

The Ferrophiliac Column

Conducted by Just A. Ferronut

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Last month we closed on a news story about a former Hamilton and Lake Erie Railway building in Hamilton, ON., that some were wondering whether it was the downtown Hamilton station for that railway. Well Mike Lindsay and Ray Corley have sent me the follow up Hamilton Spectator articles on this mystery. First, our guess last month was correct. The former H&LE building that is presently part of the Shakespeare Steak House at the north east corner of Main Street and Ferguson Avenue is the former baggage room and closet. The Spectator articles raise some interesting stories about these railway structures. According to one source, the baggage building was used as a car wash back in the late 1930s. This car wash was owned for a short while by a character named 'Curly' Burke, who among other interesting things drove a street car and supposedly won and lost the car wash in a crap game. The H&LE Railway station was located south of King Street, west of the railway and it was demolished about late June 1931. This action was the result of the Hamilton Board of Control complaining to Canadian National Railway about the station being an eyesore in the busy downtown part of the City. While indications are that this squat little station was demolished without having been photographed very often, it did have a few moments of glory or at least news worthiness. The station was constructed by the Hamilton & Lake Erie Railway. This railway was the successor to The Hamilton & Port Dover Railway which had literally bankrupted itself constructing the five miles of rail line south of Hamilton up the Niagara escarpment. The H&LE took over this ill venture and opened their line from King Street, Hamilton to Jarvis on September 18, 1873. On that date some 300 people gathered in front of the new King Street station to hear the speeches and watch the huge locomotive – the 'JOHN SCOTT', gaily decorated with flowers head southward with the first official train. CN shows the H&LE opening an extension to their line from Jarvis to Port Dover as about January 1, 1879, close to the 'late 1878' date Charles Cooper quotes in his book Rails to the Lakes.

The station was just 10 years old when the modest brick depot was the site on September 29, 1883 for a reception and departure of a special train to carry the Prince of Wales (later King George V), on a pleasure excursion to Port Dover. The Prince gave the cheering crowd an extra acknowledgement as the train left by stepping out on the rear platform and doffing his hat in a courteously salute.

The little depot moved up the scale of importance when it was the chosen site for the eastern terminus of the Hamilton and Dundas Street Railway. The Spectator states the station made the news again in early 1917. A south bound double headed freight approached King Street about 1400 on Sunday January 28, 1917. At the same time a west bound Hamilton Street Railway trolley car wanted to cross the railway tracks, the result – a collision! This resulted in the lead engine, GTR #2395 derailling and ploughing across the frozen ground to strike the station. The front of the locomotive smashed through the wall of the ladies waiting room. The Hamilton Herald's account of the accident stated, "the engine might have continued on it wild journey clear through the old depot were it not that its smoke stack got among the waiting room rafters, where it held fast." Definitely a colourful description that conjures some wild scenes. However, a photo from the Hamilton Public Library Special Collections shows the front right of #2395 pushing in the

depot wall with the smoke stack resting against the eve of the narrow roof overhang. I definitely like the Herald's account best.

Now a few corrections and updates on our Simcoe article from last month. While I came across a little more information, most of the extra is from Jack Maclean. First Jack points out that the LE&N Simcoe North station was not where I showed it, but on the west side of the rail line just north of Highway 3, in Simcoe. This was just a standard waiting shelter, shown as a flag stop for all LE&N trains. I had shown this station farther north because of a news article from the July 17, 1930 Simcoe Reformer in reporting the fire that had destroyed the CN Air Line station, it spoke of the firefighters being confused as to the location and first going to the LE&N station. The main LE&N station farther south was on the west side of the rail line on the east bank of the Lynn River.

It should be also pointed out that the interchange track between the LE&N and the CN Cayuga Subdivision was a modern addition, as part of the agreement for CP access to Nanticoke via the LE&N Simcoe Subdivision and CN's Cayuga and Hagersville Subdivisions from Simcoe east. Jack points out there was an interchange farther south where the CN Port Dover Subdivision crossed the LE&N. This trackage was in the north east quadrant of this crossing and Jack advises there had been a two storey brick interlocking tower complete with approach and home signals as well as derails controlling this diamond.

I had mentioned the early Air Line station and the present metal box station. Jack's comments about the station built following the 1930 fire, "about the tiniest full-service agency station I have ever seen; I assume the main purpose was train order work, as the waiting and baggage rooms were about the dinkiest I've ever seen. It was obvious that they didn't expect many passengers to board trains there." Well, I have now seen a photo of this station and I would agree with Jack's observations.

