

The Ferrophiliac Column Conducted by Just A. Ferronut

September 1991

I thought that the hectic days of summer were over and I could look forward to a relaxed fall, but the Rusty Railfans had other ideas. As I started the column a few days ago, they interrupted me and insisted I spend a day out with them. They told me they would show me the ropes about nosing around old rail lines. The only thing they made me promise was that I would not report too much on our sightings. More on this outing a little later.

First, I must make a bit of a clarification about the statements on the CNoR Solina station in July's column. Dave Savage called to straighten me out over my misinterpretation of a conversation we had about the Solina station. Dave confirmed that the first station at Solina was a small one on the south side as mentioned in the *Newsletter*, however, I confused the statements about the history of the present station with another location. So there may still be some confusion over the exact date the present station was constructed. Dave also told me that the station which was sold only last year is again up for sale. Again Dave pointed me to CN Rail's K16C series of plans that were produced to show data about abandonments. The plan for this area shows quite a different date for the dismantling of track through Solina than what we showed in July. The CN plan states that the Board of Railway Commissioners by their Order #52610, dated December 26, 1935 permitted the abandonment of the CNoR line from Greenburn to Ronnac. This railway plan states that the rail on the CNoR line from North Oshawa east through Solina to Ronnac was dismantled in August 1937.

Mr. Savage is presently burning the midnight oil trying to confirm that a couple of other buildings he has located are in fact CNoR stations. Stay tuned.

Back in June, I mentioned that the Town of Essex is trying to purchase the MCRR station there. The National Transportation Agency has now supplied CN Rail with information from their files on various stations along this southern Ontario speedway. One interesting tidbit was a copy of a telegram dated January 12, 1920, handled by the Great North Western Telegraph Company, advising the Board of Railway Commissioners that the MCRR Hagersville station had burned down on January 10, 1920.

While we didn't get to either Hagersville or Essex, it was the Canada Southern (MCRR) and Pere Marquette railways that the Rusty Railfans had earmarked for our outing. While I promised them that I would not comment too much on what we *seen* on this trip, I didn't make any promises about not writing about what we *didn't* see! We started our trip in St. Thomas, where I quizzed the people with the Elgin County Railway Museum as to whether they knew what were the original colours of the Canada Southern Railway? While they are not sure at present, they think they may have been green (possibly dark) and beige. So I think it's time to ask our readers, can anyone tell us what these colours may have been.

The second question from this trip relates to the Erieau dock area and details of the former railway facilities built there as part of the Lake Erie and Detroit River Railway. I have a small scale 1910 map that shows only a unimproved road across the peat bog to Erieau but at least a couple of dozen buildings on the peninsula where the railway terminated. The map shows a coal depot, a bit of a railway yard and a wye track with its tail to the east of the railway or geographic north. Do any of our readers have any details on the railway facilities at this terminal or knowledge as to whether there are any railway structures left in the area?

Continuing with the subject of stations and the government, you may recall in the July column, I mentioned that Ms. Gwen Martin of Fredericton, New Brunswick had prepared reports on four New Brunswick stations in an attempt to get them declared heritage railway stations. (**Note:** See last month's column for a few more details on heritage stations.) Anyway, the government on August 15, 1991, the first anniversary of the Heritage Railway Stations Protection Act, added twenty-two stations to the existing list of stations and former stations across Canada that have been declared heritage structures. This now makes a total of forty-two stations declared heritage structures under this federal act. This does not include the many other former stations that have been saved and restored by various groups.

The good news from this announcement to Ms. Martin and New Brunswick is that three of the four stations she submitted have been added to the heritage list. These new heritage stations include the CPR stations at Fredericton, Woodstock and Aroostook, NB. Presently these, plus the CP station at McAdam, are the only stations in New Brunswick that are on the heritage list.

The old Newfoundland Railway station in St. John's has been on the heritage list since last February. Nova Scotia now has one on it, the CN Halifax station.

