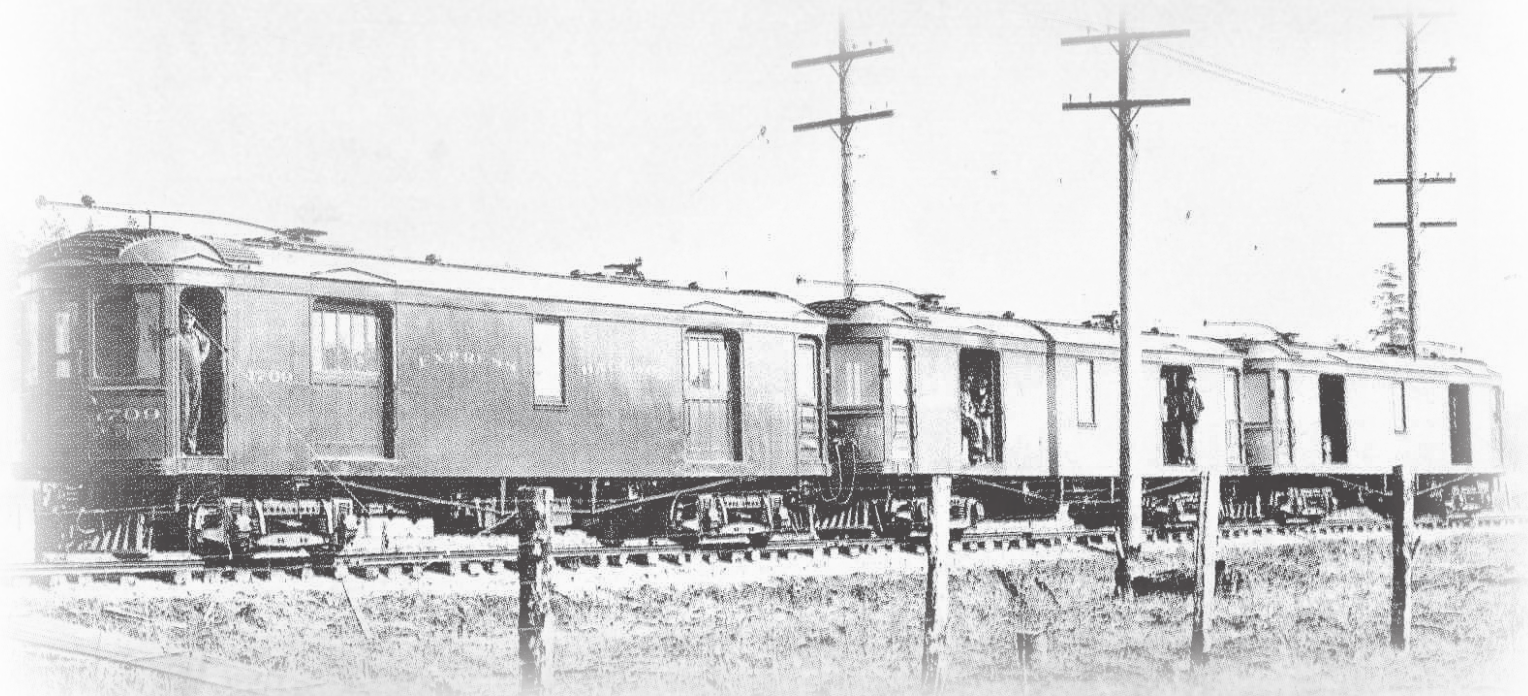


PIETER, DAISY AND THE MILK TRAIN



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Pieter and Daisy were both 10 years old and lived on adjoining farms near Chilliwack in the Fraser Valley, British Columbia. Every day, cans full of milk from their farms were taken to the local station and placed on the BC Electric's 8.10 a.m. train to be taken to Vancouver.

There were a lot of farms in the Fraser Valley and most of them had cows, which supplied milk to people living in the big city.

Farmers brought the cans to the station and loaded them into a special baggage car attached to the interurban train.

Once the cans reached Vancouver, the milk was taken away for processing and the cans were filled with water to return to the farms.

During the week Pieter and Daisy had to go to school, but on Saturdays and Sundays they liked to help putting the milk cans onto the train.