George Horner has now presented another wrinkle about the Air Line stations in Simcoe. It is an undated photo from the Patterson-George Collection showing a wooden passenger car with a SIMCOE station board. We believe this car was placed about where the station was following the fire in 1930 that destroyed it. This photo shows the freight shed behind it and it has an order board in front of it. Maybe someone can confirm or add some details about this car.

The GTR (nee PD&LH) station shown on last month's map near Union Street, Simcoe was in fact slightly farther south, just north of Kars Street on the east side of the rail line, about where the corner of the Nabisco Foods plant now sits.

The other item about Simcoe is that the turntable and two storage tracks were located between the Port Rowan and Port Dover lines south of Victoria Street.

In other station news, Ray Corley has sent along a copy of a 1987 letter from Percy L. Climo about the old Cobourg and Peterborough Railway station in Cobourg. This station had been constructed near the harbour by the C&P as part of their operation prior their take over by the Grand Trunk Railway. This station became surplus to the Railways' need and sometime either in the late 1870's or 1880's the station was moved to the west side on Stuart Street, in Cobourg to become a house. Mr. Climo stated that he had rented the north half of this station cum duplex for his family during World War II. As of the middle of March 1991, this building still sits proudly at 175-177 Stuart

Street covered with white clapboards.

Gray Scrimgeour has sent along an item of interest to anyone going to Ottawa-Hull over the summer. If you are going to be in the Nation's capital between now and September 2, 1991 and have not booked all you time at Sussex Drive, maybe you could wander over to the Canadian Museum of Civilisation in Hull. The National Postal Museum has an exhibition on railway mail service in the Special Exhibitions Hall of the CMC. Indications are that this exhibit titled *'On Track'* is very well put together complete with audio-visual displays and is well worth seeing by any railway enthusiast, postal historian, or just plain interested people and will be opened to the public until September 2, 1991. The Ottawa Citizen article on this exhibit points out for those who can make it on Thursdays, entrance to the CMC is free (Thursday only).

For a number of years now, I thought I was the only one that went through the *'Remember When'* Columns of weekly newspapers collecting tidbits about railway happenings. I have always thought they were interesting and while most may not be earth shattering, they give an insight into life at a time past. Well, I now know I am not alone, George Horner has sent along a series of items from the Uxbridge Times-Journal. These tidbits relate to the line that started its life as the Toronto & Nipissing Railroad.

Uxbridge was the headquarters of the Toronto & Nipissing Railroad from its opening in 1871 to January, 1883. Jesse Cook of Zephyr loaded three cars of cedar for Toronto in early August, 1901.

Lots of snow on Friday, March 15, 1912 when the morning train from Uxbridge got stuck all day on top of a hill north of Goodwood. This storm tied up lots of other traffic as well. Sunshine on Thursday, June 1, 1922, as GTR workmen were busy planting the large flower beds to beautify the station grounds in Uxbridge.

These news flashbacks include all the wrecks and accidents such as the two in 1926, when on Monday, August 2, 1926, seven cars of oil and coal were derailed near the 6th Concession and the wrecking crew worked all night building a temporary track around the derailment. Great work except the next day, August 3, five cars of a mixed GTR train was derailed south of Goodwood and several cattle killed. This caused the trains to be late on Tuesday.

The Thursday, August 28, 1941 Times-Journal carried comments about the demolition of the old restaurant at the Blackwater station and how the old timers remember the good old days when trains met there in the morning and evening.

A few weeks ago, I was reading an article on the Intercolonial Railway and it made reference to Sandford Fleming and the 20,000 miles or so of New Brunswick wilderness he covered in one year including a 370 mile trip by horse and sleigh from Shediac, New Brunswick to Rimouski, QuJbec. This stirred a little of my Canadian blood into thinking as I have in the past about the comparison of the way we have treated people in our history versus the American way. A few days later, the news media was speaking of a sizable grant of money made by Charles Bronfman for producing educational material about Canadian historical events and the people behind them.

These two events spun around in my skull with the resulting thought that perhaps we should include more Canadian railway people in our column. There are the known names such as Sandford Fleming, William VanHorne, William Mackenzie and Donald Mann, but then there are those hundreds of lesser known who aided this country with their contributions. Some

toiled mentally, others physically in the promotion, development, and construction of railways which opened up this land. Others worked, sacrificed and many gave their lives to save still others or to keep steel wheels rolling across the ribbons of steel in this country. I am hoping we can dig out lesser known facts about the better known railroaders and more complete stories on some of the lesser known Canadian railway heroes.

