

The 1939 Royal Tour and the Royal Hudson Locomotive No. 2850



This royal visit made history for Canada. For the first time, a British monarch set foot on Canadian soil. He crossed the country from coast to coast, most of it aboard a train especially put together for the occasion. The two major Canadian railways, Canadian Pacific and Canadian National, shared the honour of pulling the royal train with their locomotives.

The trip was a suggestion made by the Canadian Prime Minister, Mackenzie King and Governor General Vincent Massey at the coronation of King George VI in London in 1937. The choice of train travel gave as many Canadians as possible the chance to see the King and Queen. It was also an excuse to seek the support of Canada and the United States in the face of the threat of war with Germany.

Queen Elizabeth and King George VI, Photo Finlay Colour, CRHA/Exporail, Canadian Railway Historical Association Fonds

The Royal couple left Portsmouth, England on May 6, 1939, aboard the Canadian Pacific steamship *Empress of Australia*. The Atlantic crossing took nine days. They arrived in Quebec City two days later than planned because of bad conditions: thick fog, huge waves and icebergs. To make up for lost time, the couple spent less time in Ottawa and Kingston because the itinerary was very tight. The trip lasted 29 days in America, not including the steamship trip across the Atlantic Ocean. They left Halifax on June 15, 1939, and returned to England.



Arrival of the royal couple in Quebec City aboard the "Empress of Australia", CRHA/Exporail, Canadian Pacific Railway Company Fonds

King George VI (1895-1952) and his wife Queen Elizabeth (1900-2002) visited the country while their two daughters, Princesses Elizabeth (1926- ____) 13 and Margaret (1930-2002) 8, stayed in England. George VI had already visited Canada in 1913 when he was called Prince Albert. He succeeded his brother Edward VIII to the throne, who had had to abdicate to marry Mrs. Wallis Simpson.

The Royal Train

For this special occasion, the train consisted of 12 cars, including six from Canadian Pacific, four from Canadian National and two from the Canadian government, usually used by the Governor General of Canada. The entire train was repainted and decorated. The train was pulled by the two major Canadian railways in different regions of the country. When the train travelled to the United States from June 8 to 11, it was pulled by locomotives from the Pennsylvania Railroad, the New York Central Railroad and the Delaware & Hudson Railway.



Canadian Pacific Railway locomotive No. 2850 with the colours and decorative elements of the Royal Train, CRHA/Exporail, Canadian Pacific Railway Company Fonds

Some of the locomotives were painted to match the cars. For Canadian Pacific, locomotive No. 2850, the tender, cab and running boards were painted royal blue, while the smoke box at the front of the locomotive was black. Part of the tender was covered with an aluminium panel to match the cars. The boiler and pistons of the locomotive were polished steel. The royal coat of arms embellished the sides of the tender, as well as the front of the locomotive above the headlight of the 2850. The royal crown was installed on the front side of the locomotive. The Canadian Pacific Railway placed its logo under the window of the locomotive cab.



British coat of arms on the tender, builder's plate, British crown applique and CP logo on locomotive No. 2850, CRHA/Exporail, Canadian Pacific Railway Company Fonds and Photos Exporail



Canadian National Locomotive No. 6400 with the colours and decorative elements of the Royal Train, CRHA/Exporail, Raymond Corley Fonds



Queen Elizabeth and King George VI on open platform, CRHA/Exporail, Canadian Pacific Railway Company Fonds

The exterior of the 12 cars were painted royal blue, with aluminum foil and a gold line under and over the windows. The royal coat of arms appeared on the two cars assigned to the King, car No. 1, which housed the royal couple, the Queen's dresser and the King's equerry. The observation platform of carriage No. 1 was specially painted silver for the trip and was used regularly by the royal couple to greet crowds along the route. Car No. 2 was used for the steward and conductor as well as the King's secretary.



View of 6 of the 12 cars of the royal train, with car no. 1 in the foreground, CRHA/Exporail, Aaron Isaacs Collection

Coaches No. 3 to No. 8 were used for the staff attached to the Royal couple's service, high British dignitaries, the Queen's ladies-in-waiting, the Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Prime Minister of Canada, Mackenzie King, his staff, the Lord-in-Waiting and the Lord Chamberlain, Canadian archivist and historian Gustave Lanctôt, the official railway staff, not to mention the train's staff: conductor, porters and stewards.

Coaches Nos. 9 to 11 were used by the 12 police officers, the driver of the convertible car used when travelling in the towns where the royal couple stopped, the train crew and the kitchen staff. There was also a barber's salon, a telephone room, a large refrigerator, a pantry and a room for storing steel cables and poles for security around the royal train. Finally, coach No. 12 housed a gas-powered electric generator for lighting at night.