One Saturday, they were still playing inside the baggage car because their fathers were busy talking on the platform when, suddenly, the doors of the baggage car closed and the train moved off quickly away from the station.

"Oh, Pieter. What are we going to do?" Daisy asked, anxiously.

"Well, we could bang on the door when we get to the next station," said Pieter. "Or....."

"Or what?"

"Or, we could stay on until we reach Vancouver and then we can see what happens to the milk."

"But what about our parents? They will wonder where we have gone," said Daisy.

"Our fathers were busy talking. I'll bet they won't even miss us for a while."

"Oh, Pieter, I'm frightened."

"Don't be frightened, Daisy. It will be a great adventure and we can just come back on the afternoon train."

"I guess so. It will be fun to see where the milk goes and what happens to the cans."

As the train rattled off down the track, the two fathers continued to talk and didn't notice that Pieter and Daisy had disappeared. They still failed to notice their children's absence as they laughed and joked all the way to their respective trucks, got in and drove home.

Meanwhile, Pieter and Daisy sat down amongst the milk cans and settled into their adventure. The baggage car was full of cans so the doors remained closed as the train stopped at various stations along the route.

They could not even play I-Spy as there were no windows to look out of. So, they told each other stories until Daisy felt too tired. She rested her head on Pieter's shoulder and fell asleep.

Eventually, the train reached its destination and the doors were opened. As the cans were lifted off onto the platform a surprised man in uniform looked at the two stowaways.

"Well, goodness gracious! What have we here?"

"Please sir," said Pieter. "We got locked in the car in Chilliwack but we decided that we would really like to see what happens to the milk from our farms."

"We won't be any trouble," said Daisy.

"Do your parents know that you are here?" asked the man.

"I don't think so. Our fathers were busy talking on the platform when the train set off," said Daisy.

"They probably haven't missed us yet," added Pieter. "We often stay in town after we've loaded the cans."

"OK. Well, you can watch what happens to the cans and then you must catch the afternoon train. I will be the conductor on that train, so I will make sure you get back safely. Now, hurry up. The cans are being put onto that big truck to take to the processing depot."

"Can we go with the driver?" asked Pieter.

"Why don't you go and ask him. If he agrees, he can take you then bring you back with the emptied cans."

The children ran over to speak to the truck driver.

"Please sir. We have come with the milk cans from our farms in Chilliwack," said Daisy. "Would it be possible to see where the milk goes to?"

"Sure," said the driver. "I can take you to the depot where you can watch what happens. This afternoon I bring the cans back for the return trip, so you can see the whole process."

"Thank you sir," said Pieter. "That sounds like fun."

"Hop in to the truck then," said the driver.

When they were all seated in the cab of the truck, the driver set off to the large processing depot.

Once they arrived, the driver introduced Pieter and Daisy to the plant manager, telling him of their plans for the day.

"Well," said the manager, "you had better come with me and I will show you what happens to your milk."

He took them into the plant where they saw the milk being poured from the cans into a huge vat.

"From here, it goes through pipes to the heating chamber and then to the cooler. This heating and cooling process is called pasteurization and is necessary to kill off any bacteria in the milk which could make people ill."

"But we drink milk straight from the cow sometimes," said Daisy, "and we don't get ill."

"Well, that is as may be. But," said the manager, "when you sell to the public, it has to be pasteurized."

The manager led Pieter and Daisy to a huge machine, where they watched the bottles being sterilized then moving off on a conveyor belt to be automatically filled and capped.

“The bottles get loaded into crates and are then sent off to the shops,” said the manager. “Now, there is just one more place you should see.”

He led them to another part of the plant where he showed them the process of the cans being washed and filled with water.

“Why do they have to be filled with water?” asked Pieter.

“Well, if they were sent back to the farms empty, they would fall over on the journey. Filling them with water ensures they stay upright.”

“I suppose that makes sense,” said Pieter.

“Thank you very much for showing us everything,” said Daisy. “Can we go back to the station with the cans?”

