

The Ferrophilic Column July 1991 Conducted by Just A. Ferronut

Neither the heat of day or the humidity of night keeps a good railfan down – except some times. Anyway enough complaining and onto to some tidbits for July.

A couple of weeks ago, while going through some old newspapers at the Galt Library trying to find some details concerning a Grand River Railway story, I came across a follow up item on the locomotive “Samson” that we mentioned in last month’s column. The Friday, February 24, 1893 issue of The Reporter from Galt (Cambridge) carried an article titled ‘*Relics of Old Railway*’. While the article spelt the locomotive’s name as ‘Sampson’, I am quite certain that it should have been ‘Samson’. It speaks of the locomotive as having been built at Durham, England in 1838, and was on its way to the “World’s Fair” in Chicago. The locomotive ‘Sampson,’ I believe, was built in the United States and arrived at Pointe du Chêne, New Brunswick in 1854 with the locomotive ‘Hercules’ for use on the European and North American Railway between Shediac and Saint John.

Anyway, the Galt article stated that the Samson was being accompanied by the locomotive ‘Albion’ manufactured in Newcastle-on-Tyne, England in 1854 and a coach “of ye olden tyme” as they passed through Galt on Wednesday, February, 22, 1893 on their way to Chicago. The Reporter went on, “They are veritable curiosities and had it been known that they would pass our station, many of our mechanics would have been there to see the engine handiwork of those early days.” Were the ‘mechanics’ actually mechanics? Or were they early railfans?

My May 1991 article on stations and railways in Woodstock, New Brunswick, has brought a multi-page response from our member David Hanson of that town. His letter covers not only the Woodstock matters we were discussing but brings up a number of other matters including questions about the relocation of the New Brunswick Railway between Woodstock and Hartland. (At this point its going to take a few questions back to Dave to enable my old grey matter to fit all the pieces together.) Having visited Dave a few years ago, it can be rightly stated that “he has the town at his feet,” since he lives on the crest of a hill on the east bank of the St. John River overlooking both it and the Town of Woodstock. Now if you want the full story on Dave get the front page of the Second Section of the December 9, 1981 edition of The Bugle, from Woodstock. The article and photos, which covered most of the page, indicates the broad scope of Dave’s interest in trains and railroading.

In adding to our present look at Woodstock, we are only looking at the rail lines that became part of Canadian Pacific, because Canadian National also had a rail line through Woodstock.

One thing that Dave reminded me was that I had not mentioned the variation of gauge of the railways on the two sides of the river. The New Brunswick Railway line on the east bank (the Northampton (Grafton) side) was built as a 3’ - 6” narrow gauge line. The Woodstock Railway Company and New Brunswick & Canada Railway built their lines on the west bank with a 5’ - 6” broad gauge. All reports indicate that they were both regauged to standard gauge 4’ - 8½” about 1880 – 81. However, as Dave also reminded me, I had confused the location of the first railway bridge across the St. John River in Woodstock. The first bridge, as described in the May column was a short-lived one that was in fact located about 3 mile north of the Queen Street station and well south of the bridges at Sharp Island. This bridge was also south of Northampton station of the

NBR and was crossed first by a train on April 4, 1877. However, apparently before 1885, it had been replaced by a wooden railway bridge at the Sharp Island site.

This paragraph adds a little more mystery about the history of Woodstock’s railways and stations: this bridge meant that there was three to four years when there either was some dual gauge in the Woodstock area or at least some location with tracks of different gauge to permit access for the trains of these two companies with their different gauges. The NBR leased the lines on the west bank for 999 years effective July 1, 1882.

Three years later, in 1885 the NBR announced that Woodstock would become the location for its head office and general shops.

As I indicated above, it is going to take considerable more research to tie up many of the loose ends about the railways of Woodstock, but at this point I will pass on the information that is presently available.

In Dave’s response on stations, he has raised the point that another Woodstock historian, Dr. P. Paul had stated that the wooden frame structure located near the present CPR station and last used as the superintendent’s house, was the NB&C station shown at location 1 on our May map. This structure which had suffered some fire damage early this year is now being repaired.

The present CPR brick station at location 5 was built about 1911. Dave makes reference to an early photo taken at this station and shows an old style switch running north across from it which as he indicates could have been a lead to some of a remaining yard north of the station (the original NB&C yard).

