

Friends of the Railway and Forestry Museum

A special thank you to all the friends of the museum—donors, members, and volunteers!

NOTICE

To purchase a 2002-03 membership, see the on-site Gift Shop staff or telephone the Railway & Forestry Museum Office at 563-7351.

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On Track

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Volume 18 Issue 3

The 1910 Russell Snowplow Returns Home



The 1910 Russell snowplow re-entering the Museum site on May 11, 2002. Behind are Locomotive 1520 and the BCR tank car, all being pushed by CN locomotives.

Photo by Daryl Moulder

Message From The President

By Daryl Moulder

I would like to begin by inviting all our members and volunteers to come to the Museum and see what a great job the staff is doing. Each time I walk into the Museum, I notice lots of work and changes happening—the Museum looks great.

The Gift Shop has a good variety of items for sale. The other day I noticed a staff member wearing a T-shirt with our name and a cool picture. I was told it was one of the kids' camp shirts—there was one in my size, it was only \$10, and of course I just had to buy it.

In the next few months the staff have several special events scheduled. They are looking to us for assistance, so please come out and help even if it is just for an hour. Every little bit helps.

Update on the ongoing projects in the shops:

- PGE caboose - The ends and copula have had the paint removed, and the new window frames are ready. In the next month the window frames and new plywood will be installed.
- PGE cat car - This is the car that was burnt 3 years ago. The decking has been removed; next, after it has been measured and documented so it can be rebuilt, the box section will be removed.
- Eurocan locomotive – The bodywork complete, it has been sand blasted and primed and is now ready for paint. (see article)

In August we will be moving a couple of buildings. This will allow us finish the back area of the Visitors Centre and to start the landscaping in the front. In order to do this we will need assistance with the prep work and with the moves, so again we are calling for your help.

I am very excited to announce the Nechako Rotary partnership and their donation of \$5,000 that allows the planned landscaping around the front of the Visitors Centre to proceed. Once the landscaping is complete, the Museum will take on a whole new appearance.

On a sour note, the Museum was vandalized. Unfortunately an old baggage car that CN had converted into a wheel car was heavily damaged by fire. This car is one of a kind. We will be evaluating the car to see if it can be rebuilt. Along with that we had windows broken in the Visitor Centre and buildings spray painted. The damage was estimated to be about \$30,000. It is unfortunate that some people deem it necessary to damage or destroy property. While on my holidays visiting other railway museums, it became apparent that we are not the only ones who are victims of vandalism. Even museums that have on-site caretakers or who are in buildings have after hour visitors of the unwanted type. Since this incident, we have added more items to the security system as we continue to work towards better protection our collection.

I hope everybody has a great and safe summer, and I hope to see you at the Museum.

Daryl Moulder, President
Railway and Forestry
Museum, Prince George

HELPER TOWN

Continued from page 12

ant enough in the day-time when the sun shines down out of a cloudless turquoise sky, but at night the mercury coyly retired to the little bulb at the bottom of the thermometer. We considered fifteen degrees below zero a rather warm night.


As for the town itself, there was no burlesque show, no movie theatre; not even a public library. Radio was still to be born. There was a country dance at the schoolhouse every Saturday night, but that was out as far as we night hawks were concerned. About all we did was work, eat, and sleep. Twelve hours of toil per night, seven nights per week. We forgot what a spot signal looked like. "Spot," of course, means rest—a chance to sleep or loaf or gab on company time. "On the spot" was a common term to indicate chewing the rag—that is, swapping experiences and tall tales. It's now used for the readers' letters department of Railroad Magazine.

As I was saying, we had little or no "spot" in the desolate coal town of Helper, Utah. If it hadn't been for my sweetheart, a slim and starry-eyed young

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thing in Salt Lake City, I'd have bounced my smoky lantern against the nearest boxcar and grabbed a rattler for the West Coast. Thinking of her made life at Helper endurable.

After heading the calliope toward the cinder pit in the morning, we used to pick up a bucket of Java at the beanery and adjourn to Old Man Flaim's grog shop. There the tomato-faced bartender would have the stove redhot and a bottle of black Jamaica rum spotted on the mahogany. Mister, there were mornings when we were so tired that the dragging seats of our overalls obliterated our tracks in the now, but three or four jorums of boiling coffee, generously laced with full-bodied rum and seasoned with sugar, cinnamon, and a

twist of lemon peel, would have us ready to imagine ourselves on the Florida sands.

