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A Souvenir of Bex-les-Bains

Malcolm Bulpitt

Postcards from the SRS Collection

There are many people who are interested in Switzerland and collect items that refer to that country. Often these are postcards, or the stamps that are used to send them. Sometimes it is simply the case of holding on to small publicity items that can be picked up in hotels and tourist offices. This urge to collect, or of not disposing of the bits-and-pieces acquired on one's travels, can result in items that are possibly insignificant at the time, becoming of historic value to a future generation. This is where the small paper leaflet that I have

recently acquired fits in. Some time in the early years of the last century a visitor to the small town of Bex in the Rhône Valley picked up a small (200mm x 140mm when open) paper leaflet that was advertising the services of the newly opened 'Chemin de fer électrique à crémaillère Bex – Gryon', and kept it until it was passed-on, eventually becoming a tiny insight into what was happening in this area of Canton de Vaud during that period.

This leaflet was produced in full colour by the then well known postcard-printing company Hubacher & Bidermann of Bern. Today their cards are sought after collector's items. Its main role is to show the timetable of this fledgling railway company, but it also includes suggestions for excursions and walks in the area as well as listing a number of local hotels. Today's metre-gauge Bex-Villars-Bretaye railway is a part of the Transports Publics du Chablais and runs trains at hourly intervals taking 24 minutes for the 9km trip from Bex CFF to Gryon. The old timetable shows this trip taking an hour with only five scheduled trains on a normal day. This was probably sufficient for the still growing tourist business at the time - a time when local people simply did not see the need, or had the money, to travel. The trip up the steep valley of L'Avançon (the line uses

Locomotives He 2/2 Nos. 1 and 2 being horsedrawn through Bex in 1899.



ALPES VAUDOISES

EXCURSIONS

PAR LE

Chemin de fer électrique à crémaillère

BEX-GRYON



GRYON ce joyau des Alpes vaudoises
est à l'altitude de 1200 mètres.

C'est le centre d'une quantité de courses de montagne, d'excursions intéressantes et variées et à la portée de tous, petits et forts marcheurs :

Les Plans, Pont de Nant (Jardin botanique de l'Université de Lausanne), Pointe des Savoleyres, Croix de Javernaz, Bovonnaz, Chalets de la Varre, Col des Essets, Lion d'Argentine, Anzeindaz, Pas de Cheville, Sion.

Cabane Rambert, Grand Muveran, Petit Muveran, Glacier des Martinets, Glacier de Plan Nèvé, Glacier de Paneyrossaz, Diablerets, Oldenhorn.

Villars et Chesières, Chalets de Bretaye, Lac des Chavonnes, Chamossaire, Taveyannaz, Chaux-Ronde, Les Ormonts (par le col de la Croix, le Simmenthal (par les Diablerets, le Pas de Cheville et le Sanetsch).



HORAIRE

Genève	—	—	6 50	10 30	12 45	5 15
Lausanne	—	5 10	9 10	12 35	2 25	6 35
Vevay	—	5 48	9 35	1 —	3 —	7 08
Montreux	—	6 07	9 48	1 11	3 15	7 25
Villeneuve	—	6 22	9 58	1 21	3 25	7 35
BEX (gare)	* 4 55	7 04	10 28	2 10	4 56	** 8 20
BEX (Bévioux)	5 13	7 22	10 46	2 28	5 14	8 38
GRYON	5 53	8 04	11 28	3 10	5 56	9 20
GRYON	* 6 36	9 20	12 41	3 45	7 14	** 9 50
BEX (Bévioux)	7 20	10 04	1 25	4 30	7 58	10 40
BEX (Gare)	7 38	10 20	1 41	4 46	8 14	10 56
Villeneuve	8 23	12 35	2 46	5 19	9 52	—
Montreux	8 41	12 48	3 03	5 33	10 10	—
Vevay	9 04	1 04	3 15	5 45	10 31	—
Lausanne	9 43	1 30	4 02	6 12	11 10	—
Genève	11 50	3 23	6 —	7 25	12 45	—

* Le dimanche et le lundi seulement, du 14 juillet au 31 août.
** Tous les jours, du 14 juillet au 31 août.

