

6 STUFFVILLE PASSENGER SERVICE  
1941 1971

# newsletter

6218  
Retirement



Upper Canada Railway Society

locomotive cab  
study (ergonomics +  
safety) 1971

July • 90c



# THE RETIREMENT OF 6218

Sooner or later in life, it seems, a good thing that one enjoys and has enjoyed for many years, must be ended. So it seems to be with mainline steam excursions in Canada. An eleven-year era of mainline steam excursions on Canadian National Railways was brought to a fitting close in a simple ceremony at Belleville, Ontario on July 4, 1971, when U-2-g 4-8-4 6218--the last active steam locomotive on the railway--was placed in retirement.

Many thousands of people in eastern Canada and certain parts of the United States have ridden behind, photographed, recorded, heard or seen this famous locomotive in her seven years of fantrip operations on lines of Canadian National and subsidiary companies. How many miles of colour and black and white film and recording tape have been expended by enthusiasts in preserving an instant of 6218's active career??? It is perhaps an understatement to say that 6218 is the most famous Northern of all!!!

In the eleven years of mainline steam excursions on the CN system more than 150 trips were operated. Of the five locomotives operated in fantrip service, two of the more famous were Northern--6167 and 6218.

Regular use of steam on the CN system had ended in April 1960. Most people thought that they would never see or hear another steam locomotive on CN again. Their thoughts were shortlived, however, when on July 10, 1960, U-2-e class Northern 6167 was dispatched from Toronto to Niagara Falls with an excursion train sponsored by the Upper Canada Railway Society. Thus began the era of mainline steam excursions on CN. 6167 operated mainly in Ontario but ran one trip from Montreal to Victoriaville in the autumn of 1963. Another Northern locomotive--U-2-c 6153--was employed in excursion service in Quebec.

By the summer of 1963 it was apparent that excursions might be ended, if a replacement for 6167 (nearing the end of her boiler time) was not found [6153 was retired from excursion service on October 14, 1962.]. Accordingly 6218 was rescued from an uncertain fate in dead storage and placed in Stratford Shops for a thorough overhaul (6218 was the last locomotive to be overhauled at Stratford). 6218 made her debut as the replacement for 6167 on a memorable weekend in the fall of 1964. The two locomotives were doubleheaded on a pair of excursions out of Toronto--to Scotia Junction on September 26 and to Paris on September 27, under the sponsorship of the UCRS. These two trips marked the last time that steam power was doubleheaded anywhere on Canadian National.

The happy love affair with steam continued into 1965, and the United States Interstate Commerce Commission certified 6218, enabling her to operate on CN subsidiary lines in the U.S. Midwest and New England. The engine became a welcome sight to fans in such places as Detroit, Chicago, Portland and New London. 6218 operated on trips in the United States for one more year.

The years slipped by---1967, 1968, and 1969---and 6218 continued in excursion service, operating out of various points in Ontario and Quebec, to the continuing delight of railfans and the general public. However, it was realized by the railway that the life of the boiler was good for only a certain period of time, and this could be extended only for periods of a year at a time, following inspection of the locomotive by officials of the Canadian Transport Commission. One year extensions were obtained that enabled 6218 to operate into 1970. Only a six month extension was obtained after September 1970, and this expired on March 31, 1971. The Upper Canada Railway Society operated the last chartered excursion trips with the locomotive on March 20 (Toronto to London) and 21 (Toronto to Paris), 1971.

Canadian National decided that it should be the railway (and rightly so) who should operate the last trips of all with the locomotive. So project "Countdown 6218" was started by the Department of Public Relations, St. Lawrence Region in Montreal. The last weekend of June and the first weekend of July were picked as the dates of the final trips.

No better choice of dates could have been picked for the trips. The weather on both weekends was excellent, with warm temperatures and lot of sunshine. Over 400 people were lined up in Central Station in Montreal to board the first special trip with 6218 on the morning of June 26. Destination of this trip was Ottawa and the Museum of Science and Technology. 6218 was attached to the train at Turcot (no steam locomotive being allowed into Central Station), and proceeded onto Ottawa--three runpasts enroute. At the National Museum former TH&B 0-6-0 #40 was in steam to greet the train. Equipment on the train consisted of baggage car 9241, eight electromechanical picture window coaches, dinette car 427, sleeping car "Preston" and observation car "Pacific" (pulled out of retirement for the occasion). The same equipment was used the following day on the excursion to Victoriaville.

Little touches for the patrons of both trips made them even more memorable. Specially printed booklets were handed out to each patron, giving a short history of steam excursions on CN, information about the locomotives used, and details pertaining to runpasts and other information about each trip. The cover of the booklet was a striking lithograph of the numberplate of 6218, done in orange and yellow. The same lithograph was used on the specially printed menu in dinette car 427.

