

The Ferrophiliac Column

Conducted by Just A. Ferronut

July 1992

I will start this column in Toronto, but before I end of it, I will be in Montréal. I have got myself some digs in downtown Montréal and my new address is shown at the end of the column.

First, I must point out a correction to a railway name contained in last month's column. I guess since so many railways liked using the names of bodies of water, that I wanted to continue the practice, anyway last month in my reference to the name of the railway that extended north out of Stratford should be the "**Stratford and Huron**", not Lake Huron as I used in the column.

This month's travel has also turned up a little more on the intriguing details of the paralleling rail lines of the Wellington, Grey and Bruce Railway and those initiated by Stratford and Huron Railway between Listowel and Harriston. I have written about the alignment of the Stratford and Huron through Palmerston and its general alignment to Harriston. Well, I have now obtained a copy of a right-of-way plan for the area at Whites Junction, a mile north of Palmerston. This plan shows the main north – south rail lines of the two companies a quarter of mile apart. One interesting thing this plan shows is the diamond crossing of the two railways at Whites Junction. The former right-of-way between the two north – south main lines is shown as being 66 feet wide and under the name of the Georgian Bay and Wellington Railway (this company along with the Stratford and Huron Railway and the Port Dover and Lake Huron Railway were amalgamated into the Grand Trunk Georgian Bay and Lake Erie Railway Company under a provincial act, dated March 4, 1881). There is a widened right-of-way on the Wellington, Grey and Bruce Railway at Whites Junction. This polygonal area is over 300 feet wide and up to a thousand feet long. The diamond crossing is shown as having an angle of 32 degrees, and even more interesting is the introduction a long reverse curve on the W.G&B main line to permit the convenient connection to the GB&W line to Durham. This reverse curve on main Palmerston – Harriston track is to the east and has a maximum offset from the original line of about 75 feet. While this answers some questions about these early rail lines, it also raises a lot of others including those relating to what may have been at Whites Junction in the way of railway buildings, etc., as well as how long did the diamond last.

I have revisited to the site of the section house on Highway #4, south of Belgrave near the former London, Huron and Bruce Railway right-of-way that I mentioned last month. The building is on private land in the southeast quadrant at the first concession road south of County Road #16. While the outer walls have been clad with metal, the size and other features to confirm its railway heritage. The main give away feature is the hip roof with the small peak gables on the ends. This roof also has the well worn interlocked asphalt shingles so common to railway buildings.

During a number of the various trips I have made through the Bruce Peninsula this year, the subject of the ill-fated Ontario West Shore Railway project has surfaced. While, I haven't got that far into the details on this venture, on the surface it appears like the construction efforts would make great material for a comedy movie. More on that latter, but first to report that at least the abutments for one small bridge and some roadbed still exists. These exist just on the southern outskirts of the village of Sheppardton. Travelling north on Highway #21 there is a "S" curve just as you approach the Colborne – Ashfield Townline Road. There is a short gravel road connection on the east side

Highway #21, between it and the Townline road. The roadbed and concrete abutments are on the east side of this short connecting road. Nothing great, but interesting to compare their design features to those of highways and heavy weight steam railways.

One of the principal promoters of the Ontario West Shore Railway was a Mr. J. W. Moyes, of Toronto. Mr. Moyes, had been previously involved with the construction of the Metropolitan Toronto Electric Railway. While the OWSR project made some progress it could not be compared with the Metropolitan Toronto Electric Railway. It is a wonder that the OWSR got as far as it did reviewing some of the blunders.

Stories are told of the OWSR tracks being systematically torn up and abutments smashed during the night. Progress was slow at time, as the day's work was often destroyed at night. At one point some of the Railway's workers decided they had the remedy to the problem. The plan was hatched during an evening at Glazier's Hotel in Sheppardton. It was decided that these workers would spend the remainder of the night in a barn behind the hotel expecting that they would hear any vandals at work and be able to intervene. Perhaps the culprits were sitting near the workers at in the hotel as there was no vandalism that night.

Local farmers took advantage of working for the contractors. Others workers who were a considerable distance from home, boarded with local farmers. However, one group of enterprising workers built a mobile bunk house. It was a caboose-like structure was on wheels which could be moved as the construction progressed. It had cooking facilities that could provide hot meals not only for the nine workers that it slept, but also extra meals that could sold to other workers.

Then there is the story about the construction of the trestle over the Nine River near Port Albert. This structure was large enough to require wooden piles to be driven for its foundation. Preliminary work was done including cutting down the river embankments in order to keep the trestle as small as possible. The pile driver was being moved to the site on a flat bed railway car pushed by a small construction engine. A temporary track was constructed down the slope of the river bank and it was planned to tie the pile driver to the engine and with a man on the machine to operate its bakes and with the brakes and the power of the construction engine it was expected that the machine could slowly and safely let down the incline. The operation was started and you guessed it, the cable broke! The brakeman on the pile driver leapt for his life. The uncontrolled pile driver accelerated down the track, shot across the river and crashed into a barn on the other side of the hill. No one was injured and with some work the pile driver was finally put into working position. The bridge was finally completed and track laying resumed northward. A few days after the track laying was resumed, Mr. Moyes, along with various other company officials did a line inspection using the construction engine. It was later revealed that the officials had received a few extra thrills on the Nine River trestle. It seems that as the engine had started down the grade onto the trestle and the intention of the engineer was to stop part way across since tracks were not completely laid up the grade on the other side. However, the engineer had forgotten that the track laying gang, had put some grease on the rails to facilitate their removal from the flat cars. Some of this grease had of course remained on the rails. The result was that the locomotive wheels locked and slid when the

brakeman tried to stop the train. The engine slid along the tracks down the incline, across the trestle and approached the section on the opposite upward incline where tracks had not yet been laid. Fortunately for the passengers, the incline on the north side of the trestle was steep enough to slow down and let the locomotive stop before it ran out of track.

