

RAILS OF TIME

Northern Ontario Railroad Museum and Heritage Centre
Capreol, Ontario

Volume 3, Issue 2

Fall 2000

WANTED

The museum is always looking for items. Our list this issue includes:

- Date nails 28, 32, 42, 43, 49, 50, 54, 55, 56, 58
- Souder box for telegraph
- Historical Phone books

If you have these, or any other items of interest, call the Museum at

858-5050



River Rats win Millennium Raft Race

Museum staff designed, built and powered the winning raft in the Capreol Millennium Raft Race as part of Capreol Daze activities in August. The Museum was also the headquarters for the events. (See story on Page 5).

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Over 2000 visitors expected in 2000

The millennium summer of 2000 has been another busy one at the Northern Ontario Railroad Museum and Heritage Centre. Of course, tours of the facility continue to be our main activity. There were visitors from Australia, Germany, England and Switzerland, as well as from across Canada and the United States. We had over 1,600 visitors by the end of August and expect to go over 2000 visitors before the end of the year.

Groups of visitors from bus tours, several area day care centres, service groups, the patrons of the American Orient Express and even a group from the Alzheimer Society Sudbury-Manitoulin were given guided tours. These visitors

are learning about our museum from the internet and promotional brochures. While they are here, they are also shopping in Capreol. The American Orient Express, which now stops four times a season, has even decided to restock at our local Freshmart store. Just a few positive examples of the impact our museum is having on our town.

Another group of special visitors were from the Winnipeg Railway Museum. They stopped in as part of their 2000 Rail Excursion, which included a trip to the Agawa Canyon as well. They presented our museum with a pictorial plaque to commemorate their visit.

Honourary museum board members named

The Northern Ontario Railroad Museum and Heritage Centre is pleased to announce that the following people have agreed to serve as honorary museum Board members.

Their role is to act as ambassadors for the museum, to network on the museum's behalf and to promote the museum to the community at large. Our appreciation is extended to them

for their willingness to serve in this volunteer capacity.

The members are:

Jim Ashcroft: Past-President INCO – Sudbury and current Transition Board Member

Dave Chellew: President, Genesis Planning

Robert Del Frate: Lacroix, Forest, Del Frate and Chair, Laurentian University Board

Dave Kilgour: Current Mayor of Capreol and a former teacher

Gerry Lougheed Jr.: Lougheed Funeral Homes and involved in numerous volunteer endeavours

Frank Mazzuca: Regional Chairperson and former Mayor of Capreol

Fall events being planned

The museum will again be offering a Remembrance Day display. This exhibit, which continues to improve as new items are donated, will be open during regular museum hours from October 24 until November 11, 2000.

A special feature this year are the Town of Capreol scrolls listing the names of all service men and women from Capreol.

While not an event or exhibit, there will be a new feature at the museum this fall. A grant of \$1,800. from Mainstreet Ontario Millennium Funding has enabled the museum to build a wrought iron gateway. With the museum matching the donated funds through in-kind or cash contributions, the gateway arch, incorporating a bell from an old steam engine, was designed by Bob

Michelutti. This arch, which complements the design of the museum building, will be built this fall by local wrought iron craftsman Gerry Gagnon and museum volunteer Ken Lynn.

The support of the Government of Ontario through Ontario 2000 and the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation is gratefully acknowledged.

Thinking Christmas? Visit the NORMHC gift counter

It's time to prepare that Christmas list again and we have just what you need for that special or hard-to-buy-for person on your list.

Now available! A limited edition of the *Capreol 2000 Heritage Phone Book*. Celebrating our last year as a town, this keepsake book includes pictures, advertising information plus the phone numbers, addresses and postal box numbers for Capreol

residents. A must have for any household. At only \$10, they make great stocking stuffers.

Profits from the sale of the books go to support the museum. These books are available at the museum, Pro Hardware, Lynn's Place, the Post Office, and the hydro office.

The NORMHC gift counter in the museum also has several new items for sale, in addition to the memorabilia already available.

G-Train Video Productions have a few new releases, which are over 90 minutes in length. *To Stratford Under Steam* and *Steam at Allandale* are two books by author Ian Wilson, which have been added to our gift book collection.

Stop by the museum during opening hours to browse the gift counter for other ideas.

Historical Profile: *The School Car & Fred Sloman*

Education in the early part of the twentieth century was a vital force in drawing this country together, addressing the problem of illiteracy and introducing new immigrants to Canada. Providing an education in isolated northern communities was decidedly different and more difficult than in urban centres.

However, with the vision and creativity of men like Dr. James MacDougall and G. Howard Ferguson, a solution for the Province of Ontario was found. MacDougall, Assistant Superintendent of Education, and Ferguson, Premier of Ontario and also Minister of Education in the 1920's, sought out a partnership with Canadian National and Canadian Pacific railways. The Department of Education would pay for teachers, materials, school room furniture and a small library. The railways would look after supplying the cars, converting them at government expense into a school room and living quarters and moving them to the designated areas.

