



CARIBOO

Issue #2

The Cariboo is published by Paul J. Crozier Smith as an electronic newsletter for the enjoyment of those modelers and railfans of BC Rail/BCR/PGE/HS&N/HSPV&N.

If you have any material to contribute please contact Paul at pjcrozier-smith@shaw.ca Please submit material in doc form as I can not include them as part of the issue if in pdf form.

Editorial

I am still struggling trying to get enough material from people for articles.

Products of Note

ORO Decals has been turning out a number of different sets of decals oriented on BCR and PGE as well as other roads. The releases of PGE/BCR decals are too many to list here, but if you go ORO's Decals website <http://www.orodecals.com/> you can see for yourself. I have used their decals and they are excellent.

Railflyer Model Prototypes announced their new pilots, DP 0901 for the BCR. They will work with their GMDD Steps and coupler plates. The last order of BCR SD40-2's used their DP 1067 EMD SD Short Jack Pads. Their GMD Cab Steps DP 1048 will allow you build an accurate sub-base. Also, their GMDD Tread-plate for the spartan cab SD40-2's is going into production later in February. This is match for our GMDD Steps as well. Their website is <http://www.railflyermodelprototypes.com/detailparts.htm>

Motive Power Department

CN has made its claim to reduce the number of BC Rail units from the roster. Gone now are all the B36-7's, C30-7u's and a substantial number of RS-18u's and some slugs. RS-18u 613 was retired September, 2006, this leaves only eleven of the RS-18u's left; and there are only six slugs left on the roster. B39-8 3910 suffered an engine fire and it was thought she would be the first BC Rail unit to be CN'ed but on October 31, 2006 she was seen in St Louis in a fresh coat of BC Rail blue. The SD40-2's, B39-8's, Dash 8-40CMu's, Dash 8-44CWL's and Dash 8-44CW's are the only groups left intact once CN took over and all have been upgraded for international service so can be seen anywhere on the CN system.

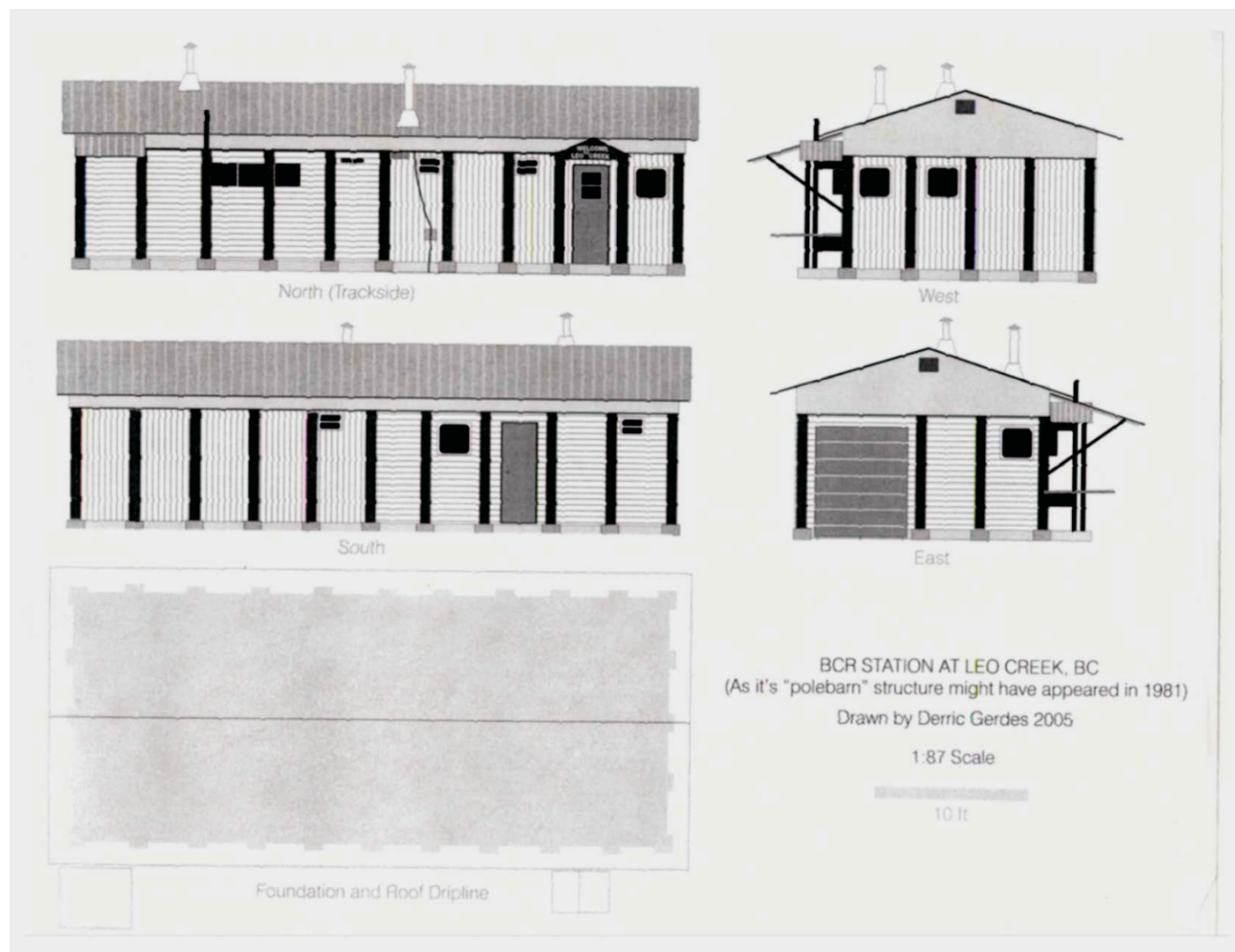
CN has suffered numerous derailments and accidents since CN took over. Many well documented elsewhere. After the conductor and trainman were killed just north of Lillooet when CN GP40-2 9606 ran away, the CTC ordered CN to use only dynamic brake equipped units on the steep grades north of Lillooet. Because of this order CN reassigned Wisconsin Central GP38-2's 2001-2006 to BC Rail territory.

