

Just A. Ferronut's February 1995

Railway Archaeology

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We left our northern Québec rail line story last month with the opening of the National Transcontinental Railway. Before we leave this road, we should note a few of the changes that have occurred over the years. The original transcontinental alignment of both the NTR and GTP hardly lasted longer than it took to consolidate their road beds. In the east, while the section from Hervey to Cochrane remains operational today, it is no longer a part of a transcontinental route. Changes along the NTR in Québec started shortly after becoming part of the Canadian National Railways, first with the combining of rail lines between Hervey and Québec City (See July, 1994 column). Major breaks appeared in the NTR when in January 1985, CN's Monk Subdivision east of Québec City was abandoned. While this abandonment didn't stop the line through northern Québec keeping its transcontinental capabilities, that was lost less than a year later with the abandonment of CN's Pagwa Subdivision between Pagwa and Nakina, Ontario in the spring of 1986.

While the NTR was built across northern Québec as part of a system with two purposes; linking the oceans, and providing a vehicle for settlement, it was a spin-off of the latter that has been most instrumental in sustaining this line. Perhaps its timing was crucial, but the NTR quickly became a spine or back bone for the development of the minerals of the north. A common statement, especially during the Donald Gordon years of the 1950's was that 'the first thing after the mining prospector was a rail line'. Mining, noted for its large demands of power, had a ready source of hydro-electric power from the swift, fast falling rivers of northern Québec. In addition, our look at northern Québec also shows how the changing construction techniques provided the mechanism to permit these three major industries to develop to support each other.

But, before we start looking at the major branches that developed along the NTR, a brief look at some small lines and changes along the NTR itself. While I am not going to attempt to cover all of the spur lines, side tracks, etc., constructed along the NTR, the following are a few examples of typical ones.

In addition, the northern Québec terrain required a goodly number of spurs of various lengths for the railway to access areas of suitable gravel to meet their needs for ballast.

St. Maurice Construction Company

StMCC (Indep) – Chaudiere Falls for about 20 miles along St-Maurice River – (abandoned) – Not physically connected to the NTR, but supported by it.

This was typical of rail lines built to get construction supplies into sites for hydro-electric power dams. Its only difference was that it was connected not by rail, but water to the main rail line. The St. Maurice Construction Company was owned by the Shawinigan Water & Power Company and during the early part of 1916 constructed this rail line as part of their 50 mile access route from Sanmaur, on the NTR, north to their dam site on the St. Maurice River. Sanmaur is about 70 miles west of La Tuque. Sanmaur, two miles west of Weymont, was a new station constructed with a 41 car siding for the St. Maurice Construction Company and was named after the company.

From the jumping off point at Sanmaur, about 20 scows, with capacities ranging between 12 and 30 tons each were

operated over two divisions on the St. Maurice River to move supplies to Chaudiere Falls, 30 miles upriver. The two divisions of this water route were separated by a section of rapids where the scows had to be pulled by a heavy boat anchored on shore. In the open area the scows were hauled by gasoline and steam tow boats.

From Chaudiere Falls, 30 miles north of Sanmaur, a 20 mile, standard gauge railway, provided the access for the St. Maurice Construction Company's operations and business incidental to the construction of their dam. This railway was served by four contractors' locomotives, 18 flat cars, two box cars and 24 dump cars. The maximum grade was 3½%, and the maximum curvature 18 degrees.

This railway has been long abandoned and today the area is served by several Provincial highways, some on the old road bed.

MINING SPURS: A skim of employee timetables over the years shows the rise and fall of numerous mining spurs along the rail lines of northern Québec.

Québec Lithium Company Spur

(Industrial Line – 28.3 miles west of Senneterre)

The Québec Lithium Company opened a mine about 30 miles southwest of Senneterre. This mine site was about six miles south of the NTR. A 6.7 mile spur was constructed to serve this mine. The spur joined the NTR with an east facing switch about a mile west of Fisher, a station and yard, 27.30 miles west of Senneterre. The NTR through Fisher in 1963, was CN's Amos Subdivision and at that time, the Québec Lithium had siding capacity at their mine site for 90 cars.

