



THE CANORA CHRONICLE

Canadian Northern Society—Camrose, Meeting Creek, and Big Valley, Alberta

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Volume 21, Number 3, September 2008

The *Empress*

In early May, several members of the Canadian Northern Society were treated to a ride aboard Canadian Pacific's *Empress* steam train between Red Deer and South Edmonton. This special train was travelling from Calgary to the Edmonton region to perform some community engagement work for the railway.

Canadian Pacific, as part of its community efforts, graciously invited volunteers from several communities in the capital region—including Camrose and Wetaskiwin—to join the railway for a day aboard the train. Thanks to Bruce and Glenys Smith for their help in driving the Canadian Northern Society guests from Camrose to Red Deer to meet the train, and thanks to CP for a wonderful day.



*George Wilson and Bill Stetler,
South Edmonton, May 2008.*

The *Empress* continued on page 6.

Welcome New Members

The Canadian Northern Society welcomes five new members: David Link of Edmonton, David Forster of Lethbridge, Doug Soeder of Calgary, Wells Furniture of Stettler, and Cecil Bowes of Camrose.

Acknowledgments

The Canadian Northern Society would like to acknowledge and thank the following:

- Fred G. Walker of North Battleford for his generous cash donation.
- Harry R.J. Home of Jasper for his donation in memory of Harry E. Stuber. Harry's recent note to the society included the remarks "it was an honour to have known him (Harry) and I am going to miss him around Big Valley this summer." Thank you Harry, and there is no doubt that many are missing him.
- Wells Furniture of Stettler for their cash donation towards continued development of the society's activities, and for Peter Didrichsen's efforts in encouraging interest in heritage preservation that led to this donation.
- All of the volunteers who helped the Canadian Northern Society raise funds through its date at Cash Casino in Red Deer, September 1 and 2. We sincerely appreciate the efforts of Sharon Duncan, Lynne Gjaltema, Lois Miller, Bill Smillie, Glenys and Bruce Smith, Shirley Vols, Brenda Meyer, Robbie O'Riordan, Russ and Kathy Evans, Carol and Ted Rawson, Nora Saar, Barb Skocdopole, Cheryl Bradwell, Judy Johnson, Jan Hermus, Elaine Skocdopole, and Myra Greig. Also thanks to Fran Stuber for her organizational efforts. This funding is extremely important to making improvements to all three of our society sites.
- Thank you to President Leslie S. Kozma for his donation of the 1983 local history book featuring the "hall of fame" railway town of Melville, Saskatchewan. It is now available in our society library at the Camrose Station.
- The family of Mrs. Bertha F. Smith of Stettler for the generous cash donation that will be used towards this summer's repainting work at Camrose.
- Bruce Smith of Camrose for his memorial donation for Mr. Hugh V. Campbell.
- Tim, Nancy and Cody Mugford of Lethbridge for their cash donation towards the ongoing efforts of the society.
- Doug Soeder and the Calgary Free-Mo Group for their memorial donation in honour of Harry Stuber.

Camrose Happenings This Summer

I want to begin my submission with a big thank you to all the volunteers who assisted with: baking and hostessing in the tearoom, projects, events, gardening and children's programming. These volunteers were Carol and Murray Roy, Dorothy Lysons, Bill and Gladys Douglas, Ann Reitan, Jenna Cross, Anna Erickson, Rebecca Fleury, Carlee and Kalynn Dobos, Kurt and Elizabeth Bagdan, Marion Bennet, Lesley Stoddart, Cheryl and Norm Prestage, Carol and Ted Rawson, Matilda Fleck, Cecil Bowes, Carol Farquharson, Robbie O'Riordan, Gladys Kupka, Heidi Johnson, and Hazel McClarty. A special thank you to Bruce for his relentless help in maintenance of the station, interpretation through the garden railway and tours, running of the new track car and numerous other daily tasks. Thank you to Shawn Smith, Society Treasurer, for paying all the bills, being here for consultation and paying the students. We want to also thank our summer students, Stephanie Sims and Liane Nichel. They were efficient, friendly and did a wonderful job. The Canada World Youth students, Mathieu and Dairio, painted the storage shed, the new model elevators, the push car and part of the railings to the walkway. They also assisted in the tearoom. They were really a pleasure to have around. During the month of September they will work at the Food Bank and Library until they leave for Bolivia.

