

Just A. Ferronut's Railway Archaeology Art Clowes

May 1995

As the days are getting longer and warmer, winter must be over. Also, the start of the spring railway shows helps to confirm this. But like every spring, it is time to clean up some of the odds and sods from winter. But first, while I haven't gone to many of the spring railway shows, I did take in the first spring version of the Montréal Model Train Expo put on by the Jeunesse au Soleil (Sun Youth). They have been holding a fall railway show for a number of years, but this year have decided to have two shows, one in the spring and one in the fall. While somewhat smaller than their fall show, it was reasonable considering it was competing with the St. Patrick's day weekend and parade. I even bought a few slides, and I think there were perhaps a few more books available than in the past. Model displays in the various gauges highlight the show, including some of the larger gauges. One radio announcer was commencing on these larger gauges in the context of them being often referred to as garden models and were noted in the past as the playtoys of the more wealthy.

A West Island (Montréal), Question

A question was recently raised about a block of land that CN Real Estate has for sale east of Boulevard Saint-Jean (Saint John's Road) and north (railway north) of the Canadian Pacific main line (Vaudreuil Subdivision) about 32 miles west of Dorval. It should be noted that CN's Kingston Subdivision is south of the CPR in this area, and the tracks of both railways are about the same elevation and along the foot of a low escarpment. The questioner was wondering if this was some of the land that was purchased for a proposed west island connection between CN's Kingston Subdivision (nee Grand Trunk's Montréal to Toronto line) and the Canadian Northern's Railway line from its Tunnel Terminal (Montréal Central Station) to Ottawa. Today, this CNoR line is used by CN for the operation of the Deux-Montagne commuter service. The route of this line is along the north edge of Montréal Island on the south shore of the Rivièr des Prairies and is about 4 miles from CN's Kingston Subdivision at Saint John's Road.

In the late 1920's following the establishment of Canadian National this connection was proposed to provide an access for trains from the Kingston Subdivision to Tunnel Terminal. While one may scratch their head today about such a proposal, it should be remembered that at that time the only access to what we now know as Central Station was via the Mount Royal Tunnel, as the viaduct connection to the south wasn't built until the 1940s.

My only maps are for various track changes proposed in the more central (downtown) part of Montréal, including one tunnel connection from west of CP's Windsor Station to connect into Canadian Northern's Mount Royal tunnel north of Tunnel Terminal. When first asked about this land at Boulevard Saint-Jean, I wondered if it may have been for a ballast pit or rock quarry. My thoughts were in that direction, since the GTR prior to the building of the CPR had a spur track from its main line to a wharf on the St. Lawrence River about a half mile west of Boulevard Saint-Jean. This spur was to permit the movement of quarried stone to river barges. I questioned a few people as to their knowledge of whether there may have been any ballast pits,

etc., in the area. After a few "I don't know!" answers, I went to the West Island oracle, Mike Leduc to get the actual scoop. He stated that yes this land was part of that for the proposed access and that another sign of the proposal is still also visible in the area. Since by the 1920's the CPR was well entrenched on the north side of CN, CN would need to cross the CPR. As indicated there is a low escarpment north of the CP, so CN proposed to construct their connection track from the southside of the Kingston Subdivision, swinging slightly southward and then curving over top of the CPR to the top of the escarpment and the plateau elevation of the central part of Montréal Island. As Mike says, the highway, presently Autoroute 20 in the area of Boulevard Saint-Jean swings away from the rail lines to provide room for the planned CN flyover. While the south end of this proposed connection shows only a curved highway and a "For Sale" sign, things are different of the Canadian Northern end. Today, CN's active Doney and Pitfield Spurs occupies portions of the alignment of this proposed connection. This spur trackage was originally constructed as the 5.82 mile long Doney spur in 1957. It connected with the Canadian Northern at Saraguay, 1.8 miles north of Val-Royal. In the late 1960's with the construction of Autoroute 13 towards Miribel airport, the original spur was cut and a new connection to the main line was made west of the Autoroute, 2.4 miles north of Val-Royal. Today, the 0.8 miles east of Autoroute 13 is known as the Pitfield Spur. The original portion west of the Autoroute extends southwestward and across the Trans-Canada Highway (Autoroute 40) and then westward to the city of Pointe Claire. The Pitfield Spur and the original portion of the Doney Spur to the curve south of the Trans-Canada Highway is on the right-of-way purchased for the earlier connection with the Kingston Subdivision at Boulevard Saint-Jean.

The portion of the Doney Spur west of this curve leaves the original alignment and was promoted by the Canadian National Railways to develop industrial lands along the south of the Trans-Canada Highway in the City of Pointe Claire. CN's Manager of Industrial Development, a Mr. Hymus, very instrumental in promoting the development of this industrial area and a major east-west road through this area is named Hymus Boulevard in his honour.

