

The Ferrophiatic Column *September 1992* Conducted by Just A. Ferronut

Montréal welcomes you. First, a thank to my confreres for covering The Ferrophiatic Column last month while I was bombing around the country. No doubt, I should have been here getting my feet under me, but it is so much more fun poking around someone else's back yard. Now to get the computer cranked up and see what it may hold for us this month.

To this ancient one, it is difficult to keep up with the modern marvels of computer technology. As an example I was invaded last weekend and now I can be reached through CompuServe electronic mail at box # 71172,3573. My computer experts tell me that while this will leave me exposed to receiving incoming mail, it will guarantee that I can continue to bother all UCRS members by enabling me to zap this column directly to the [Newsletter](#) editor.

As a break on one of my recent driving trips between Toronto and Montréal, I stopped in a Gananoque, the home of the former Thousand Island Railway. Much of the TIR line still exists and used as an industrial spur by the CNR. The TIR line was originally built under the promotion of the Rathbun Company of Deseronto, and was 3.11 miles long and according to Poors Manual of 1885, put in service on January 1, 1885. The July 1908 International Railway Guide shows the name of the junction with the Grand Trunk's Montréal – Toronto line as Thousand Island Junction. This location was some mile and a half west of the present CN Gananoque Junction, with its frame station. The GTR took over the operation of the TIR, March 1, 1910. A year later on March 6, 1911, the GTR acquired control of the TIR shares. Following this take over the GTR relocated the old junction eastward 1.40 miles and built the present Gananoque Junction Station. This relocation was made since the original junction had very steep grades that made starting a train difficult.

George Horner added his "[Reminiscences and Anecdotes](#)" to A. A. Merrilees', "[An Historical Sketch](#)" and the two works were published as [UCRS Bulletin # 43](#), in December 1955. George comments that while the TIR was the smallest unit in the vast CNR system it had several claims to distinction:

- It was the only line in the country on which one could buy a ticket to a cemetery. George points out that you couldn't buy a one-way ticket to the cemetery, but that a round ticket was only a quarter.

- If you wanted, you could fish from the window of your coach while the train sat at the main Gananoque station.

- Since the Gananoque Station was located on a wharf at the edge of the St. Lawrence River, station employees were known in the summer time to spend this lunch hour swimming or fishing.

In addition to these claims, George told several interesting stories including the one about a local "Isaac Walton" who was sitting on the wharf one evening and swung his line just as the train was pulling out, and neatly "caught" the locomotive.

Another of George's stories relates to the fact that Gananoque was a favourite haunt over the summer for many honeymooners. The TIR employees eventual hit on a sure-fire technique to identify these newly-weds. They would just look at their shoes, and if both were wearing new ones, there was no mistake they were honeymooners. These employees realised that seldom would both partners in a long standing marriage be wearing new shoes at the same time.

With these lighter moments, let look back at the operation of this railway near the turn of the century, before it was acquired by the GTR. A. A. Merrilees in his portion of [UCRS Bulletin # 43](#) points out that the TIR had purchased two locomotives, No. 3 & 4, in 1894, and these were used until about 1912, following the GTR takeover. Number 3, a 0-4-2T Dickson compound locomotive came from the Intramural Railway of the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

The other, number 4, was a 2-4-2T Baldwin acquired from the Manhattan Elevated Railway following that company's electrification.

With these two locomotives, the TIR ran up to 8 trains daily in each direction between Gananoque and Thousand Island Junction, according to the 1908 International Railway Guide. This 1908 schedule shows 4 Express trains 7 days a week; and 1 Express, 2 Mixed and 1 Passenger trains 6 days a week from Gananoque. The return trips from Thousand Island Junction had 5 Express trains 7 days a week; and 1 Express and 2 Mixed trains 6 days a week. Most of these trains were scheduled to make the run in 25 to 30 minutes. The 1908 schedule shows 5 stations along the line. In addition to the terminal stations of Gananoque and Thousand Island Junction, there were King Street, Gananoque Cemetery and Cheeseboro. All trains are shown as being scheduled to stop at King Street, while by George Horner's time after World War II, this stop was an unofficial one where the trains stopped for the patron's convenience.

