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# Champion COMMUNITY Page

## Museum wants to get more people on board

By IRENE GENTLE

Special to the Champion

Since 1954 the volunteers at the Halton County Radial Railway Museum have not only been showcasing a part of history, they've been living it too, through the old-fashioned virtues of self-sufficiency, value and loyalty to a dream.

For the rest of us that means a living snapshot of Canadian history is as close as a trip up Guelph Line, and it doesn't cost the taxpayers a cent.

"We pay more in taxes each year than we get in grants," laughed Doug McOuat, a volunteer at the museum since he was 12 years old.

That was back in 1972 when the museum first opened its doors to the public, a full 18 years after the dream to showcase Canada's electric rail history had begun in earnest with the acquisition of 47 acres of land.

The interim years were spent laying the rail and raising the funds for acquiring the museum's first two rail cars.

The site, 15 km. north of Highway 401, had once been the right of way of the former Toronto Suburban Electric Railway that had run between Toronto and Guelph. The long-abandoned rail had all but disappeared though and then, as now, it was up to volunteers to get it back.

"There was no track here at all. They had to build one," said Mr. McOuat. "There was no funding for this. The members just put their hands in their pockets."

They're still doing it, with 250-members footing the bill for the \$75,000 per annum operating costs of the museum. Volunteers also lay the track. As well, they buy, restore and operate old rail cars.

### Museum needs \$20,000

Today there are 60 rail cars and streetcars weighing in between 10 and 83 tonnes at the museum. The HCRR is the largest of four operational radial rail museums in Canada, with more cars than all the others combined.

As good as that sounds, the latest jewel in the electric rail crown is due shortly. Only \$20,000 is holding back the transportation of that jewel, the Lake Erie and Northern Railway car number 797.

The car once ran from Kitchener through Paris, Brantford, Port Dover, Galt and Hespeler, was retired in 1955 and has been ensconced in an American museum ever since.

As the last remaining electric passenger car from the Lake Erie and Northern Railway and the Grand River Railway, the car is a key part of Canadian history.

The car will cost \$17,000 to transport and about \$50,000 to restore to operational use. All costs will be met by fundraising efforts or through donations by the volunteers themselves.

### Thousands visit yearly

When it's ready it will be the 14th operational car or streetcar at the museum, where for less than \$7 an adult can ride the rails on a 1.5 mile demonstration track.

"We're entirely self-sufficient. Right now we don't owe a single cent to debt and we want to keep it that way," said Mr. McOuat, who bought out of his own pocket the rail car that greets visitors at the museum's entrance.

Since opening to the public in 1972 about 20,000 people flow through the museum each year, many of whom stay most of the day.

At any given time the place is abuzz with volunteers dressed in old-style railway gear, elbow-deep in the guts of old street or rail cars, getting them back into shape. Walk into their garage and see the wooden-slats of a rail car in the process of being refurbished to original glory.

The museum offers cars as old as the late 1800's and as recently retired as last year. For seniors the museum is a breathtaking re-exploration of the past they can still recall. For younger members, it's a train set and history come to life.

