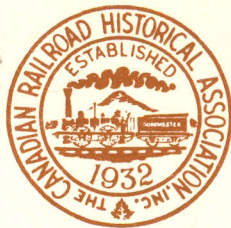


OAPS  
Canadian  
Rail

CVR



Number 156 / June 1964

## **O**TTAWA, **A**RNPRIOR & **P**ARRY **S**OUND

by Omer Lavallee

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THE PRINCIPAL MOTIVATING FACTOR behind the construction of the Canada Atlantic Railway between Ottawa and the international boundary near East Alburgh, Vermont, in the 1880s, was the conveyance of lumber and allied products from the valley of the Ottawa above our nation's capital, to a direct connection with the railways of the eastern United States. The Canada Atlantic was the project of Ottawa's lumber baron, John Rudolphus Booth, and its financing was principally through bonds owned by Booth and his family, rather than by the more normal channels of equity capital. Within a short time of its opening between Ottawa and Coteau, Que., in 1883, it had established an operating liaison with the Grand Trunk, and through passenger trains operating between Montreal and Coteau over the GT, and from Coteau to Ottawa on the CAR, offered a prestige service in an era when the efforts of most railways, in Canada at least, were turned toward development rather than refinement. In the late 1880s, this service was at least able to boast that it offered Canada's first electrically-illuminated trains. Later, as the Nineteenth Century drew to a close, three high-speed Baldwin-built Vauclain compound 4-4-2 type engines gave neighbouring and parallel Canadian Pacific services serious competition and spirited rivalry; one of these locomotives boasted the largest driving wheels ever provided a Canadian railway locomotive -- 84 $\frac{1}{4}$ " in diameter!

Once his basic services were established and operating, Booth turned his attention westward to his extensive landholdings in the wilderness lying between Ottawa and Georgian Bay, which lay partly in what is now Algonquin Park, and in 1888 incorporated two railway companies: the Ottawa, Arnprior & Renfrew Railway Company, and the Ottawa & Parry Sound Railway Company. These charters carried powers to build, respectively, from Ottawa to Renfrew, and from Renfrew to what is now Scotia, on the Toronto-North Bay railway. After acquiring rights-of-way and other concomitant property necessary to construction, the true purpose of the two companies was shown, in 1891, when they were amalgamated as the Ottawa, Arnprior & Parry Sound Railway Company.

Surveying of the route was carried on under the personal direction of the Chief Engineer of the Canada Atlantic, Mr. George A. Mountain, and a route chosen following the valley of the Madawaska into the interior. Construction was begun in 1892, and in May, 1893, the first 36-mile section was opened to traffic between the capital and Arnprior. The Ottawa "Journal" carried a long and detailed account of this event:

- " The first passenger coach over the Ottawa, Arnprior & Parry Sound Railway was run between the capital and Arnprior yesterday. It was "a special" for operating purposes, and on board were Mr. John R. Booth, Mr. Geo. A. Mountain, chief engineer, and other officials of the new line.....
- " Considering that the road is not yet ballasted, the "run" was made in splendid style, an average of twenty-five miles an hour being made..... The "special" left the Elgin street station at 8:30 on its flight to the west. After crossing the trestle work at Preston street, a magnificent view is presented