Nothing much happened in Helper beyond an occasional bar-room brawl. Overworked coal miners, in for a spree, would tangle with a couple of stray cowboys. But all of the steered clear of railroaders, for the train and enginemen on the Grande in those days were plenty tough. The miners were muscle-bound and slow; while the cowboys, being restrained by law from carrying their guns in town, were pretty harmless.

To be continued . . .

Taken from True Tales of the Rails—Actual Happenings Told by Eye Witnesses—January 1941



MUSEUM EVENTS SCHEDULE

Submitted by Coralie Peters

Welcome to the Railway and Forestry Museum, Prince George and Region! We would like to take this opportunity to let you know about our remaining special events for the summer.

STEAM DAYS

August 24 & 25
September 7 & 8
September 21 & 22

- The oldest operating steam crane in Canada will be running and people can go inside and help the engineers.
- The turntable will be operating.
- Have you ever been on a speeder? If not come down to the museum and enjoy a short trip to the end of the museum and back for only 50 cents.
- There will be different games and activities for the whole family.
- And, there will be guided tours throughout the day.

KIDS CAN . . . DAYS

Starting on July 2:
Tuesdays from
10 am to 1 pm
Thursdays from
1 pm to 4 pm

- Bring a lunch
- We will provide a snack, a tour, speeder rides, games and crafts.
- Phone to pre-book your child now at 563-7351

SENIORS' DAYS

August 12
September 9
October 14

- Seniors will enjoy FREE admission, FREE cookies, FREE coffee and FREE tours.
- Tours will be at 10 am and 1:30 pm.

RAIL DAZE

July 27 & 28

- We will be having family games, crafts, and speeder rides.
- The steam crane will be running and the turntable will be spinning.
- Come check it out!

FORESTRY DAYS

August 10 & 11

- There will be a kids corner set up for children to do coloring, crafts, forestry displays, and games.
- It's another fun family weekend at the museum.

HOURS OF OPERATION AND ADMISSION

- We are open from 9 am to 5 pm daily.
- The admission is \$6.00 adult, \$5.00 for seniors and youths, \$3.00 for children 6-12, \$15.00 for a family and children 5 and under get in FREE.

Call the museum at 563-7351 for more information about any summer events or if you have any questions. We look forward to seeing you this summer!

Check out the Railway and Forestry Museum's website
www.pgrfm.bc.ca/

Email address:
trains@pgrfm.bc.ca

PGRFM MEMBERSHIP DUES

March 1 - February 28

Family \$35

(maximum of 5 persons—2 adults and 2 or 3 children, 17 years of age or under)

Individual \$30

Senior (65+) \$15

Student (13-17 years) \$15

Lifetime \$350

ON TRACK NEWSLETTER

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Deadlines for submissions:

Winter 2002 newsletter submissions by September 15th, 2002.



Thanks to Mag-Net Internet
for designing and hosting our website
<http://www.pgrfm.bc.ca/>

Welcome New Members

Henry Barilla
David Beaudry
Jeff & Bernadine Costello
Steven, Silia, Mary Kate, Samuel
DallaLana
Harris Family
Micheal Hodgson
Michelle & Lee Karpenko
Grant Mckinnon
Steven, Mary, Joshua, Jessica
Nycholat
Clara Penner
Coralie Peters
Melanie Simmons
Stan & Eileen Smith
Telus Community
Connections North
Fabiola & Metin Toyata
Bruce Watters

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

- Free access to the Museum during normal open hours
- Mr. Quick Lube & Oil offers \$4 off any oil and lube
- Members Annual BBQ
- Free speeder rides during operating days
- Free *On Track* Newsletter
- Invitation to PGRFM general meetings
- Opportunity to work as a volunteer of the Museum
- Save 10% at Gift Shop
- 10% discount at McCloud Nine on Central by showing your PGRFM membership card.
- Free access to the West Coast Railway Heritage Park in Squamish; just show your PGRFM membership card.

