



INDUSTRY TRAILBLAZERS: 2003

Fred Sloman

Very few people have ever given more to the community nor been a greater part of the community than Fred Sloman, the teacher who devoted 39 years of his life on board CN's School on Wheels car, from 1926 to 1965. During that period he taught children in isolated regions of Ontario. Most of the students taught by Sloman were the children of railroad workers and others were recent immigrants and Cree.

With his wife and five children living with him on the car, Sloman also brought the outside world to each community when he arrived with the school car. Not only was Sloman a teacher, he also helped bring a sense of community to each town he visited. Every evening, the teacher and his wife volunteered their time to give informal classes to the parents of the students. Sloman taught them to speak English and basic living skills, such as how to complete income tax forms and order from a store catalogue. His wife helped the women write letters to family overseas and instructed them in sewing, hygiene and child care. Sloman also ran movies for the communities and organized bingo and card nights.

Northern Ontario in those days was a land of hardships and deprivations, and Sloman diligently shared his knowledge with the locals and made a real difference in their lives. He not only passed on knowledge, but also instilled in his students the importance of education and giving back to the community, which they in turn have passed on to their descendants, who now make up the strong, tightly knit communities of modern northern Ontario. Fred Sloman, whose dedicated and diligent career touched the lives of so many, is a worthy addition to the Canadian Railway Hall of Fame.

Harold H. Flemmer

Harold Flemmer worked his entire career for Canadian Pacific Railway, from 1947 to 1996, almost 50 years. He started as a labourer in Walsh, Alberta, earning a wage of 64 cents an hour.

By 1956 he was foreman of the Medicine Hat Yard, at the ripe old age of 25. He supervised 26 men, who all were at least twice his age.

Much of his career was dedicated to track maintenance, an essential yet underrated part of railroading. He advanced to supervisor of Track Programs in 1958. For many years Harold was on call around the clock, 365 days a year, often working 14-to-16-hour days, 6 or 7 days a week.

By 1968, he was supervisor of Special Duties, which included construction of the Alyth automated hump yard in Calgary from 1968 to 1970. When completed, it was the most fully automated operation of its kind on the continent. Harold considered this landmark project to be the biggest achievement of his career.

In 1975 Harold was promoted to assistant supervisor Maintenance of Way, Pacific Division. In 1976 he worked as a training development officer in Montréal, creating training materials for CPR based on the expertise he had developed in the field over many years.



In 1987 Mr. Flemmer was promoted to supervisor, Maintenance of Way, and from 1994 (until his retirement in 1996) he was manager of track programs for Heavy Haul Canada.

Through it all Harold still managed to raise a family with his dedicated wife, Freda. They are both alive today and live in Calgary. They have two daughters, two grandchildren and two great-grandsons. Harold is as dedicated to his family as he was to his career with CPR.

After his retirement in 1996, Harold wrote a book entitled *Memories — Childhood Reflections of Farming During the Great Depression and Fifty Years of Railroading*. In his book of memoirs he wrote: "My health was good all through my working career. I never missed a day due to illness in forty-nine years and three months. I feel I worked for the best company in the history of North America — Canadian Pacific Railway."

For his dedication, diligence and integrity throughout fifty years with Canadian Pacific, we are glad to induct Harold Flemmer into the Canadian Railway Hall of Fame.

Seth Partridge

Heroic actions by Canadian Pacific men on land, at sea, and in the air, in peacetime and war, have woven a bright thread of courage through the Company's history. Few however have been more fraught with peril than that of J. S. (Seth) Partridge whose heroism in 1925 made him a legend in his own lifetime.

It was one of those muggy August nights and fireman Seth Partridge with Bill Adamson, engineer, had left field for Lake Louise for a pusher job on a heavy freight drag. Moisture was settling on the undergrowth, small rocks and debris occasionally clattered down the tracks and the indefinable sixth sense of experienced mountain railroaders warned intangibly of landslide or washout conditions.

The engine had been through both spiral tunnels and was on the high line, still climbing. They realized, almost before it started, that a slide was forming on the upper slopes of Cathedral Mountain. The lofty mountain was about to rebel. Devastation would lie in its wake. Both men, knowing the terrain, realized the path of the slide would be down the mountain to the low line between the two tunnels, to the station and section house at Yoho where people would be asleep.

Seth Partridge jumped from the cab to carry the warning to Yoho, his engineer's shouted warning ringing in his ears, "Don't be crazy. You'll be killed." Partridge scrambled and clawed his way down the steep slope. Underbrush tore his clothing and skin. He fell, sprawled and hurt himself, only to get up to run again. He reached his objective in time. Sleepers at Yoho were awakened and herded to safety seconds before the slide swept down and engulfed the buildings. The old *Liberty* magazine picked up the story weeks later and awarded him a \$1000 cash prize and the title *Bravest Deed of the Month*. The Royal Humane Society awarded him its gold medal, presented by E. W. Beatty, then CPR President, at the Palliser Hotel. He was given immediate railway promotion, but soon reverted to engine service, his favourite job.

Seth Partridge, who retired August 1, 1952, had joined the Company as a wiper in 1907, became a fireman in 1908. He served in France in the First World War as a railroader with the



230th Construction Corps and was engineer on the Royal Train for then Her Royal Highness Princess Elizabeth just before his retirement. He won 78 merit marks in his railway career. Today, near the Spiral Tunnels, Partridge siding is one of the key centralized traffic control points in the mountains, guarded by two signal bungalows jam-packed with equipment for safety and efficiency in train control. It has been named in honour of Seth Partridge and the station name sign displays his name.

Seth Partridge has since passed away, but the station name sign at Partridge remains — a reminder of this Canadian railway hero who beat the slide on that August day in 1925.

Gordon Lightfoot

Born on November 17, 1938, at Orillia, Ontario, Gordon Lightfoot wrote and recorded the classic folk song “Canadian Railroad Trilogy” in 1967. This original ballad tells the tale of the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and is one of 400 songs that have been written and recorded by Mr. Lightfoot.

Mr. Lightfoot has had a very successful music career and he has sold over 10 million albums and 5 million singles all over the world since his career began in the mid-1960s. He is well known and respected by folk music fans for his unmistakable style and voice. Many top artists have covered his songs — including Elvis Presley, Bob Dylan, George Hamilton IV, and Barbara Streisand.

Mr. Lightfoot has received 16 Juno Awards and is a Companion of the Order of Canada. In 1986, he was inducted into the Canadian Music Hall of Fame, and in 2001, to the Canadian Country Music Hall of Fame.

Canadian Railway Industry is pleased to recognize the musical contribution of Gordon Lightfoot in telling the story of its past by including this talented Canadian into the Canadian Railway Hall of Fame.