

Just A. Ferronut's Railway Archaeology

Art Clowes
234 Canterbury Avenue
Riverview, NB E1B 2R7
E-Mail: jaclowes@istar.ca

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Well, I think I am starting to get settled in my new eastern digs! After thirty years of having someone else look after your place, going back to home ownership, has resulted in a few aching muscles. On the plus side, I am finding all kinds of stashed items, that I had forgotten about. I am now hoping to complete several articles that I have started at over the past few years. But this month, we should clean up a variety of items that have shown up with historic connections.

A COUPLE OF UPDATES TO OUR BALA REVIEW

A couple of goofs in last month's column brought a welcome phone call and note from Ray Corley to try to get me back on the proper track.

First, one item that I should have pointed out that with the 1927 opening of Toronto Union Station, the mileages on the Bala Subdivision decreased by 0.2 miles. This was because the present Union Station is 0.2 miles east of the former station near Simcoe Street.

Ray's research has determined that East Don and Todmorden were at the same location. The attached sketch may make things a little clearer around Todmorden. The original switch for the Orono Subdivision was 30 feet north of the switch for the Sewage Plant spur. This was mile 5.6 that became 5.4 after the opening of the present Toronto Union Station.

The opening of the Leaside Bridge in 1927 didn't help matters, since it caused the relocation of the junction of the Orono Subdivision northward 0.2 miles so the new connection became mile 5.6, (old Mile 5.4).

The station at East Don or later Todmorden was listed as old mile 6.0, which became listed as 5.8 under the new mileage. However, to the engineering types it chained out at Mile 5.75 (Timetable 5.8). To the north on the Bala Subdivision was a siding that started at mile 6.0.

The former Valydon flagstop was on the west side of the Bala Subdivision about where CP's bridge on their Belleville Subdivision crosses over, this was at old Mile 9.0 (new Mile 8.8).

Under Duncan, Ray sent along a clipping from the July 1918, *Canadian Railway and Marine World* stating that the connection to Leaside was in the final stages of construction. The listing of Regulatory Orders in the same magazine for October, states that under an Order dated September 12, 1918, the two railways were authorized to use the interlocker at Donlands.

In our section on Beaverton, I mentioned that I have a map, circa 1920, that shows a connecting track from the Midland Railway's Beaverton East Station through the village to the Canadian Northern. Ray mentioned that following the merger under the Canadian National Railways, this connecting track was gradually cut back to the Midland Subdivision. Part of it was converted to a road, now Lowell Lane.

In the Trent Canal section, I mentioned there was a question over the use of the Midland line between 1959 and

1963, when it became part of the Canadian National's Bala Subdivision. Ray told me that from a research project he was involved in, it appears that while CN had taken the line out of regular service in 1959, that during 1961 they had permitted a car or two of coal to be taken from Lorneville Junction, over the old Midland to Brechin. It would appear that CN forgot about one of these cars, which was foreign owned. It was not until early in 1962, when the demurrage charges were piling up, that it was remembered, and all indications that the move in the spring of 1962 to retrieve was probably the last one over this line.

Skipping up to Udney, the Canadian Northern's running rights over the C.P.R. into Orillia, became effective June 13, 1914. Operations over the Orillia Subdivision were discontinued in 1922, and the line was then abandoned July 27, 1923 and the line taken up.

ON THE STATION SCENE

John Ferguson, reported that CN's Midland, Ontario station was demolished during the first week of November, 1997. This single storey brick and stone station was constructed about the end of World War II, in the then modern style, with its flat roof, large multi-paned windows in the waiting room and operator's office. Stations of this era, now over fifty years old, have resulted in some discussion by station heritage people, as to whether some of them should be declared "heritage stations" under federal legislation. While too late for this Canadian National station, architecturally, these styles represent an unique period of railway depot construction.

John went on to mention that apparently last summer, the town of Midland, based on an engineer's report decided that the Midland depot couldn't pass a business case analysis as a candidate for restoration with a recycled use.

The demolition took less than a hour, and was done under the watchful eyes of a couple of CN Police Officers, who apparently wanted to make sure souvenir hunters wouldn't carry anything off.

