

## The Ferrophiliac Column *May 1990*

### Compiled by Just A. Ferronut

Well gang do you realize that it has now been a year since you first started putting up with this column. Yes, it was May 1989 that I first put a few lines in the Newsletter as a bit of a potpourri on historical tidbits and as long as we keep hearing from our readers I will keep boring you.

I told you last month that I would pass on the details on Napanee and the Bay of Quinte Railway that Ray Corley and Doug Brown had sent me, but I have been lazy this month and haven't got the map Ray sent ready for the Newsletter, so I am going to leave this subject on the siding for another month.

Back in January, Doug Brown sent a note that the end of standard gauge rail service on Prince Edward Island reminded him of another 'final day of railroading' on P.E.I., that of his father's experience as being in Charlottetown to 'welcome the arrival of the last narrow gauge train. Yes, to some of our younger railfans, Newfoundland wasn't the only part of Canada to have narrow gauge rail lines. Narrow gauge railways were often built since they were cheaper to build than their wider gauged cousins. The years of early railway construction were also the years of engineering development and in this period there were more theories on the safety of various gauges than there were gauges.

Don't tell our Prime Minister, but some of our early Canadian governments even forced the railways to do their part to keep the Americans from taking over Canada. My brief encounters with the subject over the years would lead me to believe there is enough material on the subject to write a fair size book and no doubt it would make very interesting reading.

The general consensus is that this Canadian concern about railway locations and gauges had its base in 1812 when we had a little war with our American neighbours. This was followed by the internal 1837 Rebellions, 'Patriot War' and the general lingering arguments over the location of the Canadian – American border and the protectionist trade attitudes of numerous parties in both counties. Also, two other historical facts that we often lose sight of when thinking railways prior to 1867 is the fact that Canada was a series of colonies under the British Parliament and each colony had its own colonial government and then as now there was inter-government rivalry. So you say why bore us with general history when we don't like it, we want only Railways! Well neither did I for many years, until all of a sudden I realised a history teacher of mine had tricked us into learning history. She played on our class's like of mathematics and used its development to teach us history. Using such statements as... "can you visualize what it would be like to live in a society that didn't know or understand a minus value – well up until such and such a time these people didn't." This taught me the value of looking at the causes and relationships between different disciplines to better understand each.

Back to railway gauges and locations. Many are aware of the more popular stories about railways, such as CPR's lines in southern British Columbia, being built to keep the Americans south of the 49<sup>th</sup>. But did you know the 1835 charter of the Erie and Ontario Railroad (to build from Queenston to Chippawa, Ontario) stipulated that it was not to build any rail line closer than 1000 yards to any military fortification. The Canadian military's concern was that American invaders might

seize the railway and use it to carry their men and equipment quickly to attack Canadian forts.

I can recall looking over a survey map outlining various routes suggested by Sir Sandford Fleming about 1860-70 for a rail line (Intercolonial Railway?) from Moncton, New Brunswick to the St. Lawrence River. This map showed several possible rail lines cutting north west across New Brunswick then into Québec and I recall one proposed line going across the north east part of the State of Maine. We all know what the Government of the day decided – put the rail line along the east coast of New Brunswick as far from the American border as possible.

Politics and the military concerns not only played a role in locating many rail lines but these same forces had concerns and used their power over railway gauges. Early Lower Canadian (Québec) railroads mainly because of their physical connection to American railways used their gauge 4'-8½". Many other early railways, especially a number backed by governments were built at a 5'-6" (broad gauge). The Government of the Province of Canada (Ontario & Québec) for political, military and economic reasons passed an Act on July 31, 1851 that made 5'-6" (broad gauge) the official gauge for railways within the province.

With such early confusion, one must marvel that Canada has any railways remaining today.

Back to Prince Edward Island. This island province had been granted responsible government in 1851, but it did not become a province of Canada until 1873, six years after the British North American Act. This six year delay no doubt caused the Prince Edward Island Railway to be built using a 3'-6" gauge.

Omer Lavallée in his 1972 book Narrow Gauge Railways of Canada outlines and summarizes the development of the narrow gauge Prince Edward Island Railway from its impulsive start in 1870 to its final conversion to standard gauge in 1930. From our lofty perch of 1990 we look back and smile if not chuckle at some of the events of a hundred or so years ago. Having spent considerable time many years ago on the rail ferry docks at Cape Tormentine, New Brunswick and especially Borden, P.E.I., I can recall much of the history of the PEIR being talked about almost as local folk lore. The stories of the 1870 politicians having their friends take contracts for the construction of the railway. Unlike many of its mainland counterparts, the island railway didn't have contracts awarded based on surveyed routes but were simply given to build from one point to another and the contractor would be paid by the miles of railway he built. To me at the time I was hearing these islanders talk about their railway it seemed like every islander either had the railway contractor divert the rail line to serve his barn or to avoid his favourite strawberry patch. Of course today, I wish I had been more interested in railway history at the time and jotted down the details of some of these stories.

As Omer points out in his book, the financial state of the Island's railway (something akin to our present federal situation) was a major factor in pushing Prince Edward Island to join Canada. By 1873 much of the rail line had been built, but it didn't have the locomotives and rolling stock to make it

operational and the Island didn't have the money to help them. So, they decided they should get Ottawa to help them and their railway.