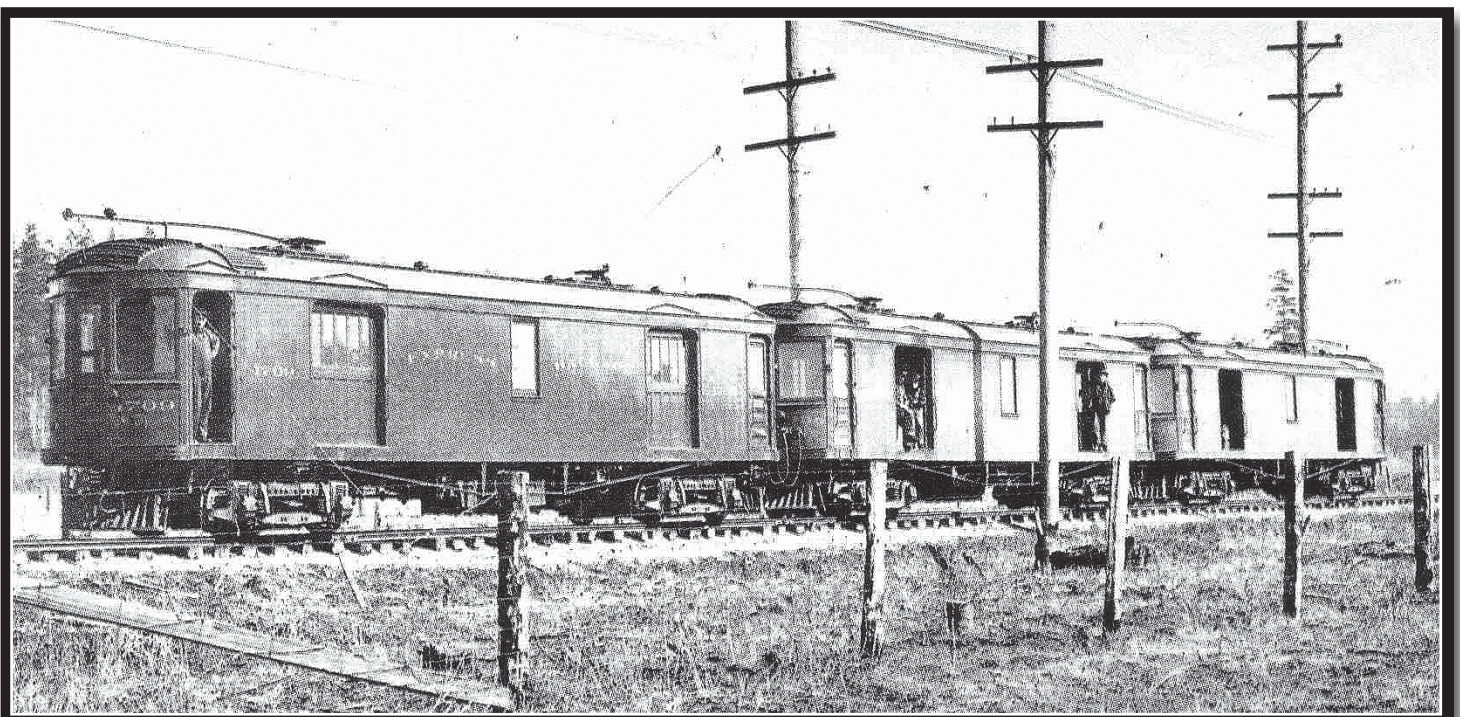
“Of course. My driver will make sure you get there safely.”

When all the water filled cans were loaded onto the truck, the driver told them, “every can has a number or a symbol of some sort to show which farm it came from. It is important to make sure every farmer gets his own cans back. That way, we can maintain consistency and quality and, be able to trace the source if a problem is ever detected.”

“I always wondered why father always checked when the cans were returned,” said Pieter.

Once they were back at the station, they helped stack the cans into the baggage car. The conductor, whom they had met that morning, spoke to them. “For the ride home, you can come with me into the passenger car. You might have to stand up if it gets full but, it will be better than hiding amongst the milk cans again.”

“Oh, thank you sir,” said Daisy. “That will be fun to see everything going home.”



As the train set off the conductor told them that the first part of the journey was through the streets of Vancouver and surrounding towns.

