

## The Ferrophiliac Column Conducted by Just A. Ferronut

November/December 1992

It must be approaching that gift giving time of the year by the number of new books that are either in the stores or rumoured to be there shortly. Don MacKay's *The People's Railway*, and Shirley Woods' *Cinders and Saltwater* are now on the stands. I heard last spring that Elizabeth Wilmot was planning to have a new book out this fall and Denis Taylor, in a note a few weeks ago stated it will be titled *When Anytime Was Train Time*, but haven't seen it yet. Denis also mentioned another book, *The Northern Connection*, by Robert Surtess about the Ontario Northland Railway, that was released earlier this fall. *The People's Railway* is a history of the Canadian National Railways prepared in a documentary style, with a sixteen page section of photographs. While Mr. MacKay spends a few pages reviewing major railway happenings from the turn of the century to the creation of Canadian National, the book is primarily on the period since the CNR was corporately established.

Mr. Woods' book, *Cinders and Saltwater* is on Atlantic Canada railways. This book, with a list price of \$24.95 plus all those joyous Canadian taxes was published by Nimbus Publishing Limited, PO Box 9301, Station A, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 5N5, in case it is not available in your area.

This book is in general chronological order including chapters on the Intercolonial, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland railways. I haven't read this book yet, but it is no doubt a worthwhile addition to any rail enthusiast's library, since there is a scarcity of major works on the railways of our eastern provinces. *Cinders and Saltwater* has a good selection of photographs spread throughout its pages although most may give you that déjà vu' feeling.

Besides Mr. Wood's book being on eastern railways, Mr. MacKay has definitely chosen an eastern title for his book on the Canadian National System. Many may not remember, but the slogans *The People's Railway* and *The Fast Line* were the wording on the ring around the bull moose's head on the crest of the Intercolonial Railway of Canada.

As has been stated before, if you are aware of a book with a railway theme or even a chapter on railways in your area, send us the details and we will pass them on to our readers.

I have started doing some wandering around the rail lines here in Lower Canada. Two of my first sojourns off the island (of Montréal) were southward around LaPrairie and down along the Richelieu River. The schematic map of the area is just that and is intended to provide a general orientation of the area rather than accurate details. This area is quite different from July 21, 1836, when a steam locomotive with two cars left the La Prairie wharf on the St. Lawrence River for a 16½ mile trip to Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu to mark the official introduction of steam railways in Canada. This event was the opening of THE COMPANY OF PROPRIETORS OF THE CHAMPLAIN & SAINT LAWRENCE RAILROAD (commonly referred to as the Champlain & St. Lawrence Railroad). A 21.16 mile extension to the original 16½ mile line was constructed from Saint-Jean along the west bank of the Richelieu River to Rouses Point, New York, and was opened on August 26, 1851. A few months later, on January 14, 1852, another 9.16 mile extension from La Prairie Junction to Saint Lambert was opened. Operations over the 5¼ miles of original line from the La Prairie Wharf to La Prairie Junction was discontinued with the

opening of the new line to Saint Lambert. This extension to Saint Lambert greatly reduced the distance across the Saint Lawrence River to Montréal from the end of the rail line.

The urbanisation of Saint Lambert has resulted in considerable relocation and consolidation of trackage in this community at the south end of the Victoria Bridge, otherwise the remainder of the alignment of the C&SL line is intact and operated today as CN's Rouses Point Subdivision.

La Prairie got another rail line in the downtown area when the Montréal & Champlain Junction Railway Company was opened on January 1, 1881. This M&CJ line is now CN's Massena Subdivision. It was constructed from a junction with the Champlain & St. Lawrence Railroad in Brossard, a couple of miles south of Saint Lambert. The Montréal & Champlain Junction Railway went through La Prairie to Saint-Constant, Valleyfield, Huntington and finally connected to Massena, New York.

Back to my trip, urban sprawl is filling in the open spaces between Brossard and La Prairie. However, the single storey flat roofed CN station at La Prairie, Mile 81.6 Massena Subdivision is still used as a yard office, etc. This building is like many small CN stations, clad in grey insul-brick siding with fading orange and blue trim. The small yard at La Prairie has, on my trips, had two or three 7000 series switchers tied-up waiting for use on assignments to serve local rail customers.

