

UCRS 50th ANNIVERSARY FEATURE

PASSENGER TRAINS AT CAMP BORDEN

BY JACK KNOWLES

Mention in the January 1991 Newsletter that CP Rail has received permission to abandon 3.21 miles of the Base Borden spur recalls the use made of that line in World War II. The spur branched off the MacTier Subdivision at Ypres and ran into the southeast part of the built-up portion of Camp Borden where there was a wye, with one line continuing west into the Royal Canadian Air Force lands at the south end of Borden, and the other line continuing north along the east edge of the army's built-up part of Borden to an end-on junction with the Canadian National Railways track coming in from Angus, the village located just outside the north edge of the military reserve.

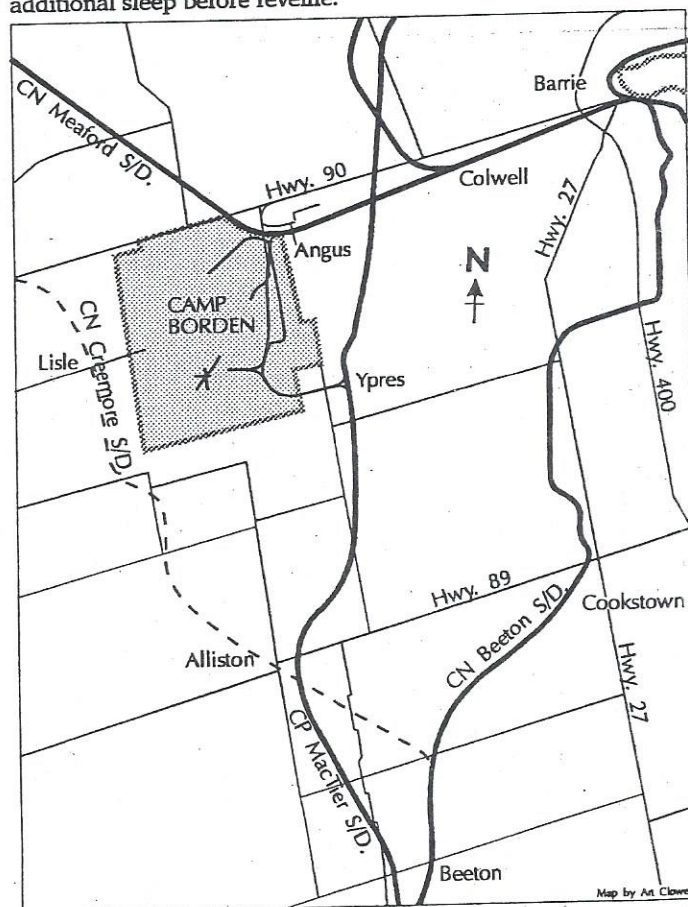
Camp Borden, then with the population of a small city, consisted mostly of one-storey frame buildings: barrack huts, officers' quarters, mess halls, military schools, and administration buildings, with a few larger buildings for RCAF or Ordnance use. Like most military reservations, Borden is on a sandy area unsatisfactory for agriculture. The military units were advanced training centres. Their trainees usually received a weekend leave pass every second weekend. With gasoline rationing for private automobiles after the spring 1942 and interurban bus lines restricted by wartime law to selling tickets for 40 miles or less, there was a substantial Friday midday exodus by rail from the camp every weekend with return late Sunday night. The troops chose their own routings and were sold reduced rate tickets. CPR got the bulk of the business, having the more direct route to Toronto. CNR did operate one leave train, but it was used mostly by troops making CNR connections.

Canadian Pacific's Camp Borden station consisted of two wooden express cars on a short piece of isolated track, with the car undersides closed in with planking from sills to ground level and broad stairways leading up to some of the large side doors. (Photo in January 1942 *Railroad Magazine*, page 129.) It was about midway up the line on the east side of Borden, and the CNR station was a few hundred yards further north, so that the two railways' leave trains loaded back to back on the same track. To serve the south end of Borden, CP had an additional stop called Bog Road, which had a roomy shed for a waiting shelter. The southeast part of the military reserve contained a wooded bog, and the stop was named after a minor east-west road running through the area. The CP track through the bog was on a good roadbed which was paralleled a stone's throw away to the northeast by an abandoned old roadbed. Probably the original roadbed had an unsatisfactory foundation, perhaps corduroy (logs laid crosswise in the bog with much brush thrown on top to hold the ballast). Bill Hood recalls going for route marches on the abandoned roadbed.