“These lines are shared by streetcars and interurban cars,” he said. “They are built differently for different purposes. The interurban cars, like this one, are bigger and stronger. They can travel faster too, as they have much further distances to travel.

“Every car has a number,” he continued. “This one is number 1304 and is very special. It was used by Prince Arthur, the Duke of Connaught, who was the Governor General of Canada back in 1912. He rode on this very train when he visited Vancouver and the Fraser Valley.”

“Wow, that is exciting,” said Pieter.

“Originally,” continued the conductor, “the trains were painted green and gold. Then in 1925 the colours were changed to red and cream that you see today.”

“I think they look very nice and bright,” said Daisy.

The conductor moved through the passengers checking and punching their tickets. Pieter and Daisy continued to watch out of the windows, fascinated by the sights of motor cars, pedestrians, big buildings and strange looking stores.

“It’s a lot busier than Chilliwack, Daisy.”

“It certainly is. Just wait till we get home to tell everyone what we have seen.”

“I just hope they are not too cross at us going off like that.”

The conductor returned as the train left the outskirts of Vancouver.

“Some trains ran from Vancouver on another line southwards to Steveston, often to collect fish. Those trains were known as the Sockeye Express. We will, however, be carrying on towards New Westminster and the Fraser Valley”

Pieter and Daisy looked out of the window in awe as the train trundled on through unfamiliar countryside. As the train pulled into New Westminster the conductor spoke again.

“There is a big terminus here as lots of routes come in and passengers change over. This is the start of the real interurban line up to Chilliwack.”

As they pulled away from the New Westminster terminus, the line turned onto a large bridge.

“This goes over the Fraser River,” said the conductor. “It takes us on towards Surrey. The bridge was opened in 1904 and was the start of a line which would eventually be built right out to Chilliwack.”

The conductor continued to tell them about all the different places as they passed through Surrey, Newton, Sullivan, Cloverdale, Langley Prairie, Bradner and Clayburn.

“There is a huge brick making factory at Clayburn,” said the conductor. “Bricks are transported on its own branch line which then connects onto this line.”

As the train moved on through Abbotsford, the conductor continued his informational story.

“The next station is very interesting. It is called Huntingdon, which is at the border with the United States of America. Just over the border is the village of Sumas in Washington State.”

“Wow,” said Pieter. “We are so close to another country.”

“Once we leave Huntingdon, we will be heading back towards Yarrow, Upper Sumas, South Sumas and Chilliwack.

“To get there though, we have to go on tracks which take us around what was the old Sumas Lake. That was drained back in 1924 and turned in rich farmland.”

“I can’t wait to get home,” said Daisy. “Do you think we will get into trouble when we get back?”

“I don’t think so,” said the conductor. “Your father went back to the station when he realized you were missing. The Station Master at Chilliwack then contacted Vancouver and found out what had happened. Your parents are aware of your trip and will be waiting to welcome you back.”

“Oh, thank you very much, sir,” said Daisy.

“You are most welcome. I am glad you enjoyed your adventure.”

“One thing I want to know,” said Pieter. “What makes the train go? I know it isn’t steam like the locomotives.”

“Good question, young man. The train runs on electricity. There is a pole on the roof that connects to overhead wires that transmit the electricity. The power comes into the motors underneath the train.”

“But where does the electricity come from?”

“Well, said the conductor, “there is a huge dam at Stave Lake, just north of Mission. Water flows from that dam through huge turbines that create the electricity and then it gets sent all around the area on overhead wires. You may have seen the huge pylons with the wires running between them. Every now and again there are small, substations to direct the electricity to specific destinations, like the railway. In fact, there is one such substation at Vedder Mountain which we are just about to pass.”

“Wow, that is fascinating,” said Pieter. “I never knew.”

The train continued its journey through Yarrow and Sardis and, eventually, it entered the loop leading to Chilliwack Station. Chilliwack was the end of the interurban line and the track looped, so that the train could continue to drive forwards instead of reversing all the way back.

As the children climbed off the train, thanking the conductor again, their parents were on the platform to greet them.

“We have so much to tell you,” said Pieter.

“Yes, we know exactly what happens to all the milk we send off on the train,” said Daisy.

On the ride home they continued to tell about their adventure, one that they would remember for a long time.



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