PRIX DU TRAJET

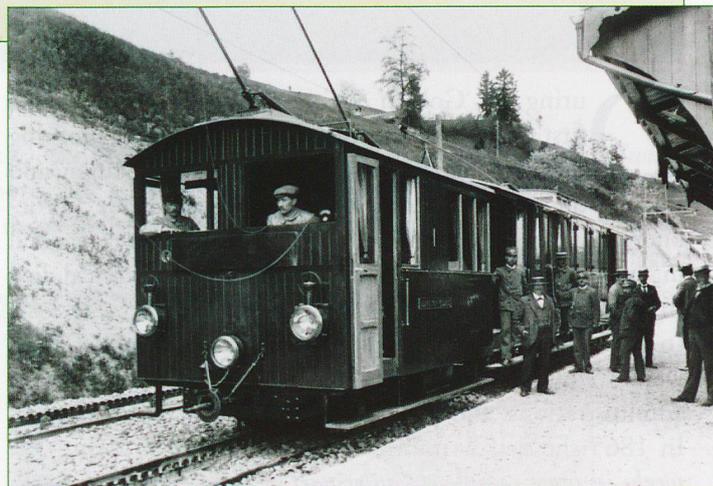
Montée Bex-Gryon, 3 fr. 80 — Descente Gryon-Bex, 2 fr. 95
Aller et retour, 5 fr. 40

Prix réduits pour Sociétés, Ecoles et Pensionnats.

Trains spéciaux sur demande à la Direction du Chemin de fer Bex-Gryon-Villars, à Bex

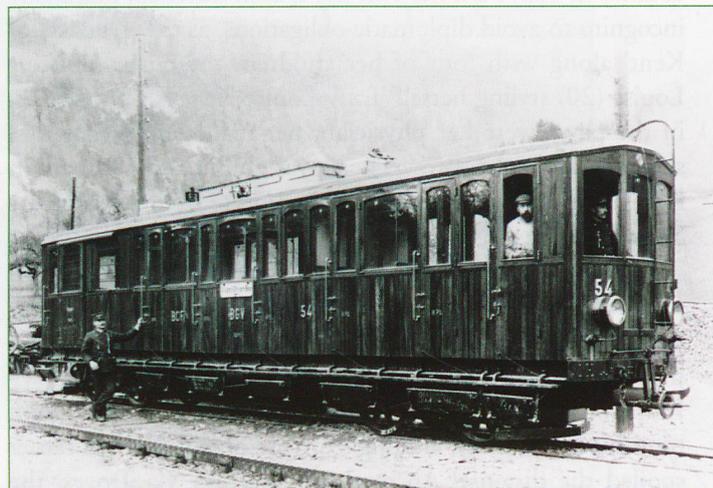
HOTELS RECOMMANDÉS

BAINS et GRAND HOTEL DES SALINES, F. Kussler,	Bex
GRAND HOTEL DES BAINS, P. Koehler,	"
HOTEL-PENSION CROCHET, Pasche Frères,	"
HOTEL-PENSION VILLA DES BAINS, Duperret,	"
HOTEL-PENSION DES ALPES, Ch. Rickert,	"
HOTEL-PENSION MOREL, F. Morel,	Gryon
HOTEL de la POSTE et PENSION, Delacrétaz,	"
GRAND HOTEL DU MUVERAN, Ch. Gemillard,	Villars
GRAND HOTEL, J. Freudweiler,	"
HOTEL-PENSION BELLEVUE, Gemillard-Soutter,	"
HOTEL DU CHAMOSSAIRE, H. Amiguet,	Chesières



ABOVE: He 2/2 No. 1 and CFe 2/4 No. 51 at Gryon during the opening of the line in 1900.

BELOW: BCFe 2/4 54 at the Bévioux depot in 1908.



Abt rack to overcome the 20%/1 in 5 gradient between Bévioux and Gryon) cost CHF3.80 upward and CHF2.95 down, or CHF5.40 return. Expensive then. The railway had received its Federal concession in 1897 as the Bex-Gryon-Villars-Chesières line. Construction commenced immediately and the first non-rack section from Bex CFF to Bévioux opened in September 1898. It took until June 1900 for the line to reach Gryon, and as the timetable only shows trains to there it is probable that the leaflet dates from that summer. The line opened to Villars (at 12.4km) in 1901 with the last 1.4km to Chesières taking another 5 years to complete. This section closed in 1961. The extension from Villars to the Col de Bretaye was built by a separate company and opened in December 1913.

Both lines were electrified at around 700V DC from their completion, with motive power at the opening of the line to Gryon in 1900 comprising two wooden bodied He 2/2 locomotives built by SLM, that worked with CFe 2/4 motor cars on the rack sections. The motor cars could operate alone between Bex CFF and Bévioux and Gryon and Villars/Chesières. Power was collected from the overhead wires by trolley poles rather than pantographs. Between 1903-15 another four rack locos had been acquired along with additional all-year motor cars classified CFe 2/4, and Ce 2/4 summer cars with open upper sides. Ce 2/2 trams also operated around the town of Bex. This original equipment was still operating in 1941. The B-V-B and the communities it serves have moved on considerably over time, but the small leaflet kept by a tourist 117 years ago has unlocked an insight as to how the coming of the railway started this process. ☒