

## The Ferrophiliac Column *May 1991* Conducted by Just A. Ferronut

William Reddy noting the material on Simcoe and Hamilton that we've carried during the last two months, sends along a few notes about rail trips he and others from Buffalo and Western New York took in this area during the late 1940s.

Bill says he recall taking numerous day trips by driving with friends to Hamilton and spending the day riding CN trains #233 and #238. Train #233 usually pulled by a mogul often from the 900 series would leave the Hamilton station 9:10 a.m. and soon travel up the middle of Ferguson Avenue and across the TH&B for its assault on the Niagara Escarpment. After crawling up the escarpment, the engine with its train easily jogged across the next dozen miles to Caledonia. While #233 rested at the impressive frame station, the adjacent 'water plug' would supply the engine with a well deserved drink of water for its southward journey. Eastbound train #218 from Brantford on its way along the B&LH to Fort Erie would be met by #233 at Caledonia if they were on time. Bill mentioned that while it was not a normal route for many regular passengers, a few railfans would on occasion would use train #218 for a trip from Hamilton to Fort Erie.

From Caledonia, #233 would roll south across the rich farmland to Jarvis, the junction with the Great Western's 'Airline' (CN Cayuga Subdivision). The next ten mile leg would be west over the 'Airline' to Simcoe. The Airline 'north' station at Simcoe was always a location for rail action. Train #351, the mixed westbound from Fort Erie for St. Thomas, etc. would usually have a Wabash engine about 6 months of the year with a CNR engine for the remainder. These trains always had a CNR combine car, since Wabash did not have any passenger equipment assigned to its Buffalo division. During this station stop one usually had a fast eastbound Wabash freight thunder past headed by a 2-8-2, although on occasions, a 2-6-0, 2-6-2 or 4-6-2 would leave their more mundane job on the mixed trains do the honours. The mixed train #355 ! #356 from St. Thomas was also due in Simcoe at this time as part of its run over to Jarvis, where it was turned for its early afternoon return trip.

The trips from Simcoe to Port Rowan or Port Dover were usually free of railway officials so it was common for one or two of the fans to get invited by the crew to ride in cab.

Mixed #233 would arrive in Port Rowan at 12:10 p.m. The crew would do what switching was needed and then head for lunch. The regular conductor, whose name Bill recalled as being Burt Grapes had a couple of very interesting habits. Burt liked to eat an entire pie everyday for lunch. He would carefully cut the pie in quarters, then proceed to devour it. His second habit which was considered bad (today it would be considered unsafe while his pie eating habit would be considered bad – JAF) was to do with shunting cars. Burt was noted for his habit when cars were being kicked in order to get them ahead of the engine, of running towards the moving car, jumping on the coupler, climbing the ladder in order to tie down the hand brakes. While a very dangerous habit, apparently Burt did it daily without injury.

Bill reports that many of these trips south of Simcoe were like having your own private fan trips since the few rail fans were often the only riders.

So you thought you were the only rail enthusiast who has done something crazy in the name of your hobby. Well fear not, as the following account that Bill Reddy sent along about another trip he and Dick Ryan of Buffalo took in southern Ontario just prior to the dieselisation on the Wabash.

Dick and Bill had picked a weekend, then arranged for tickets and releases in advance for a trip on a fast Wabash freight from St. Thomas to Fort Erie. They arrived in St. Thomas on a very cold blustery January day, after having travelled from Buffalo in the comfort of a Michigan Central passenger train. After a freezing walk for the few blocks from the MCRR station they arrived at the CN!Wabash station situated on CN's Cayuga Subdivision and boarded the Wabash caboose for their planned ride to Fort Erie. At Simcoe without knowing the reason at first why, they stopped. It took them some two hours to get moving again since the freight had hit an automobile. While there was no loss of life, there had been damage and of course the reams of reports to be completed for the police, the railway and the Board of Transport Commissioners (the regulators of the railways). This delay resulted in them being a couple of hours late in arriving at Fort Erie and being extra hungry. At this terminal they were let off in the middle of the CN yard and had to walk to the yard office. This trek left them frozen as well as being hungry. While their needs were for both food and a taxi to take them back to Buffalo, they settled on a nearby restaurant where they could thaw out as well as get some nourishment. Now that part of their needs were taken care of, there still was no taxi, so they proceeded to walk across the Peace Bridge to Buffalo.

