COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS: 2002

Banff, Alberta

The Canadian Pacific Railway's (CPR's) arrival in Banff was marked in unspectacular fashion. On October 27, 1883, construction crews laid down "Siding No. 29" in the meadows near the foot of Cascade Mountain. But Banff's modest beginnings as a railway station stop belied its spectacular future.

Three CPR employees discovered hot springs at a cave and basin at the foot of Sulphur Mountain that fall and soon vaulted the area into prominence. William Cornelius Van Horne, CPR railway builder extraordinaire, whose 1884 appointment as CPR vice-president broadened his duties, was eager to capitalize on the touristic appeal of the area. He prevailed upon the federal government to follow the U.S. example. He had the area designated a national park. The federal government passed Order in Council 2197, November 28, 1885, setting aside a 26 km2 (10 mi2) area surrounding the hot springs. This created Canada's first national park, and the third national park in the world.

Always one to render homage to his principals and mentors, Van Horne named "Siding 29" Banff, after the birthplace of two of CPR's founders. CPR's first president, George Stephen, and his cousin, CPR senior director, Donald A. Smith, were both born in Banffshire, Scotland.

In 1886 surveyor and civil engineer, George Stewart, laid out a town site between the rail line and the Bow River. That winter CPR began excavating the foundation for a new tourist hotel on a promontory overlooking the confluence of the Spray and Bow rivers. CPR commissioned famed Windsor Station architect Bruce Price to design the château-like hotel. The following summer Van Horne stopped by to check on the progress of Price's masterpiece. To his horror, he noted the kitchen staff would have the best view. And tourists would see the backside of Sulphur Mountain. Van Horne remedied the faux-pas by designing a rotunda with a magnificent view of the rivers and the Bow Valley.

In 1888 CPR opened its first Banff Springs Hotel. And it moved the station and siding to the new town site location, about a mile westward along the main line. CPR built a twin-structure log station at the new location, where the current station and grounds are today. By 1910, when CPR started unabashedly referring to the Canadian Rockies as the Canadian Pacific Rockies in their advertising literature, the log station had run its course. With some 2100 visitors a week during peek summer periods now visiting Banff, the resort and national park gateway to tourists needed expanding. So CPR commissioned J. McDiarmid & Company of Winnipeg in 1910 to build the stucco and river stone structure you see there today. The building served as CPR's station until Via Rail Canada took over national passenger service in the late 1970s.

A combination of fires and more tourists saw Banff Springs Hotel rebuilt and expanded in 1911, 1914, 1926 and 1928.

The Trans-Canada Highway opened up in 1962, nearly paralleling the CPR line. This was the beginning of the end of Banff's importance as a railway tourist stop. But the rise of automobile,

bus and recreational vehicle travel boosted Banff's importance as a tourist Mecca. Banff now sees 4.5 million visitors a year.

In the early 1970s, the express/baggage section in the northeastern end of the station was converted to a railway theme restaurant called The Caboose.

Via Rail halted transcontinental passenger service through Banff in 1990. The building was declared a heritage railway station the following year in November 1991.

The CPR station still serves today as a railway depot for the Rocky Mountaineer cruise train and is sometimes a stop for CPR's retro luxury cruise train — the Royal Canadian Pacific.

Bonfield, Ontario

Between 1878 and 1881, the Central Canada Railway (CCR) was slowly constructed westward up the Ottawa Valley to near present-day Bonfield, Ontario. Bonfield station was originally named Callander, after the Scottish home of Mr. Duncan McIntyre, principal financier behind the CCR.

On February 15, 1881, the Canadian Pacific Railway was formed, with an eastern terminus designated near the east shore of Lake Nipissing, near North Bay, although the complete survey had not been finalized. Plans however were to begin construction of the CPR westward from a connection with the CCR. On June 9, 1881, the CCR was absorbed by the newly-formed CPR.

Thus it was in Bonfield Township in the spring of 1882 that the eastern division of the CPR began construction west towards Lake Nipissing and the west coast. At a location west of the present station of Bonfield on what is now known as the Ottawa Valley Railway's North Bay Subdivision, the "First Spike" in Sir John A. Macdonald's National Dream was driven.

The Canadian Railway Hall of Fame is pleased to honour the Township of Bonfield and this historic location through induction into its communities category for 2002.

London, Ontario

The City of London, located in southwestern Ontario, is noted for its economic diversity and its significant contribution to the Canadian and North American railway industry as home to the assembly plant for General Motors Electro-Motive Division.

General Motors Electro-Motive Division is the world's largest manufacturer of diesel locomotives for all commercial railway applications. While the company's headquarters is in La Grange, Illinois, USA, final assembly of all GM locomotives takes place in London at a modern production facility. Diesel locomotives assembled in London are used not only on Canadian railways, but are also exported to customers world-wide.

Canadian railways have been leaders in purchasing modern fuel-efficient and high-horsepower locomotives assembled in London. Models such as the GM SD-70MAC provide highly reliable and versatile power, generating up to 4000 horsepower (3.0 MW) and using "AC traction" technology for the effective handling of freight on North American railways.

Both Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Railway provide scheduled freight service on mainline corridors to customers located in the city of London. The city also is located on Via Rail Canada's central Canadian corridor between Windsor, Ontario, and Québec City, offering rail travellers a choice of destinations and flexible scheduling at a new downtown station recently opened by Via.

London's continued role in powering the Canadian railway industry has been recognized through its selection as one of four communities inducted into the Canadian Railway Hall of Fame in 2002.

Montréal, Québec

The city of Montréal has been at the heart of Canada's railway industry throughout its history. It is the home of the headquarters of Canadian National, Canada's largest railway and now a top-performing North American railway system. Montréal is also headquarters for Via Rail Canada Inc., Canada's intercity passenger railway, and regional railway networks Chemins de fer du Québec (Quebec Railway Corporation), and Genesee-Rail One Canada.

Historically, Canadian Pacific Railway was also headquartered in Montréal. Historic Windsor Station, headquarters of the CPR for many years and one of the most imposing railway stations in Canada, continues to serve key segments of Montréal's commuter train system as the downtown terminal. Central Station, located next to CN's headquarters building, serves both Montréal commuters and Via Rail Canada's intercity network and is one of Canada's busiest passenger railway terminals.

In the early days of Canada's railways, the city of Montréal was home to Montreal Locomotive Works — a company that built steam locomotives for Canada's railways, and later first-generation diesels. Some of Canada's famous steam locomotives, such as CPR's Empress Number 2816, were built in the MLW shops.

Railway equipment was also built and repaired at large shop facilities in the Montréal districts of Pointe-Saint-Charles (CN) and Angus (CPR). Third-party suppliers of specialized locomotive and car repair services continue to operate and thrive in the city today.

Montréal remains a strategic and important point for Canada's railway industry. The port of Montréal is extensively used for intermodal operations that connect North America and world markets, and feed the mainline networks of CN and CPR. Today's railway network provides vital infrastructure to alleviate highway congestion and pollution in the Montréal area by providing routes for commuter and intercity passenger service together with freight operations.

South of the famous Victoria Bridge, built to provide a rail link from the Island of Montréal with the south shore of the St. Lawrence River, historians can learn about Canada's railway history at the Canadian Railway Museum in nearby Saint-Constant, home of the largest collection of vintage railway equipment in Canada.

The city of Montréal's historical role as the administrative and financial centre of the Canadian railway industry, and its continued economic role in the success of the industry has been recognized through its selection as one of four communities inducted into the Canadian Railway Hall of Fame in 2002.