

Just A. Ferronut's Railway Archaeology

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GTR Relocations

While our Editor had to make at least one correction to the listing of "connections and crossings, past and present" that was carried in the February issue of *Rail & Transit*, this list intrigued Richard Carroll enough to call and discuss a number of items about the list. The crossing of the Canadian Northern just east of Brighton, Ontario was of interest to Richard. For those interest, it was an rail-rail under crossing, the better part of a mile east of the GTR (CN) Brighton station. For the train rider going east, the Canadian Northern was on the north side and lower than the GTR (CNR) and just as you start into the slight curve to the left on leaving Brighton, the CNoR crossed under the GTR (CNR) and CPR, and then swept on a curve to the south-east. The CPR is squeezed close to the GTR (CNR) at the old crossing. The CPR half was filled in about 10 years ago, and the CNR portion about 5 years ago.

The GTR had relocated 1.1 miles of its Oshawa (Kingston) subdivision track at this rail-rail grade separation, northward to permit its construction. This relocation extended from GTR Mile 239.2 to Mile 240.4, and operation was discontinued about 1914.

Richard also mentioned that he has a timetable from the early 1920s that show "Cobright," 2.23 miles west of the Brighton station. Cobright, was the west facing switch at Mile 244.16 Oshawa (Kingston) Subdivision with a 0.14 mile connecting track to the old CNoR mainline (Deseronto Subdivision). Cobright, was actually the name of an ballast pit off the Canadian Northern, so 0.90 miles of the old CNoR main line plus the pit spur was retained after the abandonment of the CNoR (1923 in this area). Records show that operations had ceased by 1923, but it was 1938 before this trackage to the Cobright ballast pit was finally removed.

The former Canadian Northern Deseronto Subdivision from Brighton to Trenton was kept in operation until March 4, 1932. This trackage was accessed by a connecting track that had west facing switch points 0.26 miles east of the Brighton station. While short sections of trackage at both ends were kept as sidings, the main portion was abandoned and removed in 1935.

We then got talking of some of the other GTR relocations, between Brighton and Oshawa. So, in order to better clarify them, I am going to waste a few lines and attempt to explain them. First, one should keep in mind the conditions, equipment, etc., that was available in the 1850s. The GTR had generally followed the old telegraph line along the edge of Lake Ontario. This meant that men, supplies and equipment could be brought in by boat. But this also exposed the GTR to the forces of Lake Ontario, such as soil erosion.

Heading west on the Oshawa Subdivision, from Brighton, the next relocation was the 2.0 miles between Mile 244.5 and 246.2, about 3 miles east of Colborne. While, I always get this one mixed up, this northward relocation was "The Dangers". Operation over this portion was discontinued in June

1892 and the line was subsequently abandoned. Based on the general conditions of the area today, I would expect this was to avoid swampy conditions.

The earliest relocation on this portion of the GTR line, was the northward relocation of approximately 3.2 miles of mainline between Cobourg and Port Hope. This relocation, known as "Duck Harbour", was between mile 265.0 and 268.1 and took place about 1859. This due to the erosion of Lake Ontario shore line.

The next group of relocations, appear to have all been undertaken as part of the final stages of the double tracking program between Montreal and Toronto that was finished in 1903. This group of relocations all included extensive cuts and fills that would have required considerable work, regardless of other factors.

The longest relocation on the Oshawa Subdivision was the approximate 6.5 miles between Port Hope and Newtonville. Again this relocation was a northward relocation, away from Lake Ontario, and operation was discontinued in 1903. This relocation between mile 271.5 and Newtonville, mile 278.69 not only moved the line away from the lake but eliminated numerous curves and considerable grades with associated fills.

Between GTR mile 280.2 and mile 283.8, two relocations northward, or away from the lake were undertaken with train operation starting in 1903. The easterly relocation was 2.5 miles long, extending from mile 280.2 to mile 282.6, while the western one, a 1.0 mile relocation started just a tenth of a mile west of the eastern one at mile 282.7 extending to mile 283.8. Today, the erosion of the lake embankment has cut through these relocations in several spots. The west end of these relocations involved some cut, but this relocation was probably done more over concerns for erosion.

To avoid extensive cuts and fills, a 2.1 mile relocation was made between mile 288.2 and 290.4. This relocation was to the south, and while the original alignment would of have been about a balance of cut and fill, the double tracking would have meant a lot of work on the road bed.

The last relocation east of Oshawa was the 5.4 mile relocation just west of Bowmanville. This relocation like the last was south towards the lake, and had extensive cuts and fills. Its 1903 opening date points towards the double track program.

A trip by either rail or motor vehicle from Oshawa to Port Hope will reveal numerous traces of these relocations. East of Port Hope, traces of the old road GTR beds are harder to spot and care has to be taken to keep them separate from the abandoned Canadian Northern Railway.

A Member's Question

Ian MacKenzie has sent along a couple of questions, one being about rail carrying bridges over the upper St. John River in New Brunswick. Ian was wondering whether there were any other rail carrying bridges joining into the State of Maine

besides the one at St. Leonard. The answer is of course no! The international bridge at St. Leonard was constructed by The Van Buren Bridge Company, and it was opened for traffic on May 1, 1915.

