

Editor's note: CN has bought back most of the former N.A.R. lines it sold to the short line operators some years ago. The Athabasca Northern Railway from Boyle to just south of Ft. McMurray was not purchased. Since these lines were the ones travelled by the Centennial Train, time will tell if there will be any further excursion trips.

CN purchases RailAmerica's Alberta short lines for C\$26 million

EDMONTON, Jan. 19, 2006 - CN announced today the purchase of the Alberta short-line railways owned by RailAmerica, Inc., of Boca Raton, Fla., for C\$26 million in cash. In addition, RailAmerica may receive up to C\$4 million in future payments, depending on the development of new business on the acquired railways.

CN is buying the Mackenzie Northern Railway (MKNR) and the Lakeland & Waterways Railway (LWR), both located north of Edmonton, following RailAmerica's decision to divest its Alberta short lines. Also included in the transaction is the Central Western Railway (CWR), a 21-mile railway in east-central Alberta used largely for training purposes that also carries a small amount of agricultural traffic.

Except for a small part of the CWR, all of the lines connect with CN's network. CN plans to upgrade MKNR and LWR trackage to improve customer service and rail efficiencies, and to maximize the lines' potential for hauling larger volumes of oil and gas infrastructure building materials, oil sands by-products, minerals, and forest and grain products in northern Alberta.

These feeder lines are a good fit for CN's merchandise and bulk commodity businesses at a time of major energy project development in northern Alberta. Operating the LWR will strengthen CN's connection to the Alberta Oil Sands, while the MKNR component will allow CN to participate directly in the proposed natural gas pipeline projects and give the company access to modern on-line grain elevators and pulp plants.

The 600-mile MKNR runs north from Smith, Alta., located about 130 miles north of Edmonton, to Hay River, N.W.T. The LWR, which connects with CN in the Edmonton area, has 118 miles of track and extends to Boyle, Alta., where it in turn connects with the Athabasca Northern Railway. The Central Western Railway, in east central Alberta, links with CN near Drumheller, Alta.

CN began operating the rail lines today, following the close of the transaction with RailAmerica.

Together, the railways carried about 50,000 carloads of freight last year and employed roughly 130 people who

today join a larger organization with a strong interest in growing traffic on these rail lines. CN will honour the existing collective agreements of the acquired railways. Integration of the properties into CN is expected to take less than six months.

For a map of the new CN lines:
<http://www.cn.ca/PDF/NewAlbertaCNlines.pdf>

Canadian National Railway Company spans Canada and mid-America, from the Atlantic and Pacific oceans to the Gulf of Mexico, serving the ports of Vancouver, Prince Rupert, B.C., Montreal, Halifax, New Orleans, and Mobile, Ala., and the key cities of Toronto, Buffalo, Chicago, Detroit, Duluth, Minn./Superior, Wis., Green Bay, Wis., Minneapolis/St. Paul, Memphis, St. Louis, and Jackson, Miss., with connections to all points in North America.

Editor's note:

Please help fill this space!

Hi everyone! I have taken over the editorial and production duties of the Marker from Dave Stokes. Many thanks go to Dave for his hard work on the Marker.

As with the museum in general, the Marker needs the efforts of many. Please send any articles, submissions or ideas to me via email: syakimets@shaw.ca, drop off for me at the museum, or at one of the meetings. Typewritten or computer composed text are both acceptable. Photos can be digital or regular film photos, and I can also handle negatives.

I hope to publish every other month, depending on available articles and time.

Next issue will be May 2006. Focus of the May edition will be international train journeys. Have you ridden the Ghan in Australia? What about the Swiss railways? Were you a speeding bullet on the Shinkansen in Japan? Send me your stories, experiences, and photos.

Sincerely,
 Stephen Yakimets
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**THE CENTENNIAL TRAIN ISSUE --
 THE NORTHERN ALBERTA RAILWAY
 COMES ALIVE ONE MORE TIME!**

(The following is from a Travel Alberta press release)

Centennial Train Ride offers 'Journey of a Lifetime'

Northern Alberta Railway comes to life after 30 years

Nine Centennial excursions, five locations the first two weekends in September - the Train will again be King!

This September, the past will come to life! Residents throughout Northern Alberta and visitors from around the world will be able to experience the nostalgia of passenger train travel as the Northern Alberta Centennial Train relives railway history.

