



# THE ORDERBOARD

NEWSLETTER FOR THE CALGARY MODEL RAILWAY SOCIETY



*Painting by famed railroad artist Harlan Hiney of a Silk Train racing through Morley, Alberta. Greg Cave starts his two part article on page 7 about these special trains.*

## President's Report

I would like to wish you all a belated Happy New Year. 2007 started with our big event 'Supertrain'. Next is our spring mini meet and then into layout tours. I hope to meet lots of you at these events.

Congratulations to Mike Borkristl and his committee for their work on Supertrain 2007. The new committee for Supertrain 2008 is already being organized. There will be some new faces and some old faces in new roles. I would like to extend a farewell and best wishes to Glen Judd who devoted so many years on this committee. I know you'll be around

as a resource person. Thank you for everything!

Have you visited CMRS' website? If you haven't, I encourage you to do so. Richard Johnson is doing some awesome stuff for us. At our last Board meeting, Richard enlightened us with some stats about our web page. The most hits happen in January which tells us there is a very high interest in Supertrain. Events and Supertrain are the top 2 URLs on our web site with the picture gallery next.

*Continued on Page 6*

### In this Issue

● President's Report	1
● Supertrain 2007	2
● Mini-Meet Notes	3
● Trains for Kids	4
● Membership Report	4
● Layout Tours 2007	5
● Appreciation Night	5
● Thanks Volunteers!	6
● From the Editor	6
● "Clear Board" across Canada, Part 1	7
● Advertising	10
● Memberships	10
● Coming Events	10



**SUPERTRAIN 2007**

As you read this, spring is fast approaching, and Supertrain 2007 has now come and gone. I would like to thank all the hard working volunteers, over 100 of you, for your time and effort. Without you the show would not be successful at all!!

Can we call this year a successful show? Overall, I think we can. From the committees point of view, did we get the numbers and the revenue we were hoping for, no we did not. Part of the reason we did not meet our revenue is that the door price stayed the same but our costs went up almost 25% across the board and we expect costs to go up again next year in our constantly growing and vibrant city. Our attendance was down considerably this year, almost 2500. It was not from the type of advertising we did this year. The general consensus was because of the warm weather. We had two weeks of cold weather leading up to the show where everyone stayed inside and then it warmed up just in time for the long weekend. With the warm weather, families had a lot of choices on what to do outside rather than be inside at our show. But those who did attend had a good time, the volunteers and exhibits were great, the move in and move out procedures went smoother this year, and there seemed to be a little less complaining this year.

From the public's point of view, judging by the survey conducted by our committee, they enjoyed the show, but some felt that the show seems to be the same old thing each year. Other comments included not enough Lego, not enough things for children to do, the tables too high and too many vendors, some of which were not train related. I agree with some of the comments, we do need to "freshen" up the show (so anyone with ideas please forward them to myself or a committee member.) The vendors are limited to 15% of the total floor space so we feel that is reasonable. On the positive side, the road banners are by far the best advertising, followed by hobby shops and radio. And everyone surveyed thought it was good value for the money. For those of you who may be interested in the full results of the survey, please contact myself or Geoff Southwood.

What's in store for next year??? Tough to say at this time. We will be evaluating everything over the next month, hopefully getting some ideas and

concerns from CMRS members, vendors and exhibitors and putting a new committee together for Supertrain 2008. What we know for sure is that the show will be on the same long weekend, February 16th and 17th in the Big Four Building, we will try to entice some new layouts to the show, and we will be putting forth a proposal for a ticket price increase at the AGM this year. If you are interested in being on the committee next year, let us know as there will be a few holes to fill.

Many, many thanks go to Glen Judd, who is "taking some time off" from Supertrain after years of hard work, (to give his computer and his knees some much deserved rest.) We will miss your energy and immaculate records Glen. Hopefully the next person can fill your shoes! (he is also hoping you won't be too far away!!) To the other members of the committee, Bob Hadlow, Tom Parker, Brookes Harrow, Gord Cooper, Rick Walker, Rob Badmington, Fred Huntley, Geoff Southwood, Dave Walker, Dale Sproule and Tony Whalen, many thanks for attending all the meetings, all the hours you put in, and all your hard work. Thanks also go to those who worked on your sub committees. The amount of work and hours that go into putting on a show of this size is immense and you are all to be congratulated.

Until next year...