The first two cars were ready for service in 1926. CN School Car #1 would serve the area between Capreol and Foleyet and CP School Car #1 would operate from Cartier to Chapleau.

The next challenge was to find teachers qualified to assume the huge task of teaching Grades 1 through 13, as well as adult literacy classes, to a wide mix of students across the north. The department heads felt that the

personal qualities of the teachers should include "consideration, tolerance, patience and a generous spirit". The men chosen to teach would "represent the best of Ontario's culture." They would be responsible for helping immigrant workers become Canadianized, as well as developing the moral character of the pupils in their care. The teachers chosen to teach on these first two cars reflected those qualities

"Unfortunately, I like this life teaching in the bush like an alcoholic likes strong drink."

- Fred Sloman

admirably.

Fred Sloman was selected to teach on CN School Car #1 and Walter McNally on CP School Car #1. Both men were familiar with the north and committed to bringing the vision of Schools on Wheels to reality.

McNally died in 1944, but Fred Sloman went on to teach until his retirement in 1965. In his almost forty years as a school car teacher, Sloman wrote extensively about his experiences and was often interviewed. The following paragraphs offer some insights into his life and share some of his reminiscences about life on wheels.

Called "The Livingstone of the North", Fred Sloman was born in Clinton, Ontario and planned to be a doctor. While recuperating from a wound suffered during World War 1, Slo-

man helped to teach another young soldier to read. He was shocked that this young man could lose an arm and a leg for Canada and yet had not been provided with an education.

When he returned home, Sloman became a teacher instead. His first teaching post was with gifted urban students. He quickly felt they would succeed with or without him and gave up that post to teach in the bush of

northern Ontario. He stated, "Unfortunately, I like this life teaching in the bush like an alcoholic likes strong drink." By the time he was called upon to teach in the school car, he had married Cela and

was a father. During their life together on the rails, they raised five children, hosted numerous guests, sponsored bingo games and other social activities and generally cared for the families of the students Fred taught.

Home was a renovated rail car. The first one was fifty-two feet long, but in 1940, they were given an eighty foot car. The school room was twenty-six feet by nine feet and the rest housed the family of seven.

They had no electricity. In winter, Sloman had to crawl outside under the car to heat the pipes to keep them from freezing. Yet despite the hardships, Sloman and his family appeared to like the life they led. Sloman created a stimulating environment for his students.

(Continued on page 4)

Historical Profile: Fred Sloman

(Continued from page 3)

In addition to the usual curriculum, Sloman and other school car teachers used the materials they had around them and related their lessons to items familiar to their students. The classroom was filled with pictures, books, plants, building blocks and even an aquarium. In the evenings, adult classes were held or Sloman would show moving pictures. Events such as birthdays and Christmas were celebrated with the whole community. Cela Sloman would teach the women sewing, dress-making, hygiene and child care. Both Cela and Fred would help with letter writing or filling out

income tax forms. After a week, Fred Sloman would assign homework for the rest of the month and the school on wheels would move on to the next stop.

The School Car program ran from 1926 until 1967. There were eventually seven school cars working with three rail companies. They served an area of over a thousand miles and edu-

cated 226 students across northern Ontario. The impact of the school car system and of teachers like Fred Sloman cannot be overestimated.

(Information taken from information in *Schools on Wheels* by Karl and Mary Scheussler, The Boston Mills Press, 1986 and *Papers and Records Volume XV 1987*, The Thunder Bay Historical Museum and Society)

Learn more about the School Car

If you would like to learn more about the School Car, visit the Rules Car at Prescott Park and have a look at Allison Tryon's Grade 6 project (from Pinecrest Public School) entitled "School on Wheels", or get *Schools on Wheels* by Karl and Mary Scheussler at Capreol Public Library.

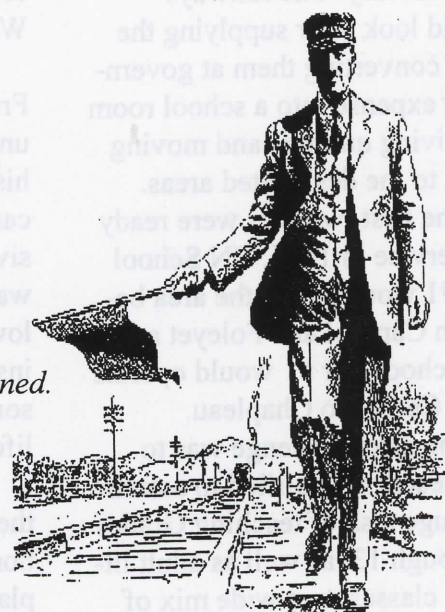
Rail Rhymes

The Old Time Operator

*The ancient operator sits and taps his clacking key,
And ever and anon he spits and smiles reflectively,
And tells tall stories to the boys of hold-up and of wreck,
Of bygone jamborees and joys when he was right on deck!*

