



# THE CANORA CHRONICLE

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

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## Canadian Northern Memberships are due!

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

Associate memberships are \$10  
Full Voting Memberships are \$20

*We thank you in advance  
for your support.*



*To our members and friends, the Canadian Northern Society would like to wish you all a joyous Christmas season, and a happy and healthy new year.*



*To all the volunteers both in Camrose and Big Valley who continually lend a hand – we thank you. Special thanks to Glenys and Bruce Smith in Camrose for another successful season at the Station and Railway Garden grounds.*



## Hardisty Depot: Saved



After nearly a century of service to the railway, the 99-year-old Canadian Pacific depot at Hardisty will live on in a new life serving the community. Although plans for the structure have not yet been confirmed, it is expected that the building will re-emerge retaining its historic exterior as a retail outlet. It was moved in September from its original site in the Hardisty yard, where it has sat since 1909, to a location near the main entrance to the town. It is the only station remaining extant of its type in Alberta (the other was at Coronation), and while three of its style are preserved in Saskatchewan (Lanigan, Kerrobert and Outlook) it is nice to see that the Hardisty depot's unique style of prairie railway architecture can live on.

Further to the interesting story he wrote for our last edition of the *Canora Chronicle*, "Travelling on a Troop Train", Harold (Curly) Reischman reports that he has had numerous comments on his story from readers around Big Valley and elsewhere! They had a hard time believing that a bunch of ladies on a troop train could have this much fun. To that Curly replies, "It happened in 1944, and that was 64 years ago. I was only 18 years old. Anyone that is still alive would now be in their eighties. So there are probably some gray-haired ladies out there in rocking chairs, and when the grand-kids ask, 'What did you do during the war, Grandma?' I wonder whether they would tell these stories?! Likely it would be described as a skirmish with some air force men. Some skirmish!"

What would a reindeer do if she lost her tail?

*She'd go to a 're-tail' shop for a new one!*

# Big Valley News



Former CWR conductor, Jordan McCallum, now of Toronto writes:

“I remember Ed well. I had the pleasure of working with him during the summer of 1994 when I worked with Alberta Prairie and Central Western. I’ve attached a photo (above) that I took of Ed in ’94 while working as trainman, as the train sat in Big Valley.”

The Canadian Northern Society expresses its deepest sympathy to Fay Dembicki and family with the passing of Ed Dembicki, a long-time railroader and supporter of the society.

Ed and Fay will always be remembered for their contribution to the community of Big Valley and for the work they lovingly put into the depot living quarters and grounds while residents of the station during Ed’s career on the Central Western Railway as rail traffic controller. Ed’s volunteer work at the station and the roundhouse site will always be remembered and appreciated by the Canadian Northern Society and its membership in particular.

The platform at the Big Valley station has been re-surfaced thanks to the leadership of Alberta Prairie Railway Excursions and funding by both Alberta Prairie and the Canadian Northern Society. Rick Kaargard has been busy resurfacing the platform with a new pressure-treated layer of planking that will strengthen the structure and improve safety.

Kathy Evans and other Canadian Northern/Beautification Society volunteers have also led the installation of new toilets in the station waiting room. This “behind the scenes” maintenance work is important in keeping the Big Valley site maintained and having adequate facilities available for visitors. Sincere thanks to Kathy Evans and Donna Clark for their additional efforts in ensuring the station is always clean and presentable—both inside and out.

Thanks to Lois Miller, Len Waters, and Curly Reischman for their efforts in repainting the express trucks on the Big Valley station platform. They look wonderful and your efforts are greatly appreciated.

Thank you to S.I. (Shawn) Smith for arranging for the re-construction

of two new storm windows for the Big Valley depot (required after a wild spring wind storm this year demolished them) and the subsequent installation.

