

WE CAN KEEP ON TRUCKIN'

With the presentation of a cheque for \$75,000, at the recent Annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner, the City of Surrey has reaffirmed its commitment to the rehabilitation of BCER Car 1225.

Pictured at right are Chair, John Sprung, Director Doug Watkins, City of Surrey Councillor and FVHRS Liaison, Judy Higginbotham, and Vice-Chair Bob Ashton.

The cheque is half of the full grant amount of \$150,000 which will be applied to refurbishing and rebuilding the "trucks" of 1225 (as indicated by former Motorman, and volunteer Frank Horne inset photo). The two trucks are the electric motor, wheel and brake assemblies which power the car. Prior to the transfer of 1225 to Surrey from Paris California, the car was in running condition. In order to ensure it is brought to top running condition a complete



overhaul is necessary, including possible rewinding of the rotors of the electric motors. In addition, the other components of the truck assembly must be rebuilt, including the bearings, springs, brakes, wheels, and tires. Yes Virginia, it does have tires - they're just not rubber. The tires are the

The Power of the BC Electric Railway - by Henry Ewart - The Story of the Power Substations



The Fraser Valley Interurban line had power supplied to the line by five identical power stations located at, Cloverdale, Coghlan near 256th Street in Langley, Clayburn, Sumas at Vedder Mountain and Chilliwack. Only two,

Coghlan and Sumas at Vedder Mountain remain standing today.

These buildings were amazing, all concrete and steel construction and they made a very grand statement with their presence. They were remarkable structures because they not only supplied power to the line, but much of

their surrounding communities, which weren't very big in the early days. In 1910, when the line was first put in, there were only 18 thousand in the south Fraser stretching right up past Chilliwack.

From a document written in 1910, the Cloverdale powerhouse was described as follows: "On one side of the transformer room is the living quarters of the Engineer in Charge, Mr. Sydney Parker and his family, consisted of eight commodious rooms. A similar number of rooms on the opposite side of the building are devoted to operators and staff. Commodious warerooms are also available for storage of equipment."

The description goes on to record that the

MORE PHOTOS & STORY ON PAGE 7

Open House Schedule 2008



Sunday May 18,
Sunday June 15
Sunday July 13
Sunday August 17
Sunday September 14
Sunday October 12
12 noon to 4 pm

At the Car Barn, 152nd & 64th Ave.

The Power of the Volunteer Army - *John Sprung, Chair*



Chair John Sprung

I have returned from our second annual Volunteer's Appreciation Dinner with a smile on my face. The smile comes from seeing the accomplishments of the many people involved in this project. Whether it's a physical change in car BCER 1225, a comment that brings in a new member, or another cheque towards completing the restoration, all are major accomplishments.

We have seen all these accomplishments recently. BCER 1225 looks like an interurban car again. The

structural side framing is back, the dividers are returning. Our membership is growing now at 213 people. Our city of Surrey liaison, Councillor Judy Higginbotham, was happy to present a cheque for \$75,000 towards the completion of the rehabilitation of the trucks. I'm not sure if we need to have another dinner in February as the City Council will have an additional \$75,000 to complete the trucks. The Society had made a request to City Council in July for financial support to complete the rehabilitation of the trucks.

Our society thrives on the work of volunteers. Daily you can see a very dedicated group working on the physical restoration of BCER 1225 in the car barn in Sullivan, wood working, repairs, welding, painting or electrical work being carried out by knowledgeable people who share in their interest and have the passion in seeing this historic interurban back on the tracks. You will also see our society Vice-Chair Bob Ashton building, painting, directing and encouraging the progress.

Our board of directors are also volunteers, and also share the vision of riding on the original BCER line through Surrey. Each in their own way contributes needed skills and contacts that help us get 'back on the track'. Many hours are spent each week, either in the car barn, in various homes and offices, or lobbying governments, to complete our task of "get car; Fix car; Run car!" To date almost 5,000 volunteer hours have gone into the work of rehabilitating BCER 1225.

Our members also volunteer in many ways: from telling friends and neighbours about the BCER track, about car 1225 or the potential to again have a running community service in Surrey, to the donations of time and money to the society, these all help.

Our community partners help in the services and goods provided, and in also letting their customers know about our Society's plans. With out them, we would remain just a mysterious green barn in Sullivan. Many of these 'partners' become very involved with our projects beyond the parts and cash, their employees and family turn out to lay track, paint buildings, tune up the speeder, and join in.

The local community in Sullivan is changing rapidly as Surrey grows. Many of the new families have no knowledge of the history of the Interurban or the role it played in the development of the Fraser Valley. Not only can we provide some sense of the local community history, we can provide a local connection to the rest of the Valley. The "meet and greet" volunteers at the Open House events this past year report that many families walked in after seeing the advertisements in local papers. Our community Outreach Programme, commenced this year with generous grants from the Surrey Foundation and BCGaming bring in new members, and new volunteers.



