

The Ferrophiliac Column Conducted by Just A. Ferronut

June 1992

Bonjour, mes ami, ici le nut de le chemin de fer – just practising – to ensure I can get my Québec passport. Last month I mentioned that I would have an announcement to make this month. Well, that is it! I have received an offer to raid the libraries, archives, etc., in La Belle Province and I have accepted and expect to be living in Montréal before your July Newsletter arrives. But don't applaud yet, since between the back log of material I have received from our readers along with that I have collected in Upper Canada plus what I expect to find on Lower Canada, you will be subjected to this column for quite a few issues yet. So, until I get a permanent address in Montréal, please send any mail for the column c/o the Society at PO Box 122, Postal Station A, Toronto M5W 1A2.

First, to add some extra details, etc. to a number of items from last month's column. Both Ray Corley and Bob Sandusky have replied to my question concerning the Toronto Suburban Railway station in Acton. While I haven't been able to talk personally to Ray, both have supplied enough information to confirm the two storey brick house is **NOT** the old Acton station. I had based my station question on a statement contained in material published in 1976 that indicated the TSR station had been converted into a residence. Bob confirms that part, but advises that the station was described in *Canadian Railway and Marine World* as "a 2-storey frame station 18' x 24' in plan, with a waiting room, office and baggage room downstairs and living room upstairs". This station was located in the south east quadrant of Mill and Church Streets about 50 to 100 feet east of Mill Street and on the north side of the TSR's tracks. Bob also points out that the TSR didn't build this station but that it was a private house that the railway converted into a station. Then sometime after the TSR was abandoned in 1931, the station was re-converted back into a house. Bob visited and photographed the house in September 1983, while the then-resident was having a lawn sale. By that time the building was clad in stucco, a common practice to help insulate older frame buildings. The long side of the house and the front door faced south to where the track and passing siding would have been. One of the men at the lawn sale told Bob that this house used to be called the "clock house", but no explanation why. You can add your own guess, but Bob suggests that maybe the owners had the only reliable Seth Thomas in town. Bob closes by saying that this house that had been used as the TSR station in Acton was demolished before the end of 1984.

While Petrolia was mentioned in a different context last month, a recent trip to London has answered a question that Gordon Shaw asked some time back as to whether there was a rail connection between the Canadian National (nee Great Western) and New York Central Railways (nee Canada Southern) in this town? I can now answer yes. I located a railway plan that shows this connection. If you consider the Canadian National line as being north and south then a good quarter mile or so north of the station (presently Petrolia's Library) there was a switch with south facing points that made a 180 degree loop to the west to connect into the New York Central trackage for interchange purposes.

Finally from last month a little more information from the Palmerston and Harriston areas about the old Stratford and Lake Huron Railway's (Port Dover & Lake Huron) long abandoned lines through Palmerston and Harriston. A trip to the area on June 6, 1992 not only added some information to this subject but resulted in a surprise as I entered Palmerston – there

were at least several hundred people waiting around the station. Were they lost, or waiting for some unannounced excursion train? – No! the Palmerston Lions Club was holding The Canadian Handcar Championships over that weekend along with a number of related activities. Back to my reason for being in Palmerston – information from the town library, discussion with a couple of local residents confirmed that the S&LH rail line was the better part of a quarter mile west of the Wellington, Grey and Bruce through Palmerston. The S&LH had their own separate station in Palmerston. The shape of the railway owned land on one property plan would indicate that this station may have been on the north side of Main Street in a slight hollow. Today there is a small Esso Oil bulk storage facility on the property.

Another property plan while not showing the detail of the Stratford and Lake Huron Railway alignment through Harriston does show that the S&LH right-of-way crossed the Wellington, Grey and Bruce at Harriston Junction in alignment with the Owen Sound Subdivision. Again while the S&LH may of had a station in Harriston this plan indicates that there was a widening of the S&LH right-of-way to the north on the east side of the W,G&B large enough for station grounds. This configuration now raises the next question, since Grand Trunk's Harriston Junction was only a few feet north of the diamond crossing of the Toronto, Grey and Bruce's Teeswater line, did these three lines all exist at one time? This one we will need to do some more digging on.

Since it farther from Montréal to the Bruce Peninsula than the areas east of Toronto, it has received several visits from me this spring. One trip with Gordon Shaw took us through Wingham and Blyth. The CN station in Wingham on the abandoned portion of the W,G&B Southern Extension (known recently as CN Kincardine Subdivision) is still sitting board up on its original site on Josephine Street. While this station has the status of a provincial heritage structure and eligible for a provincial contribution of a third of the restoration costs, the matter of the remaining funds is the present concern. On a more recent trip to Wingham, two interesting statements were made to me. While I had been aware that the CPR had crossed the Maitland River at the north end of Wingham and had a line on the east river bank southward under the CNR line to some point in town, several questioned as to whether the CPR had a station in town or not? Well, a long time resident told me that yes the CPR did have a station in town about where their present swimming pool is and that while considerably altered the station was moved and still exists as a residence at 155 Scott Street. This scenario varies from that contained in Calvin M. Patrick's *Stories and Memories of the London – Huron & Bruce Railway*, so it on the list for more checking. The second information was that the present CNR station is not the original, but a replacement to the earlier one that was demolished as the result of an explosion. While no date was given it may have been about 1905-06, since my 1907 GTR Inventory indicates a new station was constructed at Wingham in 1906. This construction date is confirmed in Calvin M. Patrick's book and while he indicates that the earlier station was built in 1889 to replace the original one built in 1872, he makes no reference to any explosion.

