

Just A. Ferronut's Railway Archaeology November 1993 "Art Clowes"

Fall must be here as the railway shows have started and we have had our first snow. However, with the leaves off the trees, the remnants of abandoned rail road beds are easier to locate.

Over the last month there has been two railway shows here in Montreal that I have attended. The first was the "PANORAMA DU RAIL" put on by the Montreal Railroad Modellers Association. Entrance to this show was interesting since they had printed tickets similar to older railway tickets, and as you passed, the conductor punched it, and you kept the ticket as a souvenir. This show had some great sound effects. Their quarters are in CN's viaduct south of Central Station, so every time a train arrived or departed, the sound was right there. The Association has great layouts with the different scales located in separate rooms. In addition to the operating layouts the show had a flea market with plenty of model goodies as well as a fair selection of videos, books, magazines, etc. I was able to get a copy of Wayne Tasse's, *Broad Gauge in the Ottawa Valley* as well as the Nickel Belt Rail's latest publication, *Prairie Cinders*, by Lawrence A. Stucky.

The second show was Sun Youth's "MODEL TRAIN EXPOSITION". This was my second year at this show, and as I mentioned last year, this show is in an old school and is spread over 3 floors. To me it seemed like they heard my comment from last year, about the lack of paper goods and photos. Some may say it was only my imagination since I found a copy of Peter Bower's *Two Divisions to Blue Water* that I have been trying to find for several years, but the amount of non-model items for sale definitely was greater. This year CP Rail had a safety display, and I always like watching and listening to the Morse group with their keys and bugs pass messages back and forth. The Montreal streetcar group was present again and in one gymnasium, one model layout was drawing lots of attention with all the smoke around it. To give the appearance of an older smoky terminal, they had set up a small fan with dry ice under the display to give the effect. I enjoyed both shows and I am certain the modellers would find them even greater.

Correction

In the August Column, I had mentioned the Discovery Train rail car No. 220 now used by Amherst, Nova Scotia as their tourist bureau. At the time I was having trouble trying to get confirmation on the correct spelling of the car's earlier name. Well, the other day at our weekly railfan luncheon here in Montreal, Leonard Seaton passed on the answer from Norman Lowe. Mr. Lowe has confirmed that the car's name was *Alexandra*, named after the Queen of the day not *Alexandria* as I had previously mentioned.

A Day's Outing

On the last Saturday of October, I decided it was time to get out for a trip to look at some of Quebec's rail lines. Since I had been out a couple of times on the lines north of the St. Lawrence, I figured to go south of the river. Much of this area is within the Eastern Townships or its influences. It appears you must change your criteria when tracking down rail lines in Quebec.

Numerous rail enthusiasts have commented about the myriad of rail lines that have existed in south-western Ontario and how confusing they are! Well, from my year here in Lower

Canada, I believe the history of Quebec railways makes that of Ontario's very simple. Perhaps Michael Shirlaw put it best when he wrote me stating, "The Eastern Townships represents one of the most fascinating areas of railway history in Canada. The railway frenzy days must have been full of struggle, rivalry, bitterness and over-building." As I dig more into the history of Quebec railways, it appears there are several extra forces here that have been added to their complexity. While, the first wave of railway construction was like elsewhere, a method of assisting water transportation by building portages or short route extensions, the differences started to show up in the following waves of railway construction. Quebec had the pressures from American railways and with no Great Lakes, it was easier to construct railways to permit the continuation of north-south trade after Confederation. Once a rail link between Montreal & Portland, Maine was established, there was the long struggle between it, and rail routes via the Maritime provinces and water transportation via the St. Lawrence River all striving to serve the European market. The geography of the St. Lawrence valley with its numerous sizable but non-navigable rivers also added to the problem of permitting the development of many small disjointed railways. Finally, the Eastern Townships were predominately English speaking at that time, but were a minority in the Legislature when it came to attempting to obtain government subsidies and support for railway construction. The result was dozens of small railways criss-crossing a small section of the country and themselves all in search of too little traffic with too little financial backing.

