

Just A. Ferronut's Railway Archaeology June 1994 "Art Clowes"

The changing rural colours shows how rapidly the season advance in this country. A second trip to the Eastern Townships in a month sure drives this home. Last month, I mentioned how Mother Nature wakes everyone up in the spring as she cleans house with lots of water washing winter's grim towards the streams and rivers. In four weeks, the patchwork of greens and dark browns in the fields, the budding leaves, along with a warm day makes one forget the rigors of winter. This was the scene that greeted me as I headed towards Sherbrooke again on May 21, to continue my exploration eastward from that city.

CP Rail's Sherbrooke Subdivision, part of CP's Montreal – Saint John Short Line (nee Atlantic and North West Railway) loops north of Autoroute # 10 (Autoroute des Cantons de l'est), east of Waterloo (95 km (56 miles) east of Montréal) and for about 20 km (12 miles) winds around the hills, through Eastman and along the shore of Lac Orford before swinging back across the autoroute and southeast towards Magog. My thoughts were on the photo possibilities, if only there was a train, cresting the next hill – there was a CP westbound! Forgetting all my limited French, I made a U-turn at the next service connection, since I now couldn't read the sign, and it was back to the bridge where CP crosses under the autoroute near Waterloo. After a few photo frames there, I went west to Bromont and burned up more film on CP C424 4240, 1807, and 4227 at the west end of town.

In Sherbrooke, the waters of the rivière Saint-François were back to a normal level, so the parking lot on the east side of the tracks was accessible to permit a couple of photos of the east elevation of CN's Sherbrooke station.

As mentioned last month, my earlier trip was directly east from Sherbrooke to East Angus and Scotstown. This time, I travelled the 4 or 5 km southward along the west bank of the rivière Saint-François to Lennoxville. The Sherbrooke Subdivisions of both CN and CP take this route. CN's Sherbrooke Subdivision through Lennoxville, built as part of the St. Lawrence and Atlantic Rail-road, crosses the CPR by a diamond in Lennoxville and continues southward to Coaticook and Stanhope, Québec and Norton, Vermont. The St. Lawrence and Atlantic Rail-road built the trackage as far as the west end of the yard at Island Pond Vermont. Here it joined the trackage built by the Atlantic and St. Lawrence and Rail-road that extended to Portland Maine. This American railway was amalgamated with the Grand Trunk Railway effective July 1, 1853. The portion from Norton on the Canada-US border to Portland has been sold by CN and is now operated as the St. Lawrence & Atlantic Railroad.

Railway construction and control in Québec was driven by a number of factors, some quite different from those found in other parts of the Dominion. One of these, the lack of a water frontier, permitted easier penetration of control by American railways over some of the weak and struggling Québec roads – the goal was the through traffic from the St. Lawrence, mainly Montréal and the New England seaports.

Lennoxville was the northern terminal of one such American push, the Connecticut and Passumpsic Rivers Rail Road. This railway was opened for traffic northward to Newport, Vermont in October, 1863. Meanwhile, in 1862, the Massawippi

Valley Railway Company was incorporated in Canada to build a railway from a connection with the Grand Trunk Railway near Lennoxville along the east side of Lac Memphrémagog via Stanstead Plain to a connection with the Connecticut and Passumpsic Rivers Rail Road. This 52 km (32 miles) road along with 8 km (5 miles) of line constructed in the State of Vermont was opened in July 1870. On July 1, 1870, the Massawippi Valley Railway Company was leased to the Connecticut and Passumpsic Rivers Rail Road and this later road was in turned leased to the Boston & Lowell Railroad Corporation effective January 1, 1887. The Massawippi Valley Railway lease was taken over by the Boston & Maine Railroad on January 1, 1919, when the Connecticut and Passumpsic Rivers Rail Road was transferred to it from the Boston & Lowell Railroad. In July 1908, a Boston & Maine timetable lists 11 passenger trains daily over the Massawippi Valley section. These trains show their Canadian terminals as the CPR & GTR in Montréal and the GTR & QCR in Québec.

On June 1, 1926, the Québec Central Railway acquired the sub-lease of the Massawippi Valley Railway at the same time as the CPR leased the American owned trackage between it and Wells River, Vermont. All of this leased trackage north of Wells River was purchased by the CPR in 1946 with the Massawippi Valley Railway trackage being turned over the Québec Central.