*He tells about the phantom freight and like the engineer,
Who met a sad and solemn fate but never knew a fear;
He calls to mind the days of old, when men were full of fight,
When boxcars loaded full of gold went through at dead of night.
With guards who seldom spoke a word and kept a gun in hand,
But who the slightest rustling heard, and thieves with buckshot fanned.*

*He spiels about the time when he was held up by a gang,
And showed the utmost bravery the while the station rang,
With pistol shots and fearful noise, and cusswords vain and vile.
He kept his cool, unshaken poise, and knocked 'em in a pile
And sent a message off for aid, and on them held a gun
And those bad men were sure afraid, but didn't dare to run*



Museum staff help make Capreol Daze a success

Capreol Daze events (August 4 - 7/00), marking our last year as the Town of Capreol, were headquartered at the Museum and kept the staff, students and visitors hopping – sometimes literally!

As part of the fun, the museum workers designed and built a raft, which was featured in the parade Friday evening. The River Rats crew were tenacious, energetic and creative in their strategy. They went on to beat all comers and win the Capreol Millennium Raft Race on Sunday. Congratulations River Rats – winners of the Fireball Award!

Other Capreol Daze events



NORMHC staff in their partially completed raft.

featured at the museum included the Railroad Olympics, a paint ball park and various children's games. The tea room offered visitors a chance to rest up and refresh themselves with beverages and shortcake.

The weather was actually

summer-like and everyone seemed to really capture the festival spirit. The summer staff were kept busy developing the Railroad Olympic events and raft building, in addition to their regular work of leading tours and clerical support.

Thanks to Marlene Lamarche and the five summer staff for all their

extra effort!

Kip Halls was also employed by the museum for the spring and summer. Kip did an excellent job of keeping up with the maintenance at the museum. Thanks for making us look so good, Kip!

NORMHC hosts 2nd annual Garden Tour

NORMHC participated in this year's Blueberry Festival by hosting a Blueberry Tea and our second annual Garden Tour on July 22 and 23, 2000.

Many thanks to the following gardeners for sharing their little bits of heaven with the visitors: Dave Thompson, Bob and Fran Michelutti, Bertilla and John Rodrigues, Dick and Linda Thompson, Denise and Jim LeCain, and Rosemary and Gary Cecchini.

Volunteers keep NORMHC thriving

The task of keeping the museum looking attractive is an ongoing one. Painting inside, upgrading the display areas and adding to the perennial gardens are just some of the areas where busy people have quietly volunteered their time and talents.

Donations

The following are a few examples of items donated this past year:

- 1893 Baptismal dress
- time cards
- typewriters
- tables and chairs
- railroad lanterns and spikes
- flowers for our heritage gardens.

Our sincere "Thank you" to everyone who has donated time, plants, memorabilia and funds to the museum. Your efforts keep NORMHC thriving.

Travelling displays

The museum isn't the only place where the public can view our unique artifacts. Displays are prepared and sent off to other locations as well.

This year, we were invited to send a display to "Timeless Treasures", hosted in Sudbury by the Police Museum. A second display was taken to Parry Sound for the annual CN Pensioners Dinner.

President's Report

Another season has come to a close at the Northern Ontario Railroad Museum and Heritage Centre, and what a season it has been. This has been our most active year to date, thanks primarily to various government employment programs that enabled us to hire summer students. A Human Resources Development Canada grant provided us with four students to assist with tours, exhibit development and research.

We were also fortunate to receive a grant from the Ministry of Citizenship Culture and Recreation to hire a student to help with educational programming. Our marketing Coordinator, Marlene Lamarche who is with us on a one year FedNor grant, has been kept extremely busy developing contacts, implementing organisational improvements and promoting various activities at the museum. Five students: Ryan Crisp, Meghan Dillabough, Shelley Smith, Nadia Berardelli and Tracy Blouin were hired through the above mentioned

Ministry or Human Resources Development Canada. We thank them for their hard work and enthusiasm.

The Town has continued to provide administration support and are working with us in fulfilling our expansion plans, including the new gateway.

As we move into a new era with the formation of the City of Greater Sudbury, the museum must expand its horizons. We are working at defining our role within the new system and by working with the area museums we can develop synergies that will benefit the whole Region.

The museum Board and I look forward to the new millennium and to the challenges ahead. Based on the comments received from visitors, the railroad museum is one of which we can all be proud. Our three years since starting up at 26 Bloor street have more than met our expectations and our future looks promising.

Bob Michelutti
President NORMHC

Volunteer Opportunities

The museum is always on the lookout for committed people interested in volunteering their time and /or expertise.

Right now we are heading in a new direction with fundraising. If you have ideas you'd like to contribute or would like to be part of the fundraising committee, we would appreciate hearing from you as soon as possible. There are a variety of ways you can take an active part.

Students can help

Are you a student seeking a place to contribute your volunteer hours? We can help! Call the museum to find out what opportunities are available for you.

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Museum Hours

May 2001 to Labour Day 2001 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. All other times by appointment.