By 1975, the mine had closed and the spur was cut back to a ballast pit, 2.3 miles south of CN's Taschereau Subdivision the name for the past 20 years or so for the portion of the NTR through Fisher. Today, not only is the spur gone, but the once busy yard of Fisher no longer exists.

Normetal Branch Line/Spur

(12.5 Mile Industrial Line - 33.4 miles west of Taschereau)

This 12.5 mile line extended north from the NTR from Dupuy, 33.4 miles west of Taschereau. In 1952, the NTR through Dupuy was defined as CN's Macamic Subdivision, and the heaviest engine permitted on the Normetal Branch was 3300 class engines. Normetal mines were for copper and zinc, with silver and gold as byproducts. By 1963, CN's speed on the Normetal branch was down to 5 m.p.h. Normetal latter served their mines with their own motive power and by 1975, CN was interchanging traffic at Dupuy. Also the 1975 footnotes state that CN Units in series 4000 and 5500-5610 were prohibited on both the remaining portion of the Québec Lithium spur as well as the Normetal trackage.

Abitibi Transportation & Navigation Company

(Abitibi Power and Paper Company)

The trackage of this company forms another facet of northern Québec rail lines – lumbering roads. The Abitibi Transportation & Navigation Company was the predecessor to the Abitibi Power and Paper Company and the owner of various rail

operations throughout the north. One of their lines started from Iroquois Falls, Ontario, on the Timiskaming & Northern Ontario Railway's (Ontario Northland) branch of the same name and extended north to Stimson (Hughes), Ontario on the NTR. Stimson (Hughes) was located about 20 miles east of Cochrane, Ontario. The Abitibi Transportation & Navigation Company's 15.76 mile line was opened for traffic December 23, 1922. At opening it had a temporary spur line from mile post 8, that extended some 5 miles into the bush. These temporary spurs were relocated to new stands of timber as lumbering operations cleared out one area. One news report in the fall of 1923 indicated that Abitibi Pulp and Paper Company was finding it could operate its plant more efficiently with this rail line access and was producing 18 to 20 cars of newsprint a day.

In October, 1926 the Board of Railway Commissioners approved the construction of a single track of the Abitibi Transportation & Navigation Company across the single track of NTR at Stimson. Thirteen months later in November 1927, the A.T. & N.C. was permitted to put an automatic interlocker into service at this diamond crossing of the NTR. This logging railway continued to collect timber from areas north of the NTR until the spring of 1954, when authority was granted for the removal of the diamond and interlocker. Today, this old roadbed is a private road that is 'open' to the public. Gord Webster was telling me that he was at this old crossing site a couple of years ago and he was surprised to see the standard diamond shaped railway sign complete with the wording 'railway crossing at grade - one mile' still in place along the road.

In reviewing the material on this rail line it was also interesting to note the change in the spelling of the early subdivision name. In the 1920's it was called the Makamik, while by 1950 it was spelled Macamic.

St. Maurice Subdivision - Fitzpatrick, QC (10 Mile Relocation for Power Dams in the 1950s)

Last month, mention was made about the 700 foot drop in the St. Maurice River in the 80 miles northwest of La Tuque and that the original NTR through La Tuque and Fitzpatrick was on the east bank of the St. Maurice River. About 4 miles from La Tuque (1 mile from Fitzpatrick) the line crossed the mouth of the Croche River and the St. Maurice.

With the ever growing need for hydro-electric power, the construction of more and more power dams was undertaken. In the early 1950's, the Shawinigan Water & Power Company started to put together plans for more construction on the St. Maurice River including a dam at Rapide Beaumont, about 6.5 miles upstream from Fitzpatrick. This project would flood about 32 miles of the CN's St. Maurice Subdivision from the dam site upstream including its Stirling Station. The result was a proposal to relocate the crossing of the St. Maurice from near Fitzpatrick to a point at about 10 miles upstream.

The larger and more modern construction techniques and machinery permitted the cutting of a road bed along the steep rocky east side of the St. Maurice River. So during 1957 & 1958, some construction crews gouged and chiselled rock for this new alignment while others worked on the bridges across the Croche and St. Maurice Rivers. The central piers of the new St. Maurice bridge were the highest on the C.N.R. system, one being over 170 feet in height from foundation to bridge seat.

The ten miles of relocated rail line was opened late in the fall of 1958. As a footnote, while no definite date or plans have

been announced, hydro needs are again knocking on the railway's door for yet more relocations.