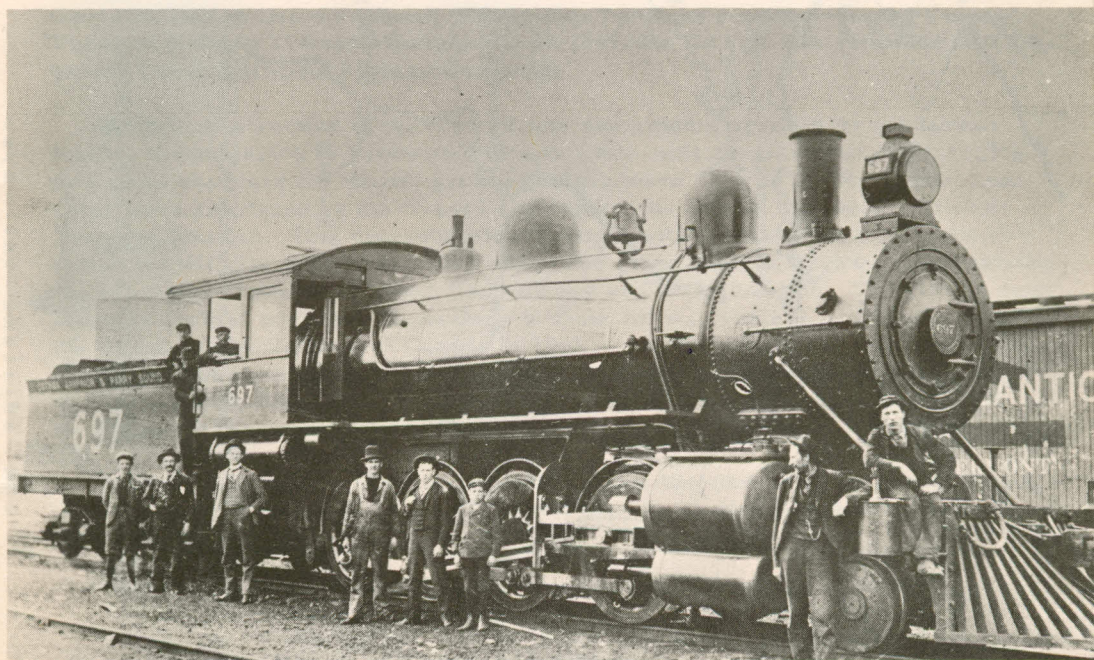
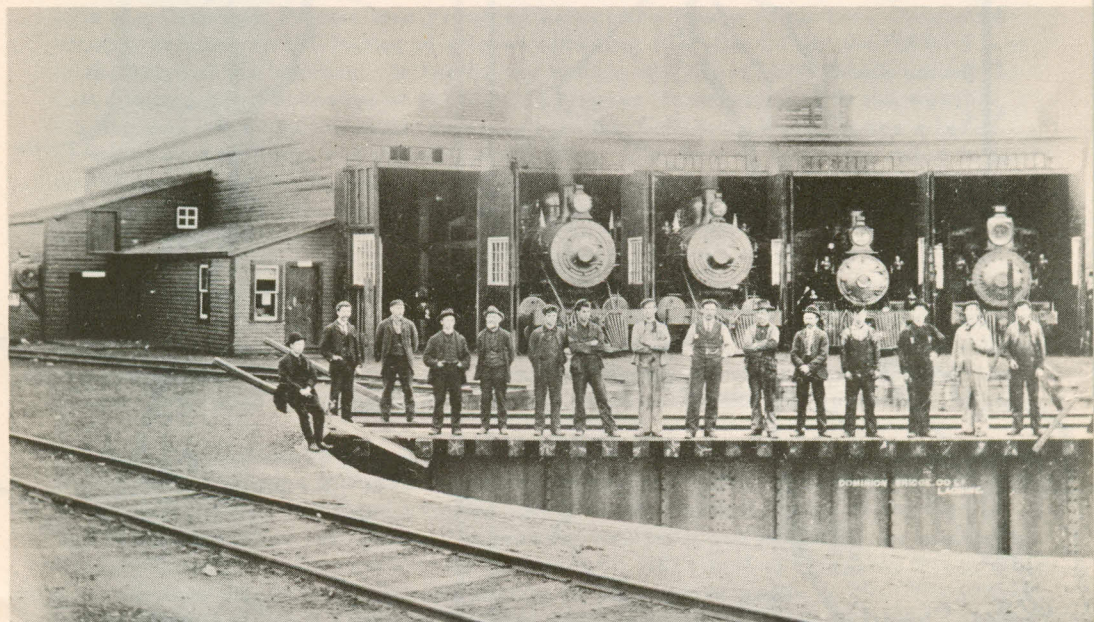
to the sightseer.....

