

# POOL TRAINS

A PICTORIAL STUDY OF THE TORONTO-MONTREAL AND  
TORONTO-OTTAWA POOLED PASSENGER TRAIN SERVICES



Canadian National Railways 6222 (4-8-4) hauling Pool 8 near Toronto, Sept. 23, 1953.

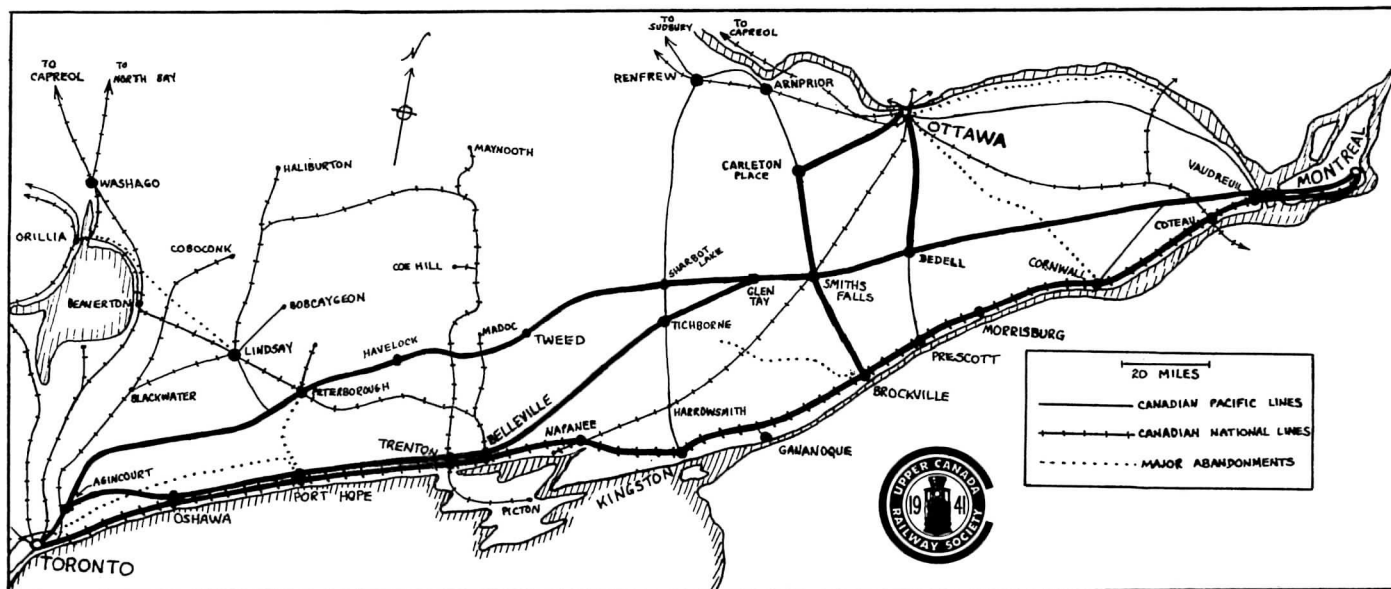
Very soon after the onset of the Great Depression of 1929, traffic on the railways of Canada, both passenger and freight, began an alarming decline which was so serious as to demand immediate and radical changes in existing operations, with two purposes in view: first, to reduce operating expenses and second, to attract new traffic or at least to halt the catastrophic drop in earnings. The second of the two alternatives was tried first by managements trained in the fiercely competitive tradition of railway companies. When this failed, many changes were made in every aspect of railway operations, with the intention of reducing expenses to the lowest possible level. Perhaps the most interesting development in passenger operations was the introduction of the pooling agreement between the Canadian Pacific and Canadian National Railways covering passenger service between Toronto and Ottawa, and Toronto and Montreal. Before examining this development in detail, however, we must take note of the services previously offered on this route.

