

Just A. Ferronut's *August 1995*

Railway Archaeology

Art Clowes

Before I get wandering too far, a couple of items to update. Here in Montréal renovations continue in and around Central Station. Work on the main concourse has gone about as far as it can until the various shops around it are finished. In this regard, while it is mainly from the regrouping of the shops, but on first glance at the artist renderings, it would appear that VIA Rail is either expecting large increases in patrons, or they are expecting a lot of trains to be late. This appearance comes since the north (Mount Royal) side of the concourse is being converted into one large area of restaurants and related food establishments. When finished, it should be interesting with the main concourse looking much as it did when opened fifty years ago and the modern state of the art food court and shops.

Amongst the information that has arrived in my mail box is that VIA Rail has sold the former Fort Gary Union Station in Winnipeg. I have no details yet, but as we mentioned in our February 1993 column, VIA Rail had undertaken some restoration. This large stone station on Main Street in Winnipeg was constructed in 1911 by the Canadian Northern Railway for joint use with the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. In more recent years we've all known this depot as CN's and later VIA's Winnipeg Station. CN, the main tenant moved out about a year ago. Under the present sale, VIA Rail will lease back about 20% of the space from the new owner for its needs.

While on the subject of VIA Rail stations, they are requesting permission from the federal Minister of Canadian Heritage to permit them to dispose of (expected to sell) seven stations they control on CN lines. This is part of VIA's program to scale back on the number of stations they maintain. These stations include: McBride, British Columbia; Dauphin, McCreary, Rivers, and Roblin, Manitoba, and Macamic and Montmagny in Quebec.

The federal Minister of Canadian Heritage has added two more stations on Canadian National lines to the inventory of Heritage Stations. These include the CN/VIA station in Port-Daniel, Québec, CN Mile 22.5 Chandler Subdivision (more below). The other is the Canada Southern station at Comber, Ontario, CN Mile 194.5 CASO Subdivision. The minister also turned down four other stations, including three in Québec; CN/VIA Drummondville, Mile 98.3 Drummondville Subdivision, two on CN's Chandler Subdivision, L'Anse-à-Beaufils, (Perce), at Mile 65.1 and CN/VIA Barachois, Mile 79.3. The other station turned down was CN Field, Ontario, Mile 260.1 Newmarket Subdivision (formerly mile 93.7 Alderdale), 51.0 rail miles south of Capreol.

In the realm of the federal government, they have granted Canadian Pacific permission to abandon rail operation on 35.9 miles their Assiniboia Subdivision in Saskatchewan effective September 10, 1995. The 35.9 miles consists of the section between a point west of Weyburn (Mile 0.6) to a point east of Pangman (Mile 36.5). The last freight train over this portion of the Assiniboia Subdivision was on November 6, 1989.

Canadian National was not as lucky in their bid to get the government to permit them to abandon 1.66 miles of their Sorel Subdivision between Tracy (Mile 45.5) and Sorel (Mile 47.16) in Quebec. The National Transportation Agency ruled

that it should be kept and will be reviewed within the next two years. This may be a moot point considering the presently proposed legislative changes to loosen rail line abandonments in Canada.

Another Equipment Question

A couple of days ago, during a discussion, about local history, with a chap in Cornwall, Ontario, he asked what I knew about Courtaulds Industries in Cornwall and their railway operations. I had to admit that my knowledge was limited to knowing that they existed and a few of the generalities about their rail connection in the latter years to Canadian National. He told me that he was interested in their history, and wanted to know if I knew what happened to their locomotives. Presently, I have not been able to track down more details beyond the fact that they had 2 Plymouth ML6's that had been purchased second-hand from the Telephone City Sand and Gravel Company. Can perhaps some of our equipment specialists tell us what happened to these locomotives?

Eastern Trip

First to be honest, I must tell you that I am not going to be honest in the telling of my trip east. As I have mentioned, I'm trying to add to my understanding of the details of the various rail lines here in Quebec. My goal is to do more articles on the railways in the different areas of Quebec. So, since I am looking at the area south of the St. Lawrence River, between Québec City and Gaspé, as one of these, I am going to keep some of the details of this trip for those articles. In New Brunswick and on Prince Edward Island, I was given enough new general information on railway events, sites, wrecks, etc., to spend the next few months getting the dates and facts straightened out and filling out the details – so those I will keep.

It is 110 miles between Lévis (opposite Québec City) and Rivière du Loup, and the area south of the St. Lawrence River is made up of a strip of rich interval land along the river with several rows of hills and valleys to the south. These are the northern fringe of the Appalachian Mountains. The major population, mainly involved in farming, is located close to the Saint Lawrence. It is along this shore of the St. Lawrence that the Grand Trunk Railway of Canada East constructed what is now CN's Montmagny Subdivision. This line provides the current access to both the Inter-Colonial and National Transcontinental Railway lines in New Brunswick.

