



Hi. My name's Blaise. I'm a pot belly stove on a Canadian Pacific Rail line. I'm important. Really! Don't be chuckling now. Without me, this country line would be a bust. Cream, eggs would freeze. And the fellas running the train would eat cold lunch.

Special how it works. We stop at every village and siding on the Lyleton branch. The rail car door creaks and groans open. A farm woman steps in with her cream can. She takes coal from the pile, put it in, lights it and steps out, leaving the cream. At Cameron, a kid steps in with a box of eggs, sets them beside me, throws in more coal, the door closes. By the time we get to Goodlands, I've got enough to feed a threshing crew. At Deloraine it's all taken out and sent down the Canadian National Rail to Boissevain, to a creamery and grading station. We continue southeast, to Liege, Hazeldean, Mountainside, loading farm product as we go. By midday I'm pretty warm from all the attention.



**The former Mountainside Store**

It's dark in here, until, that is, the door opens at each siding. Except, one special day. On our return to Lyleton, on a crisp Fall day. We had a

load of goods from Winnipeg for the Mountainside store. Well, just west of Horton, the fellas saw a slough, full of ducks. The train stopped and fellas started shooting. They had brought their guns of course, and did very well, stashing the birds in my car. We moved along and, my goodness, another slough with ducks. They got real excited. They totally forgot to close my car door. I saw Turtle Mountain bush in the background, stooked grain and cows grazing nearby, geese flying and ducks falling from the sky. It was almost the best sight ever.

When we arrived at Mountainside, the store owner was worried. He had called Horton siding and learned we left long ago! When he unloaded his freight, he saw that some boxes of gunshells had been opened. Apparently a couple fellas had run out of ammunition so "borrowed" from the freight. I guess they sorted it out in a friendly way. I didn't hear any yelling!

Early winter, that same year, we were again rolling into Mountainside from the east, again, running late. The car door creaked open. I saw a calm, night. With a most brilliant full moon hanging over the mountain. The school across the way, was all lit up from the inside. Just then, the very best thing ever happened. Angelic voices drifted down the hill, echoing their sweet refrains. The children were practicing their Christmas concert. Oh, holy night, the stars were brightly shining. . . I learned, that evening, about a whole new kind of warm. And it felt so very good.

See you later!

David Neufeld