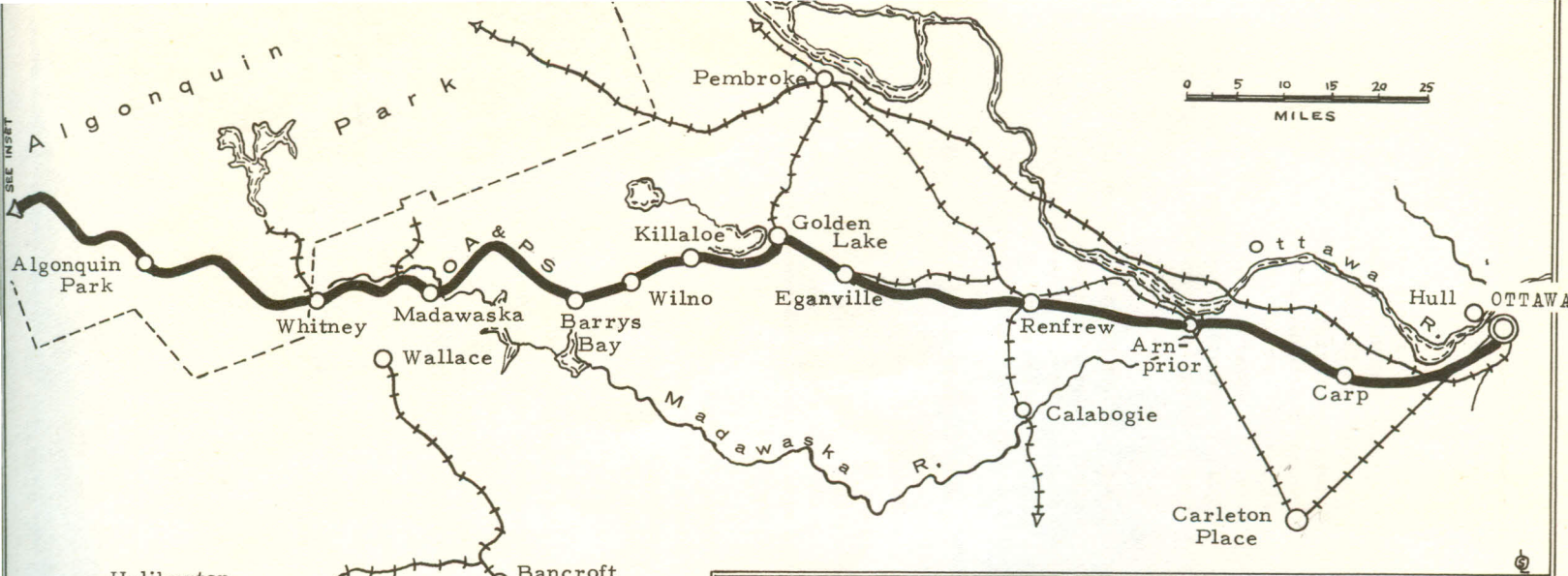
- " The first point of importance reached on the way is the Carp village, 19 miles west of Ottawa, and by the number of freight cars standing on the siding, a stranger would be apt to think the road had been in running order for ever so long. Here everything is bustle.....
- " Kinburn eight miles further west is next reached, and it may be stated that these eight miles are the straightest piece of railroad line in America. (As a statement of fact, this assertion is open to question!-- OSAL) Kinburn is a pretty little village surrounded by a very rich agricultural country, and the evidence of its producing qualities can be seen in the grain shed erected close to the siding, into which farmers are constantly pouring their grain for shipment. At this point the bustle witnessed at the Carp is repeated only in greater volume. As the train sped through there yesterday, 19 teams were busy unloading their cereal binders.....
- " Galetta is the next point of importance reached. Here the Mississippi is spanned by a magnificent steel bridge of the most modern pattern and of great strength. The iron superstructure rests upon two massive stone abutments and an equally massive pier in midstream. The cutwater of the pier, as well as all the masonry is built to resist not only the river currents and freshets, but it looks strong enough to successfully resist even the hand of time itself.
- " Arnprior, an ambitious town of 3,000 inhabitants, was reached a few minutes after ten o'clock. This bustling little hive is overjoyed at the building of the Parry Sound railway, for they expect and not without good and sufficient reasons, that the new road will give a boom to everything..... The chief industry of the town is the great sawmills of the McLaughlin Brothers, who employ about 700 men and have an annual output of 85,000,000 feet of lumber..... Next week, work on the new railway bridge spanning the Madawaska will be commenced. It will be an iron superstructure resting on stonework.
- " As soon as the weather permits, ballasting trains will be put on the road, and the ballasting completed at the very earliest moment. The rails on the road are of Sheffield manufacture, weighing 72 pounds to the yard. They are the best rail in the market. When all the ties are laid, there will be 3,000 to the mile, some 350 more to the mile than any railway in the Dominion. The idea of placing additional ties is to solidify the road bed..... As the road is to-day, coaches glide smoothly, but when the additional ties are placed and the ballasting completed, there will not be a jolt and the road will be capable of bearing a speed of a mile a minute.....
- " Freighting on the new road is very active. This morning, the engine "Nellie Bly" with J. King at the lever and J. Blythe as assistant took up ten cars of merchandise and four empty box cars. The train was in charge of Conductor A. O'Boyle, with Messrs. Nicholson and Arris as brakemen..... "