Some 50 years after the start of PEIR, it was part of the Canadian Government Railways and had rail ferry service to Cape Tormentine and the main rail systems of Canada which were standard gauge by this time.

About the same time that I was at the ferry terminals at Borden, I had a structural engineer for a boss and one of his favourite comments about railway tracks was "if you seen one piece of track, you've seen it all." But my interest in mathematics got in the way again, the design and geometry of switches and rail yard trackage intrigued me, so on the side I got into some track design, that's a whole story in itself. One day I came across an old plan of rail switches dated 1918 showing three rails. I made a copy and cut the useful information into sections and filed it with my track design material. Today these designs are now more interesting to me in the historical since this plan was one used during the conversion of the PEIR trackage to dual gauge so it could use standard gauge equipment as well as narrow gauge. On this plan someone had pencilled in the prices for each of the different turnouts. The installed prices for these three rail switches ranged from about \$270.00 to about \$750.00, a little cheaper than today when this price would even buy the sleepers for the simplest of switches. So, the island railway between about 1918-20 became a dual gauge, three track railway.

Again Omer's book outlines the gradual conversion of the island trackage from dual gauge to standard gauge. This was started in 1923 and carried out in the western half of the province first, then the north east portion. The last lines to be converted was the line from Charlottetown to Murray Harbour and its branch from Lake Verde to Vernon.

It was this line over which the last narrow gauge train from Murray Harbour arrived in Charlottetown. Doug Brown's father and a CN Policeman were the two witnesses as Canadian Locomotive Company 1918 built 4-6-0 locomotive, CGR No. 34 led this last narrow gauge train into Charlottetown on September 28, 1930.

Canada, perhaps because of its general history is probably the richest land on this planet when it comes to Railway history. It has had so many interesting players with their backroom politicking combined with national and international pressures to make the intrigue not only incredible but humorous. Anyway, let's hope that someone will bless us with a full history of railroading in the Garden of the Gulf, Prince Edward Island.

While we are on narrow gauges I just received my copy of Clayton D. Cook's pictorial book on the Newfoundland Railway. An interesting book of photographs showing many of the highlights of this narrow gauge rail system on Newfoundland, Canada's other island province. Mr. Cook writes that he expects to have his second book on the Newfoundland Railway finished and published by the end of 1990. This second book will be more about the railway employees, their stories of wrecks, collisions, the railway in wartime, the dockyards and passenger boats. In general the trials and tribulations of the people who ran the Newfoundland Railway system.

In addition to Mr. Cook's books, he advises that he a limited quantity of photographic reproductions of 4 historic Newfoundland Trains for sale as collector's items. He has 200

prints for each of the 4 scenes. Two are steam trains one of the OVERLAND LIMITED and the other the CARIBOU. The OVERLAND LIMITED was the Newfoundland Railway's passenger train that ran across the island between 1934 and Confederation in 1949. The CARIBOU was Canadian National Railway's passenger train that operated from 1949 until it was phased out in 1969. This is the train most Canadians thought of as the NEWFIE BULLET or to those on the 'Rock' the FOREIGN EXPRESS.

The other two photographs are more modern. One depict a TerraTransport freight train and the other the Last Mixed Train and the End of the Newfoundland Railway, September 30, 1988. The photostat of all four look interesting.

For more information on either the books or pictures, drop a line to Clayton D. Cook, P. O. Box 88, Lethbridge, Newfoundland A0C 1V0.

To change pace, some history on the "DOMINION" from Richard Carroll. Richard writes that in the 1920's Canadian Pacific Railways operated Train # 22, Chicago – Toronto – Montreal as the "DOMINION OVERSEAS." During this same time the CPR operated Train # 3, Toronto – Vancouver as the "VANCOUVER EXPRESS" and Train # 4, eastbound over the same route as the "TORONTO EXPRESS." By the summer of 1930 these trains on the Toronto – Vancouver route had been renamed the "DOMINION" but their eastern terminal was still Toronto. The section from Toronto to Montreal was added in late 1931 and the "DOMINION" continued until January 1966.

Meanwhile with the renaming of Trains # 3 & 4 in 1930 to the "DOMINION," Train # 22 soldiered on as "THE OVERSEAS." This name survived, even on the CP-CN Pool Train from Toronto to Montreal, into the 1950's.

Richard, further advises that evidently the train name "CANADIAN" was first used by the CPR in 1914 and – probably not coincidentally – that was the year the CPR opened their higher-speed "Lake Ontario Shore Line" route via Belleville over the Campbellford, Lake Ontario and Western Railway. Later, Train # 20 from Chicago – Toronto and its westbound counterpart Train # 19 up until April 24, 1955.

Busy Rail Line? The Canada Southern Railway line in the area of Waterford, Ontario was so busy about 1887, that the section men had to walk the line at night... "They would walk their sections four times a night, covering almost 22 miles in search of broken or loose rails." Oh, to have been able to use today's technology to photograph some of those trains.

To wrap things up this month, remember we are always looking for ideas, so don't be afraid to look in the corners and closets of your gray matter for little tidbits of Railway history or trivia, jot them down and pass them along. So may you have all high greens until next month.