Nine excursions will be offered in five locations the first two weekends in September. Slave Lake, McLennan, Peace River, the Alberta Railway Museum, Namao and Boyle will all be pick-up points.

Passengers will experience places no longer traveled by train. All will include on-board entertainment, Alberta Prairie Railway's special brand of hospitality with most excursions experiencing a reenacted train robbery. Some excursions are round trip with special whistle stops, several being one-way trips with return bussing. Boxed lunches will be available.

Adult fares range from \$25 - \$125. Children's fares are \$25-\$110. All tickets will be picked-up at departure site. Passenger pick-up locations will be announced when ordering tickets. Tickets can be ordered by calling Alberta Prairie Railway Excursions at 1-800-282-3994.

"As the major participating partner in this project, Alberta Prairie Railway Excursions (APRE), is pleased to be able to offer equipment and expertise to make this important Alberta Centennial project happen," said Bob Willis, General Manager APRE.

"We are very pleased to be able to offer a unique and entertaining experience for the public by operating special passenger train rides at selected locations this September," said Don Gillespie, President of Alberta Prairie Railway Excursions, a major sponsor of the event.

Much of Northern Alberta was opened up to settlement and resources development as a direct result of the arrival of the rail and the Northern Alberta Railway (NRA). For people in the north the NRA represented the only practical means of transporting goods and people. Today the Passenger Extra Train is only a faint memory and a thing of the past.

"Through the support of the Alberta Lottery Fund, the Alberta Pioneer Railway Association, Mackenzie Northern Railway, and Lakeland & Waterways Railway, passenger trains will again roll on portions of the former Northern Alberta Railways lines for the first time in more than 30 years."

The Northern Alberta Centennial Train project committee members include Don Gillespie, president APRE, Bob Willis, general manager APRE, Herb Dixon, president Alberta Pioneer Railway Association, Shawn Smith, vice-president Rail America, and Tim Husel, general manager Mackenzie Northern Railway.

For further information and tickets contact:
 Alberta Prairie Railway Excursions
 1-800-282-3994

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A TRAIN OF THE CENTURY.

By: George H France

Alberta as a Province of Canada was incorporated in September 1905, but at that time, a railway to the Peace Country was but a dream.

The first train reached Peace River in 1916. Over the years passenger trains hauled countless people and their possessions to and from the Peace Country, until the last train on the Central Canada left Hines Creek for Winagami Junction and the South in May 1960.

The last scheduled public passenger train on Northern Alberta Railways ran on June 01 1974.

Since that time, there was a charter special from Roma Junction to High Level to celebrate a High Level Homecoming

in October 1983. VIA also ran a charter shuttle between Pine Point NWT, and Hay River for the Arctic Winter Games one year. Then in 1989 VIA sent a short train to transport Officials, Dignitaries, and special guests over the opening of the Duet Junction (Peace River) to Diashowa Pulp Mill line.

Since that time there has been considerable development of Northern Alberta so in celebration of the Province's Centennial, it was fitting to recognize the role played by the Railways.

What better way than to run a traditional public passenger train? Planning required the co-operation of four principal parties. The Parent owning Railroad; Rail America; the Operating Company; Railink Mackenzie Northern; The Alberta Railway Museum of

Alberta Pioneer Railway Association, for the Historical aspect, and the Alberta Prairie Steam Tours who had the coaches and staff to actually run the train. Alberta Gaming provided additional funding in support of the venture.

On Saturday September 4th 205 a passenger train loaded at Slave Lake on the old N.A.R. and ran to Canyon Creek and back, then re-boarded passengers for a long run to High Prairie, arriving in late evening to be greeted by a very large crowd.

On Sunday morning, 4th September "Train # 5" was scheduled to depart McLennan at 09:00hrs to arrive Peace River on the Central Canada Line at 11:30hrs. Only a dozen or so people were waiting at Peace River, including the Transport Canada "Operation Lifesaver" display bus.

11:30 came and went as did 12:00 Noon. However, the N.A.R. Never Arrived Regularly.

At 12:20 hrs a haze of blue brake smoke appeared, slowly descending the seven miles of 2.2% grade from Judah.