The school, preschool and summer programs were very successful this year. We were unable to take all the schools who wanted to book. We programmed Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays until July and held two preschool, two summer programs for the Leisure Centre and Art Centre in July and August.

The Teddy Bear Picnic on July 1 was attended by many families and

went over well. The Old Fashioned Garden Party and Chocolate Festival did not have as many people attend as last year. 150 people attended. The week before was very rainy and cool. However, the temperature on the day of the event was wonderful and a good time was had by all. Jeppa's Train was a great success along with the wonderful music again this year thanks to Morley Riske and his swing band. A big thank you to the band members who generously donated back \$200 of their honorarium. Thank you to Sheila and Leo Girard who were here from Victoria. They volunteered at the gate and in the food tent.

Diane did a great job of organizing the Hampton District Tribute on July 26. Many artifacts and stories from the area were featured. Norwegian food and desserts were featured in the Tearoom. A special thank you to Mary Durand who also assisted Diane to put the program together. Various people told their stories to around 150 people. The Friends Band paid tribute to Dolores Schulze who was from the Hampton district and who spread her joy by singing for many years. We now have some wonderful stories in the local history section of our library as a permanent reminder of this tribute.

Founder's Day, August 16, was another great success with well over 300 people attending. Seven World Youth students helped with Joppa's Train, looked after the white elephant table, the railway safety display table, the children's craft table and assisted in the tearoom. One of the highlights of the day was the Wild Rose City Square Dancers who entertained on the outdoor dance floor from 10-11:30 am. They set a festive mood for the rest of the day. The Founder's Committee paid for the 'big top' tent that was erected on

the west side of the station. Various individuals demonstrated their artistic crafts. The Horticultural Society held the Junior Show in the tent.

Story telling took place in the gazebo between 2 and 3 pm. Heidi Johnson did a great job of role playing and telling the story of her life as Corinne David, the wife of Camille David who built the Bailey Theater. Homemade pies were a feature in the tearoom. Joppa's train ran from 1 to 5 pm. Thanks to the volunteer organizations who gave their time to make this a great success.

The Ukrainian Buffet was well attended again this year. Gladys Douglas cooked the delicious pyrogies and corn meal. A wedding was held in the Gazebo at 3 pm on the same day. Our final Saturday Buffet was a great success with many people attending. Thanks to Robbie, Dorothy, Bruce, Cecil and Rebecca the day went without a hitch. Mary Durand added humour to the day by appearing as Maxi Pearl, niece of Minnie Pearl at 2 pm.

Diane finished her time here on August 15. We have hired Janine Carolle. I am sure she will make a great contribution to the society. Welcome Janine. Janine is presently working on grant applications for upcoming projects. We also want to welcome two new volunteers; Chantell Beesley and Cecil Bowes. Chantell is working in the library. Cecil was very involved with a railway museum in Ontario and has offered to be on the board and to help with many projects. Welcome to both of these people. Donna Phillips has had a break from her project to database the library, but will soon be back. Thank you Donna.

The summer has seen generous donations. Donations are as follows:

White elephant items to the gift shop by many people. Sales have been great.

Attending their garden that will supply the Meeting Creek Festival with pumpkins, as well as carrots, potatoes and beets for the Tearoom, Carol and Ted Rawson.

Paper archives from his father who worked through Camrose donated by Laverne Wilson of Leduc.

Costumes, coal oil lantern, butter press from Lucille and David Rurke.

Two lamps and antique chair for King George Room and Board Room, 10 archival carpenter tools used by her husband Axel when he worked for the Camrose CN B&B gang from Peggy Jensen.