ANOTHER BUSY SUMMER AT THE RAILWAY AND FORESTRY MUSEUM

Submitted by Coralie Peters

To June 30, we have already had:

- 34 school and bus tours with 4 more planned for July.
- 5 birthday parties with 7 more planned for July.
- 2 successful seniors' days with a total attendance of 220.
- 161 people attended the first Steam Days.
- 393 more people were admitted to the Museum than last year at this time, and
- increased income of \$1,400 compared to last June.

Watch for the final impressive statistics in the fall issue!

SKIMBLESHANKS, THE RAILWAY CAT

By T.S. Eliot (1888 – 1965)

There's a whisper down the line at 11:39 when the Night Mail's ready to depart, saying, "Skimble, where is Skimble has he gone to hunt the thimble?"

We must find him or the train can't start." All the guards and all the porters and the stationmaster's daughters they are searching high and low, saying, "Skimble where is Skimble for unless he's very nimble then the Night Mail just can't go.

At 11:42 then the signal's nearly due and the passengers are frantic to a man—then Skimble will appear and he'll saunter to the rear:

He's been busy in the luggage van! He gave one flash of his glass' green eyes and the signal goes "All Clear!"

And we're off at last for the northern part of the Northern Hemisphere!

You may say that by and large it is Skimble who's in charge of the Sleeping Car Express. From the driver and the guards to the bagmen playing cards he will supervise them all, more or less.

Down the corridor he paces and examines all the faces of the travelers in the First and in the Third; he es-

tablishes control by a regular patrol and he'd know at once if anything occurred.

He will watch you without winking and he sees what you are thinking and it's certain that he doesn't approve of hilarity and riot, so the folk are very quiet when Skimble is about and on the move.

You can play no pranks on Skimbleshanks! He's a Cat that cannot be ignored; so nothing goes wrong on the North Mail when Skimbleshanks is aboard.

Oh it's very pleasant when you have found your little den with your name written up on the door. And the berth is very neat with a newly folded sheet and there's not a speck of dust on the floor.

There is every sort of light—you can make it dark or bright; there's a button that you turn to make a breeze.

There's a funny little basin you're supposed to wash your face in and a crank to shut the window if you sneeze.

Then the guard looks in politely and will ask you very brightly "do you like your morning tea weak or strong?" But Skimble just behind him and was ready to remind him,

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MANAGER'S REPORT

By Trudy Swaan

The summer staff has been hired, some of the artifacts have been refurbished and the others have been dusted and cleaned . . . another busy summer season at the Railway and Forestry Museum has begun!

To start, I extend a sincere thank you to the Regional District of Fraser Fort George for their generous funding for 2002. This funding has enabled the Museum to have full time management service.

I will take this opportunity to welcome back two of last year's staff members, Coralie Peters and Micheal Hodgson, and to welcome new staff members, Melanie Simmons and David Beaudry. Look for their bios in this newsletter. They are an enthusiastic group who look forward to making our museum guests feel welcome while they are on our site.

We have hired Grant Mckinnon for two months to take care of odd jobs on the site. Grant has done a great job and daily we can see improvements. Thanks Grant!

Thanks go out to Alecia

Geenfield, our Funding Coordinator, for her continued efforts to find, apply for and obtain additional funding for us. Way to go Alecia!!

Thank you to the family of the late Jack Maskulak for making the Railway and Forestry Museum a benefactor. We have received \$340 dollars to date, which will be applied to a special project yet to be determined.

Be sure to come down to the Park and see the great job our volunteers have done during the winter months refurbishing the Russell snowplow, the BCR tank car and the Nechako coach. **The cars look great and thanks go out to the dedicated volunteers for all their hard work!**

Our plans to put gardens at the front of the Visitors Centre are moving ahead—not as fast as we would like, but they are moving ahead! Look for changes there before the season is over!

The Site Committee plans to move the old Telus Building and the wooden boxcar in order to create a permanent location for the new Telus Building. The old gift shop will also be moved

to an as yet undecided location. There is some interest in moving the Giscome Church to the Museum site, and we are working with the Giscome group to see if this is feasible.

Thanks to the Ray Roar with the City for grading the parking lot, mowing the grass out front of the site, topping the tree in the parking lot, and putting up a Handicapped Parking sign. The City is also looking into securing some park benches for the site.

