

THE WRECK OF
C.N. R. 6218
NOW
PRESERVED AT
FORT ERIE.



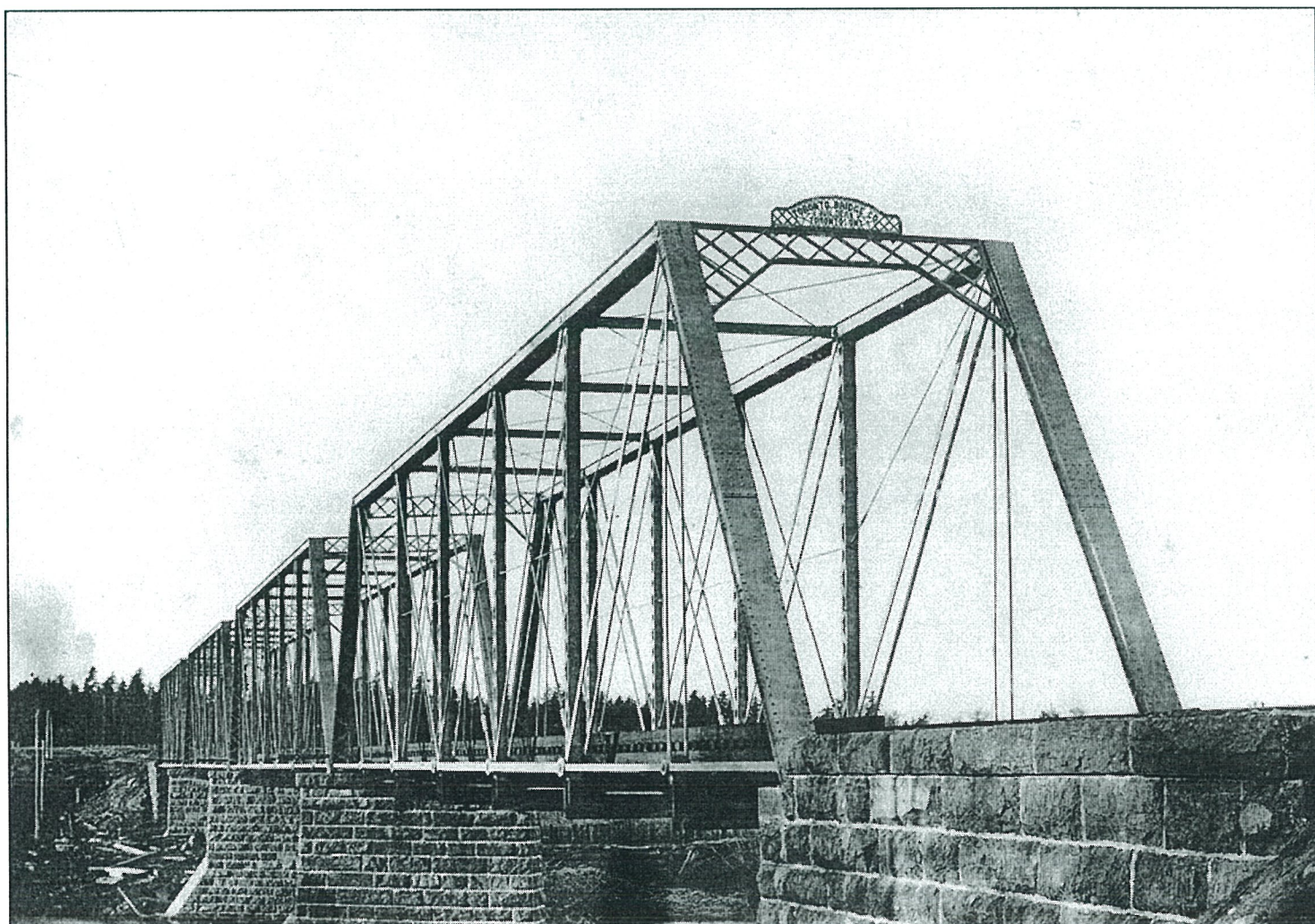
The Bridge over the South Nation River at Casselman

VIA passengers between Ottawa and Montreal may hardly notice the bridge on the line just west of Casselman. There is a change in sound as the train rumbles over the structure but this is quickly over as the train soon regains dry land. However, the South Nation River, at mile 47.7 on the Alexandria subdivision near Casselman, presented quite an obstacle to the builders of the Canada Atlantic Railway and regular trains started running on 1st February 1882 from Coteau only as far as Casselman. Work went ahead vigorously to complete the line to Ottawa and the Ottawa Citizen of 23rd February 1882 reported:

"Between Ottawa and Casselman some 350 men were busily engaged on the work of construction. The masonry of the bridge over the Nation River was completed and the Toronto Bridge Company were at present proceeding with operations to allow them to go on with their part of the work. The masonry of the bridge which was laid in cement, was done by Mr. Linsley, contractor, and is in every respect a first class job. The work was assiduously prosecuted during the winter and in order to permit of this, artificial heaters were used upon which the stone was laid preparatory to being placed upon the wall. The bridge was some 350 feet in length and 30 feet high, and addition to presenting a picture of stability the work was neatly executed...."

