



Rob O'Flanagan/THE SUDBURY STAR

Northern Ontario Railroad Museum and Heritage Centre workers Kristy Rancourt (front) and Melanie Bright are like a couple of big kids as they watch the model train at the Capreol tourist attraction.

# Museum helps preserve Capreol's railway history

'A lot of train enthusiasts will travel anywhere to see anything about trains'

By Rob O'Flanagan  
THE SUDBURY STAR

Capreol is the only small-town stop on the Canadian route of the American Orient Express.

The reasons: The Northern Ontario Railroad Museum and Heritage Centre is there, as are expert locomotive mechanics who fine-tune the luxury touring train.

"A lot of train enthusiasts will travel anywhere to see anything about trains," said Michelle Godin, the museum's educational co-ordinator. "We get visitors from Finland, England, the States, all over the place."

Established in 1998, the immaculate museum — situated in a stately clapboard house in Prescott Park — houses a series of heritage rooms, each dedicated to an aspect of Capreol's storied history.

Lumbering, mining and railroad-ing have all been integral to the town's development and identity — an identity that remains intact to this day, despite the community's more recent integration into the City of Greater Sudbury.

"Visitors are enchanted by the small-town atmosphere," said tour guide Melanie Bright, a student of history at Wilfrid Laurier University.

"After spending time in the museum, they love to walk the downtown

and take it all in."

The museum is a tribute to the pioneers who carved a rail line through the dense forest and rock of the Northern Ontario community, and who opened the Sudbury district up to the prospectors who discovered valuable minerals in the surrounding hills.

Displays chronicle the impact the railroad had on early settlements in the area, and chart the development of the lumber and mining camps that sprung up in the early days.

"The museum is very kid-friendly," said Bright, as she stood over a working model train in one of the museum's upstairs rooms.

"Children love the train theme."

## Open until September

The most notable and noticeable feature of Prescott Park is the 6077 Mountain-type engine that sits on a stretch of track adjacent to the museum. The train's caboose — or rules instruction car — is open to the public.

The museum is open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday to Sunday throughout the months of June to September. It also features a quaint tea room and souvenirs.

Unique among Ontario museums, the Northern Ontario Railroad Museum and Heritage Centre has experienced an increase in tourist traffic this year, said Godin, a museums studies student at Ottawa's Algonquin College.

Despite facing tough competition from tourism hotbeds like Science North and Dynamic Earth, more and more people appear willing to trek to Capreol for a glimpse of rail history.