

The Ferrophiliac Column *October 1989*

Conducted by Just A. Ferronut

Well another month, and while the falls colours and days are great, the chilly breezes makes my rheumatism remind this old body of the coming winter, but I feel great because of some of my mail.

Remember my comments and questions in the August 1989 Newsletter about the Climax locomotive-come tractor that I spotted in Sunderland, Ontario. Well between comments that I got from Art and a phone call I got from a GLP in Stettler, Alberta, I was beginning to think maybe they were right when they implied that I was no doubt inebriated when I was in Sunderland, but now thanks to a letter from Michael Shirlaw, of Sunderland, I can now tell these non believers that I hope their lenses all fog up. Michael writes "this steam powered creature which still has its couplers is owned presently by the Manager of the Sunderland Creamery who me that he understood that it originally had steel flanged wheels, but was unable to supply any more detail. The engine was the plaything of the late owner of the Creamery, Mr. Brooks, who would have his lads fire the thing up at least once a year and certainly for the annual Sunderland Fair Parade. Unfortunately, 'Brooksie' died in a car accident a few years ago so I would think that most of the history/mystery has died with him. Although I didn't see it in action this year, I would be willing to bet that it chugged up the few streets of Sunderland for this year's fair!"

Well, enthusiasts, who's got a few more lines to add about this interesting piece of history.

Also in the August Newsletter I asked about the origin of the station in the Cannington Area Centennial Museum Park. Jack Knowles and Michael Shirlaw both advised that this station is from Mount Albert on CN's Bala Subdivision. Jack, also pointed out that there was an article on this station move on the bottom of page 7 of the July 1981 Newsletter #381 and that this depot was in the news in mid-October 1954 when it floated off its foundation by the catastrophic rain resulting from Hurricane Hazel. Based on the picture of the Grand Trunk station at Mount Albert in Charles Cooper's book Narrow Gauge For Us, the station at Cannington is the Canadian Northern Ontario station built about 1906. The original GTR Mt. Albert depot was constructed in 1878 as one of the stations on the Lake Simcoe Junction Railway that extended from Stouffville to Jackson's Point. This railway was included in the Midland Railway System and was opened to traffic on October 1, 1877. CN's Bala Subdivision was constructed by the James Bay Railway and opened on November 6, 1906. This meant that Mt. Albert had two railway depots.

The caboose at Cannington is also referred to in the 1981 Newsletter and Michael Shirlaw writes that his information is that this crumbie came from the London Scrap yard.

Now a little break before continuing to explore the Counties of Victoria, Haliburton and Peterborough.

First a hearty thanks to Ross Gray of Lindsay for his offer to the Port Dover Harbour Museum to supply them photographs of early Port Dover railway scenes. This museum on Harbour Street, Port Dover, while mainly preserving the history of the commercial fishing on Lake Erie does have a few photos of railway activities in Town. I am certain that visitors next year will be greeted by some proudly displayed interesting railway photos from Ross's collection. Again many thanks.

Secondly, a general thanks to all the contributors to this column, keep it coming. I may not use your material the month

I receive it, but I am certain it will be used.

Plagiarism in the Newsletter?? Well since I forwarded the article on the McAdam Station and Arthur Meggett of Hamilton, New York, has pointed out the real author of the poem in that article, I guess I am the one that should report it.

Arthur Meggett has kindly forwarded a copy of the full poem written in 1865 by the Honourable E.J. Phelps, a distinguished lawyer, diplomat and statesman from Vermont. 'Lay of the Lost Traveller' – Essex Junction, VT.

With saddened face and battered hat
And eye that told of blank despair,
On wooden bench the traveler sat,
Cursing the fate that brought him there.
"Nine hours," he cried, "We've lingered here
With thoughts intent on distant homes,
Waiting for that delusive train
That, always coming, never comes;
'Till, weary, worn,
Distressed, forlorn,
And paralysed in every function,
I hope in hell
His soul may dwell
Who first invented Essex Junction!"

Mr. Meggett sent some extra data on the Essex Junction VT., and in perusing the material with my friend Loco who has lived in both New Brunswick and Montreal and knows Essex Junction, VT. reasonably well said he could see a number of similarities between McAdam and Essex Junction. Also, as Loco mentioned when you go back and look at the old (turn of the century) travel patterns, many people who travelled New England, also travelled through McAdam. Anyway, both communities were railway junctions of about the same size with Essex Junction being an important junction for three lines of Central Vermont Railroad, a half of dozen or so miles east of Burlington, VT. and as stated in 'This is Vermont' by Walter & Margaret Hard... "Essex Junction" belies its rather unattractive name. Of course, because it was an important junction where trains were never met without an interminable wait, it has been reviled in prose and verse. It is reported that the cemetery across the tracks is largely occupied by people who have expired waiting for train connections. This is one point Loco couldn't confirm as to whether McAdam's cemetery had any such citizens.

