

THE CANORA CHRONICLE

"Preserving Railway Heritage for Community and Economic Benefits"



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Meeting Creek Railway Depot Receives Provincial Historic Resource Designation

A process that was begun by the Canadian Northern Society's founding members twenty years ago has now been completed with the designation of the Meeting Creek Canadian Northern Railway station as an Alberta Provincial Historic Resource.

Our society was informed by registered letter from Minister of Community Development, Denis Ducharme, dated November 17, 2006, that the site had been designated accordingly.

Under the designation, the Meeting Creek station will be protected from alteration by law, and be eligible for an enhanced level of preservation funding.

Support for this designation over the years came from our friends at the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, and current MLA, Mr. Raymond Prins.

Summer Season Wraps Up

2005 will go down in local history as the "year the train returned to Meeting Creek." Well, at least in the form of a wagon train!

Yes, Don Gillespie and the Alberta Prairie Railway Excursions staff successfully completed the pilot season of their new "wagon train" product, which saw visitors arrive in authentic horse-drawn chuckwagons on a regular basis to Meeting Creek this past summer. Starting out at Red Willow and overnighing in Donalda and Meeting Creek, prior to returning to Stettler, the Wagon Train was a successful pilot project according to Mr. Gillespie. Using the former Canadian Northern Railway Battle River Subdivision railway grade, the beauty of rural Alberta and the Meeting Creek valley was in full bloom this summer, adding to this very unique experience. "We will be back in 2007," said Mr. Gillespie, "we already have several bookings."

As a result of the wagon train arrivals, guests had an opportunity to take some time and enjoy the heritage Canadian Northern railway depot and our grain elevator at Meeting Creek.

Thanks to Don Gillespie again for helping maintain the Meeting Creek washrooms in 2006, and for the assistance with repairs to the elevator driveway ramps, which are scheduled for replacement over the next year or so.

Thanks also to Jerry Bergstrom of Meeting Creek, and to Phil Racine of Donalda for the antique box that once held bottles of the famed "Meeting Creek Mineral Waters," a rare and prized local artifact indeed.

Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks to Dorothy Lysons for the very generous \$1000 donation towards the kitchen enhancement at the Camrose station.

Thank you to Mr. Brent Harris of Calgary for the antique railway caboose stove, which will be preserved in the former Canadian Northern Railway Battle passenger shelter (later the watchman's shelter) at Camrose. Thanks to Les Kozma and S.I. Smith for the logistics to move the stove to Camrose.

Thanks to Dean and Lorrie Tiegs for their consistent and constant work on the CNoS membership files, rosters and for publishing the *Canora Chronicle*.

Big Valley News

Congratulations and best wishes are in order for Canadian Northern Society lifetime member Harry Stuber. Harry has recently retired from Village Council in Big Valley after serving the community faithfully for many many years. On October 20, an evening reception was held in Harry's honour where he was indeed "roasted" but also sincerely thanked by all of those who came to recognize his incredible contribution to the Big Valley community.

S.I. Smith of the CNoS presented Harry, on behalf of all of the CNoS membership, with a knitted Canadian Pacific Railway "Banff Indian Days" blanket. In addition to other gifts, the Village of Big Valley presented Harry with a beautiful mirror with a glass etching of the Big Valley grain elevator.

It is true that without Harry Stuber's contribution, the Canadian Northern Society's efforts in Big Valley would be minimal. Our success over the years has been in a large part a result of his continued efforts in promoting our group, selling our memberships, raising funds and awareness, and helping wherever he could. The Canadian Northern Society is very grateful that although Harry is retiring from Village Council, he will continue to help both the Big Valley Historical Society and the Canadian Northern Society achieve their goals. Thanks again, Harry!

In appreciation of the effort of its Big Valley volunteers, Alberta Prairie Railway Excursions hosted a wonderful dinner at the Jubilee Hall on Friday, November 3. Some 100 volunteers from the Big Valley Historical Society and the Canadian Northern Society—all who lend a hand during "train days"—were invited to enjoy a delicious stuffed pork loin dinner. After the meal, His Worship Len Waters, Mayor of Big Valley, Harry Stuber on behalf of the Canadian Northern Society, and Allan Johnston on behalf of the Big Valley Historical Society presented Don Gillespie with an authentic Canadian Pacific Railway sleeping car blanket in sincere appreciation for Don's efforts and contributions to the Big Valley community—year after year. Bob Willis, General Manager of Alberta Prairie was also presented with a similar gift. As Allan Johnston remarked "we feel it a privilege to play a part in a unique product that has gained such national and international recognition. Thank You Don, and Bob, and the rest of your staff."