As the train approached Trestle 48.5, Peace River we saw BL20s #2121 and 2120, spotlessly clean in blue and white, lettered for Railink Mackenzie Northern. Large blue Alberta flags draped the loco body sides and the classification flags were miniature Alberta flags. There came five coaches in the old Canadian National colours of black green and gold, but decaled for Alberta Prairie. Carrying the markers was a green caboose, a wide cupola steel van ex-CPR but lettered for Esquimalt and Nanaimo, and decaled with Safety First slogans. In addition, the marker flags were blue Alberta Provincial flags.



The official "classic arrival point for Peace River". Mile 48.6 Central Canada Railway

train reached Kerensky Junction and diverted onto the former St.Paul/Cold Lake line - certainly a "rare mileage" excursion for the railfan. As the train reached the new end of track at Waskatenau, the sun had begun to come out. So had the Bolton Gang, back for another unsuccessful try. Perhaps Gabriel had wounded more than their pride on the previous day, as they weren't smart enough to avoid being shot up another time.

Sunday afternoon waned on. They seemed undisturbed by the many locals chasing the train with their cars, like a slow game of cat and mouse. While our train's ten-to-thirty mile per hour pace was no challenge for them, it was certainly representative of leisurely branchline travel in days gone past. With the exception of the diesel locomotive on the rear of the train, 1392 and her 'green & gold' consist looked like a scene right out the mid-1950's. It was like an echo of



Welcome to Waskatenau - with 1392 in the background, the crowd gathers around Gabriel Dumont. Conductor Ken Jones prepares to board passengers

Once the robbers were rounded up, the corralled passengers were allowed to pour off the train in this northern prairie town, quickly outnumbering the locals. A band played on a trailer brought in as a stage for the occasion, appropriately decked out with Alberta and centennial flags. Many made their way to the front of the train to watch the old 1392 take the lead for the trip home. It would take more than a few "all aboard" calls for the conductors to board all their wards, while ensuring all the local residents touring the waiting train had returned to their town.

The return trip saw warm and contented passengers dozing and gazing at the pastoral scenes as a lazy

those that had served this line until the end of steam and passenger service, in an era when time had a different meaning.

Pulling into the Alberta Railway Museum a little 'past the advertised' but well before supper, the guests quietly departed with photos, memories, and a faint glimpse of what Alberta was like one hundred years ago.

Alberta Prairie has amply demonstrated that their excursions are by no means limited to their Stettler-Big Valley home trackage, but could export goodwill and organization to any lonesome railway line.

Ken A. Jones. Copyright (c) 2006.

As passengers settled in, Gabriel made use of the public address system to inform, and entertain. With an "All Aboard!" by one of the Alberta Railway Museum's volunteer Passenger Conductors, a quick glance out the windows confirmed for them that the train was underway as smoothly as a night sleeper. The derail protecting the ARM's museum property was duly passed, and the former St. Albert Station faded into the background as the conductors drew their punches and called 'tickets please.'

First among the scenic highlights of the day was the scenic Sturgeon River valley. Beautiful shades of yellow and red laid the carpet for our entrance into Gibbons, whistle wailing. Much of the town dropped what they were doing for a look at the odd apparition that was this train from Alberta's past. The same was true for Thorhild, a little further up the line. Next up was the large Coronado wooden trestle. Cameras popped out of nowhere to capture this scene, not visible from local roads. Along the way the hissing steam monster startled both cows and locals.

Speaking of being startled - just when the safety of the Town of Redwater had come into view, some bold bandits on horseback stopped the train to rob it! The Bolton Gang had tracked Alberta Prairie's train from their favourite haunts near Stettler. Just as they had boarded the train to lighten passengers of their centennial coinage, Gabriel Dumont got the drop on them



Train Robbery! The Bolton Gang in action

and rounded them all up, with as few gunshots as necessary. A stop was made for passengers to enjoy a band playing old country tunes, and for Alberta Prairie staff to hand out centennial souvenirs.

Back on board, signpost names like Kerensky, Egremont, Abee, Newbrook, Alpen and Ellscott lazed past passenger windows. On arrival in Boyle it appeared that most of the town had emptied onto the former station grounds. Fortunately they all had tickets to take a short trip back down the line to the spur track out towards the Al-Pac Pulp Mill and then back to town. Buses were waiting to take many of the northbound passengers back to their cars at the Alberta Railway Museum. Only seventeen or so hardy souls planned to take the train round trip back to Edmonton, arriving around eleven that night.