As we sit these days in our comfortable homes with all the modern conveniences that we take for granted, let your mind wander back a few years to let's say 1864 and Sandford Fleming. I am picking Sandford Fleming since my early days on the railway were working around bridge foundations which he had designed. In 1864, there were no planes, rail or even roads between the St. Lawrence River at Riviere du Loup, Québec and Moncton, New Brunswick. Riviere du Loup was the eastern terminal of the railway from Montréal. There was no radio for weather forecasts, no restaurants, no motels, you were on your own to live or die by your own capabilities.

Hugh Maclean in his book Man of Steel speaks of Sandford Fleming and his men startling the wits of the churchgoers in Riviere du Loup as they went to worship in their heavy boots and red flannel shirts. From here they started their trek on snow shoes towards New Brunswick via Rimouski, Mont-Joli and the Matapedia Valley. They carried their heavy packs and had a sled pulled by three dogs. Their daily travels covered between 11 and 33 miles. A couple of weeks later Sandford Fleming and crew arrived in Fredericton, where Governor Arthur Gordon invited him to dine. Fleming asked to be excused, because his only clothes were the ones he had started with in Riviere du Loup. The Governor insisted he come regardless and as Hugh Maclean says he startled another segment of society.

By early 1865, Fleming and his survey crews had surveyed no less than 15 routes along which the ICR could be built between Truro, Nova Scotia and Riviere du Loup. Remember this railway as proposed at that time would have sections in three colonies (countries). Over the next three years these possible routes were reduced to three and of course we had Confederation. The proposed route near the American border was opposed by the military, since they had concerns about the Americans and the Fenian raiders. The local governments favoured a central route nearer to the one the NTR selected almost 50 years later. Fleming favoured the east route touching as many seaports as possible. This was part of Fleming's long term vision for a global route of railways and ships that would link the British Empire. Fleming personally favoured Shippegan, New Brunswick as the seaport for trans-Atlantic traffic. The Intercolonial Railway would become a 4992 mile line from Truro, Nova Scotia along the east coast of New Brunswick, up the Matapedia Valley and west along to the St. Lawrence River to Riviere du Loup.

While Fleming had many challenges in his life, this project was no doubt one of his greatest. While Confederation was a fact before construction began, the ICR was one of the first major railway projects constructed for the Dominion Government under the new federal Railway Act and the government appointed "Commissioners." Various material indicates that the Commissioners were political appointees either without or very little railway experience. Of course in the wings were the old boys groups, the regional politicians who prior to 1867 had ample power to control such matters as selection of routes, contractors, etc. for railway lines. Maritime politics didn't die that easy, as we can see to this day the result of some of Fleming's losses. One that comes to mind is what is locally

referred to as the Dorchester Diversion. The Board of Railway Commissioners allowed the local politicians and contractors to select the route between Sackville and Moncton and it circuitous route shows that the route was built to suit as many people as possible while showing that the contractor was being paid by the mile.

Fleming won his share of the important battles with the Commissioners. One of the hottest and biggest related to Fleming's desire to have all bridges built of iron while the Commissioners were happy with wooden ones such as had been used for years.

While he won this one, he had to spend three years trying to build a safe bridge across the Miramichi River near Chatham, New Brunswick. The problem at this location was a fissure in the river bottom that was filled with soft material and Fleming and his engineers could not stop their bridge piers from continuing to settle into the mud. After working for two summers without success, Fleming ordered the pier to be loaded with several hundred tons of weight more than the pier would be expected to withstand. This time he had success and in 1874 he was able to finish this bridge across the Miramichi River.

The Miramichi River at this location is a tidal river and in the spring it is a fast flowing river carrying the melted snow from the centre of New Brunswick. It was about 1965, that I became involved in Mr. Fleming's problem. The bridge piers that Fleming had constructed some 90 years before still carried trains although they had new steel spans between them. The forces of nature and trains had started one pier on the South West Miramichi to move again. No, it was not the settling problem that Fleming had encountered, but this time the pier was taking turns leaning first upstream and then downstream. We spent two or three years tracking this wandering pier, but concluded that Fleming had done his work well and except for a slight kink in the track there was no fear for this structure.

Remember, people like Fleming carried out their work without the heavy machinery of today. To me we have to stand back and admire their work. Do you have a favourite story?