

Relive Railroading At Revelstoke Roundhouse



This wood-fired 1914 Baldwin Locomotive, ran in Louisiana.—photo by Three Valley Gap

By Margo Malcolm

Like a loon call echoing over a lake, the whistle of a train reverberating through majestic mountains is a haunting, nostalgic sound.

Gordon Bell, owner of the Three Valley Gap Roundhouse and Railway Museum, has answered the train's call by creating a home for the iron horses of the past that have been put out to pasture. His covered turntable complex is the largest in North America with a diameter of 300 feet, and includes 100,000 square feet of roof!

Located less than 20 km from Revelstoke near the British Columbia-Alberta border, Three Valley Gap Roundhouse is in the heart of railway country. To this day Revelstoke still depends on the railroad for its livelihood and nearby Craigellachie, Eagle Pass, is where the last spike on the Canadian Pacific Railroad (CPR) was driven in 1885.

Roundhouses were a vital part of the old railway system. They were usually built every 100-200 miles apart because few steam locomotives ventured farther than that from their home base. Most steam locomotives were designed for specific service such as freight or passenger, and they were intended to go forward and seldom pulled a train backward. To solve this, a turntable mechanism was used to rotate the locomotives to the different workshops in the roundhouse for servicing.

Daily maintenance took place in the roundhouses, including regular greasing, oiling and cleaning. The locomotives were cumbersome and needed a lot of equipment to maintain them. The number of stalls in a roundhouse varied from as few as two to around 60 depending on its location and the

number of trains working in the area. Three Valley Gap's roundhouse has an inspection pit, a back shop, a pattern shop and a railway coach repair and carpentry shop.

If a train whistle gives you a chill down your spine, seeing the imposing iron beasts will take you back to the romantic days when the west was opening up. Three Valley Gap's Railway Roundhouse is home to an impressive display of railway equipment and trains, including a CPR Caboose, private coaches and a coal-fired steam engine built in 1922 that closely resembles Onderdonk's No. 2 locomotive "Curly," used in the CPR construction of the 1880s.

The Roundhouse entrance is a classical façade with imposing columns. Bell has built a replica of the entrance of the Arlington Court building from Revelstoke. This structure was a hotel and lumber mill office built in 1912 and later converted to an apartment building which burnt down in 1976. Its surviving original columns made of cedar were then donated to Three Valley Gap, where they are displayed.

It's not always easy, or even a priority, for communities to save artifacts from the past, but there is a human need to understand where we come from. At Three Valley Gap, Gordon Bell has taken it upon himself to preserve the history of this region. Sixty years ago, when a post-World War II boom had millions rebuilding for the future, apparently "useless" relics were forgotten, torn down, burned or simply left to decay.

Bell began collecting heritage buildings, and soon his collection came to include dozens of antique vehicles and memorabilia which can be enjoyed and

relived at the Three Valley Gap Heritage Ghost Town.

His Three Valley Gap Lake Chateau complex not only includes the Roundhouse and Railway Museum, the Heritage Ghost Town and an Antique Auto Museum but also a 200-room resort. Amenities include a unique "cave" honeymoon suite, heated indoor pool, a lake with a sandy beach and gardens.

Nearby Revelstoke is also home to the Revelstoke Railway Museum, which hosts Railway Days every year in August. Railway Days 2007 will be held Aug. 17-26.

The area is also home to many opportunities for recreation—numerous hiking trails in nearby Glacier and Mt.

Revelstoke National Parks and an 18-hole golf course. The resort towns of Banff and Jasper in the Canadian Rockies and the beautiful lakes and wineries of the Okanagan are within a half day's drive.

Next time you hear a train whistle echoing through the mountains, if only in your imagination, you'll know that there is a place where the iron horses have a found a home.

If You Go

Three Valley Gap Roundhouse
www.3valleyroundhouse.com
Three Valley Gap Lake Chateau and
Heritage Ghost Town
www.3valley.com
Toll Free: 1-888-667-2109
Email: hello@3valley.com

Salsa Dancing Thursday Nights at the Autry

Autry National Center in Griffith Park will have Latin bands playing for salsa dancing each Thursday night, July 5 through Aug. 30, 6:30-9 p.m. The sounds of mambo, Latin jazz and Afro-Cuban beats will heat up the "Sizzling Summer Nights" in the museum's plaza.

For those who can't dance, Oliva Dasso, salsa diva, will teach salsa dancing. A taco and drink bar will be open at 5 p.m.

Admission is \$5, but free for Autry members. You can purchase membership onsite. Museum admission is included and it will be open until 8 p.m. Parking is free.

Current exhibits include "Pistols: Dazzling Firearms," through Aug. 12, and "Gene Autry and the Twentieth-Century West: The Centennial Exhibition," through Jan. 13, 2008.

How to Win 2-for-1 Tickets To Autry Museum

Readers can enter a drawing for a two-for-the price-of-one ticket to the Autry National Center in Griffith Park. Simply mail in your name and address to Autry, c/o NBY!, 4805 Alta Canyada Rd., La Canada, CA 91011. Entries must be received by July 21.

Winners from Last Issue

Winners of Autry tickets from last issue are Carol Rosen of Torrance, Marilyn Garrison of Riverside, John Del Rosso of Torrance, Robin Moody of Torrance and Marguerite Ware of Montrose.

Winner of tickets to Ragtime concert is Robert Zeis of Whittier, and winner of tickets to the Theater Organ Concert is Julian Feldman of Seal Beach.