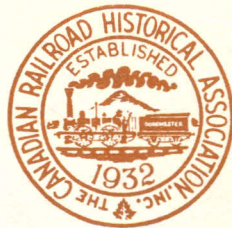


# Canadian Rail



Number 159 / October 1964

# Railways of the Eastern Townships of Quebec

## ORFORD MOUNTAIN RAILWAY.

In 1870, the Missisquoi & Black Rivers Railway was incorporated to build from a point on the boundary of Potton Township and it is believed that it was to be a northern extension of the Missisquoi Valley Railway in Vermont; the two forming a line from St. Albans to Richmond. Progress was slow and it took nine years to complete the grading from Melbourne to Bolton and lay rails from Dillontown (now Eastman) to the Bolton copper mines. This exhausted the resources of the Company and it went bankrupt. The Central Vermont Railroad then operated the completed portion as an industrial spur until about 1887 when the mines closed.

The Orford Mountain Railway was incorporated in 1888; in 1892 it was completed from Eastman to Lawrenceville and a year later to Kingsbury most of it being built on the abandoned grade of the Missisquoi & Black Rivers Railway. In 1904, it was built south from Eastman to Potton and a branch to Stukely Lake and in 1905 an extension from Kingsbury to Windsor Mills. In 1907 it was built southward to Mansonville.

The Canadian Pacific Railway bought the property on March 1st, 1910 and extended the line from Mansonville to a connection with the Newport line at North Troy. The last mile of this extension was in Vermont and was built under the charter of the Midland Railway of Vermont.

The section last built, from Mansonville to North Troy, was the first to go; train service was discontinued on May 1, 1936, and the rails lifted soon after. Service was discontinued

between Windsor Mills and Kingsbury on April 27th, 1940 and two years later rails were lifted between Windsor Mills and Kingsbury and between Eastman and Mansonville. Finally the section between Kingsbury and Valcourt was closed on December 15, 1949, and dismantled soon after. Nothing goes to waste and the station building at Flodden was moved bodily and became Grove Hill station on the lakeshore near Montreal. In the early days, the movement of lumber and farm produce was considerable but today about the only source of revenue is the large snowmobile factory at Valcourt.

## LOCOMOTIVES OF THE ORFORD MOUNTAIN RAILWAY.

- |    |       |        |     |          |
|----|-------|--------|-----|----------|
| 1. | 4-4-0 | 13x18" | 45" | 1879     |
|    |       |        |     | Kingston |
| 2. | "     | "      | "   | 1879     |
|    |       |        |     | Kingston |

Originally built for the narrow (3'6") gauge Lake Champlain & St. Lawrence Junction Ry. as no.3 BEDFORD and no.2 ABBOTSFORD. In 1881 became South Eastern Ry. nos. 21 and 20 and converted to standard gauge. No. 1 was bought by the OMR in 1891 and no.2 in 1896.

- |    |       |        |     |               |
|----|-------|--------|-----|---------------|
| 3. | 4-4-0 | 17x24" | 62" | 1878          |
|    |       |        |     | Baldwin #4714 |

Originally no.5 "EM-PRESS OF INDIA" of the Joseph Whitehead contract on the Canadian Pacific Railway. In 1882 became CPR #147; in 1905 #20; bought by the OMR in 1909.



ORFORD MOUNTAIN RY

# Canadian Rail



Number 166 / May 1965



Independent days of the Orford Mountain Railway  
are recalled by this pastoral scene  
showing the wayfreight switching at Lawrenceville  
about year 1905.

(Collection O.S.A.Lavallée)



## Valedictory for the Orford Mountain



**I**N RESPONSE to a recent application by Canadian Pacific Railway Company, the Board of Transport Commissioners for Canada has authorized the railway to abandon most of its Orford Subdivision in the Province of Quebec, extending from Eastman to Valcourt, 13.9 miles. This abandonment, to take effect on April 30th next, marks the closing of the last existing section of the former Orford Mountain Railway Company, a process which has taken just a few weeks over twenty-nine years. Though the history of the Orford Mountain was summarized in a sketch prepared by the late Robert R. Brown for the CRHA News Report in 1952, and reprinted in the October 1964 issue of "Canadian Rail" at page 221, it would now seem appropriate to review the interesting history of the OMR in more detail, and in the light of additional facts since uncovered.