The City of Surrey and Provincial government have also provided support; The City of Surrey has continued to support the society to the tune of \$575,000 . The province of BC, through BC Gaming and the Ministry of Transport, has also provided \$162,000. Our society volunteers will provide more "volunteer opportunities" to all government groups in the near future.

The "Run car" part of our society mandate remains as the largest task yet to accomplish.

As BCER 1225 is nearing the time when it will be ready to run on the tracks, with completion targeted by the summer of 2009, our many volunteers will be working to make sure there is access to the interurban tracks. Our initial budget, back in 2001 was \$5.5Million to get back on the tracks. So far we have been awarded or have commitments subject to matching funds of \$2.8 Million . We do have a great deal of work left to accomplish, and our many volunteers, within the society and within the City of Surrey will be working with BC Hydro, Southern Rail of BC, the BC and Federal Governments to get car 1225 back on the track.

GLIMPSES OF OPEN HOUSE SUMMER OF 2007



I Wanted To Drive One -Bob Ashton, Vice-Chair



The dream, held for a lifetime, was to one day drive a BC Electric Railway Interurban car. As Car 1225 moves closer to being rehabilitated, the dream becomes more and more real for Vice-Chair, Bob Ashton, the man supervising the incredible mostly volunteer effort to bring the past back to the future. He spoke with Ray Hudson about his passion and motivation.

I was born and raised in Vancouver and I used to ride the Interurban when I was a kid, and I have some

very fond memories of that time. I've always been unhappy with the fact that they disappeared. When I became a teacher, I used to take classes on field trips to the Burnaby Heritage Village where the Interurban car 1223 is on display. After the kids were looked after, I'd just sit in the car and reflect on what we had and what has been lost and what a great memory this was.

One Canada Day, in the early nineties, I was out in Steveston where I saw car 1220. I never thought there was another Interurban car, so I joined the organization, and at the next AGM, got onto the board of directors and helped in the restoration of 1220. I was with them for seven years.

During that time Allen (Aubert) and Judy (Higgenbotham) came out to Steveston when they were researching the revitalization of the Interurban line in Surrey. They had no car at that time. We had worked with the City of Richmond to put together a business plan to put tracks along the dykes to join up with the London Farm, and then Britannia Ship Yards and eventually out to Gary Point. Unfortunately, the neighbours got upset over the idea that the Interurban line might be established and ultimately the project fell apart.

At that point I contacted Allan and Judy, and met them for an initial meeting at a restaurant in Cloverdale in the fall of 1999. Out of that meeting we started the society, and I became the first Chair. We had already targeted cars 1225 and 1304 as vehicles we were interested in acquiring, so we started making presentations to city council and organizing our business plan.

I began the process by working with a similar group from Revelstoke who had information on how to repatriate a car from

the US under a federal heritage program, from the point of dealing with taxes. So I was working on that and developing the Society's policies, while others were working with the city to get the car barn and so on.

When it came to acquiring Car 1225, I travelled, with another director, to the Orange Empire Railway Museum in Paris California. We checked out the car and made the final purchase arrangements. We then spent the next year and a bit talking to the City of Surrey, and Kevin Falcon, the Minister of Transportation to come up with the money.

In August of 2005, I went back to California and helped prepare 1225 for transport to Surrey. On my return, I gave up the Chair so that I could concentrate on rebuilding the car, rather than administering the Society.

What were the challenges of getting the car to Surrey?



The actual challenges arose from the need to secure the car in such a way that none of the glass broke (it wasn't safety glass in those days). We boarded up all of the windows. Due to height restrictions with the car on the deck of the truck, we ended up taking the trolleys and base off the car. Then we used four forklifts, coordinated to work together to lift the car evenly. Also, we had to disconnect the motor leads (wires), the brakes and other mechanisms, so the body of the car could be removed from the trucks, the two assemblies of wheels and motors. Because of their weight, about 8 tonnes each, they had to be carried on a separate truck from the body.

Finally, I got the word that the trucks were at the border, but before I could take delivery, I had to make sure that the crane would be on-scene to off-load the car and trucks. When the actual transfer occurred, we lifted the trucks, then the car body over the fence and then into the barn. That part went very smoothly.

How did you assemble the team of volunteers to rebuild the car?