In 1928 and 1929 both railways had similar timetables, with no trains scheduled faster than 7 hours 40 minutes for 335 (approx.) miles. Each line operated a morning train on a moderately fast schedule, a midday train on the fastest schedule, and two or three overnight trains on schedules dictated then, as now, by convenience of arrival and departure times. In addition, each railway had at least one daily local

train which stopped at all stations, providing the service now expected of highway buses. These local trains were early casualties of depression conditions. Services to and from Ottawa were similar, although fewer overnight trains were scheduled. The C.P.R. ran over the routing still used (via Bedell), and the C.N.R. used the former Canadian Northern main line from Napanee through Smiths Falls to Ottawa. This rather cheaply-built and meandering track is not adapted for fast schedules, and the fastest time shown for its 111.9 miles was 3½ hours. This placed the C.N.R. at a disadvantage in competing for Ottawa business.

## GENESIS

With the onset of the Depression, passenger traffic began to diminish almost immediately, and by the beginning of 1931 the C.N.R. was carrying only 55% of the passengers it had carried eight years previously, while the C.P.R. figure was 65%. Before this time, however, the C.N.R. had seen the handwriting on the wall, and had taken decisive action. Effective April 27, 1930, the midday fast train was dropped and replaced by a new train leaving Montreal at 3.00 P.M. (from Toronto 4.00 P.M.) and running on a drastically speeded-up schedule of 6 hours. This represented a saving of 1 hour 40 minutes and must be one of the most spectacular accelerations on record. The 14 intermediate stops were reduced to four (Brockville, Kingston, Belleville and Oshawa), and the 321 miles



between Danforth and Lachine had to be covered in about 303 minutes. The maintenance of this fast schedule was entrusted to 6000-class Mountain-type engines.

Caught at a temporary disadvantage, the C.P.R. replied in April 1931 with a timing of 6½ hours over its Lake Shore line through Belleville. This represented a more difficult effort than the competing six hour timing, as the C.P.R. is handicapped by 183.5 miles of single track between Agincourt and Glen Tay, and a total distance 6.5 miles longer. To compensate for this, the 124 miles between Montreal West and Smiths Falls, all double track, were scheduled in 108 minutes, briefly the fastest schedule in the world; the Great Western Railway was forced to accelerate its "Cheltenham Flyer" in order to regain the cherished title. H-1 class Hudsons were used on these trains.

Spectacular as these accelerations were, the position of the railway companies was daily worsening. Accordingly a Royal Commission on Railways and Transportation was created in 1931 to inquire into the situation and report on possible methods of improving the companies' financial condition. Many suggestions were considered. The Canadian Pacific suggested that many thousands of miles of track could be abandoned if operations of both railways were concentrated, wherever possible, on the same tracks, regardless of their ownership. The Canadian National proposal was less drastic, suggesting co-operation instead of competition, and co-ordination of facilities wherever possible. Outright amalgamation of the two railways was also suggested, as was a proposal that the C.N.R. should be leased to the C.P.R. for operation.

The final report of the Commission, made early in 1932, made no radical recommendations and left the basic identities of the railways unaltered. However, an agreement was reached for co-ordination in the scheduling of overnight Toronto-Montreal trains. This produced an immediate reduction in the number of trains operated, effective in the winter of 1932, and can probably be regarded as the first step towards pooling.

#### THE POOL AGREEMENT

The idea of pooling was not a new one, but it had not been effected on a large scale until an agreement was made in 1925 between the Northern Pacific, Union Pacific and Great Northern Railroads for pooling between Portland, Ore. and Seattle, Wash. Shortly

thereafter another agreement was made between the Northern Pacific, Great Northern and Soo Line for pooling in the Duluth - Minneapolis / St. Paul territory. These agreements formed the pattern for the first Canadian experiment in pooling.

This was announced in a joint message by Sir Edward Beatty for the C.P.R. and S.J. Hungerford for the C.N.R., as follows: "The Canadian Pacific and Canadian National Railways have agreed in principle to the pooling of competitive passenger services wherever practicable. Detailed arrangements for making the pool effective, east and west, will take some time to complete. But, in order to effect immediate economies, the two companies have arranged for a partial pooling of passenger services between Montreal-Toronto, and the pooling of all passenger service Ottawa-Toronto, these consolidations to be effective Sunday, April 2 (1933). An economy of well over \$500,000 a year will result from these initial developments in the pooling arrangements."

As indicated in this statement, further introduction of pooling arrangements was contemplated, but apart from adding Montreal-Quebec services to the original agreement a year later, this was never undertaken.