Omer Lavallee’s book, Canadian Pacific Steam shows a photo on page 76, taken at Woodstock in the early 1890’s. This photo has what definitely appears to be a train shed behind the train and locomotives. The train is decorated out for a trip to Fredericton, and of course Fredericton could be reached by either going north or south from Woodstock. Dave, considers that this photo appears to be near the original NB&C station. He goes on, that it appears to fit his various recollection of the area including the tons of cinders spread all over the ground. In comparing this photograph from the early 1890’s, with a 1889 aerial view rendering of the town, it would make these trains heading south to go to Fredericton by way of McAdam and Fredericton Junctions. While I only have a small print of this rendering, the only buildings in that area are on the east side of the railway tracks in the area of the original NB&C station. This routing via McAdam Junction in terms of mileage is considerably longer than via NBR.

This 1889 rendering is 4 years after the announcement that Woodstock would be the headquarters for the NBR.

Looking at my small print of this rendering, I note there are a number of building that look like they are railway structures in the area of station location 5. At this point I must ask, whether these building existed or were simply shown on the sketch to represent possible plans of the NBR for their shops and headquarters.

Moving on to the Queen Street station, location 4, Dave writes of a photograph he has of this location taken of troops boarding a train during World War I. While the photo is not the best, the station appears to be a brick, two storey structure. Dave goes on to mention that as a teenager he lived a year or 2 near the Queen Street site, and noted concrete foundations that he believed were those of the old station.

Dave concludes his comments on the Queen Street

station area by reference to a photograph of another form of transportation used along the St. John River – river boats. “An old photo of river boat “Aberdeen” shows the buildings in the area much the same as I recall as a teenager. This form of river travel was a common form of travel along the St. John River and used until about the first of this century. These shallow draft vessels with their paddle wheels came up the east side of the river and travelled north to about the present Highway bridge # 585 then turned and moved south on west side of the St. John River to the town wharfs near the Meduxnekeag Creek and former highway bridge (built in 1895). These river boats were interesting in that they had hinged funnels that could be laid down on their deck to clear the bridges across the river.”

Before I leave Dave’s account on stations of the Woodstock area, he points out there was a small station similar to the one at Upper Woodstock (location 3), on the east side of the river, not far from the bridge and called Newburg. Another small station was located a little farther east on the NBR at Philips.

For those who may be interested, Dave points out that the Woodstock roundhouse, just south east of station location 5, had 6 stalls and the engines backed in. The turntable is still there and had a new pit installed about a year before the end of steam. The pit is now badly heaved. The freight shed is still used as leased storage. Dave recalls that about 1951 seeing Cole Bros. circus train unload at the freight shed ramps.

The last piece of building information from our Woodstock oracle is that he had been told that the former offices (two storey divisional offices) had been a private house and that some of the old books from it are now in his collection.

While speaking of rail happenings from New Brunswick, Ms. Gwen Martin of Fredericton, New Brunswick has recently completed a report on the Canadian Pacific stations at Aroostook, Canterbury, Fredericton and Woodstock (present CPR station), New Brunswick. This report is the culmination of a study of these now disused stations to determine whether one or more of them should be considered for declaration as a heritage building. I must get a copy of this report as it may shed some extra light on the questions of the Woodstock stations.

Do you have a trip planned to Bluenose country? If so, perhaps this information on a Nova Scotia eatery received from our Editor, may be a good place to keep in mind. This restaurant called the Caboose Café is on the south side of Highway #6 (Sun Rise Trail) just east of the CN station in Pugwash. As its name states, this restaurant is located in a caboose built in 1915. The Caboose Café calls itself authentic and unique, offering real food, so maybe it is worth a stop on your way by to at least keep you in a railway mood.

Pugwash, located 42 kilometres east of Amherst, NS., is at the end of the 4.6 mile Pugwash Spur off of the ‘Short Line’. Both the ‘Short Line’ and the Pugwash Spur was partially constructed by the Montreal and European Short Line Railway Company. This company after it had financially failed, was eventually taken over by the Intercolonial Railway and latter the CNR, and the mainline extended for almost 70 miles from Oxford Junction along the shore of the Northumberland Strait to Brown Point (near Stellarton) as part of the concept contained in its name. The second half of the 1800s saw several proposals including those of Sir Sandford Fleming’s ‘All Red Route’ for systems where rail and steamship companies would cooperate to supply the shortest (quickest) route between major European centres and the major centres of British North America such as MontrJal and Toronto with their combined population of 135,000

in 1861 which was an increase of 46,000 over their population in 1851, substantial growth.