Back on the CPR

At Lennoxville, the rivière Saint-François makes a 90 degree swing eastward. The CPR, after crossing the CNR in Lennoxville also swings eastward towards Cookshire, Scotstown, Megantic, Québec and McAdam, New Brunswick. My next stop was Cookshire, a village in the farm lands of the rivière Eaton valley. The CPR line through Cookshire was constructed as part of the International Railway Company (Canada). This company had first been incorporated as the St. Francis and Megantic International Railway Company in 1870. This line was being promoted on the Québec railway philosophy of constructing a line on speculation in the hope that another railway would buy it at a profit to the original promoters and include it in a larger system. After Confederation, the Canadian promoters of the Atlantic and Northwestern were hustling to get a charter to build a railway from the Atlantic coast to Lake Superior. This was achieved with its charter being granted in 1879. After several tries at getting a rail line from Lennoxville towards Megantic, the St. Francis and Megantic International Railway changed its name to the International Railway Company (Canada) in 1877, and came under the control of J. H. Pope. Mr. Pope, like many gentlemen of the day, freely mixed business and politics, and within two months of his becoming the Minister of Railways in the MacDonald government, an agreement was reached to have the Atlantic and Northwestern take over the International Railway Company to become part of what we know today as CP's Short Line to Saint John, New Brunswick.

The present station at Cookshire is a single storey frame structure with a gable roof. It is boarded up, but appears to be still used for some railway storage. However, when compared to the station as shown in a 1914 photo, it is quite different, but on closer examination appears as if it is the centre section of the

earlier station. The 1914 station had a hip roof and was considerably longer. However, a second inspection raises as many questions as it answers. One end and the location of the waiting room door support the cut down theory while the length of the trackside bay window and the details of the other end do not. Time for some more digging!

Cookshire, like Lennoxville was a junction point for an American railway. Businessmen of the Hereford area considered that with the construction CP Short Line, they should build a line from their community near the New Hampshire border to this new main line, so the Hereford Branch Line was incorporated in 1887 with the intention of encouraging settlement in their area as well as a route for moving local products to market. Word of the proposed construction of the Upper Coos Railroad northward to Beecher Falls, New Hampshire, caused the Hereford company to change their name on May 4, 1888 by dropping the word "Branch" and to expand their rights to include the power to purchase the Québec Central Railway. However, their financial clout put this strictly in the "dream" category. This north – south line between Cookshire and the terminus of the Upper Coos Railroad at Beecher Falls was opened in January, 1889. 1889 also saw construction by the Hereford Railway of a line northward from Cookshire across the rivière Saint-François to Dudswell on the Québec Central Railway, 25 miles north-east of Sherbrooke. Dudswell was also the southern terminal of the 1888-built 5-mile line (spur) of the Dominion Lime Company that served their quarry at Lime Ridge. With their arrival in Dudswell, the Hereford Railway purchased this 5-mile spur.

The Hereford Railway operated for a year and was leased on May 1, 1890, for 999 years to the Maine Central Railroad. Again looking at a July 1908 timetable for the Maine Central, it shows one north-bound mixed train daily on the Hereford Railway section travelling from Beecher Falls via Cookshire and Dudswell Junction and onto the former Dominion Lime Company's branch. This timetable lists three stations on this spur; Mile 1, Lathrop's, Mile 3, Dominion and Mile 5, Lime Ridge & Marbleton. In addition there was one daily passenger train each way on the line south of Dudswell Junction that connected with Québec Central trains to and from Québec City. The line from Cookshire and Dudswell Junction was abandoned in 1927 and the branch into Lime Ridge was abandoned 5 years later in 1932.

Along the Québec Central

From Cookshire I drove north to East Angus on the Québec Central. While I had discussed this community last month, I didn't fully understand its track layout on that visit. That mostly related to an ox-bow in the rivière Saint-François that gave the impression that the QCR station was on the south side of the river when in reality the line remains on the north side through town. On this trip Cascade Paper had one of its two GE 65 tonners and a few cars sitting on top of their plant, or that what it looked like from across the river. The depth of the valley makes some of the plant's trackage appear to be setting on its roof.