*Mike Borkristl*

**CHINOOK & HOBBY WEST**



Model Railroad Supplies  
 Die Cast & Plastic Models      Rockets & Puzzles  
 Collectible Toys & Action Figures      Slot Cars Sets & Accessories

5011 Macleod Trail South      PHONE: (403) 243-1997  
 Calgary, Alberta T2G 0A9      FAX: (403) 243-7782



**Wear Your Logo!**

Outfit your club or group with hats, jackets, shirts or merchandise showing your logo.

Visit our website at [www.keddes.com](http://www.keddes.com)  
 Or call Dave Landels at 403-287-3012  
 A proud member of the Bow Valley R.R. Club



**CANADIAN SCALE RAIL  
FUN TIMES HOBBY**

Box 3762  
Olds, AB T4H 1P5

5026 50th Street  
403-556-3771

Gordon & Lavonne Sylvester  
E-mail: cdnscrail@shaw.ca

Visit our store or shop with us on the web!  
[www.CanadianScaleRail.com](http://www.CanadianScaleRail.com)



**actionhobby.ca**

Trains - Rockets - Kites - Plastic Kits  
R/C Planes, Boats, Cars, Helicopters

Doug & Donette Hyslip  
6808 Ogden Road SE

Phone: 403-236-5098 email: [info@actionhobby.ca](mailto:info@actionhobby.ca)

Visit our website at [www.actionhobby.ca](http://www.actionhobby.ca)  
Check out our extensive "Events" calendar.

MINI-MEET NOTES

Here are the clinics scheduled for the Mini-Meet on March 18th at the Glenmore Inn.

1. History of the Silk Trains – A Presentation by Greg Cave
2. Decoder Pro - Program your locomotive decoders with ease on a computer! – A clinic by Jon Calon.
3. Panel Pro - Software can allow you to create a pseudo CTC panel and control your layout! – A clinic by Jon Calon
4. Computer Aided Track & Layout Design – A presentation and demo by Leo de Groot
5. Build a Styrene Trackside Building – A hands-on model building project clinic by Dale Sproule. (see below for more details.)

**It's not too late!** – If you or your club would like to put together a display, or small layout, please contact Jeff Burk by phone (272-5546 evenings) or e-mail [jeffb@boltsupply.com](mailto:jeffb@boltsupply.com)

**STYRENE CLINIC**

A reminder of the upcoming CMRS Styrene Trackside Building hands-on Model Building Project scheduled for Sunday morning, March 18 as part of the next Spring Mini-Meet - CMT Flea Market in the Glenmore Inn. The participation building clinic will start as close to 10 am giving you an hour to cruise the CMT Flea Market first. I've received names of 8 interested modelers, there is room for another 7, please e-mail me at [sproules@telusplanet.net](mailto:sproules@telusplanet.net) or phone 274-4852. I will get back to you with more information. Materials will be provided, you need to bring the basic tools that you are comfortable with in order to construct a HO model of a CPR trackside building from styrene. For those who just want to pickup plans and build this project themselves in the scale of choice, the coffee will be on, so come on in too. Plans will also be in the next issues of The Order-board leading up to the mini-meet. Beyond basic construction of walls and roof at this session, all CMRS members are encouraged to paint, weather, and detail this project to get it ready for the upcoming CMRS Diorama Contest at the Spring (2008) mini-meet which will feature these buildings in a Railroad setting.

A popular vote system will be used for those attending that mini-meet and the modeler of choice will take home a \$50.00 gift certificate to the local model train store of his/her choice. Remember two things: (1) Liquid Styrene Cement will be used in an enclosed classroom setting, inhaling these fumes may be harmful to some folks and (2) I, or CMRS or the Glenmore Inn are not responsible for you cutting your fingers, hands, etc.

**FAVORITE TRAIN**

A reminder that the upcoming March 18th mini-meet hopefully will feature a number of entries in the CMRS member "Favorite Train" participation table. Note, **This is not a contest**, there are no prizes, just a request to participate I want you to bring out your favorite train, any train which is probably sitting on your layout right now anyhow: Freight trains, Coal drags, Circus trains, Silk trains, Passenger trains, Kettle Valley train sets, Maintenance trains in any scale, any type. Please just bring a train for display, we'll provide the table space.

Yours in Modelling,  
*Dale Sproule*



**TRAINS FOR KIDS**

It was another successful year for Trains For Kids. We procured and distributed 37 trainsets through the agencies at the United Way. This year we decided to use a set that had track with a built-in roadbed, since many sets are likely to be played with on carpet. The downside of using these sets is that we were able to get less for the money, but we believe the play value for the sets we did hand out has improved. Our trainsets were very gladly accepted, since they fill a void in the older age categories (8+) for which the level of donations is traditionally on the low side.