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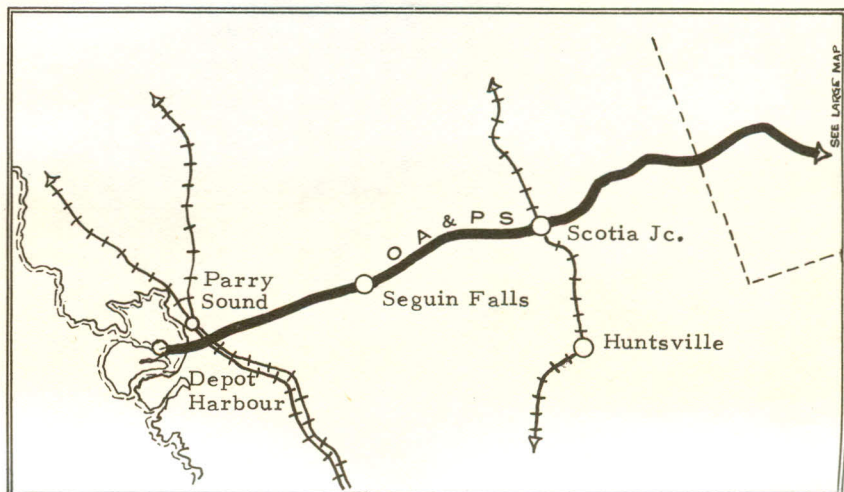
RIGHT (Top): The original roundhouse at Madawaska was a five-stalled wooden structure, later replaced by a concrete structure whose walls still stand.

(Bottom): Ottawa, Arnprior & Parry Sound No. 697 was a powerful Baldwin-built Vaucrain Compound 2-8-0. These engines formed the backbone of the OA&PS power pool.





Map of the  
**O**TTAWA, **A**RNPRIOR & **P**ARRY **S**OUND  
**R**AILWAY **C**OMPANY.  
 and adjacent railways.



Following the opening to Arnprior, construction was held up while a dispute with the Canadian Pacific was resolved before the Board of Railway Commissioners, relating to the laying of a level crossing over the CP by the OA&PS just to the west of the station. In testimony before the Board, Mr. Booth contended that the overhead crossing of the CPR in Nepean Township just to the west of Ottawa was put in on the understanding that the CPR would not oppose a level crossing in Arnprior, but the CP denied this. The Board, however, ruled in favour of the Parry Sound railway, permitting the crossing 500 feet west of the station, so that long trains on either line stopped at Arnprior, would not interfere with the other railway.

Shortly afterward, open litigation between the OA&PS and the Canadian Pacific flared again, when the two railways contested the use of Haggarty Pass, a narrow defile in the Opeongo Mountains to the west of Renfrew. But once again the Booth interests emerged victorious, and construction was carried from Arnprior and Golden Lake over the Pass to Barrys Bay and Madawaska by September, 1894.