6218 herself was in pristine condition for her final hours of glory. She had been restored to her World War II appearance, complete with rectangular herald on the tender coal bunker, smoke deflectors (or "elephant ears") around the smokebox, a glossy black paint job complete with white striping on the running boards and cab of the engine and on the tender, and yellow numerals on the cab sides. The wheels and drivers on engine and tender were painted their usual white.

Another good-sized crowd took in the excursion from Montreal to Victoriaville on Sunday the 27th. 6218 was put on the train at Bridge Street. Double runpasts were the order of the day at each of the three locations--Sainte Basile, Otterburn, and Saint Hyacinthe. A prompt return was made to Montreal from Victoriaville in the early evening.

For the final retirement ceremonies on the following weekend, Belleville, Ontario was selected as the location. 6218 was moved from Montreal to Belleville on June 30 (under her own steam).

6218 operated in short excursion service from Belleville to Anson Junction on both July 3rd and 4th. Five trips were operated on the 3rd (with baggage car and commuter cars as stock), and two trips on the 4th. On the first trip on the morning of the 3rd 6218 carried a sign on her pilot marking the last run of her engineer on that day, Mr. Ralph L. Turner.

[It should be noted that the men working the last run crews donated their services for the occasion; CN decided to give their wages to the railway unions to pass onto charity.]

The highways and byways from Belleville to Anson Junction were dotted with cars with many United States license plates, as people came from far and near to see 6218 make her last run on this weekend.

Promptly after 6218 had completed the last excursion run from Anson Junction in the early afternoon of the 4th, she was moved to the roundhouse in Belleville Yard, where she was coaled and watered, and received some last minute primping. At 1500 hours she moved onto the main line in front of the station and there picked up a "symbolic train" consist consisting of a baggage car, sleeping car "Preston" and observation car "Pacific".

At 1600 hours the train was moved to the east end of the station platform, and the cab of 6218 placed alongside the rear platform of the official car where the retirement ceremony was to take place. A sizeable crowd was on hand for the occasion.

Opening remarks was made by Mr. George Van de Water, Rideau Area Manager for CN at Belleville. He then introduced the Mayor of Belleville, Dr. J. R. Scott, who welcomed all to the city, and hoped that CN would consider Belleville as a possible for the last resting place of 6218. Mr. J. H. Richer, Vice-President of the St. Lawrence Region was the next speaker, and then Mr. K. E. Hunt Vice-President, Transportation & Maintenance, representing N. J. MacMillan, CN Chairman and President. Mr. Hunt intimated (to the delight of the steam buffs present) that CN was trying to determine if some other steam locomotive might be a candidate for preservation (succeeding 6218), but had to make no promises--that there was "difficulty in trying to home in on a proper successor to this old girl here."

Following completion of his remarks, Mr. Hunt handed the "Last Run" train orders to engineer Carmen Guest, who then left the platform of the official car, and clambered into the cab of the locomotive to join fireman Robert Dall. 6218 then backed her train down to the east end of Belleville Yard (a good mile or more); the official party left the car and joined the crowd, and the official car was removed.

A stirring eulogy to 6218 was given by Mr. O.S.A. Lavallee of Montreal. At the conclusion of the eulogy, the Duke of Edinburgh Pipe Band played "Auld Lange Syne". There was now a hush in the crowd, as people stood waiting, cameras and tape recorders at the ready. The band played a second time. After what seemed an eternity, out

of the east a plume of black smoke arose. 6218 then came screaming down the yard, through the leads and past the station and the assembled crowd, whistle blowing, doing an estimated 60 per. She disappeared into the sun in the west, and it was all over.

What more can be said, except to say what was said at the splendid retirement ceremony by Omer S. A. Lavallee in his eulogy to 6218:

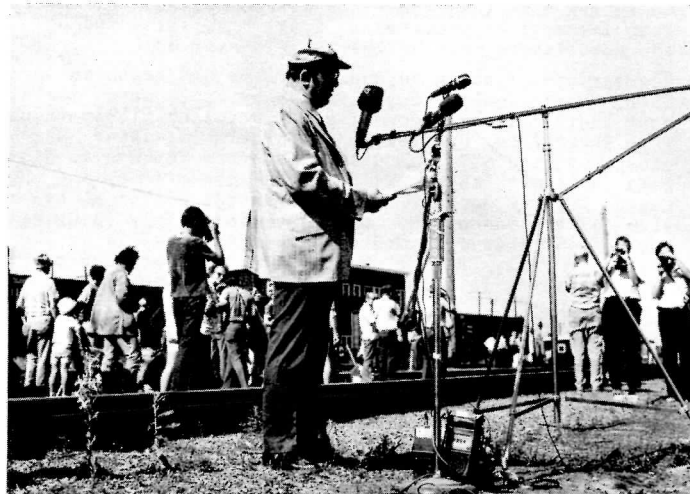
".....I would like to express congratulations and the sincere appreciation of every unrepentant romanticist--myself included--to Canadian National Railways, its officers and staff, for retaining No. 6218 and its predecessors in serviceable condition for more than a decade after the use of such locomotives ceased to be necessary for operating purposes. Those present owe a particular debt to CN for arranging this ceremony today to mark a historic occasion in a fitting and dignified manner."