Thanks to Tom Parker, who helped with the organizing, and to H&D Hobby Distributing, who were able to help with the procurement of the sets at a great price. And a special thank you to the CMRS membership for supporting such a great cause; thanks to you, some less fortunate children were able to share our love of this great hobby.

*Vince Webnes*

**Lionel Railway Stuff for Sale**

Late 1950's and early 1960's collection of Lionel Railway train stuff. Collection includes train station, mountain tunnels, tracks, switches, transformer, engine and cars, caboose, crane unit and other related items – all in good condition. Moving and would like to sell. Please call Vivian or Harald at 948-2248 for info.



**2604 - 4th St. NW CALGARY AB T2M 3A1**

**Phone: 277-7226**

**E-mail: trainsandsuch@telus.net**

**Z ~ N ~ HO ~ OO ~ S ~ 027 ~ O ~ G**

**Since 1972, friendly service & helpful advice to beginners and experts**

**Buy - Sell - Trade - Repair - Mail Order - Appraisals**



**THE DISPATCHER**

*Specializing in Digital Command Control*

**BARRY CONN**

(403) 251-9334  
213 Oakchurch Bay SW  
Calgary, AB T2V 4B6

**Discount prices on:**  
Digitrax Atlas  
Peco Kato  
Soundtraxx Athearn

Website - <http://members.shaw.ca/dispatcher>

Email: [dispatcher@shaw.ca](mailto:dispatcher@shaw.ca)

**MEMBERSHIP REPORT**

*Membership Information*

The membership list has been updated following SuperTrain. All un-renewed memberships from 2006 have been deleted. Member e-mail addresses have been corrected and verified.

Memberships are updated monthly on the second Monday of the month and following all major CMRS events. Membership cards and a membership list (for review) are available from Rick Walker at Trains & Such and at the membership desk at all CMRS events.

A CMRS application form is available on the CMRS Website.

A number of members have not supplied their mail "quadrant" (NE, SE, SW, SE). This may result in mail not being delivered by Canada Post.

*Membership Statistics*

Membership numbers are about the same as the last two years, at 341. 89 members have not paid for 2007 and have been stricken from the list.

The number of members renewing for multiple years has increased significantly to 175. This greatly reduces the amount of work required to maintain the membership lists.

2006	89 unrenewed
2007	166 members
2008	114 members
2009	43 members
2010	17 members
2011	1 member
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>341 paid members</b>

*Orderboard announcements*

Prior to the publication of the Orderboard on the CMRS website all CMRS members with valid e-mail addresses will be notified by e-mail. Recently all members with valid e-mail addresses have received a verification e-mail. If you did not receive it, please contact me at [sutul@telus.net](mailto:sutul@telus.net) or 637-2560 to update your address.

Reading the Orderboard on the Website saves the CMRS considerable costs for printing and postage. At the present time 115 members have agreed to receive the Orderboard on-line rather than by postal mail. This is greatly appreciated.

*Ian McArthur*  
*Membership*



### LAYOUT TOURS 2007

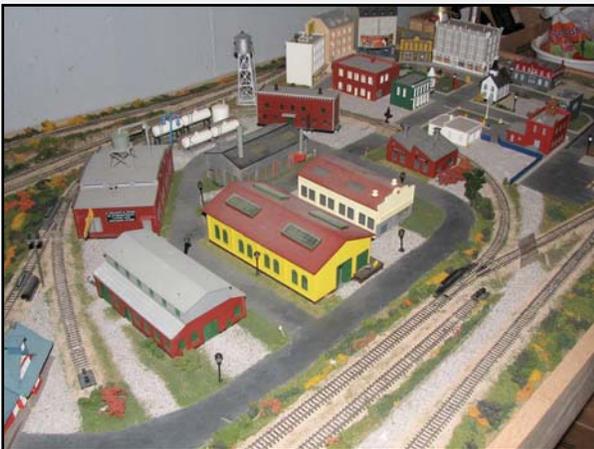
The layout tours are set for Saturday April 21 and Saturday April 28, 2007. There has been a good response so far from a number of members of CMRS. Currently we have the following groups and members listed as venues. Kicking Horse – both days, CMT, The Grain Exchange, Mike Borkristl –CCNWR, Rick McPhee, Neil McKay, Stan Parker, Gaston Moreau, and Ed Hopkins have all offered to open their layouts this year. Still have room for some additional venues for the two days. The exact schedule for the two viewing days has not been finalized. The March Orderboard will have that schedule.