Paul Bloxham, sent along some E-Mail exchanges with Gord Webster and James Brown, concerning CP Rail's Britt (Station), Ontario depot, mile 65.0 Parry Sound Subdivision. The gist of this discussion is that this station, that still exists, was sold for a private residence about 5 or six years ago, and moved. Britt Station, located on the south or east side of the Still river, a mile or so upstream from the mouth of the river that empties into Byng Inlet. The Britt station is a typical storey and half frame CP station with large hip roof and dormer facing trackside. This depot was moved across the tracks and is now situated several hundred yards south and rotated about 90 degrees to its old orientation, so that its former track side now faces east.

The Canadian Pacific rail line from Parry Sound to Sudbury was opened in June 1908. The original small station was constructed just south of the last one, and called Dunlop, in honour of A. N. Dunlop, a resident engineer during the line's construction. This name stuck until 1927, when a post office was

opening in the community. Since there was already another Dunlop over in Huron County, the name of Britt was proposed by CPR officials. This was to honour Thomas Britt, CP's general superintendent for fuels on their eastern lines.

BRITT, NOTE FOR PAT, ETC:

Based on my maps and recollections of the area. The CP main line and the Still river passes under Highway 69. The rail line is on the southeast side of the stream. On the west side of Highway 69 was the location of Britt (Station). Along the northwest side of the Still River, Highway 526, a 3.9 km road leads down to the mouth of the Still River, the community there is called Britt. The large water area at the mouth of the Still River is called Byng Inlet. To the southeast, the Magnetawan River enters Byng Inlet. The original coal transfer facility was on the southeast side of Still river on Byng Inlet.

Most of us remember Britt as the site of large coal unloading docks with rows of overhead gantries and huge piles of coal. While the area had seen various saw mills and lumbering activities prior to the coming of the railway, it was CP's decision to take advantage of the depth of water in Byng Inlet to establish the coal transfer facility that gave the area importance. The transfer facilities, at the end of a spur from CP's mainline, opened in the spring of 1911. This development meant that ships up to 7,000 tons could bring mainly Pennsylvania coal here for the use of the railway, and various industries in the north such as pulp and paper mills and mines. Peak years saw as much as 500,000 tons of coal deposited on the wharves along Byng Inlet. The shift from coal saw the gradual decline in the use of this coal terminal. It had a bit of revival when Imperial Oil established an oil transfer facility, but by the late 1970s, these tanks were removed.

However, it appears the attraction of Britt's location and its nearby water access continues to have supporters. CP Rail in recent years have established oil storage tanks at Britt. This permits them to bring oil in by ship, probably from Sarnia, and use Britt as a transfer site for shipment north to CP's various fueling locations, such as Cartier, Chapleau and White River.

With the recent announcement of the CP-CSX agreement for access to Sarnia, it will be interesting to see if this impacts the operation at Britt.

While covering stations that were demolished in 1997, Paul Bloxham, reported that on a summer trip along the Ontario Northland Railway, he noted that their station in Haileybury, Ontario, had been demolished. This had been a single storey brick structure.

BOOKS

Several books with connections to railway archaeology have made their appearance over the past year. The first, a very recent one, that my book store has on order for me is titled: *"Wreck! Canada's Worst Railway Accidents"*, by Hugh A. Halliday. This book published by Robin Brass Studio, Toronto, has 224 pages, with black and white photographs, diagrams, engravings and newspaper clippings. Hugh Halliday, a former curator of war art at the Canadian War Museum, covers 30 of Canada's worst railway accidents. This book should be an interesting addition to any library. I am looking forward to seeing the full list of accidents the author has selected. At this point, I have been told that it includes the following well known accidents:

The collision between an express train and a gravel train at Baptiste Creek, Ontario, October 27, 1854. This Great Western Railway accident, about 14 miles west of Chatham, resulted in no less than fifty-two persons being killed, with another forty-eight injured.

Three years later, on March 12, 1857, the Great Western Railway had their infamous Desjardins Canal wreck. This disaster, on the site where the company had expended considerable energy building their line to suit the route desired by directors, Sir Allan McNab and Dr. Hamilton, resulted in the death of 60 people, when a broken locomotive wheel caused the trestle over the canal to give way. Among the dead was Samuel Zimmerman, an early railway benefactor.