"The present time table issued by the company shows that there are two passenger and two freight trains running daily between Coteau and Casselman."

Trains were running through to Limoges (then known as South Indian) by May 1882, and the line was opened through to Ottawa on September 13th the same year.



This shows the bridge over the South Nation River just after it was completed in May 1882. It is typical for bridges of that period although not strong enough for today's trains. Note the Toronto Bridge Company Builders plate at the entrance. This was normal practice and added a finishing touch to the Company's elegant structures. Unfortunately in urban areas these quickly proved a tempting target for little boys with stones although this one, in a rural setting, may have lasted longer.

The country in this area was heavily wooded and much income was derived from lumber. Fires were an ever present threat and caused great destruction. On 16th June 1891 the Ottawa Journal reported:

"Fire at Casselman. Special train sent out at 11 p.m. Arduous task of mounting the Conqueror, which taxed all muscles to the utmost. -- The engine and special relief train was driven by Engineer Macdonald, Fireman Kane and Brakeman Keswick. Away sped the train with 30 miles to go with 1,200 feet of hose and 1,000 feet of the C.A.R. hose. At Eastman's, South Indian and Bearbrook the train took up hands till there were 200 buckets and some 420 men on board. At 11.45 they left Bearbrook and at 11.50 they steamed into Casselman."

The "Conqueror" was a horse-drawn fire pump, presumably steam powered.

1897 was a bad one for fires in the area. Fire-fighting equipment was again sent to Casselman by train on 5th October. Disaster struck the next day when the station and water tank at Casselman were destroyed. The bridge stringers were nearly all burned off and the bridge was rendered unsafe. A special gang of men at Booth's mill (in Ottawa) were set to work to cut timbers and a gang of 100 men were rushed to the site to put the bridge into shape for traffic. Mr. M. Donaldson, mechanical foreman, had a special wrecking train sent down during the morning with new timbers for the bridge. Men were at work all day on the bridge, and it was passable the same evening. <A bizarre result of this fire was that the railway ran an excursion train from Ottawa for the curious (or morbid) to see the damage from the fire. The Ottawa Journal of 11th October 1897 mentioned:

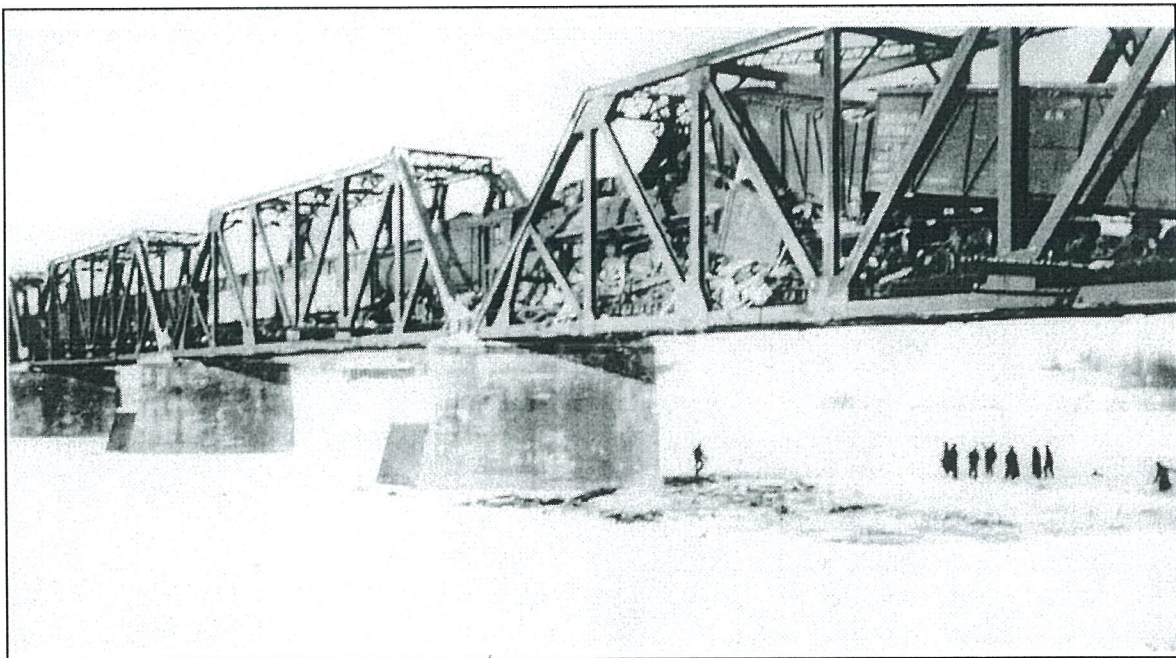
"The C.A.R. excursion to South Indian and Casselman yesterday carried down 855 persons from Ottawa -- sightseers and relic hunters."