The National Transcontinental, now abandoned from near Lévis to Pelletier Station, south of Rivière du Loup, was about 15 to 20 miles, or several valleys south of the St. Lawrence. Access to this area is by a series of north-south roads extending back from the river, but with very few east-west roads, thus making access to this old rail line difficult. Since this wooded area has numerous cottages, much of the old railway roadbed is used by recreational vehicles.

At Bras-d'Apic, there is a small railway building-cum-cottage on the east side of Québec Highway 285. At this point, I am not sure its exact origin, as to whether it was a small station or just a section-house. It sports mile boards 135 and 137 on the front corners.

The perspective from the highway is different from on

board a train. Road crossings, that are just that from the head-end, twisting along and around curves, on the ground you realize that the line takes a full “S” with three crossings over the same road, as happens south of Holiday on Highway 287.

After my visit to the NTR, I was back to the shores of the St. Lawrence for the 80 miles trip along CN’s Rimouski Subdivision from Rivière du Loup to Mont-Joli. Not much has changed along this line in recent years, except for the lack of the “Scotian” and “Maritime Express” in the passenger schedule. The CN/VIA stations at Rivière du Loup, Trois Pistoles, Rimouski and Mont-Joli are all still in use and well maintained. On this trip I did note that the small former Port Pic station (CN Mile 148.3) is still located near the tracks and appears to be used as a cottage.

Mont-Joli is the western terminus of the CN owned Canada and Gulf Terminal Railway. This 342 mile railway is now operated as CN’s Matane Subdivision. Matane is the eastern terminal of the rail line and the southern terminal for rail-car ferry from Baie-Comeau (on the north shore of the Saint Lawrence). Knowing that the Rivière-Blanche station still existed and is now operated as a railway museum, I considered it was worth the 54 mile round trip drive to see it. Since my last visit the station has been turned 90 degrees and moved clear of the right-of-way. The Rivière-Blanche station is about the size of a small single storey house, it has a hip roof with reasonably wide overhangs. The baggage room was part of this station that was built in 1902 and abandoned in 1978. The people involved have done a good job restoring the station and have a good collection of railway artefacts, although not all of them relate to the local railways. The former agent-operator’s office has been re-equipped to reflect an earlier operation. The waiting room with its pot-bellied stove definitely takes one back a few years. Included in their display are photos of various stations, trains and early timetables of the area. The baggage room forms the entrance, and is a combined office, info centre and display. The lady in charge on my visit was very knowledgeable of the area and its railways, and as she indicated they have a 45 minute guided tour, explaining the station in detail for those who may want it.

Rivière-Blanche station is in St-Ulric, on Highway 132 east of Mont-Joli.

The trip from Mont-Joli down the Matapédia valley towards New Brunswick, as always, is a pleasant and scenic drive. Since CN 5003 & 9672 heading a local freight were sitting shut-down in Mont-Joli, I didn’t expect to see any freight traffic, so I was surprised as I neared Sayabec to see and east bound ahead of me in the valley. I didn’t chase it as I wanted to see what was happening to the various stations along this line. As we have mentioned a couple of times this year, the railway and Sayabec are trying to get through the government red tape so that station can be purchased by the town. The Sayabec station has a Heritage designation. VIA has stopped using the stations in both Sayabec and Causapscal. Both of these stations are fairly large single storey wood frame structures.

A stop at the two storey multi-dormered wood frame Heritage station at Amqui confirms that colour can not be part of heritage. While many of the VIA stations in Québec are done in modern pastel colours, the bright green and buff at Amqui is a far cry from what its Inter-Colonial builders painted it. The second floor has been converted to a Bar, with a name literally translated means the Rail Worker’s Bar.

On the evening drive out towards Gaspé, I met the westbound VIA Chaleur near New-Carlisle. The next morning was the worse of the trip – getting up to catch the sunrise at Percé Rock.

While CN’s freight operation ends at Chandler (Mile 44.1 Chandler), 60 miles west of Gaspé, VIA continues to operate into Gaspé with three trains a week. The various stations used by VIA along this line are in good shape, and except for Port-Daniel, that as mentioned above has just been declared heritage, I am not going to dwell on them. The Port-Daniel station is mid-sized single storey frame station with a wide overhanging hip roof, located towards the west end of the community. It is perhaps a bit unique in the fact that it has three bay windows. The operator’s on the track side, one opposite that like at many stations forms the entrance, and one on the west end as part of the waiting room. The east part of the building, the former express/baggage area are now used by the village and some of their social services offices. The track and station are on the edge of an inlet off the harbour. This provides for an interesting reflection photograph from across this inlet.

