

Just A. Ferronut's Railway Archaeology August 1993 "Art Clowes"

I am back after a great week in the east including the trip to Prince Edward Island that I planned for last year. It has been several years since I had been on the Island so there are numerous changes, especially the lack of an operating railway.

Before I start, I should point out, that this will be a general article for a couple of reasons. The main one being that, at several of the locations, I was able to locate considerable local material, including some photos. I want to use some of this material, and since it is going to take some time to get things organised, I am saving numerous details to combine with this local material.

I made a sort of a dash from Montréal to the New Brunswick boundary meeting a couple of trains where CN's Drummondville Subdivision parallels the Autoroute west of Quebec City and the usual assortment of piggy-back, double-stack trains on the Montmagny and Pelletier Subdivisions. My timing was right to photograph an east bound led by CN 9671 about 22 miles west of Edmundston at Lac-Baker, New Brunswick. Soon I was in the territory of the Temiscouata Railway that I mentioned in the May 1993 column. Starting at CN Mile 11.6 Pelletier Subdivision, near Baker Brook, I again looked for more details of the long abandoned roadbed of this regional railway. Since the light was good and with CN's GP40-2L assisted by 2334 getting close, it was time for another photograph, so to an open road crossing east of St. Hilaire. More help for Kodak as I snapped our east bound. A closer look at the area between the railway and the main highway revealed the road bed of the 1940 abandoned Temiscouata in the brush. With this reference, one can spot the alignment of this line in the area.

The Temiscouata Railway originally extended to Connors, New Brunswick some 32 miles north-west of Edmundston. While nothing is visible in the Connors yard, a short section of embankment is still visible just south of the yard. The Connors' Pioneer Museum, located in a converted general store, is just across the street from the Temiscouata rail yard. This community endeavour has two benches from the Temiscouata Railway on display. These benches have cast metal frame end supports with wooden slats seat and back. From Connors south through St-FranHois-de-Madawaska to Clair, portions of the road bed is visible.

One of the items on my search-list was the newspaper articles of the Saturday, February 24, 1906 fire at the Intercolonial Railway Shops in downtown Moncton. The ICR shops at that time were in the area (present yard) in front of the VIA Station. The fire burned the paint shop, freight car repair shop, boiler shop, boiler room and part of the car shop. The shops built to replace these were the John Street Shops that were closed in 1988. The 1906 news article stated that "... some fourteen locomotives, including the new ones recently received by the railway, were lined up in trains with steam up in readiness to be run out in case the fire spread to the round houses."

I found the complete article interesting as I put it on the computer over the evening.

Amherst, Nova Scotia Tourist Bureau

The next morning, I decided to take a side trip down to the Amherst and Parrsboro areas of Nova Scotia. Road construction had traffic detouring through Amherst via a

different exit than I normally use. As I travel up LaPlanche Street, I spot an orange rail car setting beside the street. The last time I saw this car was in December 1989 sitting at the Amherst station and known as Discovery Train car # 220 and now it was marked as the Town's Tourist Bureau. As I walked towards the car, I noted the plaque stating that it was the car *Alexandria*. On entering the car and being greeted by two young lady receptionists, I startled them when I said that I had been reading about them the night before. With their faces still showing puzzlement, I explained that I had read how this car had been saved from the burning shops on a cold winter night in Moncton some 87 years ago. The Moncton newspaper article had stated that both the car and paint shops were full of cars undergoing repairs and that very few were saved. The article continued, "... In addition to those in the shops some ten or twelve cars or more, coal and box, loaded, were destroyed in the yard. In the shop being repaired was the Governor General's private car the *Alexandria*, and (ICR's) General manager Pottinger's private car No. 75. The former was hauled out, but the latter was burned and its frame stands in ruins with several other expensive coaches."

"The Governor General's car was only saved by a great effort. A car of coal stood against the end of the *Alexandria* and a crowd of men, which included officials and clerks of the railway, hauled the coal car out of the way and then by great exertion pulled the official car from the rapidly burning building."

The ladies were quite interested in this information and provided me with a copy of the areas Tourist Guide with its write up, "... The Centennial Coach Car, once named *Alexandria* # 119, was built in 1905 by Rhodes and Curry Company (Amherst, NS) for the Canadian Government Railways as a sleeping car."

