

The Railway Museum of BC Newsletter

JUNE - SEPTEMBER 2024

**The North Pole Express Returns again this Year!
Plus the 30th Anniversary of our Park Opening!**



RAILWAY MUSEUM
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

**Vol. 64
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FROM THE EDITOR

Our cover photo acknowledges four of our original association members (left to right): Bill Johnston, Corinne Lonsdale (and former board member), Keith Anderson, David Emmington and Bill Marchant.

Our opening this season from June through to early October, with two days a week (opening on Thursdays and Saturdays), attracted between 150 and 200 attendees a day. On the Thursdays, we hosted the 'Kids Safe' Program, bringing a busload up on seven Thursdays in July and August. The children were treated to a mini rail ride, a Budd car ride, tour of the exhibits with the White Pass & Yukon 'G' scale layout (mentioned in the previous issue of this newsletter) a huge hit. And then lunch with ice cream and a couple of little souvenirs handed out to each child as they left. The initial funding for this program for the past three years has expired and we are looking for new sponsors to assist in supporting this very worthwhile program.

This year's **North Pole Express** includes a couple of changes. Our first weekend is being offered at a 25% discount on all departures. And we are adding five departures for the first time on the Saturday just before Christmas (Dec. 21st). Tickets and all information at wcra.org. Hope to see many of you either for the first time or returning again to this event that has become a 'Christmas Classic'.

Updates from WCRA

Reports from our major department heads for the last quarter:

Bob Philip: President

While we have made some progress toward long term sustainability, we are still struggling with yearly cash-flow deficits. As you know we managed to get by in the past by increasing debt via member loans and hosting movies. Since 2018 we have not added to debt with loans but we have relied on movies. Our intention is to wean ourselves from movie dependency over time by reducing expenses and increasing revenues from business and museum programs. Of course the pandemic and the strike stopped all movie revenue and since the strike ended we have not had any movie requests. The result is reliance on increased revenues and reduced operating expenses. We also need a favourable long term agreement with BCRP.

Here is the update:

- The initial foundation investment in equipment has business revenues increasing as predicted (Gord will update);
- For this year the lack of any movie revenue has impacted net business revenue
- Expenses. Since most of our controllable expenses are in salaries we have eliminated three F/T positions, reduced one position to P/T and reduced open day security and cleaning.

We also eliminated a piece of rental equipment. Total savings amount to just under \$200k.

- Keep in mind the operating deficit was \$412k until we received the Foundation gift.
- The next meeting with BCRP is Oct 3rd and we hope to have some clarification of how to achieve what we need relative to MP2 and track 7.

At this time we would like to see a finance person added to the board and to have the finance committee restarted. We have volunteers who are really stepping up and we need to keep expanding the numbers as we take on more events

Business Operations Report - Gord Bell

The business operations at the Railway Museum of British Columbia are continuing to see growth and recovery from the Covid shut down era.

CN Roundhouse & Conference Centre Event Bookings

The CN Roundhouse and the Mac Norris Station are continuing to see booking growth and recovery.

The first and second quarters drew \$24,500.00 in bare rental income. In addition to the bare rental income, Blacksheep, as the exclusive supplier, is also bringing in similar or larger numbers from the equipment rentals associated with these events

3rd Quarter Bookings - \$14,500.00

July 24th – Fortis Meeting – (Mac Norris Station) – \$3,500.00

August 28th – Surerus-Murphy Staff BBQ - \$3,500.00

September 14th – Wedding - \$5,000.00

September 18th – Surerus-Murphy Safety Meeting - \$2,500.00

4th Quarter Projections - \$12,250.00

October 19th – Sprint the Spit (Contract signed but may move date) - \$3,500.

November 5th – Capilano University – Soccer Gala - \$5,000.00

November 8th – Bespoke Market - \$3,750.00 (major rate increase has been negotiated for 2025).

Total Bare Rental Revenue Projection 2024: \$51,250.00

The association currently spends zero dollars marketing the rental facilities at the Railway Museum of British Columbia. We now have a plan and commitment to spend some marketing dollars toward specific markets with 90% of targeted marketing going toward Weddings and Corporate events.

My initial projection for 2025 (in my last report was for \$100k in bare rentals) but I am confident it will be north of \$100k up to \$150k by the end of 2025.

Major Branded Events

Now that the dust has settled on Day out with Thomas 2024 and we have the final numbers from Hardeep, it has become clear that this event and brand are dying, and the museum would be at serious risk of losing money in 2025. Total net revenue from the entire event in 2024 was in the neighborhood of \$30k. I have gone ahead and sold the first weekend of Thomas dates to a corporate event for around \$26k (total revenue). We will sell the second weekend as well or run museum days. I connected with Mattel to look at the potential of alternate dates and was told any alternate dates would be even more expensive to run so we have gone ahead and cancelled our partnership with Mattel and we will not be producing a Thomas event in 2025. I am currently working closely with Norman Foote to produce a Children's Festival in 2025 to replace the Thomas event. The new event will feature some of our animated new museum characters as well as children's artists and various entertainment and games for kids.