Nova Scotia’s ‘Short Line’ would form part of the shortest rail line from a seaport on Cape Breton Island to MontrJal. While the proposals made paper and mathematical sense, it overlook real economics and technological progress.

Back to Ontario, Dennis Taylor sends along the results of his digging on the Canadian Northern at Solina (Station) on their Orono Subdivision. This station was first mentioned in the June 1990 Newsletter. First Denis passes on an interesting story on the naming of Solina, the village about 4 kilometres north of the location of the CNOR ‘Solina Station’. “Solina, was ‘Founded’ in 1826 as Toole’s Corners where the Toole Family settled on their arrival from Ireland.”

“Later, in 1850, when the first Post Office was opened, Mr. Hughes, a local school teacher, called a meeting for a new name. For some reason, now unknown, he wrote the letters A, I, O, L, N, S, on the blackboard and suggested that these letters be formed into a name by those present. Solina was born.”

Solina Station, CNOR Mile 47.7 Orono Subdivision (mileage from Toronto) as listed in the CNR ETT # 2, January 2, 1927. The existing station is located on the east side of Solina Road, north side of the CNOR right-of-way.

“The Railway was opened to Solina on September 30, 1911. Full service to Ottawa was started in December 1913.”

“The first station was a shelter type on the south side of the right-of-way, and built in 1911. The second station is the present one built about 1920. (1917?) (The confusion on construction dates may relate to a comment from Dave Savage “This location had two identical stations as the result of the first being demolished by a derailed train” – JAF). There was freight, express and telegraph service. Telegraph call letters unknown.”

The station closed was formally closed in 1922 and track removed in 1945. The first Agent-operator was Hiram Switzer 1917 – 1922. Freight agent and caretaker from then on was Alex Potter 1922 – 1945. The station was purchased by Alex Potter when the tracks were removed. Station pattern similar to CNOR 3rd class station.”

As an extra The Canadian Statesman from Bowmanville carried a couple of notes in July and August 1912 about two carloads of rail and ties being unloaded at Solina for the construction of a new siding which was started about the middle of August. The 1927 ETT indicates there was no passing track at Solina.

My digging through old newspapers brought up an interesting story about another interesting Canadian Railway person, Malcolm H. McLeod. This man started as a surveyor for the Canadian Northern and went on to become their Chief Engineer. T.D. Regehr in his book The Canadian Northern Railway, comments as to how lucky MacKenzie and Mann were in obtaining the services of McLeod who was an “exceptional man who frequently risked life and limb to secure the best possible location”. Regehr goes on to state that “his example inspired an *esprit de corps* from which the company benefited on numerous occasions, for the men often extended themselves well beyond the normal call of duty.” So the following is a summarized version of a later story as it appeared in the press in August, 1912, of this man who went from Chief Engineer to being the General Manager of the CNOR’s Western lines.

“HE KNOWS HIS ROAD – Few men can ride over 1,500 to 2,000 miles of railroad and not only know every mile of it, but also have located the route and been finally responsible

for its construction. Yet this is the record of M. H. McLeod, general manager of the Canadian Northern Railway Western lines, of which he was chief engineer before becoming general manager.

His knowledge of the road and country led to his appointment. Before his appointment, Mr. McLeod, along with Vice-President Hanna, were making an inspection trip over the Western lines. Their party was joined by an American, head of a railway equipment manufacturer, known as a shrewd judge of men.

He saw what was going on and heard the discussions taking place in the observation end of the private car. On the second day he leaned over to a fellow traveller and said: "They are looking for a general manager, and the papers are talking about someone from the States. There is the man they need," pointing to McLeod. "I'd make him general manager right now.

Why, he knows everything about the system, and the way he handled the Boards of Trade and Town Councils of the towns we passed through, shows he knows how to handle men. Yes sir, that the man I'd appoint general manager." A month afterwards Sir William MacKenzie appointed the man who "knows everything about the system" to the position of general manager of the Western line."

Dave Stalford, our man in the north (Holland Landing) sends along a clip from the July 7, 1991 issue of the Era-Banner. According to this article, by the time you read this the GO Transit's parking lot at Aurora will have been doubled in capacity. This is the first part of the extensive improvements planned for this station site. Included in this work will be the renovation and restoration of the depot to its original appearance. GO Transit is presently waiting for approval from the federal government's station heritage board to commence work on this turn of the century station, presently scheduled to commence in August. Also see the August and November 1990 Newsletters on this project.