Twisting and curving its way over the rocky overlay of the Laurentian Shield, the Ottawa, Arnprior & Parry Sound reached Cache Lake, in what is now Algonquin Park in May, 1895, and reached the Toronto-North Bay line of the Grand Trunk on December 1st, 1896. The terrain was hilly and mountainous west of Golden Lake, the rails reaching an elevation of 1,021 feet at Haggarty Pass, after a seven-mile climb from Killaloe station on an average grade of 1%. The maximum summit of 1,605 feet was reached at the watershed between Brule Lake and Rainy Lake, twenty-seven miles east of Scotia.

While the last section was being completed, the Parry Sound line acquired and amalgamated with the Parry Sound Colonization Railway, enabling it to reach Georgian Bay at Depot Harbour, 396.6 miles from the junction with the Central Vermont Railway at East Alburgh, Vt. In 1899, the OA&PS was absorbed into the parent Canada Atlantic Railway Company.

Though construction of the OA&PS was motivated originally by the lumber traffic, the extension to Georgian Bay was made with the intention of providing a new route eastward for wheat; grain elevators were built at Depot Harbour, and ships were chartered on the Great Lakes under the title of the Canada Atlantic Transit Company. This diversification brought with it other problems quite unconnected with the lumber industry which had given it birth, such as the provision of deep water channels at Depot Harbour and at Coteau Landing. The Booths accordingly decided to divest themselves of their railway system, and it was sold to the Grand Trunk Railway of Canada in 1905 for £2,880,000. The transfer of ownership did not come about before bids had been received from other roads, such as the Canadian Northern and the New York-owned Rutland Railroad, of which the Canada Atlantic would have been a natural extension.

Both in its independent phase and while under the control of the Grand Trunk, the erstwhile Ottawa, Arnprior & Parry Sound was divided into two operating

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Left: As completed in 1896, the Ottawa, Arnprior & Parry Sound Railway extended from the Ottawa River to Georgian Bay, a distance of 262 miles through what was then a timbered wilderness.

subdivisions, one extending 130 miles from Ottawa to Madawaska, and the other the remaining 134 miles to Depot Harbour. Madawaska was provided with a yard and extensive engine terminal facilities. The remains of a Grand Trunk-era concrete roundhouse and shop remain to this day, abandoned to the wilderness.

A Grand Trunk timetable for the summer of 1908 shows daily-except-Sunday passenger service in both directions between Ottawa and Depot Harbour. West-bound, No. 53 left Ottawa at 11:50 AM and arrived at Depot Harbour at 9:20 PM. The corresponding eastward service, No. 52, left Depot Harbour at 7:15 AM and arrived at Ottawa at 4:30 PM. The two trains crossed at Eganville, when on time.

Two known logging railways fed lumber to the CAR lines in the area between Madawaska and Whitney; one, the Egan Estates Railway (also known as the McCauley Central Railway), which was also owned by the Booth family, operated a line north for about 15 miles to Booth Lake and Shirley Lake. It connected with the OA&PS at Egan Estates Junction,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles west of Madawaska. Another line, the Whitney & Opeongo Railway, ran north from Whitney for 14 miles to Opeongo Lake. The Whitney & Opeongo connection is now used as a wye by Canadian National Railways at Whitney, the present western terminus of the line. Both logging railways were abandoned more than thirty years ago.

The Ottawa-Depot Harbour line remained intact until 1933, when a washout, said to have been caused by a beaver dam, interrupted the connection between Two Rivers and Algonquin Park stations, about six miles apart. Operation between the two stations was discontinued effective March 1st of that year, but the rails were not dismantled until 1940-42. On December 31st, 1946, operation was discontinued between Whitney wye, mile 145.94, and Two Rivers, mile 162.40, and the track lifted in the summer of 1952. Westward from Algonquin Park to Kearney, operation was discontinued in May 1959 and track dismantled immediately. The line west of Scotia was abandoned in 1955.