Major Branch Lines

So with this main line relocation we will leave the NTR and start looking at the major railway branches that were constructed within our northern territory to access the larger mining areas. As we have mentioned, the Temiskaming and North Ontario Railway reached Cochrane in November 1908, and by 1909 it was fully opened for all traffic. This event could probably be identified as the start of a "love-hate" relationship between the Grand Trunk (Pacific) and T. & N.O., that even today, still occasionally shows a few lingering traces.

In August 1913, the Grand Trunk arranged for regular train service between Toronto and Winnipeg via North Bay and then over the T. & N.O.'s trackage to Cochrane and onto the NTR for the trip westward.

On the other side of the coin, the completion of the T. & N.O. into Cochrane coupled with the mineral explorations proving the existence of extensive ore bodies in the area turned up the political heat for rail access and its control to the area around Abitibi Lake and north-western Québec.

The business communities in both Québec and Ontario were lining up political allies to support their interests. Beside these, the railway community was also split. The Grand Trunk favoured Québec and its Québec routes, while the provincial railway in Ontario was flaunting the advantages of their routes. Probably the prime key in this squabble was the Temiskaming and North Ontario Railway's proposal for a line from Swastika, Ontario via Larder Lake to Rouyn-Noranda, Québec. A map and some simple mathematics will show what this 60 miles of track could do to the whole balance of railway operations in the area.

The price of delivering the resources of these northern mines could tip the balance for businesses in either Ontario or Québec. The Grand Trunk wanted shipments from Rouyn to go via Taschereau. This would make the all Québec route to Montreal 200 miles shorter than the route via Taschereau, Cochrane and North Bay. With the Swastika - Rouyn line, the distance via Québec and via North Bay to Montreal would be about equal, but it would reduce the distance from Rouyn to Toronto, to about half (430 miles) of the 870 miles to Toronto via Québec (Hervey Junction). So, in combination with the business potentials, track ownership, prestige, etc., the reasons were quickly identified for the intensity of the Grand Trunk and Québec's blockage of the expansion plans of the T. & N.O.

By 1920, there were even suggestions and discussions that the T. & N.O. should be acquired by the Dominion Government and become part of the Canadian National Railways. Many considered the T. & N.O. would be a useful addition to the national system and indications were that the federal government would favourably receive any formal proposal. As we know, this takeover didn't get off the ground.

Nipissing Central Railway NCR (ONR) Swastika, ON - Rouyn-Noranda, QC - ONR Kirkland Lake Subdivision - 60.0 miles (96.6 km)

The Temiskaming and North Ontario Railway, a provincial railway continued to eye the potential revenues from that geological belt of mineralized rocks that extended from Kirkland Lake eastward across into Québec including the Fortune Lake and Rouyn gold fields. The question was how to get access?

In the early 1920's the T. & N.O. dug through its files

and realized it controlled the charter of the Nipissing Central Railway, a federally incorporated railway. The NCR had been federally chartered in 1907 with rights to construct rail lines including one across the interprovincial boundary to a point on the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway in Québec. The NCR was formed primarily to develop an electric interurban service, but in early 1911, weak from confrontations with other railways, controlling interest was acquired by a syndicate headed by a Alex Fasken of Toronto. This NCR control was quickly acquired by the T. & N.O. in April, 1911.

Swastika, a community about 90 miles south Cochrane on the T. & N.O.'s main North Bay to Cochrane main line is also near the western tip of the above mentioned mineral belt. This coupled with mineral strikes including gold around Kirkland Lake in 1922, were the catalysts for the T. & N.O. to attempt to exercise the powers of the Nipissing Central for a rail line from Swastika, via Kirkland and Larder Lakes to Noranda, Québec. The Québec government and its supporters let it be known that this endeavour was not welcome in Québec.

During 1923, federal approval was given for the T. & N.O. Railway Commission, under its Nipissing Central Railway charter, to construct a line from Swastika east through the Kirkland Lake gold area to Larder Lake, about 24 miles. July, 1923, saw the start of construction on the first nine miles. Construction problems including trestle work delayed laying rail into Kirkland townsite until January 1924. The completion of this work supplied rail service to Kirkland Lake 5.6 miles east of Swastika. By the end of 1923, construction was underway of the eastern portion to Larder Lake.

