

The Van Horne Rail Car

The Van Horne rail car was the private coach of the CPR's renowned general manager, Sir William Van Horne. The car is a composite of two passenger cars purchased from the St. Lawrence and Ottawa Railway Company. One was a parlor car known as 'The Rideau' bearing the No. 10. The CPR purchased it for \$2800.00, while the less important Sofa Car was purchased for \$200.00. The construction was carried out by the Cobourg Car Works of Cobourg, Ontario and was delivered to Van Horne in August 1882. The car is 58ft., 8½ ins. long and 10ft. wide. William Van Horne used the car until 1885.

The car was retired in 1956 and was purchased by Mr. F. S. Sharp of Winnipeg. In 1976 the car was discovered on the property of Mr. J. D. Love north of Portage la Prairie on the edge of the Delta Marsh where it was being used as a hunting lodge. The Sharpe family graciously donated the car "complete" to the Fort la Reine Museum.

Entering the car from the south end you will find yourself in the dining room. All of the furnishings and fittings are original and authentic. Note throughout the car, the beautiful etched and frosted glass on the interior doors and the upper vent windows that bear the CPR monogram. The sofa makes up into two beds for extra guests. The car was heated by steam from the locomotive and lit by gas.

Proceeding down the narrow passageway, bear in mind that Van Horne was over 300 pounds! The next room on your right is the kitchen with all of the original equipment.

Next you come to Van Horne's private bedroom. Although he didn't sleep much, this room provided a great getaway spot when the car was full of guests.

The room at the end of the passageway was originally a guest closet (the steps inside are for the berths in the lounge). Across from the closet, behind mesh doors, was a large hot water tank heated by steam from the engine. The next room is the guest bathroom, note the beautiful glass in the door and the original leather toilet lid.

At the north end of the car you enter the lounge that conceals upper berths on either side of the aisle. The dimensions for train berths were based on the input of Van Horne who felt that they should be large enough for someone his size and more importantly, for a mother with a couple of small children to share together. These dimensions are still in use today.

Note the beautiful gas lamp overhead. The sign "Lillooet" in the corner was the name given the car about 1916 by its then owner.

This car was instrumental in the building of the CPR and was used to entertain government officials and potential investors while conveying them to the track's end to show off the potential of both the railway and the country.