The Station at Leo Creek

by Derric Gerdes

On page 200 of J.F. Garden's Book on the BCR, there is a picture by Steve Patterson, showing the activities around this place. The Takla Combine preparing for departure, or loading passengers and their gear and you can almost smell the pitch of the trees, hear the incessant humming of the mosquitos and sense the vicious sting of the blackflies, still being

bothersome at the end of the summer as the season is preparing for short fall and the long winter. The people alighting from the train are probably young adventurers, prepared for the wilderness, looking forward to some unspoiled trout fishing or some bush whacking in this remote wilderness where large and small game may cross your path at any moment. The BCR has ventured into this country to tap the vast timber resources as well as as the mining potential, on the way to the Dease Lake terminus.



Traversing this country in those days, one encounters roads resembling dry washes or river beds and the cautious traveller carried two spare tires and extra gas in a jerry can, as you were far away from your nearest service station and cell phones had not hit the streets as yet. I get nostalgic when I look at these pictures and feel quite strongly, that by losing the BCR, British Columbia has lost another heritage, pure and simple, and the take-over of the line by a now global corporation clearly shows the rule of the bottom line, as the accident figures vividly demonstrate.

Alas, even though I frequently criss- crossed the BCR tracks, travelling west, I never managed to look up this gem of railroad pioneering, and I did not yet run into anyone else that bothered to visit the site and photograph it. Off course, this was

not where the action was, where six-axle lash-ups were not allowed to roam. And yet, this station continued to intrigue me, ever since I saw Steve Patterson's photo. This fascination grew exponentially with the passage of time and the number of blank stares I garnered, when canvassing my contacts for different views of this building.

So I started to draw from the evidence available and started to fill in the blanks with imaginary structural features, and gradually, it took on what I consider a believable shape. It looks – for all intents and purposes – like a pole barn and may have been constructed around a trailer or two, as evidenced by the two types of corrugated siding.

The building would make a fascinating, compact model, what with the different colours, siding patterns and the

roofing. Then, too, you have the different types of windows and doors that lend it character, but the circumferential poles that really make it stand out need to be identified as to whether they are square or round in their cross section. I wondered even whether they were railroad ties, as they fit the dimension of them and the other building components were sort of “found” items, too. Interesting proposition.