The Grand Trunk Railway didn't escape its share of early accidents. On June 28, 1864, a hogger, inexperienced on the line, unfamiliar with its grades and features, was at the throttle of a passenger special, consisting of eleven cars and an engine, heading for Montreal, carrying some three hundred and fifty, central European immigrants en route to Chicago. Just west of St. Hilaire, at the bridge over Richelieu River, with its swing span, the engineer may have disobeyed a Company's standing order to stop, as well as passing a signal informing him that the bridge was open. The result was some 100 people, including two crew members, and a curious onlooker, two days later on another train, were killed as the special crashed into the canal.

Moving into this century, Dugald, Manitoba, on September 1, 1947 was the site on Canadian National's National Transcontinental Railway line, when the "Minaki Special", a passenger train from the north-western Ontario resort community of the same name was heading back towards Winnipeg. The special was told to be prepared to meet the two eastbound sections of CN's Transcontinental. The heavy summer passenger and baggage loads had the trains running late. Orders had been changed several times, moving the point of their meets farther west. A move apparently to save time by the night operator set up a sequence of events, that combined with the Minaki Special's crew ignoring their written orders, would claim 31 lives, mostly in the nine-wooden coaches of their thirteen car special, as it rounded the curve into the station area at Dugald and crashed head-on into the standing Transcontinental.

Tuesday, November 21, 1950, saw a seventeen car train with Canadian troops destined for Korea, led by 2-8-2, 3538, on CN's Albreda Subdivision as "Passenger Extra 3538 West". The Albreda subdivision also had two regular eastbound passenger trains, No. 2, and No. 4, the Montreal and Toronto sections respectfully of CN's Continentals on it. The omission of the two words, "AT CEDARSIDE" in Train Order No. 248 by the operator at Redpass Junction, in conjunction with weak wording in the then current Uniform Code of Operating Rules permitted the stage to be set for the westbound to think they would not meet the eastbounds until Gosnell, 24.9 miles west of Cedarside. The result was that Train No. 2, Super-continental, with 4-8-2, 6004, collided head-on with the west bound troop train on a curve between Cedarside and Canoe River with the final death toll at seventeen troops and four engine crewmen. It was also reported that sixty-one people were injured, twenty-two seriously.

This accident had a number of interesting side stories. The exact intent of the Board of Transport Commissioners' General Order 707, concerning the use of wooden coaches got an

extensive airing. What were wooden passenger coaches with steel underframes, and should they be used on main line trains? Mr. John G. Diefenbaker, KC, MP, for Lake Centre, Saskatchewan, (later Canadian Prime Minister), was admitted to the British Columbia Bar specially to defend Mr. Atherton, the Redpass Junction telegrapher, who was later acquitted. The arguments over the UCOR wording that operators “should” listen in to other repetitions, rather than “must” listen in, resulted in changing the 1951 rule book to carry the word “must”! One long term pay-off from this accident was the Board of Railway Commissioners recommendation that Canadian National install block signals on the mainline through the Rockies to Vancouver, due to blind curves.

This perhaps gives an idea of stories covered, but remember this book covers 25 other major Canadian railway accidents. Maybe I am a bit ghoulish, but accidents do provide an understanding of the evolution of railways. I always remember being reminded as I was given my first UCOR, that it was red, to represent all the blood that had been spilled in the development of the rules. So, for \$18.95, this may be a worthwhile book to consider adding to your library.

“*Turmoil and Triumph*” by Ian Bickle and published by Detslig Enterprises Limited, 210 - 1220 Kensington Road N.W., Calgary, Alberta T2N 3P5, is another book that has been around for about a year. I have been reminded of this book on the history of the Hudson Bay Railway, a couple of times this year. First the change in the railway’s ownership during 1997, from CN Rail to OmniTRAX, and more recently a request from a chap trying to locate information on his grandfather. His grandfather had portions of both feet amputated after being frozen during the 1908-09 government surveys for the Hudson Bay Railway. The interesting item in our search for more details on Mr. Weston, is that the government gave him a pair of young horses as compensation for his loss.

The Canadian Northern had proposed in 1906 to construct a rail line from a point on its Prince Albert line (now Hudson Bay Junction, Saskatchewan) to Fort Churchill using rights under the charter of the Winnipeg Great Northern Railway. By February 28, 1910, the Canadian Northern had only reached The Pas, Manitoba.

