

WHITBY + PORT PERRY RLY.

# newsletter

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# THE PORT WHITBY AND PORT PERRY RAILWAY

By Brian Winter of the OSHAWA TIMES.

One hundred years ago this month, railway service between Whitby and Port Perry began on a 22-mile stretch of track called the Port Whitby and Port Perry Railway, popularly known as the "Nip and Tuck".

Although almost every trace of this important railway has now vanished, in its day it served to bring the grain and lumber trade of Ontario and Victoria Counties to Whitby and operated a regular passenger service at 60¢ for a one-way trip and \$1 for a return trip.

Although the first locomotive reached Port Perry from Whitby in November 1871, it was not until December of that year that regular service was inaugurated.

**SERVICE**  
On December 2, 1871, a reporter from the Whitby Chronicle accompanied the first shipment of goods to Port Perry and gave the following description of the trip:

"The locomotive "Scugog" with one of the temporary constructed boxcars and some platform cars loaded with freight left the Whitby Station at 11:40.

"At the four mile post wood was taken in, occasioning a stoppage of four or five minutes. From this point the road to the harbour is as straight as an arrow and a most beautiful view of the lake and surrounding country is obtained.

"At 11:55 another start was made, and Brooklin, 3-1/2 miles further on, reached in eight minutes. A further delay and additions to the company on board.

"The eleven mile post near Myrtle reached at 12:23. A delay of 25 minutes in taking on water, etc., the pumping apparatus being as yet in an unfinished state, and new pumps in course of construction.

"From Brooklin to Myrtle there is a long and heavy grade reaching as high as 90 feet in the mile, and for the four or five miles from Myrtle to the summit at the ridges, the grade is also, as might be expected, long and steep.

"The cutting at the summit for about a quarter of a mile is made in some places to the depth of 50 feet, through clay and sand, which is inclined to slip and give way with every variation of the weather and though upwards of \$20,000 have already been expended upon it, a further larger outlay will be necessary to render the line at this point perfectly secure.

"Passing slowly by Manchester and Prince Albert stations, Port Perry is reached at eighteen minutes past one, and allowing for stoppages, the whole distance of 22 miles accomplished in one hour and four minutes.

"A number of deviations were pointed out to use from what appeared to be the direct line, the following of which would have shortened the distance by at least one mile but, we were told that the contractor had an object to accomplish in making the distance 22 miles, and that instead of cutting where he could have done so without much difficulty through, he ran the line around the base of the little hills and caused many unnecessary curves which might have been avoided.

"Badly constructed culverts and dangerous unfinished embankments were also pointed out and which form part of the subject matter of litigation now going on between the company and the contractor.

"With these drawbacks, which are only a matter of time to bet over and set all right, the road is a good one.

"The ties, principally of the best hemlock, are well laid and as close as from 18 to 27 inches from centre to centre and competent judges declare it--we use our own words--'the best tied road in Canada'.

"The run from Port Perry to Whitby is leisurely made in about an hour, not a stick of wood being required from the time of leaving the summit--a distance of 15 miles. In fact, for this latter distance, a load of any weight with sufficient locomotive capacity to hold it in check might be conveyed without any propelling power."

The Chronicle reporter described the Port Whitby and Port Whitby Railway as the shortest and cheapest of any running north from Lake Ontario.

## ADVANTAGE

It had an advantage over the Midland Railway from Port Hope because it was 25 miles shorter and terminated at one of the best natural harbours on Lake Ontario, he said.

While the railway was still under construction, it was estimated that in one year it would ship 30-million feet of sawn lumber, 15,000 pieces of square timber, 5,000 cords of wood, 2,000 cords of tan bark, two-million flour barrel staves, three-million shingles, 300,000 bushels of grain, 10,000 barrels of flour and 12,000 passengers.

The rails were shipped from Wales in 1871 and 70 years later, when the line was closed, they were torn up and melted down for war materials to aid Britain in the Second World War.

The railway company built a grain elevator and wharves at Port Perry to handle the shipments and the tracks led into the grain elevator at Port Whitby. During the 1870s and 1880s, the entire eastern pier at Port Whitby was piled from end to end with lumber for shipment, which came in on the Nip and Tuck.

In 1871, the officers of the Port Whitby and Port Perry Railway were Chester Draper, owner of Whitby Harbour; James Dryden, a wealthy farmer from Brooklin; James Holden, one of the founders of the Dominion Bank; N. G. Reynolds, sheriff of Ontario County who built the Ontario Ladies' College as his private residence; Joseph Bigelow, and Aaron Ross, merchants in Port Perry; K. F. Lockhart, manager of the Ontario Bank in Whitby; Thomas Paxton, MPP and Edward Major.

Mr. Draper was president, Mr. Bigelow vice-president, and Ross Johnston, secretary.

## EXTENDED

In 1877, the railway was extended to Lindsay to connect with the Victoria Railway and open the lumber trade at Fenlon Falls and Bobcaygeon to the Whitby market.

Mr. Holden, who managed the affairs of the railway in its early years, had dreams of building a transcontinental railway from Whitby to the Pacific Ocean, but his plan was never realized. He died in Winnipeg in 1881 of pneumonia, while attempting to obtain support for his scheme.

The Nip and Tuck had its share of misadventures. During its construction the contractor quit and a lawsuit developed between him and the company.

It took four years to raise enough capital to build the railway and even as the first train made its run to Port Perry, there was a desperate need for money.

Once when debts became too high, Sheriff Reynolds was ordered to seize one of the locomotives. He and his deputy erected a barricade of ties on the track, but when the engineer saw the blockade, he fired up the locomotive and plowed through the ties, sending the sheriff and deputy running for their lives.

Often the brakes on trains failed coming down the steep grade from Port Perry and on one occasion, a train of mast timbers ran the whole 22 miles out of control and nearly went off the end of the Port Whitby wharves into Lake Ontario.

#### SNOWDRIFTS

Trains bringing in high school students from the north to Whitby often became stuck in snowdrifts and once when there was no hope of getting out of a drift, the train crew and students spent the night feasting on eggs and sides of bacon.

James Holden purchased three locomotives for the railway from a firm in Portland, Maine, and they were named the James Dryden, James Austin and James Holden, after directors of the company.

The James Dryden was lost in a fire which burned the roundhouse on Mary Street in Whitby in 1875. A new roundhouse, built after the fire, is now used as an auto repair garage.

The original wood-burning locomotives were replaced in 1883 by coal-burning engines.

[For additional information on the Port Whitby and Port Perry Railway, see G. R. Stevens Canadian National Railways, Sixty Years of Trial and Error, Volume One.]



What's a Canadian National passenger train doing with two CP Rail SW1200RS diesel units as motive power on a piece of CP Rail track???

You may wonder, ah, they are being diverted because of a train wreck on a CN line. Wrong! Try again.

Another clue--the track is a former Canadian Pacific inter-urban line.

Give up?? The correct answer is that the train of CN passenger equipment being pulled by the CP Rail diesels is an excursion special, sponsored by the Kitchener-Waterloo Big Brother House, on October 16th. The trip was run in part over the former Lake Erie & Northern interurban line from Kitchener to Brantford and return. Hence the CP Rail diesels shown (top left) outside of Paris, and (right) in Galt, with the CN equipment. The trip was highly successful and well patronized.

[Two photographs--Charles O. Begg]