We advertised in the local papers, we had one of the fellows who worked on 1220 in Burnaby, an electrician, heard about 1225 and came out, and through word of mouth and a bit of advertising, we put together the team we have. A number of them are ex-railroad fellows so they understand at least the concept of what a car

Continued on Page 6



REBUILDING BCER 1225 - A SALUTE TO THE VOLUNTEERS



Second Annual Volunteer Dinner, November 2, 2007



Rebuilding to the 1940's Era - *Bob Ashton Interview from Page 3*

should look like, and we integrated the other skills as we found them.

How true were you to rebuilding the original car to original specifications?

The board made the decision to restore the car to the 1940s era. That meant that the car would be in its cream and red colour scheme, with the rattan seats, and would look basically as it did in that time period. We made a decision that anything not seen by the public could be of more modern materials. For example, we could use Philips or Robertson screws instead of slot screws. Also we had to upgrade to safety glass. We're even trying to save as much of the original wood as possible by working with various gluing techniques to bolster pieces which have some rot.

What were some of the surprises you've had during the rehabilitation so far?

When we took the car apart we found some reminders of the past in the form of old coins and transfers which had fallen through cracks and behind some of the walls. We also discovered messages from the past, where some workers had scratched their initials and a date, or had written information on parts of the car which could only be seen when the car was dismantled.

On the not so pleasant side, one of the things we found was that the weight of the car at the front end had caused some of the main

beams to bend so they were no longer true. Our car was out about an inch. I had run into this with the Steveston car so it wasn't a surprise. We've made some modifications to overcome these problems but none that can be seen. As a result, our doors and windows are all true and square.



The other bit of frustration in the restoration was determining what was original to the car as it came from the St. Louis Car Company, and what was added by BC Electric. In some cases BC Electric made some modifications to accommodate operational needs, but in the last fifteen years, when they knew the system was going to be shut down, they made some make-shift repairs which were less than professional. This meant that we had to go back to old photographs to determine what was original work and what was done later.

At the end of the day, what is the thing that will provide the greatest satisfaction to you

personally?

My satisfaction at this moment is just seeing this car come back to life. My future satisfaction will be what originally motivated me to get involved in the first place, I simply wanted to drive one. That was fifteen years ago and I still haven't had the opportunity, but I figure, the way things are going, it'll be just three more years before that comes about.

PIECE BY PIECE, DAY BY DAY, 1225 IS BORN AGAIN



New Partition Installed



Removing one of the motors



Reinstalling door jambs



HERITAGE RAIL GENESIS, 1996 TO 2009 - Allen Aubert



Bringing heritage interurban passenger rail back to Surrey and the Fraser Valley



Jim Wallace (deceased), a former member of the Surrey Heritage Advisory Commission (SHAC) cut a personal cheque in 1996 to undertake a feasibility study to look into the opportunity of reactivating the BCER Fraser Valley Interurban.

Four years later the special projects committee under the SHAC chairmanship of Allen Aubert in July 2000, presented to Surrey City Council a feasibility report indicating that the reactivation of the BCER interurban within Surrey from Cloverdale to Brownsville was feasible.

Two original BCER interurbans 1225 and 1304 the only surviving Chilliwack car were located in US railway museums. The work ahead would include the repatriation of one or both. The estimated cost to secure the two interurbans, undertake rehabilitation to operating condition and to upgrade the Surrey section of the track was estimated to be \$5.5 million.

The city requested that a non-profit society be formed to move

the project forward.

In 2001 the FVHRS was created and registered in BC as a non-profit society. The society name was suggested at an inaugural meeting by Mr. John van der Burch, president of Southern Railway of BC, the owners of the interurban line.



Since inception, the City of Surrey has remained a solid supporter and has provided the property in Sullivan for the car barn and has provided funds regularly to assist with the project. To date \$2.8 million has been raised or committed subject to matching funds being received.

Volunteers are working tirelessly every week to totally restore BCER 1225 to full operating condition. The goal is to be ready to commence operations in the fall of 2009.

Board of Directors: 2007

Executive

John Sprung, Chair
Bob Ashton, Vice-Chair
Allen Aubert, Secretary
Stephen Plant, Treasurer

Directors

Jerry Gosling
Peter Holt
Ray Hudson
Roy Mufford
Doug Watkins

Councillor Judy Higginbotham - City of Surrey liaison



Fraser Valley Heritage Railway Society

NEWS

Published by the Fraser Valley Heritage Railway Society for its membership, sponsors and limited public distribution.

The Editorial Board welcomes brief letters and stories recalling when BCER's interurban trains plied the rails between New Westminster and Chilliwack.

Send contributions to:
Ray Hudson, Editor, FVHRS News
e-mail rayhudson@dccnet.com
Business card size ads are welcome at \$20 per placement per issue.

For more information contact:
Allen Aubert, Secretary, FVHRS
1045 - 165th St. Surrey, BC V4A 9A2
Website: www.fvhrs.org