

August, 1947 - Number 21

A VISIT TO THE PACIFIC GREAT EASTERN RAILWAY

by John A. Wood

On July 9th and 10th, I was able to book off from my job of pushing street Cars around for the British Columbia Electric Railway, and along with two other members of the Lower Mainland Railroad Club, I took a boat trip to Squamish, B.C. in order to look over the southern terminus of that unique railway, the Pacific Great Eastern, or as some uncouth people term it, "Pigs Go East."

I shall not endeavour to give you the history of this road, but will confine myself to some general data and personal observations. The road is owned by the people of British Columbia through the provincial government, and is unfortunately in very poor financial condition, mainly because it originates and terminates in sparsely settled country. The southern terminus is reached by a four hour boat trip from Vancouver, and of course all freight must travel by barge, the PGE #2, which has a capacity of twelve cars. In addition, an ordinary scow equipped with track is used, which can carry six cars.

Although the financial situation might be described as poor, the physical aspect is much brighter. The equipment (mostly second hand, aside from the locomotives), is kept in very good shape, and would put that of many bigger roads to shame. The passenger train northbound leaves Squamish Monday, Wednesday and Friday and southbound from Quesnel, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

We planned our trip for a Wednesday, as on that day the two trains meet at Squamish. The northbound train consisted of four baggage, express and mail cars, four day coaches, six sleepers, and an open air observation car, a total of 15 cars, and was double-headed by locomotives numbers 161, a Mikado built at Kingston in 1945, and 54, a Consolidation. The southbound train had one car less, and locomotive 160; the consist included both of the road's official cars, the *CHILCOTIN* and *BRIDGE RIVER*. All sleeping cars are named after towns along the road.

We noted with interest the three steel coaches recently acquired from the Lehigh Valley, these being LV 933, 968 and 969. The latter is at present being remodelled into a lunch counter car, and the other two will be refurbished and used as day coaches. The road is at present renting sleeping car 2706 from the CPR, for use during the summer months. The PGE has been promised some sleepers from the Pullman Company, but how many are to be obtained is unknown.

The locomotives are kept in first class shape. No. 4, a 2-6-2 type, is used as a yard goat at Squamish. A six wheel switcher numbered 3 was used years ago, but was retired to a stationary boiler status at the Squamish round house, where she is still doing her bit for the company. Other than the two 160 class locomotives, the PGE has nine Consolidations numbered from 51 to 59. Number 56, however, is not of much use these days, as it lies at the bottom of Anderson Lake at Mile 94, where it carried the engineer and fireman to their deaths after striking a rock slide and topping over.

At one time, gas-electric cars saw extensive service on the portion, long since abandoned, between North Vancouver and Whytecliff. They were numbered 101 to 105; Nos. 102 and 103 are still used in local service between Lillovet and Shalalth. Number 105 is at Squamish waiting to be scrapped. What happened to the other two is not known to your correspondent. Number 106 is a little jitney powered by a gas engine, which proudly proclaims in very large letters on the radiator that it was built by the Four Wheel Drive Auto Company of Kitchener. It is used to carry shop workers from Squamish to the roundhouse, which is situated 3 miles from town.

Two more locomotives of the 160 class, which presumably will be 162 and 163 are on order,

and delivery is looked for in August of this year.

Of interest to electric fans is some of the passenger equipment, as the majority of it was purchased from the Oregon Electric. Some of these cars still retain the gears on the axles. As they have no generators, power is supplied from a plant situated in the baggage coach. However, in case of emergency, the cars are also supplied with ornate brass oil lamps, which are suspended from the roof.

A very enjoyable two days were spent looking over this equipment, and of course numerous photographs were taken. All of the officials we met were very co-operative, and I trust that if any of you readers are fortunate enough to be able to vacation in this part of the country, you will include a trip over this most interesting railroad as part of your itinerary.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

The Pacific Great Eastern is the 347 mile railroad extending from Squamish, near Vancouver, BC, northward to Quesnel, on the Fraser River. It is physically an island as far as the rest of the rail network of the continent is concerned, although carferry connections between Squamish and Vancouver give possibilities of interchange. An extension, already graded, from Quesnel to Prince George, BC (the original objective) on the CNR is Prince Rupert line has been planned for years, and much talk of this has been heard recently. Until this is built, the situation of the road seems precarious, as all the country it serves is sparsely populated, and all traffic must have either an on-line origin or destination. There was even talk during the war of extending the road to Alaska, something that still seems a long-range possibility.

THE END OF TORONTO RAILWAY CARS IN BASE SERVICE

On July 31st, the two Township of York Railways' street car lines, on Rogers Road and Oakwood saw the last of Toronto Railway - built one man cars, which equipment had run on the lines since their opening in November, 1922. The cars, rented from the TTC, had become more and more a source of discontent for patrons of the lines, and replacement became imminent. However, rather than succumb to buses, as the T.R.'s did on Sherbourne, the last line inside the city using them, the old cars in this instance gave way to cars of the 2700 (Small Witt) type, of which a number were moved to St. Clair division in order to effect the improvement. The track on both lines is in very good condition, and traffic is holding up well, thus bus substitution would have been definitely not "in the public interest."

The first and last sets of the respective type of car is tabulated here:

<u>JULY 31st</u>		<u>AUGUST 1st</u>	
OAKWOOD	ROGERS ROAD	OAKWOOD	ROGERS ROAD
1 = 2104	1 = 2064	1 = 2778	1 = 2730
5 = 2100	3 = 2086	2 = 2768	2 = 2740
6 = 2074*	5 = 2060	3 = 2758	3 = 2734

* 2074 Last Car into Barn at 2:35 a.m.

NEW SMALL DIESEL LOCOMOTIVES RECEIVED BY C.N.R.

The first two locomotives for the Prince Edward Island dieselisation have been received from the Canadian General Electric Company. Numbered 7751 and 7752, these are of the standard Alco-GE 44 ton, 380 H.P. design, a locomotive that is ideally suited to freight work on light branch lines. The locomotives are of a double-end type with steeple cab, and have multiple unit control so that they may be used together from one cab. They have 400 gallon fuel tanks, are capable of a 35 m.p.h. speed maximum, and have been placed in class Q-8-a by the CNR.

Eighteen 75 ton locomotives being built by the Canadian Locomotive Company and will be of Baldwin-Whitcomb design. These will join 7751 and 7752 in service on Prince Edward Island,

and the twenty will be sufficient to eliminate all steam locomotives in the island province.

Also currently on order for use elsewhere are ten standard switchers from American Locomotive Company, and 18 from Electro-Motive Corporation.