#### POOLED SERVICES

The effect of this announcement was that overnight trains remained unaltered but were operated as pool trains; of the day trains, only the fast afternoon train was pooled, other trains remaining unaffected. Under the pooling arrangements, tickets of both railways are honoured for transportation in the same train, the earnings being placed in a common pool and divided between the railways by agreement. Canadian Pacific tickets are sold only to those towns previously served by their trains: i.e. C.P.R. tickets are valid in pool trains on C.N.R. lines between stations Montreal to Vaudreuil and Belleville to Toronto. In addition, C.P.R. tickets from farther afield are honoured in pool trains on C.N.R. lines to Prescott, Brockville and Kingston, which are served by C.P.R. branches.

The introduction of the pool trains caused the demise of fast C.N.R. service Napanee-Ottawa. The 6-hour C.N.R. timing was also discontinued, with the new pool trains operating to a 6½-hour schedule with additional stops. Originally Pool 15 departed from C.P.R. Windsor Station in Montreal, while Pool 6 ar-



Canadian National Railways 5702 (4-6-4) with Pool 15 at Westmount, Que., Sept. 4, 1938.  
Note unusual smoke deflector.

rived at Bonaventure Station (C.N.R.). Both trains now use Windsor Station, crossing to C.P.R. lines at Dorval.

The consist of the first pool trains is of considerable interest: Pool 15 was hauled by C.N.R. Hudson 5704 and comprised C.N. baggage-express car, C.N. coach, C.P. coach, C.N. diner, Pullman "Winnipeg", C.P. sleeper "Pontiac", C.N. parlour cars "Ainslie" and "Patricia", and C.N. solarium-lounge car "Temiscouata". At Brockville C.P. solarium-lounge car "Antigua" was added from Ottawa. Pool 6 was hauled by C.N. 5701 with a similar consist, the named cars being "Lillooet", "Lakeisle", "Manitoba", "Trinidad" (for Ottawa) and C.N. sleeper "Winona" added for a touring hockey team. (It is worthy of note that the C.P. solarium-lounge was replaced after a few days by a standard parlour car with greater seating capacity. The fact that only two coaches were sufficient for a Sunday afternoon train is a significant indication of the effects of the Depression on passenger travel.)

One year later, March 1934, the remaining Toronto-Montreal trains were added to the pool agreement, and the service assumed substantially the aspect it bears today. Toronto-Montreal day pool trains are hauled by C.N.R. locomotives and have C.N.R. crews. The consist is mostly C.N. equipment, though there is usually at least one C.P. parlour car. The Brockville-Ottawa connection is almost entirely made up of C.P. equipment, with parlour cars and a C.N. diner being switched from the Montreal train at Brockville. Coach passengers must change trains except at weekends and other periods of heavy travel, when one complete section of Pool 6 operates through to Ottawa. The consist of this section is predominantly C.P. equipment, with C.N. diner and baggage car. Similar arrangements prevail in the reverse direction. Connections for the morning pool trains 5 and 14 are now provided by Budd RDC cars between Brockville-Ottawa, and there is no parlour or dining service.

## WORLD WAR II

World War II strained all Canada's main railway lines to the utmost, but none more severely than the Toronto-Montreal lines. After almost ten years of scrimping and cutting and reductions in services, the railways were suddenly presented with a demand for immediate expansion of facilities and increases in service. They did their best to cope with the demand and accomplished more than might have been thought possible. Schedules of the day trains were lengthened by 15 minutes, and operation in as many as six sections was required at busy times. Delays were common, due to large numbers of passengers, congested terminals, and the necessity of requiring engines to haul trains far in excess of their designed capacity. (For instance, 5700-class Hudsons were commonly assigned to trains of 12 cars, and as many as 15 have been recorded. Larger engines, which have a winter limit of 12 cars, hauled trains of 18 cars or more.) In fact, passengers were sometimes uncertain not only of when their train would arrive, but even by what route it would operate: Ottawa-Toronto sleeper passengers on C.P. pool 33 and 34 were warned that their cars might be attached to C.P. pool 21 and 22 between Toronto and Smiths Falls, which meant that they would travel via Belleville instead of via Peterborough. Minor inconveniences of this variety were borne by the passengers with no more than the usual amount of complaining. Indeed, an element of cunning was injected into train travel for standing passengers. If no seats were available, the object of the game was to stand at the seat of someone who could be expected to leave the train at the next station. The more seasoned travellers soon memorized the station numbers used by the conductor in marking the destination on the "hat check" at every seat, thus gaining an advantage over travellers of the duller sort. Possibly the greatest irritant of wartime travel was dining car congestion, about which little could be done.