St. Leonard was no doubt chosen for the bridge, since it was the western terminus of the International Railway of New Brunswick. That decision was probably influenced by the more open terrain near St. Leonard. A more northerly route to Edmundston would have met working their way through hillier country, spurs of the Appalachian mountains.

St. Leonard, a community of about 2,000 people, is situated on the east bank of the St. John River about 25 miles downstream of Edmundston. It was named after a prominent settler, Leonard B. Combes. St. Leonard is situated across the river from Van Buren, Maine. The American community is about twice the size and is currently (1997) served by the Iron Road Railroad owned Bangor & Aroostook Railroad. The Bangor & Aroostook Railroad had extended its lines into the sparsely populated northern Maine in the late 1800s.

On the Canadian side, the "narrow gauge" New Brunswick Railway had been working its way northward from Gibson (Devon), opposite Fredericton, NB, that started with the turning of the first sod at St. Mary's on May 7, 1872. This sod turning was quite unique, in the fact that the spade with its walnut handle, had two silver plates bearing the record that it had been used to turn the first sod of the European and North American Railway and the Fredericton Branch Railways. Industrial, Alexander Gibson, was the principal promoter, of this line. This rail line passed through St. Leonard in the fall of 1878, on its 165 mile march to Edmundston. This line was leased by the Canadian Pacific Railway for 990 years, effective July 1, 1890.

Meanwhile, across the Province, at Campbellton promoters had obtained a Provincial charter incorporating the Restigouche and Victoria Colonization Railway. Its 1885 charter permitted the construction of a railway from Campbellton across northern New Brunswick to a point on the St. John River between Grand Falls and Edmundston. Like many early railways, it took about 15 years and a couple of name changes to get work really started on this rail line. In 1897 after numerous time extensions, etc., the name was changed to the Restigouche and Western Railway Company. Another name change occurred in 1903 when the Provincial authorized the name to be changed to the International Railway Company of new Brunswick with power to take over the Restigouche & Western.

A news report dated November 3, 1909, stated that if the weather held, the 114 mile line from Campbellton to St. Leonard, would be completed by November 30. Track had been laid, and the ballasting completed, for 80 miles. Grading had been completed on the remaining 34 miles, according to Thomas Malcolm, general contractor. There were one thousand men employed grading at St. Leonard's end, according to the same report. The weather didn't hold and the opening was delayed. First passenger service was with the contractor's trains in 1910.

The International Railway of New Brunswick (I.N.R.) at its opening was looked upon as being somewhat unique. With its connections with the Canadian Pacific at St. Leonard and the Intercolonial at Campbellton, it was able to ship lumber and timber products from the heavy forests along it, to Saint John via the C.P.R. or via the I.R.C. to Moncton and Halifax. In addition, this was the period when northern New Brunswick was being

promoted as an unspoiled territory to wealthy American for its famous hunting and fishing. The I.N.R. provided a good route to these areas including the famous salmon pools on the Matapedia River, north of Campbellton.

In the early 1900's, hunting and fishing were the hobbies of the world's wealthy. A few miles south of the I.N.R., in the Tobique River watershed, Lord Strathcona, (formerly Donald Smith of C.P.R. fame) built an luxurious lodge. This rustic lodge had eight bedrooms, flanking a huge living room with a large stone fireplace. The cedar shingle-clad lodge had 151 feet of porch, indoor plumbing, hot and cold running water. This virtual mansion, called Strathcona Lodge, was built in 1912 mainly so the Duke of Connaught who could hunt and fish whenever he and the Duchess visited the area. However, it appears that neither Lord Strathcona nor the Duke and Duchess of Connaught ever visited the lodge. Such were the whims of the rich and famous of the period.

The first connection of the I.N.R. in St. Leonard, was with the C.P.R.'s at Mile 31.3 Edmundston Subdivision. Early N.B.R./C.P.R. Timetables referred to St. Leonard as St. Leonard's but "s" was finally corrected in timetable 68, dated September 27, 1931.

Discussions had led to the first charter for an international railway bridge across the St. John River back in 1900. The first Canadian Legislation under the name of the Van Buren Bridge Company was federally enacted in 1913.

During this same period of time, the National Transcontinental Railway was being constructed along the east bank of the St. John River. Like on the I.N.R., the N.T.R. contractor started local rail service, between Napadogan and Edmundston, probably in 1911. This 112.0 mile section was taken over by the Canadian Government Railways and started rail service on May 1, 1913.

