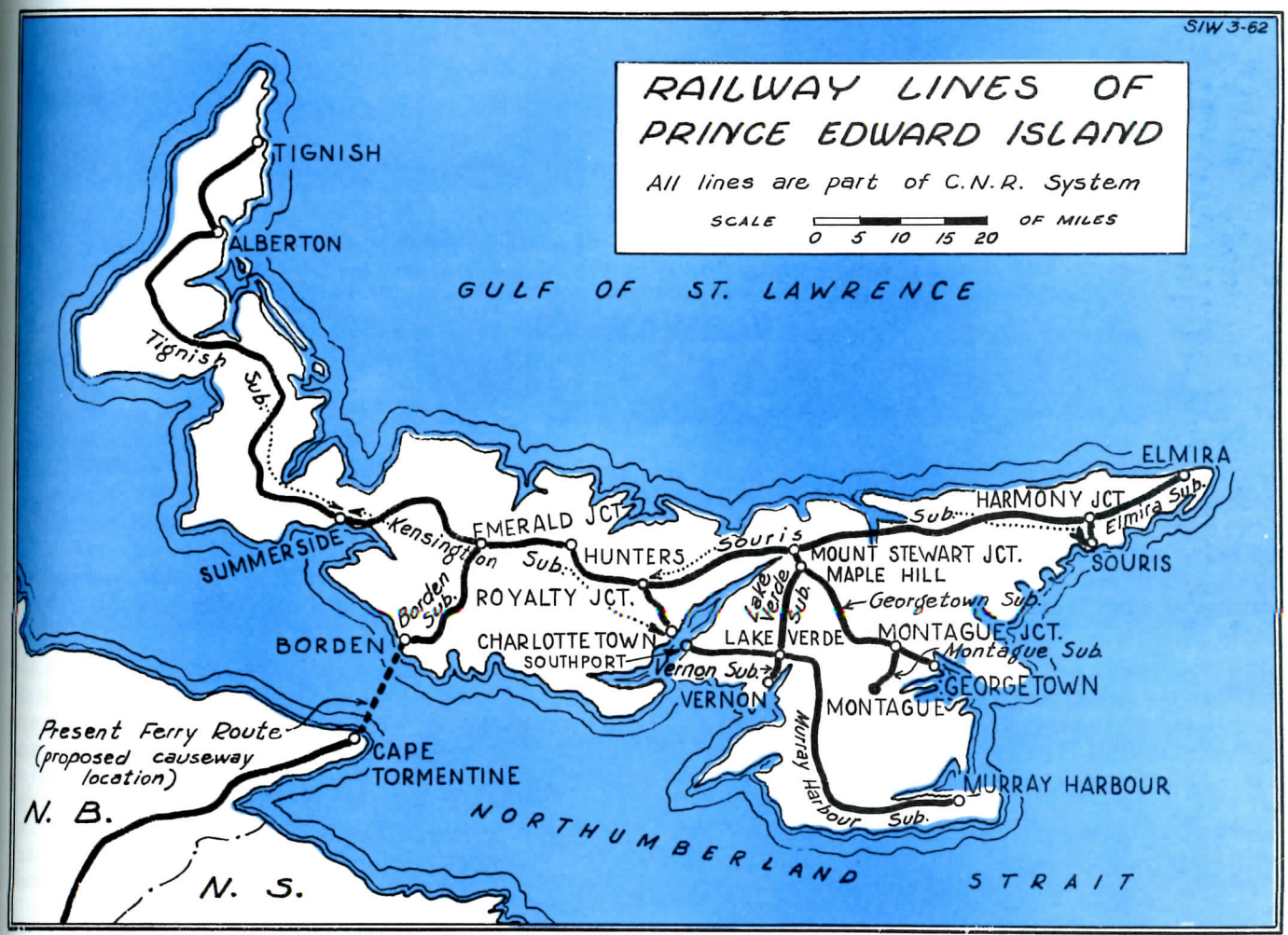
Newsletter

INCORPORATED 1952

NUMBER 194 MARCH, 1962

RAILWAYS OF
Prince Edward Island



as observed by **R. J. SANDUSKY**

UPPER CANADA RAILWAY SOCIETY

BOX 122 TERMINAL "A" TORONTO, ONTARIO

Typical of the Island's trains, M233, headed by CN 42, awaits departure for Souris at Mount Stewart Junction.

