Just A. Ferronut's Railway Archaeology

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Summer seems to have flashed by so quickly! As always, I am behind in both my material for R&T as well as answering various letters and e-mails that show up on my door step. Except for a couple of quick trips down to Hillsborough to see them get ex-CN 1009 ready for the TV-movie *"Paradise Siding"*, I tell myself I haven't done much over the past months. Perhaps this is not totally true, since there is always tons of un-filed material begging to get put on the computer, etc. Now that more temperate days of fall are here, I am looking forward to getting in a day trip to Prince Edward Island, as well as a couple of scouting trips north along the New Brunswick East Coast Railway. Recent trips to Montreal by VIA Rail reminded me of the numerous railway junctions along this former Intercolonial Railway line in New Brunswick that need closer inspections. While some of these junctions still exist, others have been long gone, or used very different from their original intent. Most of the abandoned lines also deserve a walking to determine what hidden gems may be along them!

While we have on occasions made comments about some of these lines, we have not to date looked at them as a group as seen from the comfort of the dome car of a VIA Rail train.

Now that I am in Moncton and I have been able to do more digging about these various lines, I am finding they have the standard problem so commonly associated with railway history, variations in dates and details! One finds even some of the relatively recent matters may have a range of dates that spans several years. Then there are the various "old-wives tales," that can take plenty of research to determine the actual facts.

So, let's have a look at these various rail lines, as one passes them in a northward trip from Moncton to the Québec border from the vantage of a modern passenger train. To be forewarned, in general, where variations occur, I will be favouring railway names and spelling. All aboard!, as we start our trip northward from Moncton.

From our 1998 perspective, the first and simplest line change one may be aware of is the reverse curve on the north end of the Gort Subdivision, that is a Canadian Government Railways built connecting track. This trackage extends with its reverse curve from Pacific Junction, Mile 11.9 Gort Subdivision to a point about 0.5 miles south of Catamount. About 1915, following the Canadian Government Railways' addition of the National Transcontinental Railway to its group of companies, it was decided to abandon one of the duplicate lines between the Pacific Junction area and Moncton. The older ICR line from the north end of the Moncton Shop complex (new shops on John Street), to this reverse curve near Catamount was abandoned, with their new connecting track all rail traffic north of Moncton would use the newer National Transcontinental Railway. Today from a dome-car on a VIA train, this reverse curve, along with the alignment of the abandoned ICR line is easily spotted as one travels over and past it. Between the time the National Transcontinental Railway reached Moncton and the early 1920s, numerous other track changes took place, but need a map and a separate article to properly describe them!

From the 1915 construction of their rail connection until late 1922, all rail traffic between Moncton and both the NTR and ICR used about 0.75 miles of the old ICR mainline (later the Moncton Shop Lead and presently Vaughan Harvey Boulevard) between Moncton Station towards the Moncton Shop complex. At a point, near the present intersection of Gordon and Cornhill Streets, the NTR trackage joined the ICR. From this junction, rail traffic would then travel along the NTR to Pacific Junction.

Late in 1922, the Canadian National completed a rail diversion between a point on the NTR main line about 3.5 miles north of Moncton at what became Odlum Junction, and a point on the old European & North American rail line, (CN Sussex Subdivision), about 2.5 miles west of Moncton. Over the years this cut-off has at different times been defined as the Harcourt and Gort Subdivisions. This is the route presently used by all trains between Moncton and the province of Québec.

Beersville Coal and Railway

Nineteen miles north of Catamount, the ICR (now New Brunswick East Coast Railway) passes through Adamsville. Back at the turn of the century, this was the junction with the Beersville Coal and Railway Company. The Beersville Railway as it was locally known, like many of the small industry-owned rail lines of its day, had a roller coaster life that followed the similar fate of their owners, resource-based companies. In keeping with corporate policies of the day, the ICR's District Superintendent, and General Trackmaster, made an inspection in 1899 of the then proposed Beersville railway, and reported that they: "were pleased with the prospects of the mine and said that if a tramway were well operated, the mine would supply a large amount of freight to the ICR."