The best thing about the trip is that it was a typical branchline journey, similar to those of 50 and 75 years, leaving the big city for the outlying towns and farms – much like going home for Thanksgiving. It was a thoroughly pleasant and representative trip in friendly company and creature comfort - the likes of which our province's founders only dreamed of when they came to tame this land.

The next day all was pleasantly repeated in kind. It even saw a few children dressed in their Sunday best, Set for an outing with grandma & grandpa, they would learn about their family's past by experiencing it. The

The first four clerestory coaches were loaded with 244 passengers. The fifth, a semi streamlined coach of later date, was serving as the Commissary and Staff Car, but carrying no passengers.

As the train approached, a heavy thumping was apparent. Were they even replicating a flat wheel on an old NAR coach? As the Car #6747 passed, the lead truck was bumping up and down on the railhead. There was a large lump on the near wheel of axle 2, A end. It transpired that the brake shoe on that wheel was hard cast iron and had severely overheated on the long downgrade, transferring weld onto the wheel. Within the hour, Mackenzie Northern had a service truck and grinder on site, and the problem was corrected and a new brake shoe installed.

Meanwhile the train was shunted onto the main siding, to allow passage of the southbound North Freight. Four leased CN SD 40s with 87 cars of lumber products from High Level and Manning, and MT oil tankers from Hay River.

The train then backed up to the Depot and loaded passengers for the run to Daishowa Pulp Mill approach, departing at 15:30 hrs for a two hour run out and back. As passengers lined up to board, they passed the display of 1/8th scale replica N.A.R. trains that I had set up beside the old N.A.R. Caboose.

Monday, September 05. A lovely warm sunny day. A crowd is gathered at Peace River N.A.R. Station waiting to board the 11:00 hrs "No: 5 to" Grimshaw, current end of steel. The local media had largely ignored

the coming of this Train, hence the small welcoming crowd yesterday. However, today people are asking, begging for any tickets or no-show seats. Loading takes longer than scheduled, and departure is 11:20. The train lost time on every segment of its travels, due to loading procedures, stops to align switches, remove de-rails and slow orders. True N.A.R. and nobody fretted.

Who are the people who ride this Train? Mostly upper middle age or seniors, but with a good sprinkling of (Great)- Grandchildren. Scarce were the "Now generation". This was a journey of memories and recollections.

As we slowly climbed the west hill grades, a view across the Peace River valley revealed another train - the Diashowa Turn, stopped between Judah and Grouard hill grade crossings, so strung out across the high Heart River trestle. As we cleared the Duet Yard limits the other train moved on down to Peace River. With all the windows open we gazed in awe at the vistas across the wide river valley,

with herds of Elk and Bison grazing the hillside pastures. 8.9 miles brought us to Roma and the top of the grade. Gone are the grain elevator, store, and hamlet. Just a siding with one bad-ordered tank car set out.

Speed limit on the Hills is 15 mph. Roma to Roma Jct. just 3.1 miles allows 25 mph, so we really rocked and rolled along but with a slow to 10 across a high trestle. A stop to align the Roma Jct. switch, and again to reset it for the North train. Roma Jct. to Grimshaw, still



Peace River station with George France's NAR mini-rail under N.A.R. caboose

owned by CN is 10 mph only, and the train was literally ploughing through dense Canada thistle stands while tree branches brushed the coach sides for the 4.4 miles.

It looked as if the entire population of Grimshaw was on hand to meet the train, including the Operation Safety Bus and a Fast Food kitchen van. However, the crowd was held way back from the tracks, and then we learned the reason as a gang of bandits rushed the train on horseback. The notorious Bolton Gang had trailed the train all the way from Stettler, hitting it on every segment.

After "Gabriel Dumont" had once again subdued them, a shocking announcement on the P.A. stated the Dispatcher (in Ontario) did not think there was time to detrain passengers for food, as we would be in conflict with the Diashowa Turn and the Southbound North Train. This is a very busy railroad.