While I made some detours to a couple of libraries, my goal from the Gaspé was Moncton, NB to be ready for a trip over to Prince Edward Island for my annual summer pilgrimage to see Keith and Jean Pratt.

I got over to Keith’s in late morning, and Jean of course, figured it was time to have lunch regardless. It is people like this that prevents me from getting a slim waist line. After lunch, Keith took me over to meet Allan Graham, a rail enthusiast and writer in Alberton. So we spent half the afternoon going over some of Allan’s tons of photographs and discussing various railway and other local events. From Alberton, we drove up to Tidnish and Keith explained the layout of this terminal rail yard with its station, crew bunkhouse and roundhouse on one side of the yard and the coaling tower on the other. We had a look at the former wye on the outskirts of the community. Keith was telling me that the tail track was long enough to turn a double header, with a snow plough and four coaches.

A mile or so out of Tidnish we stopped at Harper’s, near where Train No. 211, stalled, with a group of snow shovellers on board was rammed by Train No. 53, a double-header with a plough on February 21, 1932. Keith recalled his memories of that wreck that ended in four fatalities.

It was back to Bloomfield Station and Keith’s for dinner. The Pratt’s son Bobby from Boston was also visiting this year. So Jean, always the great cook, pulled the all the stops out, and served baked salmon and cod along with all the veggies and goodies that go to produce a great rural feast that the easterners refer to as supper. Her rural style meals with their fresh ingredients and little treats like home-made pickled beets always make me wonder why do I live in a plastic city.

Since after this feast (eastern supper) we couldn’t move, we sat around the kitchen table and got Keith to recount some of his old Island railway stories. Thing went great, for first we had his wife and son reminding him of various stories, then a couple of ladies arrived, a relative and neighbour. This now added another dimension to the party, and while not all the stories were railway, even some of the ghost stories had a tie-in. I can just picture the rural undertaker, dressed all prim and proper, meeting the evening train, perhaps under a full fall moon, to receive the mortal remains of some dearly deceased to be transported to a relative’s home. Then imagine the expressions

and reactions of this poor undertaker as he starts down the road and noises start coming from the rear compartment of his hearse. Little did he know at the time that the local lads (no names) had put a live goose in the rear compartment of his hearse.

Shyness kept the ladies from more than prodding Keith, but the neighbour, a Mrs. Odgen, whose father, Harold Gillis worked on the railway sections at Conway and Ellerslie, could, I am certain tell us many more railway stories. The other lady, Betty Rennie, a relative of the Pratt's did open up by telling about the snow storm around 1982, that drifted the snow over the top of the train. Helicopters were used to remove the crew and it was about a week before they got the train dug out. As I say, I am certain had this not been our first meeting, that these two Island ladies would have spun as many stories each as Keith did. Since I had commitments on the mainland the next day, I had to get back to Moncton. However, you can be sure that after this session you will see some of Keith's stories, and who knows perhaps Jeanetta (Gillis) Ogden and Betty Rennie will favour us with a few of their. As I left Keith's I had a copy of a song he wrote about the 1932 train wreck, but we couldn't get him to sing it. He tells me that his friend, John Cousins, does a much better job, since he plays the guitar.

On the spur of the moment on another afternoon, I decided to go down along the Springhill Subdivision east of Moncton, to see what might be shaking. I wound up in Dorchester, the historic shiretown of Westmorland County. Again for no reason, I decided to visit the Keillor House Museum, I had passed it many times before. About three hours later, late for a supper party, I left. I started with one of their student guides who showed me a few railway photographs that he was aware of, then Mrs. Stopps, the Museum Manager, came back! She dug out several files concerning railway activities and a local train wreck. Between the files, and discussion, we covered the politics that brought the Inter-Colonial Railway to Dorchester, the Chignecto Ship Railway, local wrecks and even the use of the word "The" in their Museum's name. Since then Mrs. Stopps has forwarded me copies of some clipping she had at home, so material for at least one more story.

While it wasn't a very long visit, I did get down to the Salem & Hillsborough Railroad. They seem to be starting to get back on their feet. When I was there they were busy getting ready for Hillsborough's Blueberry Festival. They were planning a 50 foot long blueberry shortcake and planned to have CNR 1009 under steam, although they were not planning any train movements because of the number of people and activities on the museum grounds.

The Museum is working in one of the building that they call "The Barn" to divide it into a number of sections with each section highlighting different aspects of railroading.