A quick snack, and then eastward along Highway 112 that follows the Québec Central for the 135 km (85 miles) to Vallée-Jonction. The warm and sunny weather coupled with light highway traffic made the trip a pleasure. The first part of the route is along the wide rivière Saint-François valley and then along the shore of Lac Aylmer to Disraeli. Passing the mix of

small villages and farm land especially with the sun making reflections dance from the lake causes one to reflect back to earlier days of families travelling in a creaking wooden coach along secondary rail lines to resorts for summer vacation. Since this is Québec, perhaps the children were playing a game I always remember. A friend told me he used this game to keep his children busy and entertained on long trips in Québec. He called it "Steeple" and the game was to have the kids guess as to whether the next parish church would have one or two spires. Of course, we shouldn't forget the winters, with trains, including passenger ones being stuck in the snow for hours, if not a day or two.

At Disraeli the QCR crosses over the south-east side of an arm of Lac Aylmer and heads into the more hilly country to the north-east. Soon you are approaching Black Lake and the outskirts of Thetford Mines with their outer space landscape. While different from the Sudbury moonscape, it is never the less, eerie. Around the curve and there is a mound of light grey mine tailings bigger and higher than Nature's own hills. The area is covered with such man made mountains that dwarf the buildings of the communities. And of course there are corresponding open pits where the ores, mainly asbestos have been excavated. Near Black Lake the rail line clings to the side of the hill and overlooks a monster open pit. Again, I can picture a train working its way along the curvy track with people looking down in awe at the beginning of these huge pits as clouds of smoke identify the large steam-powered shovels and drills busily digging out the ore.

The Thetford Mines station is a boxy buff brick and frame building at the east end of the community at the junction of the former town spur. The second storey is frame and covered with what else! – asbestos-cement shingles. Inspection of the downtown area reveals that the town spur has been removed and the right-of-way converted into parks.

A few more villages, and then Tring-Jonction. This village was the junction for Québec Central's 95 km (60 miles) branch to Lac-Mégantic on CP's Short Line. This line was opened for passenger service on October 14, 1895. The south half of this line from Courcelles to Lac-Mégantic was abandoned on November 30, 1987 and permission to abandon the north half was given on December 29, 1987.

Probably the most important move over this branch occurred in the early morning of Friday, July 31, 1936 when a double-header pulled a passenger special that included the private car "Pioneer" with the President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt on board, on his way to Québec City.

The station at Tring-Jonction, a single storey concrete block structure has been declared a heritage structure under the federal Heritage Stations Protection Act. The depot, presently boarded up is about the same size of the QCR station at East Angus and similar in style, except Tring-Jonction has a portico at the east end, probably to store carts of baggage, etc. while waiting for transfer between trains on the two lines. Originally the Sherbrooke line was located on the north side of the station with the track of the Lac-Mégantic branch on the south. The junction switch would have been located east of both the station and a nearby road. At some point, probably in the early 1960's, the junction switch was relocated west of the station with the Sherbrooke line being swung south to permit all trackage to be located on the southside of the station. The yard trackage is located along the abandoned Lac-Mégantic line. To see how

much trackage of that line remains, I drove a few miles south of town to St-Jules. While St-Jules was not listed as a QCR station, a small section house/passenger shelter type building sets in a farmer's field at the north end of this village.

A look at the watch, a flip of a coin and the decision to go to Vallée-Jonction rather than looping to the south-east towards St-Georges and the QCR line to Lac-Frontière. Another day for that line.

Cresting the hills along the west bank of the rivière Chaudière and looking down into the valley, about 300 metres (1000 feet) below, the railway junction on the east bank of the river comes into focus. One can see why the name Beauce Junction was changed to Valley Junction and now Vallée-Jonction.

Vallée-Jonction

Vallée-Jonction was a surprise in that while I knew its station had been designated as heritage, I didn't know that it now contains Centre d'Interprétation Ferroviaire de Vallée-Jonction museum.

The station, like those at East Angus and Tring-Jonction is of concrete-block construction. It is a storey and one half and is Tee-shaped with a Tring-Jonction type portico on its north end. The tracks are located on both sides of the stations. The railway in Vallée-Jonction is located on a narrow interval along the river with a steep bank behind it. Since the main town is located on a higher plateau, the station has an interesting feature in that there is a pedestrian bridge over the tracks of the Lac-Frontière line with a stairway down to the station.

