

Just A. Ferronut's Railway Archaeology

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Honest folks, it was just a plain old mix-up! The short portion on the Moncton Shops that showed up last spring, had been intended to be the first of another column, but some gremlins got at our files. But before we get back to the Moncton and its shops, one more mystery solved.

Last fall, George Pearce, of Fergus, Ontario had raised the question about the young age that a pair of C.P.R. 10-Wheelers were scrapped. One of these locomotives was the MLW-built, C.P.R. No. 694 that was turned over to them early in 1906. About 4 years later it was scrapped! Why? Between the information that George had, along with some research on this end and some help from Ron Ritchie, we have come to the conclusion that this engine is probably still sitting at the bottom of Lake Superior. A local newspaper tells that during the early morning of Friday, June 10, 1910, engine 694 with an east bound freight struck a boulder at Port Coldwell, Ontario. This wreck, about 45 miles east of Schreiber, killed three head-end crewmen, as the engine rolled over a cliff and into the deep water of Lake Superior. The C.P.R. records indicate that this engine was valued at \$19,500, but noting that these records show no salvage – hence the belief that this engine may still be in the lake!

Railway Shops & Buildings around Moncton

Railway shops, a well used railway facility, but one that we don't often write much about! So, this may be a good time to have a quick look at some of the railway shops and associated buildings that have adorned the landscape of Moncton, NB. This will be a fairly brief view and sticking to the major facilities.

Early Moncton Buildings

Moncton (The Bend) with the opening of the European & North American rail line to Point du Chene on August 20, 1857 saw the start of train service. The E. & N.A.'s Moncton station was a small frame structure. This line was destined to connect Point du Chene via Moncton with Saint John. While construction from Saint John saw various western portions of the line opened in segments, it reached Sussex on November 10, 1859. The completion of the segment between Sussex and Moncton saw the opening of the full 100 miles on August 1, 1860.

Saint John and Point du Chene, being the termini of this line quickly became the homes of their larger shops. Besides the railway's Point du Chene shops, the expansion of the Phoenix Foundry and Machine Shop (George Fleming) into railway supplies and eventually the construction of locomotives helped anchor early railway activities in Saint John.

One of the terms of Confederation was the construction of an Inter-Colonial Railway. Surveyors favoured keeping this new line somewhat inland to avoid the various tidal waterway inlets, but along the east coast of southern New Brunswick. Moncton was chosen as a point to start the new line northward, since not only was it on the European & North American Railway, but it also it could be reached by ships on the Petitcodiac River, as well as at Point du Chene and Saint John. In addition, some local promoters to serve their own interests had started a rail line eastward from Painsec Junction (about 7 miles east of Moncton) on the E. & N.A. Point du Chene line, towards Nova Scotia.

In 1872 while work was progressing on the construction of the Inter-Colonial Railway of Canada, the Duncan farm containing some 95 acres was purchased in what is now downtown Moncton (area around the present VIA Rail

station and CN's Terminal building) for a terminal site. Work was started in 1872 on some shop buildings as well as a new frame two-storey station to replace the small former E. & N.A. station. A fire at the Point du Chene shops in late 1872 pushed their construction. In 1876, as the Intercolonial was opening its line to connect with the Grand Trunk Railway of Canada East at Riviere du Loup, the new railway shops in Moncton employed almost 500 men. The largest building was the machine shop. This was brick structure 400 feet long and 98 feet wide. At stated at the time: "Here the locomotives are repaired, the car wheels put on their axles, the axles turned, and a variety of other operations performed." This machine shop contained no less than 16 lathes for turning iron, including wheel lathes, one of which weighs 20 tons. Besides these there are two axle lathes, with a capacity for turning ten axles a day each. There are two vertical drills and one radian drill, two bolt cutters, a nut tapper, which will tap 400 nuts per hour; three shapers; a slotter; a milling machine; a wheel borer, capable of boring from 40 to 60 per day; two wheel presses, capable of removing 75 pairs of wheels per day, or of putting on 50 pairs; and a bolt-header, with a capacity of 2,000 per day. There are also two steam hammers; two punch and shearing machines; two sets of boiler makers' rolls; three planing machines, and a brass lathe. All this machinery is run by means of a fine 60 horse power steam engine, and most of it is kept constantly at work.