"In June of 1989, the coach car was declared as surplus to the collection of the National Museum of Canada, and arrangements were made to return it to Amherst in commemoration of the town's Centennial year."

"This unit is completely self-contained with its own heating and refrigeration systems, washrooms, air conditioning and galley. Although it has been renovated numerous times over the past 85 years, much of the woodwork is original. The Reception area is a beautiful example of the car's elite past with a panelled tongue and groove oak ceiling, brass tables, club chairs and velvet curtains. Being one of the most unusual tourist bureaus in the Maritimes, the Car has a long and elaborate history of service to Canada."

"The Coach Car is permanently displayed on LaPlanche Street (Exit 2), so come and take a walk through it..."

This car as indicated above started life in Amherst and after going through numerous hands including Government Service, the Canadian Government Railways, Canadian National Railways, the Discovery Train and the National Museum of Science and Technology, the car has returned to Amherst.

The Moncton ICR Shop fire article mentions other equipment destroyed with some prices to compare with today's.

"... Among the passenger coaches known to have been destroyed were the dining car *Yamaska*, worth about \$17,000; the sleeping car *Cascapedia*, worth about \$18,000; first-class

cars Nos. 100, 102 and 133; each worth about \$11,000; second class cars 488 and 531; two baggage cars, Nos. 478 and 479; colonist car No. 526 and postal car No. 634.”

“Mr. Pottinger’s car was worth about \$20,000.”

“First class coaches are valued at about \$10,000 or \$11,000, second class, \$5,000 and baggage \$3,000....”

The second goal for the day was Parrsboro on Minas Basin and the former terminal of the Spring Hill and Parrsborough Coal and Railway Company. Most fans remember this line as the Cumberland Railway and Coal Company that joined with the CNR at Springhill Junction, (Mile 59.6 of CN’s Springhill Subdivision). Picking up an order of fried clams, I arrived at the junction shortly before time for the east bound Ocean Limited to arrive. VIA has a small modern station at Springhill Junction, on the north side of the tracks, east of the old CN freight shed. VIA F40PHs 6435 & 6436 pulling a dozen cars arrived at 1230 hours to pick up 4 or 5 passengers. As dome car “Banff Park” disappeared around the curve, I was ready to drive along the old road bed to the main road and head for Springhill. Not knowing the status of the station at Springhill, but knowing it had been only a medal clad building, I didn’t look for it, but headed for Parrsboro. The frame station (second one built about 1925) is still being used by a local business, although it is missing part of the wide roof overhang at the south end. While the former coal loading wharves are not existent today, part of a trestle and portions of the road bed are quite visible.

A trip to the Tourist Bureau got me in touch with a local historian, where a spent considerable time drooling some of his photo collection, as well as keeping both ears open to his stories. On my trip around town I spotted the existing station. The present owner, a very friendly gentleman told me about his family business and offered me a tour of the station that he has converted into a shop. It is a combined station and freight shed with the floor in the freight portion raised to car height. He then pointed out that the adjacent restaurant was on the site of the original station and that it had several railway related photos on display.

I was able to spot considerable portions of the abandoned road bed on my way back to Springhill.

Prince Edward Island

Early the next morning, it was off to catch a boat for the Island. Once on Prince Edward Island, it was a drive west to Tignish (near Dr. Stompin’ Tom’s Skinner’s Pond.) The several sites of the former level crossing of the main highway are still easily spotted. Tignish was the west end of track with it stopping on the east side (Railway directions) of Chapel Street. The community is gradually building over the former railway property along Chapel Street.

The rails may be gone from Prince Edward Island, but there are still many vivid railway memories around the Island including probably their worse accident that occurred at the Harper’s flag station, two miles east of the Tignish station. It was 0200 hours, Sunday, February 21, 1932 when Train No. 211 with 27 snow shovellers in a baggage car and coach stalled in a snow drift at Harper’s. Out of the storm came west bound Train No. 53, led by two engines and pushing a plough and hit the stalled train. Four men were killed in the crash.

From Tignish, it was back to Alberton for a look around the area including their beach stone station. The people at the Alberton Museum were very friendly and helpful in showing me some of scrap books of various Railway clippings.