Track car, people mover, CN stretcher, track gauge and safety boxes valued at \$12,000 from Glen Trimble of Leduc.

Two cross-stitched pictures by Cathie Murray, framed by Carol and Murray Roy.

Large hand-crafted toy wooden drag line and truck from Lloyd Kitchen.

Many paper goods from Helen Kitchen.

One archival postcard of a mail

delivery hook device for trains and one of the first passenger trains to leave Prince Rupert. Ivan Bjornson donated three wonderful pictures of building the GTP Duhamel bridge using horses.

\$50 cash donation from Wilf and Lois Aspens, former residents of Hampton.

\$500 donation from Martha Lindsay to buy a family plaque for her family as Christmas presents.

China tea cups and saucers for Tearoom from Muriel Chamberlain and Marilyn Olson.

Quilt raffled on August 30 donated by Carol Roy. This quilt was won by Susan Rosin of Stettler.

The station is getting well known and we are looking for a casual tearoom person to help with the Tearoom during the off season for bookings and for next summer.

We are planning a Volunteer Appreciation evening on October 18. Evening festivities begin at 6 pm. Could all members please bring a salad as the rest of the supper is provided. Please put this date on your calendar.

Upcoming events:

September 27, 10 a.m., Clean up and set up for Meeting Creek Festival. Lunch provided. Car pool available from Camrose.

November 4, general clean up at the Camrose Railway Station. Lunch provided.

December 6, Cookie Walk and Christmas Tea and White Elephant Sale.

Glenys Smith



(780) 484.4038

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Alberta Railway Museum Celebrates 40 Years



On August 30 the Alberta Railway Museum in Edmonton celebrated its 40th anniversary. What a great achievement for this dedicated group that have been so successful over the years in preserving some very interesting pieces of railway equipment, including the 1913 Montreal-built Canadian Northern Railway locomotive 1392. To celebrate the occasion an open

house was held, with 1392 under steam, and with veteran Alberta Prairie locomotive engineer Jim Potter at the throttle.

The Alberta Railway Museum collection includes the Canadian Northern Fourth Class depot from St. Albert, Alberta, a Northern Alberta Railway shelter from Opal, the Gibbons water tank, the original Canadian Northern steam crane once assigned to Big Valley and Hanna, and a wide variety of CN, NAR, and CP vintage rolling stock and artifacts.

The Canadian Northern Society wishes Herb Dixon and all of the volunteers of the museum its sincere best for another 40 years of heritage preservation.

Meeting Creek

Thank you to Don Gillespie, Dean and Lorrie Tiegs, Brent Cheek, Shawn and Karen Smith, Clayton Jones, Bruce and Glenys Smith, Bill and Gladys Douglas, Norm Prestage, Jerry Bergstrom, and Lorene Bergstrom for the volunteer efforts put into maintaining the Meeting Creek site this summer. We have the depot and elevator looking very nice at summer's end. This year we undertook the usual repairs to the platform, cut the grass, and performed general maintenance duties.

We had quite a few visitors stop by the station starting in May, all with very positive comments about the quality of this wonderful heritage site, and its condition.



Meeting Creek Harvest Festival

October 4 ~ 1 to 5 pm

Meeting Creek Railway Station and Grounds
(Just off Highway 56, South of Camrose)

*An old-fashioned day of fun and activity will be
an amazing family experience!*

Ride a Speeder • Pumpkin Carving • Wagon & Tractor Rides
Horse & Chariot Rides • Scarecrow Building
Children's Games & Crafts • Old-time Entertainment
Dedication of the Wilde Family Grain Wagon

A bee to make homemade pies for this event will be held on September 23 at the Camrose Station. Come and help make apple and pumpkin pies. We are also asking for volunteers to help sell pies, hotdogs and lemonade as well as helping with this fun event at Meeting Creek.

