

The Ferrophiliac Column Conducted by Just A. Ferronut

January 1992

Welcome to 1992 and I trust everyone had the best holiday season possible. To forewarn my 1992 Column readers, I spent a joyous month bothering librarians from eastern Ontario to the Nova Scotia border. While these librarians are probably happy to see the last of me for now, I think I collected some interesting tidbits to help fill our column for the next few months.

As we start this new year, I am going to take a line and thank all those people who took the time to send material for this column and the Newsletter, also a thanks to those people that got me interested in the historical part of railways a few years ago. A few hours perusing old newspapers in a library and you will never have the same outlook on life again. Many tell us that things were very straight laced and conservative a hundred years ago – well don't believe them as this clip from a 1897 paper in Moncton, NB shows: "A railway contractor recently advertised for 300 sleepers. By return post he received a letter from a neighbouring clergyman offering him the whole of his congregation on reasonable terms."

On my trip east, while I wasn't really out for train spotting, rail traffic was reasonably heavy. In a half of hour, early Sunday afternoon, a few kilometres west of Quebec City, I met three west bound CN freights, including a double stack and a laser led by CN 9405 followed by former GO unit 9672 and CN 9401 trailing. As I found out in Edmundston my rusty French had me confused on the Pelletier Subdivision, I thought there was a train just ahead of me, but it was actually just behind me. This prevented me from stopping in Riviere Blue where I noticed a restaurant called the Transcontinental a few doors north of the railway crossing on St-Joseph Street. My interest is to see if it has any railway artifacts since its name is the common local term for the National Transcontinental Railway.

After a night in Edmundston, it was time to go have a look at the CPR station in this City. This single storey brick station a block southwest of Queen Street (Highway 144) east of the Madawaska River is now boarded up. This station was an oddity for almost sixty years as a CPR station with a few yard tracks as an island about 26 miles from the nearest CP rail line. This line was built into Edmundston in 1878 by the New Brunswick Railway. In the late 1880s, the Temiscouata Railway provided a connection from Edmundston to the ICR line at Riviere du Loup. The CPR leased the New Brunswick Railway in 1893. These two railways had the Edmundston markets until the National Transcontinental Railway was opened in late 1912. The NTR had crossed the CPR line 26 miles south of Edmundston at Cyr Junction and the two lines were parallel from there to Edmundston. The over-expansion of rail lines especially in the early 1900s resulted in the corporate collapse of numerous companies resulting in the establishment of the Canadian National Railways. This new national rail system had considerable duplication within it and the 1920s were spent eliminating many of the duplicate lines. However, this new rail corporation showed another problem, duplication between the major railways. The start of the 1929 depression convinced the federal government to undertake the elimination of some of this duplication. So under a federal act the CNR and CPR undertook the establishment of running rights on the other company's track that made it possible for the elimination of one rail line. Among the numerous such eliminations across Canada, was the CPR line from Cyr Junction to Edmundston. So since the 1930's

the CPR operated over the CNR to its isolated yard in Edmundston. The CPR had a connection to the independent Temiscouata Railway until October 1949 when the Temiscouata Railway was taken over by the Canadian National Railway.

The flooding in the spring of 1987 that destroyed the CPR bridge over the Saint John River at Perth-Andover spelled the demise of CPR rail service in the upper Saint John River valley including Edmundston. So, the CPR station sets waiting.

The alignment of this long abandoned CPR line has puzzled me on numerous occasions. Luck was with me on this trip as a few miles south of Edmundston at the Iroquois River, I spotted the old abutments and pier of the railway bridge about 40 metres west of Highway 2. Again, at Cyr Junction, a little more information. I guess the dusting of snow and the angle of the light helped me spot a short section of the old New Brunswick Railway (CPR) road bed. The highway is quite close to the CNR at Cyr Junction. On the east side of the CNR and in line with the CPR, this short section of the old roadbed shows that the CPR line had continued across the CNR on a tangent line to the northeast. These finds are encouragement enough to spend some more time looking for more.

This former New Brunswick Railway (CPR) line still has a considerable number of station buildings along it. We have spoke of several of them at different times in this *Column*. Of the ones which I don't believe we have covered is the small frame station at Upper Kent, a few miles south of Perth. The style of this station leads me to believe it was constructed by the New Brunswick Railway. A few miles farther south, the two storey frame station at Bath has been converted into offices and commercial outlets.

While in Montréal, when one speaks of smoked meat, you think of tasty sandwiches, but a discussion of smoke meets with a retired CPR trainman in Woodstock, brought out an interesting story of railway operation. This gentleman spoke of his early years with the railway when daring locomotive engineers had the practice of disregarding their orders as they moved their trains. They would take the siding that their train orders would state, but then they would look ahead and if they could not see any smoke, they would chance moving on to the next siding. This practice was referred to in Railway Slang as – Smoke Meets.