"Slowly but inexorably, we drink our fill of the last days of the Steam Age from the Cup of Time. The dregs of the cup are bitter, but time is the enemy of all romanticists. It seems appropriate, therefore, to conclude with the words, not of a romanticist, but of a Stoic."

"Time", said Marcus Aurelius, 'is like a river made up of the events which happen, and a violent stream; for as soon as a thing has been seen, it is carried away, and another comes in its place, and this will be carried away too.'"



K. E. Hunt, Vice-President, Transportation & Maintenance, Canadian National (representing N. J. MacMillan, CN President and Chairman at the ceremony), hands the ceremonial "Last Run" train orders to 6218's engineer Carmen Guest (to the right of Mr. Hunt). Mayor Dr. J. R. Scott of Belleville (partially obscured by the microphone boom) looks on.



Omer S. A. Lavallee delivers his stirring eulogy to 6218 at trackside as 6218 awaits the highball to perform the last runpast. The engine and train were at the extreme east end of Belleville Yard.

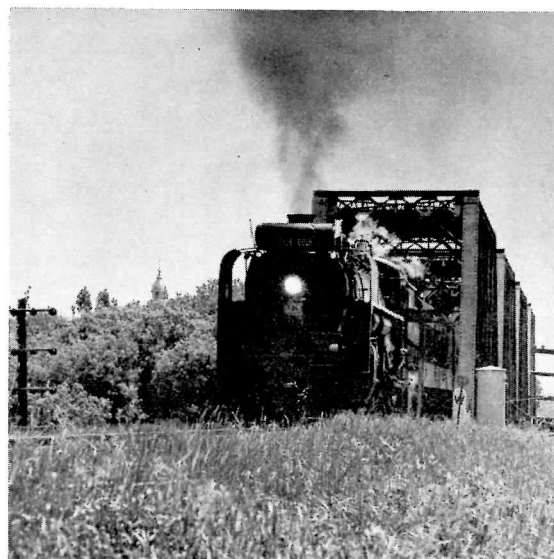
(Both photographs: NEWSLETTER/Robert McMann)



# Scenes From The Countdown 6218 Steam Weekends



ABOVE: 6218 is surrounded admirers at the station at Alexandria, Ontario--site of the first water stop on the June 26th trip to Ottawa.

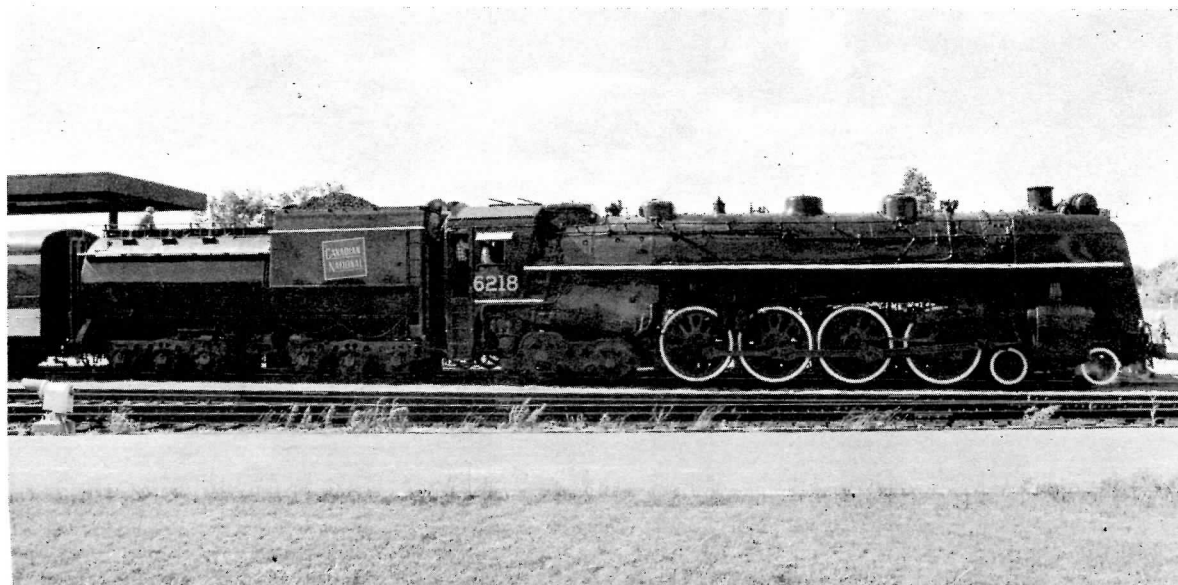


TOP RIGHT: The locomotive storms across the bridge over the South Nation River at Casselman, Ontario--the location of the third runpast of the day on the trip to Ottawa.