The establishment of the railway shops and headquarters in Moncton, also put pressure on the former Nova Scotia Railway shops and offices in Halifax, NS. The main shops for the Nova Scotia Railway had been at their Richmond Shops in Halifax. As with most early railways, politics played an important role in the move to Moncton that was completed in 1876. However, while most work was moved to Moncton, it is noted that 3 of 10 Dubs locomotives imported from Scotland in 1882 were assembled at Richmond Shops. Various indications are that some car repairs were continued in Halifax up until about World War I.

In 1876, the blacksmith shop was part of the machine shop. In 1887, the Intercolonial spent about \$6,000 for a new brick 52 x 150 feet blacksmith shop that was built at the rear of the machine shop by Mr. G. O. Dunham of Moncton. This red brick building is still in existence, used by CN Signals and presently is under study to have it declared a heritage structure that can be used to present the railway history of the region.

Besides the machine shop, the shops of 1876 also contained a brick car shop 276 x 76 feet as well as a frame structure, 300 feet long and 45 feet wide, also used as part of the car shops.

Near the car shop was the paint shop, a wooden structure, 170 x 40 feet, and the store house which is 100 x 40 feet and built of brick.

Included with the downtown shop area was their engine house. This round house had 17 stalls when built in 1876, but even at that point the area was crowded, as there were sometimes 25 locomotives in Moncton over the weekends that meant some had to left outdoors.

A dining saloon (room), some 40 x 29 feet with fifteen tables, each capable of seating 10 persons, was added to the station in 1876.

A news report in the fall of 1879 stated that the roundhouse was extended to 25 stalls. This was then the largest round house on the Intercolonial. This year, also saw the

construction of a new coal shed for the railway in Moncton.

A newspaper in August 1878 stated that special pipe lines were being laid from the gas house to the General Offices, Machine Shops, etc., in order that these buildings could be illuminated by Pintsch gas light as soon as possible. This form of lighting apparently was short-lived, since it was reported in late 1880 that the station and other buildings should be converted to electric lighting, since the Pintsch gas was costing about \$1,000 per month!

The Intercolonial constructed a new General Office building in Moncton during 1873-74. When this building was constructed it was 50 feet square, however in 1877, a 20 feet addition was placed on the north or Main Street side of the structure. This office building was a three storey structure sitting on a cut stone basement. The first two stories were brick with cut stone trim, while the third floor was built within the frame mansard roof. This building was destroyed by fire on February 10, 1883.

The original Intercolonial main line connected with the European & North American main line just west of the Moncton station. This Intercolonial line crossed Moncton's Main Street and extended northward towards Campbellton through the area where the C.N.R.'s John Street shops would be later constructed. The fall of 1882 saw the construction of a connecting track between the Intercolonial and the E. & N.A. that provided both a west leg to a wye, as well as permitting trains from Saint John to make a smooth pass through Moncton northward towards Campbellton.

As mentioned above the Intercolonial imported 10 Dub locomotives in 1882. By June, 1882 seven had been assembled in Moncton including a second No. 29. The railway had sold their first No. 29 to the Spring Hill and Parrsboro Railway the year before. The following year, 1883, the railway shops constructed two flangers, one wing and two snow ploughs.

The 1883 loss of the Intercolonial's General Office meant that they needed to build a new ones. This new structure that would last until the early 1960's was constructed on the south side of Main Street adjacent to the downtown rail yards. The original structure was a basic rectangle, almost 200 feet long and 57 feet wide that would have a west wing added later to form an "L" shape. The first construction commenced in 1884 as Messrs. Rhodes & Curry of Amherst, NS was awarded the contract for the superstructure. This ornate brick structure with freestone trim had a full basement, was two full storeys with a mansard type roof containing numerous dormers that provided a third floor. This building had 14 sizable vaults for the storage of plans, records, etc.

The year 1887 not only saw the construction the previously mentioned blacksmith shop, but also a paint shop that also cost about \$6,000.

A new round house was constructed in the western portion of the downtown yard near the older one in 1889, although few details have been uncovered to date, it appears to have been a second structure to add to the capacity of the one built in 1876.