A railroader here in Toronto when reminded of this practice told me that a similar practice was used in his early days with signal crews on motor cars. His early days were about the last days of steam and several motor car operators got surprises after checking for smoke, seeing none, would start down the track. The surprise was "What is that yellow faced thing coming down the track?"

The July and September, 1991 *Columns* made reference to research work that Ms. Gwen Martin, Fredericton had done on various stations in New Brunswick as part of the procedure to have them declared Heritage Stations.

Ms. Martin's material on Canterbury, NB, a station on the New Brunswick and Canada Railway pointed out that a portion of the original NB&C station building had been separated from the part still by the railway. It had been moved a couple of blocks and still in use as a private residence. The original frame station consisted of two sections, full two storeys with gable roofs setting parallel about 10 metres apart with their gables facing the railway. In between these two large sections was a single storey

connecting section. It was the north large section that was separated and moved to the north west corner of Main and Orchard Streets. The NB&C facilities at Canterbury were officially opened on Wednesday, December 1, 1858 with ceremonies following the arrival of the engine Shamrock, that pulled a baggage car and 3 passenger cars along the new line from McAdam. The account speaks of the station building as being a three fold building that not only housed the station house, but also offices and a dwelling for the station master. This 1858 opening also points out that there was an engine house large enough for 4 engines and a water tank. The octagonal railway water tank still stands and is now used by the village.

Ms. Martin's research also indicated that the original large two storey frame station built by the Fredericton Railway Company (known locally as the Western Extension & Fredericton Branch Railway) was still standing. The line to this station was opened on December 1, 1869. In 1923, the CPR undertook the construction of the present two storey brick building. At that time plans were to demolish the original station, however, a Mr. E. B. Yerxa, purchased the structure and had it moved to the northeast corner of Northumberland for conversion to an apartment building. This is still its present location.

Before leaving the east, I have a request for our readers. It is proposed to carry a reasonable size article on the two street railway systems that existed in Moncton, New Brunswick in a couple of months. The one area that our research material is still weak in is on technical data on their equipment. So readers – should you have any such data that you wouldn't mind sharing, please send it along.

Before getting all the way back to Ontario, our man in St. Bruno, Quebec, Doug Brown has sent along a update on the station restoration in his community. Doug points out that the station has been moved about 300 metres west of its old site. The restoration work which is costing the community \$250,000. is well underway, and when reopened this summer as a Park Chalet, it will have a new brick exterior as well a rebuilt interior. St. Bruno needed a new park building, so this project will fill both that need while still preserving the former station building.

Perhaps, one quick comment here for our readers to keep in mind about station projects and that is they fall in several groups. These range from the full restoration of stations, such as under the Heritage Railway Stations Protection Act, where the goal is to restore it as near as possible to the way it was built. Then come period restorations, to try to make the station look like it did at a particular time. Then of course there are various classes of just saving the building, retaining them in what ever form suits the needs of the people involved, this could be as a community centre or even as a residence.

Back in Ontario, members Orin P. Maus and Mike Lindsay have sent along material from the Hamilton Spectator and Brantford Expositor on the Waterford Canada Southern Station and the planned tourist short line railway, the **Waterford & Northern** that its promoters hope to have in operation in 1993. More on the **Waterford & Northern** elsewhere in the Newsletter.

The Canada Southern Railway opened their line east of St. Thomas through Waterford in the spring of 1873. The Alice Street station in Waterford was served by main line passenger train service from then until 1962. In 1895, this station became a union station with the start of Toronto Hamilton & Buffalo passenger service into Waterford with three trains a day during the week. The third railway came to Waterford in 1916, it was the Lake Erie & Northern. This electric railway crossed over the Canada Southern rail lines on a large bridge, a couple of hundred metres west of

the CSR Waterford station. It had its own station at the west end of Nichol Street, however, it also had a connecting track down the steep curving grade south on the Canada South. This track extended east to the Canada Southern station. Following the cessation of passenger service on the Canada Southern, the station was used in limited capacity for various railway uses until it was finally boarded up by Conrail in 1980.

Following the 1985 takeover of this former Canada Southern line, CN Rail as managers on behalf of the CN/CP partnership, started proceedings to enable them to demolish the depot. A local Save Our Station group headed by town businessman, Mr. Don Townsend persuaded the City of Nanticoke, in 1988, to buy the station for \$1, and lease the station land from CN for 20 years and to hand it over to the Chamber of Commerce. The SOS turned its attention to raising funds for the restoration of the station. Over the last year or so they have been busy. Most of the restoration is back to the way this station looked in the 1870s.