Do you know of anyone who creates unique crafts? We are looking for consignment items to sell in our Gift Shop. If you know someone that has a talent for making unique items and would be interested in having them in our Gift Shop on consignment, please have them give us a call. (563-7315)

**LOOKING FOR A
WONDERFUL WAY TO
SPEND A SUMMER DAY?
COME VISIT US!**



HELPER TOWN

Continued from page 7

stock. And yet it was and is an important spot on the old D&RG; for, hidden away in the canyons nearby, are a half dozen or more of the biggest producing coal mines in the West. Nearly all, including the coke ovens at Sunnyside, were reached by branch lines. A job of braking out of Helper was worth close to \$200 per month, even twenty-seven years ago.

The town itself in 1912 and '13 was "one mile long and one street wide," as one boomer expressed it. It had a depot whose upper floor housed the offices of the trainmaster, the chief dispatcher, and the general yardmaster. At the upper end of the station platform was the beanery, while at the lower end, or near it, stood the Railroad Y.M.C.A. Main Street consisted of one big restaurant run by Japanese, two or three general merchandise emporiums, and five or six saloons, all of which were practically under the trainmaster's windows.

I rented a room in a private house where several other "rails" were housed. There were four bedrooms on the upper floor, all opening off a central lounge room, whose chief article of furniture was a big pot-bellied coal stove, our only source of heat.

Showing up on the job for

my first night, I found that my companions on the footboard were Jimmy Burns, foreman, and Tom Gadbury, switchman. Tom had worked for the "Grand" at various points in Colorado and had been "Rule Gee'd" half a dozen times. A plea for one more chance after his last blow-up had resulted in a sentence of six months on probation as Helper. If Tom stuck it out without getting fired, he had a chance to go back braking out of Salida.

I never did learn what had put Jimmy Burns on his uppers, for Jimmy was a first-rate carhand and had worked all over the West. But when he hit Helper, just a month ahead of me, he was broke, hungry, without a Brotherhood card or service letter, and as ragged as a barrel of sauerkraut.

Well, that'll give you an idea. Nobody stayed at Helper as night switchman for very long—which made it a swell spot for a boomer to drop off and pick up a road stake.

And now Burns, Gadbury, and I, for reasons of our own, were determined to hold her down until Spring. My references were in order; but Superintendent J. T. Slattery had several letters about Jimmy Burns—the Denver office wanted him fired for "unsatisfactory personal record."

Slattery went to bat, like the old hero that he was, and Jimmy stayed.

We did most of our switching at the east end of the yard, where we made up drags of empties for the various mine runs. Our toughest assignment was that of lining up the local in the morning. He whole yard sloped toward the east on a one or one-and-a-half per cent grade. We kicked our cars up hill and then watched to see that they didn't roll back at us. I worked "the field," carrying a full-grown pick handle to tie down the first cuts that went into an alley, and then chunking other cuts that came against them in case the joint didn't make.

We used to stop at the rip track on our way down to the east end and load up all the blocks and chunks we could find to "wood up the lead." Hoboes would come over every chance they got and pack all my timber away for firewood. We got around that by stopping at the "jungles" every day, dropping off a half ton or so of company coal for the boys.

There was nothing about the job at Helper to cause any boomer to cease his wandering. The Utah desert country is no winter resort. It's pleas-

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MEET THE 2002 SUMMER STAFF

Hi! My name is **David**. I will be taking the Power Engineering at CNC; the program includes welding and working with turbines, boilers and refrigeration systems. Some of my interests are mechanics and working in and around loaders, forklifts, and trains. The museum is a good place for all of this! I am one of the maintenance people here at the museum and will also be giving some of the tours. Have a good summer.

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Hi! My name is **Melanie Simmons**. I have just finished my first year of Broadcast News at S.A.I.T. in Calgary, with my ultimate goal being public relations. At the museum, the activities I enjoy most are giving tours, doing birthday parties, working with the media, and talking to people from all over the world about their experiences. I look forward to seeing you around the railway museum!

Hi! My name is **Coralie Peters**. I enjoy working with young children—this is why Early Childhood Education is my career choice, with only one more year to completion of the program. I am the manager of the gift shop and some of my favourite duties include talking with the tourists, finding out where everyone is headed, where they're from, and listening to their stories. I hope to meet all of you at the museum this summer.