By 1904, a 6.481 mile rail line, mostly of second-hand 57 lb. rail acquired from the ICR extended eastward to Beersville, on the Coal Branch Railway. A second mining company moved into the area, and from a point near the eastern end of the main line at Beersville, a branch line 2.149 miles long extended southward to the second mine. After sort of operating for about three years, the Company went into receivership and was sold by the courts. While the railway was owned by one coal company, it seems that they could make both companies upset with their spasmodic service.

The prime activity on this railway between 1908 and about 1918 appeared to have been more in the courts than on the rails. The Beersville Railway had survived threats during World War I of having its rails removed and sold, when metal prices were high.

Like many of these shoe-string operations, the Beersville Coal and Railway Company appears to have struggled with various periods of operations, interspersed with shutdowns

and bankruptcies until 1923. In that year, the rail line was sold again and possibly operated until the spring of 1929, when it was sold for the last time, and the rails removed to help pay some off its creditors.

This is one of those lines that had not numerous owners, but also a number of names. At times its control extended to New York and latter to Cape Breton. A definite candidate for more research to fill in the holes in its history!

The Kent Northern Railway

At Kent Junction, fourteen miles north of Adamsville is where the Kent Northern, a 26.5 mile line had its wye junction with the ICR. This line, that we briefly described in our January and February 1994 column, extended eastward to the coast at Richibucto, NB. Since the junction wye remained after the abandonment of the rest of the line, it is still vaguely visible today.

Like the Beersville Coal and Railway Company, this railway had a "branch" on which very little is known! The main line to Richibucto was opened in late 1883. News items from late 1885 state that the approximate 5 mile branch line from Richibucto northward to St. Louis, had been completed. This branch was operated until just before 1900, before being abandoned. Indications are that passenger service on this branch was with a combination car on the end of freight trains. The line was constructed by one of the Brown family connected with the Kent Northern.

CN's Richibucto Subdivision, 26.5 miles from the Newcastle Subdivision to Richibucto was officially abandoned December 3, 1984 and the track was removed during 1986.

Passmore or Chatham Junction

Travelling north towards Miramichi (formerly Newcastle), in the area of present day Passmore, on the east side of the Newcastle Subdivision, at mile 60.4, one can still see plainly the concrete foundations of the long abandoned interlocking tower where the original Northern and Western Railway crossed the ICR on its path from Devon (Fredericton North) via Blackville eastward to Chatham and eventually Loggieville. This junction had been called Chatham Junction in the days before the line was taken over by the Intercolonial and abandoned. As we mentioned in our February 1994 column, this line, constructed by the Northern and Western Railway Company was opened in 1887, and three years later it was renamed the Canada Eastern Railway and was acquired for the Canadian Government Railways in 1904.

This east-west line across the ICR was abandoned about 1912, following the construction of a new line from the nearby Nelson Junction eastward along the south shore of the Miramichi river to the former town of Chatham (now part of Miramichi) and a new connection with the east end of the Loggieville Subdivision, part of the original Northern and Western Railway.

Derby Junction

Continuing northward, after one crosses the 6-span through truss bridge of the South-West Miramichi River, one passes the site of the former Derby Junction at its north end. Derby Junction is on the point of land between the two large through truss railway bridges that span the two Miramichi Rivers near their confluence.

The original rail line along the north bank of the South-West Miramichi extended from its north pointing switch some fourteen miles from Derby Junction to Indiantown or Quarryville. As can be guessed from the name Quarryville, this line served a quarry that supplied stone to the railway. About four miles from Derby Junction was Millerton, another real original name, since its had a number of lumber mills that provided the ICR with traffic.

Following the 1904 acquisition of the Canada Eastern Railway, the rail line was extended from Quarryville to Blackville, that permitted the abandonment of the old Canada Eastern Railway bridge across the South-West Miramichi near Blackville and the trackage to and across the Newcastle Subdivision. As mentioned we touched on this in our February 1994 column. The 75 miles of railway from Derby Junction to the crossing of the NTR at McGivney was abandoned in January, 1985.

Crossing the South-West Miramichi bridge also reminds me of the numerous days about 1960 that we spent at Derby Junction. Our temporary home, outside braced wooden boarding cars that sat on a siding at this junction station. The task was to pressure grout the piers and abutments of the railway bridge. Sandford Fleming had constructed these bridge foundations some 90 years earlier. While their superstructures (the steel through trusses) had been replaced, the foundations were much the same as they had been constructed. Not only had many changes in the weight and size of railway equipment taken place over this period, but the ravages of time had also taken their toll.