This branch was constructed through the rugged pre-Cambrian country with about 30% of the 12,000 cubic yards of excavation needed per mile being solid rock. The maximum track curvature was 12 degrees with maximum compensated grades of 1½%.

While the debate over NCR access into Québec continued, the line as far as Larder Lake was completed and ready for operation on October 16, 1924. Regular operation started on November 10, 1924 with 2 Edison storage battery cars making 2 round trips daily between Swastika and the end of the line (Crown Reserve Mine). There were 5 round trips a day between Swastika and Kirkland Lake. The first test trip of these cars was made on November 7, 1924.

In the midst of these 1924 events, news reports from this area showed how rapidly industrial changes were happening. On May 23, 1924, Canadian Pacific Railway in cooperation with the Laurentide Air Service Company started an air service from Angliers, Québec, the terminal of their Interprovincial and James Bay Railway to Lake Osisko (Rouyn), Québec. Inbound flights to Rouyn were on Monday, Wednesday and Fridays with the return flights the next day. On July 15, this service was extended to a route from Rouyn to Haileybury, on the T. & N.O.'s North Bay to Cochrane line. This service was to connect with Canadian National Railways' Continental Limited, which operated over the T. & N.O.'s line.

The amphibian airplane soon became a strong ally of the rail line survey and construction crews in remote areas like northern Québec with plenty of good sized lakes.

The fall of 1924, also saw the completion of surveys for the extension of the NCR from Larder Lake, Ontario to Osisko Lake, in the Rouyn gold area in Québec. Plans for this NCR extension were filed with the Board of Railway Commissioners

and there they sat for about two years. During this time, the NCR extended its line from Crown Reserve Mine, near Larder Lake, to Cheminis, Ontario on the Québec border and 32 miles from Swastika.

It wasn't until the spring of 1927 that arrangements were made between the Ontario and Québec Governments that would permit the NCR to acquire lands in Québec for the right of way for its approximately 30 mile extension from Cheminis, Ontario, to Lake Osisko, Rouyn District Québec. Once the politicians resolved their differences, the technocrats showed how quickly they could move. The NCR, to acquire their 100 foot wide right of way, had to observe the Québec expropriation laws, and to compensate holders of timber limits, mining companies and others whose lands may be taken over. The right of way at stations would be widened to 200 feet.

The first contract for construction on this line was awarded on May 12, 1927 with work starting from Cheminis on June 1, 1927. By June 15, land had been purchased in Rouyn, Québec, for the NCR's terminal. A press report dated September 11, 1927 stated that track had been laid on about 11 miles of the NCR extension east from Cheminis.

The track-laying into Noranda was completed October 22, 1927. The first passenger train was run into Noranda, by the contractors on November 6. The line was officially opened on November 22, 1927.

Daily passenger and freight service started on November 28, 1927. The passenger train left Rouyn daily at 11:40 a.m., and arrived at Swastika at 2:30 p.m., leaving there at 4:50 p.m., for the return to Rouyn, where it arrived at 7:45 p.m. In addition there were a daily, except Sunday mixed-train service between Rouyn and Kirkland Lake.

While the start of these services ended the T. & N.O.'s long battle for access Rouyn-Noranda, its arrival was a neck and neck race with the Canadian National who officially opened its line into Rouyn-Noranda less than two months latter.

National Transcontinental Railway Branch Lines

NTRBLC (CN) - Taschereau (O'Brien) to Rouyn – CN Rouyn Subdivision (abandoned)

The existence of Rouyn-Noranda was started when a venturesome character named Edmund Horne, staked some mining claims about 44 miles south of Taschereau. In 1920, these claims were purchased by the corporation now known as the Noranda Mining and Smelting Company.

The life style associated with these mineral finds was fast overshadowing the more pioneer and rural farm life along the NTR. The large fields of clover were great for supporting dairy farms, but the ferocious appetites for metals by the southern industries soon enticed many to collect around the mines for steady employment at what many thought was good pay.

Canadian National Railways, like the T. & N.O. was watching the mining developments in this mineral belt arcing south of its NTR.