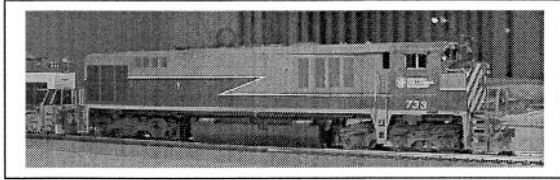
Earlier in my travels I had come across a construction trailer of “Atco” or similar coinage, at trackside, right along a dusty gravel road, a few miles north of Fort St. James with a two-tone green RS-18 idling right beside it. The name of the station escapes me now, but I had photographed it without being able to locate the slide – so far.

The scene would be a cinch to model: a very large clearing, not pine or spruce needle in sight, except for a few low, dusty poplar, willow and cranberry bushes with a “gypo”

sawmill in the distance and huge clouds of dust, swept up by passing traffic. As it is hard to model the swirling dust, one has to imagine the scene soon after a rare downpour.

I have almost resigned myself now to the realization, that the Leo Creek station will have to be remembered the way it is depicted in J.F. Garden’s epic book: whatever isn’t shown in the picture will have to be imagined. Would that I should be so lucky, that someone has another picture or a vivid recollection of some detail that I have misrepresented in my drawing. I promise that I will publish my foregoing doodles post haste, lest history be corrupted.

Then construction can proceed, first of the station, then a kitbash of the Takla Coach, and finally a gypo sawmill from the Jack Work article in MR (plans for which can be found in their website index) and – voila – a Stuart or Takla subdivision is created in miniature.



British Columbia Railway's HR616's **The last Alcos**

(A work of historically based supposition)

I think it was a terrible shame that British Columbia Railway never rostered the Bombardier HR616. This Locomotive was destined to be the very last new design in the long line of MLW/Alco domestic diesels and it would have been quite appropriate for Alco Friendly BCR to be an owner of the final Alco 251 engined locomotive ever produced. We railfans never got to see one of the cowed beasts wearing the splendid Green on Green of BCR and never got to watch and listen as one made a screaming run at the 2.2% grade out of Lillooet.

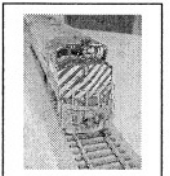
History tells us that BCR never had these locomotives, but one of the real joys of model railroading is that you can bend history a bit if it suits you. The trick I think, is to choose a deviation from History that is plausible – that is: Does the idea make historical sense? For example: A BC Rail-painted 8,500HP "Big Blow" turbine would be a totally irrational choice given the railway's operations, profile and motive power history. On the other hand the HR616 was just a full cowl variation of a locomotive that the railway actually had on the roster in quantity and so fits the BCR "what if?" picture much better. The HR616 had replaced the M630 in the builder's catalog and British Columbia Railway was fully set up to operate and maintain this type of locomotive had they ever bought them.

All that is left for the modeler to do then is to create a story based upon the actual history of the time to justify the model's presence on the roster. With that in mind, I present my model of "never was – but should have been" British Columbia Railway's HR616 locomotive number 733. I also offer this fictional "history" of 733 and of The British Columbia Railway's HR616 fleet - - - Enjoy:

In 1980, The British Columbia Railway reversed a 30-year allegiance to the products of Alco and The Montreal Locomotive Works (MLW) when it purchased twelve SD40-2's from General Motors Diesel Division (GMDD) of London Ontario. The engines, (numbered in the 751 series) went into the road service pool, operating interchangeably with the C630/M630 fleet. While generally considered successful, there were some nagging issues with the GMDD's that BCR people did not care for. The SD's were slow to load and when working in multiple with the MLW's would take a while to shoulder their portion of the work. This was particularly noticeable when a "Jimmy" was leading a group of MLW's – with a throttle advance, the trailing Alcos would move first and bump the lead SD40-2 giving the crew an uncomfortable ride. These engines were also considered to be quite loud and the cabs not insulated enough - crews often complained about the engine noise and turbo whine. ⁽¹⁾

Traffic levels began to rise rapidly on British Columbia Railway in the early 80's and the Railway had projected retirement of the 244-powered fleet for the end of 1985. Horsepower availability was beginning to be a problem for operations. To fill the gaps in Horsepower, the railway leased various engines from other railroads as needed.. In 1983, the railway lost two of the SD40-2's (#'s 755 and 760) in a head on collision with RS-18 #606 on the Chetwynd Sub. ⁽²⁾ The Railway had hoped to avoid investing in additional new power so soon after the previous order, but the power situation was changing dramatically and they needed to do something fast.