It is certain this border crossing is one that the customs officers talked about for many years, seeing a couple of young nearly frozen individuals approaching them with their story, they were in Canada to ride a freight train. Today, they would probably be detained until the people with the white jackets equipped with long sleeves and straps could be called.

A couple of months ago at our Toronto monthly meeting, George Horner and I were talking about various matters including a building in Woodstock, New Brunswick, near the CPR station that George considered had been a station at some time.

So I dropped a line to the local historical society in Woodstock, whom confirmed that, yes this building was a station. Even though Woodstock is a small town, it still has at least three of the five stations from the Canadian Pacific Railway family of railroads. To help keep these station locations a bit clearer, I have prepared a general map showing a number of key features that have existed over the last 125 years. This map shows both the downtown area of Woodstock and then skips a mile or so north the Upper Woodstock area.

The CPR entered Woodstock first from the south as the New Brunswick and Canada Railway (nee Woodstock Branch Railway) which opened on July 16, 1868. This line ended in the south part of the town about 1/8 mile north of the present CPR brick station, location marked 1 on the map. Indications are that this station was a small structure and has been long gone.

In January 1874, the New Brunswick Railway (Gibson Branch) was opened to Northampton (Grafton). This rail line had been constructed from Fredericton (Devon) via Newburg. The station and yard was located across the present Highway # 585 on the east side of the St. John River. There is a building on this site that some have stated is the old station, to date I do not had a definite answer.

The New Brunswick Railway built a new through truss wooden bridge across the St. John River at Upper Woodstock at Sharpe Island. This bridge had an upper deck for horse and carriage traffic and at the time it was the only bridge

across the St. John River between Saint John and Grand Falls.

Near the west end of this wooden bridge was a small wooden station. This station # 3 on the map still exists and was mentioned in our January 1990 *Newsletter* column. From this location the NB Railway then extended southward on the west bank of the St. John River to Woodstock.

As part of this same project the NB&C Railway was extended northward with a wooden bridge across the Meduxnekeag River to meet the NBR. With the joining of these lines, a new station was constructed at the east end of Queen Street, north of the Meduxnekeag.

In November 1885, the New Brunswick Railway announced that Woodstock would become the site of their head office, general shops, etc. Again while I have not confirmed all the details, this appears to be the start of construction on Lower Main Street where the present brick CPR station # 5 stands. On the street side of this station is where the old divisional offices (a squarish two storey frame building with a cupola, if I recall correctly) sat for many years among the well kept flower gardens and lawns. Southeast of the station is where the round house, turntable and coaling plant stood.

The superintendent's house with its wide overhanging roof stood south of the division offices on the east side of Lower Main Street. It was the history of this building that George was questioning. The Carleton County Historical Society has now confirmed that this white building long used as a railway officer's house was the original Queen Street station from north of the Meduxnekeag. Based on the NBR's 1885 announcement, I would guess at this point that this station was relocated over the next few years and probably used as a station at the present station site pending the construction of the larger brick station.

The Historical Society closed their letter with a note that this former Queen Street station recently suffered some fire damage.

I must apologize for Art and I, for a mistake we got in the map for Jack Knowles's article on [Passenger Trains At Camp Borden](#). We didn't have an old timetable handy at the time, so we argued over the name for the abandoned subdivision along the west side of Camp Borden. I convinced myself and Art that this subdivision couldn't be the Alliston, since there were no CN 'A' subdivisions in the area. Anyway, I was wrong and the map should show that abandoned line as the Alliston Subdivision. This line originally extended between Beeton via Creemore to Lake Junction near Collingwood on the Meaford Subdivision.

Jack Knowles has forwarded some material from a couple of recent issues of the *Legion Magazine* that he says reminds him of his days in the military and has ties with Canadian Pacific. One can think of tracks when thinking of this vehicle built by Canadian Pacific Railway, but not really rail lines. The vehicle in question is a Vickers-Armstrong-Valentine VII – A military tank built by Canadian Pacific Railway in May 1943. From Canada, this tank found its way to the Soviet Union, as part of Mrs. Churchill's 'Aid To Russia Fund,' via way of Shaiba, Saudi Arabia, and in January 1944, the 16 tonnes of this war machine crashed through the ice of a river at Telepino, Ukraine. Here this tank sat in the bog, under 7 metres of river water for 45 years.