The same day, the Ottawa Free Press said:

"The train didn't remain at the station at North Casselman but proceeded over the bridge over the Nation river to South Casselman, where the fire did the greatest destruction. The entire members disembarked here and in a short time the streets and ruins were overrun by curiosity and relic hunters.--

"It seems that the proceeds of the excursion went to relief of suffering."

After this brief period of excitement it seems the bridge settled down to a more peaceful existence. The Grand Trunk Railway, which took over the Canada Atlantic Railway, reconstructed the superstructure in 1905. This was approved by Board of Railway Commissioners order No. 529 of 4 July 1905. This is essentially the bridge we know today except that modifications were carried out in the early 1990s to allow double stack container trains to pass through.



However, there was one further episode in December 1944. On 22nd December, the Glengarry News reported a rear end collision between two freight trains the previous day. The picture was taken from the east side of the river and the train is traveling towards Coteau. The locomotive is Canadian National No. 6218, which later became well known as an excursion locomotive after the end of regular steam. There were no injuries or deaths in this accident which is a surprise as the caboose of the train that was rear-ended has been completely destroyed. Note the two cattle cars right behind No. 6218. Cattle cars were easily identified by the whitewash that was applied to the lower portion of the car – it hid the signs and smell of the cattle. The cattle must have had a rough shunt!

Ottawa Central Railway, Spareboard, January 2008.

The Rear End Collision on the Bridge at Casselman A Follow Up

As so often happens with historical research, another piece of information came to light just after the last Spareboard was put to bed. This had a picture of steam locomotive No. 6218 in a rear end collision with another freight train (Extra 2609 East) on the bridge over the South Nation River at Casselman on 21st December 1944.

I received from Carl Riff a copy of the statement from engineer Findley of No. 6218.

This gives a good account of winter railroading at a time when there were no roller bearing axleboxes, before Walkley yard and before the installation of Centralized Traffic Control (CTC):

"Our train was ordered at Ottawa for 12:45 P.M. I reported for duty at 12noon. Engine was off the shop track on time. Engine was moved to Bank St. for train, and we left the yard at 1:23 P.M. and passed the outer switch, located just east of Bank St. yard office at 1:50 P.M. Account train being frozen up we were assisted out of yard by yard engine as far as Main St. At Bank St. I received a terminal clearance and running order, and at Riverside a terminal clearance along with a form "W". The order at Riverside was delivered on a hoop and our train passed Riverside. No additional train orders were delivered, we proceeded at a speed of about 25 M.P.H. – the train having been frozen up in the yard, was pulling hard. I had planned going to Alexandria for water, and when about one mile west of Casselman and running at a speed of 37 or 38 M.P.H. I made a service application of the brakes in order to bring the train under control rounding the curve, and to permit a good view of the train order signal. There is a down grade towards the bridge. Immediately I made the service application of the brake I heard the sound of two torpedoes exploding and saw Flagman about 3 poles east of where the torpedoes exploded. The Flagman had a red flag and was giving me a stop signal. The flagman was located 7 poles west of the bridge and standing on a farm crossing. Immediately the torpedoes exploded and I saw the Flagman, I threw my brake valve into emergency and train slowed down to a point where I thought my train would stop before reaching caboose, which I saw when my engine was about west end of the bridge. My train was not moving more than 5 M.P.H. at time of impact, but it seemed to me the weight of the train kept shoving ahead." about 1:40 P.M.



