

## **The 1409 Report**

By: Mr. Sammy Fielding – CPR Locomotive Engineer  
(likely written in the early 1920's)

Mr. Uren, let me tell you when,  
On a west-bound drag proceeding.  
On the mentioned date, at an easy rate,  
All speed restrictions heeding.

I had a string of 50 things,  
The hog was steamin' bummy.  
The tallow green, one trip had seen,  
And the shack was in her crummy.

Two miles I drove, from Mountain Grove,  
With smoke and cinders tossing.  
Two farmer men with cattle – ten,  
Were passing o'er the crossing.

The horn I blew, an hour or two,  
I tried my best to stop her.  
I had a hunch some of the bunch  
Had come a nasty cropper.

Too late I stopped, and to the ground I dropped,  
And back to the scene I wandered.  
One cow had died and by her side,  
Two more their last were sighing.

Those rubes they swore and their hair they tore,  
And raved like men demented.  
I let them rag, called in my flag,  
And resumed my way contented.

At Ardendale, I told my tale,  
to Operator Burleigh.  
And once again, I yanked that train,  
and arrived at Havelock early.

So now you know my tale of woe,  
Each word the truth unyielding.  
I'm very sorry it happened so,  
Your's truly – Sammy Fielding.

## Glossary and Background – from P.R. Frise

The poem describes an incident that happened in the 1920's when a CPR freight train struck and killed some cattle at an un-signalled level crossing just west of Mountain Grove, Ontario (about 130 km west of Ottawa along Hwy. 7). **Sammy Fielding** was the locomotive engineer and he was well known for his poetry. Mr. Fielding submitted the incident report (called a **1409** report) in the form of this poem to **Mr. Uren** who was the Section Superintendent of the CPR line between Ottawa and Peterborough.

The **1409** report form was used to report incidents along the railroad and it would have formed the basis of payment by the CPR to the farmers for the loss of their cattle. That same **1409** form is still used today.

My connection with the poem comes from my maternal grandfather (A.C. "Clare" Price). Clare was born at Mountain Grove in 1899 and worked on the CPR for 51 years from 1914 to 1965 (i.e. he started working for CP as a construction gang member when he was about 15 years old). Despite his grade-school education, Clare went on to become the Bridge and Building Master for southern Ontario from Windsor to Ottawa. He led the crews that built dozens of major stations and structures including the Bloor Viaduct over the Don River in Toronto. He also served on the Royal Hudson train which carried King George VI and Queen Elizabeth (the Queen Mother) across Canada in the late 1930's. Clare died in Peterborough in 1992. One of my earliest memories is of sitting on his knee while he recited this poem.

The other major characters and terminology in the **1409 Report** are as follows:

- **50 things** – refers to the number of freight cars in the train. A 50 car train was a pretty big train in those days.
- the **hog** was the steam locomotive – likely of the Pacific 4-6-2 class. The fact that it "**was steamin' bummy**", means that the engine was operating well and that the trip was going nicely, at least until the cattle incident.
- the **tallow** – is the fireman who stokes (with a shovel) the boiler of the locomotive with coal. The **tallow** on this particular trip was new to the CPR (i.e. – he was "**green**") and this was one of his first trips.
- the **shack** – is the train conductor who rides in the caboose or **crummy** at the rear end of the train. He would have been responsible for walking back along the track and placing a warning flag to indicate to overtaking trains that Engineer Fielding had stopped his train on the line. In those days – there was no radio or phone communication between trains and so everything had to be communicated by flag and/or horn and light signals.

The reference to "**her**" is likely a tease between Fielding and the conductor who were buddies.

- the **horn** – all trains were, and still are, equipped with either a compressed air or steam operated horn which is extremely loud. Fielding's statement that he blew it "**an hour or two**" is sarcasm, but was meant to emphasize that he did his very best to warn the farmers to move their cattle off the track.

The area where the collision happened and the level crossings along that area are pretty isolated. Also, the track west of the little village of Mountain Grove is quite twisty and it is likely that the train came around a corner and Engineer Fielding saw the cattle on the tracks too late to stop. It is also possible that the farmers were not listening for a train and/or were sleeping and simply missed hearing it. Finally, a big train takes a long distance to stop and so it would have required a significant warning period to get the cattle off the crossing in time.

- **Operator Burleigh** – was the telegraph operator at **Ardendale Station** (a small waypoint just west of Mountain Grove, down a little road south of Hwy 7). The village of Arden still exists although there is no longer a station there.

By the early 1960's, about 40 years after the train-cow collision, Mr. Burleigh had retired from the CPR. He moved south to the shore of Lake Ontario where he owned a group of summer cottages at a place called Burleigh's Point just west of Kingston on the Bath Road. The cottages are still there, situated high up on a hill above the waters between the Bath Road and Howe Island.

- **Havelock** – is a little depot town located right on Hwy. 7 about 120 km further west of Mountain Grove. My mother (Helen) was born in Havelock in 1929 and she and the rest of the Clare Price family lived there on and off until the mid-1940's.

Havelock still has a picturesque CPR station (now operating as a restaurant) and some railway activity in the switching yard although not nearly as much as during the 1920-60 period when it was a major CPR operating hub.