The low sloping roof of this restored landmark have been covered with wooden shakes or shingles, and the exterior sports a coat of khaki paint, with green and beige indoors. Two green ticket wickets are ready to serve passengers and the floor retains an unvarnished look because, as historians have declared, that's the way it would have looked during the decade after Confederation. There are two substantial changes since the 1870s, one is the indoor plumbing, the other has been the retention of the doorway between the station master's office and the passenger waiting room, that was installed sometime after the construction of the station. This door, as Mr. Townsend pointed out, would not have existed "In the good old days, because of train robberies, the station master's office would have been secured."

Since September, the station had a railway for a tenant, the Waterford and Northern Railway.

Mike also sent along an article from the Hamilton Spectator relating to the demolition of the former Toronto Hamilton and Buffalo (CP Rail) Chatham Street roundhouse in Hamilton. This demolition is being undertaken slightly different than most. The roundhouse, built by the TH&B in 1929 sat on a 6.5 – hectare (16 – acre) site. CP Rail took over the Toronto, Hamilton and Buffalo Railway in 1977 and stopped storing engines, etc. at Chatham Street in the spring of 1990.

The difference in this demolition is that the old timbers from it are destined to help repair Mennonite barns around the Elmira area. It is expected that the salvaged timber will enable 15 to 20 barns to be repaired according to a spokesperson. About 75 Mennonite farmers were involved in heaving wood from the roof of the roundhouse. The farmers, working as subcontractors for the wrecking company, were also tearing out old brick and steel.

The contractor, Total Demolition Inc. of Brussels, indicated that they will salvage, recycle and reuse as much as possible out of the building. In addition to the timber going to help repair Mennonite barns, the bricks will be used to build new houses and scrap steel will be melted down and reused.

Still in Hamilton, Doug Page, our fearless leader of the Hamilton chapter of the Society, sent along another article from the Hamilton Spectator concerning the old Hamilton and Lake Erie rail line up the Niagara escarpment in Hamilton. I guess of the four rail lines up the escarpment in Hamilton, the H&LE was the first to be constructed and the last to be abandoned. The other three that I refer to are the two incline railways and the Brantford and Hamilton radial or interurban line.

Anyway, a couple of times last year I let myself

philosophize using articles that were sent in on the subject of rails to trails projects. And while some rail enthusiasts, I am sure think such this is the highest form of treason, to me, especially in cases where I have followed some of development, it is good to see the positive end results. After the upgrading of CN's line and the rerouting of its traffic to and from Nanitoke via Brantford, the future of the old redundant Hamilton & Lake Erie line up the middle of Ferguson Avenue and the escarpment came under discussion. The final decision since the Railway couldn't justify the cost of maintaining this steep section of track to get where it had other and cheaper access to, decided to sell the old right-of-way to local authorities. The transfer to the local authorities of this old rail line up the escarpment is now in its final stages. The Spectator's Paul Wilson and a Mr. Jake Isbister spent several hours hiking this line. These hikers considered the men of the Hamilton & Lake Erie may have blundered back when they built the line, but consider that people today should give thanks that, more than a century ago, they did press ahead with their million-dollar mistake. In these days of urban sprawl and concerns for the environment "we have a wilderness corridor cutting up the side of Hamilton Mountain". stated Mr. Isbister, who went on to say, "I've been all over North America and I haven't seen a city anywhere east of the Rockies with something to match this." He went on to point out that he used to hang around the old King Street station and recalls watching the trains on the line heading for Caledonia, Hagersville and Port Dover. They were usually pulled by a Mogul-type steam locomotive, hauling a few freight cars and a single passenger car lit with coal oil lamps, as they pulled off into an early winter evening. He continued that it got so he could identify the number of the locomotive just by the sound of the bells.

The line, one of the steepest grades in Canada ascended the 330 foot rise of the escarpment, in just over five miles. The Spectator article carried a contemporary account prepared by a Mabel Burkholder of the line's construction: "Near the top of the grade up the mountain there is a long deep rock cut. This work, lasting almost three years, was done with hand tools by a large force of Irishmen who lived in a the group of shanties called the "Patch" close to the job. Their one recreation was on Saturday nights, when paid, then cheered by gallons of village whisky, they held a Donnybrook Fair, fighting each other like a colony of Kilkenny cats."

So while this is one more rail line is gone, we can keep its history and it would appear that the people of the Hamilton area are going to have a facility to enjoy thanks to actions taken over a hundred years ago.

I had better close, even those I still have more material that I have receive, but not handled yet. If I don't my editor will want to charge me for extra space in the Newsletter. But still keep the material coming, I will use it all eventually.