Similarly, George speaks of Cheeseboro as being a flag stop, while in 1908 three trains each way made a scheduled stop at this cheese factory. Likewise, the station at Gananoque Cemetery had two trains scheduled to stop at it in 1908 along with it marked as a flag stop for one other train.

The footnotes to the 1908 schedule notes that in addition to connection to the GTR, the TIR made connections at Gananoque with steamers for Clayton, Alexandria Bay and all points of the Thousand Islands.

Back to the present, the TIR station on the waterfront in Gananoque is now gone and the track has been cut back to the north side of Highway # 2 (King Street). The Town still maintains TIR engine # 500 and a passenger shelter at the old right-of-way and King Street. Engine # 500 which ended its active life as a diesel-electric, was built by the Oshawa Railway in 1930 as a gas-electric. This engine was transferred to the TIR in March 1931, where it operated until it was retired.

There is another substantial relic of the TIR in downtown Gananoque, which many people use, but few realise its origin. This is the TIR swing span bridge across the mouth of the Gananoque River. This former rail carrying bridge has been converted to highway use, but a closer look shows its heritage and former use as a swing span bridge. This bridge connects the bottom end of Market Street across the Gananoque River with Stone Street.

Gee, it looks like I have verbal diarrhoea again. As I had only spent a few minutes in Gananoque, I had planned on only including a short paragraph on it, but here we are about at the half way mark in the column. I had planned on mostly nattering about things I came across on my travels east of Montréal. However, before I start on that I have a couple of things that showed up in the mailbag.

Ronald L. Colpitts of Orillia, Ontario has forwarded an interesting photograph from the August 18, 1992 issue of [The Packet & Times](#), Orillia. It was a photo of three individuals all with different types of head gear standing on the steps at the end of the Ossawippi Express Dining Cars which are located near the former CPR right-of-way in Orillia. This photo was taken at the official reopening of the Ossawippi Express Dining Cars. The restaurant had reopened in July, while the formal reopening was held on August 16, 1992. The invited guests were greeted by the conductor, Mayor Clayt French of Orillia, while the two new owners acted as engineer and chef for a wine and cheese reception. Hopefully, the new owners, who bring considerable experience as restaurateurs will be able to avoid the rocky times seen by this heritage dining establishment in recent years.

A couple of years ago, we wrote several articles about the railways of Port Dover, Ontario. During my research on matters

around Port Dover, I made several visits to their Museum, where I met their curator, Ms. S. Crossland. While the museum featured the fishing industry and Port Dover, our discussion got around to the importance of railways in Port Dover. A couple of members sent the Museum some photographs of the railways in Port Dover. The Town wanting to better depict their history are in the latter stages of building a large addition to their museum. With the completion of the building, Ms. Crossland is trying to get better displays. Part of her plans is to have a diorama of Port Dover that will show the harbour area, and she would like to include the railways of the area. Being a small town, resources are scarce, so I am making a challenge to our members and friends, especially those interested in modelling. Here is a chance for individuals and clubs to provide some extra exposure to our hobby of railroading. So if you or your group consider you could help with anything from a few items or models to add to the diorama or perhaps would like to spend some time helping the people from Port Dover with this project, why not drop a line to Ms. S. Crossland, Curator of the Port Dover Harbour Museum, 44 Harbour Street, Port Dover, Ontario N0A 1N0. Lets hope we can report some thanks over the next few months.

Moving eastward, our first stop is here in Montréal. Doug Brown sent along an article from The Gazette, about the Canadian Railway Museum in Delson. While the article covered many of the features of the museum, the extra news was that the replica of the John Molson was being "fired up" twice during the first half of September to put on an operating demonstration at the museum. The original John Molson locomotive was constructed in 1849 and operated on the Champlain and St. Lawrence Rail Road on the south shore of the St. Lawrence, near Montréal.