Canadian National Railways 6000 (4-8-2) with 2nd 15 at Westmount, Quebec July 19, 1941.

All locomotive photographs by Fred Sankoff, Toronto.



Canadian Pacific Railway 3100 (4-8-4) with Pool 21 at Montreal West, Aug. 1, 1949.



In due course the war was won, and life returned to somewhere near normal. Traffic on the railways, however, continued at a very high level for some time and it was not until April 1947 that any significant change was made in the pool service. At that time the schedule of 6/15 was cut from 6 $\frac{1}{2}$  to 6 $\frac{1}{4}$  hours, and that of 5 reduced by 20 minutes. In April 1949, a new summer-only morning pool train, No. 8, was added, leaving Toronto at 9.15 and arriving at Montreal at 4.20. This helped to remove some of the resentment at the comparatively lethargic schedule of Pool 14 which is dictated more by the necessities of express shipment than by passenger convenience. In April 1950 this train was again operated, in both directions, and is now a regular feature of the summer timetable. It is also operated, on a slightly slower schedule during winter holiday periods.

The last change in the timetable occurred in April 1957, when the leaving time of Pool 6 was changed to 4.15, and that of Pool 14 to 9.35, thus giving up traditional departure times in effect for nearly 25 years. No acceleration has resulted from the substitution of diesel power, but fewer and longer sections are now operated at times of heavy traffic, with trains up to 24 cars. These trains far exceed the length of station platforms, and it is necessary to "draw up" and stop twice at almost every station on such occasions.

On the lines on which service was reduced by the pool agreement, no local passenger service is now provided. The last daylight passenger operation on the C.P.R. Lake Shore line ceased in April 1952, when the Smiths Falls-Trenton mixed train was withdrawn. Only overnight trains now use this route. No passenger service of any kind has been provided on the C.N.R. Napanee-Ottawa line since March 1955, when the infrequent mixed service was discontinued.

#### MOTIVE POWER

At the time of the pool agreement, C.N.R. passenger trains were operated between Toronto-Montreal by 5700-class Hudsons and 6000-class Mountains. The Hudsons with their 80" drivers were not well adapted to trains of more than 8 or 9 cars, though on many occasions circumstances have required them to make the attempt. During the war years a wide variety of engines were used as dictated by traffic conditions. These were principally Northern types, though the faithful Hudsons and Mountains were frequently used. After the end of World War II, the pool trains became the personal property of the 6200-series Northerns particularly of numbers 6200-6234, built in 1942-43. These magnificent engines were used almost exclusively thereafter, frequently dealing with loads well in excess of their theoretical limit of 14 cars (12 in winter).



Canadian National Railways 6400 (4-8-4) with Pool 14 near Toronto, Aug. 21, 1950.

Canadian Pacific overnight pool trains were hauled by the two Northern (3100-3101) built for the service, and also by heavy Pacifics of the 2300 and 2400 classes, or by unstreamlined Hudsons. The Northern could haul passenger trains of 11 cars unassisted up the hill from Toronto Union Station to Leaside, while the capacity of the Pacifics was 8 cars. Heavier trains were assisted usually by 2-8-0s to Leaside or, in extreme cases, to Agincourt. The Brockville-Ottawa connections were powered by light Pacifics. Streamlined 4-4-4s were also used on this service at times. Owing to severe bridge weight restrictions, double-heading was necessary at times of heavy travel when a separate Ottawa section was operated through to and from Toronto. The last use of Pacifics was early in 1959; diesels were normally used prior to

that time but when the train was too heavy for a single diesel unit, two Pacifics were substituted.

In March 1954, the Canadian Pacific began to use diesel locomotives on its overnight pool trains, and relegated the Northern to storage. Except for a test run with 6504-6604 on June 1, 1955, the 6200s reigned supreme on the Canadian National lines until early in February 1957, when diesels were used for a few days on a trial basis. Diesels were regularly assigned starting on April 1, 1957, with 6214 hauling the last steam-powered regular section of Pool 6 on March 31, returning with Pool 15 the following day. Some extra sections, however, were steam-powered as long as the steam engines were available, the last such occasion being in April, 1959.

