Just A. Ferronut's Railway Archaeology *January 1994*

"Art Clowes"

Well, it is time to say welcome to a new year, and all that jazz. I would also like to thank my many friends and column readers who took the time to send me season's greetings. These greetings along with the many comments and suggestions forwarded over the year are greatly appreciated.

The Frozen East

As mentioned last month, I spent the Christmas period in New Brunswick. While the weather was cold and encouraged one to hang around the libraries, I did venture out on few days to survey some of the southeastern New Brunswick.

My first sojourn on a bright crisp morning was east of Moncton along the old European and North American Railway for about 18 miles to Pointe du Chêne, on Shediac Bay on Northumberland Strait. The European and North American Railway was the first across the south of New Brunswick extending from Pointe du Chêne to Saint John. The portion of this line from Moncton to Shediac Bay was opened on August 20, 1857. The total line to Saint was opened August 1, 1860. Seven miles east of Moncton is the railway location that today is defined as Painsec Junction. It was at this location where a line towards Nova Scotia was first started by the Eastern Extension Railway. This line was completed and became part of the Intercolonial mainline to Nova Scotia.

The area around Shediac Bay is a great summer resort area, with warm water in the bay and cool sea breezes on warm summer nights. This was a prime ingredient that led to years of commuter (suburban) trains to operate, mainly for I.C.R. workers between Pointe du Chêne and Moncton. In the peak years of the Moncton Railway shops, some of the Pointe du Chêne trains terminated and started at the John Street shops in Moncton. My 1890 time table shows three trains in each direction per day, during the week. By 1907 this number had doubled.

Of the 11 miles of railway that originally extended from Painsec Junction through Scoudouc, Shediac to Pointe du Chêne, only 5.4 miles remain to serve the industrial area around the former Scoudouc World War II airfield. This few miles of trackage is still operated as a subdivision. However, the stations at both Shediac and Pointe du Chêne on the abandoned portion still exist.

The single storey frame station with a brick dado and stuccoed upper portion at Pointe du Chêne continues as a private summer cottage with the name board displaying "Land Ends."

The single storey sand stone station at Shediac, like the Pointe du Chêne station is still in its original location. It sits in the shadows of the federal pension department's large building.

Once you are on the coast at Shediac, you might as well go the few miles north to see what changes are taking place in the village of Bouctouche, the northern terminal of the Buctouche and Moncton Railway again, note the variation in spelling).

The first sod for this road - which when completed extended slightly over 32 miles between its two namesakes – was turned on November 10, 1885. The 30 miles from the I.C.R. at Humphrey Mills to Buctouche was opened on February 20, 1888. The two miles from Humphrey Mills into the east end of Moncton was opened on September 1, 1888. It was this inner two miles that was used some thirty years later by the Moncton Tramways, Electricity and Gas Company's street cars as described in our article on that service back in December 1992.

Never a rich line, this line knew bankruptcies and name changes before coming under control of the Dominion as part of the Government Railways on July 1, 1918 and then into the C.N.R. family. While the 2 miles from Humphrey Mills to Moncton was abandoned shortly after the government take over in 1918, the real demise came in the late 1960's when falling traffic and highway construction near Buctouche saw the abandonment of the line except for about 2 miles in Humphrey Mills which has been kept as a industrial spur.

Back to my driving north on Highway # 11 towards Buctouche. Just on the outskirts of the village the highway crosses the Buctouche River. To the east of the highway bridge is the set of concrete piers from the old through truss bridge that used to carry the railway into the village. It was the costs of separating the highway and railway at this location that sped up the rail abandonment process. In Buctouche, along the north shore of the river, the alignment of the railway, nothing remains except the looping Station Street to remind one of the railway.

The brilliant sunshine and bare ground, makes driving comfortable, so if I am in Buctouche, why don't I hop up the next major river and the village of Richibucto. This seacoast community at the mouth of a river bearing its name was the eastern terminal of the Kent Northern Railway until it was abandoned in the fall of 1984. The track through the downtown business section to the wharf had been removed earlier. North of the main drag, the angle and type of a number of buildings give away the railway's location. Another block north, the raised ground with bits of the coal and cinders poking out through the short grass defines part of the old rail yard. The road bed from the yard area towards Kent Junction is presently used by as a road along a industrial area.

The Kent Northern Railway reflected the Buctouche and Moncton, but probably with even less initial dollars. This 26.5 mile line was constructed from Kent Junction on the Intercolonial line, 47 miles north of Moncton to the Harbour at Richibucto. The Northern Railway (of New Brunswick) spent nine years funding and constructing their line that was officially opened for traffic on November 1, 1883. This line was laid with iron rails had been released from the Prince Edward Island Railway, when they laid steel rails in 1882. The promoters were hoping to make their millions hauling coal from mines along the I.C.R. to the harbour at Richibucto. The Kent Northern did stay independent until September 1, 1929 when it became part of the C.N.R.

Since it was getting along towards lunch time, the brain automatically changed priorities – I remembered a burger stand in Chatham, that used to have great "steamies" (steamed hot dogs) and fried onions. You guessed it, food convinced me to drive on north to Chatham. I wasn't disappointed, the restaurant was still on the main drag across a parking lot from the former C.N.R. station. The former brick station, a few yards south from the Miramichi River stands at the edge of a sizable parking lot. This large depot has a large storey and half centre portion with a hip roof and dormer with a wing on each end of

the main station.