In 1989, the tank was retrieved from its watery parking lot following two years of searching and planning. CP Rail after being advised of the recovery helped arrange for two retired CP Rail employees who worked on the Valentines in the Angus Shops, Montréal during World War II to visit Telepino and the tank. Upon inspection it was found that the engine was

still in good shape and the fuel was still clean.

Jack Knowles's article on Borden also reminded me of an Orillia train story that Jack Maclean told me a few weeks ago.

Jack pointed out that at least during the late 1930s and early 1940s, Canadian Pacific Railways operated a unlisted mixed train daily except Sundays between Port McNicholl and Orillia. This train did not appear in either any public or employees timetables, but operated as an extra.

The train would leave Port McNicholl with what ever freight traffic there was (usually 6 to 12 cars) for places like Medonte, Uthoff, etc., along with a combine car but no caboose. The power was usually a CP 800 – 900 series '4-6-0' locomotive. By this time, CP Orillia station had been sold to the Canadian Legion, the station platform had been removed and there was no wye, only a water tank. So this meant that the conductor who wore freight service coveralls, but always his passenger service 'pill box' hat would dig out a step box for his rural passengers to be able to disembark from this phantom train. The conductor would tell his passengers what time he would be leaving, and they would wander downtown for some shopping, etc. while the train crew would do whatever switching was needed.

Usually about 2:30 p.m. the passengers or the train would arrive back near the old station site to get ready for their trip back to Port McNicholl. The engine would be on the west end of the train with tender first, followed by the combine car and then any freight cars for the return trip. This train would travel west to Medonte, with the tender first, since this was the nearest wye to Orillia.

This service was for the locals since none of the passengers would be carrying baggage and they all seemed to be friends. While Jack says he could find no reference to this service in any timetables, it did fill a local need and continued until about the end of World War II. Anyone have some extra information on this service.

Last month, I said we should try to have some stories on people associated with railway history. While doing some digging on the Kingston and Pembroke Railway, there was one story about a train crew that cropped up in different places. While I don't have Mel Easton's book *Men and Memories of the K and P*, based on a couple of newspaper accounts as well as *In Search of the K & P* by Carol Bennett and D. W. McCuaig, it appears to go as follows:

A couple of miles south of Clyde Forks was the homestead of a Swedish couple named Petersen and their daughter Amanda. They had lived there for years. Amanda, after her parents died was known to all the train crews, because she would come out to the tracks and wave. One crew decided to reward her by bring her newspapers from Kingston and Pembroke which they did everyday. As she waved the crew would toss her the papers. One day in 1928 she came out to the tracks waving more frantically than usual. The train stopped, and the crew discovered that the stove pipes and chimney at her house were on fire. This was a frightening experience at the best of times, but to a elderly lady it must have been even worse. Anyway, the train crew including at least one of the Eastons (son, father and uncle all worked on the K&P) proceeded to the house, waited until the fire died down, then took the pipes apart, cleaned them and replaced them. The train crew even started a fire for Ms. Petersen before leaving. A little different than many places today.

A couple of closing notes. I was in Brantford, Ontario

a few days ago and noted that the old TH&B station, now the Iron Horse Restaurant is now open for business.

The Wellington County Historical Research Society will have a new publication covering a number of railway stories issued in June 1991. Their booklet, Volume 4, will include: *The Railway Age in Wellington County* and *Speed and Service: A Look at Railway Timetables*, By Stephen Thorning; *By Streetcar To Toronto: The Toronto Suburban Railway*, By Donald Coulman; *Remembering Those C.P.R. Branch Lines*, By Ralph Beaumont; *Lewis Colquhoun: Wellington County Train Robber*, By Gregory Oakes; *Reminiscences of the Railway in Wellington County*, Edited by Bonnie Callen and *Working on the Railway*, By Harris Bell. Interested, send \$6.50 (includes postage and handling) to the Society at PO Box 5, Fergus, Ontario N1M 2W7 for each copy of this publication you want.