

The Ferrophiliac Column

Conducted by Just A. Ferronut

August 1991

Back in the February, 1991, column we had some material on Renfrew, Ontario, along with a general configuration of the trackage in this town. However, at that time I didn't have details on the location on a number of the railway structures including the main CN and CP stations. Well Bob Sandusky has come to my rescue by supplying details as he remembered and recorded them from a 1958 trip to this interesting railway town. This town was not only the northern terminus of the Kingston & Pembroke Railway, but also in 1958 it sported a east west line for each of the national railways. Anyway the following are Bob's words about his trip and observations, etc.

"In April 1958 I visited the Renfrew area with several associates including some whom had came from Montréal. We had met from our separate directions at Sharbot Lake and had ridden up to Renfrew on the K&P behind 870. We spent the night in Renfrew and next day caught the westbound CN for a run over the Ottawa Arnprior & Parry Sound to Barry's Bay. So we had an evening and a morning to examine the facilities. Going back over my photos confirms some details and leaves others as assumptions.

"Looking at the map in the February Newsletter and considering both the CP rail line and Raglan Street as running east and west, then the CP station was a long block east of Munroe Avenue on the south side of the Chalk River Subdivision at the north end of Railway Avenue. This passenger terminal was of stone construction. Immediately west of the station on the south side of the main line was a stub-end siding with a west facing switch point.

"Farther west of the station was another west facing switch that fed the two or three tracks that swung slightly south east to serve the freight shed that was located on the west side of Railway Avenue just south and west of the station. Since there were two main tracks through the area near the station there was a cross over west of the switch for the freight shed tracks.

"The water tower appears to have been on the south side of the main lines east of the station, though my photo is a little vague (night shot) and I would accept correction from stronger evidence. This tank fed two water plugs, on the north side of the tracks west of the station and one on the south side east of the station and water tank.

"The CN station (frame) was located on the north side of the CN Line east of the spur track shown on the February map. This station was just east of the street east of this spur which is Renfrew Street West (the Town considers their main streets such as Raglan and Argyle as running north and south not the same as the railway directions – JAF). A steel water tank was at the immediate west end of the platform immediately. On the south side of the main track across from the station were several yard tracks.

"Out at Renfrew Junction where the K&P crossed the CNR, there was an interchange track, south east of the diamond. The station here was on the west side of the K&P, south of the CNR.

"The K&P engine house was a gem. It was both unusual and interesting to watch 870 emerge in the crisp dawn and clump over a diamond almost as the tender cleared the engine house doors. Mr. Keith Hopskins of Scarborough has made a beautiful 'HO' model of this structure, finely detailed inside and out, which I hope some of your readers have seen at

model shows."

Last month's column had a note from Dave Stalford about the CN Aurora Station that GO Transit wants to purchase and restore. Some of you may have noted that these comments were almost identical to those made in last year's Newsletter about this station. The reason for this delay is that this transfer of the Aurora station is one of several similar cases that got caught in the mill by the new federal Heritage Railway Stations Protection Act. This Act was proclaimed a year ago on August 15, 1990. No doubt this act will assist with the preservation of some stations, but it has an interesting side effect. This act, adds layers to the approval process for the declassification and disposal of railway stations. This extra protection, while it can benefit an endangered station, catches all stations in the same web. The result is that even where there is agreement for the sale of any station, the steps under the HRSP Act have to be met. In addition, under this act, railway stations worthy of restoring to their original condition can be declared heritage stations. This then means more approvals before any changes can be the structure. A legal lecture is not my intention at this time, however knowing the generalities of this law makes the following stories a little more interesting.

Our story is centred in Montréal, where as not doubt many of our sportsfans are aware the talk is about that City's new Forum. This new sports monument is to be built immediately west of Canadian Pacific's Windsor Station. Again the concept of a sport palace as part of a station complex is not new, and while I don't know how many of these complexes there are, I always recall my childhood trips to Boston, where the Gardens that is located over that City's North Station.