RAILWAYS OF

Prince Edward Island

Many railway enthusiasts have noticed the CNR rail schedules for Prince Edward Island, which appear only in the winter folder and take effect around the middle of December, and probably have wondered just what is over there. Those who succumb to their curiosity and board the M.V. Abegweit for a trip across the Northumberland Straits will find a rail system which, within itself, is as standardized as any other but which also has a personality of its own. (This seems to be a feature of many island railways.)

The island's own peculiar brand of motive power will likely be seen immediately upon arrival at Borden, where a G.E. 600 hp. road-switcher sits on the pier with a line of idler flats, waiting to remove the freight or passenger cars from the ferry and insert another line of cars for the return trip. These G.E. locos are omnipresent on the island's trains. The only exceptions to this rule are two or three 1600 series, 4-axle, Kingston-built road-switchers which handle the through passenger trains to Charlottetown, plus the odd freight run over the same line. On the cold January day of my visit, the pier switcher at Borden, CN no. 32, unloaded a steam generator car, five assorted baggage and express cars and a 5500 series coach, all of which were assembled behind engine 1636 and sped out of town as train no. 40.

The line from Emerald Junction to Charlottetown (in common with much of the other trackage on the island), consists of an interminable succession of curves and grades which were originally plotted for the 3'-6" gauge of the Prince Edward Island Railway. In all, it is quite reminiscent of some parts of the CNR's Uxbridge or the CPR's Owen Sound Subdivisions, both of which also began life with a gauge of 3'-6".

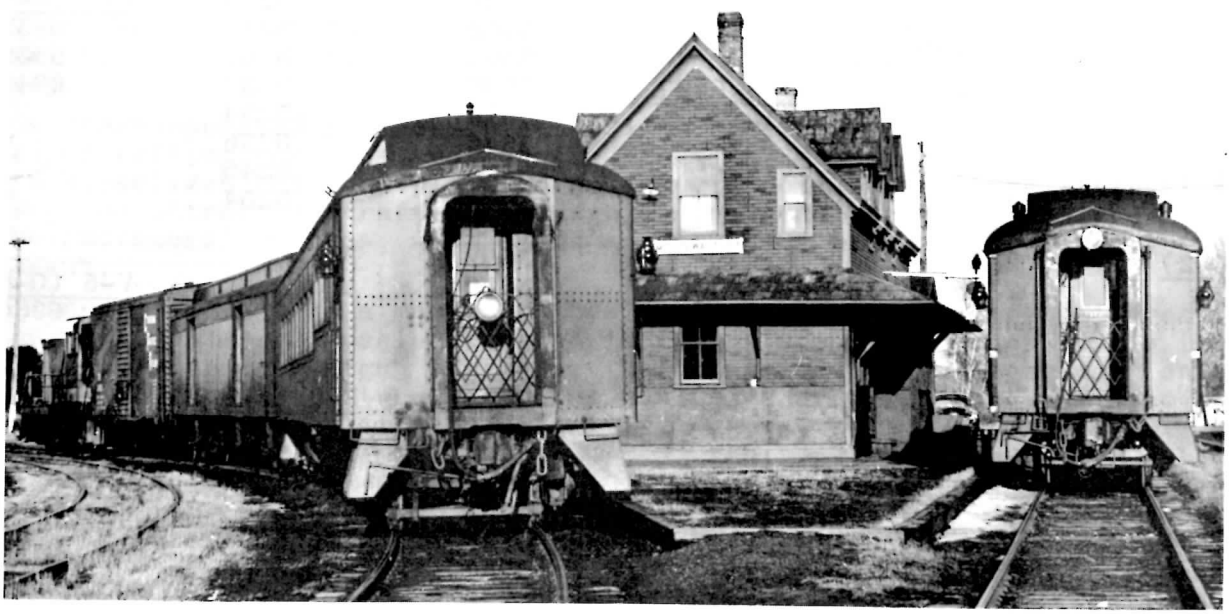
The tidy city of Charlottetown is soon reached and a half mile north of the station train no. 40 is wyed (as are all other passenger trains entering town), then backed down into one of the platforms beside the large and imposing stone station. It is 9:00 pm. (or later if the Abegweit was delayed by ice), and most

