

November 21, 1907
Hodge and Grimes Were Declared Not Guilty
Conductor and Engineer Were Not Responsible for
the Horseshoe Disaster - Verdict Was Cheered.

After being out two hours, the jury in the criminal assizes, which closed at Brampton on Saturday night, brought in a verdict of not guilty in the case of Engineer George Hodge, and Conductor Matthew Grimes, charged with criminal negligence, which caused the wreck on the C.P.R. at Caledon Horseshoe Curve where seven lives were lost.

The courtroom was packed, the gallery being filled with women, who sat for over an hour awaiting the result. At exactly 8:50 the jury came into the room, two hours after Justice Magee had given his charge, explaining the legal points.

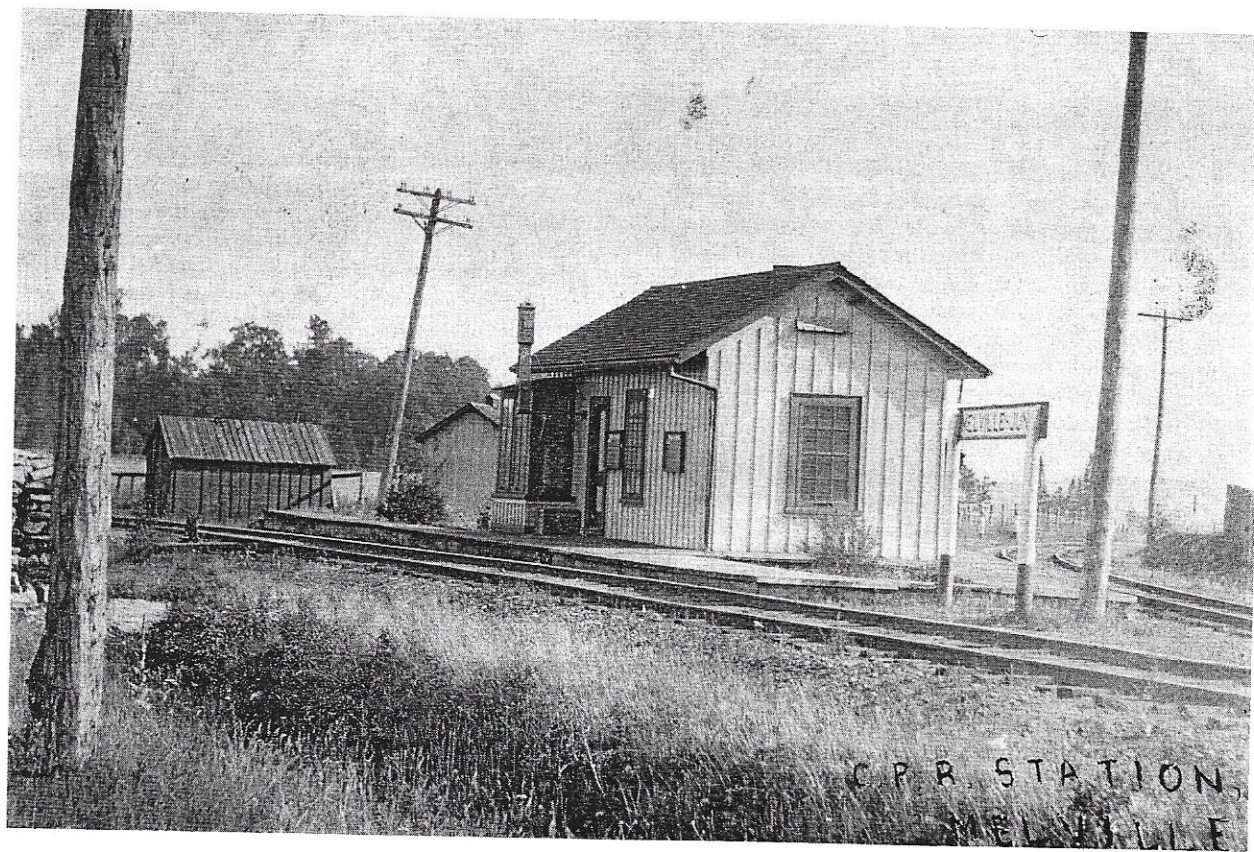
There was complete silence, and Clerk Dickson asked the foreman if a verdict had been reached. The foreman rose slowly and in a quiet voice said: "Not Guilty." There was great applause, despite the protestations of the court officials.

SHOULD BE A WARNING

When order had been restored, Justice Magee said to the prisoners; "I am glad for your sake that this verdict has been reached. I trust it will be a warning to both of you through your whole lives. I release you from attendance at the court."

