

The Crossbuck

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Trainspotting with Troy and Cammy

By Troy Anderson

Some may argue that this winter was longer and colder than most; but oddly enough, in January and February, there were actually some warm days, too.

With the days getting longer, and the odd weekend hovering around zero, the trainspotter in me finally came out of hibernation. So off I went to take home videos and photos of the trains passing over the Battle River trestle.

Soon my modus operandi was that if I caught a freight sitting in the Wainwright yard, that would be my first detour before heading to the trestle. Once settled in for a day of trainspotting, there is often a bit of time between trains, giving one time to contemplate and ponder.

On one of the colder days, I was looking across the trestle when it dawned on me that this was a perfect time to cross the frozen Battle River to obtain a new viewing perspective from the western side. It was from here that I discovered the location of the cairn and promised myself to get some shots with the freights that have been passing by for 100 years.

The most memorable



day was when my five-year-old son, Cameron, decided that he wanted to trainspot with me. It did not take very long to realize that he was going to be the video man, like it or not! He was a great asset since it gave me more freedom to take still images as the trains rolled by. Later, we enjoyed a picnic as our last freight of the day passed by.

Now, if you see a guy standing near the right-of-way with a tripod, camera and binoculars, you can almost

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The Battle River trestle, 2775 feet long and 195 feet high, was completed on December 10, 1908. Originally additional wood trestlework, 2500 feet long and 25 feet high, was required at the west end of the steel structure due to a difference in grade elevation. The wood section was filled in with rip-rap to become the high earth fill that appears today beyond the west abutment of the steel trestle.

On April 16, 1908, A. Lemmons of St. Boniface, Manitoba, T. Kirby, a homesteader from Alberta, and Foreman Woodford Readman, of Northampton, England, died when the scow used to ferry workers across the river was swamped in mid-stream. Their bodies were never recovered. Fellow workers erected a concrete cairn on the west side of the river, just north of the trestle, in memory of the men.

A construction train was the first to cross the trestle on December 15, 1908.

The trestle is located nine miles west of Wainwright on Alberta Highway 14. Signage marks a viewpoint with interpretive signage and picnic tables overlooking the trestle and Battle River valley.

Little Obie captivates Wainwright



Conductor, Don McGuire, and Engineer, Constable Robert Greer of the CN Police, pose with "Little Obie".

Roy Pierce photo

CN's Safety Train, "Little Obie", made his first public appearance during Wainwright's "Party in the Park" at Wallace Park, as part of Wainwright Centennial Celebrations. The locomotive was built in CN's Homewood, Illinois shops, over the frame of a John Deere "Gator". It pulls a simulated intermodal car and caboose, both fitted with benches for the public.

Constable Robert Greer, of CN Police, travelled to Wainwright with Obie. Rides were provided to the public on a route adjacent to Wallace Park. Obie worked his heart out all afternoon hauling a steady stream of passengers.

CN also provided railway safety brochures and coloring books. A tent, erected near the designated loading zone, was manned by WRPS volunteers Herb Bradley, Norm Corness, Kim and Roy Pierce, and Paul Foerger.

Const. Greer was impressed with the number of riders who took the opportunity to visit and ride "Little Obie". We are currently negotiating a date for a return engagement in 2009.

Thanks to CN for providing their safety train for our Centennial celebrations.

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be guaranteed that the "nut" is me. As for being a trainspotter, the definition fits me to a tee: a person whose hobby is train spotting and is often an obsessive follower.

When you start filming trains at temperatures below zero, it has to be an obsession.

Editor's note: Troy Anderson is a Captain at the Canadian Manoeuvre Training Centre, CFB Wainwright. He is an active member of our rail society and an enthusiastic Lionel trains collector.

"Ties That Bind" well received

The final event of Wainwright's Centennial week was a musical theatre performance by Vancouver's Canadiana Musical Theatre Co. with two shows in front of very good crowds at the Wainwright Communiplex Theater.

The musical comedy depicted the building of the railway across Canada, from parliamentary arguments, to surveying, and tracklaying. A member of the audience was recruited for the "Blasting" and, of course, was accidentally blown away!

Kelly Clemmer, Chair of the Wainwright Centennial Committee was asked to say a few words before the show began.

The weeklong Centennial celebrations were a huge undertaking by all involved, and our thanks go out to all involved for making it a success:

- Al's Hotshot and Trucking Services Ltd.
- Bison Bus
- Bison Printing (2000) Ltd.
- Dr. Bev Brilz
- Coleman Scholarship and Grant Foundation
- Denwood Motors

- Don's Speed Parts
- Donations made in memory of Mike Gormley
- Hillview Trucking Ltd.
- Donations made in memory of Paul and Helen Hlady
- Norris Ford
- Robert Rattray
- Stafford Oilfield Services Ltd.
- Sundown Oil & Water Hauling Ltd.
- Taoguard Enterprises Ltd.
- Wainalta Motors
- Wainwright Auto Dealers

We also wish to thank:

- Wilmar Implements for use of the John Deere Gator;
- Eastalta Coop Lumber for plywood used temporarily on the flatcar deck
- Wainwright Legion for use of their grill;
- and a special thanks to the MD of Wainwright for providing a yearly Grant of \$2500.00. Your support is appreciated.