Then it was a few miles over to Bloomfield Station to spend the afternoon with Keith Pratt to reminisce about railways. Keith having spent a substantial part of his early life near the station next to the tracks. Following the cessation of rail service Keith rigged a bicycle with a third wheel to permit him to travel the rusting rails. Since I had not got done for a trip on his rail-bike, we took a car ride over about 7 miles of the abandoned rail bed. We started at Joe Smoke’s crossing about a mile west of Bloomfield Station. This crossing near Piusville, named for an adjacent homeowner who was known for his fiddling to permit his guests to dance a reel or jig. We headed east passing the old siding and station site at Bloomfield. You could visualise people standing on the station platform at twilight in near-freezing weather on December 6, 1938 as the headlight of Locomotive No. 1112, leading the west bound just came into view a couple of miles east of the station. It stayed in view for a short period, only to disappear about a mile east of the station. The rain had softened the roadbed and the weight of the locomotive forced the embankment to one side and the engine ploughed into the ditch on its side filling the cab with mud and burying the driver up to about the waist. He was badly scalded by boiling water and steam from broken pipes, but survived.

Eastward, near the area of this derailment, just east of Trout Brook was the foundation of the water tank that had been constructed in 1926. The site of the old saw mill is now grown up with woods. Another story of this area related to a local resident, Archie Doucet who was struck by a train just east of the water tank. The train crew didn’t realise that they had hit someone, and Mr. Doucet’s body was thrown into the ditch. His body wasn’t found for a couple of days, but the local story continues that a resident spotted some sectionmen about twilight pushing a push car across the crossing at Bloomfield Station. The push car had something covered with a tarp, but as the resident approached the crossing, everything vanished. About the same time the next day, the same thing happened but this time the sectionmen were pushing the body of Archie Doucet to the station.

Two miles east of Bloomfield was Duvar, a flag stop with a shelter located at the cross road. This crossing and station was well know in the earlier days as a nearby house was the local source of Island moonshine. Between Duvar and the next flag stop of Howlan, two miles east, there was the Mill River Siding, that served Haywood’s mill. The ancient shelter from Howlan’s still sets in the farmers field near it original site.

We drove east about another two miles on the old road bed to Gaspé Road on the outskirts of O’Leary. Here be got back on the public blacktop and looped into O’Leary where the former station has been converted into Linda’s Lunch Bar.

It was back to Keith’s where his gracious wife served a fantastic maritime fish supper. As we sat around enjoying supper and talking trains, including those real narrow gauge ones, the Maine Two-footers, my only complaint was I had eaten too much for lunch. In early evening, I left with intent to spending the night at Charlottetown and the next day on the east half of the island. Others had others duties for me so my trip east was cut short, but next trip!

After business and family duties back on the main land, it was time to think of the trip back to the metropolis. However, since I didn’t have much of a photographic record of the former St. Martins & Upham Railway station at St. Martins, New Brunswick, my ferronut calculations told be that a hundred

mile detour would not really add to the trip home. Again the shortest route had to be along the roads next to the railway from Moncton to Sussex and then through the hills and vales to the coast of the Bay of Fundy. West of Petitcodiac, I met VIA's Atlantic Limited led by two F40PH's on its way to Moncton & Halifax. The St. Martin's depot now clad with metal siding, and the roof converted from hip to straight gable still sits on the beach near its original site at the southern terminus of the St. Martins & Upham Railway. St. Martin's also has two other structures, that are of interest to me, covered bridges! The village has converted a lighthouse near these bridges to their tourist information centre. After some non-railway photographs, I stop at the info centre and was pointed towards the Quaco Museum. Since it didn't open until after lunch, it was time for some more clams. The delay to go to the Museum was worth it. They had several articles on their railway, as well as a number of interesting photographs.

So armed with some more photocopies, it was back to the scanner & computer and the need to write some letters to see what we can get for copies of photographs, etc. to fill our pages.