*For further information or to volunteer
contact Glenys or Janine at (780) 672-3099.*

Big Valley News

The Canadian Northern Society sincerely appreciates the efforts of Kathy Evans who has agreed to be the Society's Big Valley Chairperson. Kathy has by all accounts done a great job this summer keeping watch over the station and grounds in general. Her Beautification committee colleagues, and those from the Historical Society who have been involved also should be thanked as they have ensured that the station grounds have looked beautiful all summer long.

All of the dedicated volunteers of the Big Valley Historical Society also deserve a great deal of credit for the community work in Big Valley this summer. Thank you to Lois Miller in particular for taking charge of and improving displays and interpretation around the station and roundhouse, in addition to the fine work she has done for the Historical Society elsewhere in the village.

Two interesting "railway themed" events occurred this August—one being Alberta Prairie's railfan day in early August featuring the 6060 and the Rocky Mountain Rail Society folks, as well as displayed short-line

motive power. The other was the annual Free-Mo model railway show took place again in mid-August. It was indeed different not to have Harry Stuber walking around the Big Valley arena—he was greatly missed by all in attendance.

According to the management of Alberta Prairie Railway Excursions, this summer has been very busy and "a good year" for rail excursions into Big Valley. There have been the usual visitors who experience the train ride and afternoon in the village from Alberta; however, this year many Saskatchewan guests, and guests from Europe and the United States have been welcomed.

Starting September 15, the Big Valley depot will again be the focal point for the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology's conductor pre-employment training program, with the Canadian Heartland Training Railway hosting the students for a fourth program in the village. In addition to the railway equipment and facilities, the CHTR also uses the Big Valley Legion as a classroom. Dave Armitage will once again be leading these efforts.

The Canadian Northern Society continues to support the maintenance and upgrading of the depot in Big Valley. This fall, we will

be replacing some storm windows on the second floor, and will be working to do some better winterization than we have been able to achieve in the past.

Those wishing to support the continued preservation of the Big Valley railway depot, roundhouse, and the upkeep of the Canadian Railway Hall of Fame Pavilion may contact Kathy Evans at (403) 876-2033.

In History

1883, November 18 (125 years ago): railways adopt a standardized system of keeping time that uses hour-wide time zones.

1898, December 13 (135 years ago): First passenger train over the newly reconstructed Victoria Railway Bridge, Montreal. The original 1859 tube had been replaced by a double track steel bridge.

1928, September 22 (80 years ago): The last spike is driven by Premier John Bracken on the Canadian National line between Flin Flon and Cranberry Portage. The line had been built in record time by the Dominion Construction Company under its President, Harry Falconer McLean.

Fernie Station Being Restored

Once the exclusive source of freight and passenger arrivals, each train entering the city of Fernie was an event, the station at its heart. Today that railroad heritage is alive and well, most prominently embodied by a surviving, make that thriving, relic of CP history: the Arts Station. After Fernie's Great Fire of 1908, the CP station was among the first buildings to be rebuilt. Now 100 years later, this one-of-a-kind CP mountain station is gearing up for 100 more. A complete overhaul of the building's outer envelope is currently in progress. Renovations for 2008 are budgeted at \$80,000,

which will include a new paint job, windows and much needed insulation. When completed later this summer, the Arts Station will return to its original colour scheme, losing that pronounced blueberry hue. The Fernie and District Historical Society uncovered the station's original blueprints and colour specifications, which has guided the project thus far. "It was a real surprise that the original colour wasn't that boxcar red we had all grown up with, but this beautiful cream and chocolate," said former councillor David Thomas. According to Thomas, it

was after World War I that CP began painting its trains and facilities boxcar red, apparently due to price-spikes in rich pigments such as chocolate and cream. "This is going to be the only CPR mountain station that looks anything like the original," Thomas said. "There are stations in Banff and Jasper made of stone that are similar, but all other beautiful wood stations in mountain towns are gone."

(Fernie Free Press 080806)

Travelling On A Troop Train, 1944

By Harold (Curly) Reischman

In June of 1944 I had graduated from the Elementary Flying School course at Abbotsford, B.C. They told us we were to hang around until the course behind us graduated. It would be the last course in Abbotsford and then it would be switching over to an operation training unit to fly B-24 Liberators for the Pacific War.