A view of Ottawa, Bank Street, station and yard in August 1948 four years after the collision described here. The view is looking east along the present alignment of the Queensway, the Bank Street underpass is just behind the photographer. On the right is the station and yard office with an engine in the stub. The main line is the clear track with the main part of the yard to the north or left. The train in question would have travelled away from the camera, past the Mann Avenue roundhouse, crossed the Rideau River and would have joined the present Alexandria subdivision at Hawthorne. Canada Science and Technology Museum, Matt-0746.

Ottawa Central Railway, Spareboard, February 2008.

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THE WRECK
OF CNR 6304
AT BAYVIEW
JUNCTION
MARCH 28,
1949.

C.N. Locomotive Jumps Rails, Ploughs Furrow Two Charged After Watchman Shot In Zeller's Store



LOCOMOTIVE PLOUGHS FURROW SIX FEET DEEP—This morning about 6 o'clock, a C.N.R. freight train locomotive jumped the rails and overturned as it rounded the Bayview curve near the York Street traffic circle. The train was going slowly as it made the turn but the weight of the 11 cars behind drove the cab into the rain-softened roadbed making a furrow 30 feet long and six feet deep. Two crewmen were slightly injured as they jumped clear of the toppling engine. The coal tender and the rest of the train, which was proceeding from Sarnia to Hamilton with a load of machinery, remained upright. Railway officials are still investigating the mishap and have not yet determined the cause of the derailment.

MARCH 28 1949

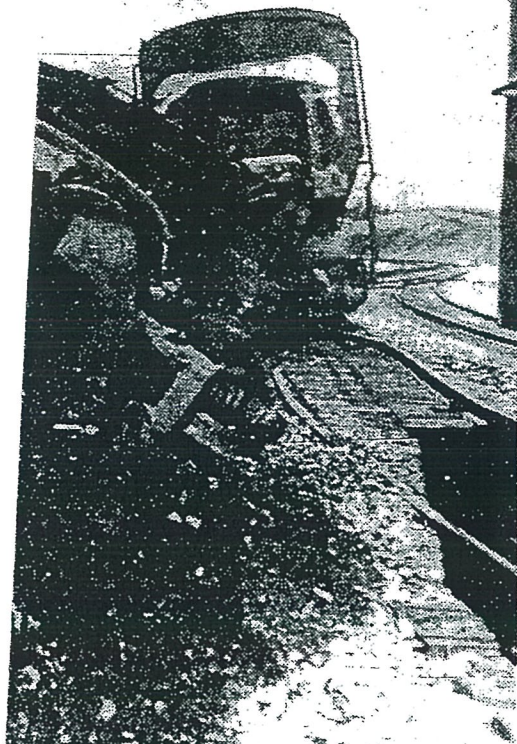
CNR 6384

Ploughs Furrow Six Feet Deep

Zeller's Store

Two Crewmen Slightly Hurt

Mishap Occurs While Freight Rounds Curve Near York Street Circle



morning about 6 o'clock, a C.N.R. freight train locomotive derailed on a siding curve near the York Street traffic circle. The 11 cars behind drove the cab into the rain-soaked ground. Two crewmen were slightly injured as they jumped from the train, which was proceeding from Sarnia to Hamilton. Railway officials are still investigating the mishap and

A C.N.R. freight train locomotive ploughed a furrow six feet deep in the ground and completely severed a siding track this morning when it jumped the rails and overturned while rounding the Bayview curve near the York Street traffic circle. Two crewmen suffered minor injuries when they jumped from the cab.

Carrying Machinery

The 11-car train, transporting machinery from Sarnia to Hamilton, had just stopped and was starting up again at a speed estimated at three miles an hour when the engine left the rails and toppled over. The coal tender and the rest of the train stayed upright. Railway officials are still investigating the mishap and could give no cause for the derailment.

The fireman, Lloyd McPherson, of Stratford, and a brakeman, E. S. McLeod, of Sarnia, both jumped clear of the cab as it started to go over. McPherson wrenched both knees and ankles when he landed on a near-by set of tracks. McLeod suffered similar injuries.

The engineer, John Egan, Port Huron, Mich., rode the locomotive into the ground and escaped without a scratch. The conductor, Ernest E. Blackwell, of Sarnia, was riding at the rear of the train.

The weight of the heavy load behind drove the engine six feet down into the rain-softened roadbed. A parallel set of siding tracks were completely uprooted and broken as the cab dug into the ground and ploughed up a furrow 30 feet long.

None of the crewmen could give an opinion as to the cause of the derailment. "It just left the tracks all of a sudden," said one.

The line is expected to be cleared for traffic this afternoon. A crane was brought in by rail from London to help the huge Hamilton railway crane lift the heavy locomotive from its side.

MARCH 28

1949

CNR
6304