



BCER 1304, the Connaught Car, is on its way back home after 46 years

The Fraser Valley Heritage Railway Society has moved one step closer to its goal of revitalizing heritage electric interurban tourism passenger rail service on the Fraser Valley Line. The New England Electric Railway Historical Society, owner of BCER 1304, has accepted the Society's offer to purchase the historic interurban car.

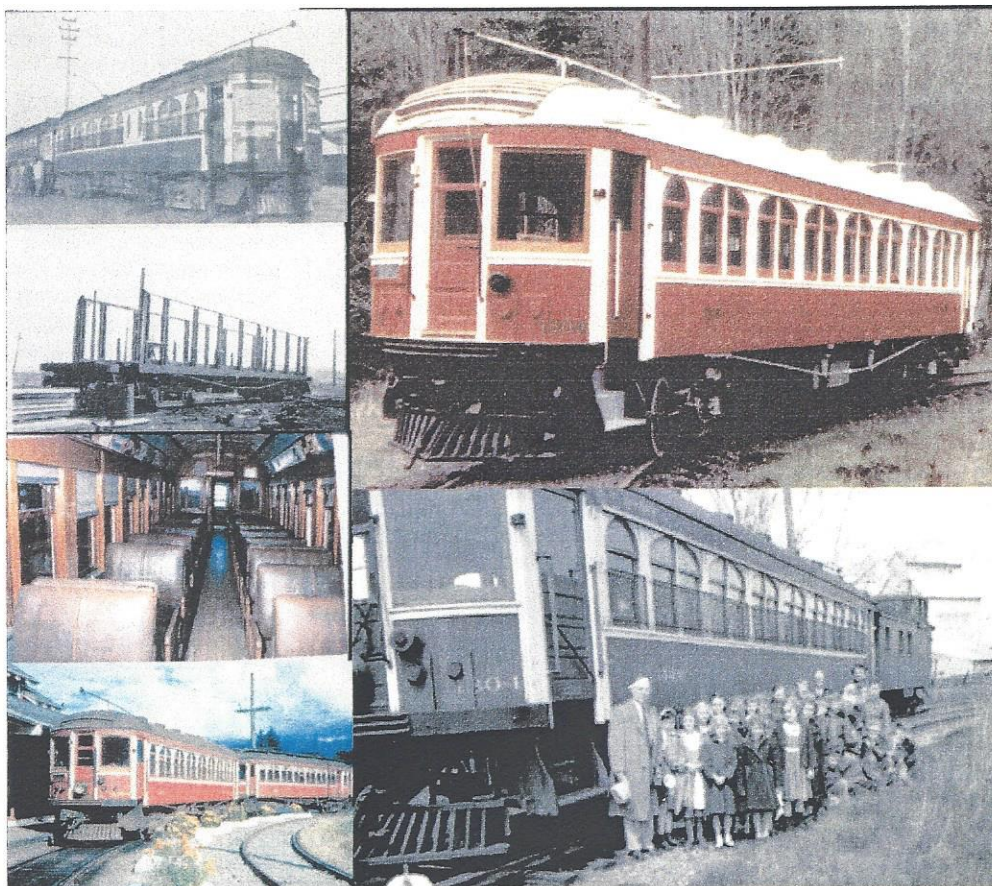
BCER 1304, also known as the Connaught Car, is the only one of the seven remaining BCER interurban cars to have ever plied the rails of the Fraser Valley Line between 1910 and 1950.

The New England Electric Railway Historical Society at the Seashore Trolley Museum in Kennebunkport, Maine has owned the interurban since 1956. They will allow the Society time to complete the requirements of the federal government's "Cultural Property Export and Import Act" in order to arrange for investors to pay for the repatriation of one of BCER's most famous interurban cars.

Originally built in 1911, BCER 1304 has hosted royalty, serviced regular passengers, been rebuilt after a disastrous fire, taken school children for a trip back into history and has fared well in semi-retirement in two Oregon railway museums before the Fraser Valley Heritage Railway Society positioned itself to bring back one of the most historic interurban cars in the once proud BCER fleet of 80.

"BCER 1304 is the major focus of the Society's efforts this year," said Board Chair Robert Ashton. "We have been negotiating with Seashore for several months now and are very pleased that they have accepted our offer."