**Railway and Forestry
Museum,
Prince George
open from 9 am to
5 pm daily.**

Micheal Hodgson: I am a home-schooled teen from the wilds of Big Creek, and trains have always fascinated me. I have spent many hours in the bush working with my father who horse logs on the family woodlot. My accomplishments include a private pilots license, three times seeing the Canadian prairies from the windows of a train, traveling across the US by train, and trips to Spain and the United Kingdom with my family. Have great summer.

Kelly Morris: I have been involved with non-profit organizations in Prince George for the past 13 years and enjoy working with the many board members, volunteers and donating businesses that come together for a common cause. I am the Executive Assistant to Forest Expo and sit on a board for the Prince George 2002 BC Seniors Games as the Sport Director. The Railway and Forestry Museum is interesting and I enjoy meeting the many visitors that come from all over the world.



OPEN LETTER TO VOLUNTEERS

By Micheal Hodgson

Hello all! Once again the museum will be holding Rail Daze and Steam Days when the 100-ton steam crane is fired up and shown off for visitors from all over the world. Steam Days/Rail Daze both rely on the donated time of the dedicated volunteers.

This year's Rail Daze will be held on July 27/28, with Steam Days August 24/25, September 7/8 and September 21/22. Also on the schedule of events is the Forest Family Festival, August 10/11.

Steam Days/Rail Daze will feature the steam crane operating, turntable rides, speeder rides, games, and Canadian National Railways will be showing off one of their most modern locomotives.

Forest Family Festival will have displays set up for artisans to show off their wooden pieces, logging equipment to view, heritage games and crafts for families, and a children's corner to teach children about forestry. The Prince George Follies will present a free performance during the day, and a lady from the Prince George Public Library will read to the children.

All of these events require lots of volunteers to run smoothly. If you can come down any of these days, please phone the museum and talk to one of our summer staff. (563-7351)

Thank you in advance; we appreciate your help.



The consist on the lead track coming into the Museum site.

Summer 2002

ON TRACK PUBLICATION

Creating this publication is like having a child. It can't be done alone. It requires passion and maybe some coaxing, which leads to a bit of groping, bumbling and thrashing around. It requires some anxious waiting and wondering if what was done was actually the right thing. When the publication does present itself to the world, the creators look at it with a sense of pride and relief, wondering how they managed to produce something so fresh, exciting, and new.

This "baby" is no exception. Without our contributors, this newsletter would not exist. It is your voice. Thank you to all who have contributed, not only to this issue, but to past and future issues, too. We can't do it without you.

Excerpts from article by David Moorhouse, Editor, Meeting Point Newsletter

Donations in memory are gratefully accepted. Tax receipts will be issued.



Photo by Daryl Moulder

Russell snowplow being turned on the turntable so it can be taken off on the appropriate track for public viewing.



Photo by Daryl Moulder

Parade of refurbished exhibits consisting of the Russell snowplow, locomotive 1520 with tender, and the BCR tank car.

Summer 2002



The refurbished Russell snowplow, enroute to the turntable, waits beside the Penny Station.



Russell snowplow is eased onto the turntable. Don Holzworth supervising the operation from the doorway of the plow.

Summer 2002

HELPER TOWN

PART ONE of THREE

By "Haywire Mac"
Author, Harry McClintock

When I was cut off the board on the "Mormon" Division of the Oregon Short Line in December, 1912, with a clear record and six months seniority—which was unusual for me—the chief clerk apologized and said I'd be rehired as soon as business picked up. That is, if I were still around then.

"Oh, I'll be around," I promised; and I meant it, for a job of braking between the Utah capital and Pocatello, Idaho, was about as good as any you'd find in the West at that time. There were plenty of openings for trainmen in the wide open spaces, but most of them ran "from no place to no place, through nothing," as the boomers put it. And Salt Lake was a lively town to hang out in. It was big enough to play the finest theatrical attractions and yet small enough for you to get acquainted with all the bartenders. Besides, in my humble opinion, Salt Lake City had (and still has) more pretty girls to the city block than any other town in the States or Canada. I had one of them lined up steady there for a while, a blonde with

baby-blue eyes and hips like a snake's torso.