Since many of these lines were built on a shoe-string, they were built to very poor standards. In flat areas this meant no embankments and very small ditches. It also seems that due to the value that Quebecers place on their land, they will expend considerable effort removing abandoned railway works. The result is difficulty in tracing many old abandoned lines.

On the business side, many Quebec railways shows lists of bankruptcies, foreclosures and wheeling and dealing of the shadiest kind with companies often being split between two new owners just to make tracing their history more confusing.

Enough philosophy, back to my trip. The weather was great, but it was mid-morning before I found myself pacing AMTRAK's southbound *Adirondack*, led by F40PH No. 341 across the Victoria Bridge. Since the *Adirondack* stops at Saint-Lambert, I went out to Cannon about 2 miles east and was able to photograph the *Adirondack* as it crept across Highway 116's four lanes. Cannon is where CN's Rouses Point Subdivision joins its St-Hyacinthe Subdivision. This portion of the Rouses Point Subdivision is part of the rail line built by the Montreal, Chambly and Sorel Railway and originally extended from the St. Lawrence river in Longueuil across what is now CN's St-Hyacinthe Subdivision to Marieville. The four mile section from Cannon to Longueuil has been long abandoned.

CN Cannon is within the urban area of the various communities along the south shore of the St. Lawrence across from Montreal. While I am starting to understand the trackage, abandonments and relocations in the area, it will take more research and a map to explain the history of this area.

My target was the Montreal and Sorel Railway that

had extended from St. Lambert along the south shore of the St. Lawrence River to Armstrong (the west side of the Richelieu River at Sorel). The original 44.67 mile line was opened on April 1, 1882, and was leased by the Southern Eastern Railway on the same date. When the M&S first opened it had a junction with the GTR's line (now CN's St. Hyacinthe's Subdivision) just east of the St. Lambert station. In the 3 miles between St. Lambert and Longueuil, there were two stations; Montreal South and Longueuil West. East of Longueuil, stations became more respectably spaced at distances averaging about 5 miles. The Grand Trunk Railway of Canada took over the lease of M&S effective January 1, 1884. However, the Montreal and Sorel Railway, was one of railways caught in the Quebec railway tangles, for even under the GTR, it did not operate from April 1884 to December 31, 1885 and from October 1888 to June 24, 1889.

On June 1, 1889 the lease of the Montreal and Sorel was taken over by the Great Eastern Railway Company and operation was resumed on June 24, 1889.

The Great Eastern Railway over the previous seven years had constructed a dozen or so miles of railway east of Sorel, that would be connected to the Montreal and Sorel. In 1890, the Great Eastern Railway entered into another agreement with the Montreal and Sorel to repair the line between St. Lambert and Sorel. Confused? Well I am!

The Great Eastern Railway kept the operation going for a year or so before financial problems and the sheriff started to show up. By 1894, the South Shore Railway came on the scene and bought the Montreal and Sorel and agreed to purchase the Great Eastern Railway which it did in December 1899.

The South Shore Railway didn't fair much better. Its operation was taken over by the Quebec Southern Railway in October 1901. By March, 1904 the courts had appointed a receiver to direct the South Shore Railway's affairs and in 1905 the court ordered its sale. The SSR was sold in June 1906 and it was transferred to the Quebec, Montreal and Southern Railway Company in August, 1906 and the courts confirmed it in January 1907.

The St. Lambert to Sorel line didn't change hands again until July 16, 1929 when the Canadian National Railway Company acquired the Quebec, Montreal and Southern Railway Company.

In less time that it took to write the history, I had driven in a semi-circle along the main roads and Autoroutes around much of the built-up urban area of St. Lambert and Longueuil and arrived at Varennes on the old M&S. Today, Varennes is an operating point on what CN defines as their Sorel Subdivision. Varennes, today listed as mileage 16.5 Sorel Subdivision is about 13.5 miles from St. Lambert along the old M&S.