other tracks between the butterfly platforms are occupied by an assortment of wooden coaches, combines and express cars. Number 40's coach along with the odd 5200 class coach in the yard appear quite incongruous in this scene. One notices back-up lights on most of the cars and soon discovers that they are frequently used on the many "branches off branches" on the island.

South and east of the station lie the docks, loco shop and a small freight yard where G.E. steeple-cab no. 2 spends all of its time charging back and forth. Beyond this, crossing the Hillsborough River, one can see the former rail bridge over which the narrow gauge trains from Murray Harbour used to enter town. This was the last line to be standard-gauged (1930) and when that took place, the rails were cut back to the east end of the bridge, at Southport, and a new access line was built from Mount Stewart to Lake Verde. The bridge was used for one lane of highway traffic until recently when a new structure was completed. No doubt the old one will be dismantled ere long. The rails east from here have now been removed for about four miles to Mount Herbert. From the latter point to Hazelbrook, mile 7.4, freight service only is provided but a mixed train runs between Hazelbrook, Murray Harbour and Vernon.

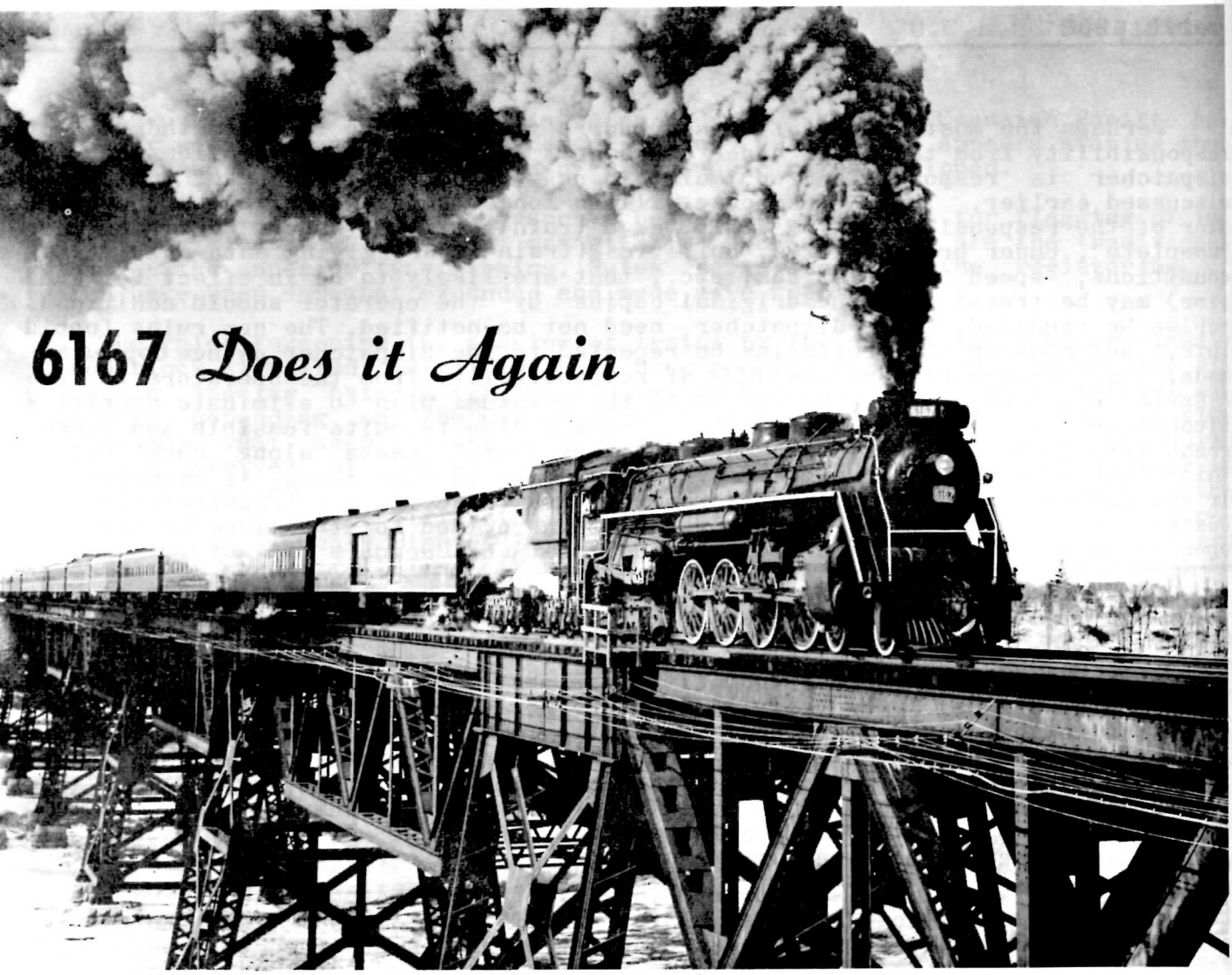
A surprise awaits the person first visiting Vernon. At train time he will watch amazed as the loco, express and passenger cars negotiate the reversing balloon at the end of the 3.8 mile branch. (One wonders if the mileage of the subdivision includes the distance around the loop.) One would expect to find a spring switch at the entrance to the loop, since the train always navigates it in the same direction, but no . . . . upon arrival the train always stops twice; once as the switch is opened and once more as it is closed behind. It then proceeds to the white, frame station located at the very top of the loop.(Does anyone know of any other rural turning balloons still in use in Canada?)

