

# BACKYARD RAILROADERS

MARCH 2008

## MORE SNOW!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

It seems every time we schedule a meeting, we've had a snow storm. The December /07 Christmas Party was cancelled due to a storm and rescheduled to January, another storm but we held it anyway. The February meeting saw another snow storm, but again we went ahead with not a bad turnout. This is CANADA (EH), so snow storms are to be expected.

## February meet

The February meet was held at the Barber's in Newmarket. Bruce Nord had travelled to Scandinavia in 2007 and visited amongst other things a Garden Railway. He had a DVD of this LIVE STEAM railroad in Sweeden which we watched. Almost everything on the railroad was scratch built. It was a very impressive railroad and excellent video production.

Don Wells of Newmarket talked about how his railroad construction had progressed in 2007 and his plans for 2008. Don is good at trying different methods of construction and materials. He proposed having an OPEN HOUSE this summer (details to follow).

Bruce Nord suggested members might be interested in a train excursion in Medina N.Y. He suggested that there was a good opportunity for one on Tuesday June 10<sup>th</sup>, as they had a special trip for \$19.00, which included the train ride from Lockport to Medina and return but also a visit to the museum. This Railway is open from May 27<sup>th</sup> to October 21<sup>st</sup>.

Another suggested trip was to the TRAIN MUSEUM in DELSON Que. This museum is open May 19<sup>th</sup> to September 1<sup>st</sup>. Members could take the VIA train from Toronto to Montreal, visit the museum and return to Toronto by train. Proposed date would be sometime in August (more info to follow).

## OPEN HOUSES

Anyone wishing to host an "Open House" in 2008, please advise Jim Barber as soon as possible. THANKS

## NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is APRIL 20<sup>th</sup> from 1 to 4 pm at WILMOT CREEK near Bowmanville, at the junction of the 401 and 115/35. An e-mail will be sent in April with more directions. The meeting is being held at Wilmot Creek to assist Merv Stouffer with a presentation to members of the Wilmot Creek Community Association regarding a proposed "Memorial Garden", which would include amongst other things a "Garden Railway". We as a club would be providing videos and photos of Garden Railways and provide suggestions and answer questions on how a Garden Railway could be incorporated into this plan. It is felt that a Garden Railway would be an added attraction for Community members to enjoy.

## 2008 MEMBERSHIP

2008 MEMBERSHIP ARE DUE. If you have not already sent your \$30.00 to Earl Graves, PLEASE do so as soon as possible. THANKS

## THE GREAT CANADIAN TRAIN RIDE – Part II

In the February 2008 newsletter, I described our VIA Train trip from Toronto to Vancouver. In this newsletter, I would like to tell you about some of things we did in British Columbia before our Via trip home.

On our arrival at Pacific Station in Vancouver Friday morning (we left Toronto Tuesday morning), we picked up our rental van and took off for the Tsawwassen Ferry Terminal, heading for Victoria via Swartz Bay. We arrived at the terminal just fifteen minutes before the next ferry departure. We were fortunate to get on this ferry as the next one would be in two hours.

Once aboard the "Spirit of British Columbia" we proceeded from the vehicle decks to the upper passenger decks, which is very spacious with comfortable seating, lots of windows, washrooms, food, shopping etc. We had beautiful weather (we did the whole trip, so we were able to go to the upper open deck to admire the view and enjoy the fresh air. The ferry passes through small islands covered with trees and home. Small power and sail boats along side, off in the distance you could make out Vancouver Island with its snow covered mountains rising out of the sea. Once you arrive at Swartz Bay you have the southern tip of Vancouver Island and Victoria close at hand.

We had planned to tour Victoria and then the next day, take the "Malahat" VIA train from Victoria to Courtenay & return. Travel time is about four and a half hours each way with only a one hour stop in Courtenay. We decided that although a great trip, we would be better off seeing more of the Island by van, in the same length of time.

We did our own City tour of Victoria, taking in the downtown and famous and beautiful harbor, with a must visit inside the "Empress Hotel". A stop a mile "ZERO" of the Trans Canada Highway, and continued

on the scenic “Marine Drive”, drooling over the beautiful properties overlooking the Juan de Fuca Strait with the U.S.A. off in the distance.

The next day instead of taking the “Malahat”, we drove Hwy 1 & 1A north from Victoria towards Nanaimo, stopping many times at scenic overlooks, and a special stop in the town of Chemainus. Chemainus is a small town long connected to the mining, lumber and fishing industries. It was also home to many Chinese who worked as part of “bull gangs” moving planks to ships and also on the Trans Canada Railway. The Town to preserve its’ history, has one of largest displays of giant outdoor wall murals depicting scenes from the past. A large statue of H.R. Macmillan stands in a park overlooking the harbor.

We continued north past Nanaimo and took highway 4 towards Port Alberni. Just before you reach Port Alberni, you pass through Macmillan Provincial Park, home of “Cathedral Grove, which contains giant Douglas Fir, some of which are over 800 years old. Port Alberni is located on the end of a long inlet well inland from the Pacific coast. The Pacific coast and view of the Pacific Ocean was our goal. There are few roads leading to the Pacific side of the island and highway 4 is one of them. Once you reach the coast you take a left to Ucluelet a mall community on a rugged rocky point of land, with a lighthouse marking one side of the entrance to Barkley Sound. Continuing north from Ucluelet to Tofino, you pass “Long Beach” a large sandy beach, which is very popular in the summer month. Just a few surfers braved the water in early May. Tofino is a small town also situated on a rocky area with a beautiful harbor with whale watching tours. After a great seafood meals we headed back the same way to Nanaimo.