Anyway, I am certain that numerous travellers spent many hours waiting at McAdam like the Honourable E. J. Phelps any others did at Essex Junction for the train to Boston. Many thanks to Arthur Meggett for supplying this correction and interesting extra background.

Meanwhile, back on our July exploration of abandon and nearly abandoned rail lines north east of Toronto. We shall continue along the former CN Coboconk Subdivision. This section from Cannington to Coboconk, constructed by the Toronto and Nipissing Railway Company was opened for traffic on November 26, 1872. The first station site north of Cannington is Woodville. Nothing could be seen here except some fast disappearing remains of the old right of way through this community. Michael Shirlaw's quote... "Of particular interest, at least to me, are the faint vestiges of the junction at Lorneville, beside Highway 46," adeptly describes the present state of this once active junction. It was here that the narrow gauge track (3'-

6") of Toronto & Nipissing Railway crossed the broad gauge track (5'-6") of the Midland Railway of Canada. The 22.5 miles between Lindsay and Beaverton was opened in January 1871. Michael Shirlaw reminded me of Charles Cooper's comment about what a prize a picture of this oblong "diamond" would be. We like Michael and others noted some of the earthwork for the wye track is visible but no trace of the hotels, station, stores and all the other appurtenances which were reported to have made up this once busy village. Again nothing visible at Argyle. Northward on Highway 48 and an apparition – well not really. Standing on the west side of the highway about 3 kilometres north of Argyle is the well preserved CP Eldon Station, now converted into a house apparently in its original site on the old Georgian Bay and Seaboard Railway right of way. The one and one half storey structure still has wooden shingles on the walls of the dormers with stucco panels. The roof has been redone with green asphalt shingles and the walls of the main building have been covered with manufactured white clapboards. An interesting site considering this CP line from Lindsay to Orillia was abandoned in 1937.

Kirkfield still has two structures of interest to the railway enthusiast. Here in the heart of Toronto & Nipissing territory is the house that Sir William MacKenzie of Canadian Northern Railway fame built in 1877. This well portioned brick house on the north side of Highway 48 is now painted grey with white trim. While closed on the day of my visit this house appears to be still in use for wedding receptions, etc. as well as for an antique shop, much the same as described by J. D. Knowles in his article in the July 1981 Newsletter # 381. North on Regional Road 8, on the east side is the Kirkfield Station converted into a summer cottage. The original part of this station was constructed by the T&N in 1876 and remodelled with an addition in 1892. Wandering around the station and grounds with the present owners one can feel some of the activities of a hundred years ago.

Two point eight miles further is another station come cottage – Victoria Road. This station quite similar to the Kirkfield Station was constructed in 1894 and although now clapboard and painted brown with a yellow station name on its ends still shows its vintage especially with the old roadbed showing through the lawns.

Another eight or so miles and you're in Coboconk, the end of the Toronto & Nipissing as well as the end of the Coboconk Subdivision which extended some 36.39 miles between this terminus and Blackwater Junction. The station is still in place in this village now used by the Tri-County Building Supply. It is interesting to compare the present station with pictures of the original one that burnt following an August 1908 lightning strike. It would appear that the present one if not built from the same basic plan as the original was at least built on its foundation.

So this has been a quick peek at some of the remains of this Toronto & Nipissing line that was the life line of this rural area for many years. This was only one of the rail lines in the area that we had a look at this year.

So as not to forget our waistlines, a couple of rail enthusiast restaurants for the month. John Thompson writes about two railway stations converted to eating establishments, "the CN stations at Craigleith (between Collingwood and Meadford), and Southampton, Ontario. Unfortunately, in both cases the lines on which they were situated have been abandoned and torn up." John reports that he was unable to test the fare at Southampton, as on his visit the establishment was only opened for supper.

Now a question. In glancing at a booklet on Montreal restaurants mention is made about Once Upon A Time, 600, rue d'Youville as being furnished as a turn of the century train depot. Does anyone have any other details?

The PS for the month is that the former TTC street car at the Langford Restaurant on Highway 2 near Brantford has now been completely repainted. I will make no comment on the colours, that I will leave to the transit experts.