*What do reindeer hang on their Christmas trees?
"Horn"-aments!*

Camrose Happenings

I just completed a book this summer on inspiration. The author believes that if we are inspired by something we should follow those instincts and believe that great things will happen. Great things are happening at the station. They are not without some cost (sleepless nights as plans are mulled over in one's head, wondering what the very best way to do something is, wondering if others will agree with plans as we see them). There have been so many creative inspirations during the years that the Canadian Northern Society has been in existence. It started with the inspiration of two young boys who were driven to save a number of railway stations for future generations. For those early members the passion has been dulled in recent years as members pass on or enter another transition in their lives. Sometimes they even feel unsupported. Something we need to address as a board.

For myself and other volunteers the desire and inspiration comes from the driving force to make Camrose Station a community centre where visitors and members can experience a sense of connectedness in a world where there is so much disconnectedness. The recent building of the kitchen addition is a good example. Men have worked together for a common end, not always agreeing but hopefully respecting the many ideas that surface. Collaboration and compromise are achieved many a day. The addition was to be built by a contractor who was unable to do so at the last minute. Murray Roy once more created a wonderful design for the addition that fits with the building. Bill Douglas, Bruce Smith and Kurt Bagdan have worked very hard along with Murray. Ted Rawson and Wayne have also lent a hand. Some materials have been acquired at a fraction of the cost thanks to Murray and his knowledge of the RESTORE.

Inside the station we have been moving the beverage counter back to the wall for convenience and efficiency. Food for lunches for the working people has been supplied by Dorothy Lysons, Carol Rawson, Carol Roy and Glenys Smith.

The gift shop has had a face lift as we acquired two display cases from the RESTORE. Remember to save your white elephant things for the store. Thanks to Carol and Murray we are displaying the pins on silk covered boards so this should increase sales.

Christmas events at the station are as follows; The Model Railway Club open house on November 25, Cookies Walk and Tea December 2, St. Mary's Hospital workshop and party December 5, Camrose Senior Choir Christmas Party and supper December

11, Cargill Christmas party possibly December 16, carolling from the station at 7 pm December 17, and an anniversary party booked December 9 as well as Christmas Eve. Gardening workshop coming in January on the Fundamentals of Gardening by Gary Taylor, Master Gardener, January 16, 25, 30 from 7 to 9 p.m.

Cookies are being donated for the Cookie Walk but we are also having a baking bee on November 29 to make additional cookies. If you would like to help with baking, donate or help on December 4 please let me know. The times are 1–5 for the walk.

Dale Falk has donated an extraordinary gift to the Canadian Northern Society. He has donated a \$349 painting for raffle. It is located at present in the framing shop downtown. We will bring it to the station for our events.

Raffle tickets are available to buy or sell. Dale is an exceptional painter. He is the son of Alma Falk a long time supporter of the station and recently made a donation of \$30. Thank you Dale and Alma.

Global TV spent an hour and a half at the station filming and will be let us know when it will be airing. Alberta Museums had let them know that we received the official museums status which prompted the interview. We encouraged them to see Meeting Creek and Big Valley. They will be interviewing Alberta Prairie in the spring or summer. Their goal is to promote Central Alberta happenings.

It is with regret that Nansee Hughes cannot continue on in the administrative position for the station. Her other commitments make it difficult for her to fill the 20 hours per week approved by the city of Camrose. We will be advertising soon as Nansee finishes December 2. Thank you Nansee for all your excellent help.

Glenys Smith

Hall of Fame Inductees for 2006

“This year’s inductions illustrate the important role that ordinary Canadians have played in helping the Canadian railway industry grow and prosper,” said Les Kozma, director and chairman of the Canadian Railway Hall of Fame. “Without these people, our industry would never have made it to where we are today.”

Joseph Earl Shaw, who was born in 1916 in the Canadian Northern Railway depot in Condie, SK, devoted his working life to Canadian railways. Shaw worked as a station manager, telegrapher, dispatcher, chief dispatcher, and retired as trainmaster in 1978 in Edmundston, N.B.

Jess C. Nowicki, a third-generation railroader

whose family helped build the railway westward, has devoted his life to educating about Canada’s railways. “Both Joseph Earl Shaw and Jess C. Nowicki have been inducted into the ‘heroes’ category of the Canadian Railway Hall of Fame,” said Kozma. “We would like to congratulate them and thank them for their continuing contribution to this industry.”

Father Albert Lacombe has been inducted posthumously as a leader into the hall of fame. Born in Saint-Sulpice, QC on February 28, 1827, Father Lacombe spent his early life on the family farm before being ordained into the Oblate order in 1849. Best remembered for his brokering of peace between two ancient rivals, the Cree and the Blackfoot, his negotiations between the Blackfoot and the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1883 was instrumental in the finishing of Canada’s first transcontinental railway.