### Early Copper Mining

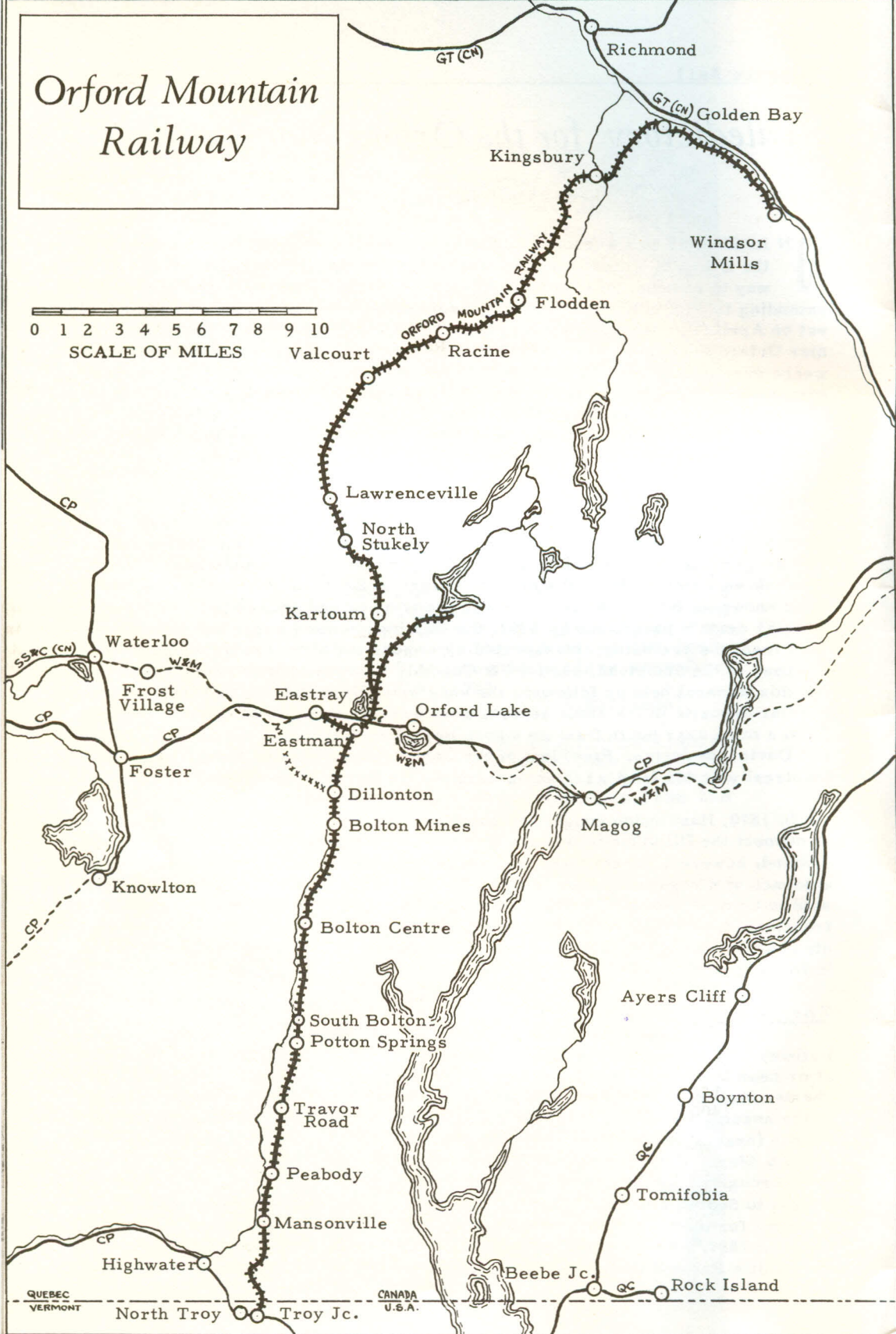
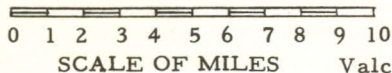
The story begins somewhat over a century ago when the demand for copper brought about by the civil war in the United States encouraged interests headed by L.S. Huntingdon to exploit a mine near Dillonton, about three miles south of the present village of Eastman, Que.; the site was later known as Bolton Mines. The war economy forced copper prices up from 28 to 55 cents a pound, and by 1862, the Huntingdon mine employed several hundred men, the ore being transported by wagons for about twelve miles to the railhead of the Stanstead, Shefford & Chambly Railway at Waterloo. The demand for this mineral held up following the conclusion of hostilities in 1865, and other similar deposits in the same general area were opened up and worked, among them a mine near South Durham whose proprietors included the name of Jefferson Davis; the former President of the Confederate States of America had fled to Montreal with his family for asylum, following defeat of the Confederacy in 1865.