Meanwhile, pressure from Western Members and businesses pushed the federal government to arrange for the 1909 surveys. So, in the fall of 1908, John Armstrong, a well know railway surveyor with extensive experience in railway construction, was put in charge. He was to have two assistants, and one hundred men. His assistants were Messrs. Murphy and Law, engineers of the railway department at Ottawa. Using these people in four parties, various possible routes were surveyed. However, unlike many of the earlier western surveys and rail line construction, it would take twenty years and more stops and starts than a trolley, before the Canadian Government had an operational rail line to Fort Churchill. With this extensive time frame, and political climate of the period, Mr. Bickle had ample material from which to draw on for his book. While perhaps not the book for everyone, as some may see the Hudson Bay Railway as being out of their area of interest, or perhaps too political, but again it is part of Canadian railway history.

While our next book is not what we would normally define as a “Railfan” book, it should not be overlooked as a possible gift to a young relative. In the current style of mixing

fact and fiction, writer, Julie Lawson joined forces with illustrator Paul Mombourquette to produce an interesting children’s book “*Emma and The Silk Train*”. This book is based on the facts relating to the “Million-Dollar Wreck”, that occurred on September 21, 1927, when a Canadian Pacific silk train travelling over their Cascade Subdivision in British Columbia, from Yale towards Haig, while rounding a curve near milepost 27, the fifth car from the engine jumped the track and sank into the Fraser River. Three or four cars followed but stopped short of the river. One broke open at the water’s edge, and bales of the precious silk, both raw and manufactured, went floating downstream. There were no human casualties.

Factual reports state that the accident provided a welcomed addition to the low income of Indians living in the vicinity of Hope. Paddling out in canoes, they rescued floating bales, for which they received a reward of \$10 per bale. Later, a couple of squaws were seen wearing silken garments, presumably salvaged from the wreck.

Based on this story, Julie Lawson weaves her story around the station master young daughter Emma, out, looking for some of the precious manufactured silk. When Emma finds some silk in the water, she falls in while trying to retrieve it, and is swept down stream. She winds up on a small island in the river, wet, but with her silk. She uses the silk to try to flag a train, but since it was also a silk train, it didn’t stop. It did however, drop a message off at the station, and of course Emma was found. Throughout the book, a number of facts about silk trains are brought out.

While, as I mentioned, perhaps not a book for your collection, but at \$15.95, with great illustrations, numerous educational aspects including Canadian historical facts, an ideal gift to consider for a young one. If you can’t find this book at your book store contact Kids Can Press, 29 Birch Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M4V 1E2.

While we are discussing silk trains, my favourite related story relates to a tax bill that the Canadian Pacific owed the village of Port Arthur, Ontario. The issue had been building for several years until the community considered the railway owed them about \$14,000 in taxes on railway property. The railway had been trying to get a tax exemption because it considered it had brought certain advantages to the community. William Beaver, the tax collector, replied that an exemption might be arranged if the railway would route all its freight via the Port Arthur docks instead of diverting part of it to Fort William, a rival new settlement springing up to the west. William Van Horne, then president of the CP, would give no assurance on that point.

The village got tired of waiting and one day as a silk train stopped at Port Arthur to change crews and take on water and coal, Mr. Beaver seized the engine and chained it to the rails. “We’re holding this engine as hostage,” he said, “until the overdue taxes are paid.”

Railway officials quickly agreed to pay, but the tax collector only wanted cash. A hasty inventory of Port Arthur’s one and only bank disclosed a mere \$12,000. Mr. Beaver wouldn’t take that, either. “Pay in full!” he insisted. Finally the CP borrowed the additional \$2,000 from its local employees, paid the full sum, and sent the delayed hotshot rolling eastward again.

ODDS AND SODS

Back in our June 1997 column, I had mentioned Lesley Bernard and her project to locate and convert her 1954 built Pullman Standard Car "Equity" near Actinolite along the Skootamatta River to a wilderness retreat. Well Lesley reported that on November 22, 1997 Equity was rerailed on its short section of track at her site and rolled to its permanent location at the north end of this track.

Gerard Burrige sent along an item about a Grand Trunk Western caboose that he came across in a unique place, McDonald's in Ancienne-Lorette, (part of greater Quebec City). The party caboose at this restaurant is GTW 79062, freshly painted red and with GT noodle lettering. He noted that the painting must have been done locally, since on the step was: "Soyez Prudent" (be careful) – wording not likely too common west of Port Huron! One of its Barber-Bettendorf trucks had DT&I cast into it. The setting is quite attractive, located on a grassy island with two gooseneck a-la-station style lamps with a two-sided clock on steel standard at one end of the island.