Requests for proposals were sent to GMDD at London Ontario and to MLW's successor, Bombardier (BBD) in Montreal for pricing and delivery for five 3,000 Horsepower Road units. GMDD's bid offered five of their SD40-2's to be tacked on the end of a concurrent CPR order and delivery was estimated at 14 Months from date of order. BBD, of course had an empty shop floor and was desperate for business. Their proposal offered five of the new "Draper Taper" HR616's and unlike GMDD's SD's, the HR's would not be rated at 3,000HP. Instead, they would carry a rating of 3,200HP as generated by the 16-251E Prime Mover. With most of the major components still available after building Canadian National's twenty-unit order, BBD was able to offer expedited delivery of the

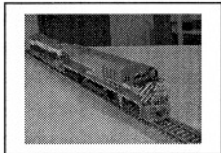


HR's and promised to deliver the units within 8 months of order. Trade-in credit was not a major factor in either bid.

The railway was impressed with BBD's claims of higher reliability (thus the "HR" model designation), more horsepower and their pledge of fast delivery. They placed an order with the builder for five HR616's to be delivered early in 1984. The units were to be numbered 731-735 and were designated BCR Class MF-32. The purchase agreement called for equipping the units with the standard BCR accessory package of a winged plow, stacked five chime horn and dual ditch lights. They were also equipped with extended range dynamic braking. These locomotives featured the first application of the desk-top control stand on the railway and would have a hot plate and microwave oven in the cab. Engine number 731, would carry the Locotrol Master set taken from wrecked SD40-2 #755. Paint scheme would be the two tone green scheme with 8" diagonal nose stripes and yellow side sills. The five HR616's would be the last new locomotives delivered in the green before the change to the red white and blue colors in 1985.

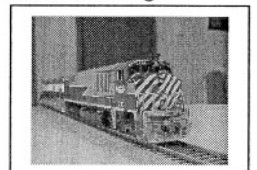
Delivered by CN to the railway at Prince George on February 28, 1984, the five units were quickly set up by the mechanical Department and were put to work earning their keep for their new owner. The delivery of the five gave the motive power people a unique chance to compare side by side, the two builder's state of the art motive power offerings of the day. After working through some early teething problems, the HR's settled into regular service working mainline trains between North Vancouver and Prince George with the occasional trip to Chetwynd or Fort St James. Operationally, the "Fat Cats" (or "Grand Félin's") as they came to be known, were treated as just another six-axle road unit and could be found working interchangeably with their older C630/M630 cousins and with the SD40-2's. With only the 731 equipped to lead, and with widecab equipped units being fairly unpopular with South end crews, it was somewhat rare to catch an HR leading a consist but it did happen on occasion. In early 1986, one of the HR's (#731) was damaged in a rollover accident and after rebuilding emerged from the Squamish paint shop resplendent in the system's then-standard "Hockey Stick" Scheme. The other four were painted into the "wide band" red, white and blue colors late in their careers.

Bombardier had great hopes that these five locomotives might help to turn the tide for their fortunes in the North American Domestic Freight Locomotive business. The 20 HR616's on Canadian National were piling up the miles back East and there were on-going negotiations with Canadian Pacific that would eventually lead to a six-month demonstration by four HR616's on that railway. For the moment, things were looking at least a little brighter for the beleaguered builder and there was a glimmer of hope for the future - IF, IF the big bodied freighter could deliver the goods and the orders.