"We are looking forward to the day when BCER 1304 will be back home, overhauled and ready to run on the Fraser Valley Line after a 55-year hiatus!"



A collection of photos of BCER interurban car 1304 over the years: on the forest loop at the Oregon Electric Railway Historical Society's museum in Glenwood, Oregon in April, 1979 (top right, photo by Richard Thompson); on the loop near Chilliwack Station in May, 1955, (bottom right) when it transported a Grade Three class from Yarrow Elementary School on a field trip with teacher J.E. Fowlie (back row, right) back to Yarrow from Chilliwack (its last run in B.C. with passengers.); on a normal run from Vancouver to New Westminster in the early 1940's (top left, note the oval windows and clerestory roof); on September 17, 1945 after catching fire near Cloverdale and having burned to the waistline during a return trip to New Westminster (second left) the night before; with a new leather seated interior in the car barn at Glenwood in 1983 (third left); and, in Chilliwack Station in early 1950 before the end of passenger service. Car 1304 was the very last car to run on the Fraser Valley Line on Sunday, October 1, 1950. For a complete history of BCER 1304 as extracted from BCER historian Henry Ewert's book, "The Story of the British Columbia Electric Railway Company", see the back page.

Connaught Car - refitted for royalty, ruined by fire, rebuilt only to retire

The most historic interurban car of the British Columbia Electric Railway's fleet of 80 is about to enter another phase in its most adventurous life.

BCER historian Henry Ewert describes the many lives of Car 1304 in his "The Story of the British Columbia Electric Railway Company":

How the BC Electric prepared for royalty...

For the visit of their Royal Highnesses, the Duke and Duchess of Connaught and their daughter, Princess Patricia, the company decorated its head office with a blaze of lights and royal motifs...but the company outdid even itself.

Selecting one of its New Westminster-built Fraser Valley branch interurban cars, the fifteen-month old 1304, the company sent it back into the car shops for an extraordinary transformation, and when it reappeared, it had been freshly painted (in the original dark green livery); it also bore the royal coat of arms, twice on each side, the name "Connaught" and the company's name in full, delicately, but boldly, lettered in gold on each side.

Its interior, with seats and partitions removed, resembled a well-

appointed living room, with carpet, curtains, and upholstered chairs, mostly in cream and green. The orange glass of the upper arches was masked by the curtains, and red lights were strategically installed elsewhere to resemble an open fire in a grate.

The Duke and his party (the Duchess stayed in Vancouver) boarded "Connaught" at the Hastings and Carrall depot at 10:45 a.m. on September 21 for a trip to New Westminster over the Central Park interurban line.

From Edmonds, the party proceeded via the Twelfth Street routing into New Westminster, where an honour guard of the one hundred members of the 104th Regiment and its band welcomed the royal party. Continuing on their tour by automobile, the Duke and his entourage visited, among other sights, the huge mill at Fraser Mills.

The return trip to Vancouver, with motoman Freure and Conductor Grimmer still on duty, was taken on the Lulu Island branch via Eburne.

Disaster strikes in 1945...

Three days later (September 16, 1945), interurban 1304, the former "Connaught Car", caught fire near

Cloverdale while making its way west from Chilliwack. Only a virtually destroyed shell was left by the time the train crew realized what was happening behind them and a brave, though futile, attempt was made to extinguish the blaze. It was not to languish long as a bizarre floor on wheels outside the company's Kitsilano complex; since passenger vehicles were still in great demand, the shops, busy with streetcar refurbishing and rebuilding, got to work, constructing a beautiful, new interurban car, its exterior patterned after the 1309-1311 series.

Dark leather, foam-filled, flip-over seats were installed; walls of dark varnished mahogany and a cream painted ceiling clinched the unique handsomeness. For the second time in its career, Car 1304 was an attention-getter. Its return to action on December 29 was an unqualified triumph, denizens of Carrall Street viewing with some amazement and pleasure a prime example of the car builders' art at its best, something the company's shops still do thirty-five years later. "Built at Kits Shops, Jan. 1946" proudly lettered over a vestibule door, 1304 quite possibly was the last wooden interurban car built in North America.