While the T. & N.O. was making noises and efforts to construct a rail line along this mineral belt, Québec and its railway backers were looking at access from Taschereau on the NTR. The first official move towards the construction of this north-south access commenced on April 3, 1925, when a Provincial charter was granted for the Rouyn Mines Railway Company. This character granted power to construct and operate a railway from O'Brien (Taschereau) on the NTR southerly to a point in the

township of Rouyn, with power to amalgamate with any other railway.

The Rouyn Mines Railway Company entered into an agreement with the Dominion Government for the 30 year lease of its property effective October 1, 1925. This agreement was approved by federal Orders in Council. The Government entrusted the Rouyn Mines Railway Company's property to the Canadian National Railways for management and operation.

CN, for bookkeeping purposes assigned the Rouyn Mines Railway Company's property into the National Transcontinental Railway Branch Lines Company. The result showed that the first 1.07 miles out of Taschereau as part of the National Transcontinental Railway while the remaining 42.83 miles of this 43.9 branch to Rouyn was listed as part of the NTRBLC.

Construction was completed late in 1927 and the line was officially opened for CN traffic on January 1, 1928. The Rouyn-Noranda region soon became one of the leading mining areas in Canada. Rouyn-Noranda mineral production reached \$42,000,000 in 1938.

By the 1960's, since most of the mining activities were within about 8 miles of the south end, the increased use of CN's Val d'Or Subdivision was more efficient and reduced traffic on CN's Rouyn Subdivision.

In April 1968, the tri-weekly passenger-train service operating between Taschereau and Rouyn-Noranda, was discontinued.

The last scheduled freight train to operate over the full subdivision was in the Fall of 1969. Freight service north the Lac Dufault Mines, located on a spur off mileage 36.64 Rouyn Subdivision was ended in January 1971 following the burning of a timber trestle near mile 35.0.

By 1972 the last intermediate station, Cléricy, Québec, mileage 26.4 with its caretaker was authorized to be closed.

In 1975 CN made application to the Canadian Transport Commission, for authority to abandon rail operation over a 32.7 mile portion of its Rouyn Subdivision from mileage 2.7, a point near Taschereau, Québec to mileage 35.4 a point near Lac Dufault. Effective November 16, 1979 this trackage was officially abandoned and the track was removed in 1981.

The remaining 8.5 miles of track at the south into Rouyn became the Rouyn Spur off the Val d'Or Subdivision. Again, as the mines served by this spur were worked out, it was gradually cut back until today only a 2.0 mile Rouyn Spur remains.

At the Taschereau end, the remaining trackage has been converted into yard trackage and much of it removed.

While the depletion of mines and changing traffic needs may be accused of contribution to the demise of CN's Rouyn Subdivision, the push to reduce duplicate routes and hence costs were probably bigger factors.

Canadian National Railways

CNR (CN) - Senneterre to Rouyn, QC – CN Val d'Or Subdivision

This 100 mile line had been planned in 1927 by which the Taschereau to Rouyn line was to swing north-easterly from Rouyn to serve territory then in process of development and connect back with the NTR at or near Senneterre. This project got caught by the Great Depression before it could be undertaken, so it languished for several years.

Authorization for the construction of this new line was approved by the Canadian Parliament on June 23, 1936. The line

was to begin at Senneterre, 381.3 miles from Québec and extend for 100.6 miles to Rouyn, and connect with the Rouyn Subdivision.

Railway surveyors began work immediately and contracts for construction was awarded on October 22, 1936 and work was started on November 9, 1936. Three years were allowed for the construction of this line, but only twenty-five months was needed. By December 31, 1937, the contractor had completed 89 miles of the grading, the balance, 11.6 miles, was completed in September, 1938.

Railway forces laid a total of 52 miles of track on this line during 1937. From Senneterre westward, 41.2 miles of track was placed to the crossing of the Lemoine Narrows; and from Rouyn, Mile 100.6, about 10.8 miles was placed to the crossing of the Kinojevis River, Mile 89.75.

This permitted the opening of 36.43 miles of the line from Senneterre to Val d'Or on November 28, 1937 under authority of BTC Order 55229.

During 1938, the balance of track, 48.6 miles, was laid, tracklaying being completed on July 29, except for over the Kinojevis River bridge on which track was laid November 3, 1938.

