



Gary Southgate stands in the doorway of engine 6311 which pulled passenger cars for CN Rail on the Super Continental more than 50 years ago. The engine and several cars are repainted in classic CN colors.

Canadian Farmer Collects Historic Rail Cars

By Lorn Manthey, Contributing Editor

You'd think a Saskatchewan grain farmer might be interested in restoring old tractors or trucks in the months when he's not working with crops, but that's not the case with Gary Southgate. From his farm near Battleford, Southgate has worked countless hours for several years to learn about, locate, evaluate, and acquire more than 50 historic rail cars and engines. His vision is to recreate a small version of the Super Continental, which was Canada's transcontinental train from 1955 to 1977.

"I began by looking for cars from the Canadian Pacific (CP Rail) and found out there weren't that many available from the 1950's," Southgate says. "So I switched my focus to Canadian National (CN Rail). I have some of each in the collection."

About half of his cars and engines are now being renovated in the scenic town of Eastend, Sask., nearly 230 miles south of where he lives. Southgate is building a station and rail siding there alongside a short line track to store, renovate and display the

equipment. By 2023 he hopes to have a train assembled that will take visitors on scenic tours between Eastend, Ravenscrag, Robsart and Shaunavon.

Over 9 years, in addition to farming 3,000 acres of his own land and renting 3,000 more for grain crops, Southgate has acquired about 45 passenger, dining, sleeper, and other cars along with five engines. Between buying, moving, and renovating them he's invested well into 7 figures of his own money and has yet to gain much income. Southgate's cars and engines keep their original Via Rail Canada numbering system and during restoration, the CN cars are being repainted in the dark green, black, and gold trim of the Canadian National line from the 1950's. Interiors are being cleaned and wiring is being replaced so the cars will be heated and air-conditioned with working electrical.

Several cars and engines in Southgate's collection have historical significance. He acquired car numbers 5302 and 5307, known as "Balloon Tops" by CN employees and "Canadian Flyers" by rail fans, from the Bluewater, Mich., Chapter of the National Railroad Historical Society. Car number RPCX 5226 was built in 1937, used in service by CN Railways, and later sold to Michigan collector Harold Frye in 1984. "Frye did an amazing job restoring the car to original condition," Southgate says. "It was one of the cars used in 'The Polar Express' movie that was filmed in Michigan."

He acquired another rare car known as "Cape Tormentine" from the Florida Railway Museum and returned it by rail flat car to Saskatchewan for renovation. "Eleanor Roosevelt rode in this car on a rail trip across Canada," Southgate says.

One of his engines is CP Northern number



Southgate has about 45 cars and five engines in his collection.

3101, built in 1928 as a steam locomotive. It, along with number 3100, worked continuously for 25 years pulling overnight passenger trains between Montreal and Toronto and was later converted to burn oil and pull freight trains in the Prairie provinces. Three additional engines he purchased were used for Super Continental rail service.

Sleeper cars, sleeper-buffet-lounge cars, 6-wheel coaches, baggage cars and baggage dormitory cars round out his collection.

"There was a lot of excitement in the air when four engines and 20 of my rail cars arrived at Eastend in April 2022," Southgate says. "Now we're busy getting the necessary permits and approvals and cleaning equipment so we can get things rolling. It all takes time, and we have to meet several safety requirements."

"We're trying to preserve rail history while creating a tourism and educational venue that will interest people of all ages," Southgate says. "It's been a long and time-consuming process, but we're getting much closer to having a viable enterprise."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Gary Southgate, North Battleford, Sask. (ph 306-481-5681).

Pastor Brought A Deere 3020 Into Church

Rev. Adam Hamilton says that any day he can get on his Deere 3020 tractor and work around his Johnson County acreage he feels a closeness to God. He recently explained that relationship in a four-part sermon series entitled "God and Tractors" that he delivered at his Kansas City church. Wide-eyed parishioners were amazed that Hamilton's cleaned and polished 3020 was parked behind him on stage as he delivered the sermons.

Hamilton says it might not be the first time a tractor has ever been to church, but he thinks it might be the first time one has ever been "on stage" in front of a congregation. "I was able to drive the tractor in from the lower level of the church and raise it on the orchestra lift for display 18-in. above the floor of the sanctuary," Hamilton says. "The congregation had a real sense of awe that first Sunday."

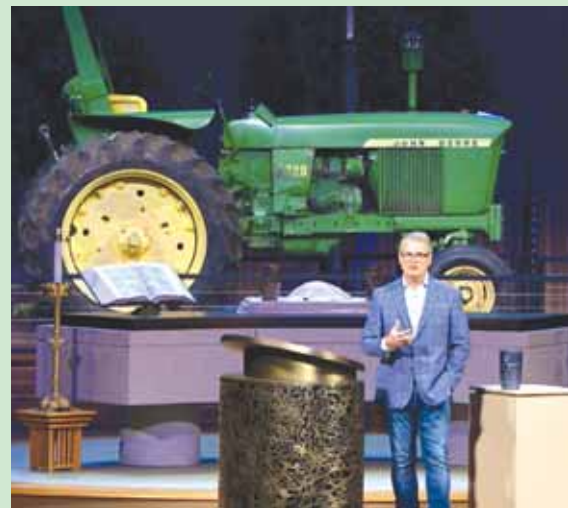
Hamilton weaved analogies about tractors and God into four sermons on successive Sundays in the summer of 2022. Using his personal experience getting his tractor stuck in the mud, he related how a larger tractor was called in to save him, comparing it to the human need for God to rescue us. He told about his silted-over farm pond being cleaned and restored by large backhoes in the manner that humans can be "born again" when muck is removed from their lives. Other messages contrasted harvesting wheat with a single sickle compared to today's large combines, analogous to humans doing life on their own power or gaining a bountiful harvest with the help of an empowering Spirit. And Hamilton's comparisons didn't end with his sermons.

Following each sermon, the congregation

went outside and saw an array of antique tractors, newer models, and even a large combine delivered by a local dealer. After his final message, Hamilton drove his 3020 out of the sanctuary to the parking lot where he proclaimed, "The Harvest is Plentiful" taken from a reading in Matthew, asking attendees "with all this power let's go to work spreading God's word."

Hamilton's messages reached five Kansas City area campuses where membership exceeds 25,000 and weekly attendance is over 30,000. Sermons can be heard at www.cor.org/leawood/sermons.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Rev. Adam Hamilton, United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, 13720 Roe Ave., Leawood, Kan. 66224 (www.cor.org).



Rev. Adam Hamilton used his Deere tractor to illustrate the importance of God in our lives during a summer sermon series at his church.

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