During SuperTrain an idea was put forward to look at offering a Garden Railway layout tour in July. The benefit would be the weather is expected to be nice and the gardens have had a chance to fill in and in bloom. Feedback is welcome on this idea and if there are any people with layouts that would like to participate please let me know. Also a possible date would be welcome. My contact information is in the Directors section on page 10.

*Dave Walker*

### N Scale Layout For Sale

We have for sale, a 9'X3' N Scale Model Train layout with oak fascia. A close relative built this to pass the time when he was diagnosed with terminal lung cancer. It was 90% finished before he passed away three years ago. We know there is someone out there with his passion who would enjoy it much more than we are able to. The negotiated selling price includes the layout itself, all trains and modeling supplies we have left. Please call Shawn at 280-5192 for further details.



### APPRECIATION NIGHT

Many have asked about tickets and they are usually available for sale as early as Supertrain. The answer: I've had trouble setting the budget for ticket sales and this will be rectified as of the March 18th mini-meet, so you can pick up tickets then on a **Cash Only Basis** starting then and right up to 4 days before the dinner on May 25th unless we sell out early. Banquet costs alone have risen \$5 for the same meal from last year, other costs changes are not as significant. We are planning a very nice dinner, CMRS Appreciation Awards (the reason why we are gathering), the Presidents Award, Brotherhood prints, a 30 minute presentation from Tom Price of CP Rail followed by the Fun Casino that many of us thoroughly enjoyed last year. Using the same successful formula as last year, the initial ticket cost may seem high but a portion of it will be refundable at the dinner. Last year the initial ticket cost was \$30 and half was refunded at the dinner. This keeps the number of no-shows who said they would attend to a minimum. The idea worked well last year, so why mess with success? I'm not going to falsely suggest a figure without knowing, but by the time you receive this newsletter I will probably know the ticket cost, call me if you want at 274-4852 or write: [sproules@telusplanet.net](mailto:sproules@telusplanet.net)

*Dale Sproule*



**Mountain Pacific Scenics**  
Manufacturers of Tree & Shrub Foliage  
Wood Bridges and Scenery

#### Maurice Despins

151 Woodfern Pl. SW  
Calgary, AB T2W 4R7

Tel/Fax: (403) 251-4976

e-mail: [mprail@telus.net](mailto:mprail@telus.net)  
website: [www3.telus.net/mpr](http://www3.telus.net/mpr)



2020J - 23 Avenue NE

**WE ARE YOUR COMPLETE HOBBY  
AND CRAFT CONNECTION!**

Phone: 291-2733

Fax: 291-5324



THANKS TO THE VOLUNTEERS!

I would like to thank all those members of our organization that stepped forward and volunteered to work at SuperTrain this year. Without volunteers the show would never be as successful as it is and be enjoyed by so many of the people in Calgary that come out to see it. The change in how the committee set up the volunteers this year has proved successful even with a couple of glitches before the show and during. Nothing was too serious that could not be overcome by the great group of people that assisted when a problem arose. A special commendation to those volunteers that helped out and controlled the crowd at the end of the show on Sunday, when the medical incident arose.

Looking forward to next year, we'll work on the errors and timing to ensure even a better volunteer experience for SuperTrain 2008.

David Walker



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

My my, how time flies! Was a little over a week and a half ago and we were wrapping up Supertrain 2007 and it's about that same amount of time until the Mini-Meet! I realize I left a teaser on the front page of the last issue. The layout featured was a Calgary Free-mo module named "Dual Pool", built by Alyssa and Tracy Rouleau. Great work!

For this issue's "teaser", the first person to email me the name of the location shown in the photo below wins something from my collection. Good Luck!

**The deadline for submissions into the next issue of the Orderboard is March 29, 2007.**



**For your CPR Clothing & Collectables, Shop at Station 29**

View our online catalog at [www.cprstore.com](http://www.cprstore.com)

For information, call 403-837-0133 or 403-319-7094

To order, call 403-837-0133 or 403-837-1324

Fax 403-261-4678 or e-mail [station\\_29\\_store@cpr.ca](mailto:station_29_store@cpr.ca)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT (CONTINUED)

*Continued from page 1*

Now that Supertrain is over, we should be seeing many new photos on the web, check it out.

Then there's our new look Orderboard. Doesn't it look great and refreshing? Thanks Jon for coming forward and taking this on.