Since the Centre d'Interprétation Ferroviaire de Vallée-Jonction was open, I paid my \$2.50 admission to have a look around. It was well worth it even though all the displays are in French. Between my four words of French and the limited English of a couple of the attendants, I learned considerable more than what the various display panels of photos, etc., revealed. The museum entrance area is the former ladies waiting room. The main waiting room is the main display room, the ticket office/operator's room is gradually being restored to contain many of the artefacts of such an office. In this office that have a photo-copy of the hand written charter for a rail-road from Lévis to Sherbrooke, dated 1835. The intention at that time was to use wooden rails like were later used on a number of roads. They have a half scale model of a section of wooden rail track on display.

They also have one room set up with a video display on the community and the railway.

The attendants told me that there were four rooms on the second floor used by crews for layover bunking. Also a concrete bomb shelter had been constructed in the basement. I was also told that this was the second station in Vallée-Jonction.

The line to Sherbrooke swings across the rivière Chaudière in front of the station. The present through truss bridge is apparently the fourth railway bridge at this location. Photos of some of the earlier ice/water wrecked bridges and replacement construction are included in the display panels around the station.

Among the other museum photos are of several wrecks including pictures of the Scott Junction Station after a derailed train demolished it.

Being less than 50 miles from Québec City, the hills along the river in the area made great ski-hills in the 1930's and 40's. Just across the river the 300 metre (1000 foot) hills were

made higher with wooden trestle-works that added another 30 metres (100 feet). Museum photos show train-loads of skiers arriving at the station for a day or weekend of skiing.

Presently the group is working on plans to try to get a tourist-excursion train operating over this scenic trackage.

A less than a half mile south of station on the Lac-Frontière line, the three stall engine house and turntable are still in place. The trackage of the small yard is also still in place.

Looking west across the river, you can see the grade of the Sherbrooke line working its way up hill after curving south off the river bridge. The grade is a good 1% if not steeper. A steam train working this hill in the midst of fall colours must have been a fantastic sight.

The rivière Etchemin Valley

The National Transcontinental Railway's original alignment after crossing the rivière Saint-Laurent on the Québec Bridge at the mouth of the rivière Chaudière was south and then south-east under the Grand Trunk's line from Richmond to Lévis swinging north of the present CN Joffre yard. It then crossed the by-pass trackage (CN's Diamond Subdivision) at the east end of the Joffre Yard near St-Jean-Chrysostôme-de-Lévis. This permitted the NTR to work its way south up the west bank of the rivière Etchemin valley to Saint-Malachie where it made a horseshoe curve to cross this valley. This alignment followed the NTR's concept of keeping power-sucking grades to a minimum.

Saint-Malachie is where I picked up the abandoned route of the NTR after leaving Vallée-Jonction. The steel spans have been removed from the bridge over rivière Etchemin as well as some of the fill approach on the west side. A side street in the village shows the progress of time as the concrete abutments of a deckless highway underpass carry the construction date of 1979, barely eight years prior to the abandonment on January 26, 1988 of the NTR line from Saint-Isidore eastward to Armagh, Québec.

Much of the right of way and road bed can be seen along the rivière Etchemin valley. Just south of St-Anselme the NTR was grade separated with a bridge over the Québec Central. In was in this area on the west bank of the rivière Etchemin that a connecting track between the two railways existed. A half mile or so north is a mystery, a frame station. It is located on a side road near the north end of the NTR siding at St-Anselme. While it appears that it could be a NTR station, the nearest stations I have been able to identify were about 5 miles each side at Saint-Isidore and Sainte-Claire. Can any readers add any details? So a dash back to Montréal ended the day's outing.

Prescott Show

The week before my trip to the Québec Central, I went over to the Leeds & Grenville Model Show in Prescott, Ontario. While shows like this may be small when compared to the large shows of Toronto, Ottawa and Montréal, they are interesting to visit and see the interest in the modelling part of our hobby. This show was also an opportunity for me to purchase a copy of *Haliburton by Rail and the I.B. & O.*, a 1992 book by Taylor Wilkins. I had missed this book that covers the history of the railways north of Lindsay, Ontario. The black and white soft covered book includes a number of maps and a good mix of photos including local snapshots showing railway life of the time.

In closing, the main concourse of Montréal's Central Station has been getting some sprucing up this spring. Included in the repainting has been the highlighting of the bas reliefs at

each end of the stations. For the first time that I can remember, they have highlighted the figures by doing them in buff on a blue background. A great improvement to look at this portrayal of Canadian history!

See you next month.