Ruiter of St. Albert, AB.
- Don Hoey of Sioux Lookout, ON.
- Ian Juby of Chalk River, ON.

## Happenings in Big Valley

Railroading was alive in Big Valley again for 16 weeks this spring, as the Canadian Heartland Training Railway and Northern Alberta Institute of Technology teamed up for a conductor training program, using guidelines established by the Railway Association of Canada.

It all started on April 12: four registered students, led by CHTR's senior instructor Dave Armitage, provided the initial training necessary as part of a new pilot program featuring practical, technical, and safety-related instruction. Through the co-operation of the Canadian Northern Society, these students made the Big Valley railway depot their home and instruction headquarters for the course, and had a chance to participate in the operation of trains using real-life situations over the Alberta Prairie Railway between Big Valley and Stettler.

Canadian Heartland Training Railway provides railway practical and operational training to a number of railway operators across Alberta and in the state of Minnesota. From time to time, CHTR uses the Big Valley site as well as the local railway depot for training purposes. This latest program is the first program to be offered at Big Valley in 2007, following two successful events last year. It will be followed by several smaller two to three day programs related to the railway industry later in the year.

For further information on the Canadian Heartland Training Railway, please call Dave Armitage at (403) 540-1867.

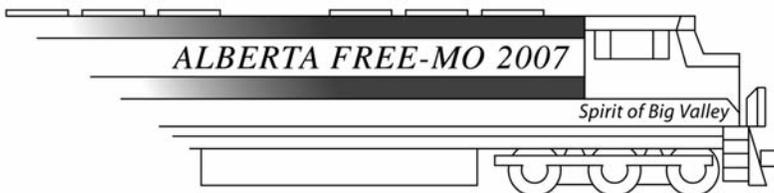
### Canadian Heartland Training Railway Open House

You are all welcome to join the Canadian Heartland Training Railway for its annual Open House event to be held at Big Valley on Saturday, August 18, beginning at 10 am to 5 pm. The open house is held in conjunction with the annual "Free Mo" model railway exhibit that is planned for the Big Valley Agriplex.

Come join the CHTR and learn about our organizations' railway training services. In addition, this is an opportunity to take a walk through Big Valley's railway roundhouse interpretive centre. A chance to ride a diesel locomotive and learn about the importance of Canada's railway industry will be featured.

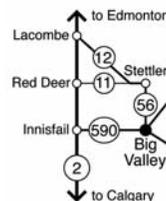
Contact Dave Armitage at (403) 540-1867 for further information.

## COME AND RUN A TRAIN WITH US!



Saturday 18 August (10-6), Sunday 19 August (10-5)  
Big Valley Agriplex, Big Valley, Alberta

FREE ADMISSION! Donations are welcome.



- Bring a DCC-equipped HO-scale train, or run one of ours!
- Bring a Free-mo module and join the layout! (Please register module by 22 July)
- Join in the Spouses' Auxiliary scrapbooking and hobby table!

For more information, or to register a module, please visit:

[www.calgaryfreemo.ca](http://www.calgaryfreemo.ca)

**Calgary  
Free-mo**



# Alberta Prairie Wagon Trains Are Back—But Not To Meeting Creek

Readers of the *Chronicle*, and folks in the Stettler—Big Valley area will know about Alberta Prairie Railway Excursions' unique venture into offering authentic wagon train trips to visitors to the area last year. Running from Stettler (via a Red Willow staging area) this delightful two-day adventure carried visitors along the scenic old Canadian Northern Railway right of way through the community of Donalda, the Meeting Creek coulees, and on to the Meeting Creek station where visitors enjoyed the heritage railway depot and grain elevator sites maintained by our society. "Interest in the trips has been strong," said Don Gillespie when discussing the venture with the *Chronicle's* editors last year.

But alas, petty politics would seem to have stopped the Meeting Creek leg of the trip for 2007. If one can believe it, there was a small and somewhat vocal amount of local opposition to the wagon tours operating on the portion of the old right of way between Donalda and Meeting Creek, despite the fact that Alberta Prairie was operating on a maintained right of way which effectively is public property, and was doing so in a professional, community-minded, and respectful manner. As a result of the opposition, Alberta Prairie was incredibly denied in its development application to the County of Camrose to continue to develop and operate the tours on the most scenic leg of the journey.

Those of us who know Don Gillespie, and understand the deep commitment of Alberta Prairie to the development of tourism in central Alberta over the years naturally are bewildered by the County's decision. It would seem that the voices of those who opposed this unique opportunity for visitors to see the area were louder than those who supported it. As a result, an opportunity to showcase Canadian Northern Society's heritage efforts at Meeting Creek to the public has been lost. We can only hope that Alberta Prairie may find a way to resume these trips in the future to Meeting Creek.

Of course if they don't—given the circumstances—who would really blame them?

## Elbow Elevator Gets New Lease on Life as a Museum

While grain elevators have become an endangered species during the past couple of decades, the resort community of Elbow, SK, has pulled together to rescue its proud Prairie landmark. Just six years shy of its 100th birthday, the last remaining elevator in Elbow has been spared. Now it's about to begin a new stage in its life thanks to a deal between its owners and the village. The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool has given the elevator to the village to use as a museum. In turn, Elbow has agreed to supply a letter of credit for \$35,000 as security for demolition and fire. It will also take over the lease from CP. It's a win-win for everyone, and residents of Elbow were quick to show their approval of the deal, says Grace McTavish, chair of the Elbow economic development committee. Within three weeks of the first organizational meeting, interested citizens paid and pledged \$45,000 as trust funds to cover the letter of credit and provide a maintenance reserve, McTavish says.

Built in 1913, the elevator was upgraded in 1957, and in 1974 a 20-tonne receiving scale and three-tonne shipping scale were added. The elevator has not been used since the mid-1990s, although trains still pass through the village regularly on their way to the Gardiner Dam terminal at Strongfield. The facility is an excellent example of the wooden elevator grain storage system. As a museum, it will serve to remind new generations the crucial role elevators played in the farm economy, McTavish says. This particular elevator provided another unique purpose in the area, she adds. "We refer to it as our 'Prairie Lighthouse.' Since the creation of Lake Diefenbaker it has served as a beacon for the sailors and fishermen as they head northeast, home towards the marina," she says. About 110 kilometres south of Saskatoon, Elbow overlooks Lake Diefenbaker. With its large marina, championship golf course and the nearby attractions of Douglas Provincial Park, the village has become a tourism hot spot. Having an elevator as a permanent attraction will add to Elbow's long-term tourism potential.

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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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Design and Layout by Whale Tail Graphics • (780) 484-4038 • [www.whaletailgraphics.ca](http://www.whaletailgraphics.ca)