From La Prairie I travelled towards Saint-Jean along Highway # 104. This highway crosses the Rouses Point Subdivision (in the area of the old La Prairie Junction). However, this area will need closer examination to identify the location of the junction point of 140 years ago. My timing was fairly good in that I was able to get photos of the southbound Amtrak, on its way to Rouses Point, Albany and New York City. I completed this outing by travelling a few of the back roads in this area looking for any good locations for railway photography.

The next weekend I continued my trip on down to Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, the original southern terminal of the C&SL.

The CN Saint-Jean station is located on the west side of the Richelieu in Saint-Jean at the former junction of the Stanstead, Shefford and Chambly Railway. The S,S&C joined the Champlain and St. Lawrence and extended east across the Richelieu River to Farmham.

The CN station, located on Jacques-Cartier near Frontenac, was constructed in 1890. This single storey brick structure has been restored and converted into a tourist bureau. A number of the exterior doors have been closed and some purists would probably object to the conversion of the north side operator's bay into an entrance complete with a door. However, and regardless, it is good that this structure has been recycled and will continue be a useful part of Saint-Jean.

This station has two other interesting aspects. The Rouses Point Subdivision makes a substantial curve in front of it, thus making a good location for photographing a southbound during most of the morning. I took advantage of this to again record a southbound Amtrak on film.

The second interesting aspect is a monument to commemorate the opening of the original Champlain and St. Lawrence Railway. This steel monument, some 5 or 6 metres high is in the form of a large letter "J" with a flat rather than curved bottom. The bottom is shaped like stylised section of rail anchored to a concrete base respecting a railway tie. This rail shape flows into the shape

of a track spike for the top portion of the monument. Definitely an interesting and representative way to mark the birth of Canadian railways.

Saint-Jean has a second station still standing. This station constructed by Atlantic & North West Railway in 1887. This line is now part of Canadian Pacific Railway and identified as their Adirondack Subdivision. It is the portion of this line east of Sherbrooke that CP has recently given notice of its intention to abandon.

This CP station, located at Foch & de Salaberry is now boarded up except for a portion being used by CP's signal staff. At some point, there has been an addition constructed on the east end for baggage and express. While the brick on this addition are of a harder type and the limestone dado a little different, overall it is a well matched addition.

On the east side of the Richelieu River is the community of Iberville. The Central Vermont's now abandoned Roxbury Subdivision that extended from St. Albans, Vermont northward on the east side of the Richelieu River to Iberville, joined the S,S&C there and crossed the Richelieu on the S,S&C into Saint-Jean.

From Saint-Jean I went along the east side of the Richelieu River north to Chambly. I drove east along route #112 to Granby and back. An interesting drive since this road parallels CN's Granby Subdivision. I am going to leave major comments about this line for another time after I learn more about the convoluted history of some of the railways of this part of Québec. The Granby Subdivision was built by the Montréal, Chambly and Sorel Railway. Since this line predates both Sir William Mackenzie and Sir Donald Mann, I can only conclude, it must have been the example they used when learning how to build railways on the cheap. It would appear that this line was built by laying ties on the natural ground, placing the rails on them and then adding a little ballast (probably only the cinders dropped from the passing locomotives) and finally digging the ditches by running a Jordan spreader down the track. The comment I made to a couple of friends is that I have got to get out on this line with a train and camera with a long lens to record some of the ups and downs of the line. While portions of the M,C&S were abandoned very early, this portion of the line was used by the Montréal & Southern Counties during its existence.

Back at Chambly, it was northward to Otterburn Park and the St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railway. Today we call it CN's St. Hyacinthe Subdivision. The bridge over the Richelieu River at Otterburn Park – Beloeil is the one often used by CN for publicity shots, since it is an interesting open deck truss. This line was a portion of the original line from Montréal to Portland, Maine.

Coming back along the St.L&A, I stopped at St. Bruno to get a look at their station which I have mentioned in this column on several occasions as being relocated and restored. This Grand Trunk station similar to the one at Grimsby, Ontario with a turret over one corner of the waiting room has been relocated about ¼ mile west of its original site. It is located on a landscaped hillside with a full basement, thus providing ground level entrance on one side to the basement and on the other side, entrance to the former main level of the station. It has had a pinkish brick veneer placed on the exterior up to the eaves. The gables and turret are done in grey with the trim white. Another nice job.