In the course of two days on the island, various mixed trains were observed, always with one loco, except for no. 252 from Tignish which appeared one day with locos 28 and 31 (plus 3 tank cars, 2 express cars and a coach). Evidence of the importance of agricultural produce on the economy of the rail system was seen in the long lines of refrigerator cars occupying sidings at many terminals and junctions. These trains enjoy reasonably good connections and in the course of four days a determined railway enthusiast could cover all the lines except the one from Mount Stewart to Lake Verde.



Back-up whistles and lights are obvious here as trains M233 and M249 wait at Mount Stewart Junction for their departures to Souris and Georgetown respectively.

6167 Does it Again



CN 6167 rumbled across the bridge over 20-Mile Creek as 1000 excursionists watched or rode the train at this run-by.

As has already been proven, the combination of a crisp winter's day, a steam locomotive and a destination with wide public appeal, more than guarantees the success of an excursion. The latest trip promoted by this Society in co-operation with the Canadian National's Passenger Sales Department had all of these attributes. Sunday, March 4th dawned cold and clear. The destination chosen for the day, Niagara Falls, certainly has a universal appeal, and few people visit there during the winter because of the difficulties that are often encountered in winter driving. CN's engine 6167 provided the motive power for the train and presented a dramatic sight at the two run-pasts which were performed en route.

Because advance ticket sales were much slower than on previous trips, it was first thought that seven coaches would provide sufficient accomodation for the expected crowd, even allowing for considerable last-minute sales. However, by late Saturday evening, indications were that more space would be needed, so a further three cars were added to the consist. By then, the train totaled 12 cars including an express car and Cafeteria car no. 496.

