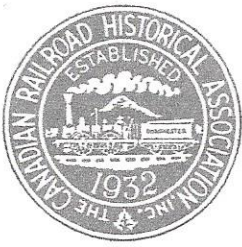


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# crha News Report

P.O. BOX 22.

STATION "B"

MONTREAL 2, QUEBEC

NUMBER 110

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APRIL 1960



DAYS OF STEAM on the "I.B. & O." is recalled by this photograph made on Easter Saturday, April 12th, 1952, of CNR Engine #1223 and train #323 on the point of leaving Bancroft, Ont., for Howland Junction over what was once the Irondale, Bancroft & Ottawa Railway. No. 1223, presently No. 1520, is being held at Stratford for CRHA.

Photograph by O.S.A. Lavallee.



.....  
... A FOND FAREWELL TO THE "I.B. & O."

--- by Omer S.A. Lavallee

DURING THE MONTH of March, the picturesque railway line through the Haliburton Highlands of Ontario which was known far and wide, to natives and visitors alike as the "I.B. & O.", was abandoned. Officially, this was the Irondale Subdivision of Canadian National Railways, but it was known throughout its career by the initials of the independent company which was responsible for its construction in the late Nineteenth Century, the Irondale, Bancroft & Ottawa Railway Company. Irondale was on the line, Bancroft just a few miles off it, but, like many similar ambitiously-planned projects whose names reflected aspirations instead of accomplishments, the I.B. & O. never reached Ottawa.

I made only one trip over the I.B. & O.; it was a railway reached only with difficulty from Montreal, especially for a weekend trip, but unlike the bitter last days of once-a-week service, the I.B. & O. had seen better services in comparatively recent years. Thus it was, that on Easter weekend, 1952, the author, in the company of three other CRHA stalwarts, Anthony Clegg, Ken Chivers and Forster Kemp, made the I. B. & O. our goal.

We left Montreal on CP #21 for Trenton. Since arrival at this Lake Ontario town was made in the wee hours of the morning, we spurned the sleeping car for once, and joined the vulgar mob in the coaches which, since it was Easter and the great exodus from Montreal to Toronto was taking place, were none of the best. As a matter of fact, they were colonist cars and we spent the night in an acutely upright position. I slept fitfully, while friend Clegg entertained Mr. Chivers with anecdotes, which seemed to get funnier as the night wore on. Clegg, incidentally, is famous for this, so that when 4:00 AM rolled around and Trenton came in sight, he was in spasms of laughter, while the rest of us pondered upon the justice of a cruel world or schedule which would thus precipitate passengers upon a cold platform in the chilly pre-dawn of a Canadian spring. Sometime during the night, around Parham or Lonsdale, we had passed the several sections of No. 22 which was taking the equally-great Toronto-Montreal exodus on their way. Thanks also to a diabolical system of sorting passengers according to origin and destination, whose only apparent advantage is to drive rail passengers over to the busses or the airlines, Chivers, Clegg and I rode in the uncomfortable and crowded colonist car, merely because we had embarked at Windsor Station in Montreal. Kemp, on the other hand, who had scrambled aboard at Montreal West found himself in almost sole possession of a streamlined, air-conditioned coach, in which he slept peacefully and without interruption until Trenton (-- as Kemp would).