Leaving my trackside wanderings, I spent an interesting few hours at the Montréal Model Train Exposition a couple of Saturdays ago. Sponsored by the Jeunesse de Soleil (Sun Youth) at their centre on St-Urbain Street, it was both familiar and different from other shows I have attended. The show was held in the Sun Youth's

headquarters, an old converted school. This year the show was expanded to have displays, etc., on three floors. The gymnasium, several converted classrooms and the corridors of the main floor were used. On the top two floors the corridors and a couple on former classrooms on the second floor were used. The main thrust of the show was definitely models and model displays. While, I am not modeller, there definitely appeared to be plenty of good bargains in the various scales. I found the model layouts interesting, since many were in various stages of construction and seemed to reflect activity. Unlike many shows, there was very limited sale of non-model material. There were no slides and not really any sales of tee-shirts, books, etc., and only a couple of people with videos for sale. The one antique dealer seemed to be doing quite well.

As with many shows the live steamers operating and Operation Lifesavers video displays were popular. The kids also seemed to like the idea that for two bits they could ring a real steam locomotive bell at one display.

Display booths sponsored by a couple of the Montréal tramway historical groups covered that aspect of the hobby, and the Delson Museum had a booth on one of the upper floors.

In all an interesting show and now with the days being numbered for the Deux Montagnes mobile museum, maybe it's worth thinking about putting the two together for a visit to Montréal November 6 and 7, 1993.

A few other station items from across the country. The classical red brick, former Canadian Pacific Railway station at 800 Columbia Street, New Westminster, British Columbia is being restored. This one and half storey building, about a half a block from the Fraser River, was built about 1900 as the western terminal of CP's line to the Fraser River. New shingles were being placed on the roof during the damp days of the middle of November. While trains of Canadian Pacific, Canadian National and the Southern Railway of British Columbia still trundle past the old station to switch the adjacent rail yard, none stop there these days and gone are the tracks of the Great Northern Railway.

East in Alberta, the relocation of CN's Vegreville Subdivision from downtown Fort Saskatchewan (15 miles east of Edmonton) a few years ago has permitted a number of urban changes. The Vegreville Subdivision was constructed by the Canadian Northern Railway and paralleled the main street through Fort Saskatchewan. The town's single storey station was constructed in 1905 on their main street. It was built as one of less than a half of dozen CNOR stations following Special Station Plan 100-19. This station is now in the process of being restored thanks to the efforts of several groups and businesses.

Another Canadian Northern station is the large stone station built in 1911 for joint use with the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway at the junction of the Assiniboine and Red Rivers in Winnipeg, Manitoba. This four storey station, called the Fort Gary Union Station for part of its existence, has been declared a heritage depot under the federal Heritage Stations Protection Act and is now used by VIA Rail, with CN Rail occupying much of the buildings office space. Gone are the myriad of station and yard tracks from the area between the station and the west bank of the Red River. The few remaining remnants of the former low level freight line are expected to be gone in the next couple of years with the reconstruction of the Main Street bridges over the two rivers, just south of the station. While not much work has been done to the main circular ticket lobby, the waiting room to the rear has had restoration work done, including new seating designed to give the appearance of period benches.

The stables south east of the station used to

house the railways' hay-burners during the days when the railways really used horsepower to deliver express has been converted in a market building housing a number of shops, boutiques and restaurants.

Now really going east, first to Pugwash, Nova Scotia. The two storey brick station built about 1890 by the Great American & European Short Line Railway, has been sold to the village of Pugwash and used as their library and sits next to the Caboose Café, that we mentioned a few months ago. The village of Pugwash is at the end of a 4.6 mile spur off of CN's Oxford Subdivision. Both this subdivision and spur were constructed by the Great American & European Short Line Railway. This company became the Montréal & European Short Line Railway. Later these lines were operated by the Intercolonial Railway as part of the Canadian Government Railways owned lines. The Oxford Subdivision from Pugwash Junction east to Brown's Point, near Pictou has been abandoned and the main rail customer on the line is the salt mines at Pugwash.

The one storey brick CN station in Stewiacke, Nova Scotia, while it was turned down for designation as a heritage station is still used by some of the Railway's maintenance forces. This station constructed by the CNR in 1926 sets on the east side of CN's Bedford Subdivision in this Nova Scotia village.

Back to Upper Canada a news item from The Era Banner, of Aurora, Newmarket, Georgina, East Gwillimbury, Bradford, West Gwillimbury via Dave Stalford. In their Cheers & Jeers Column of November 18, 1992, the paper gives Cheers to the King Railway Station Committee on being awarded the Canadian Railway Heritage Association Preservation Award for 1991 for their efforts in preserving and renovating the 140-year old King Station.