The mileage changes came following the May 6, 1969 opening of a new 7.7 mile diversion track that was constructed from Bruno Junction on the St. Hyacinthe Subdivision about 7 miles east of St. Lambert to the old M&S line near the east end of Longueuil. The diversion was constructed as the result of the heavy industrialization of the area along the south shore of the St. Lawrence downstream from Montreal. The diversion as noted in the May/June 1969 *Newsletter* permitted the removal of 2.6 miles of the M&S trackage as well as the elimination of 22 level crossings, mostly in the residential areas of St. Lambert and Longueuil. Following the construction of the by-pass, the 2.8

miles of the M&S between the end of the abandoned trackage and the new connection became the Longueuil Spur. This spur is still in use.

I arrived at Varennes about 1030 hours and CN 7067 & 7027 were idling on the main line waiting for the crew to finish their coffee in the yard office before carrying on with their switching of local industries. The single storey station appears to have been constructed as part of the construction of the by-pass track in 1969. It is about 24 x 40 building clad in a pressed corrugated grey fibreboard. The crew was getting revved up as I started to head east towards Sorel.

Just west of the community of Contrecoeur is the large DOSCO/SIDBEC-FERUNI steel plants. CN designates their station at this location as St- Antoine (CN Mile 28.8 Sorel Subdivision). CN 3551, 3516 & 3546 were sitting at St. Antoine, shut down, waiting to share the next week's work load of the complex with the industries own locomotives.

In the community of Contrecoeur proper on the east side of St. Antoine Street at Mile 31.1 Sorel Subdivision, CN's frame single storey station sits, still in its maroon and cream paint scheme on its original site. This station is presently used as a local youth centre.

Another 15 miles east and I arrived in the City of Sorel. The station here at CN Mile 46.2 is at the corner of rue du Roi and rue Adelaide about a block east of the Richelieu River. The single storey frame station on the north side of the track is painted grey and has been remodelled and serves as a bus terminal.

From Sorel, I make a general arc through the country side south-east towards St. Hyacinthe and Autoroute 20 to get back to Montreal. On this part of the trip I passed through St. Guillaume. This small community was at the early junction of two railways of the CPR family of rail lines. The first railway was part of the Montreal and Atlantic Railway that was abandoned through St. Guillaume in 1894. The second railway was the Lake Champlain and St. Lawrence Junction Railway. This line from Farnham through St. Hyacinthe was abandoned more recently. The old rail yard site in St. Guillaume is still quite visible. One interesting point is the name of the street along the rail line – rue de la Station – a sign of the changes in the language trends.

The last spotting on my return trip was at Route 116, CN Mile 117.22 St. Hyacinthe Subdivision, east of St. Hyacinthe as east bound freight with CN 2116, 2118 & 7066 rolled by at 16:07 hours.

North Bay

On a recent trip to North Bay, I stayed at the Pinewood Park Inn at the Lakeshore exit from Highway 11 at the south end of city. The North Bay Model Railway club as a substantial display at this motel. They have a 25-30 foot long operating model display as well as a surrounding display. One cabinet has a number of railway lanterns, etc. In back of the display are shelves of model equipment, the full gambit or cars and engines. In the area, it is worth dropping in for a look.

Early Track Structure and Railroading

Gord Webster's articles on railways in Nova Scotia in the last issue of *Rail and Transit* reminded me of another interview in the February 1915, *Canadian Government Railway Employees Magazine*. That interview was with a Mr. A. B. Gray, a time early Roadmaster of the Intercolonial Railway at New Glasgow, NS, and the following are his comments about his

recollections of his early days as a Section man on the Nova Scotia Railway:

“.... When I commenced railroading in 1866, the Nova Scotia Railway was in operation between Halifax and Truro and Windsor. The road bed was ballasted with clay, and rock, taken out of the cuttings between Halifax and Bedford. The ties were in nine foot lengths of round timber, split in two halves with saws. The rails were of the H pattern, that is, the tops and bottoms were alike, and could be used over again by turning them upside down. They were secured to the ties by cast iron chairs, the ties being spotted to allow chairs to set level on them. The rails were fastened in the chairs by wooden keys or blocks made of elm soaked in tar. These rails, when new, made a smooth running road. The rails were 16 and 18 foot lengths, and they, along with the chairs and keys, were brought out from England about the year 1855. In 1867, portions of the track between Windsor Junction and Halifax were re-laid with iron “T” rails, the same pattern as are now used. These “T” rails were secured at the joints by a thin steel scabbard. These scabbards had a decided tendency to work loose, and slip clear of the end of one rail, and trackmen had to keep busy keeping these scabbards in place. There were no hand-cars in those days, push cars only, but they were much lighter than those in use at the present time. The track men were paid 90 cents per day, and the foremen \$1.25, and many of us had to live, pay house rent, fuel, etc., and support quite large families, yet they seemed to get along, and have a little to spare. The first regular trains used to run with the passenger cars next the engine. Later on, the passenger cars were put on the rear of the trains. These trains made good time, and accidents were rare. It was quite a usual occurrence to see eight and ten flat cars on the regular morning train from Truro to Halifax, loaded with wagons of country produce. Special trains were frequently run out for loading and distributing ties. Many of these special trains had no van, and only a conductor and one man, and sometimes a conductor only. The engines in use at that time were all wood burners. In many cases, when out on special trains, loading and unloading ties, I have helped the Fireman to handle wood, both on the tender, and into the fire-box. The dumps or fills between Bedford and Halifax were seriously damaged by the heavy south-east and north-east storms. One, Doyle’s dump was badly washed out in 1870. Rails and ties were carried by the sea into the pond on the right hand side going to Halifax, and I think the rails are in the pond to this day (1915). The sections between Halifax and Bedford were short, only three miles in length, and they had two men and a foreman to look after them, yet there was always plenty of work for them to do. They got no extra help in the summer, and in the winter they had plenty of snow and ice to handle. There were no car flangers of any sort.

Again, reading both of these articles, it is interesting to note the reference to early piggy-back service, the high rates of pay!, caboose-less trains and of course in both articles the reference to the wood-burning locomotives.

Early Rules

While we are digging around some of the day to day parts of early railroading, I found the following from the 1864 Grand Trunk Railway’s “*Book of Rules and Regulations*” interesting. The following is part of Rule # 15 for TRACK REPAIRERS as contained in the section for Maintenance of Way and Structures. This rule starts with all the technical niceties that the ballast should not be more than two inches above the ties and

how the track is to be kept clear of ballast, gravel and snow, etc., for the clear passage of trains. The part I found interesting part was: “.... All labourers dwelling in shanties along the line are strictly forbidden to keep cows or pigs within the fences. Occupants of crossing watch-houses must be particular in obscuring their windows at night, as the light might be taken for a signal. ...” This 1864 rule book was defined as general regulations applicable to all servants of the GTR and in addition to instructions concerning train operation had sections for each category of crewman as well as for station personnel and rail plant maintenance people. One section even gives instructions as to how to repair telegraph lines. Every foreman was expected to have a copy of these rules in his possession at all times or face a penalty of a fine of \$1.00 or worse, dismissal.

A Rarity for the CPR

In this day of environmental concern an article titled “The little plant that stopped a dam” in the Woodstock, NB, *Bugle* caught my eye. However, it was not the main story that interested me, but a side issue. The plant in question is the Furbish’s lousewort, one of the rarest plants in the world. The yellow perennial herb is known to exist only in the St. John River Valley, New Brunswick and in Aroostook County, Maine. Records show that only about 6,000 plants exist between the two places.

The St. John River Valley location of the plant is mostly located on a plot of land owned by the Canadian Pacific Railroad, near Four Falls. This plot has been under the protection of the railroad, under the authority of the local agent, since April 1978.

Future Months:

CP LaSalle station still standing
Newburgh CNOR Station exists in town as a house – Dan McConnachie.
Dick Browlee and church game