The work was undertaken using compressed air equipment. The air was supplied by large air compressors that were set up at the end of the bridge with high pressure air lines were run along the bridge with take-offs at each pier for the operation of the drilling tools, etc. Staging, to serve as a working platform would be constructed around the top of the piers, and often wooden rafts would be needed at the water line, especially if the pier required extra drilling nearer the bottom.

In general, the task at hand was to drill the piers and abutments with a series of 2 inch diameter holes. Once these vertical holes were drilled, reinforcing steel bars to be dropped into them. The goal was to permit these old cut stone piers to be bound together by these reinforcing bars. Depending on how the pier had been constructed, horizonal and extra holes in the lower portions would be drilled to permit horizonal steel to be added, that would help tie the piers together.

After days of drilling through the hard granite stones of these piers, then adding the reinforcing bars, most of the holes would be plugged.

With this phase done, it was now time to crank up the grout mixers and commence the crucial stage of the job. In the grout mixers, again run by air, fine sand, cement, fly ash and water would be mixed to a runny consistency. Since I can hear everyone's grey matter repeating over and over, why the "fly ash"? – it made the grout more slippery, and thus helping move through the delivery pipes, the drilled holes and various cracks and crannies in the pier. The delivery pipes were connected into the drilled holes with "grout inserts", devices with rubber washers on them that would be put into the hole and then by shortening the rubber washers, they would be squeezed out against the holes to form a tight seal. The grout would be pumped into one hole, while a couple of adjacent holes would be watched for the signs of the grout coming up them, thus

announcing that the grout was doing its job of filling the voids, etc., in the pier. While I don't recall it happening at the Miramichi, I can recall a few occasions, where large quantities of grout was pumped into a pier, with no signs of grout in the adjacent holes! Then to everyone's surprise a look down the river would reveal water-borne clouds of grout escaping into the river. It was surmised that in these cases, the grout had found an underground fissure that had less resistance than the pier, and so the grout merrily followed it until it got to a point near the river bed and escaped into the water. The solution was to let the grout stand until set and then try over.

So today, many of these bridges, are still in use, stronger than when they were originally built.

My second recollections of the area involved the North-West Miramichi river bridge and came some four or five years latter, in my days as a surveyor. Reports had come in that the track people were having problems keeping the rails in line across a couple of spans of this bridge. The river at this point is subject to both tides as well as the changing water flow of the different seasons. It appeared as if at least one pier was moving back and forth with the tides. While his movement was quite small, it was enough to attempt to determine exactly what was going on! We knew that one pier was on a weaker foundation, and expected that like many early bridges, it was setting on a brush mattress, and that this permitted the movement.

The major part of our work related to getting the site set-up. This entailed bringing in pile drivers, and driving two piles back from the bridge, at each. These were to be the control points with marks (saw cuts) were put in the top ends. In line between these piles holes we drilled in the top of the piers, and in these we set, in sulphur, brass plugs with a fine cross on their top. The next task was setting long 6 inch diameter pipes down the upstream face of each pier. These had lugs welded to the outside to form an ladder, and were on short brackets anchored to the piers.

With the set-up completed, it was time to start the surveys. To get as much consistency as possible, we used the same crew, and that we would start doing a survey a week, then gradually reducing the frequency to once a month. We purchased all new equipment, except the transit, which was assigned only to this job. For the chains (measuring tapes) we had tension gauges and thermometers, to ensure we always used the same pull on the chain and could correct for the temperature. To measure between the piers, one had to pass the chain around all of the vertical members on the side of the bridge to be able to get out to the brass plugs. With the transit set up over one pile and using the second for a back shot, then sighting in on the piles at the far end of the bridge to ensure the piles hadn't moved, we would then sight in on each pier to record the position of the brass plug.

The vertical pipes had small cuts at the ends to permit small wire cross hairs to be added to both the top and bottom. Plum bobs would be hung down these pipes to measure any movement between surveys. To ensure that wind wouldn't affect the measurement, clear plastic plates were put over the ends of the pipes during the measurements.