Plotting the proposed connection as originally planned would have been straight except for the end connections. So, another question answered.

Last Amtrak Montréaler

While I will leave the detailed news on the changes relating to the Canadian operation of the various Amtrak passenger trains to the news columns, I can't help but make a few comments about the Montréaler. I joined a couple of other rail fans at St. Lambert, Québec, late on the afternoon of Saturday, April 1, 1995 as the last of the current Montréalers came glistening out of the sun on its journey from Montréal back to American soil. Amtrak Locomotive 203 sporting a large cardboard fish marked "Last Trip" on its nose, led a baggage car and six coaches on this southward march.

While this marks the current cut, which according to a recent article in *Passenger Train Journal* started on September

30, 1972 after not operating for 6 years. The Canadian Railway Historical Association's *News Report* in December 1953, reported the cutting of six Canadian National and Central Vermont international trains on October 1, 1953. These 1953 cuts completely eliminated all passenger service on the St. Armand Subdivision between St. Johns (St-Jean), Iberville, and St. Armand, Quebec and Swanton, Vermont, and this route at one time was 'the route' of the Montréaler, the Washingtonian, and the Ambassador.

The railway bridge across the Richelieu River between St-Jean and Iberville as well the St-Armand Subdivision have since been abandoned. Reference to the St-Armand Station was made in the February 1994 column, and there were some comments about the earlier operation on this abandoned line from Julian Bernard in the March 1993 column.

Some may also remember the squabbles in 1987-1988 between various parties including, Guilford, Amtrak and others that finally led to an interruption of Montréaler service that wasn't restored until July 17, 1989. So another chapter in the rocky road of this train closes.

Much Canadian

Without getting into a great dialogue, I have often said I can't be too interested in non-Canadian railways since there is so much in Canada to digest. This story is such an example and started one Sunday morning late last fall as I was listening to Clyde Gilmour on CBC Radio. I was banging away on the computer when I caught a few words about a compact disk titled something about railway songs. Mr. Gilmour let us hear one piece played on a steam calliope, and mentioned the musician's name was Mr. Eldon Rathburn and that he had worked for the National Film Board and had just released a CD titled "Mostly Railroad Music". Being half asleep, I didn't get the name of the company that had released this disk. Mr. Gilmour did indicate that it would be carried by Sam the Record Man. My search started here in Montréal, then Moncton as well as Toronto, I couldn't find it, and the sales people I questioned didn't recognize it either. After visiting every major record store in my travels, I was questioning our national approach to Canadian music and artists.

While I realize the National Film Board are in films, not music, I did consider they would probably at least have some of extra details on this disk since Mr. Rathburn had worked for them for about 30 years. However, a visit to the NFB's showed their bureaucratic blankness that left me cold, so I tried the CBC, but since I didn't have the exact date of the program, and they had a computer problem, I still didn't have a solid lead. Finally, on a recent trip to Toronto, and after considerable digging, and about the last disk in the section, success came my way, a copy of Mr. Rathburn's production on a Crystal Records label.

Being a hearer of music, not a good listener, I find this disk very interesting. First, it should be realized that the much of the music on Mostly Railroad Music was written or conducted for film background music. It is not the ballad type that we are used in songs like Casey Jones, etc. The big surprise to me were the number of songs on Canadian railway topics that I was unaware of. The CD starts out with *The St. Lawrence Tubular Bridge*. Other Canadian titles on this 70 minute CD include; *Spiral Tunnel Boogie*, *In Memoriam – Jumbo*, *The Iron Horses of Delson*, *Dorion Crossing* and *Turbo*. Eight other titles of the 19 on this disk relate to railways. Two major ones are *Junction*, and *The Rise and Fall of the Steam Railroad*. The

Junction provides over 6 minutes of interpretation of railway sounds at London's Clapham Junction in 1959 on a Jew's harp. *The Rise and Fall of the Steam Railroad*, is a 16 minute composition using various instruments to leave you visualizing the sights and sounds of railroading.

While perhaps not every fan's cup of tea, but to those who like lighter background music on known themes, it is probably worth taking a closer look at. As I say I got my copy at Classical Record section of Sam's Yonge Street store, Toronto. Their price was \$25.99 plus all those government requests. The title is *Mostly Railroad Music* – CD520, by Eldon Rathburn on Crystal Records Incorporated.