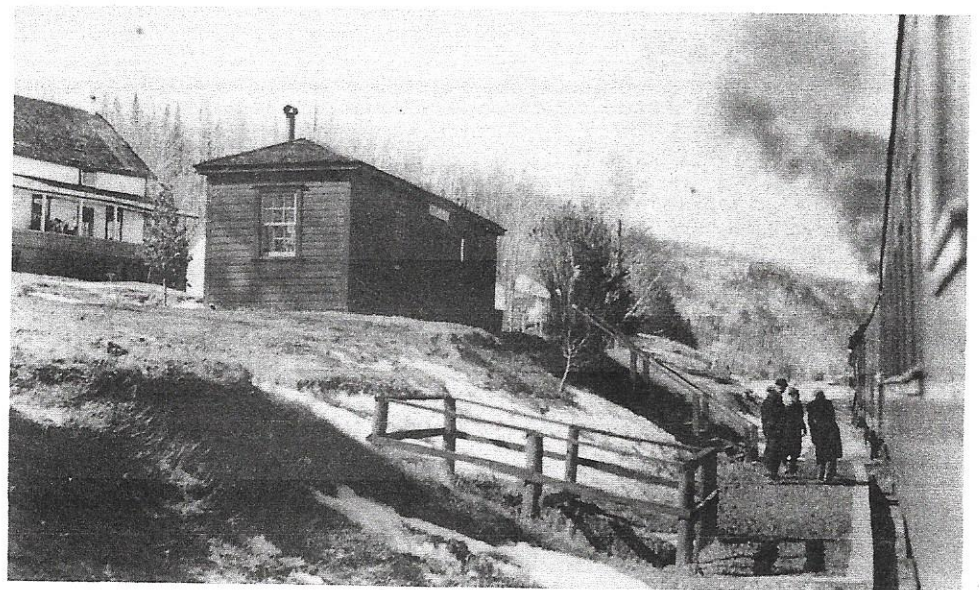
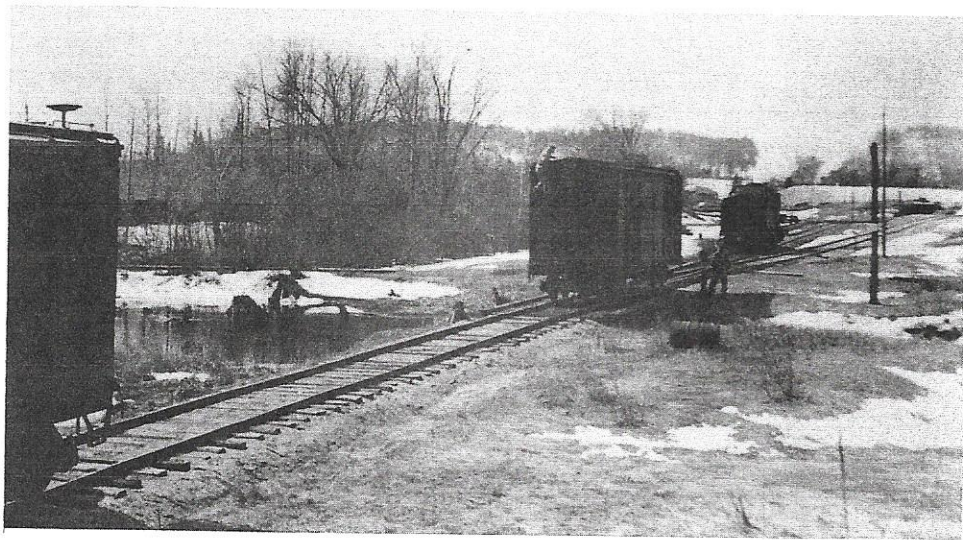
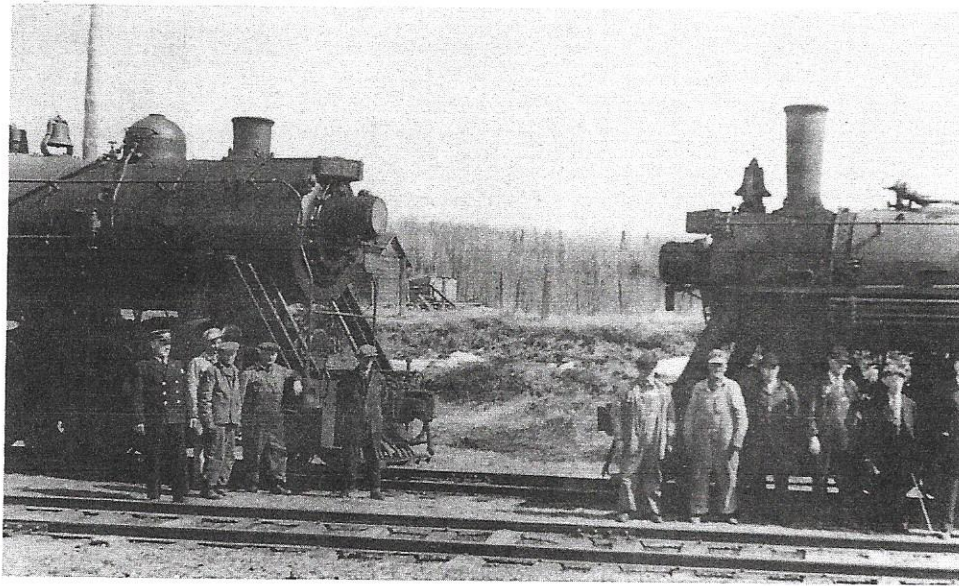
We took several walks around Trenton, had breakfast two or three times in an all-night restaurant (in Trenton!) and with the light of day came a switcher, No. 7222, which entertained us until the mixed was ready to leave for Bancroft about 8:00 AM. This train had 4-6-0 No. 1406 on the head end, and a leisurely Good Friday was spent going north through the scenery which our May 1959 trip traversed, from Trenton to Bancroft, via Anson, Marmora, Bannockburn, Ormsby Jct., and Detlor. Upon arrival at Bancroft, we repaired to the enginehouse before finding our lodgings at the hotel, to determine what the I.B. & O. line power would be on the morrow. Alas, the enginehouse was locked up, and though a tantalizing wisp of smoke rose from the smokejack, no nook or cranny enabled us to see what it contained. In those delicious pre-diesel days, our greatest worry was that it would turn out to be an E-10 class 2-6-0, rather than the 1200 series 4-6-0 which was the real goal of our trip.