The Canadian Heartland Training Railway ran another NAIT conductor pre-employment program this fall, with instructors staying in the station living quarters at some times, and the students using the facilities for operational purposes and for studying. Proceeds from CHTR’s contributions to the Canadian Northern Society for use of the station go towards the on-going upkeep and maintenance of the station and related facilities. We’ve also hired the students where we could for odd jobs such as cleaning the station eavestroughs. The previous group had an individual who was very helpful and led the re-painting of the ‘engineman’s’ bunkhouse next to the station.

The Alberta Prairie Railway “Big Valley Volunteer Appreciation Dinner” was held in early November and was well-attended. What a great and generous way to thank the community for all of the dedication of local volunteers who support the regular arrivals and

departures of excursion trains. The meal, fellowship, and entertainment was excellent. Allan Johnston brought remarks on behalf of the community—thanking Alberta Prairie for their generosity and for the significant contribution to the community. Vivian Hulley also had some very thoughtful words on behalf of those in the “Big Valley downtown” who certainly benefit from and enjoy meeting the many guests who come in each year to the village on the excursion trains.

On behalf of both Alberta Prairie and our Canadian Northern Society, a plaque dedicated in memory of Harry Stuber was presented at the dinner to the community, which will be placed in the Big Valley depot.

Kathy Evans has taken on the task of keeping the station staffed for the Christmas train runs (Nov. 29, Dec. 6 and 13). She also dressed up the station for this festive occasion. Thanks Kathy and all of your helpers!

Kathy Evans would personally like to acknowledge the following individuals for help in and around the Big Valley station:

- The ladies that helped wash windows, Anne Tizzard, Vi Milton and Phyllis Garrison.

## Meeting Creek Happenings

Glenys, Bruce and members of the Canadian Northern Society:

Just wanted to say a “big” thank you for all the work that you put into making the Harvest Festival such a success. It can probably be summed up by something that our seven-year-old grandson said on the ride back to the hotel. He said, “Grandma, are they doing that next year because I sure would like to come back.” In this time of all the electronic games and gadgets, it is quite an accomplishment to make such a favourable impression on a seven-year-old. So I would say that you “done good”!!

Thanks, also, for the great supper and enjoyable conversation on Friday evening.

We are very fortunate to have found your group and we have complete confidence that the old wagon is in good hands.

Keep up the good work and please keep in touch.

Margaret and Jerry Wilde

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*The Harvest Festival was held on October 4 in Meeting Creek. The society is pleased to report that it was a great success.*

*A 12-foot wooden grain wagon was donated to the Canadian Northern Society in 2007 by Margaret (Wichman) Wilde and her husband Gerald Wilde of Regina, Saskatchewan. It belonged to Margaret's grandfather, Henry Wichman, who purchased it in North Dakota between 1900 and 1910. A dedication to the Wilde family for their donation was held at the Harvest Festival.*

*Harvest Festival photos below.*



Thanks to the hard work of Don Gillespie and crew, the standard section toolhouse arrived in Meeting Creek the last week of September from Stettler. We've worked to repair some move and rot damage, but will need additional floor and roof repair in the spring.

- Cleaning the station and maintaining the washrooms for train days when summer students weren't available, Donna Clark and Phyllis Garrison.
- Cleaning leaves out of the gutters, Alice Faye Watts.

There is a lot of work to keep up the station and grounds and we couldn't have done it without all these volunteers. Thank you very much.

Those in Big Valley wishing to renew their Canadian Northern Society memberships and continue to support the operation and preservation of the railway depot, the roundhouse, and the Canadian Railway Hall of Fame Pavilion can contact Kathy Evans.

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What does Father Christmas suffer from if he gets stuck in a chimney?

Santa Claustrophobia!

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## Camrose News

We would like to gratefully acknowledge the following donations:

- Cash donation and baking supplies from Alma Falk.
- China cups to the Tea Room, white elephant items and shredder from Cec Atkinson.
- Donation of kitchen items and white elephant items from Robbie O'Riordan. As well Robbie spent a great deal of time organizing products for the white elephant sale and helped with event baking.
- Carol Roy spent several days helping decorate the station into a winter wonderland! Glenys remarked how amazed she always is that every year there is such a different look.
- Dorothy Lysons and Ruby Lampkin also lent a hand with the decorations, which is greatly appreciated.