The production of the North Pole Express 2024 is upon us. The first planning meeting has already taken place, and the entire core team is working on all aspects of the production.

The executive team has made some changes to help increase the bottom line and we expect with the extra day and slightly better capacity that the museum will enjoy the most profitable event to date.

Blacksheep Event Rentals

Although Blacksheep experienced a slow start to the year, Blacksheep is now well on its way to another record-breaking year. When the RMBC bought Blacksheep we were producing a gross revenue of just under \$100k annually. This year we are projecting a gross revenue of around \$766,000.00. This is a 33% increase over the 2023 final gross revenue of \$573,000.

This growth is stable, and we are projecting additional growth in 2025 through the corporate partnerships that we built and are continuing to build in 2024.

General Manager's Report (cont'd)

Long term projections show Blacksheep with revenues north of a million dollars by the end of 2026.

Museum Manager's Report - Tom Arnott

On Site Maintenance

I have been working collaboratively with the Squamish Men's shed and they recently repaired and replaced the picket fence at Silver Fox station.

We haven't used the Kids caboose since before Covid and I would like to reinstate the car but the stairs and access platform timbers require replacing. Again, I am hoping the Men's Shed will take on this work. The caboose was gifted to the museum by a McDonald's restaurant in Vancouver and had been refurbished as a kid's play area. It was used in the past for birthday parties and we hope to use it again for this purpose.

There is also on-going refurbishment of the Brightbill House. Painting of the garden picket fence and the front lounge windows has been completed.

Museum Grounds and Gardens

Volunteers Gill Arnott and Karen Schreiber have been busy weeding and revamping the many flower beds and garden areas over the past few months. The front gate is now looking much neater and more welcoming and there are now a number of planters and flower tubs around the grounds. The museum was successful in applying to Woodfibre/LNG for a \$2000 grant and the plan is to use this donation to further improve the garden areas. We have recently planted a new rose hedge in front of the print shop. We recently received a donation of organic garden soil from Coast Aggregates.

Mini-Rail

Work to maintain the track continues and well over 400 of the rotten wooden ties have been replaced with a longer lasting composite tie. The old mini-rail workshop, which was housed in an old BC rail truck body, has been removed and work is on going to replace this structure with a sea container and also to create more locomotive/car storage space. Unfortunately, BC 646 has been out of commission due to mechanical reasons for most of the year but we are hoping that it will be available as a stand-by locomotive for NPX in November. The track and infrastructure is in really good condition and we had very few mechanical or derail issues this year. The plan is to continue with an on going rail maintenance programme over the winter, weather permitting.

Volunteers

We are averaging around 160 volunteer hours a week spread over a small base of volunteers (we have 140 volunteers on our database) though the regular

Where traditionally volunteers would be here for several days per week, we see more coming in for just one day or a few hours to help out. We had a display at the local Fall fair in Squamish which attracts over 5000 visitors. Our object was to continue to promote the museum at a local level and also try to recruit volunteers for the museum and for additional help for North Pole Express. We continue to have some incredible volunteers who give many hours to keep our museum functioning.

Gift Shop

If you have been in the gift shop recently you will have seen that there has been a lot of work done to create more surface area and stands to display a greater amount of merchandise. Further work to create a new display area and cabinet storage drawers along the back wall is planned soon. I plan to move the Gift Shop reception area parallel to the Roundhouse window. This will enable us to open up the shop area and improve access and visibility to shop products.

North Pole Express (NPX)

Yes NPX! We have been working to get our order in for the 3000 items that are required to be available to hand out to kids from Santa and the 9000 mugs that are given out during the event. Planning meetings have now started and we have confirmed many of the essential services that are required to make this event happen. One of our biggest challenges will be getting enough volunteers. We are running over 5 weeks this year starting on Saturday 23rd November and concluding on December 21st. We are again hoping for a sell out and anticipate around 14,000 visitors this year.

Display Exhibits

I have, with the help of many volunteers, started to review and improve our display areas. It's always a challenge to try and continue to make the visitors' experience interesting, particularly as we are seeing a number of families coming on a regular basis. The Marjatta car now has a display of CN and CP crockery and silverware from the early 20th century. Additional display items have been added to the Colonist car and we have received a number of G scale locomotive models from several countries including Spain, Holland and France. We have also just received a large collection of wooden railway models and other railway memorabilia which is going to make a significant difference to what we can display.

Museum Opening Activity

We have now been open since April and are seeing an average of around 150 to 200 visitors per open day. The Thursday openings have also been successful. We had 118 visitors on our last open Thursday. We were offering free entry to Seniors on Thursdays.

