

The Ferrophiatic Column

Conducted by Just A. Ferronut

October 1992

Up north here, in Montréal, the radio announcers have already told us that the fall colours have peaked – so can winter be far off?

Back in the August column, there was a report of some Hi-Rail Honda bouncing around Ontario near Capreol along Canadian Northern's old Sellwood Subdivision. I think the word bounce here is proper, when one considers the number of railway station names that got bounced around or changed over the years. In addition, a review of a number of railway documents indicate that the same uncertainty plagued them in defining the mileage for certain locations. These mileage variations are small, but frustrating, when trying to compare several documents. The worst in these bouncing locations is no doubt Capreol. This was as much of a result of changes in the track and operating arrangements as anything. But, I am getting a head of myself.

Our August comments brought a letter from our eminent authority of railway history, Ray Corley, complete with a chronological history of the Sellwood branch trackage and a sketch pointing out that the connection to what we now think of as CN's Ruel Subdivision had been relocated. Great – enough details to fill out the story on this now abandoned mining line. This should be the end of the story, but since I had recently found some records about the establishment of some stations along Canadian Northern's Montréal – Port Arthur line and being interested in the Canadian Northern, I thought this would be a good chance to confirm some loose ends about the Canadian Northern line in the Capreol area.

Armed with copies of the Canadian Northern timetables for 1910 and 1917, as referred to in the August column, along with Ray's material, I easily identified the relocation of the connection from the mainline to the Sellwood branch. However, clarifying the mileages on the branch was a little more difficult, since as often is the case, different records use different criteria in defining track lengths. Some records may show only the main track to the terminal yard limits, others include both, and others may include total trackage. So, I went in search of more records, to see if we could get a clearer picture of the trackage. Not only did I find some extra information on the track records, but I also came across an article on an interview with A. J. Hill, one of the first Canadian Northern's Superintendents in this area and his comments on the naming of some of their stations.

First, it should be noted that while most newer references to Sellwood use the spelling with one 'l', the older spelling used two and I will stick to this older spelling. In recent years the Sellwood Subdivision or branch was defined by CN Rail as the Lowphos Spur.

The Canadian Northern constructed their rail line northward from Toronto (Rosedale) reaching the Sudbury area early in 1908. Ray's research states that the rail line from near Coniston to Sellwood Junction and onward to Sellwood was opened on April 24, 1908. The Sellwood terminus was no doubt an early target to get mine traffic moving as soon as possible.

The Canadian Northern mainline was pushed northwest from Sellwood Junction, and the line to Gowganda Junction (315 miles from Toronto) was opened on December 29, 1909. Ray goes on to point out that the Canadian Northern line from Gowganda Junction to Ruel was opened on November 10, 1911 and on through to Foleyet on October 15, 1915.

Today, when most rail enthusiasts think of this part of Ontario, the name Capreol immediately comes to mind, but in 1910 this railway junction did not exist. It was 1915 before Canadian Northern opened its line from Montréal via Ottawa and North Bay into present day Capreol. A comparison of the 1910 timetable against the one for 1917 shows a number of changes. However, since Hanmer

and Thorlake show in both timetables, I used them for control points in my comparisons. Thorlake was listed as 36.3 miles west of Capreol in 1917. However, about 1965, CN Thorlake along with several other stations in the area were moved for operating purposes. Thorlake became mile 39.9 on CN's Ruel Subdivision, however, the 1965 timetable indicates that the mixed trains will make flag stops at the old mileages.

The following is a table showing the stations between Capreol and Thorlake and the changes in their names between 1910 and 1917. Ray's research indicate that the connection between the main line and the Sellwood Subdivision was about 8.35 miles west of Capreol. As indicated below the timetable puts it at mile 8.4 in the nearest tenth.

The mileages, except for those in brackets are timetable mileages and are shown in tenths of a mile. The three mileages shown in brackets were supplied by Ray and are in hundredths of a mile.

1910 Name	1917 Name	Pre - 1965 Mileage
Thorlake	Thorlake	36.3
Lakepost	Caipha	29.3
Raphoe	Raphoe	24.1
Poole	Anstice	16.5
Sellwood Junction	—	8.4 (8.35)
—	Milnet	9.1 (9.16)
(Relocated connection to Sellwood Branch)		(9.05)
Norman	Nandair	5.1
Nickelton Junction	—	4.4
—	Capreol	0.0

The 1917 timetable indicates that Milnet had been established since 1910 at timetable mile 9.1 (Ray's figures indicate 9.16). This 1917 timetable appears to indicate that the junction for Sellwood branch has been relocated from Sellwood Junction to near Milnet with the construction of a new connecting track. Ray's research establishes the location of this new junction at the east end of Milnet, mile 9.05. His research shows that this relocation permitted the removal of 0.95 miles of the original Sellwood Subdivision, which was done in 1921. The 1910 timetable showed the Sellwood Subdivision as a 5.2 mile line from Sellwood Junction to Sellwood. Following the construction of new connection to the main line near Milnet, the spur length to the Sellwood station was 4.2 miles.

