

Board working hard on Phase One



The Fraser River Bridge, which opened for rail and vehicular traffic in 1904, marked the end of a small community just to its west. Brownsville, or "Brown's Landing" as it was originally called in 1861, became a key factor in Surrey's early economic development with the commencement of ferry service in 1883.

(see back page.) Here the one o'clock Chilliwack-bound BCER interurban train with locomotive 1706 in lead crosses the bridge in the days before passenger service was terminated.

Since the last newsletter, the FVHRS Board members have completed the following accomplishments:

- Awarded a grant from the Real Estate Foundation for \$50,000 that will be forwarded once the Society has an agreement for a car barn site with a siding;
- Applying for BC Heritage Fund grant;
- Expanded membership to 60 (59 regular, senior and students and 1 commercial);
- Had discussions with Orange Empire Railway Museum in Perris, California for purchase of BCER Interurban Car 1225;
- Negotiating lease terms for BCER 1220;
- Continuing negotiations with the owner of Sea-Tac Interurban Car 523 - The Tulip Car;
- Had discussions with Kwantlen University College regarding the lease of a 1.1 acre segment of their Cloverdale Campus for erection of a Car Barn;
- Had discussions with City of Surrey's Planning Department, Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection regarding accessing Kwantlen site over a sensitive watercourse;
- Had discussions with BC Hydro's Properties Division regarding accessing their right-of-way on which SRBC trackage sits and the requirements to be met in order to re-electrify the corridor for interurban use;
- Had discussions with Southern Rail of British Columbia regarding requirements to secure a running rights agreement;
- Assisted in discussions between Cloverdale and District Chamber of Commerce and Cloverdale Business Improvement Association with the Greater Victoria Electric Railway Society and BC Transit regarding the loan of a Brill Streetcar for use in Cloverdale to interface with FVHRS operations and Cloverdale Fairground activities;
- Designed and completed CAD/CAM plans for and a cost-estimate of recreating BCER Cloverdale and Sullivan Stations;
- Acquired and developed material for use in a training program to attain provincial certification for motormen, conductors and dispatcher.

"Getting Phase One started has been the Board's major focus," said Chair Robert Ashton. "We had hoped that things might have moved faster but things are still moving as we are still determined to reach our goals."

A Message from the FVHRS Chair

As the year 2001 draws to a close, I reflect back over the past nine months. Since the formation of the Fraser Valley Heritage Railway Society much has happened.

Our Board of Directors has adjusted, and the "newness" worn off. What has developed is an energetic group of volunteers eager to fulfill the goal of the FVHRS. In order for this to happen a foundation is being laid:

- A business plan has been developed and is continually being revised and updated.
- Grant opportunities are being explored, applications sought and filled in.
- We have been working towards a sound relationship with Southern Rail of BC.

All this hard work is being accomplished by various sub-committees. Directors and members have been "showing the flag" at any opportunity that presents itself. We have been at the Cloverdale Rodeo, Sullivan Days, the Mount Cheam Lions Club Model Railroad Show, Trains 2001 at the Cameron Center in Burnaby and the largest rail show in Greater Vancouver area, the Langley and Aldergrove Heritage Society meetings and many others, including the Cloverdale and District Chamber of Commerce Annual General Meeting and a Cloverdale Business Improvement Association Board meeting.

Your society continues to work towards leasing BCER 1220 from the Steveston Interurban Restoration Society and is maintaining contact with Orange Empire Rail Museum regarding the possible repatriation of BCER 1225, a historical gem as it was the last BCER interurban to carry fare-box passengers. Kwantlen University College liaison, Jim Gillis, is working hard with the college striving to secure a car barn site.

And, of course, we are continually working in a very positive way with the City of Surrey, Mayor Doug McCallum and the City's liaison, Councillor Judy Higginbotham.