Our Trains for Kids program, lead by Tom Parker and Vince Wehnes, is another success.

We are fortunate to have a team of good and strong Board Members. It makes my job easy. The new members, Dave, Greg, Gail, Dale and Brookes tackled tasks unfamiliar to them with great results. The veterans Rob, Rick, Ian and Jeff continue to provide strong leadership and commitment in their roles. Check out the back page for their roles and upcoming events.

As you can see, we are very fortunate to have such good people on the Board and committees. Next time you see them, give them a tap on the back for a job well done. These people give a lot of their time to the success of CMRS. This is the time of year when CMRS members have many events to participate in. Some of us will participate in all of

them and others will be selective. Whatever you choose is fine. Not all events will appeal to all members but we all have the same opportunity to participate in them. Our next event is the Spring Mini Meet and shortly after that, the home layout tours. For all new members who have not been to these events, and you are building your own empire, I encourage you to take these in. Look for more details within the Orderboard and the website.

Folks, we could use your help. Many of you have talents, tips, knowledge about something in this hobby that would benefit the members. Wouldn't it be great to share that with everyone? We would like to hear from you. The Mini Meets are a great place to inform members by way of discussion forum, seminar, show & tell, etc. Please contact Jeff Burk or any other member of the Board.

I look forward to seeing you all at the Mini Meet.

*Maurice Despins  
CMRS President.*



## “CLEAR BOARD” ACROSS CANADA

### *The Story of the CPR Silk Specials By Greg Cave*

*“Our train orders were to **take the hole** at Parkbeg, take water and await Extra 2541 - a silk special. I was on the tail end of Number 8, the eastbound Transcontinental. We were running several hours late due to snow slides west of Calgary. Only 35 miles from home on the run from Medicine Hat we were being scooped by a “Silker”. Once we were safely in the siding I went outside to the tail end of the train and awaited the “Special”. In the distance I could hear it whistle for a crossing; and moments later I could see the faint yellow glow of its headlight. I took my position, across the track to inspect the train; and when I turned around it was almost on me. It whistled for the west crossing at Parkbeg; and then the engine raced past in a cloud of snow, steam, smoke and cinders followed by a number of maroon express boxes and a 60 foot coach. I gave the tail end a highball with my lantern and saw the shadow of the brakeman, and the vestibule door of the coach close. The red marker lamps narrowed as it sped away. The whole occurrence took less than four minutes.” – Charlie Cave*

As a youngster growing up in a largely railroad family at the CPR Divisional point in Moose Jaw I had the good fortune of being exposed to many romantic tales and lore of the railways particularly during the steam era. One favourite topic brought up and passed on by these family members dealt with the thrill and excitement of the silk train specials or “Yokohama Flyers” of the late 19th century to mid 20th century. My uncle Charlie and my grandfather J.C. were involved through different trades and were part of the multitude of CPR employees involved in ensuring that the silk train traverses were uneventful. Charlie was a trainman who was occasionally assigned to the silk trains, but more commonly served as an observer as he was required to “wait in the hole” with his train and inspect the silk trains as they raced by on their hair raising journeys to eastern Canada and the silk mills in the U.S. My grandfather J.C. was a locomotive foreman who was responsible for the crews preparing the steam locomotives used for the silks and other assignments, usually a G2 Pacific 4-6-2 2500 or 2600 series locomotive. He made sure that the engine was fully steamed and lubricated and spotted for the rapid changeovers.



**G2 Pacific 2601 - Typical power used on the later silk specials.** Photo credit Dr. Richard Leonard.

Much has been written about the silk trains. At least one book, chapters in other books and numerous newspaper and magazine articles have chronicled the history in the U.S. and Canada. From the late 1880s to the mid 1930s, special trains took bales of raw and manufactured silk from the Vancouver docks to silk mills and markets in New York, New Jersey and elsewhere. The romance and fascination with these trains comes from the fact that a trainload of silk was worth many millions of dollars; and that these trains raced across the nation at high speed, in relative secrecy under armed guard with priority over all other traffic.

The transportation of silk began immediately after the completion of the CPR. The prime motive for the construction of the CPR transcontinental line in the early 1880s was to bring British Columbia into Confederation and prevent the west from being assimilated by the U.S. At the time CPR rails reached Port Moody, Canada’s population centers were in eastern Canada, Winnipeg, and Victoria. Virtually no revenue could be derived from the prairie sector between Winnipeg and Vancouver. The CPR recognized that until the west was settled, commerce with the Far East was essential to its success and it acquired steamship services to complement and source its railway business. The railway was to provide an essential transportation link between the Far East and Europe, not to mention eastern Canada and the eastern U.S.