North Train with bad-ordered coach at Peace River

Somebody did a quick re-think. The Power had to run around the train, retrieve the Caboose, set it on the West end of the coaches, then run by again and couple up on the East end. So we were all allowed to detrain, and told to re-board when we heard the long blast on the (whistle). Departure was at 14:30, our scheduled arrival time at Peace River, and the journey took one hour to carefully descend the 2.2% grade. Brake smoke entered the open windows, and a staff member was heard to comment that the coaches were giving up ten years worth of Prairie running on their brake shoes on these hills.

Arrived Peace River at 15:30, the departure time for the next trip; a one-hour turn around was accomplished.

The run to Daishowa Approach is spectacular in the

extreme. On the East side are grand vistas of the Mighty Peace River, but on the West side, first there are unstable hillsides with big mud slides threatening the rail grade, then we pass under 300 ft high sandstone cliffs, millions of years old, deeply eroded into caverns and hoodoos. Great slabs of rock occasionally fall close to or on the track. A sharp contrast at the stop at Diashowa Mill approach is the man made ash pile from the mill. A drastic eyesore.

The locos had pushed us to the mill, and now were heading us in grand style back to Peace River, until the Bolton gang nailed us again in the industrial area of Duet. A last stop just before arrival to do a roll-em-by inspection, and journeys end.

The Alberta Prairie Crew, professionals that they are, had done a magnificent job. The MacKenzie Northern people seemed to have gone all out to ensure the success of the undertaking, and it was

a grand effort. Then there were all those behind the scenes who orchestrated the event so well.

As my family and I sat down to supper in a restaurant just below the grade embankment, the daylight began to fade. Extra #2120 South whistled off, and the Passenger Train of the Century, now dark and MT slowly began the long trek up the 2.2% Judah Hill, and thus faded back into History.

However, a lot of rolling stock, artifacts and memories of the Northern Alberta Railways live on at the Alberta Railway Museum at Edmonton, Alberta.

CENTENNIAL STEAM

by Ken Jones

To celebrate the Province of Alberta's 100th birthday the Alberta Railway Museum, Lakeland & Waterways Railway teamed up with Alberta Prairie Railway Excursions to offer steam-pulled passenger train excursions for the public September 10-11 from Edmonton-Boyle and Edmonton-Waskatenau. Many volunteers, staff and a financial grant from the provincial government were instrumental in making this a memorable success.

At first glance, the man standing at the only open coach door appeared to be a grizzled old cowboy. Perhaps it was just the unseasonably cool September morning, but his facial expression seemed to be curled into a scowl. The crowd that had begun to gather on the railway station platform could only wonder whether he was standing guard. None were brave enough to ask, preferring instead to keep a respectful distance and enjoy the environs of the adjoining station instead.

The seasoned staff of Alberta Prairie Steam Excursions moved swiftly and efficiently inside the length of the six-car train, ensuring everything was ready for the anxious passengers. Seats had been

labelled by name. The bar and souvenir shop were amply stocked. And a fleeting scent of fresh cooking wafted from the crew-diner car.

After mixing just the right amount of preparation and anticipation, the signal was given. On cue, the "cowboy" came to life - and turned out instead to be the famous Métis, Gabriel Dumont. A broad smile crossed his face - one as big as the great expanse of the prairies

he once roamed. Beckoning the passengers to board the warmly inviting train, the crowd surged forward.

Like old railway hands, Alberta Prairie's staff efficiently greeted each passenger, took their tickets, and escorted each to their pre-assigned seat in five coaches comfortably warmed by oil heaters. The cars ranged from Harrimans to former Montreal Commuter coaches. There was even a wood-lined heavyweight with red plush velvet seats. Talk about 'riding the cushions' - wow! In mere moments, the train was fully loaded; left only to await the Conductor's departure signal.

The previous weekend - being the actual anniversary of Alberta's centennial (September 5) - Alberta Prairie had taken their consist out with a number of diesel-led excursions to northern points in the province. More on this later.

Only the previous day (September 9) the train had gone to Redwater for an L&WR 'employees and friends' special. But for the excursion on this day, the train was under steam! Quietly hissing away at the end of the



1392 attracts a crowd of admirers at Waketnau

consist, ex-CNR # 1392, a 4-6-0 built in 1913 and lovingly preserved at the Alberta Railway Museum in north-east Edmonton. She was paired in a push-pull operation with CN 9639, on lease to Rail America's Lakeland & Waterways Railway. For the day's northbound trip to Boyle 1392 would push in reverse, ready for a grand face-forward return home later that night.