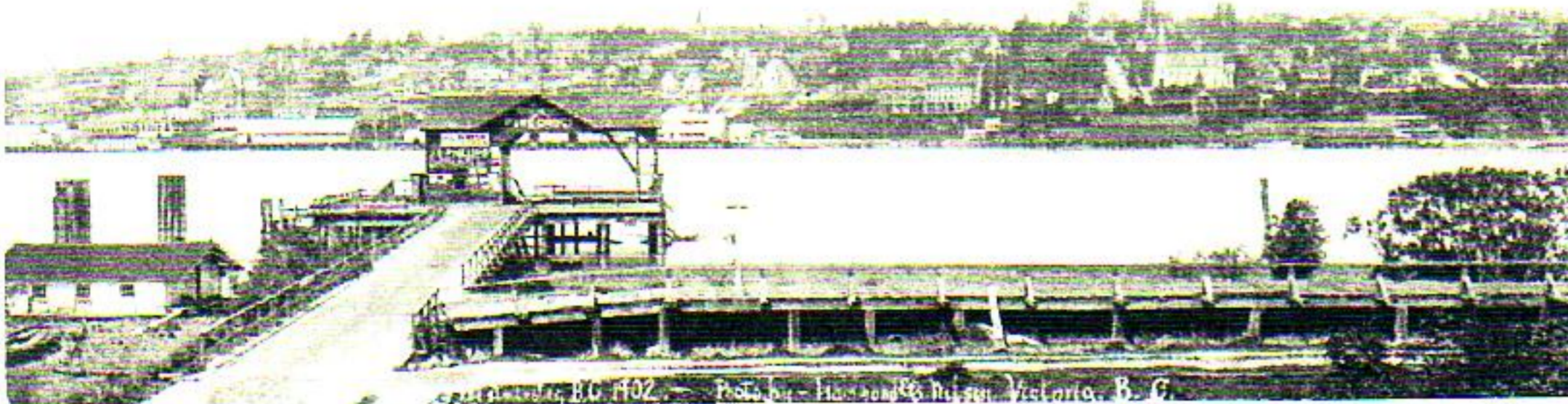
The Fraser Valley Heritage Railway Society has come a long way in short time and all directors are convinced that 2002 will be a very successful one for our Society.

May the Holiday Season be joyful and the year 2002 meet your every expectation.

Robert Ashton
Chair, FVHRS

Brownsville

Once a key town in Surrey's development; now a cornerstone in foreshore revitalization



Looking northwest across the Fraser River from Brownsville lay B.C.'s largest city, New Westminster, which could only be reached by ferry until 1904 when the Fraser River Bridge was built, making it plausible for BC Electric Railway to built the Fraser Valley Line.

According to Jack Brown's history of "Early Settlement Centers in Surrey", Brownsville was a prominent community in the economic development of Surrey.

Located across the Fraser River from B.C.'s then largest community of New Westminster, Brownsville was developed by Ebenezer Brown, who built the first hotel there in 1861 along with a wharf. As the terminus of the Yale Road (built in 1875 to connect New Westminster with the old Yale-Cariboo Road into the Interior), the Semiahmoo Wagon Road (built in 1872-73 to connect New Westminster to the International Border via Elgin) and Scott Road (built in 1875 to connect New Westminster with Ladner), the little community, then known as "Brown's Landing", would become the terminus for the New Westminster and Southern Railway in 1891.

Surrey Council had passed a resolution in 1880 to co-operate with the City of New Westminster in applying to have a line surveyed on the south bank of the Fraser River for CPR, according to Brown's "The Railway Era: 1887- 1910".

"When Port Moody was chosen as the western terminus, Surrey felt it would be deprived of any railway connections as the federal government's contract with the CPR forbade the construction of any competing line to the south or southeast during the next twenty years."

However, entrepreneurial spirit could not be dampened and by 1883 both councils had agreed on a joint ferry service across the Fraser River a move that brought Brownsville into some prominence.

