

THE Anticosti Island Railroad

by Keith Pratt

(from CN "Keeping Track", reprinting an article of 50 years ago, as appearing in Canadian National Railways Magazine)

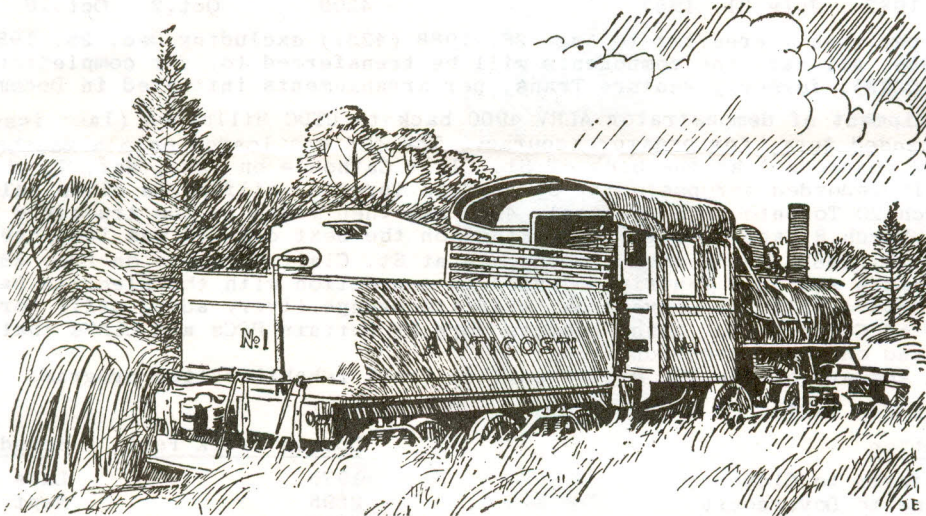
Railroads are often found in odd corners of this old Earth, but to my mind the queerest place for a railroad to be is on an island in the middle of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. But there is an island out there with an honest-to-goodness standard gauge logging railroad.

Anticosti Island is located out in the great Gulf of St. Lawrence, 361 miles east north east from Quebec City, in latitude 49' and longitude 63' west. The closest point on the mainland is Mingan, 21 miles distant on the North Shore, and Fox River in Gaspé. The island is 136 miles in length and about 40 miles across at the widest point, about one-third as large as Prince Edward Island. There are about 75 families settled on this island, all employees of Consolidated Paper Corporation, who now own the island.

In 1896 the late Henri Meunier, "Chocolate King" of France, purchased this island from the Government of Quebec and built on it a wonderful chateau, which he named "Chateau Meunier" and which he and his interests retained for 31 years. In 1926 they sold out to a group of news-print companies, the "Anticosti Corporation", and with the Depression and the falling off in demand for pulpwood these companies were merged with the Consolidated Paper Corporation, the present owners.

After building the Chateau and furnishing it with all modern equipment, Mr. Meunier felt that in order to have a complete place he must have a railroad built. In 1910 work was commenced and an 18½ mile road was built. The first train was operated on Oct. 15 of that year, a locomotive having been purchased from the Montreal Locomotive Works and numbered 1.

No. 1 was built in August of that year and was a 2-4-0, with a diamond stack (later changed). It had 160 lbs. boiler pressure; cylinders 12" diameter x 18" stroke. Driving wheels had a diameter of 34".



Later, when the pulpwood industry was opened up on a larger scale, four other locomotives were required. Nos. 2 and 3 were built by the Heislner Locomotive Works. No. 2 had a boiler pressure of 175 lbs., cylinders 13" diameter x 12" stroke; drive wheels four, diameter 36"

No. 4, as far as I can learn, is a Baldwin product with a boiler pressure of 180 lbs. Cylinders 17" diameter x 24" stroke; drive wheels three, diameter 44".

No. 5 was rebuilt in 1904 by the Fitz-Hugh Luther Co. Boiler pressure 175 lbs.; cylinders 18" diameter x 24" stroke; drive wheels three, diameter 57". (The reference to drive wheels three is assumed to mean a six-coupled locomotive--Ed.).

For other equipment they have about 10 steel cars, two or three box cars fitted up for boarding cars, and used as camps for the men during lumbering operations; about 20 dump cars and 25 wooden cars, about 30' x 9½'. They also own a steam shovel and an industrial crane of around 16 tons, which is used for heavy work.

When the Depression struck in 1929 lumbering operations ceased on Anticosti, and since then the railroad has never been used, with the exception of about 4,000 feet of it, which runs from a warehouse down to the wharf, and on which freight is hauled by a gas engine. Flat cars are used. This gas engine was built on the island around 1930, and can haul three carloads of freight.

There is also a small open air coach which is used to meet the boats that call at the island, and to carry passengers to and from the village. The railroad is very crooked and has some very steep grades, but Mr. Major Small, who was kind enough to supply me with some information, states that the road is getting into very bad shape. The report is that the road is to be torn up, and when there is again a demand for pulpwood a truck road will be constructed.

The cars and engines that were once so useful and dependable still wait patiently for the big day to come when they will once more proudly "choo choo" up and down the line, but this day has

never come and the little engines are left standing out in the wind, storm and shine, alone with their memories...forgotten.

The above drawing of Anticosti 2-4-0 No. 1, by Joe Easley, appeared in Railroad Magazine some time after the CNR Magazine article had been published. The drawing was based on a photo in the Keith Pratt collection.

More on Anticosti

Dear Mr. Westland,

Regarding the Anticosti Island R.R. article (April issue), I thought that you might be interested in knowing that I have a copy of Keith Pratt's article as published in 1937 which included photos of 2-4-0 No. 1, which obviously inspired Mr. Easley, because it is the same view. The other photo shows the gas locomotive, No. 6 and the passenger car. I am enclosing a copy from my father's roster book which provides some additional information on the motive power.

I believe that the only way one can visit the island today is with government (Quebec) sponsored fishing and hunting trips. It would be most interesting to visit and see if any trace of the railroad and equipment still exists. I have a friend who is a keen fisherman and hunter, so the next time I see him I will ask him if he has been on the island and if his answer is 'yes' you will know my subsequent questions!

--Douglas Brown, St. Bruno, Quebec

Anticosti Island Railway--Chronology and Roster of Equipment

Port Menier to Lake Zede; Lake Princeton Branch: 25 miles.

1896: Anticosti Island bought by Henri Menier, wealthy chocolate manufacturer in France. 1909: Construction of railway started. 1910 (Oct. 15): railway completed. 1920: Operation discontinued. 1926: The Menier heirs sold the island to a group of Canadian paper companies who then organized the Anticosti Corp. 1929: Railway dismantled except about 4000' from the wharf to a warehouse.

Locomotives--

<u>No.</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Cylinders</u>	<u>Drivers</u>	<u>Builder</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	2-4-0	12"x18"	34"	Montreal 48736	1910
2	0-4-4-0	12"x10"	33"	Heisler (geared)	
3	0-4-4-0	13"x12"	36"	" "	
4	0-6-0	17"x24 "	44"	Baldwin	
5	"	18"x24"	57"	FitzHugh, Luther	1904
6	0-4-0	gas			1930

One passenger car, three boarding cars, 10 flat cars, steel, 25 flat cars, wood, 20 dump cars, one steam shovel, one crane.

(Note spelling "Menier", as distinct from "Meunier" as used in the Keith Pratt article; Mr. Brown's spelling checks out with that used in at least one accredited Canadian atlas. Port Menier is located on the Anticosti south shore, approximately 10 miles east of the western tip of the island--Ed.)

--compiled by the late Robert R. Brown