In 1870, Huntingdon sought and obtained a charter for a light mining tramway to connect the Dillonton mine with Waterloo. Partly due to a falling off in copper demand, however, the tramway was never completed, though there is said to be evidence of a roadbed in the vicinity of Libby Pond. The tramway's rights were sold to Central Vermont Railway interests on July 26, 1871 and were eventually transferred, in 1874, to the Waterloo & Magog Railway which had been incorporated on December 13, 1871, and was then under construction between the towns in its corporate title.

### The First Railway

In 1870, the Missisquoi & Black Rivers Valley Railway Company was chartered to build from Potton, south of Bolton Mines, to, at or near Durham or Richmond on the Grand Trunk Railway. This was the first charter issued covering territory later served by the Orford Mountain Railway. In the ensuing years, the company constructed the railway grade between Melbourne (near Richmond) and Potton Springs and, after the completion of the Waterloo & Magog to Bolton Forest (Eastman) in 1877 enabled construction material to be brought in by rail, the M&BRV Ry. laid track on its own grade from Bolton Forest to South Bolton, 10.1 miles. This line was then operated by the Waterloo & Magog for the proprietors of the Missisquoi & Black Rivers Valley Railway until about 1887, when service was suspended due to the W&M being sold to Canadian Pacific Railway interests. The M&BRV owned no rolling stock.

# Orford Mountain Railway





### The Second Railway

In 1888, a new body, the Orford Mountain Railway Company was granted a charter to build from Eastman to Lawrenceville and elsewhere. Since this charter covered territory previously included in the Missisquoi railway charter, it is evident that the latter's rights of extension had lapsed. Construction got under way in 1891, using the old Missisquoi grade; by the summer of 1894, it was in operation between Eastman and Kingsbury, 26.5 miles. Inauguration of service on the Orford Mountain resulted in partial resuscitation of the completed section of the Missisquoi railway which had been abandoned in 1887. At this time, 7.34 miles of the M&BRVry. are shown<sup>1</sup> as "operated in summer by the Orford Mountain Railway, for freight only, between Eastman and Bolton Centre"; the rails extended a further 4.6 miles to a point south of Potton Springs, but the same source listed this as "disused".

In the decade following completion of its initial section, the Orford Mountain Railway enjoyed successful operation, and turned a modest profit. Its principal traffic was lumber which accounted, in the eleven year period ending in 1904, for a total of well over one-third of the total freight tonnage, or an average of more than eight million board feet a year. Other forest products such as firewood and pulp wood helped this category to account for about one half of all traffic. The railway was well managed, the ratio of earnings to working expenses in the same (1894-1904) period averaging 112:100. The officers at this time included S.W. Foster, President, Knowlton, Que.; G. Stevens, Secretary & Treasurer, Waterloo, Que.; A.C. Lytle, Superintendent, Eastman, Que.

In 1904, the decision was made to effect certain extensions:

- (1) From Kingsbury to Windsor Mills, on the St. Francis River, completed in 1905.
- (2) From Eastman to Bonallie (Stukely) Lake, completed in 1906, and
- (3) An extension of the former Missisquoi line, from Potton Springs to Mansonville, built in 1906 and opened on July 12th, 1907.

This expansion policy proved to be ill-advised; while additional traffic was generated, operating costs of the extended system rose out of proportion, and by the end of 1906, the earnings/working expenses ratio had exactly reversed itself to 88:100. The consequent loss of public confidence enabled the Canadian Pacific Railway, then in an expansionist phase, to purchase all of the capital stock at bargain prices, and on March 7th, 1910, by an Order-in-Council, the Orford Mountain Railway was leased to the Canadian Pacific for 999 years, integrated into the larger system as the Orford Subdivision.

### Under C.P.R. Control

The new owners took the obvious step immediately and in 1910 and 1911, built an additional  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles of track southward from Mansonville and over the border into Vermont, there to connect with the Newport and Montreal main line at a point six-tenths of a mile east of North Troy, called Troy Junction. The mile of track on the Vermont side was built under the charter of the Midland Railway of Vermont. While it may be questioned whether the acquisition of the Orford Mountain was a good capital investment for the CP, it might well have been justified on the basis of "insurance" alone, as the Mansonville end of the independent line was only about fifteen miles distant from Richford, Vermont and the Central Vermont system, which had occasionally evinced interest in the Canadian short line. Failure of the CP to take action might have

provided the CV with a ready-made feeder deep into Canada and Canadian Pacific "territory". The erstwhile Orford Mountain Railway had now reached its greatest extent.

The first contraction of mileage came about shortly after the commencement of the first World War, when the branch into Bonallie Lake was ripped up for use elsewhere during the war shortage.

