



# the CANORA CHRONICLE

*"Capturing history – Building community"*

## MAILING ADDRESS

The Canadian Northern Society no longer has a mail box in Big Valley, AB. Please send your memberships and any other correspondence to our Camrose address:

Box 1174, Camrose, AB T4V 1X2

E-mail: [canadiannorthern@telus.net](mailto:canadiannorthern@telus.net)

## SEEKING SUPPORTERS

The society's efforts in preserving heritage railway depots have been successful only due to the dedication of volunteers and long-time supporters.

A volunteer is needed to take on the maintenance and co-ordination of the Canadian Railway Hall of Fame pavilion at Big Valley. Duties include having updated signage placed on the pavilion every two years or so, and simply ensuring the facility is maintained. Not a big commitment, but one we need.

We need a volunteer to help maintain the Meeting Creek station and the grain elevator: grass cutting, painting, light maintenance duties in the summer months. Any help—even one day per year would be appreciated.

Help is needed to paint and repair the toolhouses and maintenance sheds at Big Valley as well as roofing repairs are required on the storage sheds. All three buildings to the north of the Big Valley station require paint.

If you are able to volunteer any of your time to help us maintain these facilities please call Janine at 780 672 3099.

## Acknowledgements

The Canadian Northern Society would like to welcome new members to our organization: Caitlin Thomson of Camrose, Joe Bracken of High River, and Sandra Beaudon of the Hanna Roundhouse Society, Hanna, Alberta. *Welcome and thank you for your support.*

Appreciation and thanks go to the following people for their generous cash donations received with their annual memberships: Finn Didrichsen of Stettler, Jimmy Munsey of Edmonton, Ernest Shatz of Oliver, BC, Clayton Jones of Surrey, BC, Les and Donna Langille of Red Willow, Charles Bohi of White River Jct., Vermont, and Muhlbach Electric of Big Valley.

## BIG VALLEY OPEN HOUSE

Alberta Prairie Railway Excursions and the Canadian Northern Society held a well-attended open house at the Big Valley Heritage Railway station on Saturday, March 27.

The open house featured the new community meeting room facility that was developed this past winter in the former express room of the depot. As a result of this upgrade, the community at large will have an excellent alternative to hold business meetings within a historical setting, and the room will also continue to be used for interpretive displays.

With the upgrades to the station, we've incorporated some new displays of railroadiana, art, and photography that will be of interest to the many visitors who visit the Big Valley station each year. Much of this material, including two new hand-made display cabinets, are also courtesy of Don Gillespie at Alberta Prairie.

Guided tours through the entire station were provided and delicious barbecued pork on the bun, coffee and refreshments were served by Don and Carol Gillespie and his Alberta Prairie Railway crew, who have done a wonderful job in making this project happen. Without Don's volunteer efforts and leadership, as well as Alberta Prairie's continued support, this project could not have materialized. It truly is a gift to the community.

Special thanks as well to Joe Bracken of the Canadian Heartland Training Railway for the CHTR's support of the project, and their generous cash donation of \$4000.

## CAMROSE EVENTS

*We sincerely thank the following organizations and individuals for their kind donations to the station.*

The station received funding for interpretive signs from Alberta Museums Association, new signs in the speeder shed; upgraded signs in the station museum. Thanks to Bill Walker for making the frames for some of the indoor signage.

Glenys Smith - donated 8 bags of potting soil, CD player/radio for the King George Room and a food processor for the kitchen.

Robbie O'Riorden - two cabinets, one for the greenhouse and one for paint storage.

Janine Carroll - oak table for the Big Valley Station

Diana Nichel - an unusual trunk, picture and history of her mother. Many artifacts having to do with her grandfather who was a surveyor for the Grand Trunk Pacific in this area early 1900s. Diana also donated a collection of her original artwork for sale in the gift shop (some oil paintings and many dried flower petal pictures).

Gladys Douglas - prepared enough individualized gingerbread dough portions for 394 kindergarten children!

Wolf Kirchmeir - railway articles and paper artifacts.

Norm Corness - 1910 picture of an engine on turntable.

David Stiener - crew telephone, mail box with switch key for maintenance of way, to be added to the speeder shed displays.

Carol Roy - cookie tins for the kitchen and white elephant sale items; and as always she takes the leading role in the station decorating.

Kevin Sorenson - Certificate from the federal government along with the story contribution at our 100th anniversary celebration.