The 1917 timetable also states that there was a wye at Sellwood, however, since there was not one at Milnet or the junction with the branch, passenger trains continued to back between Milnet and Sellwood.

The Sellwood branch line continued beyond the Sellwood station for 0.3 miles according to Ray's material. At a point 0.13 miles west of the Sellwood station or mile 4.33 on the branch, the 1.15 mile long Moose Mountain Mine spur connected. In addition to the mine spur, the 1910 timetable indicates there was a siding for McCreary & Graham's 3.5 miles east of Sellwood towards the main line.

Ray's comments state that the Moose Mine spur was abandoned in 1925 and operations on the Sellwood Subdivision ceased at the end of 1926. The classification of the branch was bounced around over the next couple years. A track diagram from about 1930 shows the Sellwood line as being 3.9 miles long. The track on the branch was removed during November and December 1940.

Seventeen years later in 1957, spike hammers rang out again along the Sellwood branch as it was reactivated for rail service. The line was named the Lowphos Spur. CN's spring 1965 timetable states that this spur extends 4.8 miles from the Ruel Subdivision

switch. As indicated in the August column this spur lasted about 30 years. CN Rail was granted authority on December 17, 1987 to abandon this line listed as 3.94 miles long with its head block at mile 9.05 Ruel Subdivision. The line was lifted in 1988 or 89.

Now onto a more recently abandoned line, CN's Uxbridge Subdivision, and some comments and questions about it from Norbert Krommer and Ross Gray. These gentlemen took a summer trip along this line from Lindsay to Stouffville. The Uxbridge Subdivision was built from Stouffville to Blackwater Junction as part of the Toronto and Nipissing Railway and the portion from Manilla Junction to Lindsay was constructed by the Whitby, Port Perry and Lindsay Railway. The gap between Blackwater and Manilla Junctions was constructed under the charter of the Toronto and Ottawa Railway, but all three of these companies were part of The Midland Railway of Canada when this last link was opened in 1883.

Norbert writes that the CP Rail pulled out of Lindsay first and CN Rail took over their two rail customers within the town limits. CN Rail service ceased in April 1991 with the abandonment of CN's line into Lindsay. Of the numerous street-rail crossings left behind in Lindsay, two have been paved over completely as part of the Town's street paving programs. Others have had a layer of asphalt placed over rough crossings.

Our rail inspectors checked all the road-rail crossing between Lindsay and Stouffville. They report there are 2 grade-separated crossings and 34 level crossings and that half of the level crossings have been graded over either with gravel on the gravel roads or surfaced with asphalt on paved roads. The other crossings still remain with their rails and planks exposed.

Their inspection revealed that the railway-crossing signs (crossbucks), are still in place at most crossings, but a few of them have been removed. Our sharp eyed sleuths spotted one commercial sign near a crossing and it was supported by one post with the familiar "CNR" still on it.

Norbert, writes that he is puzzled about what appears to be two useless crossings that CN is maintaining at the end of the retained track. He noted that just east of Stouffville, the track crosses a township road and Highway 47 within about 5 metres of each other. Norbert, like others is wondering why the "CN End of Track" sign is on the east side of Highway 47 instead of a few metres west, which would avoid these two crossing. The answer is that there was an industry which had land east of Highway 47 and indicated it might want rail service, so unless rail access was maintained to the east side of Highway 47, he would object to CN's abandonment application. CN obtained permission to abandon its rail line from the east side of Highway 47 eastward to Lindsay. However, the provincial government has expressed an interest in reserving or banking the portion from Stouffville to Goodwood for possible future commuter service.

Last month I was mumbling about my rambling through New Brunswick. As you may recall I left you a few miles west of Saint John at Westfield Beach, where the former CN, nee-Saint John and Quebec Railway (Valley Railway) jointed CP's Saint John to Montreal line. CN used the CP's line for the last dozen or so miles into Saint John via Lancaster. At Lancaster, the CP's frame station built sporting its witch's hat conical roof and circular waiting has been the subject of debate between the community and the railway. Like many stations the argument is whether it should be demolished or saved. Anyway while the debate continues, the station was still standing in August just west of the Reversing Falls bridge amongst the shadows of local industries, including Moosehead Breweries and local paper mill.

While this station is now called Lancaster, I always remember it by its earlier name, Fairville. Being old enough to have ridden the Saint John streetcars, following periodic trips to the port

city over the CPR from McAdam, Fairville, was the one stop I always remember. As kids, we were always reminded that the provincial mental hospital was in Fairville, and to us "Herring Chokers" the mention of Fairville was synonymous with being loony.