## APPENDIX

In this section we depart somewhat from the usual format of our Bulletins, to present as a matter of historical record, examples of the unusual and the unexpected which have affected the pool services in recent years. We hope that it will be of interest in demonstrating the problems that are encountered in railway operation, and how they are overcome. It should be borne in mind that the engine failures and train delays mentioned below are merely a sampling over many years, and the vast majority of trips are made without incident.

The first example is taken from the cold and snowy month of February, 1943, which was so severe that parlour car service had to be suspended. A heavy snowfall in Eastern Ontario and Quebec, accompanied by a high wind and temperatures down to -22°, tied up Toronto-Montreal services almost completely. The last train to arrive relatively normally was a section\* of Pool 5 of Feb. 15th, (5592 with 8 cars) which arrived Toronto 34 minutes late, being the last arrival from the east for almost 48 hours. Daybreak of Feb. 16th found Pool 6, which left Toronto at 4.00 P.M. on Feb. 14th, stuck in the snow at Cornwall. 1st 14 of Feb. 15th left Toronto 2½ hours late, and was held for varying periods at Kingston, Gananoque Jct. and Lansdowne, and by daybreak of Feb. 16th was stuck in snow east of Brockville. 2nd 14 left Toronto 3 hours late and was held up at Gananoque Jct. for many hours. Pool 15 of Feb. 15th, and Pool 5 of Feb. 16th, were cancelled.

The overnight trains fared no better. No. 19 of Feb. 14th was held up by snow east of Cornwall, and despite the assistance of two Mikados from Coteau, became stalled in the snow at Cedars when the train engine ran short of water and had to dump its fire. 1st 16 of Feb. 15th became stuck at Cornwall, and 2nd 16 was held at Wales. No. 17 of Feb. 15th left Montreal at 2.11 A.M. on Feb. 16th behind two Northern (6228-6216) but became stuck in the snow notwithstanding. No. 18 of Feb. 15th was stopped at Bainesville, while Nos. 19 and 20 were cancelled. The blocked lines were cleared by morning of Feb. 16th.

Canadian Pacific trains were not cancelled, but operated in convoy with snowplows. Pool 21 of Feb. 14th arrived Toronto 8 hours late, while Pool 33 from Ottawa was 13 hours late. Possibly the most unusual feature of the situation was the order of arrival at Ottawa of the overnight trains of the 14th. The Ottawa section of Pool 6 arrived at 6.20 P.M. on the 15th, 20 hours 20 minutes late, operating as usual by Smiths Falls and Carleton Place (the food supplies of the buffet-parlour car being exhausted, passengers purchased food from a small store in Stittville); however 2nd 34, operating via Bedell, arrived at 5.00 P.M., only 9½ hours late, while 1st 34 arrived 45 minutes later. Such are the fortunes of blizzard travel: the three trains arrived in the reverse order of their departure.

\*made up at Belleville

Probably the earliest use of diesels on these trains was on May 4, 1953, when 6232 was disabled by a cracked side rod bushing, and was replaced on Train 6 by diesels. A similar substitution occurred on Train 15 on July 20, 1956, when 6230 was disabled.

On Jan. 29, 1954, 6240 was disabled at Cornwall, and 2nd 6 was taken to Montreal by 2-8-0 2524, which managed to keep within 20 minutes of the scheduled travel time; while on Dec. 12, 1955, 6215 was also disabled at Cornwall and No. 6 was taken over by 2-8-2 3502; and on Dec. 21, 1955, 6234 ran short of coal for various reasons at Montreal West, and the train arrived at Windsor Station behind C.P. diesel switcher 7056.

On Feb. 4, 1956, a comedy of errors and minor engine failures meant that four engines were required, one after the other, to take Pool 15 to Toronto, which was reached 3 hours 30 minutes late, and on Dec. 9, 1956, the left main crank pin of 6252 broke near Newcastle while hauling Pool 15 at high speed; before the train could be stopped the engine was entirely disabled and the track so badly torn up that it had to be relaid before the train could be pulled away from the damaged engine. The second section took most of the passengers on to Toronto, while the disabled section finally arrived 5½ hours late.



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