So, instead of listening to the far-off whisper of Southern California palm trees, I hid myself to Helper, Utah, at the other end of the Salt Lake Division, and went to work switching for the Denver & Rio Grande. Helper is a smudge on the landscape on the eastern side of the Wasatch Range, just where the Rio Grande rails start the climb over the famous Soldier Summit. To the eastward the shining steel stretches away through vast reaches of rock and sagebrush country that is almost as thinly settled as it was when Brigham Young led his pioneer caravan across what map makers termed the "Great American Desert."

To the westward, seeming almost to hang right over the little division point, rise the mighty battlements of Wasatch Range. Bellowing locomotives that drag their strings of dingey freight car up the grade, through Castle Gate canyon, are dwarfed into toy size by the gaunt, naked cliffs which look down upon their passing.

There wasn't much to Helper in those days—just a four-track yard, a roundhouse, a coal chute and a "rip" track for light repairs to the rolling

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SKIMBLESHANKS

Continued from page 4

for Skimble won't let anything go wrong.

And when you creep into your cosy berth and pull up the counterpane, you are bound to admit that it's very nice to know that you won't be bothered by mice—you can leave all that to the Railway Cat, the Cat of the Railway Train!

In the middle of the night he is always fresh and bright; every now and then he has a cup of tea with perhaps a drop of Scotch while he's keeping on the watch only stopping here and there to catch a flea.

You were fast asleep at Crewe and so you never knew that he was walking up and down the station; where he greets the stationmaster with elation.

But you saw him at Dumfries, where he summons the police if there's anything they ought to know about: when you get to Gallowgate there you do not have to wait—he gives you a wave of his long brown tail which says: "I'll see you again!"

You'll meet without fail on the Midnight Mail the Cat of the Railway Train.

Submitted by Marion Switzer

X

Summer 2002

EURO/CN 7817

By Don Holzworth

The Eurocan Project started on May 20, 2002. It began by getting all the rusty—and I mean rusty—doors to open. With the odd “gosh” and “oh darn,” this was accomplished in only four and a half hours.

On May 22, the guys (Roger and Mike) from Harmony Painting started to tape off windows and such to get ready for sand blasting. The day is perfect—cloudy but no rain. Locomotive 1990 started right up and Eurocan was pulled outside at the CN shops. Once this was done, Roger and Mike went to work. Finding a good spot on the old cat car, I settled in with camera in one hand and Pepsi in the other to watch the show.

After a short time, the sand pot ran out as it will and Mike started to refill it from our supply. Dumping the first bag into the pot everything came to a stop—turns out the pallet of so-called sand is actually some kind of cement mortar. So they had to pack everything up and put everything back inside until we get some real sand.

Well, Mother Nature called in some rain so there was a couple days delay before we



Photo by Don Holzworth

CN 7817 in Eurocan colours being sandblasted.

could start again. By then, Locomotive 1990 and the Nechako had been moved back to the park. On the 26, we had to use our Hyster forklift to push Eurocan back outside. Mike and Roger started up the compressor to start blasting, only to find that it had developed a humongous oil leak. So the boys had a larger air compressor delivered and, in a short time, Eurocan's hide was blasted off. Within a couple of hours it is naked and no longer the Eurocan. Once this is done, we pushed it back inside out of the weather.

May 29, Roger and Mike began re-taping the locomotive and after some body filling they applied the primer coat. It is a totally different looking loco now. The guys have done an awesome job in spite of the few glitches.

After some small repairs and more prep, they will start the final paint job. We look forward to seeing the finished project.

Editors' Note: The Eurocan will be painted in the original CN colours.

✕



Photo by Don Holzworth

CN 7817 with prime coat complete.

CN SHOPS WORK PARTIES

Interested in smaller projects and light duties such as painting, etc.?

Call the
Museum
Office
563-7351



An Insider's Peek Into Interesting Artifacts at The Railway and Forestry Museum

By Alecia Greenfield

Have you ever wondered what the Museum staff would show you if they had a couple hours to show you their favourite pieces of our industrial past?

Well starting mid-August you can see it all. Our summer staff, Michael, David, Coralie and Melanie, has been working on their own exhibits to feature their favorite artifacts. (Well, Michael had to pick his second favorite because we couldn't fit a whole train in the display case).

So come on down and harvest some insider information.