NOT GUILTY

Conductor Grimes will go back to work. Hodge has not decided yet what he will do. Both were heartily congratulated on the result of the trial. Grimes expected no other verdict. Hodge was glad the strain was over. Five minutes after the jury were locked up a ballot taken stood eight to four for conviction. The four jurymen who were in favour of the accused commenced in earnest to explain and argue every point. It took over an hour, when one by one the others fell into line until the twelve were convinced that the accident was not caused through any negligence of Hodge and Grimes.



C.P.R. Station at Melville Junction 1900-tracks to Caledon and the Horseshoe are in the foreground, while the rail to Cataract and the Forks curves off to the right.

EPILOGUE:

The accounts of the Horseshoe Wreck just given are direct quotes from the Orangeville Sun, a pioneer newspaper of northern Peel County. In doing historical research in this area of Ontario, it is amazing to see the impact the wreck still has on the lives of the older residents. While the Horseshoe Curve disaster does not rank among the massive airline tragedies of to-day, it certainly was the most singularly shocking event in the region. The old residents of Caledon still talk as though it happened only yesterday.

In this booklet, the wreck has been traced from firsthand accounts right through to the inquests and trial of the trainmen. However, aftermaths of the wreck are to be found in the Orangeville paper for more than a year after the event. Lawsuits and claims for personal damages were filed throughout the winter and spring. Finally, in the Nov. 19, 1908 edition of The Sun, a front page heading proclaimed, "Stewart Got Verdict vs. the C.P.R. — Awarded \$11,500 — Last of the Caledon Wreck Cases". Thus, the railway was finally clear of its involvement in the matter.

Compared with other railway disasters, the mere ditching of a train due to fast running is usually not of great consequence. Yet, its occurrence at one of the Credit region's most scenic locations, with the possible exception of the Forks trestle, lends attraction to the wreck. Early copies of the Orangeville Sun are alive with the cornfield meets, rear enders and derailments that occurred in abun-

dance on the lines radiating from Orangeville. But it is the Horseshoe Curve location that makes this particular accident stand out from the others.

The Horseshoe Curve still enjoys a certain amount of appeal for Canadian railway historians ardent enough to search it out. A walk along the abandoned roadbed, (and if you're lucky, a guided tour by Mr. Baxter who now owns the farm), is one that appeals to many railfans. Not much imagination is needed to picture the narrow gauge tenwheelers of the Toronto, Grey & Bruce as they blasted up the grade at a stately 5 m.p.h. Also, one may even visualize the C.P.R.'s #555 careening down the slope just before she tumbled off the rails. Indeed, Mr. Baxter is very enthusiastic in showing you the exact spot, and to take you to his yard where he exhibits a pile of bolts and wheels unearthed while plowing that section of his fields.