Trains on Hotel Stamps

Many of our Canadian readers have no doubt by now seen or purchased Canada Post's series of stamps featuring Canadian Railway Hotels that we mentioned in the May Column. Dave Stalford, states he was surprised on the first of August 1993, as he turned the page on his Canadian Trains calendar from Steamscenes Canada. The August scene caused Dave to take a second look and then quickly find a copy of the Banff Springs Hotel stamp. Yes! The train on the calendar and stamp are one and the same. The caption on the calendar indicates the photo was taken by Doug Cummings on July 18, 1970, near Massive, Alberta as a train of the "longest dome ride in the world" passes the Sawbuck Range along the Bow River between Calgary and Lake Louise. The lead unit is FP-9 No. 1411. Dave also pointed out that the car behind the fourth unit (not too clear on the stamp) is a box car and while it doesn't have a red stripe, it appears to be one of the cars used for mail as mentioned in the June Information Network column.

Cote St. Paul, Quebec

Our article on the railways west of downtown Montréal in the April 1993 *Rail & Transit* has brought a general inquiry about the Grand Trunk Railway's St. Paul branch. Since I want to do an article of the rail lines west of this downtown area, several contributors, including Ray Corley have forwarded material on this area. This new material has clarified numerous questions about these lines, however, no reason has yet turned up for the construction of this GTR Branch. The St. Paul branch extended west along the south bank of the Lachine Canal for 1.08 miles from GTR's main line.

While our April map doesn't show the St. Paul station, its location would be about the left edge of the map. At first glance, the large station at the end of the branch was a question. In discussing this branch at our Tuesday luncheon, it was mentioned that this line had commuter service at least during the period from about 1895 to 1910. A look at the 1907 GTR Inventory reveals that the 18 foot by 36 foot single storey frame depot, freight shed and coal & wood shed were all constructed in 1894. The July 1908 edition of the *International Railway Guide* lists six suburban trains each way over the 2.91 miles between Bonaventure via St. Henri to St. Paul daily except Sunday. The one-way trip including the stop at St. Henri was 15

minutes.

Vancouver Island Update

Over the last several months we have made reference to various proposals and problems relating the possible use of the former CN right-of-ways in the Victoria area for hiking-bicycle path while protecting part of it for possible future light rail transit.

One of the problems has been the conflict of the railway bridge over Selkirk Waters with boaters if it is to be left in a closed position. The expenses to put it back into operation were a non-option. The latest proposal would raise one part of the bridge that would put a hump-back in it. This raised section would allow 90 per cent of marine traffic to pass under without having to raise the bridge's arm. While the Canadian Coast Guard has not yet approved the project, the preliminary design estimates the work at roughly \$500,000.

Abandonments

It can be expected to see considerable activity in the area of abandonments from both federal railways as they continue to spin-off various marginal lines. Applications will be two classes, those where it is expected some interest of them being purchased for short-line operation and those where no interest can be expected.

CN has announced that effective 0001 hours on Sunday, 15 August 1993, that the 150 miles of the former CN Kapuskasing and Pagwa Subdivisions between Cochrane and Calstock, Ontario was taken over by the Ontario Northland Railway.

The ONR held a brief ceremony in Cochrane on Monday morning, August 16, to herald the inaugural of service along its newly acquired line. The first train departed Cochrane for points west at 0830.

This line was originally constructed by the government as part of the National Transcontinental Railway.

It is expected that the Notice of Intent to abandon another 160 miles of government built line will be issued soon for CN's Graham Subdivision, built as the Grand Trunk Pacific line from Thunder Bay to Superior Junction (Sioux Lookout).

INFORMATION NETWORK

BOOKS -

Quebec, Chronicle-Telegraph, Page 4 - Wednesday, August 11, 1993 - EMPRESS OF BRITAIN WAS CP'S GREATEST SHIP - By John Henry, Special to the QCT - If they notice it at all while driving down Champlain Boulevard, most motorists are probably unaware that a nondescript 1930-vintage railway tunnel under the Plains of Abraham is a surviving link to one of the most glorious chapters in the long history of the port of Quebec.

For nine summers before World War II, the port was the terminus for the finest passenger liner ever to ply between Canada and Europe: Canadian Pacific's magnificent Empress of Britain. The great ship represented a bold gamble by CP that it could lure transatlantic travellers with a first-rate vessel and a route that was shorter and more sheltered than the one from New York, historically the leading North American maritime gateway.

To accommodate the mighty Empress, a 4,300-foot long terminal with a 40-foot depth at low tide was constructed along the St. Lawrence River at Wolfe's Cove, now called Anseau-Foulon. And CP built a tunnel more than a mile long through

solid rock under the Plains of Abraham so that its boat trains could whisk passengers directly to and from the ship.