Canadian Pacific's Romanesque style limestone Windsor Station in Montréal has been declared a heritage station and is to be retained and restored as part of the Forum project. This station now over 100 years old was designed by the architect, Bruce Smith and opened February 1, 1889. Since this is a heritage station no change can be made without going through an approval process. This is probably fair enough to all parties. However, the glitz is that the proposal for the Forum was developed on the basis that some of the additions to Windsor Station that were constructed in this century and not part of the original structure would be demolished. Apparently the main offender is the "Accounting" annex on St. Antoine Street. The developers wanted to demolish it to permit the restoration of the western wall of the Painter Building. In addition, there is the "Mud Hut" annex which was to be removed to permit better restoration of the de La Gauchetière Street face of the station.

While there appeared to be little objection to the removal of the "Mud Hut" apparently the "Accounting" annex has caused a little stir. The developers had considered this as a separate structure and not part of the "heritage station," however, not everyone agreed. So the Public Notice as required under the Heritage Railway Stations Act and published earlier in the month includes this removal in addition to other changes. These other changes include work to restore the carriageway on de La Gauchetière Street, the entry way in the central bay of the original station as well as the glass covered concourse. Passageways will also be constructed to provide fuller access to the Metro. While the restored station and new Forum will no doubt be worth waiting for, I am certain many may not have the

kindest words for this new protection act.

We will try to keep you posted on the future developments in this project.

While speaking of station restoration, The Ontario Heritage Foundation in their newsletter Heritage Dimensions point out that work is well under way on the CPR station in Peterborough, Ontario after several years of delays. This station, originally purchased by the City from CP Rail has been sold to the Greater Peterborough Chambers of Commerce. Following restoration this building is expected to house not only the Chamber of Commerce but also the provincial Motor Vehicle License Bureau, the Tourism and Convention Bureau and a community meeting room.

Research has confirmed that this yellow brick and limestone station was constructed in 1884 and is now the oldest known Ontario CP station still located in its original location. While considerable restoration work will be undertaken as part of the present project, a slate roof like the one originally capping this structure will not be replaced at this time.

Back to QuJbec and a totally different subject sent along by Doug Brown from St. Bruno. This is a subject that has been receiving considerable coverage of late as more people want to exercise, get outdoors and perhaps a little more back to nature ! *Recreational Paths*.

While the original builders of our rail lines might have a problem trying to fathom out why would anyone wants or needs extra exercise after a days work, but times have changed.

The article that Doug sent along from the MontrJal Gazette pointed out that this new use being added to the list of ways to recycle abandoned railway rights-of-ways is just beginning to gain ground in Quebec.

The present push to convert these strips of land to trails by removing the tracks, compacting or grading the underlying bed and laying a paved pathway has gradually gained momentum over the last 25 years in the United States where the rails-to-trails groups have been able to develop almost 4,000 miles of pathways.

The U. S. conversion program for the rails-to-trails program is now spear headed by the work of the Rails-to Trails Conservancy (RTC), which was established in 1985.

In general these rails-to-trails groups do not favour railroad abandonments, since most of their supporters are same people who are knowledgeable on environmental matters and are concerned about pollution. However, if the government does approve an abandonment, then these groups consider their actions help keep these continuous corridors intact for future uses while getting an immediate benefit of having a trail or pathway for use for such activities as hiking, cycling, running, skateboarding, roller skating, snowmobiling, horseback riding, and cross-country skiing. In addition to these more common uses, these paths often can be used by people in wheelchairs, bird watchers, and people who just like being near nature.

Quebec presently has approximately 15 different rail-trail sites at various stages of development along parts of the nearly 4,000 kilometres of abandoned tracks in the province. Since neither Quebec or Canada presently have an umbrella organization to keep tabs on these conversions, it has been difficult to follow all of the developments more accurately.

Quebec is not alone in these conservation/protection endeavour and while it may appear that Canada lags behind the U.S. in some areas, it has nothing to be ashamed of. The fact that most of the rail lines being abandoned in Canada belong to either one or the other major rail companies often makes negotiations

easier. While today, land in urban areas is difficult to obtain because of its development potential, the policies of the Canadian railways to have their land in the rural areas evaluated and then offer it to government agencies before trying to sell it to adjacent land owners or developers is a boom for the rails-to-trails groups.