Today, the rails of the former Ottawa, Arnprior & Parry Sound Railway end in the woods 220 miles short of Georgian Bay, just as they did when the line was under construction seventy years ago. Much of the line is still laid with 72-pound rail with "OA&PS" markings, but Canadian National diesels, with smooth and unhurried efficiency, now perform the meagre services.

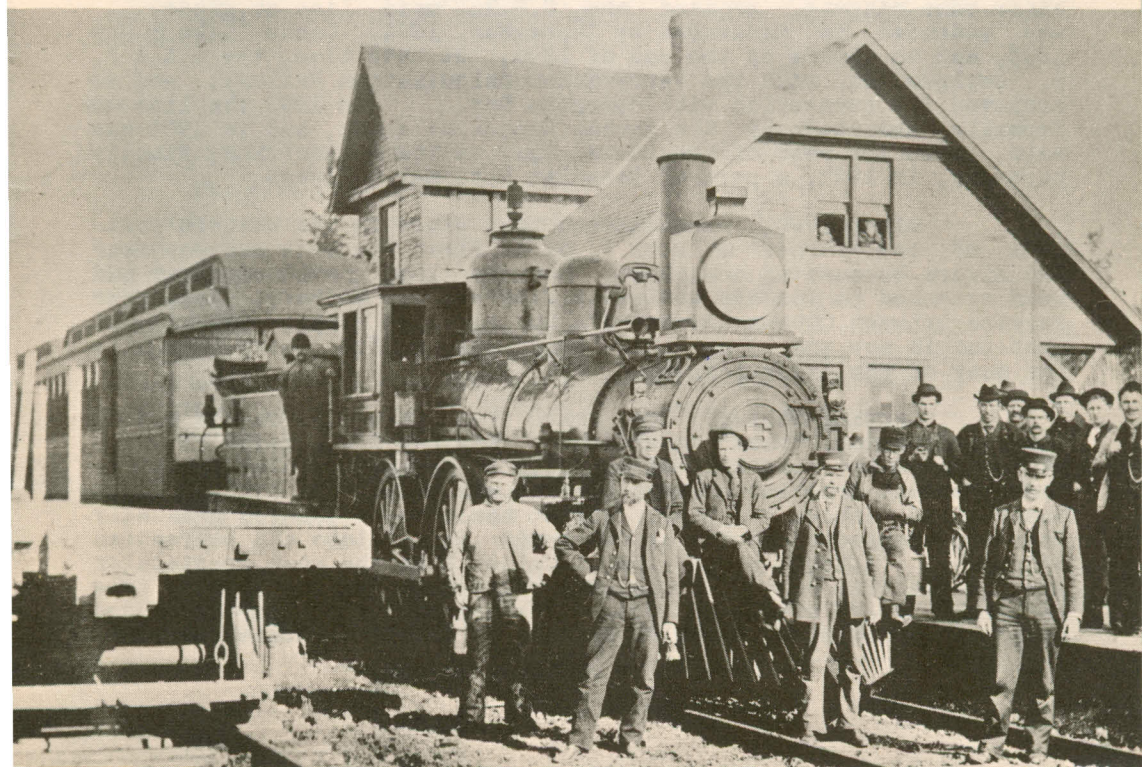
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RIGHT (Top): Canada's only standard-gauge "Mason-Fairlie Bogie", Canada Atlantic Ry. 0-6-6 No. 4, is pictured here with a freight on O.A. & P.S. rails at Killaloe. It was formerly the "Mansfield" of the Burlington & Lamoille RR, a Vermont short line.

(Bottom): Also apparently taken at Killaloe, a dapper 4-4-0, Canada Atlantic No. 6, pauses with passengers, crew, and the inevitable station idlers.

(All photos collection late W.G.Cole)

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J.R. BOOTH'S ROAD TODAY.....