Within a few weeks of arrival of the first transcontinental train from Montreal to Port Moody in 1886, the windjammer W. B. Flint, arrived from Japan with more than one million pounds of tea and other merchandise onboard. This cargo was directly transferred from ship to train for destinations in Eastern Canada, the United States, and Europe. It was followed a month later by the arrival from Japan of another CPR-chartered ship, the S.S. Abyssinia with a cargo of tea, silk and mail bound for London. Trans-Pacific, Trans-Atlantic commerce using the CPR as a link was then initiated. In 1889 Canadian Pacific had secured a contract from the British government to carry the imperial mails from



Hong Kong to Britain via Canada. Subsequently, the company commissioned the construction of 3 ocean passenger-cargo vessels which were the forerunners of the famous white Empress fleet. Mail, tea, silk and numerous other products from the Far East were now regularly shipped from Vancouver to eastern Canada and the northeast U.S. and Europe.

Canadian Pacific's integrated approach gave it a major advantage over its competition in Canada and the U.S. With its fast ships under direct control of the company it could prioritize and coordinate the shipments more effectively than those railways with no marine shipping arm. During the economic depression of the 1890's many U.S. railroads went bankrupt, while Canadian Pacific's business flourished. Although the Canadian National and railways in the U.S. also ran silk specials, the CPR's integrated steamship and railway service gave it a significant competitive edge. The northern route from Japan to Vancouver was much faster than those connections to Seattle, San Francisco or San Diego. Although the route via Prince Rupert was even shorter there is no indication of silk specials being run from there on the Grand Trunk or later Canadian National railway.

The Empress ships would complete the 4200 mile ocean voyage from Yokohama to Vancouver in less than 9 days with a record time set in 1931 at seven days, 20 hours and 16 minutes on the Empress on Yokohama. To save time the ships stopped at Victoria to board customs and freight handlers. Customs forms and waybills were prepared prior to the ship's arrival in Vancouver. While the ships were en route to Vancouver trains of 8 to 15 cars were spotted on the docks at the Vancouver terminal. Stevedores and train crews were called; and dispatchers along the route were advised of the pending arrival of the ship and imminent departure of the silk extra.



**Unloading silk bales in Vancouver.**  
Photo: Vancouver Public Library, Special Collections, VPL16657

Upon arrival in Vancouver the ship's crane and boom or conveyer belts were aligned and the dockworkers immediately began transferring the bales to the waiting cars.

The bales were about 3' x 2' x 1' in size and

were wrapped in burlap and straw matting and weighed between 133 and 220 pounds each. A bale of raw silk

carried an insurance value of between \$800 and \$1600. The cars carried a maximum of 30 tons of cargo or about 470 bales of silk. A train carrying 15 cars in 1928 could have a value at that rate of around \$11,000,000 or over \$125,000,000 in current dollars. Often trains were loaded and rolling eastbound in less than half an hour.

The bales contained live silk worms and mulberry or oak leaves which were consumed by the worms for about two weeks, after which they

started spinning silk cocoons. These cocoons were quite fragile and deteriorated quickly. The raw silk was highly susceptible to heat, moisture, fumes and punctures, hence the carriers minimized their risk by quickly expediting the shipments. Ken Liddell in his book "I'll Take the Train" mentions "The cars used in silk service were typically lined with varnished wood, sheathed in paper, made airtight and sealed to keep out moisture, not to mention thieves, although no thefts occurred in Canada". Although the silks ran during winter months, no heat was used in the cars. Speed of the silk train movement was of the essence due to high insurance rates calculated by the hour; and the silk worms' perishable nature. In addition, the raw silk was treated as a commodity and subject to the vagaries of the stock market. A short delay could significantly reduce its value. Consequently, dispatchers ensured that these trains had priority over all other traffic on the route as they raced across the continent.

The first shipments of silk were small and were carried as express shipments on high priority passenger trains. Officials limited these trains to a maximum of two cars per train. As the profitability of these trains was recognized it was recommended that specialty trains with superior priority be created. The early silk specials were fairly non-descript. The Moose Jaw Times reported on Jan. 14, 1904 "The silk train special which passed eastwardly last Friday was not much to look at, simply fourteen plain ordinary box cars, but like many other things, it was not to be judged by appearance, for it carried a cargo worth something like two and one half million dollars."