CP leave trains usually consisted of heavyweight steel coaches hauled by a 4-6-2. Occasionally steel colonist cars were used. As there was no other food service on such trains, the news vendor did a good business in confections. To do Camp Borden freight switching, CP assigned a D4g class 4-6-0 which tied up at night at the wye, where there were a water tower and a small coal pile. To provide connections on weekdays with passenger trains 25 and 26 on the MacTier Subdivision, the 4-6-0 galloped out to Ypres with a wooden combine. Also, Essa

station on Highway 90 was a brief bus ride from Borden. (This was CP's nearest station to Barrie.)

The return leave movement late Sunday evening occurred at a time when the lower concourse of Toronto Union Station was jammed with all kinds of other departing passengers and their friends seeing them off. The resulting congestion of people was so great that barriers were installed at the top of the ramp from the main hall to the lower concourse and only persons holding a valid ticket were allowed to pass. Thus family and friends had to bid farewell to their travellers in the main hall. The return leave trains usually departed right on the advertised but then stood for perhaps an hour out in the yard before passing the bottleneck under the Bathurst Street bridge. I recall making Sunday evening trips behind 4-6-2 No. 2400. After the stop at West Toronto station the servicemen settled down for some sleep until after wheels clattering over the CNR diamond at Alliston announced that Borden was not far away. Soon the troops detrained in their great numbers and dispersed through the dark camp, handing in their leave passes at their unit guard houses and reaching their barracks about 0300 hours for some additional sleep before reveille.



Troops who had completed their training were housed in barracks in the east-central part of the camp. When they departed in large drafts for east coast transit camps or on other overnight trips, the trains of either railway were composed of steel colonist cars without bedding or attendants. The cars were rather plain sleepers with self-service cooking facilities in one

end. These cars had been disused for their original purpose since the beginning of the 1930s depression, and I recall seeing some CN ones with a few broken windows and very shabby paint, stored on a siding up on the north edge of the old high line embankment just west of Spadina Avenue in Toronto. One 1930s depression era use was for hauling the unemployed young men from eastern cities who travelled to the prairie each year at harvest time to manually bring in the grain crops. Also, a few cars were equipped with window bars for handling transfers of penitentiary inmates.

When troops on draft marched to a train burdened with all their kit on their backs ("full marching order"), they were preceded by a military band, not an everyday occurrence. Having no railway bedding and only one issue field blanket, the soldiers on draft trains at night used their greatcoats in place of blankets. Harold Hartley has provided us with a description of a troop movement by rail in his "Reminiscences of a Military Railway Man," January 1989 Newsletter. I have made further brief comments on troop trains in a letter in the October 1989 issue of *Railfan and Railroad* magazine.

In fairness, it should be reported that conditions were improved when the troops came home after World War II in 1945. CN had refurbished the colonist cars inside with green fabric upholstery in place of leather or leatherette. This was the era when woodwork made dark by numerous coats of varnish was covered with light green paint. Bedding was by then being provided, and CN lettered the car exteriors "Armed Forces Sleeper." This lettering was later removed as colonist cars saw a further period of use hauling British and other war brides from east coast ports. Colonist cars had on occasion substituted for day coaches in general public service during the busiest wartime periods and for awhile after the end of the war. (In the 1950s some of these cars were made into combines to replace the wooden cars still running on branch-line mixed trains).

Canadian National Railways did not need to keep a locomotive at Camp Borden, as the large Allandale roundhouse was only a few miles away in what is now south Barrie. As previously mentioned, CN's access to Borden was from Angus, on the Allandale-Collingwood-Meaford branch. CN's Camp Borden station consisted of wooden baggage cars 8398 and 8369 set on an isolated short piece of track west of the main track. Living accommodation for the station staff was wooden colonist car 2674 nearby on a separate isolated piece of track east of the main track.

