

## The Ferrophiliac Column

### Compiled by Just A. Ferronut

March 1990

Last month's column has brought several good responses, this is the advantage of me being slightly dense, the knowledgeable people keep me out of hot water and on the factual track – Thanks to all.

A few more facts and comments about Grand Trunk stations. First a question about Thomas Edison and his work at St. Marys Junction Station. A friend told me of reading either an article or book some 20 - 25 years ago about Thomas Edison's hasty departure from Canada. "As a lad of 18 or 19, Thomas Edison was called to report to Superintendent Spicer in Stratford for an investigation of some infraction of the railway rules. As he sat waiting for this investigation, he thought more and more about his probable punishment – some 25 –30 brownie points, or worse? As he sat and waited, a train for London arrived, considering his options, he caught the train to London and then he travelled on to Sarnia. At Sarnia he crossed the frozen St. Clair River to Port Huron." The question I have been asked is does anyone know the publication or more details of the story?

Carrying on with Grand Trunk Stations, Dana Ashdown writes that he believes the St. Marys Junction station was constructed somewhat earlier than we mentioned last month, probably in the late 1850's and that it and the Georgetown station are the only original Grand Trunk stations left between Toronto and Sarnia built by Gzowski & Company in the 1850's. Gzowski & Company also built a few brick stations of the same plan on the Grand Trunk's branch between Port Huron and Detroit, Michigan, one of which is now preserved at Greenfield Village (Ford Museum) in Detroit and available in model form (H.O.) – Smith Creek Station. Dana believes the model is made by Heljan. Dana also pointed out that the Georgetown station was remodelled into its present form by Grand Trunk in 1904.

Now going back to the Bay of Quinte Railway and my comments last month about Napanee and Deseronto. Both Ray Corley and Dana Ashdown have supplied comments and information on this matter. While their comments answered some of the immediate questions, they have triggered a desire to know more about the Bay of Quinte Railway which in 1908 had 17 passenger trains a day operating between Deseronto and Napanee – 8 to Napanee and 9 to Deseronto with 15 of them making connections with Grand Trunk trains. Ray Corley considers that the building in Napanee that I was referring to as the BQR station last month may well have been a freight shed or other support structure for the BQR not the station. Knowing the general configuration of trackage in the Napanee area, Ray's statements make sense. The BQR Deseronto – Yarker line crossed the Grand Trunk's west of the present Napanee station and a portion north of the Grand Trunk was relocated to its present location after being taken over by GT. Ray pointed out that Donald M. Wilson's Lost Horizons: 'The Story of the Rathburn Company and the Bay of Quinte Railway' and other documentation places the BQR station on the north side of the Grand Trunk. The BQR had a track along the north side of the GT from its crossing of the GT at Deseronto Junction eastward to about opposite the GT station in Napanee. The BQR also had a wye track to permit a train westbound out of Napanee on their track to swing northward to connect to their line to Yarker. This sounds reasonable since in 1908, the BQR also had 7 passenger

trains a day on its northward line to Yarker. The north side station would require BQR passengers to cross the Grand Trunk's mainline instead of across Highway 41 as I stated last month.

Well fans, at this point, I am going to leave the BQR Napanee station question open – I can find logic in both sites. It is going to take some extra searching before I would feel comfortable with a final confirmation on this station location. I must wonder in writing at this point, was the station on the north side and used for through trains with perhaps the south side building being used for perhaps at some point for some of the shuttle trains between here and Deseronto. I would appreciate any information that anyone may have to either shoot this theory down or support it. So stay tuned to see what turns up.

This writer would appreciate hearing from anyone who has or knows of a copy of Donald Wilson's Lost Horizon for sale. Again Ray Corley and Dana Ashdown both filled me in on my mystery building in Deseronto to confirm it is the northern portion of the BQR engine house. Dana points to three photos from the 1890s on pages 68-69 of Donald M. Wilson's book showing the engine house with an assortment of 4-4-0s, 0-4-0 steam dummies, and an 0-6-0 saddle tank engine. Ray Corley confirms this and went on to point out that the BQR rail line curved southward just east of the engine facility in Deseronto and went down to a wharf on the edge of the Bay of Quinte. The 1908 International Railway Guide states: "CONNECTIONS: At Deseronto with steamers for Bay of Quinte and Lake Ontario points." At this point I am going to thank Ray and Dana for their useful information on the Bay of Quinte Railway and for pointing me in the direction for more research.

Again the two avid railway historians mentioned above have confirmed my statement that the roundhouse in Trenton was built and owned by the Canadian Northern Ontario Railway. Dana also took the time to send me a copy of the map of Trenton as carried in James Plomer's book on the CNOR, Desperate Venture. I now have a 1932 sketch from the CNR showing some of the trackage in the area so this is another project to carry in a future column.

In the January 1990 column, I made reference to the station in Riverside-Albert, NB and questioning whether this line when any farther towards, Alma and Fundy Park, NB. I could recall seeing a 1890ish photograph of a locomotive in Alma but had not been able to confirm whether it had got there by rails or was it just a industrial locomotive operating on isolated tracks. Well I spotted the missing piece in the 1908 International Railway Guide which shows the Albert Southern Railway from Albert to Alma, NB. This publication states Mr. W. A. Trueman was the manager but that the line was "not running". A check in A Statutory History of Railways in Canada 1836-1986 by Robert Dorman & D. E. Stoltz confirms that this railway was constructed and opened in June, 1892, however, it was sold at public auction in December, 1892 and was operated by W. A. Trueman as manager for the creditors. Operations were apparently abandoned about 1900.

Back to Ontario, and a couple of trips I have made to the Brantford area. The former TH&B station is a sorry looking sight at present but hopefully the developer realized the size of his undertaking and will have a restaurant in place by this fall.

The building has been gutted – well really demolished except for about two-thirds of the exterior walls. It would appear that this become a totally new structure with the exterior either being the original station walls or recreations of them. This should at least make a structure that will have many years of life. Luck to the developer. The former LE&N engine house still stands on the banks of the Grand River while the CP controlled rail access to Brantford continue to shrink. The end of CP service to Brantford is set for August 4, 1990. On the eastern outskirts of Brantford the rails of the TH&B Waterford Subdivision between Brantford and Hamilton have been removed under the Highway 2 bridge and as far as the eye can see both ways. Do you realize this is the second rail link between these two cities to be removed. The first to be removed was the Brantford and Hamilton Electric Railway that connected the two cities for about 25 years until service was discontinued in 1931. Many remains of this line are still visible along the south side of Highway 2 from Highway 54 at Brantford east to about Duff's Corner (Highway 53). These remains include: bridge abutments at Fairchilds Creek, the old power house at Langford and numerous sections of subgrade and concrete culverts. Also on Highway 403 just east of Mohawk Road in Ancaster under a power line the subgrade is very noticeable as this electric line started its decent into Hamilton.

The other day I got a quick look at a new book St. John's Street Railway - History - Pictorial Works. This book has been put out as a project of the Newfoundland Light & Power Company, St. John's Newfoundland and consists of historical photos of this street railway that operated from May 1, 1900 to September 15, 1948 with short descriptive notes on the facing page. So to some of our transit fans how about a book review and more details on this soft covered book that I understand is retailing for \$11.95.