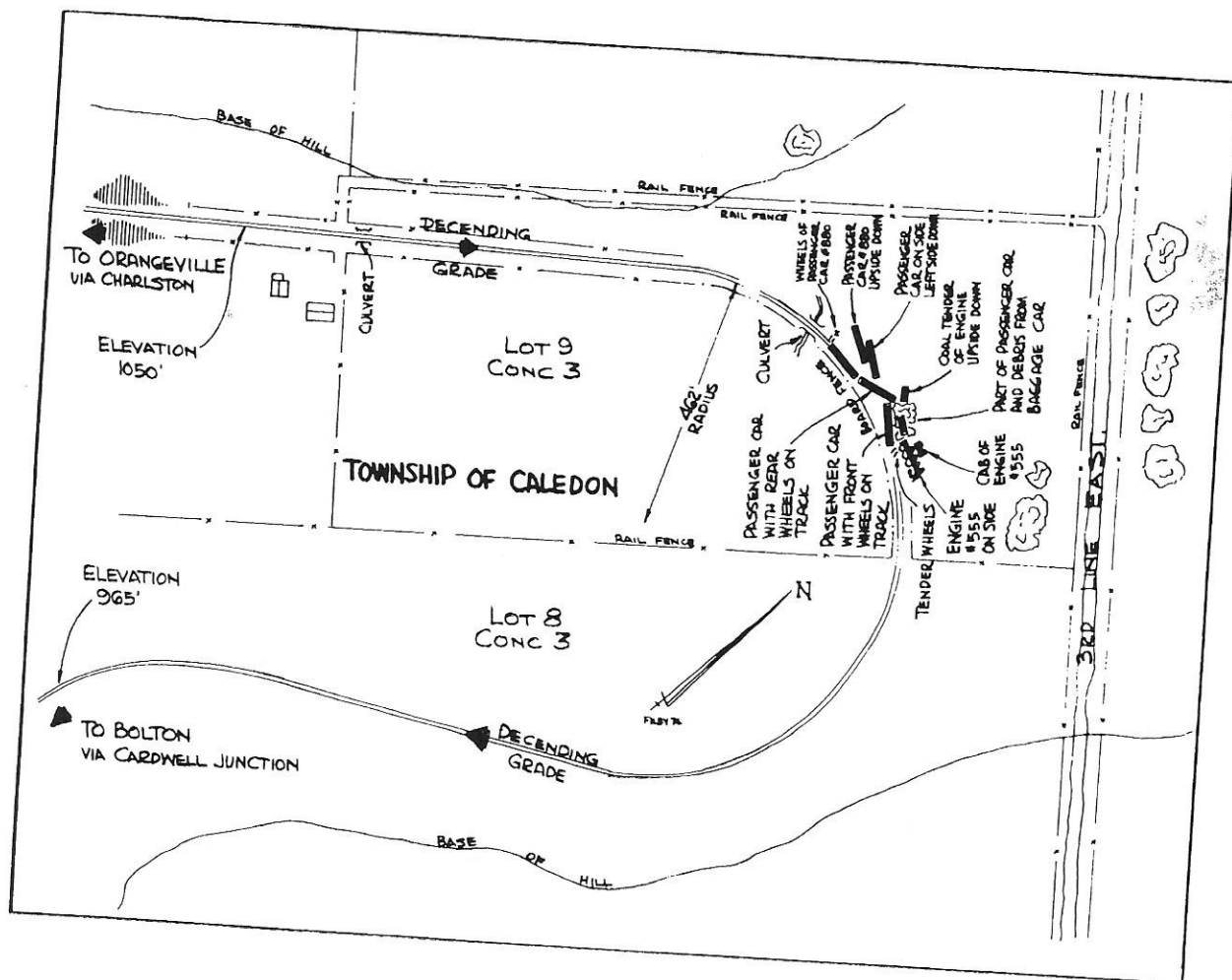
The Orangeville to Bolton line, which included the Curve, was a duplication of the Credit Valley mainline to Streetsville. As the Horseshoe's grades were more formidable, all traffic was eventually rerouted through the Forks and the rails taken up in the early 1930's. Almost as a final parting shot, the very last wrecking train through Mono Road hit and killed an onlooker. The rails of the Horseshoe had claimed another life, even in their final hour. The railway grade itself was sold to the farmers along the line, each purchasing his portion of the right-of-way for a dollar, and the sound of squealing flanges as trains rounded to the curve was heard no more.