CNR avoided running weekday passenger shuttle trains by issuing transportation coupons good on Travers Coach Lines (the Barrie Camp Borden civilian operator) to passengers holding CNR tickets with Camp Borden or Angus destination. When I arrived in Camp Borden, TCL was operating six well worn buses numbered 3300, 5100, 5300, 6000, 6300, 6406. It transpired that Harry Travers had been a CNR fireman, and had numbered his buses after some of his favourite CNR (and GTW) steam locomotive classes.

Lisle station on CN's Beeton-Collingwood branch was close to the west road entrance into the Camp Borden lands, but the mixed train on that minor branch played no real part in serving the camp, as Lisle was quite remote from the built-up part of Borden.

CNR occasionally operated on a Sunday the "Sweethearts' Special," a passenger round trip from Toronto to give wives, girl friends and other family the opportunity to visit Camp Borden and view its facilities. One such train which I saw was double-headed by 4-6-2s 5303 and 5591.

Later in the war, station facilities of both railways were completely changed, with the line up the east side of the Camp being relocated eastward about 1,000 yards on an entirely new alignment through previously undeveloped land. Each railway had a station spur curving westwards through about 90 degrees from the new line, so that the two railways' leave trains now loaded side by side facing east instead of back to back facing north and south. Both railways then had proper station buildings.

CP Rail's rusty Base Borden spur of recent years, blocked with long strings of stored boxcars, gave little hint of its busy past.

NEWS OF THE MIDLAND AND COLDWATER RAILWAY PROJECT

An organisation has been formed, under the name of the Midland and Coldwater Railway Company Limited (January 1991 Newsletter), to attempt to obtain the Canadian National line between those points for passenger and freight service. CN is applying to abandon its Midland Subdivision between Midland and Uthoff, eight miles west of the junction with the Newmarket Subdivision at Orillia. The M&C is, apparently, not interested in the section between Uthoff and Coldwater.

Coldwater and Midland are 17 miles apart. Coldwater is the point where the CN Midland Subdivision connects with the CP Port McNicoll Subdivision, a short distance from its junction with the main north-south MacTier Subdivision at Medonté. Midland is a community of 10 000, located on Georgian Bay. Rail traffic outbound has recently taken a sharp decline, since several grain elevators were closed. Passenger service ended on this line in October 1958.

In common with other proposed and existing short lines, the M&C proponents evidently believe that the line could be successfully operated as an independent line, which would not be subject to CN's present operating costs. One of the company's directors is UCRS member Tom Barber, of Midland.

In their recent newsletter, the M&C report that they have received confirmation from the Ontario Ministry of Transportation that MTO will fund a feasibility study for the concept of an industrial and tourism railway on the Midland Subdivision. Meetings have been held and proposals are being called by the provincial Rail Office for a complete engineering analysis. This will include examination of the line, including structures such as bridges, consideration of upgrading, equipment and facilities, and the costs of operation. The report is due by April 1, 1991, for use by M&C in establishing a business plan and approach for capitalisation of the project.

The Board of Directors has authorised the issuance of 50 founder's shares of stock in the company, and a number of these have been bought by interested persons.

Assistance has been received from the North Simcoe Development Corporation, and the corporate office of the M&C is located at North Simcoe's address in Midland. It has been stated by M&C that abandonment of the line would result in a major increase of annoying truck traffic on Midland's streets.

M&C has been given reasonable assurance by MTO that the overpass of Highway 69 over the Midland Subdivision will not be eliminated to force the closure of the railway line. Current indications are that this bridge will remain, when highway widening takes place within the next few years.

-John D. Thompson

CAMP BORDEN IN 1944

BY WILLIAM HOOD

Reading Jack Knowles's article on Camp Borden passenger trains in the April 1991 issue of the Newsletter prompted me to jot down a few of my recollections of the facilities at Borden and the events leading up to them at the time I was stationed there.