On this New Brunswick trip, I located another station, that I am almost too embarrassed to write about. Last January, I had mentioned some of the surviving stations along the St. John River valley, well, I didn't tell you about one on my list that I couldn't find. What is more embarrassing is that I now know I have driven by it in its relocated position on numerous occasions over the last three years. This station, originally built as the western terminus of the 13 mile long Southampton Railway that was opened December 1, 1913, on the east bank of the St. John at a place called Otis, New Brunswick. Otis was renamed Nackawic following the construction in the 1960s of the Mactaquac hydro dam a few miles down stream. As with many small community stations, the one at Otis (Nackawic), became redundant to CP Rail's operating needs and was abandoned. Before my trip last Christmas, I carefully noted that this former station was stored in a lumber yard in Nackawic. This article stated that the Town had plans to convert this station into a travel information centre and the Irving family had offered to provide the use of some land next to the Trans-Canada Highway on the west side of the St. John River and the town. This made sense since Irving had a service station on a large block of land. From my various inspections I knew this former station wasn't there, so hence my hunt of last winter. Embarrassment came in August, quite by a fluke. I was almost past Nackawic when I noted the sign for their information centre and it occurred to me that I needed a provincial highway map. I turned around and drove back, and surprise, the station. It was located on Irving land, OK, but not the land I expected, it is sort of tucked in beside Maritime Tires across the road from the service station. The attendant confirmed my embarrassment that this station has set in its present location on the west side of the Trans-Canada highway for four years. The station, located just north of the cable stayed bridge across the St. John River, is still in CP station maroon with the Otis name board on the south end.

In other station news, John D. Thompson reports that the restaurant in the relocated Orangeville station is now closed. Denis Taylor advises that VIA has finished placing a new red slate tile roof on the Cobourg station. On a recent trip to Peterborough, I made a trip into the refurbished former CP station. The interior has been done into basically one large open area. One of the most interesting features is that the ceiling has been redone with a new ceiling about 6 inches lower than the original except around the edges and the two former hung lights. These areas have been kept to show the original cornice moulding and bas reliefs around the former light fixtures. On this same trip, I noted the former CN station at Marmora, while closed for the winter is still located as an information centre in the park on the north side of Highway # 7 on the east side of the Marmora River.

Doug Page has sent along some clippings from the Hamilton Spectator about groups trying to get use of a couple of abandoned rail lines in the Hamilton area. One group known as the Grand Trunk Trail Association is trying to establish a hiking and possibly a horse-back riding trail along the portion of the abandoned Buffalo and Lake Huron Railway right-of-way between Dunnville and possibly, Caledonia. A ten kilometre section at the Caledonia end has been sold to Domtar for an access road, and may not be available for trail use. Meanwhile the Lynn Valley Trail Association that is working on a plan to use nine miles of the former Port Dover & Lake Huron Railway right-of-way between Simcoe and Port Dover for a hiking trail are getting opposition from some of the adjacent land owners.

NEWS FOR PAT:

A little train spotting at Leaside, Sunday October 11,

1992. I drove into Leaside about 1715 hours and there was a westbound sitting there. This train with units 5860, 3249, 5862, 5624 had broken an air hose and the crew were replacing it. It proceeded west at 1720 hours. At 1732 hours and east bound came through with units 5515 and 5530. Less than 10 minutes later at 1741 hours another westbound with 5408 and 4230 passed and then at 1746 hours another eastbound with 8241 and 8249 passed and this guy had van # 434347 on the rear. - Art.

Re Charny, etc. - NTA Order 1992-R-364, dated October 14, 1992 has been issued amending the earlier orders on the abandonment of the Montmagny Subdivision. The abandonment of the Montmagny from Hariaka, mile 111.35 to Saint-Romuald, mile 119.12 is now set for April 3, 1993.

This delay is caused by 2 reasons: “.... AND WHEREAS the applicant (CNR) requires the transfer of the ownership of the land constituting the Montmagny Subdivision between mileages 111.35 and 119.12, which is now owned by the Government of Canada (commonly referred to as Canadian Government Railways properties):

“.... AND WHEREAS the applicant states that it will be materially and effectively impossible for VIA Rail Canada Inc. (hereinafter VIA) to complete the construction of the new VIA passenger station in Charny by October 31, 1992, the effective date of the abandonment of the operation of the branch line; ...

“.... NOW THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED THAT:
Pursuant to paragraph 172(2)(a) of the NTA, 1987, Order No. 1991-R-170, dated April 3, 1991, as amended by Order 1992-R-131 dated April 22, 1992, is hereby varied by fixing April 3, 1993 as the effective date of the abandonment of the operation of the branch line.”