## The OA&PS Revisited



by Fred Angus

SUNDAY, MAY 24, 1964 was a cool sunny day in Ottawa, as more than 200 rail enthusiasts prepared to board a special C.N.R. train at Union Station. The occasion was the Ottawa Railfans excursion, sponsored by Bill Williams and Al Barr, to Whitney, Ontario, over the line of the former Canada Atlantic Railway. Precisely at 8:30 A.M., E.D.T., the six car train, hauled by CN "A" unit 6779, and consisting of baggage car 9131, cafeteria car 424, and coaches 3241, 3211, 5622 and 5431, left the station to start the twelve-hour, 297-mile round trip.

The line had been built in the 1890s as the Ottawa, Arnprior & Parry Sound Railway, which was a company formed by the amalgamation of the Ottawa, Arnprior & Renfrew Railway, and the Ottawa & Parry Sound Railway Co. The O. A. & P. S. was controlled by the J. R. Booth interests and was, in effect, a westward extension of the Canada Atlantic Railway, to connect with the Great Lakes at Georgian Bay, and so provide a route Eastward from the Lakes via the O. A. & P. S. and C. A. railways.

The O. A. & P. S. reached Arnprior in May, 1893, and after some dispute, crossed the C.P.R. main line at grade, was extended to Madawaska by September, 1894, Cache Lake in May 1895, and to Scotia by the end of 1896. At this time, the O.A. & P. S. amalgamated with the Parry Sound Colonization Railway, and so achieved its connection with Georgian Bay. In 1899 the line was formally absorbed by the parent Canada Atlantic, and in 1905 was sold, with the rest of the C. A. Ry., to the Grand Trunk, finally becoming, in 1923, a part of Canadian National Railways.

After 1940, abandonments took place in the Western portions of the former O. A. & P. S. At first the line was cut near Two Rivers because of a washout, but by 1959 the abandonment had been extended to include the whole line west of Whitney. Passenger service between Ottawa and Barry's Bay survived until 1962, but that too is now gone, so this trip was the first over this line for many of the excursionists.

Leaving Ottawa, the train ran 15 miles on the Beachburg Subdivision, then entered the Renfrew Subdivision on which it continued the remainder of the trip to Whitney. The first stop took place at Arnprior where a runpast was made. The next 45 miles was covered without stopping, while the scenery changed gradually to a more rugged character as the train passed into the Laurentian Shield. After a photo stop at Golden Lake the most spectacular part of the trip began as the line climbed up "Haggarty Pass" on a continuous grade with many curves, reminiscent of the now-abandoned Montfort Subdivision, North of Montreal. The line became more level

(Photograph at bottom of page 152)

THE O.A. & P.S. REVISITED

beyond Wilno, 1021 feet above sea level, but continued gradually upward to more than 1200 feet at Whitney. At Madawaska a movie run was made on the bridge over the Madawaska River, and the participants were afforded the opportunity of inspecting the ruins of the Grand Trunk roundhouse. This structure, which was used for less than twenty years in the 1910-30 period, gave the impression of an ancient Roman ruin rather than a 20th century railroad building. The turntable pit and decaying crossties showed its true origin.

Another 16 miles carried the special to Whitney, the present end of the line. Here, the only shower of the day caused many to remain aboard while the engine and baggage car were turned on the wye, leaving the cafe car to bring up the rear on the return journey. By this time the rain had stopped, and the excursionists spent the half hour remaining, exploring the area. It was seen that much of the rail near the station bore the inscription: CAMELS TOUGHENED STEEL W 1895 SEC b O A & P S RAILWAY, revealing that this was the original rail with which the line had been laid, nearly seventy years ago, and in continuous use since that time.

Leaving Whitney, the train proceeded East, another run-past was held about 2 miles out of Whitney, then a stop at Barry's Bay to inspect the old wooden water tank, still in good condition, although now, alas, empty. No further stops were made, and as the sun started to set, the train began passing through the suburbs of Ottawa, which was reached at 8:40 PM.

Thus ended a trip which was over new territory for most of us, and the members of the C. R. H. A. who attended sincerely wish the sponsors of the excursion every success in continuing to run these trips, which are most enjoyable and interesting.

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