I joined the army in May of 1944, and after a brief stay of a week at the Canadian National Exhibition grounds for indoctrination into the armed forces way of life (i.e., sleeping on steel double bunk beds in Horse Palace stalls), we were shipped off by the Canadian Pacific Railway to Peterborough for basic training.

Peterborough was a fairly interesting city in 1944, with quite a number of trains both passing through and originating in the city on both the Canadian Pacific and Canadian National Railways, and I spent as much spare time as I had stopping by the stations to observe the trains. There were always two wooden coaches parked on a siding just east of the CPR station. Sometimes they would disappear for a day and then reappear to take up their appointed position on the siding. I eventually found out that they were used to move troops out from Peterborough after they had completed their basic training.

When we had spent two months completing our basic training we were told one night that we would be moving out the next morning for advanced training at Camp Borden. At 5:00 that morning, several platoons of soldiers were assembled on the parade square in full marching order with back packs and kit bags, and we proceeded up George Street to the CPR station. There I found my two wooden friends had been coupled to the rear of a train standing in the station. The train turned out to be No. 601, a daily except Sunday local from Peterborough to Toronto, scheduled to leave at 7:10 a.m. and to arrive in Toronto at 9:15 a.m. We were all loaded onto the two cars and we settled down for the leisurely trip to Toronto.

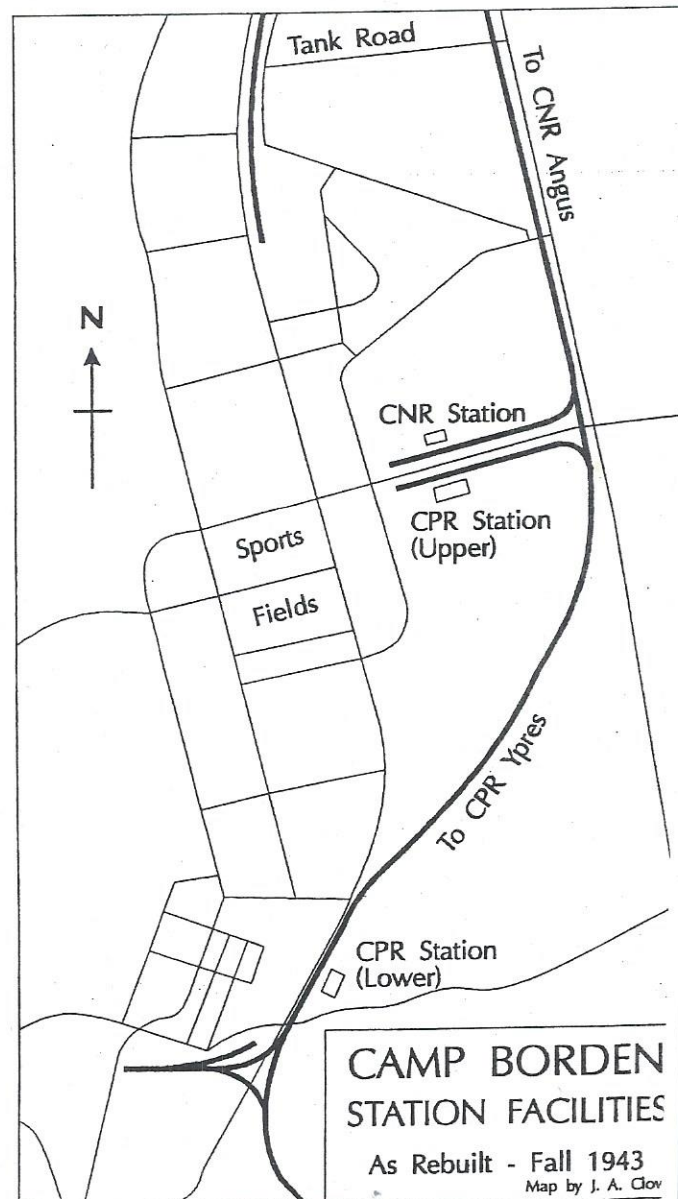
On arriving at Toronto Union Station we were told to unload quickly and crossed the platform to where another train was standing, with three wooden coaches on the rear. We were loaded onto the rear two cars. This was CPR train No. 25, a daily except Sunday run from Toronto to Sudbury, scheduled to depart at 9:20 a.m. and to arrive in Sudbury at 5:55 p.m. This train is shown in the June 25, 1944, schedule as having a through coach from Toronto to Camp Borden, which turned out to be the third wooden coach on the end, ahead of our two special cars.