The first station south of Wingham was Belgrave. A couple of miles south of this village on the east side of Highway 4, there is what appears to be either a hand-car or section house from the London, Huron & Bruce Railway. While not being able

to stop the day I spotted it, I plan to re-inspect it shortly.

The next station south on the London, Huron & Bruce, is located on the south side of Dinsley Street east of Highway 4, in Blyth. This frame structure was built by the Grand Trunk in 1904 and listed as a first class, 1 storey frame – 16' x 60' x 14' structure. It replaced the earlier station which burned on August 11, 1904. This structure with its witch's hat or steeply pitched conical roof sitting on the curved walls of the north end has been given a veneer of bricks and is now a private residence.

Blyth had two railways it is interesting to note that while both railways are now abandoned their stations still exist. The CPR (nee Guelph & Goderich) travelled westward through town along the south bank of the Blyth River. The G&G line crossed under the L,H&B. The CPR water tank is still standing on the banks of the river, but the station has been relocated a couple of miles south of town on the east side of Highway 4, as part of a local leather and wool goods retail business. Calvin M. Patrick indicates this station was sold and moved to its present location in 1979.

My June 6, trip that took me to Palmerston was originally aimed at obtaining information from various libraries along the Toronto, Grey & Bruce as well as the two Wellington Grey and Bruce towns. I arrived in Orangeville for breakfast and while waiting for the library to open went over to Armstrong Street, north of Wellington to have a look at things around the relocated CPR (nee T,G&B) railway station. This structure is the CPR's version of the Grand Trunk station at Blyth with it slightly broader witch's hat. This former station is posted as being for sale. While it is in good shape, it is probably not in the best location for business ventures. While the area of the former Credit Valley station grounds north of Broadway are now filled with playgrounds and apartment buildings, a couple of remnants of the former road bed can be especially, little farther south in the area where it crossed Orange Street.

Next visit was the library at Shelbourne, in this case looking for both written information on local railway history, but also the exact location of the former CPR Shelbourne station. The helpful ladies at the library, not only supplied me with some excellent railway material they also made a few telephone calls and got me headed to the present location of their former station. This station, now used as a residence is partly hidden from the road, but is located on the east side of the first concession road west of Highway 10 in Mono Township. The station, which has a lived in look, is about 4 km south of Highway # 89 or about the same distance north of County Road 11, the Concession Road is marked as Mono 2 Line.

The former CPR station on the Teeswater line at Grand Valley has been converted into a residence. It is at the south end of the village on the old right-of-way west of Highway 25. It has been redone with a board & batten exterior, stained a light grey.

Westward on this line in Arthur the CPR station here has been relocated to the east side of Conestoga Street north of Domville Street. This former depot is now painted tastefully white with black trim.

While I didn't plan on this being strictly a station article it appears as if it is. It is noted that VIA had some staging around their Guelph station.

Doug Brown, our South Shore man (Montréal, that is) has sent along an article and coloured night photo from *Le Journal de St-Bruno* on that town's renovated station. From the photograph the lower section under the gables has been painted in a maroonish colour with cream trim. The fascia boards and upper gable appear to be painted white or a pastel grey. This

station has been mentioned on a number of occasions in our column. It has been moved from its original location to be used as part of the Town's parks and recreation facilities. The restoration has cost \$250,000 and among the remarks at the opening were those that the restored depot bring back many memories and remind people of other restored structures in the area.

Changing over to the book scene, I note that at least here in Toronto, the book *Last Train to Toronto*, By Terry Pindell that I mentioned a couple of months ago is available at W. H. Smiths and Coles.

The April issue of CN's Keeping Track lists a book of railway photographs from the west. This book titled *Westbound* By Mike Chandler is a portfolio of black and white photographs that he has taken over the last 30 years. The book can be purchased for \$39.95 (GST included) from Bonaventure Press, PO Box 1612, Place Bonaventure, Montréal, Québec H9H 3H2.

Since I am always looking for new books on Canadian Railways and their histories to add to my collection, as I expect others are, how about letting us know about such books published in your area. Often local or regional books are published that contain extensive railway material, but never make it to the list of railway books. Your local author would no doubt appreciate a little broader exposure.