Next morning, we left Union Station a few minutes after the 9:30 am advertised departure, and an unscheduled stop was made just clear of Cabin D to permit the addition of two more coaches to accomodate the already standing load aboard the special. As we drew to a stop at Sunnyside, it was interesting to note the dozens of automobiles parked along the paralleling highways while their passengers admired 6167. From here, a fast, non-stop run was made to Oakville,

where the waiting passenger load again exceeded the available seating. Here too, a message was received, suggesting that one of the run-pasts, planned for an interesting location east of Merritton, be rescheduled to avoid the difficulty in starting the heavy train on the stiff grade between there and Niagara Falls.

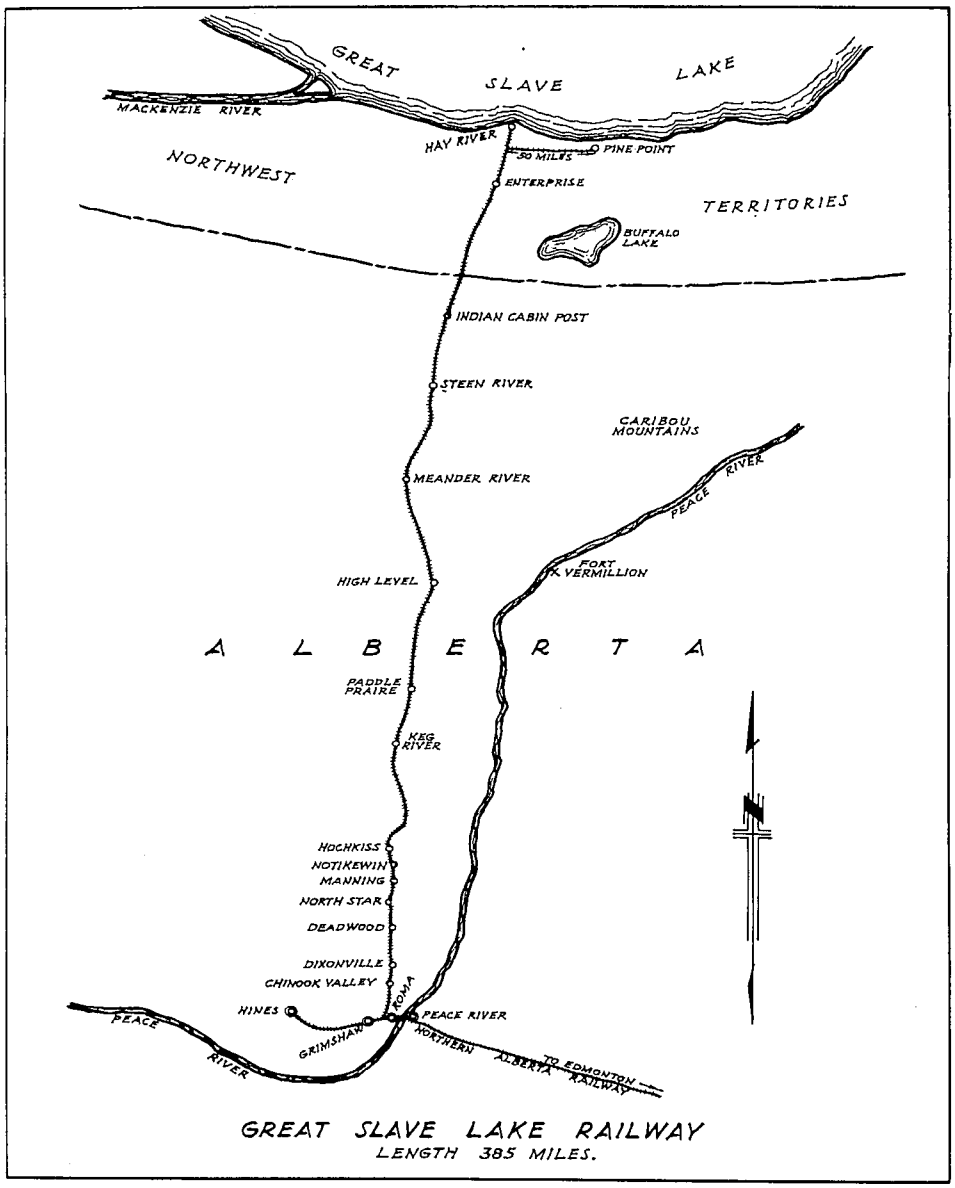
At Hamilton, a 20 minute stop was made to take on water for the engine and to add a further four coaches, swelling the train to an overall length of 18 cars, and what must surely be a record length for a steam excursion in Canada. From Hamilton, the special proceeded along the Grimsby Subdivision to Jordan, where the first run-past was made. The wide right-of-way, as well as the disused piers of the old bridge and the wide banks of Twenty Mile Creek provided ample vantage points from which to photograph the train as it rumbled across the present quarter-mile long, double tracked bridge. The next run-by, at a smaller bridge and fill at mile 16.0, again afforded ample opportunity for photography, in spite of the large crowd. After leaving here, a brief stop was made at St. Catharines to allow a few passengers to detrain to catch Railiner train no. 693 back to Hamilton. With a good run at the grade, 6167 and its 18-car load charged past the summit of the Niagara Escarpment at about 30 miles per hour. Niagara Falls Station was reached at about 1:25 pm, some 55 minutes late.