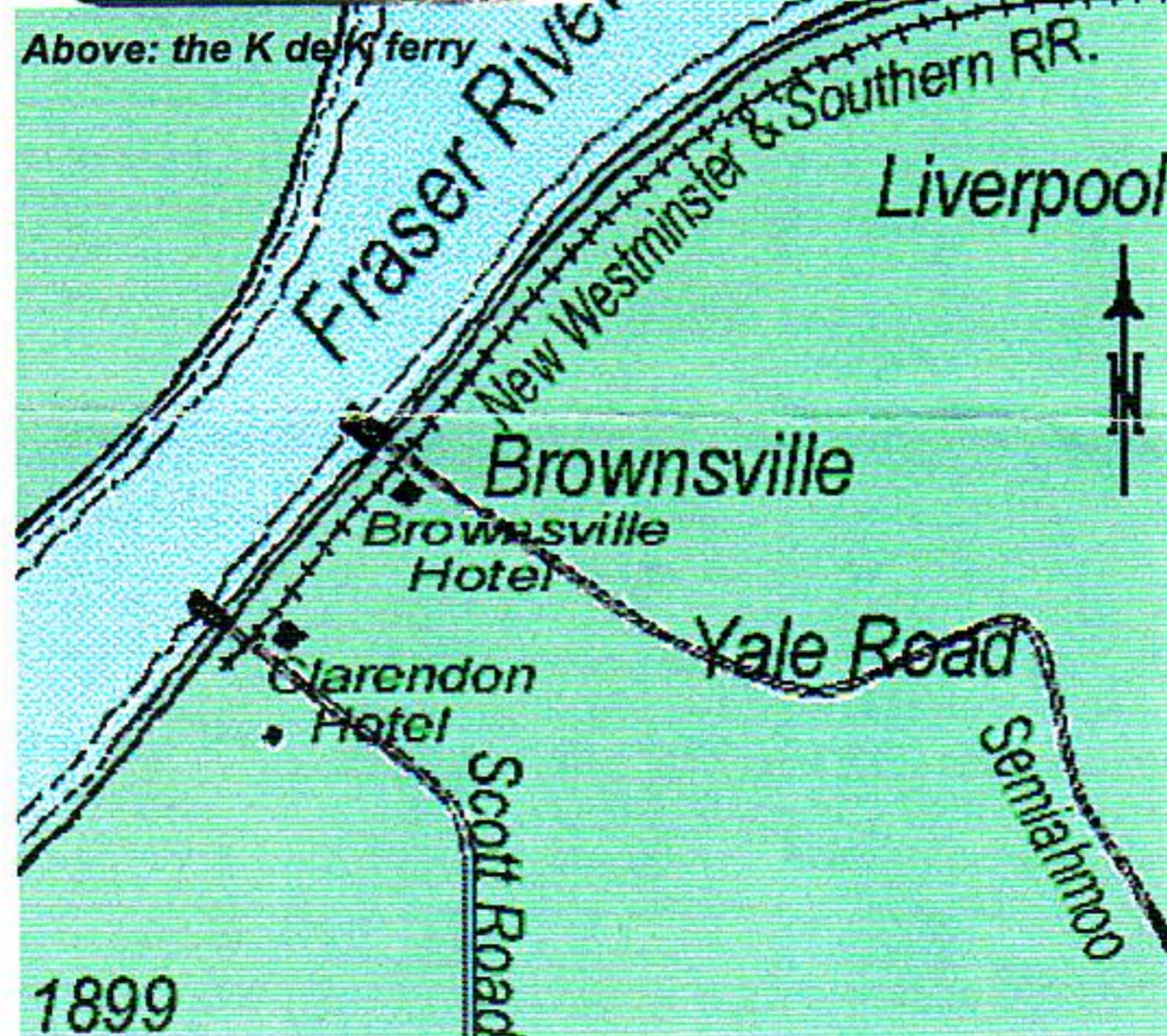
"A steam ferry, called the K de K (standing for 'Knyvett de Knyvett'), was sublet from the joint municipal authority to Captain Angus Grant and went into operation that fall," Brown's

'Crossing the Fraser' recounts.

"It was to give hourly service from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. every day but Sunday, when shorter hours were established."

Its impact was tremendous. Farmers on the south shore of the Fraser River strove to own a wagon so that they would have their own transportation to the city.

In 1889, the K de K was replaced by the steam ferry, Surrey, which was operated by the City of New Westminster until the opening of the



Brownsville in its heydays during the late 1890s when it was the terminus for the Old Yale Road, the Semiahmoo Wagon Road, Scott Road and the New Westminister and Southern Railway. The small community boasted four hotels along the road to the wharf, a general store, stables, a salon and a post office before its demise due to the Fraser River Bridge.

Fraser River Bridge in 1904, according to Brown's research.

By 1889, construction was underway on the New Westminster and Southern Railway connecting the Lower Mainland to the United States via Brownsville, Bon Accord, Port Kells, Cloverdale and Hazelmere by February 14, 1891. The NWSR was absorbed into James J. Hill's Great Northern in 1902.

Ed. Note: "From Boom to Bust to Beautiful" will complete the history of Brownsville in the Winter edition of the FVHRS NEWS.

(Extracted from "The Historical Geography of South Surrey, British Columbia", Jack Brown's Masters Thesis at Western Washington U.)

Spreading the word

If you belong to a group such as an historical or heritage society or railroad club and would like a member of the Fraser Valley Heritage Railway Society to address your group about our project, please contact Director Graham MacDonell at: 1-604-864-0160 or by e-mail at: gemcom@home.com.

"We would be pleased to make a presentation on the Society and /or on the history of the Fraser Valley Line," said MacDonell.

Other presenters include: Vice-chair Vic Sharman, a former motorman and retired Corporate Secretary of BC Transit; and, Henry Ewert, author of the book, "The Story of the British Columbia Electric Railway".

There is no charge for the presentation. If your organization has a large television screen, FVHRS could present a showing of the video-film, "The Chilliwack Line" by BCER filmographer Ken Hodgson.



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@home.com

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