The Intercolonial continued to use its downtown shops and yards over the next ten years without any major expansion. In the early 1890s, it was reported that the railway had about 77 acres property, as well as over 24 miles of tracks within the Moncton terminal area. During this period, while the number of railway employees had fluctuated, however in 1892 there was about 950 persons employed between the shops and the trainmen whose headquarters were in Moncton. In addition there was about 125 clerks employed in the various departments. The average amount paid out in 1892 for wages was about \$34,000 per month.

In 1897, a new buff brick station was constructed. To some, this two storey structure with its extensive canopies and covered areas along the train platforms was considered too squat in appearance. Others had concerns about what effects the

black smoke from trains and the nearby blacksmith shop would have on its light colour. To us older types, this is the station that we remember as serving the C.N.R. through to the early 1960's. This was the period when the C.N.R. demolished most of their downtown facilities following the opening in 1960 of C.N.R.'s Gordon (hump) yard. The land was turned over for commercial development.

While most of the downtown railway facilities were located on marsh land that had received considerable fill prior to their construction, the stone foundation of an earlier railway structure was unearthed as the new 1897 station was being built. This was no doubt the foundation of the original general office building that burned in 1883!

Like earlier, the number of railway employees around the Moncton shops fluctuated, but in general as the new century dawned, the number of employees gradually increased.

Saturday, February 24, 1906, was a very black day for both the Intercolonial and Moncton. When the Intercolonial's whistle sounded the alarm for a fire about 9:00 p.m., that Saturday evening, no one realized what fire damage would be inflicted on the railway. By the time the "all-out" was sounded, about 10:30 a.m., Sunday morning, one person would be dead, several shops, as well as a number of rail cars, etc., destroyed.

A Mr. Abram Jones, one of five paint shop workers who entered the burning shop to retrieve personal belongings was caught in the burning building and lost his life. It was speculated that Mr. Jones was attempting to save a bit of tobacco that he had in the shop, since he was known to keep some there for sale to his fellow employees.

It was believed that the fire had started in the upholstery section of the paint shop. From here, the fire ran west through the paint shop building, a 500 by 75 feet structure, and then extended southward to the freight car repair shop, about the same size as the paint shop. From the car shop, the fire spread to the brick car shop, a 400 by 75 feet structure. The eastern end of this brick building was saved. The fire spread on, devouring the new boiler room and old electric light station and then attacked the boiler shop in the machine shop proper. The boiler shop and the master mechanic's office, situated on the extreme eastern end of the machine shop were destroyed. While attempting to advance, a brick wall between the machine shop and the boiler shop saved the western machine shop portion of this large building from the fire.

The fire left the following buildings destroyed, or heavily damaged: the paint shop, brick car shop (partly), freight car repair shop, boiler shop and boiler room.

The firefighters were able to save the following buildings: machine shop, erecting shop, tender shop, round houses (old and new) blacksmith shop (on Albert Street), stores building, oil warehouses, tube, tin and plumbing shops.

At the height of the fire, fourteen locomotives, including new ones recently received by the railway, were lined up in trains with steam up in readiness to be run out of the round houses, in case the fire spread towards them.

Both the car and paint shops were filled with cars undergoing repairs, and very few were saved. Outside the shops, an additional ten or twelve cars including both coal and box, loaded, were destroyed. One of the cars undergoing repairs was the Governor General's private car, the *Alexandra*. This car was saved by a great effort, as a car of coal stood in front of it. A crowd of men hauled the coal car out of the way and then manually pulled the official car from the burning building.

Mr. David Pottinger, the Intercolonial's General Manager, wasn't as lucky! His private car, No. 75, worth about \$20,000 was burned leaving only its frame standing, along with those of several other cars. Among the cars reported destroyed were the dining car *Yamaska*, worth about \$17,000; the sleeping car *Cascapedia*, worth about \$18,000; first-class cars Nos. 100, 102 and 133; each worth about \$11,000; second class cars 488 and 531; two baggage cars, Nos. 478 and 479; colonist car No.

526 and postal car No. 634.