Wainwright celebrates 100 years of railroading history

The week of July 14-20, 2008 was designated Wainwright Centennial Week. The week featured numerous activities throughout town.

Wainwright was established as a Village on July 14, 1908, as a Division Point on the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, which was building west from Winnipeg toward a terminus at Prince Rupert, BC. Major locomotive and car shop facilities were established here, and in the early years, train dispatching was done here as well. Today, although the rails form part of CN's main line, the extensive facilities are long gone.

Wainwright Rail Park hosted a "Celebration of 100 years of Railroading" on Sunday July 20, starting with a pancake breakfast at 8:00 a.m. Society members manned the grills and served up food; others manned our exhibit buildings, cars and locomotives, to ensure the public always had someone present to answer questions. A sizable crowd kept our volunteers busy all day.

Several new displays were unveiled for the Centennial including:

- selection of photos from the Herb Snyder Collection, held at the Provincial Archives of Alberta. Thanks to Gord Snyder for ensuring we had copies of the rail photos available;
- new displays of Grand Trunk Pacific paperwork (train orders, clearances, forms, and manuals) donated by Norm Corness, Edmonton;
- display from the Rutherford Collection including photos, passes, manuals, paperwork and plaques donated by Ida Rutherford, Edmonton, and Jean Anderson, Wainwright.

A walking tour of early railroad facility remains was offered in the afternoon.

Afternoon entertainment was provided by the Canadiana Musical Theatre Co., who sang railroad themed songs, and let the crowd in a rousing



Don Kinghorn and Trevor Sardoff pose with an antique car and motorcycle during Centennial Celebrations at Wainwright Rail Park.



Members of the Canadian Musical Theatre Company perform for visitors at Wainwright Rail Park.

Roy Pierce photos

"Happy Birthday" to Wainwright!

Allen Desnoyers, Director of the Canadiana Musical Theatre Co, returned later in the afternoon to sing solo for our visitors.

Several people took the opportunity to bring antique vehicles, which also helped set the scene for the day.



Visitors enjoy the pancake breakfast during railway centennial celebrations at Wainwright Rail Park.

WRPS conducts historical tour of early railroading in Wainwright

A walking tour of the remaining footings in the CN Wainwright yard provided many people the opportunity to learn more about Wainwright's railroad history.

The first stop was the 1942 locomotive shop in a wooded area near the Bunge edible oil plant, west of Wainwright Rail

Park. Although the site is now largely hidden by brush, the concrete floor of the main shop and machine shop are plainly visible, as are the six locomotive pits (although now filled in). A few pieces of rail from the drop pit area are also visible. The size of the shop came as a surprise to people who were previously unaware of

its existence.

The continued west to the site of the Grand Trunk Pacific coal dock. This was a trestle style facility and the footings for the inclined trestle and coal bunkers remain clearly visible. Some ties remain in the ground where tracks once provided steam locomotives access to their fuel. Photos of the coal dock in use showed people the immense size of the facility. It was replaced in 1942 by a newer, elevator style coal dock, on the opposite side of the yard. No trace of the newer coal dock remains.

Other surviving footings include the floor of the car department's RIP track (repair in place) buildings. Footings for both the wooden octagon water tank, and a supplemental steel tank, were pointed out, as were the footings from the bunker "C" oil tank and standpipe that refuelled steam locomotives on the main line and siding. Footings from the early diesel fuel tanks, and the floor from the water softening plant and ice house were also shown to visitors.

This walking tour helped show visitors the importance of Wainwright as a railway Division Point, and the reason why the railway had so many employees here in the past.

Buffalo Adventure Tours to include WRPS in 2009

Wainwright Rail Park will again be a part of the Buffalo Adventure tours provided through the Wainwright Buffalo National Park Interpretive Centre Foundation. Our "Rails Across the West" tours are three hour experiences and must be booked through Buffalo Alberta.

Four 2009 "Rails Across the West" tours will be available May 18-23, June 8-13, July 13-18, and August 10-15.

Day Trip Teasers and Adventures start from \$55 per person. All-inclusive



Visitors view the Battle River trestle from the interpretive site.

Roy Pierce photo

Overnight Adventures start from \$210 per day, per person.

For information on booking your Buffalo Adventure Tour, visit their website at www.buffaloalbera.ca.



Don McGuire (L) relaxes with Ken Morrison (C) and Brian Small (R) of the Battle River Model Railroaders in Camrose. Ken and Brian spent a couple of days railfanning the area last fall and visited Wainwright Rail Park.

Ken Morrison photo