Without getting into the details, the results of improved construction methods supported by better access can be seen by the speed of construction.

The official opening of the line took place on Saturday, December 3, 1938 and many of the official guests arrived by a special train that operated from Montreal Tunnel Terminal via Hervey Junction to Senneterre and on to Val d'Or where the main ceremony was to take place.

A new feature was added for this opening. Radio broadcast equipment was set up at Val d'Or for a national hookup by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. The scene was described by Gerald Wilmot, commentator, while the clink and the clank of maul and spike was heard as Honourable C. D. Howe, Minister of Transport, using a gilded maul, drove home a golden spike to signify the completion of the line. This was followed by the cutting of a golden ribbon stretched across the tracks. Finally, S. J. Hungerford, Chairman and President of the Canadian National Railways, climbed into the cab of locomotive 5255, which drew the special train through a gateway with a radiant sun typifying the golden west of Québec.

While the special train continued towards Rouyn, it stopped at Malartic, a complete agency, about 16 miles west of Val d'Or, where the Railway President inaugurated the commercial wire in this the Canadian National Telegraphs's 1449th office. The party completed their trip to Rouyn-Noranda where the Western Québec Mine Managers' Association held a dinner in the Hotel Noranda for the special guests.

With the party over, regular commercial train service, for both passengers and freight, commenced Monday, December 5, 1938.

This line is still operated today by the Canadian National Railways as their Val d'Or Subdivision for access to this resource are of Québec.

This wraps up our look at the major branches south of the NTR, and the last major railway construction in Québec prior to World War II. As the war ended, Québec and Canadian National looked north of the NTR for areas of expansion. The first expansion to the north was aimed at timber and colonization, but extensive mineral finds expanded the network to a rail line loop of 333 miles as well as a 61 mile stub ended subdivision.

Canadian National Railways

CNR (CN) - Barraute to Beattyville – Mile 0.0 to Mile 39.02, CN's Chapais Subdivision.

In 1946, the Canadian National Railways, partly in response to the perceived post-war need for more cultivable land for returning veterans with their new brides and timber for the post-war redevelopment announced that they would build a new 55 mile line from the National Transcontinental north towards Kiask Falls in the Bell Riviere valley down river (north) from Senneterre.

The Railway's plan as filed in October, 1946 indicated that Barraute, 18 miles west of Senneterre was to be the point on the NTR for the junction of this new line. Construction got underway in 1957 and it was finished in 1958, but short of the Bell Riviere. Its northern terminal became known as Beattyville, 39.02 miles from Barraute.

Canadian National was granted authority to operate over this line on February 10, 1949, and regular service was commenced on February 28, 1949.

The railway construction bulldozers and power shovels barely got shut down before the prospectors picks and shovels told them there was enough profit in the rocks to restart railway construction.

Canadian National Railways

CNR (CN) - Beattyville to Chibougamau – Mile 39.02 to Mile 200.2, CN's Chapais Subdivision. Section from Mile 78.06 (near Grevet) to Mile 169.40 (Chapais) has been abandoned.

The glint of gold – that is from the expected profits in hauling minerals (gold, silver, copper and zinc) and timber caused Canadian National to send two locating parties into the area in May 1953. Over the next five and a half months, they penetrated 300 miles of northern wilderness and prepared the preliminary alignment for their new line. Final location and plans were prepared for the 160 miles from Beattyville to Chibougamau, and in November 1954, the first contracts were awarded for clearing and grading the roadbed.

Construction got into high gear in 1955 and by early fall, the clearing, grading and laying of track from Beattyville over the 11 miles to the Bell Riviere as well as the bridge over the river was completed. This bridge is the largest bridge on the line consisting of two spans each 200 feet in length and is 25 feet above the water.

By the fall of 1955, the clearing was also complete over the 60 miles from Bell Riviere to Bachelor Lake, while grading, laying of track and construction of bridges on that section was progressing rapidly.

Much of this rail line was built on clay over a sub-soil of clay, rock and muskeg. Work was carried on throughout the year and with temperatures as low as minus 63° F., both the men and equipment were given real challenges.

By March 1957, the line to Chibougamau was completed to the stage that permitted the first ore to be carried over the line to the Noranda smelter. Finishing work was completed

over the summer.