In the end of course, it was not to be - not on BC Rail and not for BBD as a freight locomotive builder. Canadian Pacific did demo the HR616's in 1985 and found them wanting ⁽³⁾. After testing the units for a number of months, they were returned to the builder with an unfavorable review from the railway. Perhaps Canadian Pacific's experience with the disastrous M636 was just too much for any 251-powered locomotive to overcome. In any case, the reality was that CPR would never buy another Alco. Canadian National was a different story though, and they placed an order with BBD for ten more HR616's at the end of 1984. But the builder insisted that it needed CNR to increase the size of their order to forty of the locomotives for economic (profit) reasons. In response to this demand, CNR cancelled its order and that cancellation caused Bombardier to withdraw from the domestic freight locomotive business in 1985 ⁽⁴⁾.

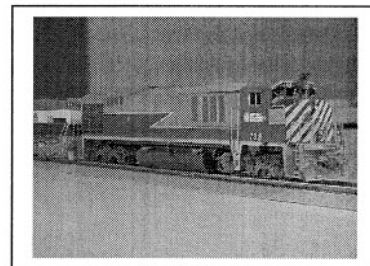
The loss of Bombardier as a locomotive supplier meant that there would be no follow-on order for more HR616's by BC Rail regardless of their performance against the SD40-2. The railway had found the big Alcos to be rugged, capable and powerful freight haulers. In the end the claims of "High Reliability" might have been a little overstated by the builder but like all Alcos, when properly maintained - the HR's could be counted upon to apply their full rated horsepower to the rails and could out-pull any other locomotive on the line. Had they continued to be available, the railway might well have purchased more of them.



With no other choice available to them, BC rail returned to GMDD the next time they ordered locomotives, buying five more SD40-2's in 1985 (#'s 763-767) and leasing or purchasing fifteen more second hand SD40-2's between 1986 and 1987. Meanwhile, the HR616's continued to soldier on racking up impressive mileage figures on BCR's twisting, turning mainline. In 1989 the railway decided to retire its aging six motor 251-powered fleet. An order was placed with General Electric for 22 Dash 8-40CM's and arrangements were made to trade in all of the C630's, M630's and M630W's as credit toward the order. Delivery of the GE's began in May of 1990 and all of the 630s were off the property by years end. Being only 7 years old at the time, it was decided that the HR616's would be held back and retained for a few more years of service. They spent the next few years working in trailing service on mainline trains and in work train service. As it was no longer needed for lead service, #731 lost its locotrol gear during this period. It was interesting to catch a "dual cowl" consist on those occasions when an HR would be teamed with one of the GE's.

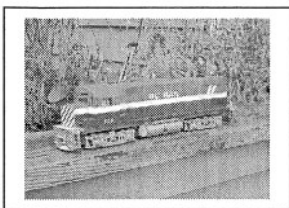
In 1994, #732 was destroyed in a head on collision with a freight lead by SD40-2 #754 at Dragon, BC (both units were scrapped). That same year, the railway returned to GE for another locomotive order, this time a four unit set of Dash 9-44CWL's. The 4 remaining HR616's were accepted by General Electric as trade-in credit on this order and were ferried to GE soon after the arrival of the new engines in 1995. Thus ended the era of six axle mainline power on BC Rail. Fittingly, CN allowed the four to work their way east, providing a good & proper send-off for the quartet.

The four were then sold by GE to National Railway Equipment and were stored at NRE's facility in Sylvis, Illinois. They remain stored there to this day along with several members of Canadian National's former HR616 fleet. Their capped stacks, rusting flanks and silent 251 prime movers offering mute testimony of the shattered dreams that their builders held of a future in the freight locomotive business.



NOTES:

- (1) All actual issues noted after the arrival of the SD40-2's
- (2) The actual wreck of the 755 and 760 occurred in 1984
- (3) CPR demo'd 4 CNR HR616's in 1985 – These had been bought back from CNR by BBD and renumbered into the 7000 series for work on CPR. The demonstration resulted in no orders
- (4) True Story – BBD said it could not economically build 10 Locomotives and asked CNR to increase the order size.



B C Rail's #808 – The “Hockey Stick” C425

(A work of historically based supposition)

The last of my “fictional” models is this model of C425 #808. Like my FA-2 model, there is quite a bit of historical fact behind the rationale for this model. Like FA-2 #868, C425 #808 was indeed on the roster of British Columbia Railway. Like the FA, the 808 was retired early and faded into history (sort of).