While lack of suitable power has created a few snags, the S&H's charter trains have been doing well.

While I didn't over to see it, the S&H has one sleeping car completely renovated and offered sleeping accommodations over the summer.

As I started back towards Central Canada, I went through Saint John, NB to see what might be around to identify the New Brunswick Southern. If one didn't know of a change, one wouldn't see it, since all I saw was 3 CP 8000's switching in CN's Island Yard. Other than the date it looked the same as it has been for several years. I was told that C.A.R. Business Car (Van 422990) had been repainted in New Brunswick Southern's

colours of green with black ends, but I couldn't spot it around Saint John or Lancaster.

I got through McAdam, NB, about mid-afternoon one day, there were quite a few cars around but no sign of power. That evening I was out to see Art Harris, a retired CP sectionman at Harvey. He was telling me that the New Brunswick Southern's train from Saint John usually passed Harvey about 7:00 a.m. and went back between 5 and 6 in the afternoon.

Another day at the library and it was about time to head back to Montréal.

Since I knew there was a couple of miles of construction of the Trans-Canada highway north of Florenceville, NB, I decided to take the old road and see if there were any changes at the Shogomoc Historical & Model Railroad Club in Bristol. As I approached the site of their rail cars, there were two CP yellow motor cars sitting on the main line with several people around. The group has, a mile or so, of the abandoned CP track brushed out for running their motor cars on. So I paced them up and back on a run. They had what we used call a two man inspection or foreman's motor car and a large gang or crew car.

Being ahead of schedule, I decided that I should head up towards CN Drummond on their Napadogan Subdivision, in case there was some rail traffic around Grand Falls. I didn't meet any trains, but I did find the New Denmark Memorial Museum, that I had looked for last year. While as the community's name reflects the museum is a memorial to the Danish settlers of the area they do have a few railway items and photos.

At Fraser Junction at the south end of Edmundston, I photographed a couple CN engines heading into town from a work train. Later up between Rivière-Bleue and Estcourt on the NTR in Quebec, I met and photographed three CN eastbound double-stackers in a period of about a hour. It was then generally back to Montréal to wrap up another interesting trip.

The Railway Book Market - Two "All Aboard" books

As mentioned above I visited the Salem & Hillsborough, and in their gift shop they had copies of a book titled *All Aboard*, by J. William Calder, that had been published in 1974. This book sub-titled "The history and humour of a 'forlorn' little train, and the people and commodities that it carried", is about the Cape Breton Railway Extension Company. While this company started with grand ideas, its construction was limited to the 25½ miles of railway that eventually became CN's St. Peters Subdivision between Point Tupper and St. Peters, Nova Scotia. Since I hadn't read it, I purchased a copy. However, like many of these small, local books, one's knowledge of the area's history and people correlates to the ease one can comprehend them. The first part of this book is like that, but as its sub-title states there are the tales of humorous happenings and events that can and did occur in these smaller communities, especially in days gone by. This book has some typos (spelling mistakes and missed page references), but to me it must be evaluated in a global perspective. What is one looking for? My criteria is, does it add anything to the understanding of an area. For me, yes, and I consider the six bucks, plus my subsidy to the governments (taxes) was well spent for this 132 page book.

Before I got half way through J. William Calder's *All Aboard*, I received a note that another (new) *All Aboard* was to have been published in June 1995. This one is about railroading on the other (western) side of the country. At this point I haven't

seen anything on it in Canada, but the following is a quote from an American book flyer. "*All Aboard: The Canadian Rockies by Train*, by David Mitchell. This 144 page soft-cover book vividly recounts the epic achievement of surveying and constructing the Canadian Pacific Railway all the way across Canada, concentrating on the challenge of crossing the Rocky Mountains. Illustrated with 42 pages of colour photos of the scenic grandeur along the tracks, as well as a fascinating array of 60 historic duotone photos showing the drama of railroading in days gone by." This book was to sell in the United States for \$24.95 (US), so one may want to keep their eyes open around your hobby shop or book store.

The third book that I have become aware of this month, is from Nickel Belt Rails, and their plan to release a limited number of authorized spiral bound photocopied edition of their long out of print book "*From Abbey to Zorra via Bagdad*". This book, by Dale Wilson, is an 8½" x 11", 148 page volume about Canadian Pacific passenger service in the 1950s. The postpaid price in Canada is \$29.95 plus G.S.T. and can be ordered from Nickel Belt Rails, PO Box 483, Station B, Sudbury, ON P3E 4P6. To our American readers, if you are interested, Nickel Belt Rails' American address is PO Box 587, Houlton, ME 04730.