With approximately 400 kilometres of abandoned track in Prince Edward Island, that province is hoping to become a major rails-to-trails site to further boost its tourism industry. Trails criss-crossing the island will not only lead tourists to the usual sightseeing attractions like Green Gables, but will encourage them to visit lesser known areas of the island. This concept is expected to bring in tourist dollars to some economically depressed rural areas that have lost their rail service.

The Gazette article pointed out that in Ontario, utility companies are interested in rail rights-of-way to run water pipes (the abandoned CP Goderich Subdivision has been considered for locating a water line to supply Lake Huron water to the populous in the Kitchener-Waterloo area – JAF) or telephone cables, for instance, between towns and cities. Then of course the biggest user of abandoned rights-of-ways has probably been the hydro companies.

While some died in the wool rail enthusiasts may consider these conversions as sacrilegious, but in the global view, they are no doubt doing as much or more than many in preserving railway history. Not only are the routes of this abandoned rail lines being kept for all of us to trace, but also these conversions preserve corridors for future uses, even maybe back to their original use as a form of rail line.

Ontario has had a few small portions of long abandoned right-of-ways converted into local parks and presently there are several rails-to-trails projects under way such as the one on the TH&B as covered on page 15, of the September 1990, Newsletter. However, it would appear that Qu'bec presently has at least a couple of very interesting rails-to-trails projects.

The largest is one in the Laurentians, north of Montréal. The Coalition du Parc Linéaire des Laurentides is negotiating with the province and CP for the rights to 200 km of track between St. Jerome and Mont Laurier. In 1989, after CP announced the abandonment of this trackage, the coalition started pressuring the provincial government to buy the land. Some history of this line and its abandonment was covered on page 18 of the October 1990, Newsletter.

Maurice Couture, executive secretary of the coalition, said the group has 95-per-cent approval for the project, called Parc du P'tit Train du Nord, from the 28 municipalities that would be directly affected.

"The park would be open all year long with biking in the summer and cross-country skiing in the winter," said Couture, "so it has important economic benefits for the area since it would pass through tourism areas with hotels, restaurants and stores."

The full 200-km stretch of Parc du P'tit Train du Nord will not be completed for at least another two years but Couture would eventually like to see a rail-trail that connects Montréal to the Laurentians.

An Eastern Township rails-to-trails project will give Montréalers the advantages of a trail close to home. The 22-kilometre l'Estriade trail from Granby to Waterloo in the Eastern Townships is to officially open in September, 1991, but the trail has been ablaze with recreationalists all summer. This former CN Rail line was constructed by the Stanstead, Shefford and Chambly Railroad Company. The portion between Granby and Waterloo was opened on December 31, 1861. From August 2, 1899 to October 31, 1923 this line was leased by the Central Vermont Railway, and from then until it was amalgamated with the CNR in 1956 it was leased by the CNR.

Visitors to l'Estriade can travel safely through some of the most beautiful countryside the Eastern Townships has to offer. The trail is straight and level and every four or five kilometres there are places to stop for a rest. At the Granby end, trail users can visit a wildlife sanctuary. Further along, a stream flanks the trail where tired cyclists and hikers can dip their hot feet. There are also tables for picnickers and even a local vineyard for wine connoisseurs. There's even a place to rent trailers for towing toddlers behind bikes. Other attractions not on the trail but nearby include the Granby Zoo and Yamaska Park.

While I consider myself to be more interested in history these days than a hiker, but having been involved in the development some 30 years ago of a 45 mile hiking trail, I can see the trail enthusiast's view of these projects and there development no doubt are a benefit to both parties.

While gone through this material from Doug, I couldn't help but think of our George Meek. George, when the opportunity presents itself likes to remind everyone of some of the oddities in the early days of the construction of hydro transmission lines in Ontario. In the late 1800s and early part of this century, hydro companies had problems in acquiring property for the construction of their transmission lines. Apparently hydro companies could not expropriate land under the name of a hydro, but railways could. The result was that numerous hydro companies either got into a partnership with railways or formed a railway company in order that they could expropriate land for transmission lines.