**Silk train about to depart from Vancouver**  
Photo: Vancouver Public Library, Special Collections, VPL15641



In the early years the cars used on the silk trains consisted of available baggage cars, box cars and reefers – units generally equipped for passenger service. In the late 1920s, 46 special steel box cars numbered in the “4900 series” with passenger wheel trucks and steel wheels were constructed for the trains. These were 44’



Specialy built through baggage cars used in silk train service.

Photo: Vancouver Public Library, Special Collections, VPL 15641a

x 8’ x 10’ cars which were painted Tuscan red with gold “passenger style” lettering and box car side doors. The speed of the silk specials was legendary, particularly over the Prairies. Jack Davidson, a Moose Jaw hogger, ran an eastbound silker from Swift Current to

Moose Jaw in 77 minutes, which meant they covered the 110 miles at an average speed of 87mph. Many silk trains averaged 55 mph across Canada. The “Canadian” several decades later only averaged 41 mph. Reportedly, station doors along the way were locked to prevent curious spectators from being drawn in by the suction of the speedy trains. In addition, for the same reason, station agents removed express and baggage carts from the station platforms. For security purposes engine and crew changes typically took place in the yards rather than at the station. The trains stopped only at Divisional points such as Moose Jaw for crew changes and as needed at intra-divisional coal and water towers. The next crew on call was in line for the next trip east. There were no pre-selected crews, but it was not uncommon to “book off” if you got a silker, as many of the running crew were frightened of the speed. Since the locomotives were hand-fired as opposed to more modern steam locomotives with automatic stokers or oil burners, the silk runs were very unpopular amongst firemen. Leith Knight, a well known Moose Jaw historian wrote that “CPR engineer Joe Kabellik of Moose Jaw got so many silk runs in one season, he was forever after known as ‘Silk Train Joe’”.

The April 26, 1922 Moose Jaw Evening Times reported that “When the Canadian Pacific Railway Company undertook to enter a race from Yokohama to New York with a cargo of silk and to beat their American rivals, that the Canadian company would be able to win the race by a margin of two days was not anticipated. On the sea voyage the American ship Pine Tree State was outdistanced by 22 hours. The American ship left 10 hours ahead of the Empress (of Asia) and arrived 12 hours before her rival. In the race across the continent the American train took 131 hours and 15 minutes, while the Canadian Pacific train allowing four hours and forty minutes for the delay at the ferry between Prescott, and Ogdensburg N.Y. made the trip in 106 hours and 12 minutes or twenty five hours and two minutes faster. The CPR won the race by 47 hours”. Seldom were cabooses used at the end of the train due to the speed and the necessity of carrying armed guards and insurance personnel along with the running crew. Passenger coaches or combines were typically used. Accidents weren’t common, but at least two major derailments occurred as well as one fire which destroyed a baggage car. From the accidents it was determined that cabooses were too light and unsafe for the speeds encountered.

Early locomotives used in silk train service were of the 4-4-0 American driver style which were later replaced by 4-6-0 or Ten Wheeler driver arrangements. After 1913 4-6-2 G2 Pacific style locomotives numbered in the 2500 and 2600 series were primarily used on the trains. Harlan Hiney, a famed railway artist, depicted very accurately the appearance of a silk train traveling through Morley, Alberta in an oil painting. The painting, shown on the front page of the newsletter, shows G2 engine 2631 pulling a string of the Tuscan red Through Baggage cars.

Canadian Pacific ceased running the silk specials in 1933 and later simply added two or three silk cars to the consist of their transcontinental priority passenger trains. The construction of the Panama Canal heralded the end of the rail transported silk business along with Pearl Harbor and the Second World War. The introduction of nylon and rayon severely diminished the requirements for silk in the garment industry.

**Special Thanks:**

Harlan and Theresa Hiney - railroad artist  
Dr Richard Leonard - Railfan  
Glenbow Museum Library – Calgary  
<http://www2.glenbow.org>  
Moose Jaw Public Library and Archives  
<http://www.sasktelwebsite.net/mjpub/>  
Vancouver Public Library – Special Collections  
<http://www.vpl.vancouver.bc.ca/>

**Key references:**

A Silk Train in Transit – F.E.Trautman – 1924 – CPR  
I’ll Take the Train-Ken Liddell, 1974,Western Producer Book Service  
Silk trains : the romance of Canadian silk trains or "The Silks" - Bernard Webber – 1992 – The Word Works Publications  
Canada’s Silk Road – Graham Chandler – Dec 2005 | Jan 2006 - The Beaver  
The Silk Connection – Cecelia Lamont – 1977 – Canada West  
There was never a signal set against a SILK TRAIN - Freeman Hubbard - 1965 - Railroad