While the first few surveys took longer, we eventually got to the point where we could do the field measurements in a day. Our surveys went on for almost two years. While everyone had a role to play in the field survey, the extra day at the office to plot the findings on a master tracing was boring. To get around this we would take turns transcribing the field notes. Our conclusion, was that while one pier was moving slightly, that at least in the two year period, the amount wasn't increasing. Remember this was in the days before computers!

At the end of our survey it was decided to hire a university professor, to repeat the process, to see what he could ascertain. Two interesting items came from this change. First because of the various lettering on the master drawing, he considered that several crews had done the work, and therefore considered the resulting errors distorted the results. A couple of years later, I met one of the students this professor used for his surveys. His comments were that after a couple of surveys that basically confirmed our measurements, they would goof off to the Miramichi and cook up a set of figures to take back to their boss. His final determination was that there was a slight movement in the pier, but that the range was stable.

While this may not be your view of railroading, it is part of the behind the scene which helps to keep the trains moving.

Newcastle Wharf

About one and a half mile past the North-West Miramichi River Bridge as the railway climbs around a sweeping curve towards the VIA Rail station at Newcastle, (now Miramichi), one passes the south point switch of the 2.03 mile spur that goes back down grade to the Newcastle Wharf. The Newcastle spur track, along with a similar spur, at Campbellton are two of the oldest sections of ICR tracks in the northern portion of New Brunswick. They both were constructed prior to the ICR's 1873 annual report. The Newcastle Spur saw plenty of action in October 1872 as the barque *"Amadeo"* waited while the *"Examplar"* unloaded steel rails for the new Intercolonial railway. The *"Amadeo"* had a cargo of six locomotives, two of which were to be unloaded at Newcastle, the other four destined for Saint John, NB. At a nearby wharf, the barque *"Miramichi,"* was discharging 2,700 barrels of cement to be used on the Miramichi river bridges. Most of the original ICR Newcastle spur is still in use.

Campbellton saw its first passenger car arriving from Moncton at naught nine hundred hours on Wednesday, October 20, 1875. This trip had started from Moncton, the previous day. However, since the car had broad gauge trucks, they had to be changed to standard gauge before crossing the Miramichi River bridges and continuing its trip to Campbellton. Early November 1875, saw the start of regular passenger service as locomotive No. 43 left Newcastle with a heavy train for Bathurst and Campbellton.

Bartibog

Twenty miles north of Newcastle (Miramichi today) is the abandoned wye rail junction at Bartibog. This was another resource railway that was built and officially opened on November 19, 1957, as a 23.1 mile branch line that extended westward to the Heath Steele mine, with its zinc and copper bearing ore. This line was touted at the line's opening as being the first new major railway construction in the Atlantic provinces for more than 40 years.

This line cost $3,000,000 to construct and involved the clearing of 325 acres of the forest where there was neither a clearing nor a homestead. Bulldozers, scrapers, shovels and carryalls, moved 22 million cubic feet of rock and earth to form

the roadbed. Rockcuts, some as deep as 50 feet were blasted at points along the line. Often more than a ton of high-powered geglinite was used at a time. The result was 27 million cubic feet of fractured rock to be removed.

CN pulled out all the stops for the opening of this line. Guests from the east arriving by train, were provided with sleeping car accommodation near the Newcastle station for the night of Monday, November 18, 1957. Guests from the west arrived on Tuesday morning's Maritime Express that was due in Newcastle at 7:05 a.m. The party then transferred to the inaugural train which that departed for Heath Steele at 9:00 a.m. The railway, in Car 2, adjacent to the "Cacouna" (3) on the special train had arranged facilities for newsmen covering the opening. Typewriters, copy paper, telegraph blanks, etc., were available there for those wishing to prepare material enroute.

In addition, Canadian National Telegraphs had arranged for wire facilities at the general offices of Heath Steele Mines Limited, so that stories could be filed from there. Also, it was arranged for a CN Telegraphs messenger to meet the eastbound special train at Newcastle 4:30 p.m. Tuesday to receive any press material for furtherance by wire.

By the mid 1980's most of the ore had been shipped, that remaining was being handled by trucks, so CN applied to abandon this one product rail line. Abandonment became effect on October 15, 1987, and the line has been removed.