Museum Manager' s Report (cont' d)

We are seeing a lot more Squamish families visiting and uptake on family annual passes.

I would very much like to see the museum opening for more days next year and also opening early in the Spring.

374 Pavilion Report - George Game - 374 Volunteer Manager

The 374 Visitor Count to the end of August was 4,718. This was 512 less than last year and much lower than pre-COVID levels (2019).

374 Pavilion Staffing

We currently have 35 Volunteers at the Pavilion, with six off for medical, maternity, or vacation. Finding new Volunteers is always challenging. People come and go regularly. I aim to have at least two or three volunteers scheduled on-site at any time. This allows for sickness, appointments, breaks and increased security.

374 Pavilion Events

Due to changes at the Roundhouse Community Centre, we are now open every day of the year except Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

On Canada Day, we decorated the 374 Pavilion and Engine, had a good turnout, and handed out 240 Canada Day Cupcakes, Paper Canada Flags, and Maple Leaf Tattoos.

Next year, the CPR 374 will have its 138th Anniversary Party on May 18th, 2025, from 12 to 3 PM at the Roundhouse Community Centre in Yaletown. At 10 AM, the engine will be taken outside and prepared for steam. The Little Mountain Brass Band will play their first 45-minute set at noon, starting with O Canada. At 1 PM, a few short speeches will be followed by the band's second set. Cake and Coffee will be served in the Pavilion at 12:30 PM. Children's activities will be available. After the band finishes their second set, the 374 will remain outside until everyone has had a chance to blow the steam whistle. Engine 374 will then be powered down and returned to the Pavilion. Please put this on your calendar and plan to attend. We usually have good weather on this date, and the band is excellent!

The next event at the Pavilion will be the delivery of the Original Stanley Park Steam Train. David Walmsley is almost finished with its new Display Case and will arrange delivery. This will be a great addition to the Pavilion and allow many more people to see an important piece of Vancouver History with this Stanley Park icon re-located back in the city where she belongs.

WCRA Celebrates Museum's Thirtieth Anniversary: Report by Bill Johnston

As a follow-up from page 23 of the last Newsletter, we are pleased to report on the event marking the 30th anniversary of the Museum's official opening. This occurred on the afternoon of July 20th and was a combined event to thank volunteers for their generous support and to celebrate the museum's opening. Tom Arnott and Chrissy Stephen invited board members of that era along with current executives to participate. Only three board members from 1994 remain and fortunately they were all present for a short speech by one of them, Bill Johnston, a past president and long-time board member. He outlined the following history timeline leading up to the present day. The other two board members present from that time were Dave Emmington and Bill Marchant. Johnston's address was followed by Corinne Lonsdale, former mayor of the District of Squamish. It should be noted that she was always a strong proponent of the museum and worked behind the scenes in the district office to ensure that progress was positive. Current President Bob Philip followed with a big thank you to all our wonderful volunteers agreeing that without them we wouldn't be here today. Current Board chair Steve Crombie sent regrets at not being there due to an accident in Stanley Park blocking traffic for hours.

Capsule Timeline of the WCRA's history (from Bill J.)

The nucleus of WCRA was a group of about a half dozen rail fans meeting by chance in the late '50's at the Mission rail bridge following a disruption in service of one of the major railways there. It became the site of a lot of railway activity for awhile – and still is. This group stayed connected and became known as the 'Highballers' and later the 'West Coast Railfan Society'. We were pleased to see Keith Anderson present at our event, one of the original Highballers and still an active volunteer at Engine 374. By 1961 the greatly expanded group was registered as a society as the West Coast Railway Association. Over the years the group acquired some rolling stock and railway memorabilia and various artifacts. By the 1980's the group's activities were centered at the Transportation Museum at Cloverdale in Surrey. A caboose (#1817), Cowichan River passenger car #2263, speeders, and displays were on show three days per week. The Colonist car came soon after donated by Craig McDowall. Randy Rand was the 'almost' resident volunteer guiding visitors through that period.

General meetings were held on the last Tuesday of each month at various places but the most popular venue was Pacific Central Station through the 1980's and into the early '90's.

Expo 86 was a major world's fair, and the theme was transportation. WCRA played a major part in the development and execution of 'Steam Expo'.

This was an exhibition of an amazing working collection of steam locomotives from all over north America including some from overseas. Some will remember the big 'Steam Past' procession along the Vancouver waterfront. Board member Grant Ferguson was instrumental in carrying that off along with countless volunteers. And member Craig McDowall ran the merchandise kiosks on site for the event.

The Association knew that a permanent location was needed to continue the goal of preserving Western Canada's railway heritage. Over the years many sites were considered and by 1987 a short list of three were considered.