For museum volunteers it is life, and after years of being one of

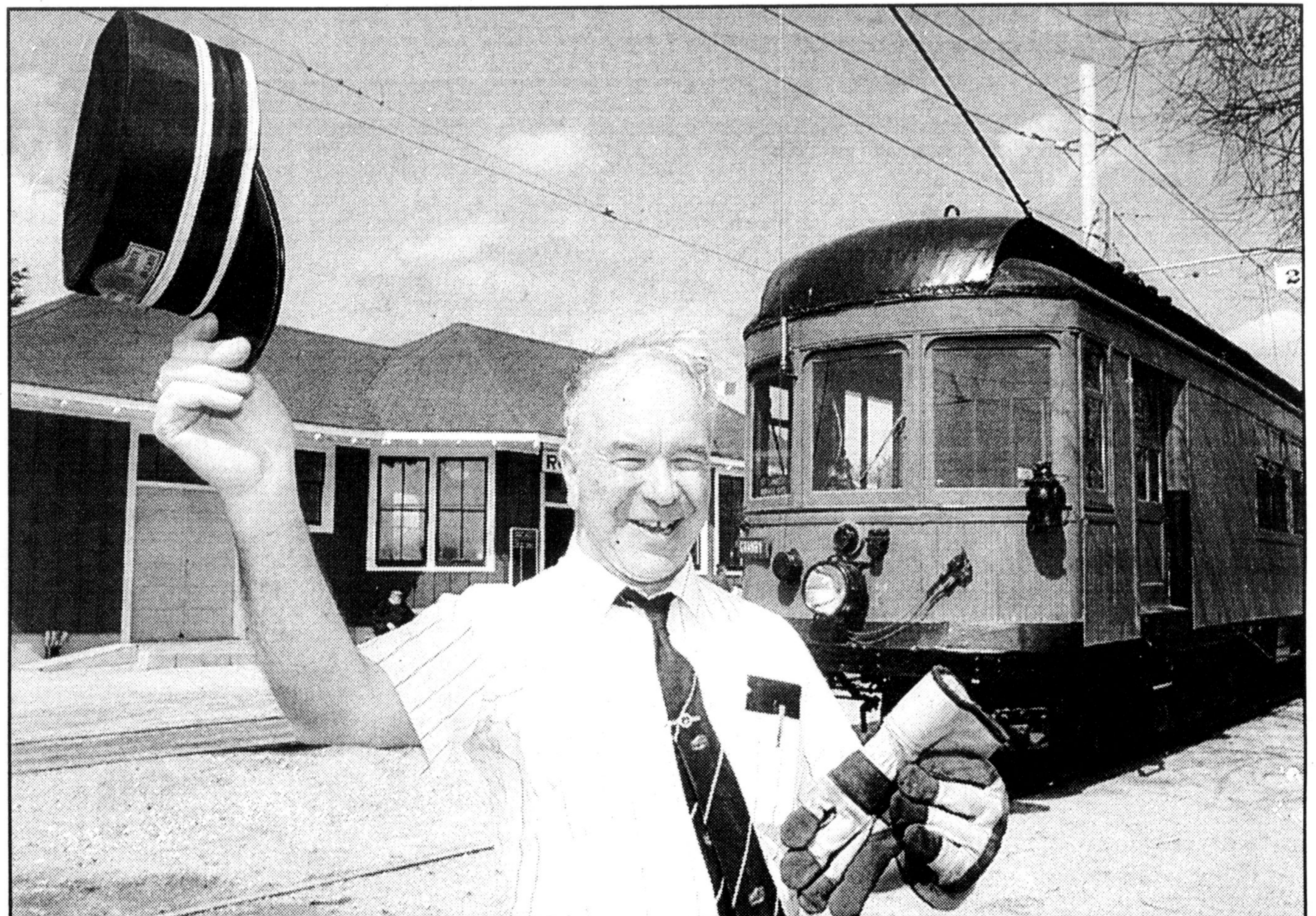


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

**Conductor John Ogilvie welcomes visitors aboard Montreal and Southern Countries 107, one of the gems at the Halton County Radial Railway Museum.**

Halton's most secret attractions, they're ready to blow their cover.

To that end the museum has gotten into the movie business, renting out their cars for scenes or even hoofing it down to Toronto — as they did recently for the movie *Mimic* to lay 350 feet of track on the set.

"We've been one of Halton's best kept secret and that's mostly our fault because we don't really go out banging the drum a lot,"

said Mr. McOuat. "But we've got big plans now. We want to double out membership and our revenue so we're going to have to get out there more."

The museum, at 13629 Guelph Line, will open the first week of May on weekends only, opening seven days a week in July and August. For more information or to make a tax deductible contribution call 519-856 9802.

## Gregory gets race relations award

Inspector Keith Gregory of Halton Regional Police was recognized for his work in race relations at a national conference last month.

Insp. Gregory, who has been with the Halton service for 27 years, received a gold medal at the Fifth National Race Relations Conference at the Holiday Inn Yorkdale on March 25. The conference was organized by the Race Relations Centre of Toronto.

Halton Police Superintendent Paul Cormier, chair of the Diversity Awareness Committee, said Insp. Gregory was nominated because of his work "with the community for a better understanding of multicultural issues." Insp. Gregory was nominated by Halton Police Chief Peter Campbell.

Insp. Gregory has been a member of the North Halton Cultural Awareness Council since 1996.

"I'm honoured I'm being recognized for my contribution," he said. "But I view the award as a recognition of the efforts of all those people in the North Halton Cultural Awareness Council (NHCAC) and our police service."

Educating youth on multicultural issues is a key goal of the council. Insp. Gregory said the council is "getting fantastic cooperation from the schools."

He added police involvement with the NHCAC allows police to work with both the council and youth.

Chairperson of the NHCAC Elizabeth Carmichael said the council "is really proud of the relationship we have with District One (Halton police's north Halton division)." She stressed that



**Halton Regional Police Insp. Keith Gregory recently received a gold medal at the Fifth National Race Relations Conference.**

includes everyone from the front desk staff on.

Hasanat Syed, president of the Race Relations Centre, said the centre recognizes individuals, municipalities, community organizations, corporations, and police services for their race relations efforts. Last year Halton police received a gold medal at the conference.