After spending the night in Nanaimo we were off early in the morning to catch the first ferry to Horseshoe Bay (north Vancouver). Departing Horseshoe Bay, we took the “Sea to Sky” highway toward Pemberton. The Sea to Sky highway is being widened to four lanes as far as Whistler for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games. The highway closely follows the route of the former BC Rail line to Pemberton and the two are side by side much of the time, its’ too bad the “Royal Hudson” isn’t in operation anymore. We unfortunately didn’t see any trains. It was another sunny day and the mountains and ocean made for great photo ops. Our first stop was at Squamish for lunch by an old Ferry dock surrounded by mountains. After lunch we were off to the “West Coast Railway Heritage Park”. The park is now the home of the famous “Royal Hudson”. The Hudson was in the shop being refurbished and not on display, but they have a large collecting of west coast railway equipment, with additional small equipment located inside a series of old Heavyweights (see [www.wcra.org](http://www.wcra.org) for more info).

Whistler was our next stop with a quick drive through the village and then on to Pemberton. From Pemberton you lose sight of the railway as highway 99 heading to Lillooet takes a different route through the mountains once you reach Mt Currie. As you climb slowly the snow line gets closer until around a corner and snow is on either side of the road. Cayoosh Creek appears beside the highway, and as we follow it toward Lillooet, we stop at a park operated by BC Hydro. When you pull off the highway into the parking lot, you are welcomed by one of the most scenic views in the Rockies. From the vantage point you look down on the end of Seton Lake, a manmade lake with hydro dam. On the right side of the lake, you see the railway following the north shore just feet above the water. It must have been a great

view from the train but unfortunately there is no longer passenger service since the discontinuation of Budd Car service.

Another five miles to Lillooet and on the way we cross Cayoosh Creek on a single lane timber "Howe" truss bridge. Lillooet was a major stop on this line and still has a large rail yard. Lillooet is spread along the shore of the "Mighty (muddy) Fraser".

After a night in Lillooet we head for Cache Creek, the highway (still 99) crosses the Fraser at Lillooet, on "The Bridge of the 23 Camels" ([www.lillooet.com](http://www.lillooet.com)). Just about a mile from town we have climbed a few hundred feet above the river and you get a spectacular view of the railway bridge crossing the river ahead of us. The terrain has changed from the day before with forests to now sparse almost desert like conditions. The highway and track parallel each other with several over and under and side to side exchanges and the Fraser a half mile or so to the west and below us. We leave the railway again at about Pavilion and enter Marble Canyon, passing Pavilion Lake, which was like a mirror reflecting the far side of the canyon in its crystal clear water.

At Cache Creek we hit Hwy 1 (Trans Canada) and almost immediately we are following the Thompson River, with CP rail below on our side and CN on the other side. Unlike the Fraser the waters of the Thompson are almost pristine. As we stop for a photo of the river and large water pumping station (used for irrigation), we here the growl of a diesel engine, and down below appears what turns out to be a 124 car CP coal train. We continue down the Thompson stopping for more photos, the train passing us again. At Spences Bridge, we cross the Thompson and immediately have a CN eastbound freight go over us. The highway is now almost at the same level as the river, with the CP line on the far shore, and CN line about 30 feet above us. While stopped here taking photos our CP coal train passes on the other side and two CN eastbound freights pass within 5 minutes then a SPERRY TRACK INSPECTION car and another CN freight. On our way south from Spences Bridge we begin to climb above the Thompson. The CP line is also climbing but at a lesser amount, it is visible most of the time but the CN line on our side is below us and out of sight. The CP line is hugging the side of the mountains and must go through a series of short tunnels and several rockslide sheds. We were able to stop at a vantage point and get shots of our CP coal train passing through. We continue to play tag with the CP coal train which catches us again at Lytton. Lytton is located where the Thompson and Fraser rivers converge. The pristine waters of the Thompson soon disappear in the muddy water of the Fraser (great photo). At Lytton you enter the Fraser Canyon, with the Cascade Mountains on the east and the Coastal Mountains on the west.

A few miles south of Lytton the striking "Siska Bridges" are seen, as the CP and CN change sides of the canyon with one bridge crossing over the other. From Lytton to Mission, all west bound CP and CN trains now use the CN line and all eastbound trains use the CP line.

Just south of Boston Bar you reach the narrowest part (110") of the Fraser at "HELLS GATE". Fish ladders first built by the native "Niaka'pamuy", assist the sockeye salmon upstream through the torrent waters. "airtram" ride to the floor of the canyon and standing only feet over the fast moving water on an open grated bridge is well worth the time. At the bottom you are on the CP side with the track close behind

you and slightly above you on the other side, the CN line with tunnel and rock shed ending just opposite. Our now friend the CP coal train passes us again on its way to Vancouver.

Just south of Hells Gate we enter a short tunnel and as we exit we cross the river only to enter another tunnel on our way to Hope. We did not cross back over the river but took less travelled highway 7, along the Fraser to Agassiz. The Fraser is now out of the Canyon and fertile farmland spreads on either side of the river, with the mountains still ever so close. We stopped at Chilliwack for a day as my fathers' family settled this area.

Off to Vancouver, again taking the north shores less travelled road, with a short trip to Harrison Hot Springs. At Vancouver we spent a day site seeing at Stanley Park and Granville Island. We visited the Model Train and Ship Museum on Granville Island, which is well worth the time. A trip to Art Knapp's Train Store in Surrey, afforded a better look at the delta that most of Vancouver and suburbs are built on. The train store at Art Knapp's was well stocked (G scale only), but the outdoor layout (operated by the Greater Vancouver Garden Railway Club) was a little disappointing. I think the tired look could be due to the weather conditions, with a lot of rain over the year. It is still worth the trip to Surrey.

Back to Vancouver for our last night, departure tomorrow evening (Friday).

**DEPARTURE DAY AND VIA #2 TO TORONTO NEXT MONTH**