- May 1987. First mention of a Squamish site on the shortlist of locations to be considered for a museum. After much analysis it proved to be the best option.
- August 1987. Preliminary survey done and Squamish District starts paperwork to see how it might work.
- March 1988. A draft lease arrives at Squamish council for consideration, review, and comment. Based on a positive response, permission to start clearing the site is given in December.
- April 1989 and following months. Clearing is commenced and continued.
- August 1989. BC Rail tentatively agrees that track access to the site is possible.
- March 1990. BC Rail agrees to specification and location of a #8 switch and subsequent trackage to the site. On November 22nd the first turnout was delivered by Nortrak and installed on December 10th by BC Rail crews. Track was later donated by CN and BN.
- May 25th 1990. Lease is officially signed at Squamish council chambers. Corinne Lonsdale present!
- January 25th, 1991. A one-day workshop was held to focus on the future of the museum. A vision was established. It was a framework for development. As it turned out Hal Kalman of Commonwealth Historic Resource Management lead a team of 8 experts to flesh out the plans. This framework has been followed almost exactly over the years.
- March 1991. Grant Ferguson pleads with BC Rail to stop the planned demolition of their car shop in the north yard.
- March 17th 1991. Museum signs were erected. Trevor Mills, Devon Generous and Jim Miller did the job. At 1:00 PM a short ceremony was held, and the signs 'West Coast Railway Museum' were unveiled. Grant Ferguson and Doug Cummings held the sign. Sirens wailed out from our 1944 PGE Fire Truck.
- June 1991. Work is underway to move the carshop.
- August 9th. 1991. The 300-ton car shop moves! Supreme House Movers confirms that it is the largest building ever moved in BC. It reached its destination on the museum site on the 13th. It wasn't until April 1992 that the building was lowered onto its foundations.

John Amenta led the group in singing 'O Canada' followed by President Don Evans welcoming the crowd of about 700. David Mitchell, MLA for West Vancouver-Garibaldi, brought greetings from the Provincial Government. Mayor Corrine Lonsdale was next and most complimentary about the opening and enthusiastic about the benefit to the community. Roger Clarke, a BC Rail Vice President, wished us continued success as did the last speaker Barry Swift, President of the Howe Sound & District Chamber of Commerce. Two members of the senior advisory board, Mary Collins and Dr. Laverne Kindree, cut the ribbon followed by fireworks and cake. The Royal Hudson arrived back at the Government Road crossing and the dignitaries returned to North Vancouver.

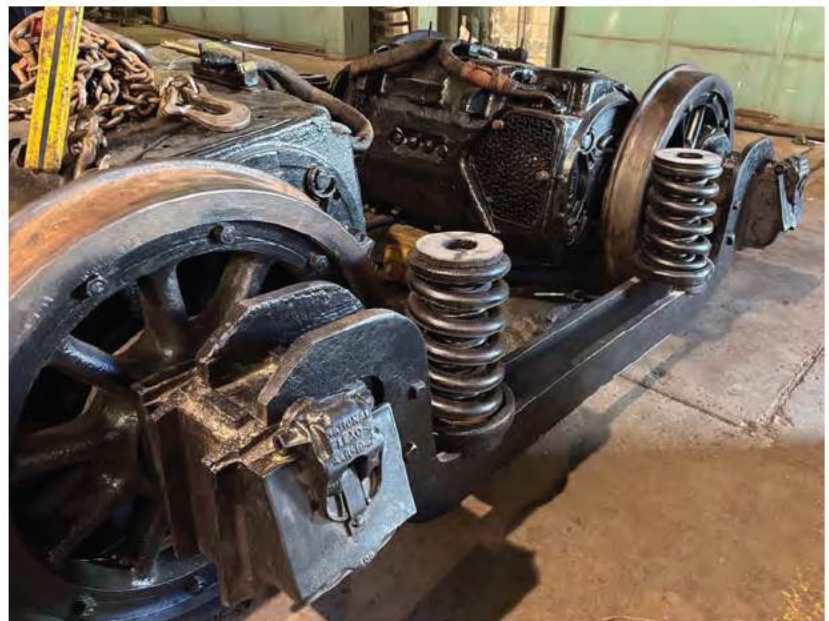
Photos from the Celebration:



Around the Museum

BCER 960 Update - Mike McGaw

Progress is ongoing with the refurbishment of the front trucks as they are off their blocks and wheels back on tracks with both traction units tediously aligned. New rear seals installed in journal boxes. With the help of the overhead crane, we positioned each box over the axles, then inserted babbit components and their respective saddles into journal boxes. The 4 sets of 3 coil springs were positioned on equalizers.



Mike and Bob Gordon did final prep work on both the traction motor set up and the truck frame. They then lifted frame with the help of our 50 ton crane (as the 10 ton crane couldn't reach the truck frame).

Motors were then blocked up so the frame and bolster cavity could pass. Nearly perfect alignment, save for one journal box hang up. Kirby Read and his son Pat stepped up to help it all come together. Bob and Mike continued on related fitting issues which included dropping bolster onto the frame. The truck is now 85% completed.