RIGHT: The engineer and fireman of 6218 pose obligingly for pictures during the two hour lay-over at the Museum of Science & Technology in Ottawa. In the background the tender of STELCO 0-6-0 #40 protrudes from behind the gondola car; the switcher was in steam to greet 6218.



BELOW: A broadside portrait of 6218 by the platforms of the ultramodern Union Station in Ottawa.



(All photographs this page NEWSLETTER/Robert McMann)



6218 speeds past the station at Glen Robertson, Ontario on the way back to Montreal from Ottawa, right at sunset.  
(Ted Wickson)



← The morning of Sunday, June 27th was cool and sunny, with cloudless skies. Ted Wickson caught 6218 on her way to Victoriaville at this spot west of St. Bruno, Quebec.

BOTTOM LEFT: This pretty railfanette poses on the steps of the back platform of observation car "Pacific" during the layover at Victoriaville, Quebec.  
(Brian George)

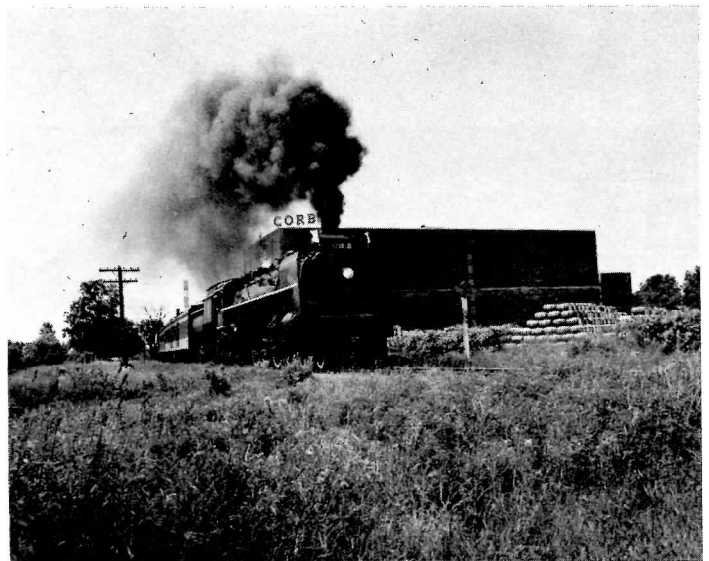


↓ BOTTOM RIGHT: 6218 puts on a fine show crossing the Richilieu River at Otterburn, Quebec, at the second of three double runpasts on the June 27th trip to Victoriaville. (Brian George)



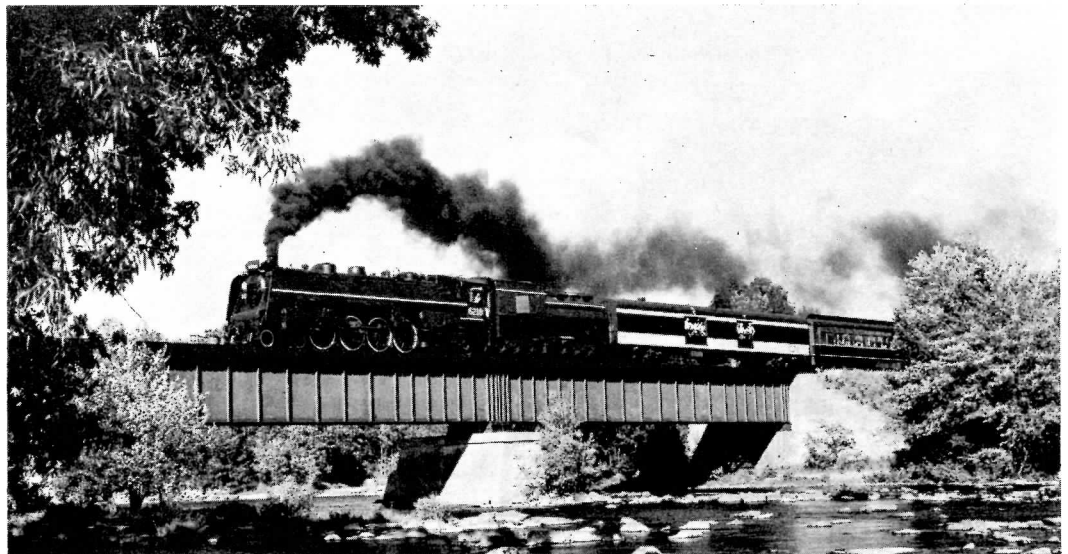


6218 moves past the roundhouse building out to pick up her train at Belleville Station, very early on the morning of July 3rd.  
(Dusan Cizman)