**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Maurice Despins** – Independent  
President  
H – 281-5916  
[mpotech@telusplanet.net](mailto:mpotech@telusplanet.net)

**Brookes Harrow** – CMT  
Secretary/SuperTrain  
H – 201-4937  
[bharrow@nucleus.com](mailto:bharrow@nucleus.com)

**Greg Cave** – Calgary Free-mo  
Orderboard & Publicity  
H – 247-2180  
[greg.cave@shaw.ca](mailto:greg.cave@shaw.ca)

**Rob Badmington** – Independent  
Vice President/Slide Night.  
H – 217-7575  
[badmingt@telusplanet.net](mailto:badmingt@telusplanet.net)

**Jeff Burk** – RM Garden Railway  
Mini-meet  
H – 272-5546, W – 209-6505x204  
[jeffb@boltsupply.com](mailto:jeffb@boltsupply.com)

**Ian McArthur** – Independent  
Membership  
H – 637-2560  
[sutul@telusplanet.net](mailto:sutul@telusplanet.net)

**Dale Sproule** – Independent  
Membership Appreciation  
H – 274-4852  
[sproules@telusplanet.net](mailto:sproules@telusplanet.net)

**Rick Walker** – Independent  
Treasurer  
W – 277-7226  
[trainsandsuch@telus.net](mailto:trainsandsuch@telus.net)

**Gail Myers** – Bow Valley  
Railfan Events  
H – 295-2254  
[hgmyers@telusplanet.net](mailto:hgmyers@telusplanet.net)

**David Walker** – Independent  
Layout Tours  
H – 240-9271  
[mcwalk@telusplanet.net](mailto:mcwalk@telusplanet.net)

**ADVERTISING**

Do you have some Model Railroad related items for sale, or perhaps something rare you want?

Consider an ad in the Orderboard. Ads run free of charge for members (provided they are relatively small), and a \$10/year charge for Business card size commercial ads. Assistance with ad design is also available. Contact the Editor, Jon Calon at [orderboard@calgarymodelrailway.org](mailto:orderboard@calgarymodelrailway.org) for details.

**The Deadline for the next issue is Mar. 29, 2007**

**MEMBERSHIPS**

Calgary Model Railway Society memberships can be **purchased** or **renewed at any of our events or by mail**. Cost is \$10 per year, running from June to the following June and can be purchased in upwards of 3 years in advance. Membership forms can be printed from our [website](http://www.calgarymodelrailway.org). Completed forms and payment can be mailed to:

Calgary Model Railway Society  
Box 63033, 2604 Kensington Road NW  
Calgary, AB T2N 4S5

**COMING EVENTS SCHEDULE**

*Items in Bold type are Calgary Model Railway Society events.*

**March 18, 2007 – Spring Mini-Meet & CMT Flea Market**, Glenmore Inn, Calgary, AB  
March 30-31, 2007 – 10th Annual East Coast Large Scale Train Show, York, PA.

For more info: <http://www.largescaletrainshows.com/>

April 21-22, 2007 – Thunder Creek Model Train Show, Moose Jaw, SK

May 5-6, 12-13 – Day out with Thomas the Tank Engine, Heritage Park, Calgary, AB

Pre-ticketed event, for more info: <http://www.heritagepark.ca/>

May 17-21, 2007 – Pacific Rails 2007 - University of Victoria Conference Centre, Victoria, BC

For more info: Canadian Association of Railway Modelers, [www.caorm.org](http://www.caorm.org).

**May 25, 2007 – Membership Appreciation Night**, Glenmore Inn, Calgary, AB

June 2-3, 2007 – Big Train Show, Ontario, CA, USA. <http://www.bigtrainshow.com/>

June 27-30, 2007 – 23rd Annual Garden Railway Convention, Las Vegas, NV. <http://2007.ngrc.com/>

August 18-19 – 4th Annual Alberta Free-mo, Big Valley Agriplex, Big Valley, AB

September 22-23 – Great Edmonton Train Show, Edmonton, AB. <http://www.mmrf.ab.ca>

September 29-30 – Railway Days, Heritage Park, Calgary, AB. <http://www.heritagepark.ca/>

**Do you have an event that should be listed here?**

**Send an e-mail to [orderboard@calgarymodelrailway.org](mailto:orderboard@calgarymodelrailway.org) with the details!**