Gloucester Junction

About another 20 miles north brings one to Gloucester Junction. This was the junction with the Caraquet Railway. The Caraquet Railway was originally incorporated on April 18, 1874 with plans to built about 60 miles eastward to Pokemouche. It appears that the prime reason to construct this line was to access the remaining virgin timber on the peninsula and perhaps to gain better access to mackerel fishing. Being close to Bathurst, this branch had its switch pointing northward towards that community. Indications are that while the road had an energetic political promoter in the person of Mr. K. F. Burns, MP, nothing was done for about 10 years. In 1884, construction appears to have been started. A news report from July 1887 indicates that the rails were laid a distance of sixty miles from Gloucester Junction, viz: to Pokemouche, (Inkerman) the original prospective end of the line. Mr. Burns, their MP, "with his usual thoughtfulness and assiduity with regard to the want of the constituency, secured from the Dominion Government a further subsidy, which will enable the company this year to extend the road a further distance of about seven miles. This will bring it to Shippegan Harbour." This same report indicated that work had started on this last seven miles into Shippegan Harbour, as well as ballasting from Caraquet to Pokemouche, with the work expected to be finished that year, 1887.

This same report states: "The traffic, over this line, both in passengers and freight is something remarkable. During last week upwards of 300 passengers went over the line."

While different writers have used different dates regarding the opening of portions of this railway, the December 17, 1887 death of nine men on a snow-plough train from Caraquet, a couple of miles west of that community confirms that at least the 48.5 miles to Caraquet was open. This accident, defined as the worst railway accident up to that time in the Province of New Brunswick. The cause of the accident was that the bridge that had been moved by the force of the tide (and probably pan ice in the bay).

In 1885, a second company, the Gulf Shore Railway was incorporated and built 17 miles of railway from Pokemouche Junction southward to Tracadie and Shelia. This was in addition to the 7 miles of line from Pokemouche Junction into Shippegan.

These two railway amalgamated on April 13, 1911 as the Caraquet and Gulf Shore Railway. They were acquired by the Canadian Government Railways effective June 1, 1920 and became part of the Canadian National Railways.

While the line had been cut back from Shelia to Tracadie at some cloudy date (pre-1960) in the past, all the remaining trackage beyond mile 4.34 was abandoned May 2, 1989. Today most of the abandoned roadbed is easily traced as it has been converted into hiking trails. The 4.34 miles near Bathurst has been kept to provide rail access to industrial lands on the east side of Bathurst Harbour.

Nepisiguit

Across the Nepisiguit River we have a junction that has seen two railways over the life of the ICR. The first of these was the Northern New Brunswick & Seaboard Railway. This railway was incorporated under a provincial statue in 1909 to construct a 16.93 mile line along the Nepisiguit River to the Canada Iron Corporation's ore deposits. The community at the mine site was called Bathurst Mines. This was another resource railway, built into the wilderness, and its fortunes followed those of the ore deposits. The first several years appeared to have shown promise for the 30 or so families of Bathurst Mines. The line listed four stations besides Nepisiguit Junction, and an additional 2.9 miles of trackage was constructed for yard purposes, etc. Early in 1914 the railway was still operating with train service Monday, Wednesday and Saturday although the mine had shut down. A 1915 report states that the mine and railway are shut down, but one of their group had started to run a saw mill as well as cut and ship pulp wood. This kept some men employed. It goes to indicate that Mr. Godin, the mill owner, would persuade the I.C.R. to run an occasional shunter to his mill and move the products of his operation. He also secured a gasoline trolley to carry mail, tourists and himself up and down the railway.

In 1918, pursuant to an agreement dated May 10, the Northern New Brunswick & Seaboard Railway permitted the St. John & Quebec Railway Company to lift the rails, turnouts, etc., for use on their line then under construction between Gagetown and Westfield, NB. Indications are that most of this rail was 80 lb. with a small amount of 85 lb. These rails were replaced in 1925.

Reports started about 1924 concerning the re-opening the mines, and even extending the railway across the province to join the Tobique Valley Railway at Plaster Rock. While indications are that there was some reactivation of the mine during World War II, I am not sure at this point what if any role the railway played in its operations. A dam was constructed on the Nepisiguit River, and roads were eventually built into the mine site. This dam became the property of the Bathurst Power & Paper Company Limited, and supplied power to their mill in Bathurst. The paper company operated a patrol by gasoline driven trolley along the rail line to inspect their hydro line from their dam. Otherwise the rail line laid unused, except for the wye at Nepisiguit, which CN had under agreement for its use.