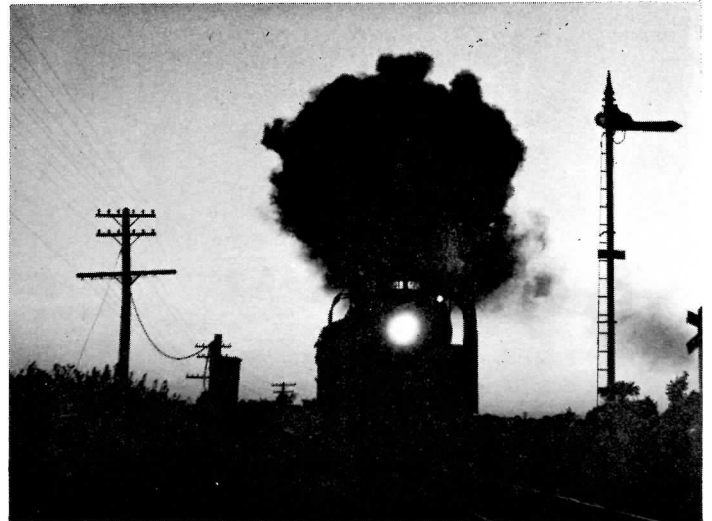
6218 passes the home of some very well-known brands of liquor on her very last trip on the morning of July 4th, outbound to Anson Junction, at Corbyville, Ontario.  
(NEWSLETTER/Robert McMann)

6218 crosses the Moira River at Foxboro, Ontario outbound on the first early afternoon trip, July 3rd.  
(John Thompson)



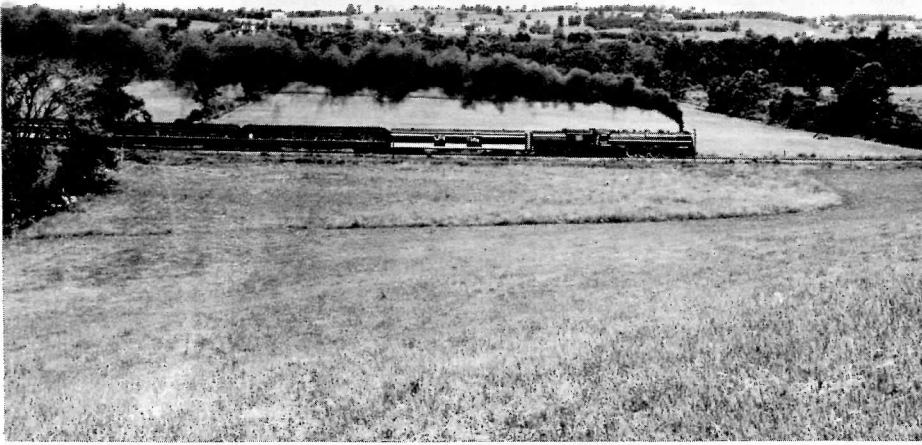
6218 storms up a slight grade westbound at Stirling, Ontario, on one of the afternoon trips July 3rd. Fans in the baggage car wave at the cameraman.  
(Dusan Cizman)

6218 is silhouetted against the evening sky, with an adjacent semaphore standing guard. The location is Anson Junction, as the locomotive leaves for Belleville on the last trip of the day, July 3rd.  
(Ted Wickson)





On her final excursion on the morning of July 4th, 6218 and her train are seen from a hillside, heading southbound between Stirling and Madoc Junction.  
(John Thompson)



The early morning sun lights the side of 6218 as she heads back to Belleville on the first morning trip on July 4th, at Halloway, Ontario. (Ted Wickson)

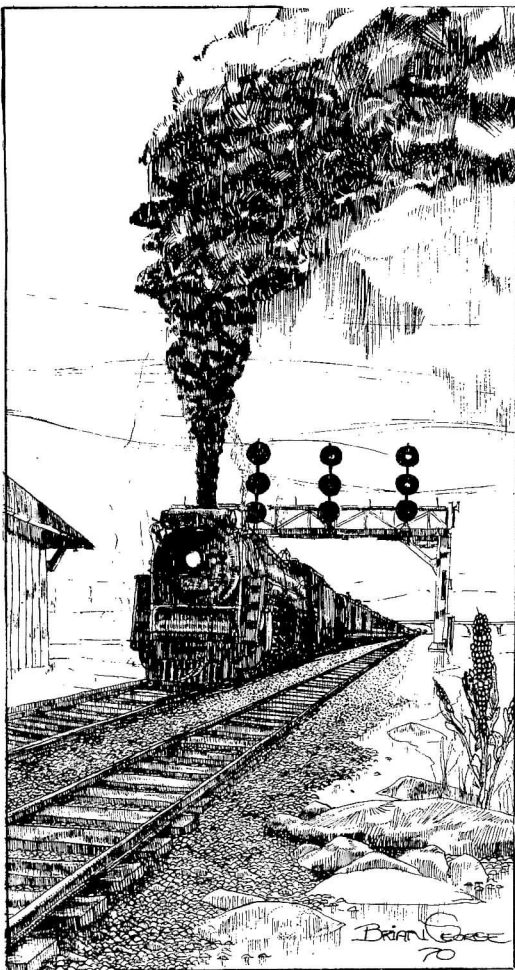


6218 arrives at the yard limits of Belleville Yard on her final excursion run on the morning of July 4th.  
(NEWSLETTER/Robert McMann)