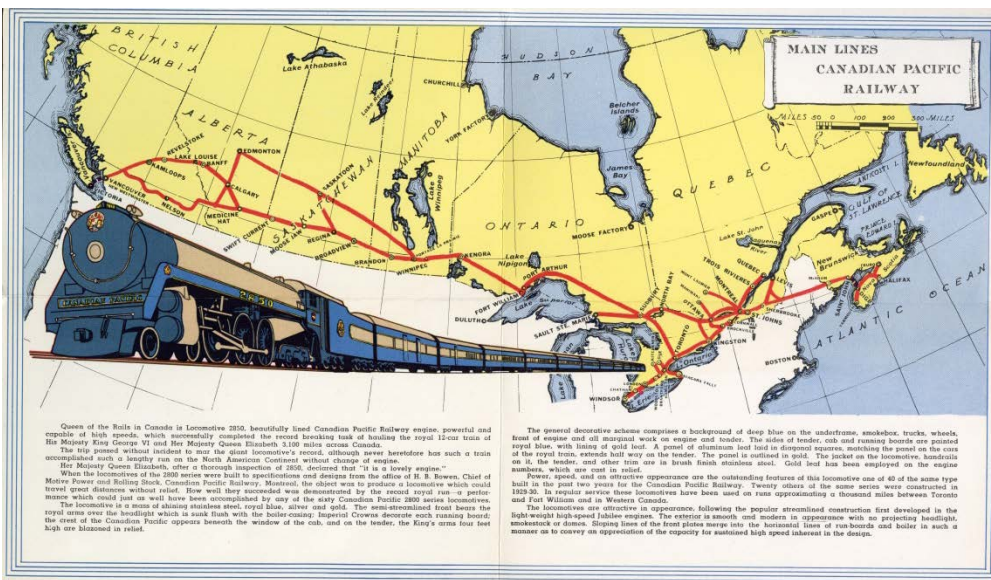
The cars were heated by steam produced by the locomotive, which passed from car to car through a piping system, and cooled by a system of ice blocks stored under the cars.



Blocks of ice waiting to be stored under cars, CRHA/Exporail, William Cole Fonds

With the exception of the first night at the Citadel in Quebec City and the two nights at the Canadian Pacific Railway's Banff Springs Hotel, the royal couple slept aboard the royal train, which stopped at night for passenger comfort. The program for the royal visit was well organized, since the couple not only went across Canada and back, but they also visited with the American President, Franklin D Roosevelt, in Washington and at his home in New York State.

Locomotive CP No. 2850 pulled the royal train from Quebec City to Vancouver, British Columbia. It was also used on the return train from the royal couple's visit to the United States, from Delson, Quebec, to Sherbrooke, Quebec. It was used for more than 4,900 km, a record at the time.



Canadian portion of the trip made with locomotive CP No. 2850, CRHA/Exporail, Canadian Railway Historical Association

The pilot train

The pilot train preceded the royal train by 30 minutes to ensure that the track was clear and that there were no obstacles. It carried 114 people: 77 newspaper and radio reporters, railway officers, Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers, postal employees and telephone operators. One of the cars carried the Buick convertible car for the use of the King and Queen and the motorcycles of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers.

Anecdotes

No freight train used the track used by the Royal Train within 16 hours of the Royal Train's passage and no passenger train within 2 hours of the Royal train.

The locomotive engineer could operate a button in the cab of the royal couple's car to warn them of the upcoming passing of a city where the train was not stopping. The couple could then go to the platform of the car to greet the crowd.

The success of this visit was immense. For example, the small town of Melville, Saskatchewan, with a population of 4,000, welcomed more than 40,000 visitors to see the royal couple. People came by train, bus, car, horse and even plane.



Crowd cheering the passing of the royal couple, CRHA/Exporail, Canadian Pacific Railway Company Fonds



Decoration of the facade of the Morgan (The Bay) store in Montreal, CRHA/Exporail, Robert R. Brown Collection

The Canadian Pacific Railway's Royal Hudson 2850 locomotive

After the royal visit, locomotive 2850 was exhibited at the World's Fair in New York from June 28 to September 4, 1939. Nearly 300,000 promotional leaflets were distributed to visitors. CN locomotive No. 6400, which was used for part of the royal visit, was also exhibited at this exhibition.

Locomotive 2850 was ordered by Henry B. Bowen, Chief of Motor Power and Rolling Stock of the CPR and was built by Montreal Locomotive Works (MLW) in 1938. It was part of a CP series of 60 locomotives. The wheel configuration, 4-6-4, permitted an increase in the size of the boiler, grate and firebox. The partial streamlining of the locomotive reduced air resistance and the amount of fuel required.

After the royal visit, the locomotive was returned to the Canadian Pacific Railway colours as seen today at Exporail. With the King's approval, the CPR painted all of its partially streamlined Hudson's

with crowns and named the locomotives numbered from 2820 to 2864 as a "Royal Hudson". This was the first and last time a locomotive was given the Royal designation outside the United Kingdom. The Royal Hudson was capable of pulling a 1,210 metric ton passenger train at speeds of 145 km/h. These locomotives were used primarily by CP in Quebec and Ontario. They were also used for freight trains, beginning in 1955, when diesel-electric locomotives were replacing steam locomotives.



Interior of the cab of locomotive CP No. 2850, Photo Exporail



Locomotive CP No. 2850, Photo Exporail

After its royal journey, locomotive No. 2850 was used for passenger service in the Fort William area of Ontario (now Thunder Bay) and then in the Winnipeg area of Manitoba before being retired from service in 1959 and donated to Exporail in 1960. This year marks the 60th anniversary of its arrival at Exporail.