Mac Wilson from Barrie has sent along a couple of items. In the first, he advised that a notice appeared in the *Orillia Packet and Times* stating that the swing bridge at the Atherley Narrows, east of Orillia, would be closed from November 4 – November 24 for the purpose of rail abandonment activities. The notice had been issued by the CN Facility Maintenance, Capreol. This of course was the result of the lack of a buyer for the remaining segments of the former Newmarket Subdivision around Orillia.

Over the past several months we have on occasions made reference to the happenings around the former GTR station at Brighton, Ontario and the anticipated move of CNR Consolidation No. 2534 from Zwicker Park in Belleville. Mac Wilson in his last couple of messages, has advised that Belleville has granted an extension of time for the move of this engine. Also, arrangements have been made with Anderson Floats to undertake the move. It is proposed to make it in three sections; one being the boiler, the second the running gear and the final one the tender. At last report the movers were waiting for colder weather to ensure the ground at Zwicker Park was frozen well enough to support the heavy equipment. Apparently the park had been a landfill site, and the movers have concerns about the bearing capabilities of the soil.

THE FIRST BATTLE OF LÉVIS

How much of the on-going debates raging over the future of rail service to the waterfront transportation terminal in Lévis, Québec, relates to what I might call petty politics. Today, it is the proponents of trains versus those for abandonment and condominiums, this was not the case during the First Battle of Lévis.

In the middle of August 1879, the Intercolonial Railway of Canada had just finalized the deal to purchase from the Grand Trunk Railway, their Rivière du Loup Branch, and the day of transfer was at hand. There was some general labour unrest in the Québec City area. Stories started to reach the city of the happening in Point Lévis on Wednesday, August 13, 1879. They were enough to raise considerable concern. A report in *The Chronicle*, of Québec of August 14, stated: "The tales from Point Lévis grew wonderfully in volume and by twelve o'clock it was stated that no fewer than one hundred and seventy Grand Trunk Railroad employees, stood armed to the teeth with guns, pistols and swords, before the outgoing Halifax train, and forbade its

departure on pain of instant destruction. Among the direful things prophesied was the tearing up of the track, and this was looked upon as serious indeed." A reporter was sent across the river by ferry "to the seat of war."

It was soon realized that while there was a problem, it was not of the magnitude of the stories. The reporter found groups of idle men wandering about the streets, gathered in knots on the wharves and platforms, or standing in the bar-rooms talking over their grievance. At the railway offices, the reporter found out that there were "no armed men setting at defiance the laws of the country and intimidating passengers. The Halifax train was discovered standing on a siding, and the outward bound travellers, to a very large number, were found disporting themselves as best they could. Some remained quietly in their seats looking out the windows of the cars, others were lunching at the "Victoria," others again were smoking and chatting, while not a few relieved the tedium of their curious imprisonment by strolling about the precincts of the station."

The problem it turned out was a common one, neither the Intercolonial nor the Grand Trunk Railways had made any plans as to what to do with the approximate 28 former operating employees of the line to Rivière du Loup and the fifteen employees of the Grand Trunk shops at Hadlow.

The Intercolonial (Government) had not bought the eight Grand Trunk locomotives, which formerly operated on this line. The Intercolonial chose to use their old locomotives and their own staff – men who have been engaged on the line and were familiar with their engines. For larger repair jobs, the Grand Trunk used their shops at Richmond, Québec, while the I.C.R. had repair shops at Rivière du Loup.

The confrontation at Lévis continued, as the former Grand Trunk employees guarded the engine of the Halifax train, to prevent it from leaving. Tempers heated as an argument took place over the fact that this train was carrying the Queen's mails and subjects – the innocent victims in the affair. Policemen were called to keep the peace, but fortunately their services weren't required. After much parleying, the train was permitted to leave Point Lévis at 1:05 p.m., though the men threatened not to allow another train to leave until their wrongs were redressed. Since the men had been egged on by drink, the promises of review by politicians, and officials of both railways appeased the men, and the First Battle of Lévis drew to a close.

The Intercolonial finally did what they could to lessen the hardship which the change in the management necessitated. They employed five out of the seven discharged conductors, two of whom accepted positions as baggage men. The I.C.R. also accepted the services of three sets of train men, representing nine hands. The Grand Trunk's Hadlow mechanical shops with their fifteen hands closed.