The locomotive receives some last minute attention by the sand tower at the Belleville roundhouse, prior to moving down to the station for stationary display.  
(NEWSLETTER/Robert McMann)

6218 and her symbolic "Last Train" stand in front of Belleville Station, as admiring fans look on. The retirement ceremony took place shortly after this photo was taken, to the east of the station platform.  
(NEWSLETTER/Robert McMann)





# A TOAST TO 6218

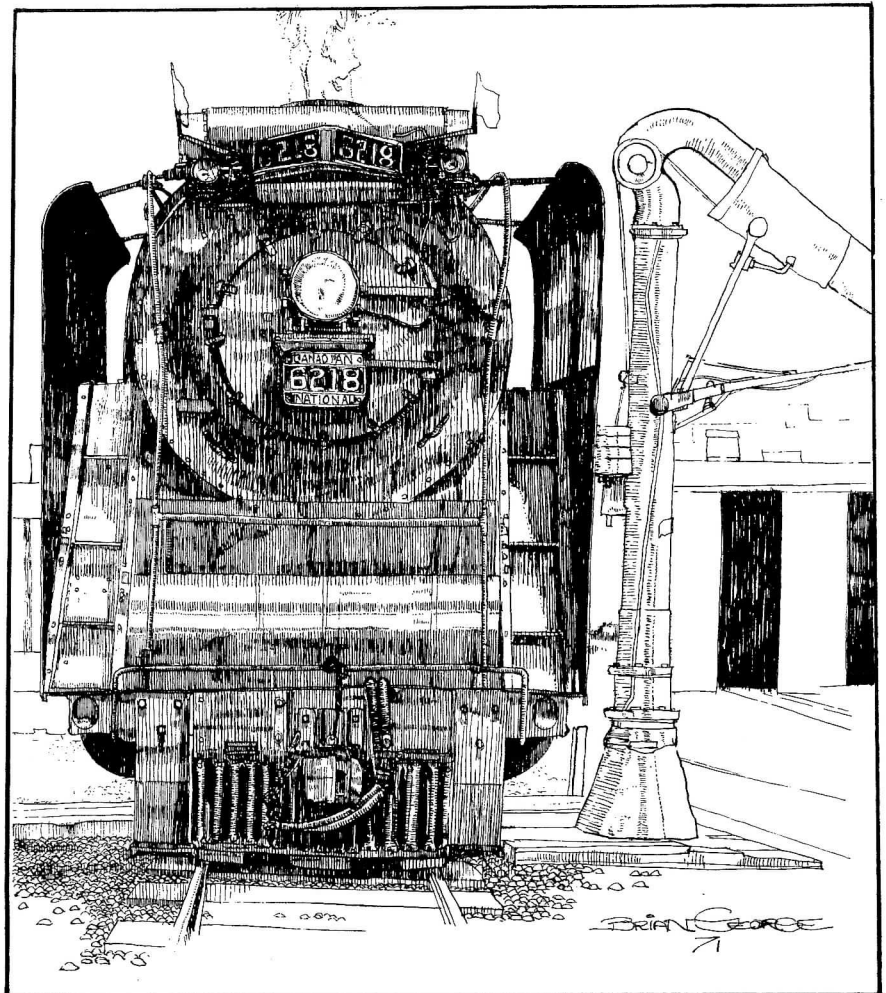
POEM BY JAMES J. SHETLER SR.

DRAWINGS BY BRIAN GEORGE.