No. 25 departed Toronto and we proceeded on the next leg of our journey. Two hours later, the train arrived at the Ypres wye at 11:20 a.m. The three cars on the end of the train were cut off on the main line between the two legs of the wye, and the remainder of the train continued on to Sudbury. At this point, an ancient D4g 4-6-0 which had been waiting on the south leg of the wye pulled out onto the main line and coupled up, nose first, to our three cars. We were then pulled back clear of the south-leg switch, the switch was lined up for the wye, and we were on our way for the last 4.5 miles of our journey. I can still recall hearing the mournful drawn-out whistle of the little 4-6-0 blowing for the grade crossings as it pushed the cars along. Fifteen minutes later we arrived at the south Camp Borden station by the R.C.A.F. barracks, presumably to let some passengers off the coach from Toronto, after which the train continued on for the last mile to the north station.

We finally pulled up in front of the CPR station where I

had my first glimpse of the famous Camp Borden I had heard and read so much about. There was a large paved area where we got off, roughly 100 feet wide, with the CPR tracks on the south side and the Canadian National tracks on the north side. The station facilities were completely different. The CNR station was a single-storey building with a small passenger waiting room and a baggage room. The Canadian Pacific station, however, was a large two-storey structure with ample passenger and baggage areas. I later found out the reason for this difference in size.

What I will call the Camp Borden "main line" ran along the east side of the camp, about a thousand feet or so from the station area. Both railways had a spur branching off the "main line" into their respective stations, the CNR coming in from the north and the CPR from the south (see map). As has already been mentioned, the CPR line connected with the rest of the system at Ypres, while the Canadian National ran north to Angus where it connected with the Meaford-Collingwood line



to Allandale (Barrie). These stations had not been built when Jack Knowles was at Borden. Another UCRS member, Dick Vincent, was at Borden in the fall of 1943, and he states that work was just being started on the buildings when he left, so that when I arrived there in the middle of July 1944 the stations were still quite new.

Now for the difference in the size of the stations. As Jack remarked in his article, every second Friday noon there was a mass exodus from the camp as most servicemen were granted a weekend pass good until Sunday night. As most men wanted the most direct way to Toronto, they chose the CPR, so there was always a 12 or 14 car train of steel coaches waiting at the station. This train usually had a Hudson on the head end, either a standard or a Royal Hudson. The station staff were kept busy selling military tickets prior to train time. The CNR train on the other side at its station, however, consisted of three or four wooden cars pulled by a light Pacific. This train was used mostly by servicemen wanting connections to other CNR trains. The only times I ever saw a large train on the National side was when a draft of troops was being shipped out to the east coast, at which time there would be anywhere from 10 to 15 steel colonist cars lined up, as mentioned in Jack's story.

Sunday evening, at the conclusion of the weekend pass, the return train was scheduled to depart Toronto Union at 11:30 p.m. However, in contrast to the steel cars leaving Borden on Friday, the return train was usually made up of wooden coaches with gas lighting. This was all well and good, since the dim lighting let the troops have a bit of sleep on the way back to the barracks. Depending on how quickly the train was able to clear the Toronto yards, we usually arrived back in Borden around 2:00 a.m. On the return trip the train did not back into Borden, but proceeded directly in, engine first, to save time, after which it would back out the 4.5 miles to Ypres.

I had an opportunity to use the through coach to Toronto on two occasions. In September of 1944 I was transferred to Kingston for a specialised course. We boarded the coach at the north station at 1:15 p.m. with the D4g at the head end and proceeded to the north leg of the wye at Ypres to await the arrival of southbound No. 26 from Sudbury. When the train came to a stop at 1:45, we were coupled on the rear and were soon on our way to Toronto. When we returned to Borden in November the trip was made in reverse, with the through car being picked up at the wye and pushed back to the camp.