Photos: Mike McGaw



The Henry Pickering (David Walmsley)

The Henry Pickering being over 100 years old, it may require some structural repairs and improvements. The upper coupler support plates required replacement with additional reinforcement steel. Both ends were completed in just 8 days. All new grade 5 bolts were used to replace the original rivets.



Photos: David Walmsley

Saturday Volunteers

Our 'Open Saturdays' (and Sundays on holiday weekends) have been a steady success consistently drawing close to 200 patrons each day. This wouldn't be possible without our volunteers - many who have attended almost every day. Here is a 'salute' to four of our 'vollies'.



Bill McEnery



Deb Sankey & Lynn Ledgerwood



Darcy Cruikshank

CURRENT RAILWAY NEWS

VIA

Jasper Update:

The municipality of Jasper is currently inaccessible due to the aftermath of the spreading wildfires in the region. For this reason, VIA Rail trains #1 and 2 departing before September 23rd inclusively, will not stop in Jasper. The train station was not damaged from the wildfires.

Train service has been completely re-established, and trains have been travelling as per scheduled since August 7th, but without stopping in Jasper.

Train #2 departing Vancouver on Monday, September 23rd and train #1 departing Toronto on Wednesday, September 25th, will be the first trains to stop in Jasper. The earliest that bookings can be made at the Jasper Park Lodge is Nov.17th. (VIA)

Issues with the new Venture Trainsets

Via Rail passengers are speaking out after their train from Montreal to Quebec City broke down, leaving them stranded for about 10 hours over the long weekend with a lack of food, water and access to a toilet for prolonged intervals.

Rudy El Maghariki says what he expected to be a three-and-a-half-hour trip on Saturday became a 14-hour ordeal. "We were just tired. We were hungry. We were thirsty. We couldn't go out," he said, saying it became almost impossible to breathe after so many hours without fresh air.

Like many others on train 622, El Maghariki expected to arrive in Quebec City around noon for a weekend visit. But he says the train came to a stop about 45 minutes away from the destination. He said staff members initially told passengers the train was having some mechanical and technical issues, but he said after hours, there was still no update — and people were getting upset and restless.

Via Rail confirmed that passengers were stuck for 10 hours on Saturday when a train broke after experiencing two consecutive mechanical issues. The company said the situation was particularly complex because the train was on single-track territory in an isolated area and no buses were available in the region to offer alternative transportation during the long weekend.

Federal Transport Minister Rodriguez said he is determined to get to the bottom of the delay and met with VIA Rail executives and told them the way passengers were treated was unacceptable and demanded a full report. (CP)

CN

On Sept. 16th, Canadian National has announced it's moving its crew change terminal out of Jasper, AB., which apparently has nothing to do with the recent wildfires but has been under consideration for some time.

The terminal will be moved from Jasper to a new location about 100 kilometres east, in the Hinton/Dalehurst AB area, CN said in a letter to Jasper-based employees. The letter said the decision is aimed at improving "network fluidity" between Edmonton and Blue River/McBride, B.C. The change is scheduled to take effect by September 2025, according to Ashley Michnowski, media relations for CN.

The CN Drawbridge over Rainy Lake ON, just east of Fort Frances collapsed on August 14th, luckily shortly after a train passed over it. This is the CN line to Thunder Bay. Even though the bridge looks to have new paint, it's reported to be over 100 years old. The bridge is automated, and while raising the drawspan after a train passed over it, the tower section collapsed and dropped the drawspan.

(TRNS)



Union files Notice during Labour Negotiations

Unifor, the union representing about 3,600 Canadian National Railway mechanical, clerical, and intermodal employees in Canada, has filed a Notice of Dispute with the Canadian government regarding its negotiations with the railroad, CN has announced.

The move on Friday, Sept. 27, came just three days after Unifor, Canada's largest private-sector union, with more than 315,000 members, began negotiations with CN over a contract that expires on Dec. 31.

The notice, sent to Canada's labor minister, generally leads to appointment of a conciliation officer to assist the parties in reaching an agreement. (VP)

Pending Dockworkers Strike on US Eastern Seaboard

The International Longshoremen's Association and the United States Maritime Alliance, which represents ports from Maine to Texas, are at an impasse in their contract talks. The union says it's prepared to walk out on Oct. 1. President Joe Biden has said he will not invoke the Taft-Hartley Act to end a strike. With a dockworkers strike looming at East Coast and Gulf Coast ports, Surface Transportation Board Chairman Robert E. Primus has asked BNSF Railway and Union Pacific to provide information on how they will handle the anticipated surge in container traffic at West Coast ports. *Update: Negotiators reached a deal on Oct. 4th to avert the projected long term strike* (CNN)

Britain's Royal Mail Service to End

The British postal service, Royal Mail, announced it will cease using its dedicated fleet of mail and parcel carrying trains in October, giving three months notice to DG Cargo, the rail freight company that runs the trains on its behalf. Royal Mail stated that this is due to two main reasons. The increased cost of running electric trains as British electricity prices have risen dramatically since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. And because its purpose built train fleet now needs expensive investment due to its age. (TRNS)

Late Breaking News

CN

Canada's Federal Court of Appeals gives CN's planned Toronto-area intermodal facility the go-ahead. The court has overturned a lower-court ruling blocking Canadian National Railway's development of a Toronto-area intermodal facility, allowing construction of the terminal to move forward.