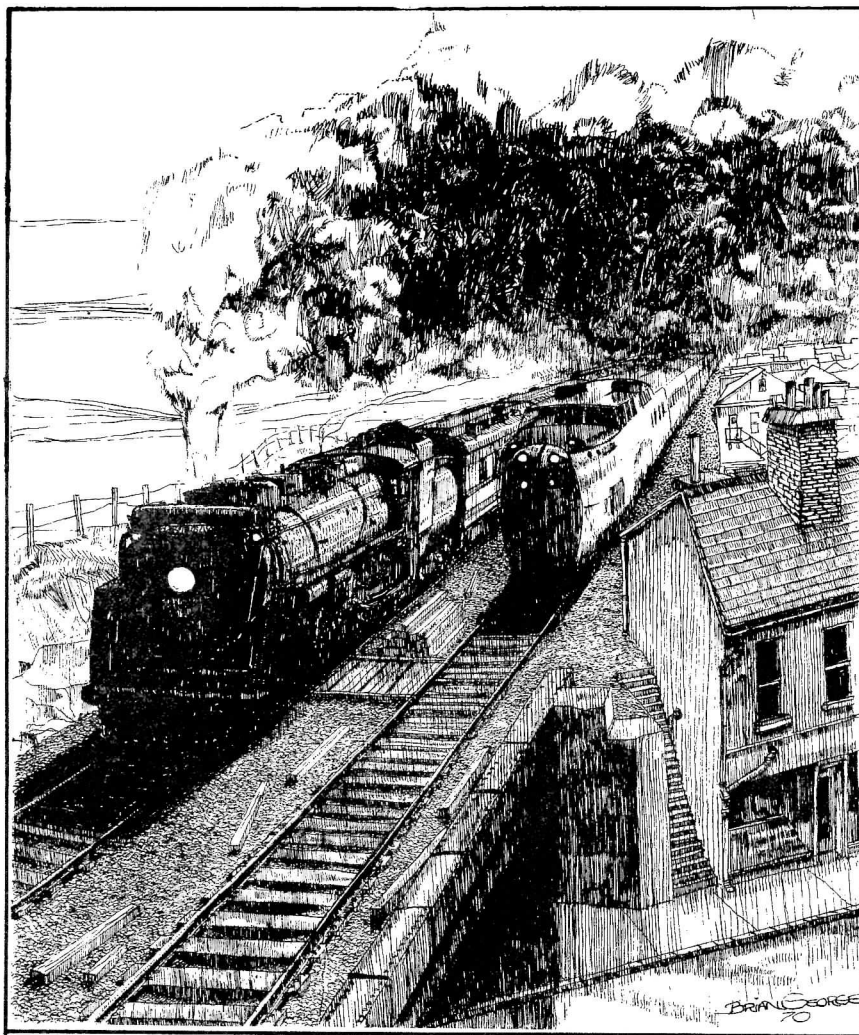
Called out of retirement back  
into the game,  
Her 'Northern' sister is running  
lame,  
We need a good engine to keep  
up the fight.  
6218 will surely be right.

So into the roundhouse, they  
hailed the old gal.  
They lifted her high, right off  
the rails,  
Put in new bushings, parts  
and new shoes,  
Polished her up and sanded  
her flues.

Plugged all the leaks, and  
filled the rust spots,  
Filled her with water, then  
got her hot!  
Tested her out for her coming  
date,  
So this "last of her kind"  
could meet a good fate.





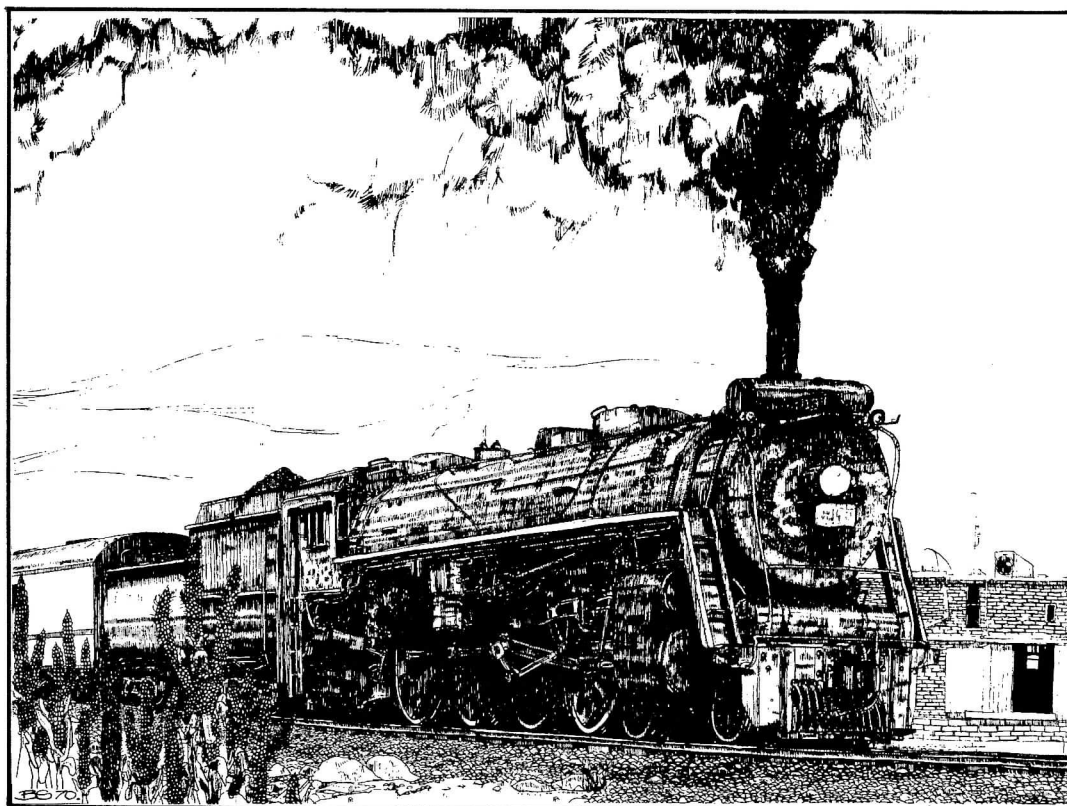


Spring of '64 saw her rolling  
once again,  
Running excursions on the  
lakeshore main.  
A great monstrous champ, all  
full of pride,  
Rushing past diesels and strutting  
her pride.