As previously mentioned, this international bridge, controlled by the Bangor & Aroostook Railroad, was opened on May 1, 1915. This bridge was built in a period of 72 months. Work started in the middle of September, 1914. Excavation and the pouring of concrete were vigorously prosecuted throughout the winter, although the temperature usually hovered around zero and at times lower (Fahrenheit). This was made possible by enclosing the piers in housings, heated by steam pipes. Steel erection started from the Canadian shore in January, 1915 and followed closely on the heels of the substructure, the last pier on the U.S. side, having been finished early in April. The bridge, some 800 feet, consists of 5 single track steel riveted lattice through truss spans. It was designed for E-50 Cooper loading (2 consolidated locomotives, with 50,000 lbs. on each driving axle, followed by a trainload of 5,000 lbs. per lineal foot). The Van Buren Bridge Company owned 1.19 miles of the 1.36 miles of track from the United States bank of the St. John River to the connection and crossing of the N.T.R. This was part of the connecting track that extended from the original I.N.R. (CN Mile 105.0 St. Quentin Subdivision) south-west across the N.B.R. (C.P.R. Edmundston Subdivision) and the N.T.R. (CN Grand Falls/Napadogan Subdivision) to the Van Buren Bridge. The two grade railway crossings were protected by electric power interlocking signals controlled from a signal tower at the N.T.R. (I.N.R. Junction).

The I.N.R., N.T.R. and the Canadian portion of the Van Buren Bridge Company, were all acquired by the Canadian Government Railway on behalf of the Dominion Government.

The I.N.R. was leased in 1914 by the I.R.C. on behalf of the Dominion Government, pending its purchase by the Dominion Government in 1915-1916, for the C.G.R. The operation of the N.T.R. was delegated to the C.G.R. effective May 1, 1913. The Canadian portion of the Van Buren Bridge Company was acquired by the C.G.R. in 1918. 1918 was also the year that the 1.6 miles of the former main track of the I.N.R. from CN Mile 105.0 to the C.P.R. station was dismantled.

During the 1920s, St. Leonard remained a busy railway junction. However, these years also saw numerous discussions about too much competition, lack of business, time for mergers, joint planning committees, etc., (sound familiar). The stock market crash of 1929 shook the railways to some action – resulting in the CN-CP Act of 1933. This act permitted the combining of parallel lines where one line could be abandoned with joint operations on the remaining line. One outfall of this act was the abandonment of the CP's Edmundston Subdivision from Cyr Junction (Mileage 28.6) south of St. Leonard, to the southern outskirts of Edmundston. Following this abandonment, the CPR operated over Canadian National's N.T.R. line. This operation continued until the September 27, 1996 purchase of it by the Van Buren Bridge and Construction Company (an Iron Road Company).

The west end of the I.N.R. (CN's St. Quentin Subdivision) still remains to serve an Irving lumber operation on the east side of the Trans-Canada Highway on the outskirts of St. Leonard. The remainder of the St. Quentin Subdivision was removed mainly in 1991 following its abandonment, effective June 6, 1989.

While not a direct part of this story, the east end of the I.N.R. was shortened by approximately 5 miles, when in 1920 a new 2.66 mile connection between near Christopher and Tide Head (formerly Moffat) on the I.R.C. main line was constructed. This permitted the abandonment of 7.4 miles of trackage from near Christopher and downtown Campbellton.

So today, long freight trains still barrel over the N.T.R., while the Iron Road still trundles over a part of the N.T.R. and the old New Brunswick Railway, mainly to serve McCains Frozen Foods plant some 12 miles south at Grand Falls. This concludes a quick look at the railways that have come, gone and still exists in St. Leonard, New Brunswick.

Station Houses in the News

While some reports have been made that the CN St. Clair Avenue station had been demolished, it still stands. Rumours are that CN has applied to the Ottawa for permission to demolish the remaining portion structure. Their decision should be interesting, since the Railway's application apparently centres around what triggered the original heritage designation. Other rumours indicate that preliminary estimates place both the cost of demolishing the building is about the same as that to enclose the structure, so a secondary argument.

On the brighter side, indications are that there will be a new Union Station in the Toronto area. Reports are that a funding grant has been made to the York – Durham Heritage Railway for a new station at Stouffville. It is reported that this station will also be used by GO Transit at Stouffville, hence the union station.

A firm proposal has been received for the purchase of the former CN Hamilton Station. This 1931 station features a Corinthian front (south facade) supported on massive fluted stone columns, behind which are massive doors, framed in

bronze, opening into the lobby. CN passenger service continued to the days of VIA Rail. VIA Rail used the station until 1992, the same year that it was designated a heritage station. GO Transit continued to use the station until February 26, 1993. As a side note the Hamilton Chapter of UCRS held its last meeting in this building in February 1987.

Back in 1994 the building was touted as a possible site for a City Museum. After this fell through, a proposal late in 1994 and early in 1995 was made for the sale of this station as a part of a development for mall featuring numerous Asian retail shops. Restoration and preservation of heritage features costs scared this proposal away.

The City is presently supporting a group of area business men interested in purchasing the station. While there have been no details released on the proposed use for this station, but both the City's mayor and the Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee, have stated that the heritage feature of the station will be preserved. CN has filed its application for federal permission to sell this heritage station.

In 1996, this station received about \$1 million in touchups to serve as the backdrop for the movie entitled *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, with Geena Davis.

The City is expecting to close the present deal before the end of 1997.