Visit FVHRS at the Woodworking Show

As part of the Society's Marketing and Communications Program, members of the Board often spend part of their weekend at railway shows and community events.

On October 18-19-20, we will be at the 9th Annual Cloverdale Wood and Woodworking Show & Sale being presented in the Agriplex, Show Barn and two other buildings on the fairgrounds.

Come and see our display as we will be featuring the "wood" aspects of Interurban Car 1304, which we are described in the story on this page, and of Streetcar 30 - The Clover Belle - a beautiful example of pre-WWI craftsmanship of oak paneling.

Please find a poster and an information sheet about the show enclosed with this newsletter.



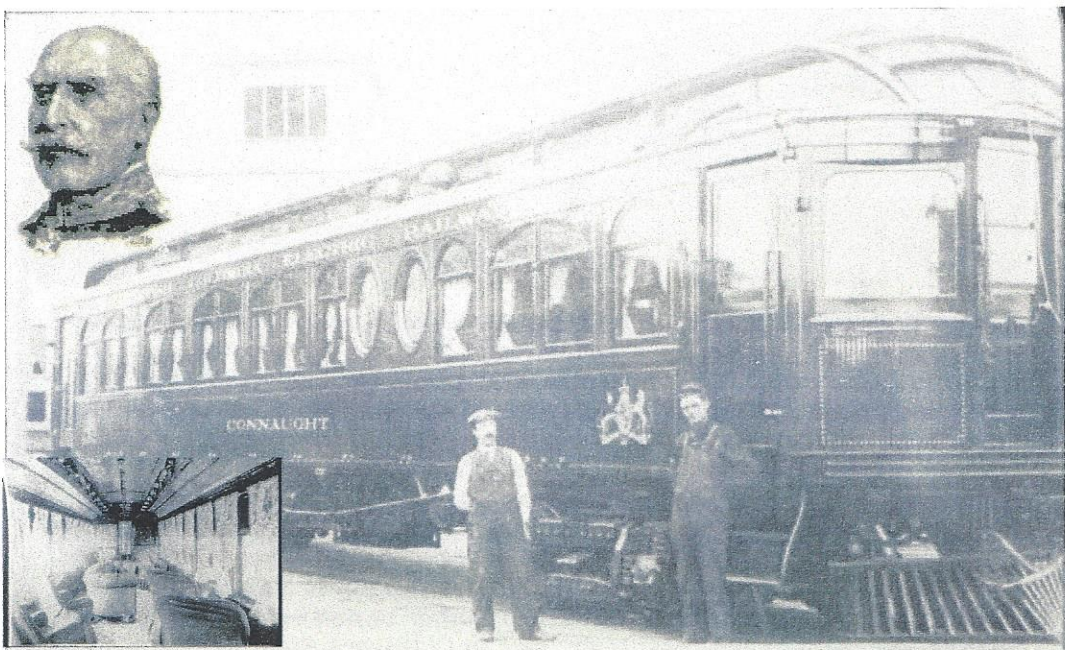
The Fraser Valley Heritage Railway Society NEWS is published quarterly by the Fraser Valley Heritage Railway Society for its membership, sponsors and limited public distribution.

The Editorial Board welcomes brief letters and stories from readers who remember the Fraser Valley Line when BCER's interurban trains plied the rails between New Westminster and Chilliwack.

Please send your contributions to: Graham MacDonell, Editor, Heritage Railway NEWS, 148 - 3160 Townline Road, Abbotsford, B.C. V2T 5P4 or e-mail: gemcom@shaw.ca

The Editorial Board also welcomes advertising for business card size ads at \$20 per placement per issue.

For additional information about FVHRS, contact: Allen Aubert, Secretary, FVHRS 1045 - 165th Street, Surrey, BC V4A 9A2



BCER 1304 prepared for a visit by His Royal Highness, Prince Arthur, the Duke of Connaught. (See insert.) (Arthur was Queen Victoria's third son.) The interior was completely replaced with plush furniture befitting royalty. (See insert at left.) Note the clerestory roof and the oval windows for the men's and women's bathrooms - two items which were not retained when the interurban was rebuilt after the disastrous fire on September 16, 1945 near Cloverdale.