The Canadian Press reported that a three-judge panel ruled on Oct. 7th that the federal government's decision to allow construction of the facility in Milton, Ontario, was reasonable despite "significant adverse environmental effects." That overturned a March decision that found the government had failed to consider the adverse impact of diesel exhaust from locomotives and trucks at the Milton Logistics Hub. (CP)

VIA

VIA announced a 'Black Friday' 8 day sale until October 15th with fare savings of up to 40% off on specific routes. One example is 40% off on Berths in Sleeper Plus class on board the Canadian for travel between November 15, 2024, and March 30, 2025.

The Grand Canyon Railway

Commemorating the first passenger train to arrive from Williams to the Grand Canyon's south rim on Sept. 17, 1901, and the line's reopening 88 years to the day in 1989, The fleet's flagship, 2-8-2 No. 4960, was no exception on Sept. 21, as the Mikado-type was on the head-end of the 16-car excursion with over 1,000 tons on the drawbar, according to GCRY chief mechanical officer Eric Hadder. Even with assistance from F40 diesel No. 4128, the morning drizzle did no favors for the heavy train when climbing the grades northbound. "It took two attempts to make it through the 'S' curve at MP 48, and up the wye at Grand Canyon," said Hadder. "This created a delay of about 45 minutes in extra time".

CPKC

CPKC ran an OCS business train with their two F units from Calgary to Vancouver on Sep 1st-2nd. The train returned EB to Calgary on Sept. 3rd-4th. (RG)



Photo was taken at MP 118 on the Shuswap sub at 5:45 PM on Sept. 4th

Photo: Russ Grycan

UP 'Big Boy' #4014

UP #4014 departed on Aug. 28th from Cheyenne, Wyoming on its 'Heartland of America Tour', and traveled across nine additional states: Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas. The eight-week tour concludes in late October. An interesting fundraiser on the tour included four spots in a 'cab ride' for 90 minutes en route which were placed up for auction with all proceeds benefiting two related causes: the Union Pacific Museum Association and Union Pacific's 'Friend-to-Friend' Network, a nonprofit operated by current and retired employees that assists railroad families in times of need, such as medical or natural disaster hardships. Two spots went for \$6000, one for \$6100 and the last one on Sept. 4th went to \$10,100! (UPHS)

Amtrak

New Maintenance Facility Announced for Amtrak's Seattle Yard

Amtrak has awarded a construction contract for upgrades to its King Street Yard in Seattle, meant to prepare the facility for arrival of next-generation Amtrak Airo equipment for the Amtrak Cascades route as well as improving maintenance for long-distance trains that use the facilities.

PCL Construction Services will lead design and construction on the project, slated for completion in 2027. Work will be completed in the existing footprint of the yard, located south of Seattle's Stadium District. The project will include a new two-bay maintenance and inspection facility and a new service and cleaning bay.

In addition to Cascades trains, the facility handles Amtrak's Coast Starlight and Empire Builder, as well as Sound Transit's Sounder commuter trains. (TRNS)



Hurricane Helene Causes Disruption on Amtrak

Amtrak train #98 was en route from Miami, FL to New York, NY with many stops along the way. One passenger, Brandi Phillips, got on the train at a Savannah, GA station around 10 p.m. Thursday. An hour later, the train suddenly stopped.

Passengers were told the train stopped because a tree had fallen across the tracks and "we couldn't move. They (Amtrak) had sent us a mass text saying that crew members would be here in 60 minutes to get everything cleared away, and we would be back and rolling," Phillips said. "60 minutes turned into 15 hours!"

Hours later, the passengers were finally allowed off the train as buses were organized to take the riders to their designated locations. (TRNS)

A LOOK BACK in our ARCHIVES

WCRA Newsletter – September 1979

Association News

A Heritage Committee was formed as our delegate to the Heritage Canada meetings will be selected from this committee. Members are Craig McDowall, 'Rockin' Ron Pajala, Bob Gaevert, Jim McPherson and Fritz Lehman.

Re: the association acquiring any cars from CPR, three conditions were set out by Omar Lavallee: Location to place car, status as a registered non profit society and stipulation whether we want a donation or will purchase the car.