Today, the station is the home of the Whooper restaurant and has a former CN caboose parked in front of it. (The term "whooper" has connections with a mythical animal from along a tributary of the Miramichi. The Dungarvon Whooper supposedly inhabited the Dungarvon River Valley in the early 1800's and was noted for foretelling foreboding events by it nighttime whoops or howling.) The Chatham station is in good shape and CN's Loggieville Subdivision still passes between it and the river.

Chatham received it first official train on August 1, 1876 when The Chatham Branch Railway Company completed 9 miles of railway from Chatham Junction (presently Nelson Junction) on the I.C.R. Moncton to Riviere du Loup line. Another 2 miles of C.B.R. was opened to the Chatham wharf about July 1, 1887. The Chatham Railway Company incorporated in May 1888, acquired the C.B.R. and extended it about 52 miles east to Loggieville. Most of this portion east of Chatham was abandoned by the C.N.R. in November 1985.

A quick hop across the Miramichi River gave me a chance to get a look at the new VIA Rail station at Chatham. This station built a few years ago replaces the large brick station used by the C.N.R. for many years. VIA's new structure, is single storey and boxy with a flat roof and grey vertical siding. While this station is nondescript with a narrow canopy along the length of the track side, it is reasonably pleasing. Perhaps, its the large triangle window with a sloping base at the trackside corner that takes the sharpness of the building. A look down the track (Railway southward) sits two locomotives, CN 3501 & 3588, with its all orange cab. It was now time for a quick trip back to Moncton.

Monday, December 27 was another bone chilling sunny day. While there wasn't much snow on the ground, it looked like a good afternoon to see if I could find a scene for next year's Christmas card, so out I went. I headed east from Moncton to follow CN's Springhill Subdivision through the Memramcook Valley towards Sackville and Amherst. I didn't expect to see much freight traffic and since it was early afternoon, I had expected the eastbound Ocean Limited had gone.

At Dorchester I decided to go down to take a look at the track and decaying buildings around Dorchester Cape. I forget which politician it was back in the 1970's that was going to build a great industrial complex at the junction of the Memramcook and Petitcodiac Rivers. Their plan included a large floating dock, to serve the complex by water as well as a railway spur extending about 3 miles from the Springhill Subdivision at Dorchester. It was found that tide had its own ideas as to where the dock should be as it was often found floating up or down one of the rivers. The rail line has seen a few cars of revenue traffic over the years but never near the political promises.

My inspection found the Chemical Spur, now the Dorchester Spur, the site to store a sizable number of out of service cars. This inspection did turn up another change. The underpass across the Springhill Subdivision on Route 935 near Dorchester has been removed and replaced with a level crossing. This change has converted this site to a good location for afternoon photography. The fact that the road crosses at the bottom of a large bow in the railway provides good lighting for either direction. There is an adjacent sideroad that provides a number of other locations overlooking the curving track, good for west bounds. After checking these out, I came back to the route 935 crossing, and I got a east bound movement flash from a couple of miles across the marsh. This turned out to be VIA 6414 and 6430 powering the eastbound Ocean Limited. Since the Ocean passed at 1515 hours, it was a good three late. The two F40PHs were pulling a head end baggage car, two coaches, a mid-train dome followed by 8 cars and a *Park* tail-end dome.

Working with the weather-people, I decided I had time to return home by looping from Moncton, up to Newcastle along the I.C.R. and then drive the South West Miramichi River Valley over to the St. John River Valley ahead of a predicted snow storm.

Except for a few miles at each end, the single track ICR parallels Highway 126 for the 80 miles between Moncton and Newcastle. Sandford Fleming was the engineer in charge of the construction of the ICR through New Brunswick. The Moncton - Newcastle leg is an almost straight line between the two communities with lengthy tangents and almost unnoticeable curves through the flat terrain of eastern New Brunswick. The line was built using the shallow stream valleys to create momentum grades to help the early steam locomotives. The fact that this line was constructed to a high standard and has remained single track for its 120 or so year life, makes it a working museum to display the skills of the early railway builders. Older stone bridge piers and larger stone arch culverts are fairly common in the eastern half of the Dominion, but it is the number of the smaller stone culverts still in use along this line that makes its more unique.

Sandford Fleming worked on the basis of building all of his culverts to a size that a man could get through to inspect and repair. He built where possible to a minimum height of 4'-4" and 2'-0" wide. He tells us that in some of the low or shallow fills where he couldn't get acceptable cover over the top of the culvert that he had to make some lower. Cover or fill over these culverts were important, since he was using stone slabs with a 2 foot clear span, the fill had to supply an arching effect to keep the loading on these stone slab culvert tops at an acceptable level. Local quarries were used to supply the stone. He had all of his culverts built with a cobble-stoned floor to prevent erosion. To be able to use this basic concept of a stone slab top, he had to go to stepping the wall stones inward on the wider culverts. These culverts with all square stones were much cheaper than the arched top culverts that required all stones to be cut with the sides bevelled and the top key stone very carefully cut to fit and transmit the loads through the arch. However, as can be realized the stepped stone culverts with their stone slab top did have a width limit and were generally used for culverts 6 feet or less in width.

Along this line, there are several 2 foot wide box culverts with stone slabs as well as several 4 foot wide ones with a double step, 6 inches in each step to bring the top span to the 2 feet along this line. Several Fleming designed stone arch culverts are still in use as constructed. There are culverts with their wing walls paralleling the streams, others paralleling the track, some walls are short and some are long.

Anyway this line gives one a chance to look at an facet of our hobby that we often ignore.

More on this trip next month.