

## Just A. Ferronut's Railway Archaeology Art Clowes

*November 1995*

This month, I am like all the radio and TV types – coming to you live (I think) from on location. In translation that means that I am here in the wild Maritime Provinces and will use the modern electronic wonders to zap a short column back to our Editor in Toronto.

This visit is giving me the opportunity to dig out many of the final pieces to a number of stories that I have hinted at over the past year or so. Things like the “C.P.R. Penny Wreck” in eastern New Brunswick, a multitude of railway bridge collapses, and even the wreck of a “circus train.” This wreck for many years keep rumours flying of animals that supposedly escaped. These mythical animals were blamed for strange noises and unrecognized sightings in the woods around the country side. Also, from the old newspapers, it appears that every community and small railway put their own twist on “the” stories about slow or poor rail service. There are variations on people travelling the length of a line on foot as quick or quicker than the train, and of people hopping off trains to pick berries, and then catching the train before it got around the next curve. In many cases, I think they are believable.

As has often been said, railways are great sources of news, for there are always lots of people around to comment on happenings. These events coupled with the various railway building crazes meant that the old newspapers could be counted on for some railway news in every edition.

While life in the late 1800's may have been spartan and rough by our standards, they could still often get a little humour in. There the story in October, 1897 concerning the death of a Joe Moore, an old Intercolonial Railway driver. Joe apparently died in Moncton, but he remains were to be interred at Sussex, New Brunswick. The article states that the train carrying his remains to Sussex was two hours behind schedule, which left him “late for his own funeral.”

Then there was the Intercolonial Railway station agent at Sussex, who in 1894 was first suspended for four months, then fired for not having scrubbed the waiting room floors in the station. The argument was that he had received the money for the work, but had not scrubbed them for about two months.

Of course railways of 1897 were accommodating. The Central Railway simply changed their train schedule one day in the fall of 1897 to accommodate harness racing fans from St. Martins. A horse, locally raised by a St. Martins' horse-owner was racing against a well-known horse in Sussex. The speed of these horses surely would of been greater than the train speed over the old St. Martins & Upham Railway.

Heavy winter snowstorms were often a problem for early railways. One must remember that the locomotives of the 1880's and 90's did not have the power that we associate with those of the 1940's and 50's.

A report about blocked trains on the Canadian Pacific Railway in western New Brunswick during a snowstorm in late February, 1898, really makes one scratch their head in wonderment. The storm had dumped anywhere from 18 to 30 inches of snow. The wind had piled it into gigantic drifts of 10 and 12 feet high.

The following occurred on the rail line that extended from Woodstock to McAdam, New Brunswick and the branch from Debec to Houlton, Maine.

The first train of the day due out of Woodstock for McAdam and St. Stephen was a freight scheduled for 6:00 a.m. However, because of a minor accident the night before, it did not leave until 10:00 a.m. It proceeded as far as the “70 mile post,” about six miles north of Canterbury (17 or so miles from Woodstock), when its snow plough left the rails and tried running on top of the drifts. This occasioned a delay, and the delay occasioned the drifting in of the train. The north bound express from McAdam came as far as Canterbury station, where, in waiting it too became drifted in. An engine was sent down from Woodstock and before he reached the stalled southbound freight, it became a fixture in a huge drift. The downward express, proceeded from Woodstock as far as Benton, (just north of the two stuck southbounds), where it was ordered to meet the northbound express. While waiting, it suffered the fate of the others – snowed in.

Two more engines were sent north from McAdam and another south from Woodstock, but evidently those were sent to keep the other locomotives company, for they promptly found themselves in same predicament of the others.

Latter, the Houlton train got stuck in rounding the “Y” at Debec. It took a double header relief train from Woodstock to eventually clear this one.

By my count this episode involved at least 9 locomotives and seven trains all snowed in within a distance of less than 20 miles.

The final remedy after the snow abated, was using a large crew of men with shovels.

While other rail lines in the area suffered delays and stalled trains this section was the worst hit. Therefore, it is no wonder the article stated that: “The train service as a consequence (of this storm) is sadly demoralized.” They concluded with: “All this would be enough for a good story of fiction. But this story is not fiction. In fact the very strange part of it all is that it is true.”

This line for many years was part of Canadian Pacific's Shogomoc Subdivision, was taken out of service following the spring freshet on the St. John River that on April 1, 1987 washed out the railway bridge across the Saint John River at the upper end of Woodstock. This same freshet washed out the rail bridge across the Saint John between Perth and Andover, New Brunswick.

CP Rail has since legally abandoned this line and this fall, (1995) awarded a contract to a company from Brandon, MB. to remove the rails, ties, etc. By December 8, 1995 they had made better progress southbound than the trains from Woodstock did during the 1898 storm. On that Friday, the dismantling crew were busy lifting the rails just north of the Canterbury Station.

### **HERVEY-JONCTION**

Hervey-Jonction, Québec was barely a way station until the construction of the National Transcontinental Railway

transformed it into a substantial railway junction. Hervey-Jonction was on the east-west rail line extending from Rivière-a-Pierre on the Québec and Lake St. John Railway to Grandes Piles on the St-Maurice River. From Québec City, especially after the Canadian Northern obtained control of the Québec and Lake St. John Railway, the line to Grandes Piles provided a shorter route to a navigable part of the St-Maurice River upstream of some of the rapids. It also provided rail access to lands back from the St. Lawrence River. New farm lands were a need for Québec as the fertile intervals along the St. Lawrence were continually being divided into ever narrower farms by the population expansion of new generations. The west end of this line between St-Tite to Grandes Piles was abandoned when the new line westward through Shawinigan and Garneau was completed.

The construction of the more southerly east-west connection from Garneau through Batiscan, St. Stanislas and Portneuf towards Québec City, further reduced the flow of traffic from Québec City to the St-Maurice River area. However, the expansion of the rail connections into Montréal provided extra traffic first to serve the Jonquière area at the north end of the Québec and Lake St. John Railway.

With the better rail connections into Montreal that the Canadian Northern constructed, the completion of the N.T.R. put Hervey-Jonction on the map. The N.T.R. was built for transcontinental rail traffic and of course by-passed Montréal. At the time of the construction of the N.T.R., Montréal was the country's metropolitan centre with plenty of rail traffic. Resource traffic from northern Québec and even much farther west used Hervey-Jonction as the interchange point to take the former Canadian Northern route through Garneau, Shawinigan and Joliette to Montreal.

Changing rail traffic patterns and the abandonment of various rail lines has again changed Hervey-Jonction back to a less important rail junction.