Last month we wrote about CP's Windsor station in Montréal. There are six other CP stations in Québec on the heritage list. These include: Trois Rivières, Mont Laurier, L'Annonciation, East Augus, Tring-Junction and Nulle-Junction. It is interesting to note there is presently no CN Rail stations in Québec on the heritage list. My personal guess about the reason for this would be that numerous stations along the old Grand Trunk ! Intercolonial lines used by VIA were restored a couple of years ago.

British Columbia now has six stations on the heritage list. The August 1991 designation included five stations to add to the earlier designation of CN's Smithers station. The new ones are: Esquimalt and Nanaimo Station (CPR) at Nanaimo; former Grand Trunk Pacific Station (CNR) McBride; CNR Station Kelowna; CPR Station Mission and Columbia and Western Station (CPR) Grand Forks.

Alberta now have three CPR stations that are now heritage: Red Deer, Lake Louise and the latest, Empress. Again in Saskatchewan it appears the heritage people favour CP Rail since their stations at Moose Jaw and Saskatoon are the only ones designated to date. In Manitoba, while CN and CP each had two stations on the list before August, the three new additions are all former Canadian Northern (now Canadian National) stations. The earlier list included: Union (CN) and Higgins Avenue (CP) stations in Winnipeg. CN Dauphin and CP Virden were the other two Manitoba stations previously designated. The three new CNoR Stations are: Roblin, St. James (Winnipeg) and McCreary.

Heritage stations in Ontario had included: Union Station, Toronto; Michigan Central Station, St. Thomas; TH&B Station, Hamilton; CN Stations at Barrie, Brantford and Aurora (which has been mentioned in several *Newsletters*, including July and August, 1991). One of the newcomers, CN Hamilton, was not unexpected. CP Rail had four stations added, one of which is a welcome surprise, their North Toronto Station. This station, I understand, has only officially been used by one passenger train since it was closed in the fall of 1930. This station was apparently built mainly as the result of a argument between Canadian Pacific and the Grand Trunk at the start of the downtown viaduct (Union Station) project. Its use didn't make passenger train connections the easiest in Toronto, and it was during its short existence

that Will Rogers apparently commented that Toronto was the only city he knew where the trains couldn't find the station. The original waiting room area has been used for quite a few years now to sell beer. Future plans here should be interesting.

The other CP Stations to make the list include: Carleton Place, Havelock and Cambridge (Galt).

Since I am into stations, I am going to add a little more on a couple of other stations from data that Michael McIlwaine has sent me. Michael has sent information several times on various stations across the country. My problem is getting the material filed so I can access it quickly. Hopefully, one of these issues, we can cover various details about stations from coast to coast.

Anyway a few tidbits from Michael's material starting with my favourites first. Calgary, AB., the CN station which was originally a convent is still on its original site and is now again owned by the church. Wear your dark glasses when you go to Bassano, AB., as Mike says the CP station is still track side, but is painted "**Action Red**".

The Alberta towns of Claresholm and High River, while they are about 35 miles apart, share a common station. The station was the first built in Calgary, AB., by the CPR in 1893. In 1911 it was split in two and moved to the above two towns. Both of these towns use these CP stations as museums and are still at trackside. The depot museum at High River, has been used in several movies and has a nice collection of Canadian diesels and rolling stock.

The CP station at Okotoks, AB., is still at trackside but has been converted into a community centre. At Vegreville, AB., the CN depot has been converted to a senior citizens centre.

Historical groups have been busy in the west in taking over and renovating or restoring various stations. The local historical society in Oliver, BC., has owned the CP station here since about 1987. The Canadian Northern Historical Society of Big Valley, AB., has made the former CNoR station into a local historical museum and is also used as a station stop by the "Alberta Prairie Railway". The former roundhouse walls are still standing, just south of the station. The same uses are being made of the former CNoR stations at Meeting Creek, and Rowley, AB.

Again many thanks to Michael McIlwaine of Leamington, ON. for this information on these western stations.