From the station, seven chartered buses carried excursionists to the Falls themselves while the train was remarshalled and the engine serviced. At 4:15 pm the entire train was backed onto the Whirlpool Rapids Bridge, giving passengers a thrilling view of the Niagara Gorge, and in the far distance to the south, the Falls.

Following the departure at 4:35, a non-stop, high speed run was made to Hamilton. Again, the engine was watered, and two coaches were removed. Although a few minutes were lost between Hamilton and Bayview because of driver slippage on the wet rails, a fast trip was made back to Toronto, and the 35 minutes late arrival there was due mostly to the water stop at Hamilton.

The passenger count for the day was also some sort of record . . 975! Special credit for this is certainly due to Mr. A.L. McPherson and Mr. F.A. Rowell of the CN's Toronto offices for having the foresight and the ambition to promote this type of excursion. The Society too, welcomed the opportunity to assist in the planning, publicizing and operation of the train and we feel that the many satisfied passengers that day have been made more aware of the CN in a most favourable way.

The resourcefulness of the CN is unlimited. The firebox of 6167 is not hand-fed but the tender certainly was on March 4th!



Construction Starts on the GREAT SLAVE LAKE Railway

Clearing has commenced on the first 137 miles of the 430-mile Great Slave Lake Railway, an extension of the Northern Alberta Railways to Hay River and Pine Point, N.W.T. Contracts were awarded by the CNR to (of all things) the Bogock Seed Company of Edmonton for the first 52 miles from Roma (Mile 0, between Peace River and Grimshaw), while Peter Rohl of Calgary will clear the right-of-way from mile 52 to mile 137.

The Great Slave Lake has a ready-made access route for construction equipment and materials in the Mackenzie Highway, which it will roughly parallel all the way to Hay River. The line will prove easier than many others to construct in other respects also: the terrain to be crossed is lightly timbered, the rivers and streams narrow and muskegs few in number. The alignment is across a number of low plateaus located between wide but shallow river valleys, of which only one is more than 100 feet deep. The average elevation of the line is 1800 feet above sea level for the first 200 miles and 500 feet above sea level for the rest of the distance. The southerly 175 miles of the line passes through good farmlands producing cereal crops and rich pasturage.

The principal purpose of the Great Slave Lake Railway, of course, as recorded previously in these pages, is to bring out lead-zinc concentrates from the Pine Point mine on Great Slave Lake. This mine will be situated at the end