We have written BC Hydro re: possibility of a fan trip next year

The Skagit River Fan Trip

A warm sun shone as 12 WCRA members for our fan trip to Skagit River and the Lake Whatcom railways. Arriving in Sedro Wooley, WA, we saw the ex Seattle City Light RR 2-6-2 1928 Baldwin and its three ex Milwaukee 1947 vintage coaches that made up the consist. With 44 inch drives the locie wasn't made for speed but rolled along nicely after departing Sedro Wooley at 25-30 mph which was appropriate as it was running on a BN branch line to Concrete WA. The train crew were called out from BN's active roster.

The trip to Concrete was 24 miles and as it turned out, we would arrive for Concrete's annual 'Good Ole Days' festival. A stop at Birdsvie before arriving at Concrete was to pick up country and western singer Billy Wyatt, who entertained us on the train. And then one mile out of Concrete we stopped again, this time to decorate the locomotive with American flags to arrive as a 'special' with her whistle blaring. We were able to catch the parade and spent a few minutes in town before the train departed west after the locomotive ran around the consist and went 'tender first' back to Sedro Wooley. We had lunch in town at the Skagit Station, sitting in the 'Cascade Pass': a Pullman built for the UP in 1929.

Then on to Lake Whatcom for a ride behind the LWRR's #1070 – an Alco 0-6-0 built in 1908 for the Northern Pacific pulling two NP coaches formerly used on their 'Mainstreeter' passenger train. The trip from Park to Wickersham and return was a perfect ending for an enjoyable day in Washington State.

WCRA AMTRAK Excursion

A few members and some friends took the Pacific International on a day trip to Seattle on June 28th. The three car train of Amcoach, Amcafe and Amcoach was powered by a F40PH #213 and was well occupied when departing Vancouver and was at capacity leaving Bellingham. South of Bellingham, the old interurban line remains were quite visible on collapsing trestles above high tide. Upon arriving in Seattle, a brief tour of Amtrak's coach yard saw a wide variety of newer

Amfleet and conventional cars. The Coast Starlight departed with two SDP40F diesels and 17 coaches (including 3 domes!). A few members rented a car at King Street Station and went on a Seattle-Tacoma trip with the first (and most depressing stop) at the Milwaukee Tacoma shops.

The shops were very rundown, with many damaged (some burnt) units stored unrepaired: from switchers to a U36C. There is no remaining evidence of the former electrification. Track condition is very poor and looks unmaintained for some time. You wouldn't want to move anything faster than walking speed over these tracks. An interesting place for lunch is a block from King Street station called the 'Iron Horse'. It serves hamburgers and sandwiches: all with famous passenger train names. And your order is delivered by a model railroad train along the walls of the restaurant! A continuous slide show also adds to the ambience. We returned on the NB 'Pacific International' departing at 19:30 and it was standing room only from Seattle to Bellingham.

BC Rail

Premier Bill Bennett on August 29th said that any move to extend the BCR to Alaska would first need a commitment of US dollars. The justification for extending the line, as he stated, would be for political or military strategy to connect Alaska with the other 48 mainland states. And obviously this would not be accomplished by the province or Washington state, it would have to be on the federal level on both sides of the border.

BC Rail's RDC-3 #31 is now the regular lead unit on the Caribou Dayliner and to fit this role, it has been fitted with permanent ditch lights mounted below the cab windows and has had the front vestibule steps removed. This unit was formerly a Great Northern Budd car built in 1956 and it was the replacement to the former #31 that was wrecked in 1973.

The three remaining ex BN RDC-2's that BC Rail had in storage at Squamish are headed to VIA's Point St. Charles shops. The Budd's (#B40-42) were spotted on flat cars in BCR's yard in North Vancouver on August 26th. They were all ex Northern Pacific and were purchased from BN by the BCR after the inception of Amtrak.

BCR's ex CPR 2-8-0 #3716 is on her way north to star in a movie titled 'The Gold Train'. It was in the North Van yards on August 28th ready to depart on the CN mainline to Edmonton. In the consist was two tank cars (for water and oil), a power car and the NRHS Portland chapter's 'Mt. Hood'. The filming is to be done on the Northern Alberta Railway's line at the town of Smith (45 kms east of Slave Lake). Working with #3716 will be NAR's 2-8-0 #50 and rolling stock from the Alberta Pioneer Railway Association.

And yet another movie is scheduled to be shot next year partially on the BCR mainline, presumably with #3716. The tentative title is 'The Gray Fox', and will be based on the train robbery at Silverdale, BC 75 years ago when a CPR train was looted on Sept. 10th, 1904 by Billy Miner, who escaped across the border and was finally arrested and put in jail for his crime.