This news clipping also points out that the Museum has street car equipment as well as that from railways. My time here in Montréal has brought me somewhat in contact with the city's former street car system. Earlier in July there was comment on the radio about road construction work on Park Avenue that among other things was removing the old street car tracks. Walks along Ste. Catherine Street has revealed street car tracks appearing through the pavement at the corner of Peel Street and at the south east corner of the Forum.

Beside getting news clipping from Doug Brown, yours truly received an invitation from him to join a local group of rail fans who meet weekly to discuss our hobby. In the same vein, our member Bruce Chapman dragged me out the other day to tour some of the local rail facilities. Both gestures make a great welcome to a new city.

Finally, to get on with my trip to the east. While the Saturday was bright and sunny, rail traffic was scarce between Montréal and Levis. While I heard a couple of trains while having coffee, I only spotted one train from Highway 20 until I got off near St. Andre (the junction of CN's Montmagny and Pelletier Subdivisions) east of Québec City. After several hours of freeway driving, I usually get off and travel on Highway 230 for the last few miles into Saint-Alexandre. Highway 230 in this area follows a ridge south of CN's Montmagny Subdivision. I spotted a west bound freight at or near the junction. So I doubled back to a level crossing and waited. Surprise, I got two units moving light westward, CN 9538 and CN 9677 still in GOTR colours. I waited for a few minutes expecting this power to return perhaps with a couple of cars to pick up the rest of its train. However, I got a train whistle from the east, then CN 9641 helped by three other 9600s came west with a double-stacker. So rather than wait, I headed east. It was interesting at St. Andre Junction, CN 9538 had left its train standing on the main track of the Montmagny Subdivision east of the switch with the Pelletier cutoff.

Onward to Edmundston, New Brunswick, but no rail traffic. Québec Highway 289 crosses CN's Pelletier Subdivision (originally the NTR east of Pelletier, CN Mile 68.) at several places including one in Les Etroits (CN Mile 34.6). I would not want to say

how many times I have crossed this crossing without really seeing it. But with no trains, I guess was looking at other details more carefully. Here on the lake side of the road just east of the crossing is a small single storey yellow house. A second, and then a third look, and yes I would have to say this is the old station. The roof on this house has a wide overhang, but on the roadside it has been made into a verandah. On closer inspection the bay window is there on the verandah behind the posts and rocking chairs. Its location makes sense, so I believe this would be the original NTR Les Etroits, Québec station.

I gave the 26 mile area between Edmundston and Cyr Junction a fairly close inspection both on my way east as well as on my return. I was looking for more details of the old CPR, nee New Brunswick Railway line that was abandoned between these points in the 1930s. As I mentioned last January, the old roadbed is visible at the old diamond at Cyr Junction and bridge abutments are still visible at the Iroquois River near Edmundston. While I still haven't connected with the library in Edmundston, I have found a few more traces. In the area near Rivière Verte, I am certain I spotted some of the road bed a hundred feet or so east of the Trans-Canada Highway. St-Leonard shows the most signs of this rail line. The alignment of the CPR through this town was between the Town's Main Street and the Trans-Canada that skirts the town on the east. One question based on the condition of the old road bed at the north end of St-Leonard, did CN Rail keep a section of this CPR line connected to its St. Quentin Subdivision to serve the town? While St-Leonard is gradually growing, the right-of-way is reasonably traceable through town and at the south end of town a large culvert and embankment is still in place over Coombes Brook.

In Woodstock, the CPR station, which has been declared a heritage station, is still sitting there boarded up apparently waiting a decision between the Town and the Railway on its future.

For the first time in many years, I took a drive along Highway 102 from Oromocto to Saint John along the old Saint John and Quebec (Valley) Railway. This line built and opened during World War I, became part of the CNR. Except for some track around Oromocto the rest of the line is abandoned. This rail line would have been a great one for a rail enthusiast to have ridden. It traversed forest, skirted the Saint John River's edge, crossed long causeways along the flood plains as well as wound through substantial rock cuts nearer Saint John. The line joined the CPR at Westfield Beach and used their trackage for the last dozen miles into Saint John. See you next month.