So we lay around for about three weeks, then they bussed us all to Jerico Beach in Vancouver to No. 9 Construction Maintenance Unit or transfer for air gunners or navigator training. We stayed as pilots (two friends signed on as air gunners and went to Dafoe, Saskatchewan, and were killed a week later in a plane crash. They were passengers.)

At Jerico Beach, they issued us a kit bag full of work gear and waterproof suits and said, "You're off to the Alaska Highway." The next day we were bussed to the CNR station in Vancouver and climbed aboard the last coach on a very long train. It was a day coach and the rest of the coaches were sleeper cars with a dining car in the middle. We noticed a lot of military police (MPs) on board and we soon found out why.

I think we were the last car load to go for breakfast so with MPs front, back and middle we were escorted to the dining car. The next car to us was army fellows and next to that was a whole car load of CWACs (women's army) and the rest of the cars were soldiers. The men were going to Halifax but I don't know where the women were going. There were no problems as were herded through the women's car by the MPs with their billy clubs, but lots of wolf whistles.

We were each given a pillow and

told to stay in our car. When it was our turn to go for supper, we again were herded through the women's car. But the women were starting to make up their berths as they had finished their supper (it was late). After our supper, as we returned through that car again the berths were made up with heavy dark curtains hanging to the floor. It looked like a black tunnel with night lights on. Nearly every bunk had a woman's head sticking out. These curtains covered the backs of the seats too, and the train was rock and rolling and you had to grab the backs of the seats to keep your balance. If you missed you would fall right through the curtain with the girls pulling too. So the line would have to stop while the MPs rescued that guy. Of course with the line up stopped there were other guys diving into the berths with the girls pulling from both sides. Don't forget the cars are still rocking and rolling. We ended up going on hands and knees through the car. All the while the MPs are blowing whistles for help, pulling guys out of berths and pushing women back in, shrieking and screaming. Also, the girls in the upper berths were jumping down on us. It seemed the longer this went on the less pajamas were being worn.

We were glad to get to our car. We got a bit of sleep that night. They put double MPs on our doors. We arrived in Edmonton with no breakfast so they counted heads and checked under seats and when everyone was accounted for, they unhooked our car and there we were hungry, and with no sleep, but ready for our next adventure up the Alaska Highway for the next four months. I wonder what shape the MPs were in if the girls' car went all the way to Halifax?

The most memorable part of this trip was the rock and rolling of the train. This train was averaging over 60 mph and swaying from side to side

violently. There was no way you could walk down the aisle without hanging on.

Later in Fort Nelson, we would lie on our bunks and listen to all the different stories from the guys. The MPs would try to catch a girl running by and he would end up with only her pj's. Now she was even harder to stop and he couldn't use his billy club. That trip was worth the price of admission. These women were not the weaker sex. After we saw some naked we guessed they must have had commando training. They had muscles! I saw one woman pick up and toss a guy into the upper berth. We Air Force guys were 98-pound weaklings compared to the women.

The *Empress* Continued...

Certainly one of the highlights of the steam train weekend in Edmonton was 99-year old George Wilson being a guest on board the train. Not only did George ride the train from Wetaskiwin to Edmonton one day, but he spent a portion of the return journey from Wetaskiwin to Red Deer in the cab with locomotive engineer Bill Stetler and fireman Jonathan Morris.

George, whose son is Bill Wilson of Wetaskiwin (and of Alberta Central Railway Museum fame) retired from company service in 1972 after starting as a wiper on the CPR at Wetaskiwin in the early 1920s.

George is as sharp as a tack and remembers the days of steam on the CPR throughout Alberta and western Saskatchewan, and the heyday of prairie branchline terminals such as Kerrobert and Coronation. It was great to see him railroading again with the crew of 2816 as indeed "CP's most senior locomotive engineer."

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 or directly at their home:

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