THE FACTS:

In 1976, The British Columbia railway was facing another of its chronic motive power shortages. Traffic was on the upswing and train lengths and tonnage were on the rise. The railway's fleet of locomotives was barely enough to cover train requirements and with further increases forecasted, the mechanical people were looking at buying new power.

Also in 1976, the US government combined several failing Northeast railroads into a single large system called the Consolidated Railway Corporation, or Conrail for short. As part of this merger, existing equipment leases were transferred from the original owning railroads over to Conrail, unless there was an objection from the leaser. In the case of an objection, the company who owned the equipment could choose to repossess its equipment and try to sell or lease it elsewhere. The company that Owned the Erie Lackawanna's 12 C425's decided against accepting Conrail's offer of transfer and reclaimed the Alcos when Conrail officially formed. They immediately began shopping the units around the industry. That is how BCR came to buy Canada's only C425 fleet.

Always on the lookout for a bargain, the Provincial Railway was contacted about their level of interest in the twelve 2,500HP locomotives. Inspections, negotiations and a purchase agreement quickly followed and BCR suddenly had 30,000 more Alco Horsepower to apply to their operation. The C425's seemed like a good fit for the railway's needs having four axles and gearing which would make them suitable for operations on the north end of the system (if their weight could be kept down by not topping off the fuel tank). In addition, their high HP could be used on the mainline to the south in road service making them very versatile engines.

The Locomotives were ferried west from the EL on The Burlington Northern. It is said that they worked their way west, but I have not been able to confirm that. The units were routed through Seattle and were taken to Canada on the Sumas line being exchanged with CPR at Hundington. Upon arrival on BCR the engines were pressed immediately into service, getting minimal lettering changes to reflect the new ownership.

The C425's ran in fading and peeling EL colors for several years. Eventually, the Railway decided to invest in major rebuild for the entire class of locomotive and began to cycle the units through the shops at Squamish. While there, the engines received a new or rebuilt prime mover, new wiring and improved cooling systems. The cabs were upgraded to system standard and the engines received all the usual BCR accessories including a set of ditch lights, front-mounted bell etc.

The first 425's rebuilt received the two tone green scheme that featured a low dark green band on the long hood with the single 4" stripe wrapped around the nose. Units 801-804, 806-810 and 812 received this scheme. C425 #811 receive a class unique scheme of a high dark band on the long hood. Interestingly, the C425's were the first BCR power to receive the yellow visibility strip running along the side of the locomotive. This was soon applied to all classes of power, but it began with the C425's.

There are those who point out that the cost of rebuilding and upgrading the C425 fleet far exceeded what it would have cost them to buy new units in the mid 70's. Perhaps so, but the "Baby Centuries" were a welcome addition to the fleet and were personal favorites of mine.

In 1980, C425 808 along with M630 #711 derailed into Seaton Lake just south of Lillooet when the train they were powering hit a landslide. Unfortunately, the accident claimed the life of the brakeman, who was dragged down into the waters and never found. The 808 was recovered in March of 1981, and later returned to service as BCR 800. The rebuild of the 808 into the 800 (the number was change because a crewman had lost his life in the accident) saw a new paint scheme introduced to the C425 fleet. The 800 was painted into the new system standard of two tone green with lightening bolt and 8" diagonal striping on both ends. This upper ditchlights were recess-mounted into the nose as well. The 805 (the last of the C425's to be shopped) and the 812 eventually received these modifications and paintwork as well.

The fleet remained intact through the mid 80's and the units could be found in almost any service on the system. My favorite memories of the C425's are of the times when I caught them working in remote service. You could find them paired up with one of the M420B's or sometimes with an M630W and a RCC. Standing on the highway bridge over the tracks at Glenfraser, as a Northbound rolled under you was something to experience. If there was a C425 back in the remote set you would wait for it to arrive. The 16-251's in the 425's sounded just a bit different than the other engines and for whatever reason, the 425's traction motors whined louder than the other engine's motors did. The remotes would crawl around the big curve at "GF" and the units would hammer under you as they worked their way north, the exhaust blowing straight into the air as they passed beneath you. Fun

Eventually, the units began to fail and a major failure meant the retirement of the victim. 810 was wrecked in Squamish, 800, 801, 807 and 809 were all retired by 1990. The remaining engines worked until their sale by the railway in the early 90's. The remains of the fleet still work today in New York State on the lines of GTV.