These ambitious undertakings, completed in time for the brand-new liner's maiden arrival at Quebec on June 1, 1931, are recalled in a recently published book, "Empress of Britain: Canadian Pacific's Greatest Ship" (Stoddard Publishing Company Limited, Toronto, 1992). The book is an attempt to make up for what its author contends is an oversight by ship historians.

After its sinking by a German U-boat in 1940 – the 42,000-ton Empress was the largest passenger ship lost through enemy action on the high seas during World War II – "the ship almost immediately disappeared from memory," author Gordon Turner writes in his introduction to the book.

The ship's relative obscurity today is ironic because it was a standout for more reasons than its top rank on the war casualty list.

For starters, the Empress of Britain was the largest merchant ship built in Great Britain from the end of World War I until the Queen Mary of 1936. The Empress also set some records in its time: largest and fastest ship between Canada and Europe; largest ship to transit the Panama Canal and more space per first-class passenger than any vessel afloat.

Moreover, the numerous photographs in the book suggest that the Empress was among the most majestic liners ever built. With three massive buff-coloured funnels set atop an all-white exterior that stretched from a slightly raked stem to a sleek cruiser stern, the ship had an unmistakable appearance and one that lived up to its regal name.

The ship's handsome lines are evident in the handful of photographs of the vessel at or near the Wolfe's Cove terminal. One particularly nostalgic picture encompassing two of Canadian Pacific's proudest possessions, shows the Empress sailing upriver past the Chateau Frontenac hotel.

The liner's first visit to Quebec attracted so much interest, reports Turner, that the Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire sold 15,000 tickets to a tour of the vessel at 25 cents each. Also to mark the visit, CP hosted a banquet on board with a guest list that read like a Who's Who of Canada. It included Prime Minister R. B. Bennett, former Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden and the Governor General, the Earl of Bessborough.

The appeal of the Empress to the rich and famous of the 1930s is understandable. They must have felt right at home on a ship with one of the first full-size tennis courts on the high seas, a championship-size squash court and staterooms so spacious they were called apartments.

But despite its luxury and the advantage of its sheltered route down the St. Lawrence to Europe "39% less ocean" was CP's slogan – the Empress was less successful than its New York based transatlantic rivals.

In the ship's best year for transatlantic crossings, 1937, it sailed only a bit more than half full on average. (It did better on world cruises.)

Turner speculates that one reason for the Empress' low transatlantic passenger count may have been that many travellers considered Quebec too remote. He also notes that keeping a balanced weekly schedule on CP's Quebec – Southampton route was impossible since the ship's running mate, the venerable Empress of Australia, was considerably slower.

Although CP president Edward W. Beatty predicted in

1938 that the company would probably order a sister ship for the Empress of Britain by the End of 1940, the outbreak of World War II doomed any such plans. Sadly, war also, of course, brought a grisly end to the Empress itself.

In October 1940, the great ship, while off the Irish coast, was set afire by bombs dropped by a German plane. Forty-five of the 643 souls aboard the Empress perished. Crippled but still afloat, the liner was taken in tow by two Allied warships only to be torpedoed and sunk by a U-boat.

Easily the most compelling photograph in the book shows the pilot who bombed the Empress receiving congratulations upon returning to his base. Judging by the smiles on the German's faces they realized what an important ship it was – something Quebecers had appreciated since 1931.

Empress of Britain: Canadian Pacific's Greatest Ship, written by Gordon Turner and published in 1992 by Stoddard Publishing Company Limited, Toronto, is available from Boston Mills Press, 132 Main Street, Erin, Ontario N0B 1T0 (Phone 519-833-2407). \$35. Hard cover, 216 pages. John Henry is a free-lance writer from New York.

PAT: Mike Leduc was telling me he is up to 89 station sites on Montreal Island that have been used by CN and its family of predecessors. These 89 sites have had 120 names.

Future Months:

CP LaSalle station still standing

Newburgh CNOR Station exists in town as a house – Dan McConnachie.

Notes: Parrsboro – Conrad Byers – has desk from original station in his office.

Present station was built in 1925.

Ship - theatre = KIPAWO