BC Gov't Museum Train

The Museum Train ended up its 1979 season on the island closing its schedule in Victoria on August 22nd. The display coaches will be stored at the E&N roundhouse, as has been the case in past seasons. As the Royal Hudson's 'Good Time Express' covered most of the province earlier this year with the Museum train display cars, the Museum train itself visited mostly smaller communities closer to its home base. The tour started in Steveston, moved through Mission, Agassiz, Hope, Coquitlam, then over to the island to Courtney, Qualicum, Port Alberni, Ladysmith, Chemainus, Lake Cowichan and Shwanigan Lake before its last stop in Victoria. Rumours are that this year will be its last.

CP

A \$4 million program to upgrade CP's Coquitlam yard is completed. The upgrade included increasing trackage to boost capacity from 3500 to 3750 cars, lighting and drainage upgrades, computer systems and an extension to the yard office. Close to 1000 employees work at this yard with an annual payroll of \$16 million,

The revival of CP Rail's Drake Street carwasher used for washing VIA's Canadian was short lived. As of the end of August, the unit is inactive and appears to have been damaged. One of the units that contained rotary brushes has been snapped completely off its base. Repairs are very unlikely as the Canadian will move its Western terminus to the CN VIA station this fall. Currently the consist is being washed by hand at Drake Street!

CN

Oops! A CN switcher working the south end of the Lulu Island line, somehow snagged and tore down a telephone company trunk cable on August 31st with all telephone service in the area cut off for six hours.

VIA

Three of the famous private cars owned by George Pinns (including the renowned 'Pennsylvania' observation car #120) were in Vancouver for two days in late August. They were on a transcontinental rail tour (1st class style). The Pennsylvania, built in 1928, was used by many former US presidents during campaign 'whistle stops'. This tour started in NYC, then crossed the border to Montreal, added to 'The Canadian' to Winnipeg, then on CN to Edmonton. There a VIA FP9 #6508 took the three coaches to Peace Lake and Slave Lake

on the Northern Alberta Railway and the Alberta Resources Railway. This was the first passenger train to ever operate on the ARR. The coaches were then added to VIA's #3 with four units on the head end back in Edmonton to Vancouver and then departed on VIA #4 back across Canada and then across the border to NYC. A couple of interesting side bars: VIA FP9 #6508 made the entire trip with train and the Pennsylvania is compatible with either steam or electric hookups. There were 38 passengers on this trip with a crew of one mechanic, two Pullman porters, a cook, a waiter and Mr. Pinns himself.

AMTRAK

Amtrak's Board of Directors approve a number of route changes on August 29th which will in, all likelihood, mean the Pacific International's time table will change. The main effect in the Pacific Northwest is the combination of the PI (Van-Seattle) and the 'Mount Ranier (Seattle – Portland) to be done on October 1st. This change would end up with the PI arriving in Portland about the same time as the SB 'Coast Starlight'.

Misc. News

A 0-4-0 narrow gauge Porter lettered B.R. passed through town on a flat deck truck apparently headed to Duncan on Vancouver Island as part of a new restaurant project. It came from mine service in Dawson City.

Metal Morphosis (an art and metal craft shop in Gastown) has converted the courtyard at the back of their Water Street premises and laid ballasted rail and are moving in an ex-CP caboose which will be a challenge as it will have to come down a narrow back alley. And the kicker is, at this point, they aren't sure how they want to use it!

Former Hillcrest Lumber Climax #10, recently owned by Terry Ferguson, is now at the Union Pacific shops in Seattle.

Milwaukee Road's Sumas branch, a short piece of isolated MILW right of way from Bellingham to Sumas is used to interchange with CPR and BC Hydro. Due to the embargo on freight to Canada over Milwaukee, this train is shorter than in the past and now only operates 3 days a week. They leave cars at Linden WA on the way to Sumas but the track is so bad that only one unit can switch at Linden (due to weight restrictions) and the two normal power units are a GP-35 and a SD-10 and are so undependable that some days they never leave Bellingham!

The Carmi Sub track removal by CP Rail has been temporarily put on hold. CP announced they will delay any removal until June 1st, 1980. This will allow time for final work on surveys and feasibility studies to determine the potential of a

tourist operation on the line. The Society rallied a lot of support in a hurry with over 700 people gathering at the Capri Hotel on August 22nd and subsequent meetings drawing large crowds to the extent that the Provincial Government has now got involved. While the government is not interested in restoring the line, they have now offered to lease the line, through the Myra Canyon, if it is operated as a tourist line by a private investor. However there is a dramatic difference in cost estimates to repair the line with the government estimate of \$ 25M vs the Kettle Valley Railway Society's estimate of \$20-\$100k!



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Note: Don't forget for WCRA members to keep track of your volunteer hours for 2024 and send to donna@wcra.org. Deadline is January 31st, 2024.

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Back Cover Photo: CN Business Train: On the south track at Stoyama Creek on Sept. 12, 2024 10:55 nearing Spence. Photo: Ken Storey



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