THE MODEL:

That is the history of the BCR Alco C425 fleet. Again this is where the "what if" scenario comes into play for a model railroader. Numbers 805 and 812 were shopped, rebuilt and repainted in mid to late 1984. Suppose the railway had not ended the rebuild program for the C425's then? What if they had extended it by another six to nine months and had continued to shop C425's for major rebuilds into 1985? The end of 1984 saw the last locomotive painted into the two-tone green British Columbia Railway paint scheme (M630 #719). The railway then changed its name to "BC Rail" and it's colors to the provincial colors of red white and blue in the "Hockey Stick" scheme. The first unit to roll out of the Squamish Paint shop in 1985 (C420 #631) debuted the new scheme and all others that followed carried this scheme until the change in 1987 to the "wide band" red white and blue.

If just one more C425 had been authorized for rebuild in 1985, or if there had been a significant rebuild after a mishap, it would likely have received the "Hockey Stick" scheme making for a very unique locomotive. I chose to change reality just a bit to allow for a single C425 to wear these colors.

SOME NEW HISTORY:

My unit is the 808, which in my version of railway history did not derail into the lake in 1980. Instead it had been through the shop for a rebuild in 1979 and had then worked along with the other units of the series all over the system. In July of 1984, the unit experienced a serious electrical fire (it is an ALCO after all) while working as a trailing unit on a loaded southbound freight on the Squamish Subdivision. The crew detected the fire and tried to put it out but was unsuccessful. The unit was then cut out of the consist and set out on the siding at Creekside where the local Pemberton Fire Department extinguished the fire. The engine sat on the Creekside backtrack for a few days until the Lillooet-Squamish wayfreight was ordered to pick it up and return it to the Squamish Shops.

The 808 languished in the backshop area for a few months while the mechanical people tried to decide what to do with it. An evaluation showed that even though the fire had been a bad one, none of the major internal systems had therefore decided that and returned to scheduled for

While in the shop, the recess the nose ditch set of lights as well. the green paint so a scheduled and the new standard scheme

Work was completed followed M630 #722 emerging in its new The unit was

service. It was the Squamish shop's policy to keep a newly rebuilt unit fairly close to the Squamish area so that the unit could be quickly returned to the shops for adjustments should a problem be identified out on the road. Usually this meant that a new rebuild would be in semi "captive" service in the yards, on the Lillooet way freight or on the "Budd Wiser".

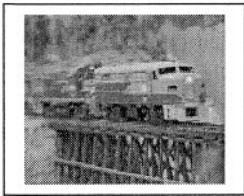


decision was made to lights and to add the lower The fire had badly marred trip to the paint shop was 808 would receive the of red white and blue.

in February and the 808 into the paint shop colors on March 13, 1985. immediately put into

The 808 was assigned to the School Bus train for it's first few weeks out of the shops. On the morning of March 22, the C425 was leading the Budd Wiser Coach south along the lake to Seaton Portage to pick up the day's load of school children. As it rounded a curve along Seaton Lake it encountered a huge rockslide that had come down onto the rails after the lead patrol had passed the scene. Unable to stop in time, the 808 hit the slide and derailed into the lake. The crewmembers were fortunately able to jump from the cab and were unhurt. The 808 rolled down the underwater embankment and came to rest some 200 feet below the surface of the water. The "Budd Wiser" coach derailed, but remained upright.

Having experienced the expense and disruption associated with recovering a locomotive from the lake, the railway decided instead to not to attempt a recovery and retired the 808 on the spot. The unlucky C425 remains on the bottom of Seton Lake to this day.



British Columbia Railway #868 – The FA-2

(A work of historically based supposition)

Another of my “what if” models is this model of FA-2 #868. Unlike my light of fancy on the HR616, which the railway never rostered, there actually was an FA-2 that worked in freight service on BCR and its number was 868.

In 1972, Pacific Great Eastern leased former Spokane Portland & Seattle FA-2 868 from a leasing company. Alco had built the unit as SP&S #868-1 in December of 1950 (Shop order 78352). The FA was retired and traded in to Alco on the 18th of December 1968 – possibly as trade-in credit for one of the C636's or C415's built for SP&S late that year. The Cab Unit came to the railway still in SP&S yellow and green. The classic oval logo had been removed and the road name lettering had been painted over. The reporting marks ALX was painted on the flanks of the unit. The locomotive still carried its former SP&S road number.

