

## OERHA acquires Upper Canada Railway Society archives

The Ontario Electric Railroad Historical Association has acquired the archives of the Upper Canada Railway Society. This once-active society has ceased to function and the existence of its records was in jeopardy. With no long-term place to store its archives, the UCRS turned to the OERHA for assistance.

The UCRS was incorporated in 1941 in Ontario. While it could be argued that the majority of its members were more keenly interested in steam railways than electric ones, the society did follow and report on both. They held regular meetings, small charters were operated and they arranged visits to railway facilities.

It might surprise many in the OERHA family to know that had it not been for the UCRS, the OERHA might not exist, as we know it today. When some of the UCRS trolley fans learned in late 1953 that TTC 1326 was no longer part of the TTC's 'Mission Statement', it was realized that fast action would be required to save it. To run an acquisition proposal through the UCRS directors at that time would have been a very novel and possibly controversial initiative. TRC 1326 would likely have been scrapped before any rescue became available from that source. A small task force of like-minded individuals formed and within seven months had 1326 and latecomer 2210 (nee TRC 55) sitting on track near the present east loop of today's property and chose the name Halton County Radial Railway. To these first members from the UCRS ranks we are eternally grateful for their quick action and foresight in embarking upon what was probably, at the time, a scary venture. So rose the OERHA out of the UCRS.

After delivery of 1326 and 55, progress was slow due to the lack of funds and workers, the long distance from Toronto and the distractions of other events. (Electric railways were closing down in the late 1950s and our founders were also railfans!) Despite it all, car 1326 was under a roof of sorts by 1960 and body restoration had begun. By 1962 the next generation of young members (some from the UCRS and others not) was beginning to make its very effective presence (read muscle) known. New expertise and enthusiasm enabled further acquisitions to be made and by the end of 1962 extended track-accommodated cars 2424, W-25 and M-4.

The UCRS assisted the OERHA in other ways as well. It was known for operating steam charters from Toronto to various destinations in southern Ontario. The trips had also become very popular with many steam-starved U.S. railfans and patronage was heavy. Since the train lengths were approaching 12 cars or more and

passengers often numbering 600-700, food service became an issue. The UCRS arranged for a cafeteria car be included in the consist with the OERHA as its caterer. This was a big source of revenue for us. We must have done something right because we always sold out! There were generally three or four trips a year.

The UCRS had always issued 'Bulletins' of a technical and historical nature on various electric railway vehicles. Examples are the TTC 400's, Peter Witts and PCCs to name a few. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the UCRS and OERHA jointly published a number of trolley books that were authored by John Mills. The UCRS provided the capital and the OERHA the material. These too were a significant source of revenue. Their printer was a long-time UCRS member. The apparent demise of this once thriving and large association is melancholic for many who are interested in the railway scene in the Toronto area. The reasons for the winding down of this once large interest group are many. I do not profess to know all of them. Consider the gradual 'streamlining' of rail systems everywhere, their reduced variety and accessibility, their increasing remoteness from most people's daily experiences, an aging population, modern electronic devices, internet attractions. The list goes on. The duties of maintaining an incorporated society fell upon progressively fewer souls until even the monthly news report ceased and the life support system ceased to function.

One must acknowledge though, that a group of the UCRS' former Hamilton members has never ceased to have monthly meetings and informally call themselves, "the Hamilton Chapter of the Upper Canada Railway Society", though they do not conduct formal business or maintain assets.

It is ironic to consider that the small group given life in 1954 from the larger one is now about to assist in maintaining some memory of the once mighty one.

Many thanks to Bob Sandusky for his insight and assistance in this story. (Dave Andrew, OERHA)

## South Simcoe Railway's 136 back in steam

After several years of repairs, ex CPR 4-4-0 136 is back in steam on the South Simcoe Railway. Without



James Brown