**PHOTOGRAPHS:** The inserted photo page shows a few typical I.B. & O. scenes taken during the visit referred to; in this story. The top shows the eastbound and westbound engines at Howland, CN #2516 and #1223, where the opposing trains exchanged engines. Centre photo shows engine #1223 "dropping" a car at Wilberforce, Ont., while the lower picture illustrates the elevated station at Baptiste, Ont.,. The cover picture was made at Bancroft prior to the departure of train #323. --- all photographs by the author.

Our experience of the night before was conducive to good sleep in the Bancroft inn, and bright and early on Easter Saturday, breakfast under our belts, we were back down at the CNR station, watching No. 1406 make up its train for the return to Trenton. Back at the enginehouse, we appeared just in time to see the doors opened to reveal No. 1223, the engine we were after, a very nice, light little ex-Canadian Northern 4-6-0, which was to take train #323 to Howland and Lindsay.

Just about this time, we acquainted ourselves with the crew, which was headed







on this day by a most friendly man, Conductor Burn, while the engineer, Mr. Thompson, handled No. 1223 as if he was hauling the International Limited. Before leaving, Conductor Burn asked us if we had our lunches, and upon assuring him that our interest in his line would carry us through, rationless, to Lindsay, we were told that we could have lunch en route, at \$1 per person, an arrangement which surprised us rather pleasantly. After asking the same question of the other passengers, he went back into the office and the Agent at Bancroft sent a telegram to the lunch-stop, wherever it might be.

Leaving time came and No. 1223, coupled to a baggage-car and a coach, both wooden equipment, gave a smart push and started backing the train to the wye at York River, a few miles north of Bancroft. Bancroft itself is situated on what was once the Central Ontario Railway, and the I.B. & O., when completed, joined the C. O.R. at York River, and used the latter's tracks into Bancroft. At York River, there was a pause, briefly, while Conductor Burn went into the 3x3' (literally!) station to register his train, then backing up to the north wye switch, we started running in conventional direction, westward along the York River on the fringe of the Haliburton Highlands.

At Baptiste, we paused briefly while passengers disembarked at the picturesque station, which is situated on a bank about fifteen feet above the track. It is reached from the platform by stairs! After skirting Baptiste Lake, the train started its steep ascent to Highland Grove and Mumford. The latter place is at 1,346 feet above sea level, the highest point on the line. At each of these places, local work was done, wayfreight loaded and unloaded and the occasional passenger picked up or set down. The speed of the train was not high -- perhaps 20 m.p.h. at top, as we weaved and twisted through the rocky countryside on 56-lb. British steel, product of the world-renowned mills at Sheffield in the 1880s.

Kemp had pre-empted the smoking compartment in the coach as a sort of map-room. The other three of us sat in the body of the car, and when we felt the need for orientation, we went in and consulted our navigator who would inform us learnedly of the name of the river just crossed, or the lake which we were approaching. (This was before Forster started taking pictures!) Kemp even showed up the brakeman who, in a congenial sort of way was naming the lakes for us when he was informed imperiously by our navigator (who had never been over the line before, but was placing all faith in the topographical maps) that this was not Dog Lake -- No indeed, it was Cat Lake, or some such place. The railwayman, abashed, withdrew, and was not seen again. (Those of my readers who have been "demolished" from full height by the imperishable memory of brother Kemp, will appreciate how the trainman must have felt.)

About this time, No. 1223 was getting thirsty, and we shortly pulled up to the station at Gooderham, a pleasant hamlet which was the spot at which the gastronomic needs of both the engine and the passengers would be looked to. All of us, crew and passengers, descended and repaired into the station to find that a lady, who was in some manner or means connected with the railway, had turned the waiting room into a pleasant, but regrettably unadvertised, dining room. Meanwhile the fireman had connected No. 1223 to one end of a water siphon, and in the ensuing twenty-seven minutes, while the engine watered itself, the rest of us, passengers, crew and all attacked a very nice lunch of roast beef, all for the modest fee of \$1.