Camrose Booster - who did an amazing job covering the Centen-

nial Celebration (see *Camrose Booster*, week of April 26, 2010).

To all the garden ladies who came to help get the gardens ready for the Centennial Celebration - thanks very much. The Friends of the Station, thanks for the amazing amount of baking and food prep for this and various other events.

Hilda Saddleback and Debra Jessop - for the recent help given in the library and archives.

Bruce - where do we begin? This time of year as always Bruce is busy doing whatever needs to be done. Thanks Bruce!

Bill Douglas - helped with cleaning the grounds with tractor.

Barb - took on the sign project, was instrumental in the school program planning and she updated the self-guided tours, and developed of a map for the garden tour.

Alberta Prairie - donation of speeder that will be located at Meeting Creek once it's been cleaned.

St. Andrew's Anglican Church and Camrose United Church for donations to the White Elephant Sale room.

Loyal Order of Moose, Camrose - donation of \$200.

*~ Janine Carroll*

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It's been an exciting and busy time for "the Friends" since our group formed in January 2010. Members have been involved in cleaning the station, decorating for different events, cooking, baking, hostessing, serving, archiving, gardening and caring for the White Elephant Gift Shop. Whew! And it's only mid May!

Our first major event was the annual Valentine's Day Supper in February. It featured a scrumptious stuffed loin of pork with all the trimmings, prepared by station caterer Joanne Hildebrandt, who volunteered her time to prep, cook,

serve and clean up. Entertainment included classical guitar by Lyndee Olson and a visit from Jane Austen.

The pace picked up in March with the annual Easter Egg Hunt, a fun time for families watching their children hunt and decorate eggs while enjoying home-baked goodies.

On April 23 we paid tribute to the past as it was on that date in 1910 that the tracks of the Canadian Northern reached Camrose. The Station Café was filled to capacity, the crowd included retired railroaders, our MP, MLA and mayor, in addition the general public. Next year, 2011, we look forward to the centennial of the Camrose Station.

On Sunday, May 9, we hosted the first Mother's Day Brunch. Each of the two sittings were fairly close to being sold out, and the homemade buffet was very much appreciated. This may become an annual event based on its popularity this year.

Our summer hours officially start Saturday, May 22, with a new lunch menu. We are happy to have catering provided by Joanne, taking pressure off Glenys and freeing the students to concentrate more on interpretation.

We look forward to seeing society members over the summer months. Come enjoy the gardens and attractions. Visit the Gift Shop while you're here.

*~ Friends of the Station*

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The 2010 school program at the Camrose Railway Station and Park is now in full swing. We are expecting over 500 preschool, ECS, grade one and grade four students to attend the program between May 10 and June 16. All of the children begin their visit to the station by learning about railway safety. Various activities throughout the day include cookie baking, exploring the station and grounds on a history

hunt, playing old-fashioned games, completing a craft, and singing railway songs. The children also ride on a track car, participate in an interpretive story, and learn to square dance.

The grade four students have the opportunity to dress in period clothing and experience what “a day in the life of the railway” was like back in the early 1900s. In the morning the students prepare their own lunch, consisting of home-made soup, biscuits and cookies. Role playing allows groups of student to repair the track on the maintenance of way crew, send Morse code from the agent/operator’s office, or learn the duties of the freight men, engineer, fireman, and conductor. Afterward the children meet to share their experiences and later act out a skit about early pioneer life and the railway.

The children really enjoy their day at the station and many of the teachers bring their classes back year after year. This program’s success is due to the many willing and tireless volunteers and also to the energetic and enthusiastic summer students.

~ Barb McDonald

Following the centennial of through service between Edmonton and Winnipeg on CP’s North Main Line that occurred April 18, the afternoon of April 23, the ladies of the Canadian Northern Society hosted an open house and reception at the Camrose depot to celebrate another historical milestone—that being the 100th anniversary of the very day that the Canadian Northern Railway’s Battle River Subdivision entered Camrose on April 23, 1910.

(For my CPR colleagues, this was the Canadian Northern branch headed from Vegreville to Drumheller, via Camrose, Stettler, and Big Valley.)