Old railway records are always interesting to peruse. Another interesting order issued by the federal regulators just after the end of the Second World War relates to the Canadian National station at Callander, Ontario. According to the order, the Railway claimed they didn't have or couldn't get qualified telegraph operators. The result was they asked for, and got, permission to temporarily close the station for two weeks during the summer to permit the regular operator to go on vacation.

A few days ago, a photograph on page 49 in Niall MacKay's book, Over the Hills to Georgian Bay was pointed out to me and the question asked as to why was Canada Atlantic Railway engine 10 pulling James Bay Railway combination car 1 on the track between James Bay Junction and Parry Sound. At first I didn't give it much thought, since many early railways had arrangements with other lines for use of track, etc. Then I got thinking more about it and started to do a little checking, the result was more questions. So, while I have done some extra digging I don't have all the answers.

First, one should have a look at J. R. Booth and his Canada Atlantic Railway. As his railway worked its way westward from Ottawa, it reached the Grand Trunk Railway (built by the Northern and Pacific Junction Railway) (now CNR Newmarket Subdivision) at Scotia Junction in 1896. However, ten years earlier, the Parry Sound Colonization Railway had been chartered to build from Parry Sound (South Parry) to Huntsville. This line had been started but like many early railways, quickly ran out of money. It would appear that the line was surveyed and at least 10 miles constructed west from Scotia. The bankrupt PSCR was purchased by J. R. Booth, to form the western leg of the Canada Atlantic from Scotia to Georgian Bay. The western terminal of the PSCR was apparently about where South Parry is today. Booth continued construction on the old PSCR and was nearing the western terminal. Booth, a shrewd business man, started to look and deal for land to extend his Canada Atlantic Railway the last mile or so into Parry Sound from the end of the old PSCR. The land owners and developers in Parry Sound feeling confident of a railway, got greedy and were asking more than J. R. Booth was prepared to pay, so he simply said no and went down the line a mile or so to near Rose Point and extended his railway west onto Parry Island with its terminal at Depot Harbour. This action meant that Parry Sound was bypassed by this first railway.

A review of CN right-of-way plans indicate two separate right-of-ways in the area south of South Parry. One is shown as Grand Trunk and paralleling it on the west is the James Bay Railway (existing CN Bala Subdivision). This fits because the Grand Trunk gained operational control of the Canada Atlantic in 1904 and ownership of it 10 years later.

The James Bay Railway (CNoR) would have liked to obtain control of the Canada Atlantic but didn't, or couldn't. So they started to build a line from Parry Sound to Rosedale (Toronto). The CNR Synoptical History indicates that the 3.7 miles of the James Bay Railway (CNoR) from Parry Sound to Canada Atlantic Junction was opened on March 2, 1902, slightly more than four years before the James Bay (CNoR) line to Toronto was opened.

It would appear that the James Bay Railway at Parry Sound was isolated from any other of their, or CNoR, trackage at that time. However, the railways at the turn of the century were not only competing for rail routes but many were also competing for steamship and steamboat traffic.

So, with a general view of some confusing background, a look at the 1908 timetable for the Canada Atlantic line (part of Grand Trunk's Ottawa Division) shows one of the two trains each way, each day splitting or joining at James Bay Junction with one section travelling to Depot Harbour and the other to Parry Sound. The station at Parry Sound is marked as CNoR. Even this short section would give the CNoR access to the steamship traffic at Parry Sound and this is indicated in the timetable. The 1907 Grand Trunk B&B inventory does not show any structures between James Bay Junction and South Parry, so it appears that even at that early date, the operation was all over the James Bay Railway (CNoR) north of James Bay Junction. This inventory shows a 600 square-foot platform at James Bay Junction, built in 1895. The photo in Niall's book appears to be the result of the competition agreeing on a split in some of the passenger traffic. This of course can create a whole series of other questions: did the passengers transfer to this James Bay Railway car at James Bay Junction or were they hauled over the Canada Atlantic? How long did this arrangement last? These and other questions about railway matters in this part of Ontario appears to form an interesting area of study and confirmation.