I was soon to say goodbye to Camp Borden. Just after New Year's Day, 1945, a large draft, including myself, was assembled and we headed out to Camp Debart, Nova Scotia, on one of the colonist car-equipped Canadian National troop trains. This was the last I ever saw of Camp Borden in that familiar configuration.

In 1957 the through coach to Camp Borden (by then listed in the timetables as N.A.C. - Not Air Conditioned) was dropped from the schedule and replaced by a through RDC service, trains No. 309 northbound and No. 310 southbound. On Saturday, April 15, 1959, I decided to visit the camp again, and so travelled on car 9110 to Borden. The RDC just went as far as the south station, arriving there at 1:15 p.m., even though the north station was still listed. However, the north station was dropped from the listing effective with the April 24, 1960, timetable. October 29, 1961, saw the service into Borden eliminated from the schedule altogether, and subsequent timetables simply showed Alliston with "Camp Borden" in italicised letters beside.

I have not been to Camp Borden since that 1959 trip, so I do not know how the facilities changed after that. Perhaps some other member could add a follow-up. ■

NEWS FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE

In September 1984, Guilford Transportation Industries (GTI), operated the last work extra from St. Johnsbury, Vermont, to Rigby Yard in Portland, Maine, over the Mountain Division of the former Maine Central Railroad (MEC). The railroad through Crawford Notch in New Hampshire's White Mountains, once the Maine Central's western outlet to its Canadian Pacific Railway connection at St. Johnsbury, Vermont, was downgraded and subsequently abandoned after GTI rerouted traffic over the Boston and Maine and Delaware and Hudson Railroads.

Since then, the eastern part of the Mountain Division has become overgrown with weeds, bushes, and second-growth trees. At least two landslides, one major washout, and a fallen boulder currently obstruct the track through Crawford Notch. Until recently, there seemed to be little possibility that this very scenic line would ever see trains again.

Then on April 5, 1991, William Hunscher, a local businessman, announced that he would purchase from GTI 23 miles of the line from Bartlett, New Hampshire, through Crawford North, to Bretton Woods, near Fabyans, New Hampshire.

Mr. Hunscher added that he hoped to have diesel-powered trains of classic coaches running on a two-hour round trip between Bartlett and Fabyans by June 1992. He did not offer any hope that a restored steam locomotive might be brought to the new Mountain Division railroad soon.

Mr. Hunscher was one of a group of private investors who negotiated unsuccessfully last year to buy the Conway Scenic Railroad of North Conway, New Hampshire. The CSRR has a connection with the former Maine Central's Mountain Division at Intervale, New Hampshire, 9.1 miles south of Bartlett.

Mr. Hunscher and GTI reportedly agreed separately on trackage rights over the ex-MEC from Fabyans west to Whitefield, New Hampshire, and a connection with the New Hampshire and Vermont Railroad, onward to Gilman, New Hampshire, and St. Johnsbury, Vermont, the latter railroad currently operated by the Lamoille Valley Railroad Corporation.

No announcement was made regarding the purchase price for the 26 miles of mountain railroad through Crawford Notch nor of Mr. Hunscher's financial arrangements.