The fire had destroyed most of the shop's power, but the City council promptly placed a 150 h.p. engine at the disposal of the railway, and it was quickly installed in the machine shops, and put in running order in a very few days. Work to erect a new temporary paint shop, commenced on the Wednesday following the fire. The pattern-makers were temporarily accommodated at the nearby private Record Foundry, and a large number of employees went to work in the remaining portion of the brick car shop.

The Honourable H. R. Emmerson, a local parliamentarian and Minister of Railways quickly got permission to start construction on new shops for the Intercolonial. Although several sites were considered, the final selection would be adjacent to the Intercolonial main line about a mile north of the Moncton station. These would become known as the John Street Shops and last until the spring of 1990.

By 1907, the sod turned by Mr. Emmerson had been completed and construction was well under way on these new shops. The spring of 1908, saw the new freight car repair shop completed, and the passenger car repair shops, the planing mill in advanced stages of completion. Other shops were in various stages of advancement. The Power House had rather large foundation, a stable affair, of solid concrete 40 feet long, 12 feet wide and 10 feet deep.

Around various parts of the site, portions of the big electric cranes for the locomotive erecting shops were stored - these machines were capable of picking up a locomotive as if it were a toy, and hoist it through the air from one part of the shop to another. These great cranes would travel on steel rails anchored to the structural steel high up in the erecting shops.

The Moncton Shops, like many railway works, saw foreign workers being brought in, mainly from Austria and Italy. They lived nearby the new works in shacks. While the usual complaints were made about these foreign workers taking jobs, and being of no benefit to the city, local business men seen it differently. On one Saturday, a local grocery firm was paid over \$200 for groceries sold to the Austrians in less than a fortnight. A butcher firm was paid \$50 for a fortnight's meat. In addition they were engaged at types of work which very few Canadians would undertake.

The workers and work transferred from the old Intercolonial shops downtown to the new Canadian Government Shops at John Street as they were completed in late 1908 and early 1909.

This period also saw the construction of the third transcontinental railway, the National Transcontinental Railway into Moncton. The new N.T.R. yard in Moncton was known as the Franklin yard and was constructed a couple of blocks west of the John Street Shops between Pacific Avenue and what would become St. George Boulevard, and the line would connect with the old Intercolonial between the Moncton station and the John Street shops. This N.T.R. yard would have a standard 12-stall round house built as well as the other amenities of a terminal yard.

In June 1918, the N.T.R. roundhouse in Moncton became somewhat unique when a group of 40 German prisoners from an Internment Camp at Amherst, NS were housed there. These German soldiers and sailors worked downtown removing the ruins of the old Intercolonial shops and laying some track after that work was completed.

The final disposition of the N.T.R. roundhouse is still somewhat a question. All indications are that it was torn down about 1921. If so, this then raises another question, did the framing timber go the Chaudiere, (Joffre), Quebec for the Intercolonial roundhouse there to help fill in the last 15 bays of that one to make it a full circle? The mystery stems from one news clipping in a 1921 magazine that stated such was happening!

Moncton saw another substantial railway fire on

Sunday, April 14, 1918 when the former 1872 railway station burned. At the time of the fire and for many years this former station had been used as the yard office and despatching centre for Moncton. The railway responded to this loss by placing an empty passenger coach near by for the office staff. The operators moved over to the passenger trains despatching office in the depot and went on with their work as usual. Since the 1872 station had been located as an island amongst some of the yard tracks, its replacement, a two storey frame structure was located clear of the tracks.

Since the T. Eaton Company had chosen Moncton for its distribution warehouse in 1919, the railway soon called tenders for a new brick and steel freight shed. This 400 feet long building, located on Foundry Street, still exists and is presently used by private companies.

A new 40 stall roundhouse was constructed in the west end on the downtown Moncton yard in 1921. This was apparently to replace both of the older ones. This new roundhouse had one section of seven stalls that were 120 long while the remaining 33 stalls for 100 feet. The railway considered that Moncton had about 80 engines assigned to it, and that between 35 & 40 would be in town at any one time. This roundhouse was converted to service diesels in the 1950s, and suffered the same fate as most of the downtown railway structures in the early 1960s.