Stations

The impressive two-storey station at Montmagny, Québec built about 1904 during the days of the Intercolonial Railway and used by VIA Rail is to be closed. VIA is citing the lack of ticket sales for the cutback in staff, but will continue to stop its trains at Montmagny for passengers. Montmagny is about 35 miles east of Quebec City on the Lévis to Rivière du Loup portion of CN's (ICR) line to Halifax. This station, like several along this former ICR route in Québec had been spruced up in recent years. The first storey of the Montmagny station with large windows sporting semi-circular tops has a near-white stucco coating. The upper floor and the Dutch-Colonial roof are clad in greying wooden shingles. And to top matters off, the Montmagny station has been declared a Heritage station under the federal act.

Perhaps more of a news item than anything, but CN has applied to the National Transportation Agency for permission to close and demolish the Canadian Northern built station at Val-Royal on CN's Deux-Montagne line. This is to permit new commuter shelters to be placed. The Val-Royal station, earlier known as Lazard was turned down as a federal heritage station, but to visit to this single storey frame station is to step back in time with a stove in the waiting room for warmth and a railway operator who still hoops orders for rail operation over the Monfort Subdivision north of Val-Royal.

A recent article by Stephen Leahy in the *Toronto Star* reminded us that it has been 25 years since the former Whitby Junction clapboarded Victorian-style railway station with its large overhanging roof and three conical turrets was moved across a frozen Whitby field to near the corner of Henry and Victoria Streets, south of the CN's Kingston Subdivision.

The Whitby Junction station was constructed in 1903 by the Grand Trunk Railway and after its 1969 relocation was converted to a public art gallery that was opened in September, 1970 under the name, The Station Gallery.

The other station making the news this month is CN's Hamilton station. The consortium that has been working on a large commercial development in the area of, and including this large two storey building, has apparently realized some of the costs associated with heritage stations, and has advised that they propose to drop the station from their plans.

Ownership Change on the Alberta Resources Railway

The National Transportation Agency by its ruling of April 11, 1995 approved an agreement between the Alberta Government and Canadian National Railways for the sale of the Alberta Resources Railway to CN. This approval comes about 26 years after the official opening of the ARR on May 28th, 1969. This line, some 234 miles long was constructed and operated by CN, but owned by the Alberta Government.

The Alberta Resources Railway serves as a rail link from Solomon, (Swan Landing), Alberta, on the Canadian National's Edson Subdivision 200 miles west of Edmonton, and runs northward 230 miles via a circuitous route to the Grande Prairie on the Northern Alberta Railways. This line was officially announced in February 1965 with its first stage to reach the vast coking coal deposits about 100 miles north of Solomon. The ultimate goal was the then untapped resources of coal, timber, pulpwood and gypsum and to provide a rail route to the west coast ports about 300 miles shorter than the then earlier route via Edmonton.

Construction was started in 1965, and was concentrated on the first fifty miles to Smoky River. The pace of construction increased in 1966 with the official start taking place on May 9th at Solomon. Construction moved northward towards Grande Prairie over the next two years. Early scheduling had earmarked October 23rd, 1968 for the official opening, but this was postponed partly by delays in the completion of the Smoky River Bridge.

By October 1968, major construction work including the 200-foot-high Wapiti River Bridge at Grand Prairie was completed. The track had all been laid except for about 10 miles. The Smoky River Bridge was completed about a month later.

Over three years of criticism about the construction of line was answered on May 28th, 1969 when an official 20 car train rumbled through 234 miles of northern Alberta wilderness to open the Alberta Resources Railway. This train which departed Edmonton the night before, on May 27th, was in charge of SD-40's 5000, 5001 and 5002.

The cutting of a ceremonial log and the driving of a chromed spike on May 28th, marked the official opening of this resource line that has now officially become part of the Canadian National Railways.

Straight Track

I am no quite sure whether it was some records that a chap gave me on the Canadian National or an article from the November 1953 issue of the CRHA's *News Report*, but I couldn't help but be interested in the various comments about the longest straight or tangent track.

The CHRA reports that Austin Cross of the *Ottawa Citizen* reported that the longest tangent in Canada is one of 91 miles of track between Stoughton and Regina, Saskatchewan on the CP's Tyvan Subdivision.

The CNR records indicate that their longest tangent track extends for 56.93 miles on its Alliance Subdivision from Mile 2.29 near Camrose to Mile 59.22 at Alliance, Alberta.

Even the two of these were combined we would still be only about half the length of the longest tangent in the world. Again the CNR records reports that the longest tangent in the world is one 328 miles long across the Nullarbar Plain on the Transcontinental railway in Australia. These records start that the longest tangent in the United States at the time was 78.86 miles on the Wilmington – Hamlet line of the Seaboard Air Line Railway in North Carolina. In the category of straight track, the 205 miles across Argentine pampas on the Buenos Ayres & Pacific Railway is interesting. Not only is this track straight but it was also perfectly level.