The line was inspected, approved and regular freight and passenger service started on October 7th, 1957. Operation was tri-weekly, with a split at Miquelon, halfway between Senneterre (on the National Transcontinental line) and Chibougamau. Trains operate Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays northbound from Senneterre to Miquelon, and Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays southbound. From Miquelon to Chibougamau the operation was reversed, i.e. Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays northbound and Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays southbound.

Chibougamau, derived from the Indian word meaning 'Quiet Place', was the site of the official opening on November 6, 1957 as most of the town's populations of 3,500 joined the special guests that arrived on a special train pulled by CNR 6515.

The speeches of the official opening were broken by the "rat-a-tat-tat" that echoed from the hammer of a modern spike-driving machine, as a shiny spike quickly pierced a stout wooden tie supporting the two ribbons of heavy steel and the old railway-building tradition was again served, but in a modern way. The climax of the ceremonies occurred as CNR President Donald Gordon gave the 'proceed' to a twenty-five car ore-laden train led by CNR locomotive 3055.

Again, with changing railway operating philosophy, along with some changes in traffic patterns and economics earmarked the centre portion of the Chapais Subdivision for abandonment. Since the majority of the rail customers were near the ends, an application for authority to abandon from Mile 78.06 (near Grevet) to Mile 169.40 at Chapais was made. Approval was granted and this 91.34 miles of track was abandoned.

While the final work was being completed on the Beattyville to Chibougamau line, work was progressing on the 133-mile line east from Chibougamau Junction (Faribault) (6 miles south of Chibougamau) to Triquet (junction with the Roberval Subdivision (see last month's column)).

Canadian National Railways

CNR (CN) - Faribault (Chibougamau Junction) to Triquet – CN's Cran Subdivision, 133.3 miles

This rail line was planned and built in conjunction with the Beattyville to Chibougamau line to access the mining area around Chibougamau and to provide a 200 mile reduction in the rail distance between Chibougamau and deep water terminals on the St. Lawrence.

This line was across slightly better terrain than the line to Beattyville as there was some sand and solid rock mixed among the clay and boulders. Like many secondary lines at the time, the rail was 80 and 85 lb. used rail.

This line was officially opened about two years after the Chapais Subdivision as C.N.R. President Donald Gordon opened this 133 mile section from Chibougamau Junction, QC, to St. Felicien on October 28th, 1959. This line completed the entire loop line from Barraute to St. Felicien.

Today this line as CN's Cran Subdivision continues to provide rail access for the mineral and timber products from the Chibougamau area to the western end of old the James Bay and Eastern Railway and then on to the former Québec and Lake St. John Railway. This perhaps could be considered as part of the missing link that Canadian Northern attempted to forge across northern Québec.

Canadian National Railways

CNR (CN) - Franquet to Matagami – CN Matagami Subdivision,
61.1 Miles

The last major branch line constructed in northern Québec by Canadian National was the 61-mile branch line north-westerly from Franquet, Mile 72.1 Chapais Subdivision (Barraute to Chibougamau line) to Lake Matagami. The line was primarily intended to bring out zinc and copper concentrates from the properties owned by Matagami Lake Mines.

Matagami, at the end of the branch was originally laid out as a townsite for a population of 4,000 people.

The new line was laid with 85 lb. rail, creosoted ties and gravel ballast. There are two steel bridges and six timber trestles, on the line with the largest trestle being 900 feet in length. The construction schedule for this line was delayed and the line was opened several months latter than planned.

This line which is still operated by CN as their Matagami Subdivision was officially opened on October 11, 1963, with regular train service commencing on October 27, 1963.

So this wraps up our three month sojourn over the major rail lines of northern Québec (and a little piece of Ontario). I trust it has not been too boring, for hopefully after some more digging we will be able to take a closer look at the details of some of the terminals along these lines.

NOTE: Add to end of ONR

Today, this line under the jurisdiction of Ontario Northland Railway continues to see rail service into Rouyn and the line is called the Kirkland Lake Subdivision.

Jim Gussow

Ottawa, Northern & Western Railway
O,N&WR (CP) - Hull to Maniwaki, QC

Ottawa, Northern & Western Railway
O,N&WR (CP) - Mattawa to Angliers, QC

Sioux Lookout

CN Hamilton Station