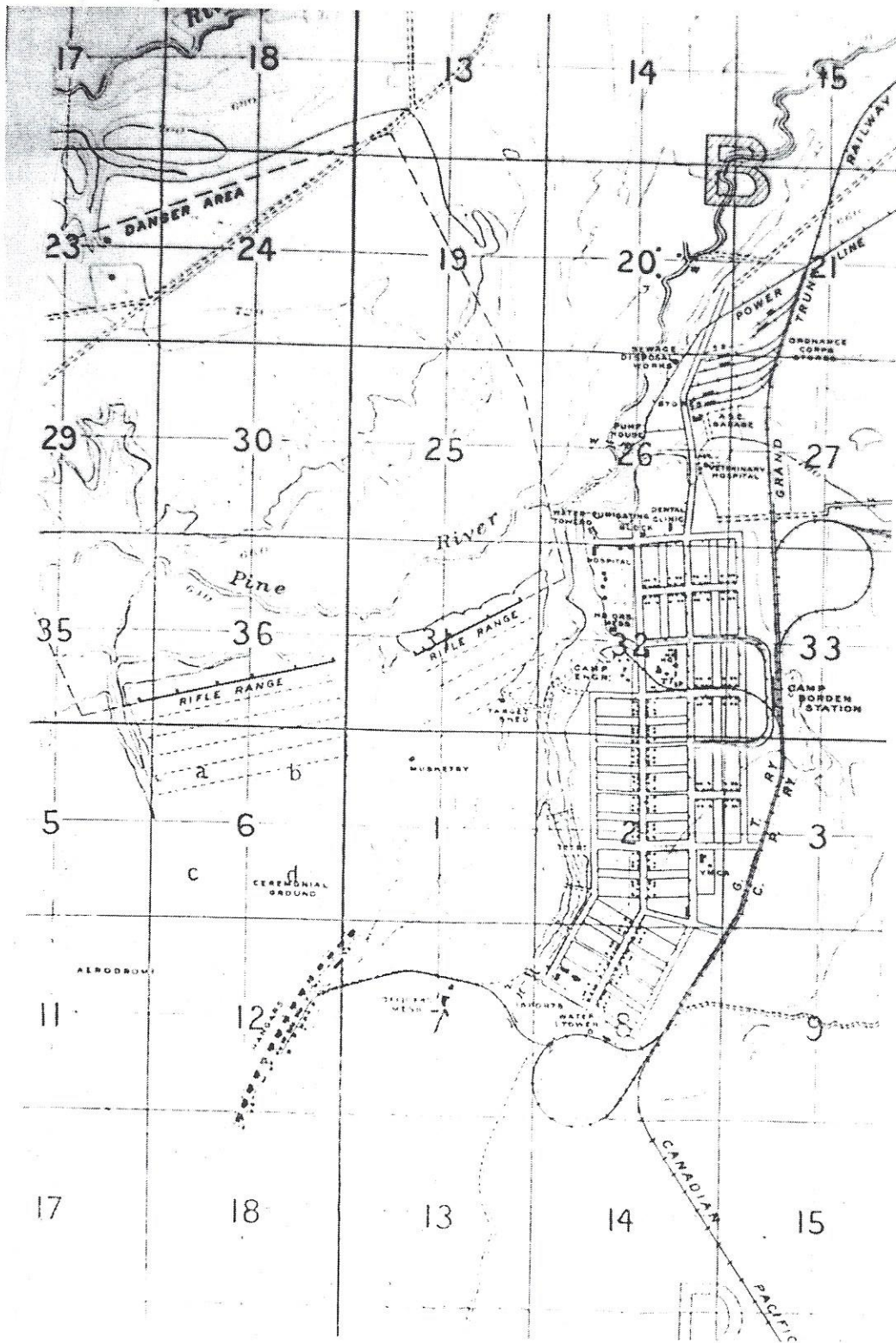
GTI said it would begin formal abandonment procedures for the Mountain Division soon and anticipated that this would take 30 to 60 days. Last year, GTI notified towns along the former MEC line from Westbrook, Maine, to Whitefield, New Hampshire, that abandonment of the Mountain Division was intended. While the state of New Hampshire has first refusal to purchase abandoned rail rights in the state, New Hampshire State Transportation Commissioner Charles O'Leary said the state would waive this right in favour of Mr. Hunscher's project.

GTI president David Fink said that his corporation had been trying to find a way to preserve the Mountain Division since the cessation of rail service in 1984 and hoped that the purchase and sale agreement and completion of abandonment proceedings would clear the way for restoration of rail passenger service through Crawford Notch.

While the agreement with GTI includes the remaining buildings in the Bartlett area, there is no indication that the buildings and yards would be developed as a base operations. It was recognised that a zoning variance would be necessary from the Town of Bartlett, since the former MEC yard area is now designated as a residential area.

-Sandy Worthen, with reports from H. Arnold Wilder, Manchester Union-Leader, Conway Sun, Carroll County Reporter

The History of Camp Borden
1916-1918 971.317 Ham P.L



Map of Borden, showing Army and Airforce section.