



Eatonia

HERITAGE PARK

Officially Opens!

EATONIA – An initiative taken 40 years ago by James Pitts, then head of CN's Mountain Region, reached an important milestone on October 16 with the official opening of the Eatonia Heritage Park.

When the station at Eatonia was slated for abandonment, Pitts approved of the town's proposal to purchase the station and leave it on site as one of the few disused stations in the CN system which was not to be moved or demolished. All other stations along the branch were Canadian Northern designs and all of have vanished.

After Canadian Government Railways took over the ailing Canadian Northern and Grand Trunk



Platform dignitaries (from left to right) were: Sharon Price, board chairperson, Councillor Shelley Eckstein, Bill Boyd, member of the legislature for the Kindersley constituency, Anne Reinhardt and William Wardill.



The Telegraphers are from the Morse Club, Saskatoon Branch. Sitting in the foreground is Bliss Cross and standing in rear is Dennis Ogresko.

Pacific, Eatonia, located 42 kilometres southwest of Kindersley, was served by a portable station.

The railway concentrated its efforts on developing a water supply, pipeline and water tank, as well as a number of divisional point structures, which included a round house.

When it went into service in 1925, the permanent station contained elements of Canadian Northern and Grand Trunk Pacific architecture, but featured a new and more attractive roof line and an elongated freight shed.

Listed as a “variant”, it was built to a prototype design number which was never used again.

“Jimmy” Pitts, now deceased, was the son of a section foreman at Glidden, 18 kilometres east of Eatonia. Anne Cross, now Anne Reinhardt of Eatonia, was the daughter of a Glidden station agent.

When the King family donated the 1917 Boomer catalogue house to the town, Anne was virtually conscripted by the Town Council to oversee the moving and restoration of the old building and to be the principal fund raiser for the project.

Momentum carried over to the station where, except for the freight shed converted into a library, the building had languished for years as a storage facility.

Except for the roof, exterior restoration, as well as the ground floor restoration, was complete in 2009.

Funds provided by the local branch of the Royal Canadian Legion, prior to disbanding, were used to restore the upstairs rooms. Two upstairs rooms and a new cenotaph on the grounds commemorate the former Legion branch.

The ground floor of the station houses the library, archives and dis-



Above: The park entrance sign was paid for by the Eatonia Lions Club and Clem King, a Boomer grandson.

Left: A 1917 Boomer catalogue house was moved and restored in the park.

plays of railway memorabilia, most of which were provided by Anne Reinhardt. Other major contributors to the station project were the Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation, the J. M. Kaplan Fund and the Benjamin Moore Company (paint.)

The Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation and Benjamin Moore were also substantial contributors to the catalogue house restoration. The park entrance sign was paid for by Clem King (a Boomer grandson) and the Eatonia Lions Club.

Construction of the platform north of the old CN caboose was funded by Eatonia Community Co-operative Services.

In 2010, a substantial Enabling

Accessibility Grant was received from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada and was expended for a wheel chair ramp, pathways and a new station platform.

After the opening ceremonies, there were tours of the house and station (including the Cold War communications bunker in the basement) and a demonstration of telegraphy.

The 14-member Eatonia Heritage Board (converted in 2010 from a committee) face the challenge in 2011 of raising funds for re-shingling the station roof, wiring the house and completing the restoration of the caboose.

Platform dignitaries at the opening ceremonies were Bill Boyd, Member of the Legislative Assembly for the Kindersley constituency; Sharon Price, Board Chairperson; Councilor Shelley Eckstein, Anne Reinhardt and William Wardill. ❧

• *By Bill Wardill.*

Photos by Margaret Larock.