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- Carol and Murray Roy—thanks for preparing the Christmas Pudding for the Cookie Walk!
- Bruce Smith—who spent a huge amount of time with the decorations—getting them out of storage, putting up the outside lights and decorations, creating the Snowman Village in the glass display case housed in the lobby.
- Everyone who donated cookies to the cookie walk as well as those who came to the station to bake.
- To everyone who has helped with events and bookings along with donations to the White Elephant table.

Chantelle Beeslie has taken on the huge project of sorting, organizing and cataloguing the library and archives. If anyone needs anything from either, make note where you took it from, and please let Glenys know when you return it so she can confirm that the item(s) have been listed.

The volunteer appreciation supper was well attended and enjoyable! As it turned out, the timing was very challenging for many so if you weren't able to make it, please know you were missed! It was very nice to meet those who were able to come. Glenys was very excited that a table was taken by our Big Valley colleagues.

There have been a number of bookings and events planned for the fall and winter seasons (thanks again to everyone who help make these a successful!). We have several Christmas parties booked—what a cheery location with all the decorations!

The fall clean-up of the station is done! Thanks to Bruce and Glenys, Carol Roy, and to my family who had three generations come help, my mom, Ruby Lampkin, myself and my daughter Meagan Carroll. I was

amazed how much cleaner the rooms looked after the cleaning considering they seemed clean to begin with.

The annual Cookie Walk, White Elephant Sale and Tea is being hosted on December 6. There have been several days that the inviting smell of cookies baking has filled the station. It's a great place to work! We anticipate that the event will meet with the same extraordinary success as usual.

We are having a Christmas carolling evening with a twist—on Sunday, December 21, from 7 to 9 pm. We will be going out for some neighbourhood carolling (weather permitting) but finishing off the evening 'round the station fire place for more Christmas singing and storytelling along with hot chocolate and cider. So, bring your best singing voice, your stories and poems and please join us.

Creating Harmonious Blends of Rocks and Plants in Your Landscape—a two-evening seminar hosted by Master Gardener Gary Taylor at the Camrose Station—Tuesdays, January 27 and February 3, 7 to 9 pm. In this four-hour course he will be exploring how to re-create and maintain natural rock outcrops as well as selecting shrubs, annuals, perennials and hardy bulbs most suited to these habitats and local growing conditions. If you have any interest please come—cost is just \$15.00, which includes your handouts!

Over the upcoming season our intention is to simplify the Tea Room menu. If anyone has a menu suggestion, please get in touch with Glenys. Her intention is to focus on the old-fashioned dessert selection, and in addition offer light “soup, salad, sandwich” type lunches. On our event days we will offer theme

meals.

We will be finalizing the 2009 calendar by about December 15.

Annual Valentine's Day Gourmet Supper planned for Saturday, February 14. Anyone who can help with baking and preparation please let us know!

We have applied for funding and grants from several sources. Janine attended a CREAM meeting and Kalyna Country workshop. She was also very fortunate to attend the Alberta Museum Association conference in Edmonton in October, which was very interesting. We have initiated a partnership project with other public gardens in north central Alberta. The project is to create a brochure outlining a driving tour of these gardens.

Upcoming projects:

- replacement of wooden side-walks, spring 2009.
- Completion of an interpretive structure which to house our collection of track cars.
- Initial stage of research and study into recreation of the Camrose Memorial Gardens.
- Cleaning of the oil cans.
- Restoration of a baggage cart.
- Painting of the boardwalk coming into the station, the fence around the Garden Railway as well as some indoor painting.
- Production of a new railway station cookbook.

If you have interest in any of these projects please let us know!

Janine Carroll and Glenys Smith

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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