In 1959, the paper company approached the Province of New Brunswick, then owner of the railway following earlier bankruptcies, for permission to remove the line. A Mr. Donald E. Hicks, agreed to remove the rail, for its salvage value. This was done and the roadbed was converted to a highway, presently part of Highway # 430.

A recent (Summer 1998) radio report mentioned that there are still one or two people still living at Bathurst Mines, but in general it has been inactive community since about the end of the War II.

The second Railway from Nepisiguit Junction, that still exists today is the line that serves the Brunswick Mining and Smelting Corporation. Construction on this line started in the spring of 1963 by the Canadian National Railways. This 14.7-mile branch line carries copper, zinc and lead from the mines to a processing plant at Belledune. This line, while built as a railway branch has been sold and is now privately owned by the Brunswick Mining and Smelting Corporation. This railway serves Brunswick Mines which is located about 5 miles north-west of the old Bathurst Mines site.

Bathurst Harbour Spur

Two miles north of Nepisiguit, the Bathurst Spur, a 2.4 mile line extending eastward to a pulp and paper mill on the harbour front. This line with its south facing switch points was constructed by CN but now operated by the paper mill.

Petit Rocher

About 12 miles north of Bathurst is Petit Rocher. Here the Intercolonial Railway had a 1.35 miles spur down to the town's wharf. This spur had a south facing switch, and made somewhat of a loop north and eastward to the Petit Rocher wharf. This line was dismantled in 1914.

Belledune & Irvco

About 8 miles north of Petit Rocher, at mile 129.7 Newcastle subdivision, one comes to the Belledune, then a couple of miles further is the Irvco complex. Belledune is the home of the base metal smelter for the ores from the Brunswick Mines mentioned above. This facility was constructed in the same period as the Brunswick Mines. Belledune is mainly a yard with a short spur to the smelter.

Irvco has a private spur that serves their industrial complex associated with the operations of Belledune.

Dalhousie Junction

A further 32 miles brings us to Dalhousie Junction, CN Mile 164.3 Newcastle Subdivision. This is the junction of the 6.2 mile Dalhouise subdivision, a line that extends east to the community of the same name, and that is listed as being opened June 25, 1884 and is still in use.

Campbellton Wharf Spur

This spur, as mentioned earlier, was constructed about 3 years before the ICR main line was opened to permit rails and rolling stock, etc., to be delivered by ship for use in the construction of the Intercolonial in the area. This spur, about one mile long, was located within the yard area and terminated on a railway owned wharf. Turn of the century photos indicate considerable activities of transhipment between the railway and ships.

Campbellton and Tide Head

In 1885 the Restigouche and Victoria Colonization Railway was incorporated to build a railway from Campbellton across New Brunswick to some point between Grand Falls and Edmundston. Meetings, talk and surveys seem to have been the prime purpose of this company. In 1896 it changed in name to the Restigouche and Victoria Railway. The next year the Restigouche and Western Railway took over. With still no construction, the International Railway Company of New Brunswick was incorporated to take over the R&W. Construction work didn't start until after the provincial government guaranteed the company's bonds in 1907.

The original line of the International Railway started immediately west of the Campbellton station with a north pointing switch. The line made a loop and roughly paralleled the ICR westward to a point about 2.7 miles south-west of Tide Head, originally Moffat. At this point it swung more southwest along the Christopher Brook towards St. Quentin.

The line expected to be opened in late 1909, was delayed because of the weather and was not opened until early in 1910.

The federal government leased the INR (Inter-National Railway of New Brunswick) effect August 1, 1914, and operated by the ICR. In 1915, the INR was purchased by the government as part of the Canadian Government Railways.

During 1919 a new 2.66 mile rail line was constructed from Tide Head along Christopher Brook to the point where it met the original INR. This permitted the abandonment of the 7.4 miles between the connecting point and Campbellton, with this section of track being removed in 1920.

The International Railway, operated by Canadian National as its St. Quentin Subdivision was abandoned from Tide Head (mile 0.00) to near St. Leonard, (mile 103.5) effective June 6, 1989. The rails, etc., were reported removed as of September 6, 1991.

Even on the long days of summer it is now dark, as the Ocean Limited leaves New Brunswick on its journey to Montreal.