Under CPR operation, the Orford Subdivision enjoyed four passenger trains daily, two in each direction. Train #270 left Windsor Mills in the morning for North Troy, returning in the afternoon as #273. Also in the morning, #271 left North Troy for Windsor Mills, returning in the afternoon as #272. All trains crossed at Eastman where there was a three-hour layover for connections, the trains going up the 1.4-mile spur to Eastray to meet Montreal-Sherbrooke-Saint John main line services. By the Twenties, the service had diminished to one round trip a day, #276 southward from Windsor Mills, returning from North Troy as #275.

### Contraction

On April 1st, 1936, the 22.8 miles of track between Troy Junction (by now called Elkhurst) and Eastman was abandoned, and fifteen miles of track from Elkhurst to Bolton Centre removed in that year; the balance remained in place until the demand for war scrap claimed it in 1942. At the other end of the system, the Kingsbury-Windsor Mills portion lost its train service on April 27th, 1940, and was officially abandoned on December 23rd, 1941. Its 9.4 miles of rails were also removed in 1942.

The next abandonment took place in the period of economic "retrenchment" following the end of World War II, and this was the 12.7-mile portion from Valcourt to Kingsbury, whose service was abandoned on December 15, 1949, the rails being lifted in 1950. The station at Flodden, on this section, was removed and transplanted to the Montreal lakeshore suburban area, as a shelter was needed at Grovehill. Still lettered "Flodden", it was unloaded from a flatcar and for a few days while awaiting repainting, it aroused the ire of at least one local commuter of Caledonian ancestry, who thought it high-handed of the CPR to rename "his" station after the spot in northern England where the Scots went down to honourable but crushing defeat at the hands of the English in 1513. Flodden, alias Grovehill, remained in use for a decade.

Following the 1949 abandonment, the former Orford Mountain Railway was reduced to a meagre 13.9 miles, extending from Valcourt to Eastman. This may have disappeared at this time as well, but for traffic which in large measure originated from the well-known Bombardier snowmobile factory at Valcourt, which community was served until recent years by execrable roads. The inevitable extension of a better highway system into the Black River valley where Lawrenceville and Valcourt are situated, has resulted in recent years in a distinct cut in what was never very large revenues. The result is the order permitting abandonment of what is left of the OMR on April 30th, 1965.

Thus, the remains of yet another Canadian short line will disappear from the railway map for good. It is true that the 1.4-mile spur from Eastray into Eastman will remain, but that is a relic of the Waterloo & Magog, rather than of the Orford Mountain Railway.





Number Three and its crew took time off near Bolton, Que., about year 1909, to be preserved photographically.

### Locomotives

In its independent era, the Orford Mountain Railway possessed six locomotives, two of them purchased from the South Eastern Railway, two from its successor, the Montreal & Atlantic Railway, and two from the Canadian Pacific Railway:

4-4-0    1879    Kingston    13x18" 45"

- (1) 1                      Ex SER #21 in 1891.    Scrapped about 1900.
- (1) 2                      "    20    "    "    "    "

Originally 3'6" gauge engines built for the Lake Champlain & Saint Lawrence Junction Railway. Standard-gauged in 1881, becoming SER #21 and #20.

4-4-0    1880    Rhode Island    16x24" 63"

- (2) 2    Ser.888    Ex M&A #18, in 1901.    Scrapped March 1909.

4-4-0                      Rhode Island    14x24" 57"

- (2) 1                      Ex M&A #2 about 1900.    Scrapped 1910.

4-4-0    1878    Baldwin    17x24" 62"

- 3    Ser.4714    Ex CP #20 in 1906.    Scrapped March 1910.

This locomotive, a sister of the "Countess of Dufferin", was built for contractor Joseph Whitehead, and was his #5, "Empress of India". It was sold to CPR in 1882, this engine becoming CP #147. It worked on ballast trains in the west, and on lines in southern BC in the Nineties, then was transferred to Montreal and used in suburban service. It was loaned to the Orford Mountain in 1906, and sold to it officially in July 1909.



4-4-0    1882    Kingston    17x24" 62"

(3) 2                      Ex CP #45 in May 1909. Sold July 1910 to Baie-des-Ha!-Ha! Ry.  
as their #2.

In the Canadian Pacific period, after 1910, 4-6-0s of a number of designs were used, the duties later falling on "E" class 4-6-0s, and D-4-gs. In the later years of steam when the line extended only to Valcourt, a D-10 was the usual assignment on the way freight.

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Sources of information: 1- White, James. Altitudes in the Dominion of Canada, Ottawa, King's Printer, 1901. Also: Poor's Manual and the Official Guide, various editions; Railway Statistics, published annually by the Federal Government; Warrington and Nicholls, "A History of Chemistry in Canada".