Other 2006 inductees to the Canadian Railway Hall of Fame include:

Special Award—Railway artist **Max Jacquiard**, whose paintings are featured in homes and offices across North America, has been painting steam trains exclusively since 1981. His paintings are vital in remembering the importance steam trains played in North American history and have revived the imagination of train lovers across the country. Max grew up in Flin Flon, MB, and later moved to Coquitlam, BC.

Technology—The **Myra Canyon Trestles**, also known as “McCulloch’s Wonder,” were constructed in the early 1900s by the Kettle Valley Railway as part of a secondary mainline route. The railway’s Chief Engineer, Andrew McCulloch designed and constructed the route through the Myra Canyon, near the city of Kelowna, British Columbia.

The design involved the building of 20 trestles over a six-mile route through the canyon by seemingly hanging engineering works along canyon walls, several-thousand feet above the canyon floor. Despite being partially destroyed by fire in 2003, the trestles are being rebuilt and are scheduled to be completed by 2007.

Community—The community of **Melville, SK**, is being recognized as an integral railway divisional point between Winnipeg and Edmonton. Melville, named after Grand Trunk Railway President Charles Melville Hays, became home to railway crews working throughout Western Canada. Grand Trunk Pacific Railway also used Melville as the site for a large roundhouse and important service facilities for its steam fleet.

For more information, please go to railfame.ca.

CHTR Corner

Many of our Big Valley members and visitors to the village will have noticed the sign on the fence at Big Valley's railway depot that proclaims "Canadian Heartland Training Railway." Although we reported on a joint open house held in the previous issue of the *Chronicle*, many have asked "Just what is the Canadian Heartland Training Railway (or CHTR for short)?"

The CHTR is a not-for-profit corporation that has been operating since last year—dedicated to providing practical training for Canada's railway industry. Partnering with Alberta Prairie Railway Excursions, and our own Canadian Northern Society, the CHTR uses the railway network and resources in the region to provide practical training of railway conductors, switchmen, track maintainers, and locomotive operators. Through the support of its partners, the CHTR plans to make use of the second floor of our Big Valley railway depot, and the small local railway yard, for more practical training in the future. This benefits our society by helping offset the costs of operating, and maintaining our Big Valley station—important when one remembers that winter heat bills in a generally quiet station can be quite significant!

The CHTR also provides training at industrial plant sites and for short line railways across Alberta and at other locations in Canada. In addition, CHTR sponsors special transportation industry familiarization training seminars. One of those seminars took place on Wednesday, October 18, during the day in Big Valley. Fourteen distinguished guests, most from Ottawa and some from as far away as Moncton and Halifax, visited Big Valley to learn some practical applications of railroading from CHTR's instruction team. In the evening, a special Alberta Prairie dining service train was operated from Stettler to Big Valley, bringing the visitors back to the Village for the second time in the same day, and causing nostalgic comments while standing on our station platform that "this fine dining service and wonderful atmosphere could be right out of the 1950s. Congratulations to all of those who have made Big Valley such a neat place to visit!"

Long-time professional railroader Mr. Shawn Smith (also a volunteer with the Canadian Northern Society and the Big Valley Historical Society) is a director of the CHTR, as well as a training associate. Canadian Northern Society Vice President Brent Cheek also lends a hand with training. Other associates of the CHTR include experienced locomotive engineers and conductors, who can


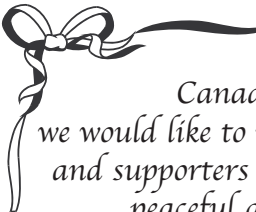
share their practical experiences with CHTR students. This winter, CHTR plans to partner with the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology on a conductor training program available to those interested in pursuing this type of a career. This program will see students train at Stettler, Warden, and Big Valley as they learn to safely qualify as a road freight conductor before pursuing a career in the Canadian railway industry.

Together with Alberta Prairie Railway Excursions, the CHTR is very pleased to be working with the Canadian Northern Society and the Village to develop Big Valley as a training site. For further information on the CHTR, contact Joe Bracken, President at (403) 601-8731, or visit www.chtr.ca.

Land Deal Complete

Thanks to a creative land transaction begun almost three years ago, the land upon which the Camrose Railway Park has developed is now solely owned by the community. "Thanks to CN, the City of Camrose, and some behind-the-scenes work by the Canadian Northern Society, the station lands at Camrose have been donated for community use," said Les Kozma, President of the Canadian Northern Society. "We are now in the process of setting up an agreement between the City of Camrose and the society that will ensure long-term occupancy of the site by Canadian Northern Society."

Look for further news on this land transfer in the upcoming *Chronicles*, and for a special event where the land donation by CN will be recognized in spring 2007.



On behalf of the
Canadian Northern Society
we would like to wish all our members, volunteers
and supporters a very Merry Christmas and a
peaceful and prosperous New Year.

About The Chronicle

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

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