I worked out of my Camrose depot “home office” that day and



100 years ago, April 23, 1910, the Canadian Northern track laying gangs crossing the CPR Wetaskiwin Sub at the diamond north of the Camrose depot.

came downstairs around 14:30 to the smell of fresh coffee and cake. We had guests including Kevin Sorenson (our MP) and Verlyn Olson (our MLA), the mayor of Camrose, plus some distinguished retired rails like Walter Kittler, come and enjoy a short presentation and some very interesting remarks by Allan R. Johnston of Big Valley. For those of you who don’t know Allan, he is a living link to the Canadian Northern - his dad hired out on the Canadian Northern at Kamsack in 1906, and was promoted to fireman from wiper in 1910. Allan shared some very personal and poignant memories of being the son of a locomotive engineer which the railroaders in the crowd could certainly relate to. It was interesting to hear about life in terminals like Kamsack, Radville, Kamloops Jct., and of course Big Valley. Our local MP, Kevin Sorenson,



Verlyn Olson, MLA, Bruce Smith and Allan Johnston.

is a bit of a rail buff—his uncle worked as a baggageman on the passenger train from Edmonton to Blue River in Kevin’s childhood days, and he spoke to the reception on his interest as well. He seemed to have a great time talking with the volunteers and retired rails that attended. He said some complimentary things about railways as well.

The Canadian Northern presented the City of Camrose with a gorgeous picture commemorating the event (thanks to Lorrie Tiegs for designing). This event was the kick-off to several upcoming centennial celebrations and an exciting time to be a part of this organization!

After the celebration, Liam and I went up to the access road by the diamond and I shot a photo of him standing there—at that very location—for posterity (photo below).



Fittingly, the National had a southbound guy switching at the same time on the old Canadian Northern “Demay” main - now the lead for the steel coating plant. We talked briefly to the crew and gave them a copy of the program Lorrie Tiegs had made up for the reception. After they had made up and started to pull they gave Liam and the



Karen Smith with the anniversary cake.



Walter Kittler and Brent Cheek.

remaining folks at the depot a nice whistle salute as they highballed south on the old Canadian Northern pike headed for the Battle River Valley!

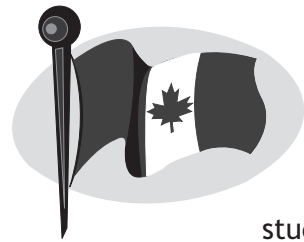
~ Article and photos by Shawn Smith



Canadian Northern Society celebrates arrival of rail <http://www.camrosebooster.com/news4.htm>  
Expansion of line gave CNoR access to rich coal reserves <http://www.camrosebooster.com/news5.htm>

**For a complete list of the activities and programs to be held at the Camrose Station and Park this summer please visit [www.canadiannorthern.ca](http://www.canadiannorthern.ca).**

### CANADA DAY CELEBRATIONS IN BIG VALLEY



The Rocky Mountain Rail Society will be operating their track speeder in the morning beginning at 11:00 a.m. at the Big Valley train station. The speeder can take visitors for a ride in the yard at Big Valley. The rides will be free and the speeder will operate until after the passenger train has left Big Valley for Stettler in the afternoon.

There will also be a display of artwork and stories written by local elementary school students about Canada. The student's work will be displayed in the Rocky Mountain Rail Society boxcar and the Big Valley Station. We encourage the public to come and see the students work.

When the passenger train arrives at Big Valley at 12:35 p.m. the colour party from the Big Valley Legion will meet the train at the station. The Alberta Prairie Steam Tours passenger train will be pulled by the steam locomotive 6060. The 6060 is an Alberta Heritage Resource and is the largest operating steam locomotive in Canada. The 6060 is a 4-8-2 Mountain-type steam locomotive that was designed and built in Canada during World War II. The 6060 is called the *Spirit of Alberta* in honour of all the Albertans who have helped preserve this magnificent heritage artifact. At the throttle of 6060 will be Harry Home. Harry is the man responsible for saving the 6060 many years ago.

The 6060 will be moved to the north end of the passenger train at about 1:00 p.m. When stopped anyone wishing to take a photo of the 6060 with Harry Home can do so. The 6060 and the train will pass Big Valley Legion Colour Guard when the passenger train departs Big Valley for Stettler.

The *Canora Chronicle* is the quarterly newsletter of the Canadian Northern Society—a registered charity dedicated to providing community service through heritage tourism initiatives.

Canadian Northern Society, P.O. Box 1174, Camrose, AB T4V 1X2 / Ph: (780) 672-3099 / Email: [canadiannorthern@telus.net](mailto:canadiannorthern@telus.net)

Editors: Dean and Lorrie Tiegs / Ph: 780 484 4038 / Email: [secretary@canadiannorthern.ca](mailto:secretary@canadiannorthern.ca); Contributor: Shawn Smith

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