Since the N.T.R. was constructed by the Government, it was quickly combined with the Intercolonial for operations. In the Moncton area one substantial effect was the abandonment in 1916 of about 10 miles of the Intercolonial starting less than a mile north of the John Street shops. The abandonment started about where the tracks were close enough for the place to have the nickname "Shake Hands". This Intercolonial abandonment continued north about 10 miles to Catamount, about a mile north of Pacific Junction and where the connecting track from the N.T.R. curves back onto the Intercolonial alignment.

Shortly after the formation of the C.N.R., work was started on another key track change in the Moncton area. The result was the construction of the so-called "West End" diversion or cut-off which was completed in December 1922. This 2.4 mile long line extended from Odium on the N.T.R.'s main line north of Moncton. The south end of this diversion was at Marsh Junction on the old European & North American rail line (Sussex Subdivision) 2 miles west of Moncton station.

While the Moncton shops continued to turn out rolling stock, modified cars and locomotives during these years, and on up to World War II, there were no major changes made. World War II resulted in the Moncton Shops, like all industrial complexes quickly swinging over to producing goods that would help with the war effort. 1943, saw the installation of C.T.C. through Moncton. The Moncton portion of this signalling improvement extended from Catamount, about 12 miles north of Moncton eastward to near Truro, NS. This avoided the need to double track this territory.

With the 1950s came dieselization, and the gradual decline of steam locomotives spelt the end to the railway shops building locomotives. Diesels were designed to be built in a totally different environment and were more suited to mass production. The shops were able to hang on, albeit at a reduced level of work servicing diesels, and later doing some rebuilding. In general, the shops were relegated to mainly car work, and as the trend towards more standard freight cars even the need for this was reduced. The shedding of various passenger services, meant the same fate for passenger equipment, and even this totally ended on April 1, 1978 with the establishment of VIA as a separate corporation.

Meanwhile, in Moncton, construction had started in 1956 on a new electronic hump yard in the area between the old E. & N.A. main line to Saint John and just west of the diversion constructed in 1922. This site was 2.2 miles long, paralleling the Sussex Subdivision (E. & N.A.) and about ½ mile wide.

When opened in 1960, this yard that would be named Gordon Yard after C.N.R.'s president, Donald Gordon. This new yard contained a diesel shop with servicing facilities, along with a main classification yard of 40 tracks. In addition to that classification yard, it had 21 receiving and departure tracks and connected to both the Sussex and the Gort Subdivision (the diversion line).

Construction was completion on this yard in 1960 and that then freed up the downtown flat yard and facilities for commercial development. So it was in the early part of the 1960's that saw the removal of most of the downtown rail facilities and the construction of CN's new Terminal Building, and passenger station along with considerable other commercial development. The former CN Telegraph building still exists hidden in a corner practically surrounded by commercial development.

Following the abandonment of the downtown yards in Moncton, the west end area about where the round house stood became a auto handling facility for new cars waiting delivery by highway to dealerships. This year, 1999 even saw a piece of this land become the home to a drive through doughnut shop.

Also, over the past decade as the C.N.R. abandoned various lines, went more towards inter-modal, and centralized more services, the facilities at Gordon Yard have been cut back and one substantial portion converted for inter-modal traffic.

The 1980s also saw the C.N.R. John Street shops first go through more reductions, then it was offered for sale. The shops were finally closed on September 29, 1988. After some political orchestration, it was decided to demolish them and use the land for commercial development. So, in late 1989 the demolition commenced. A. & A. Demolition, who had the contract for the demolition of the shops, found that the government standards used in their construction, didn't help with their work. On the main erecting shop, the contractor planned to cut many of the columns and then simply pull the structural frame and roof down. They found it quite a struggle as the cables for pulling things down snapped like string and the building stood there in the spring sunlight grinning at their efforts. The demolition was finished about March 15, 1990. Since then work has been undertaken to clean up the shop lands and it appears that now in 1999, some of the land may now be ready for reuse.

Today, Moncton, as a railway town is just shadow of its former self, but thanks partially to its central location that had made it originally a railway centre, it has been able to maintained much of its importance as hub of the Maritime Provinces.

Moncton, like most larger railway terminals had numerous other railway structures not mentioned above, but that were still needed and used as parts of the railway's operations.