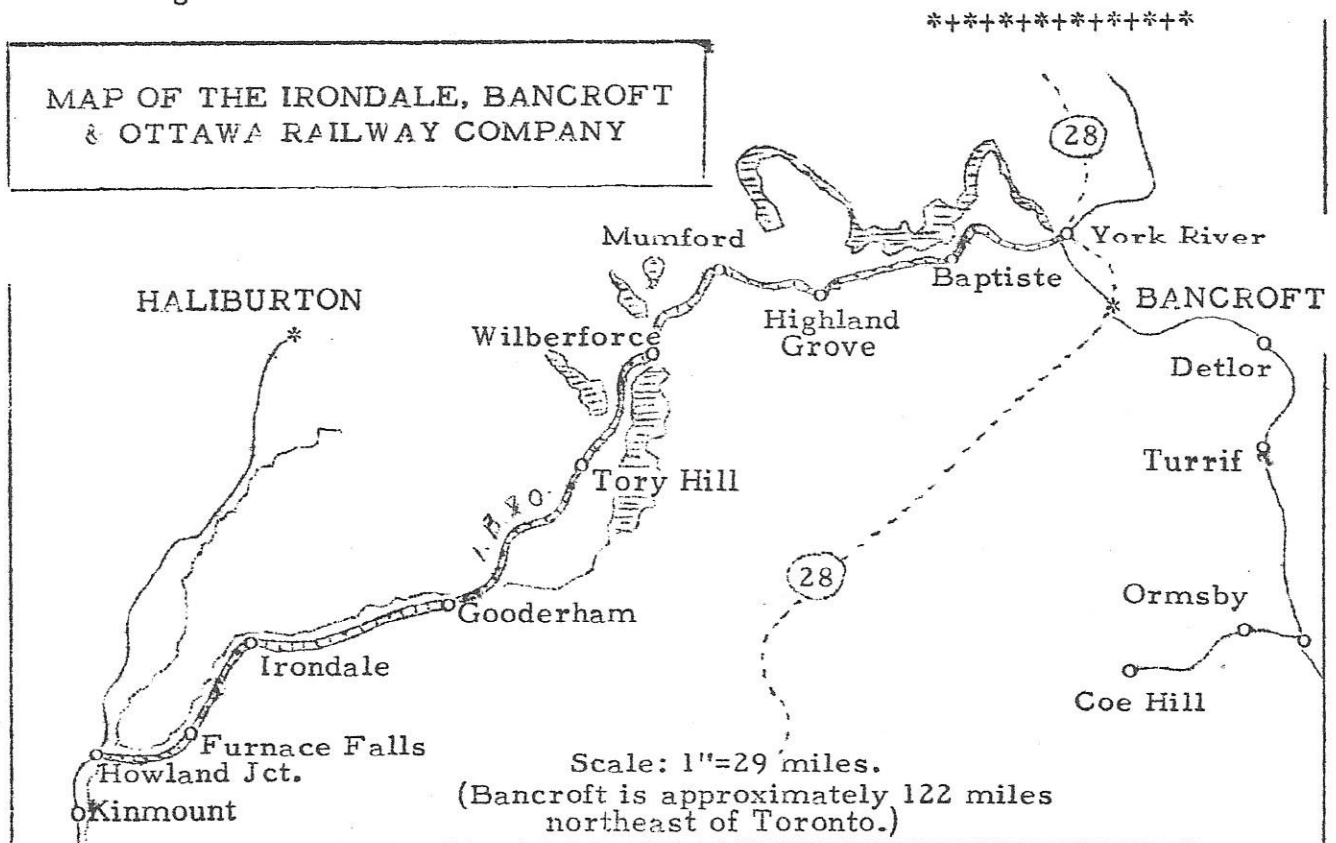


Typically, the engine crew sat in one corner, the train crew in the other, while the passengers distributed themselves about the other neat tables.

Just as we were finishing dessert, the tender of No.1223 was seen to overflow, and the crew opined that it was time to get going! Ah, the charm of the siphon-water stop, where time is not a consideration and leisure is paramount. We climbed aboard, fully and satisfactorily stuffed, while train #323 resumed its way down the valley of the Burnt River. We had no trouble regaining schedule; Irondale and Furnace Falls were left far behind, as we proceeded with a will to our meet with the opposing train at Howland.

Our haste was in vain. Howland was devoid of other signs of life upon our arrival. We were informed that our engine was exchanged with the other train at this point, since the other engine was too heavy for the I.B. & O. We bent to the task of turning No.1223 on the "armstrong" turntable, and had just completed this task when the other train arrived with 2-8-0 No. 2516 at its head end. We turned this engine too, then the engines exchanged trains. We bade a fond au revoir to the crew but not before the two engines were brought face to face for a photograph with the respective crews.

As we departed southward from Howland, smoke in the Burnt River valley told us of the progress of No.1223 back to Bancroft, over the "I.B. & O.", a brave little railway whose name will remain inscribed forever in the annals of Canadian railroading.



**\*\*TWO NEW CRHA PUBLICATIONS** will be released on the Easter excursion weekend, aboard our special trains. You'll want both of them for your railway library. News Report readers will have all details with the May issue. \*\*\*\*