The small construction locomotive used on the OWSR was numbered 999. It pulled two flat cars in addition to its tender back and forth along the line during construction. Since the line did not have any wyes or switches the train had to back into Goderich from the work sites. The track on the OWSR was eventually laid from Goderich to Kintail. The train not only travelled this 14-15 miles for construction, but it made a number of revenue trips. It carried at least a few loads of grain to Goderich as well as occasionally hauling coal northward. One Ashfield Township resident who lived along the rail line had the cement for the concrete for his barn transported from Goderich by the OWSR train.

An evening pastime for the children along the OWSR was to borrow the workers' hand powered jiggers and pump them up and down the line.

While there are many questions about Mr. Moyes' actions and final destination after the OWSR scandal, but could some of the construction blunders have been a contributing factor?

While, so far we have not been sweltering in the heat here this summer, maybe you have – so here is a little clipping from the Orillia Packet, of Friday, April 9, 1880 that may help cool you down. "Ice cutting operations are over for this season. The total amount cut and shipped off by the Northern and Hamilton & North Western Railways was 1993 car loads, which at 13 tons to a car make a weight of about 26,000 tons, and at 150 cakes to a car equals about 300,000 cakes. In addition to this there is stored in the ice house on the shores of the bay 40,200 tons, which is moving out at the rate of 35 cars a day, at this rate will take about 3 months to move. The area of ice removed from the bay, estimating the cake at 2 feet square, is about 75 acres. If placed together in a line the cakes would extend nearly 290 miles." Your drink need some ice?

The Goderich, Huron Signal, of Thursday June 14, 1906 carried an article of interest no doubt to equipment enthusiasts. This article was about the Mooney Biscuit and Candy Company, Limited, of Stratford, Ontario and the acquisition of their first private car. The article implies that this Company was the only concern at the time in Canada owning and operating their own freight cars. The company purchased their first private car in 1906, only three years after the firm had started their business in Stratford.

"The new cars are of standard size weighing 36,000 pounds and having a capacity of 60,000 pounds (30 tons). They are painted a rich cream colour. On each side of the doors is the familiar blue and purple of *Mooney's Perfection Cream Sodas*.

"The first private car of the Mooney Company to be loaded left the bakery at Stratford for Edmonton last week, over the Canadian Northern Railway, and will doubtless attract much attention en route and on its arrival at its destination."

Denis Taylor of Cobourg reports on the reopening of the renovated station in his home town by VIA on July 1, 1992. The work has included the renovation of the waiting room and the construction of a new ticket office. The waiting room includes the former operator's bay. The ticket office, on the west side of the waiting room has a modern smooth lined counter with a plate glass window to separate the sales staff. The interior of the waiting room has been painted light grey with white trim and

equipped with modern lighting. The floor is done in a speckled grey vinyl. The seating is back to the wooden strap benches of the type used in earlier days. The main entrance has been relocated back to the south side of the building. The new passenger facilities are located about in the middle of the station and while they are not exactly back to its original styling, it is a major improvement on the old east end waiting room. This former waiting area is being renovated for rental. The baggage room remains the same, but with access from the ticket office. The one thing still missing is some period lamps on the platform.

Before we leave Cobourg, Denis also sent along a clipping about the proposal from CN's Real Estate Division to have representatives at the Town's Canada Day festival as an "Information Gathering Exercise" concerning the possible development of the waterfront lands of the former Cobourg and Peterborough Railway Company (the railway of Rice Lake crossing fame). This CN land located on the waterfront was last used for rail purposes as CN's Cobourg Harbour Spur that was abandoned and removed in the mid-1980's. Adjacent lands are presently being developed and the aim of CN's Real Estate's Canada Day's sojourn was to enable them to undertake a small demographic study as well to talk directly will local people to help identify suitable uses for the former rail lands.

The VIA station at Woodstock that we reported as being renovated has been completed with the exterior brick work painted white with a greenish grey trim including the corner brick pilasters.

Denis Taylor also mentioned that a recent CBC "Ontario Morning" reported considerable discussion on the use of the old railway right-of-way from Barrie to Midland, from the bird watchers, hikers and farmers, etc., point of view. I would expect these people were probably referring as much to the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre and the Ganaraska Trails as anything. On a recent trip to Midland, we stopped in at the northern headquarters for this Marshland park. It is located just south of Highway #12 and CN's Midland Subdivision opposite the Martyr's Shrine, the same entrance as to the Huron Indian Village. Just north of the parking lot for this park headquarters is the southeast end of the railway wye of the former GTR (CN) line between Tay Junction (junction with the Midland Subdivision on the north end) and Birch Junction (junction with the CN Penetang Subdivision near Elmvalle). This line opened in 1911 operated for 20 years until it was closed in 1931. This former roadbed is still well defined in the area of Tay Junction with portions of it used for hiking trails. Parts of the road bed is also still very visible at the south end of the village of Wyebridge. The concrete remains of a former grade separation still stands as a silent sentinel east of the realigned Highway #93 at this location. This is also a rail line that has not been excessively written about.

Pat – A Question for YOU!! - July 3, 1992

Denis Taylor writes and asks – "Are you aware of any time sheet which shows departure times from either MacMillan or Agincourt? CN234 & 235 were running through (Cobourg) about 1400 and 1700 daily, but I haven't seen them in weeks. I guess they just go when they are made up. Most traffic seems to be either at night or when I am down on the lakefront."