Back to Canada, CN defines the 55.45 miles on its Chatham Subdivision between Komoka and Kent as their longest tangent in Ontario. In eastern Canada there is 30.29 miles of tangent on CN's Newcastle Subdivision from near Rogerville,

New Brunswick southward towards Moncton.

The Railway Book Market

We have remarked at different times, how difficult it is, as a book purchaser to become aware of the new books coming on stream about Canadian railways. However, if you ever analyze the scene from the book writer's side, especially if they are small or independent and targeting mainly the Canadian railfan market, then I believe one would realize what difficulty is. So, as been our practice, we will try to a little to help spread the word on new railway books that we become aware of.

The British Railway Modellers of North America, (BRMNA) of Calgary have two new books out that I have been brought to my attention since my last column. In recent years as I have become more interested in Canadian railway history, I have found these locally focused books, a help in understanding many of the historical operating aspects of the area covered.

The two recently BRMNA released books give one the choice to look at a Canadian National operation or a Canadian Pacific operation, in the east or in the west. While perhaps I should start with the CN book, my eastern roots told me to look at *CANADIAN PACIFIC'S DOMINION ATLANTIC RAILWAY* – (Volume II) – By Gary W. Ness first. As the title implies this is Mr. Ness's second book on the Dominion Atlantic Railway. With the release on this second volume, Volume I has been reprinted for those who missed it, but may want it. The second volume is definitely an extension of the first to continue a look at this fascinating railway that served the Annapolis valley and Yarmouth area in the southwest part of Nova Scotia for over a hundred years.

The DAR was the summation of a half dozen companies that struggled to built and operate a railway through an interesting and diversified part of Canada. Whether intentional or not, Mr. Ness has selected a wide variety of photographs highlighting many geographical and social features of the time and area. These photographs cover the period from the days of the Western Counties Railway "May Party" excursion train in 1875 portraying horses, buggies and a sailing ship as well as the excursion train to a triple header of SW1200RS' pulling a string of gondolas along a tidal river in 1988.

Since the DAR was made up of several railways, the variation in details of the stations of each is obvious in many of the photographs. The valley is quite unique and again various photographs provides one with good examples of building styles of the area. Probably my favourite photograph in Volume II is a CPR photograph of CP G2u "Pacific" No. 2665 backing down towards the Digby wharf on its "20 foot" right-of-way between shingle clad houses. The shapes and features of the houses are Annapolis valley!

Mr. Ness has well documented the details about the photographs in this book.

Perhaps Volume II alone could give one the impression that the DAR was not effected much by the tides of the Bay of Fundy as it made its way especially between Windsor and Yarmouth. However, Mr. Ness shows how these natural features impacted the DAR, along with more details relating to the Bay of Fundy ferry service in Volume I.

While either of these volumes are worthwhile additions to any railfan's library, combined, the two volumes provides a good pictorial capsule look at the Dominion Atlantic

Railway. Each of these volumes sell for \$9.00 plus GST in Canada and \$2.00 postage and handling and are available from British Railway Modellers of North America.

The British Railway Modellers of North America second recently released book is the *CANADIAN NATIONAL in the WEST* - (Volume Six) - By Ray A. Matthews.

This book is the sixth book published by the BRMNA on the Canadian National Railways in western Canada.

Again, one must look at this book in the context of its place among the other five books in the series as well as the magnitude of the geographical size of Canadian National's operation in the west.

Volume Six is a worthwhile addition to the previous volumes, as takes a closer look at some of the variety of head-end power used over this vast and varied territory and helps round out the information in the earlier volumes. The various classes of rail lines of the west demand different power and this is reflected with photographs varying from light 2-8-0's for grain lines to "Mountain" class 4-8-2's in transcontinental passenger service to a rare shot of a 4-6-2 pulling a CN silk train.

In addition to the photographs of various steam engines with their detailed notes, there are also a number of photographs of diesel operation as well as what I would call unique western photographs. These photographs include one of a steam powered snow rotary, and the massive coaling tower at Edson, Alberta that could coal eight locomotives at a time. Other unique photos include one of an auxiliary re-railing a derailed tender. Two other interesting photographs are on the Albreda Subdivision west of Jasper, Alberta. One is a 1920'ish shot of freight, panting in wait on the far side of a small mud slide. The second Albreda shot is at Albreda, BC and in the same period. It is interesting to note what this line looked like then compared to its condition in the 1990's.

I believe this book helps fill in the details about CN's western operation over the years, and again would say that Volume Six of Canadian National in the West is a worthwhile and inexpensive addition to the library of those who are interested in the development and operation of the Canadian National.

The Canadian National in the West - (Volume Six), like the books on the DAR is available for \$9.00 plus GST in Canada, and \$2.00 postage and handling from British Railway Modellers of North America, 5124 - 33rd Street N.W., Calgary, Alberta T2L 1V4.