From London, St. Thomas and  
Stratford and then  
To Oshawa, Barrie and Watkins'  
Glen.  
This reborn creature from the  
roundhouse shop  
All over the province, they  
sure made her hop.

Posing for runpasts, conventions,  
whatever,  
No matter the place, the time  
or the weather.  
For seven long years, she's kept  
up the fight,  
Showing us all, steam still has  
the "might".

Now she's done her best in  
her second life,  
Steaming and chuffing through  
all of the strife.  
So let's give 6218 a long,  
lusty cheer,  
And hope against hope, she'll  
run next year.



# A Song about 6218

6218, well-known as the number of CN's last active steam locomotive, is now also the name of a song--a song which is produced by Track 4 Records of London, Ontario, and recorded by an up and coming Canadian folk-singing duo, the Stone Hand.

The record is currently being made available to railfan clubs across North America (and is currently available from the UCRS), and is the result of a long train of events that began two years ago at the York Hotel in London. Ed Assaf, the hotel proprietor, and a long-time rail-buff, was auditioning a new singer for his Thursday night entertainment spot. The artist, one Mike Mulhern, performed a self-composition, "The Song of the Trains," as one of his audition selections. Mr. Assaf liked the song and was pleased with the fact that Mike was interested enough in trains to write a song about them. This is when the idea to compose a song about 6218 was born.

The locomotive, the last active steamer on CN, was a subject of interest to Assaf. His hotel, being directly across the street from the CN Tower in London, contained a number of oil paintings of famous Canadian steam locomotives, as well as a number of rail artifacts prominently displayed about the walls of the building.

Mr. Assaf told Mulhern the story of the locomotive and suggested they collaborate on a song about the engine. A number of tunes and lyric ideas changed hands between the two over the next three months, and when the first draft of the song was completed, it was recorded at Track 4's studios, operated by Walter Grasser. Grasser subsequently became Mike's manager and diehard promoter of the song.

The initial recording of the song prompted the writers to initiate some changes in the structure of the song, and it was then completed in its present melodic form two weeks later. The song was again recorded at Track 4.

Shortly after the take was completed, Mulhern teamed up with singer-guitarist Don Mathers to form what is now known as Stone Hand. Together they began performing and promoting the song "6218" along with Assaf and Grasser.

Their promotion efforts has taken Stone Hand on the UCRS winter excursion of January 24, 1971, from Toronto to Orillia, where a film crew from the CBC television show "This Land" filmed the group and their song. The song and also "The Song of the Train" were broadcast on the "This Land" television show nationally on February 24, 1971 (and again on July 14). The song has also been performed on CFPL-TV in London, and articles on the song and the train have been published in newspapers throughout the country.

The subject of the Stone Hand's song--6218--needs very little introduction to railfans. Although the recording may not help to keep the engine in operation, it is designed to preserve the memory of the locomotive, and in some way preserve the memory of steam. The flip side of the record is a beautiful treatment of the song that started it all "The Song of the Train".

Stone Hand, themselves, have felt an affinity towards Canadian railways. Mulhern, as already mentioned, to the point of having already written a song about trains, and Don Mathers as a one-time employee of the railway. Mathers, guitarist, banjoist, harpist, and vocalist, has been doing musical things for most of his 23 years. He started with four years of piano lessons, then two years of banjo, three years of trumpet, and five years of guitar. Along the way he sang with two high school trios and one college duo. Mulhern, on the other hand, wanted to become a singer most of his life, but he let banking, soldiering, journalism and acting have their time in his life first. When he reached for the inevitable late in 1969, he had eight years of vocal training and one year of self-taught guitar to press his claim. Six months of working as a single preceded his alliance with Don and the beginning of Stone Hand.

Stone Hand have, since their meeting, been appearing in many clubs and hotels throughout Ontario, developing their act to the point of being the country's most promising folk duo. They have appeared on CBC-TV's "The Performers", and numerous local television appearances promoting themselves and their song about 6218. This, combined with the release of the final recording of the song, produced by well-known folksinger Paul Mills, has established Stone Hand's reputation with not just railfans, but all facets of the public, throughout Canada.

To obtain a copy of Stone Hand's song about 6218 (flip side "The Song of the Train"), the Upper Canada Railway Society has a limited number of these records available. Send \$1.19 (plus 5% Ontario Sales Tax) to UCRS Publications Sales Department, Box 122, Terminal A, Toronto 116, Ontario, and your record will be mailed out promptly, along with an attractive 8-1/2" by 17" poster of Stone Hand with steam locomotive 6218.



Stone Hand and 6218 pose together for an informal portrait.  
(NEWSLETTER/Robert McMann)