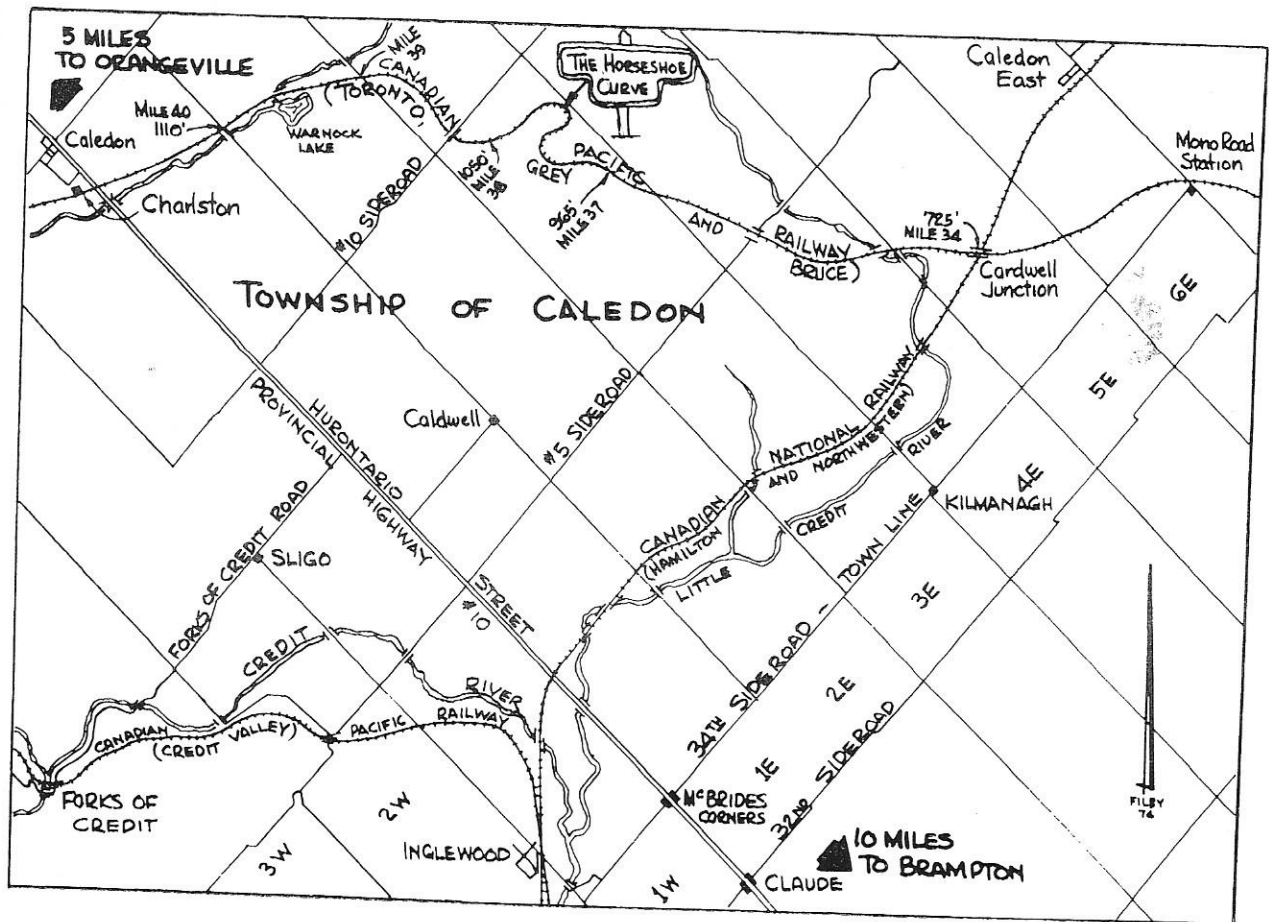


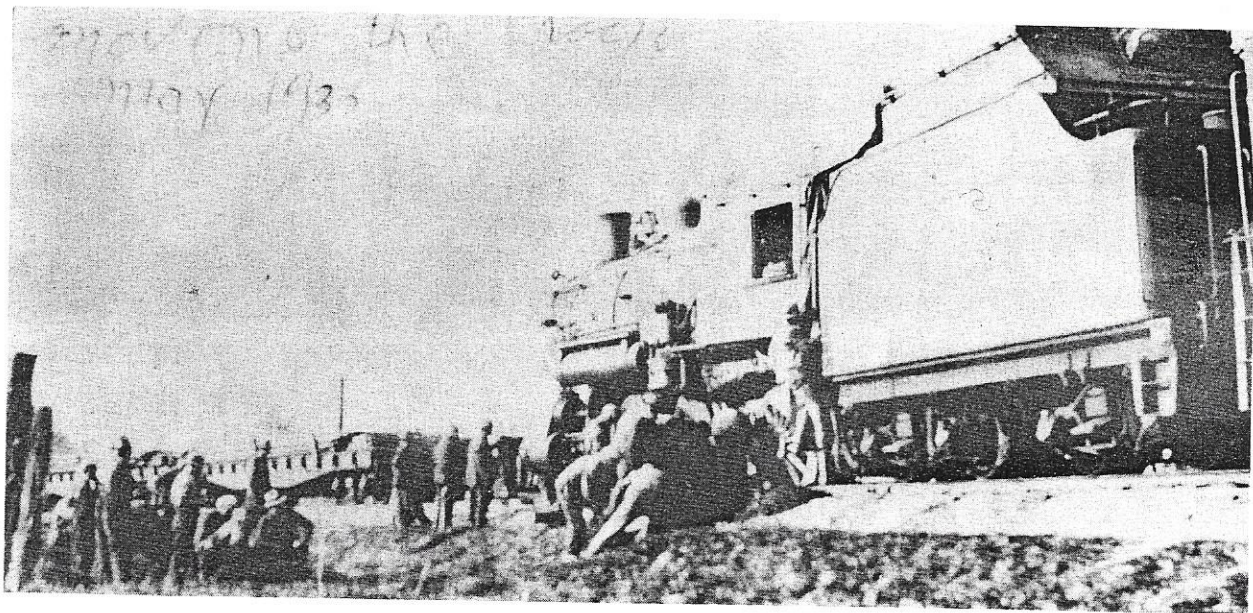
Culvert as it appears today.



Curve as it appears today.







Removing the rail at the
Horseshoe Curve, May of
1933

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