Information on why the locomotive was brought to the railway is a bit sketchy, but the early 70's were a period of increasing traffic on the railway and more and more carloads were being generated by on-line industry and out of the Peace River region. PGE was receiving a fleet of M630's for mainline service and the railway was constantly leasing additional power to cover their needs. Particular examples of leased power include MK C636's, GP-9's from Bangor and Aroostook, CPR RS-18's, L&HR C420's, L&SI RS-3's and even Devco RS-27's from MLW. Clearly the Railway was grabbing every engine it could get its hands on in this period and that is likely why the FA ended up being leased.

Clearly the plan was to use the engine in service for as long as it would run. The railway actually had previously had some luck with this policy. An FM H10-44 that the railway grabbed on a short-term lease actually ended up working for the railway for many years. The FA-2 was not nearly as lucky. The record shows that it cracked a crankshaft on its very first road trip. A pretty dismal story.

Obviously neither the lesser nor the railway wanted to pay the cost to repair a thirty year old cab unit which was obviously on its last legs anyway. No doubt the railway spoke to the lesser about repairing or returning the unit to them and there was little enthusiasm on either end of the transaction to make anything happen for the Alco. Instead, the railway purchased the locomotive – probably for its scrap value – and it was retired and used for spare parts to keep the other 244-powered engines running. The hulk of the unit sat around the Squamish backshop area for a number of years afterward until it was finally scrapped sometime in the mid to late 70's.

So began AND ended the PGE/BCR's Cab unit era.

This is where the “what if” scenario comes into play for a model railroader. Suppose instead of failing right away, the FA-2 had, like the H10-44, surprised everyone by making like the Energizer Bunny and had just kept going and going and going? Isn't it likely that the railway would have converted the lease into a purchase as they had with the C420's and the LS&I RS-3's? Having bought the locomotive, they certainly would have wanted to make it look like part of the fleet meaning that the unit would have needed a fresh coat of British Columbia Railway (after 1974) two tone green. Speculating on how the railway might have applied their colors to an FA was a lot of fun. Having only one to do, I thought the paint shop guys might have spent a bit of time being a little more creative with the geometry of the locomotive, using its lines to make a unique application of the colors. I went with the Lightning bolt, meaning that this repaint would have been done in 1976 or later as the M420B's the railway purchased that year signaled a return to the “bolt” after having dropped it for a few years. No diagonal stripes on the nose puts the repaint before the

introduction of the stripes in 1980. A little yellow on the headlight grill and some sweeping 4" stripes on the front of the nose just makes for a nice "look" for the cab unit.

A rebuild of the time would have also included equipment deemed necessary by the railway to allow the unit to lead. Radio gear and the associated antennas and a set of ditchlights help to get the right effect.

So this is British Columbia Railway's one and only "A" cab unit. They were to amass a rather large group of Cab "B" units (from Alco, CLC and EMD) which were all converted into radio receiver cars, but except for a couple of retired CN FA's bought for parts, this unit – Number 868 was it.

On my roster, the 868 operated for many years on BCR. It was particularly popular with the crews on the north end of the system where it's big warm and roomy cab was appreciated by all and it's smooth ride was a welcome change from what the crews were used to getting from the M420's and RS series engines. Given its "system unique" status and rakish good looks, the engine was the power of choice for officer specials and was kept clean and in good working order by the maintenance trades.

Because of its preferential treatment, the 868 worked right up to the retirement of all 244-powered locomotives and was retired from the roster in December of 1985. For a time, there was talk of retaining the unit for continued use on system specials. Had the work been authorized, the unit would have been repowered with a 251 primemover and probably would have been painted in the Red White and blue "Hockey Stick" paint scheme.

Instead the Cab Unit was stored at Squamish after its retirement while officials tried to reach agreement with various preservation groups for its display. In the end, the railway could not reach agreement with any of the museums and the unit was sold to a private individual who has stored the locomotive on private property in Washington State where it remains today.

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