

# Local Railway Items from Area Papers - Brockville subdivision

*10/08/1881 Ottawa Free Press Brockville*

Account of excursion Ottawa-Brockville.

*11/10/1881 Ottawa Free Press Brockville*

The Brockville Recorder gets off the following: One of our back country exchanges announces the recent construction of a new car on the Canada Pacific for the exclusive use of shantymen, and says it is large and high. There ought to be a bar in both ends and the rest left for a battleground.

*13/01/1882 Renfrew Mercury Brockville*

It is said that hereafter the line between Brockville and Ottawa will be devoted more largely to passenger traffic and that between Prescott and Ottawa to freight traffic, the new order of things dating from last Monday, when the syndicate took possession of the latter road. It is also stated that hereafter, when the Grand Trunk is late from the West, the train will not wait at Brockville. If this be true, it is another illustration of the remarkably deficient designing powers of the C.P.R. The country to be served between Brockville and Mactier has more claims than that between Prescott and Ottawa, and if wither ought to wait for the Western Grand trunk it surely ought to be the C.P.R. - Central Canadian.

*27/01/1882 Renfrew Mercury Brockville*

The statement that the C.P.R. express leaving Brockville in the afternoon will not wait for the G.T.R. train when late has been denied by Mr. Baker, who says connections will be made as usual.

*22/05/1882 Brockville Recorder Brockville*

We have, in our short and uneventful career, heard of runaway girls, runaway horses, runaway metches and even runaway engines, but it remained for our maturer years to hear of a runaway railway car. Such a curiosity came to light on Saturday, and ??respects resulted more seriously than the majority of runaways. During the afternoon there lay, among other cars, on the track of the Canadian Pacific Railway, above the junction, a box car loaded with black oil. It was couled, but was detached while shunting. While a brakeman named Law was on the car the brake, by some means, became broken or loose and the ? commenced. The grade is considerable at the point of starting and in a few moments the fully laden fugitive was under full headway. The line was open, the brake refused to work, and Law in a few moments found himself going through the inky blackness of the tunnel at a 20 mile an hour gait. There did not seem to be any way stations and Law had no chance to stop for orders. Daylight very soon appeared again and as the car emerged from the darkness the true nature of his peril was revealed. The main line was connected with the track leading to the "Armstrong" ? and on this track the pilot engine, with engineer O'Brien on board was standing. As soon as he saw the situation and realised that a collision was inevitable ? jumped? and the car ? into the pilot. A shower of splinters and a crash that rattled the windows of the station building ? an inspection which revealed no broken bones but the car was seen to be in bad shape. The whole end was ? in and the oil was pouring in black ? through crevices of the deck into the river. Law received no serious injury, and O'Brien who stood at his post, like a "brick" also escaped unhurt. Had the engine not been on the track the probability is that the cabin would have been torn out of the "Armstrong" and the whole cargo dumped in the river.

*28/07/1882 Ottawa Citizen Brockville*

The half past eleven freight train on the Brockville branch, when one mile south of Smiths Falls, collided with a special locomotive and tender coming from Brockville. Engineer Burns was killed. Some ten freight cars were damaged as well as both locomotives. A special carrying Sir John Macdonald arrived shortly after the collision, but returned to Ottawa after an hour's delay. More.

*29/07/1882 Brockville Recorder Brockville*

Only having a few minutes in which to give notice of the disaster on the C.P.R. yesterday before going to press, our report was gained hurriedly and was therefore quite inaccurate. It was nearly six o'clock this morning before anyone reached the scene of the accident, and not until that hour could accurate be obtained concerning the affair.

It now seems that Burns collided with the freight train, and not the express as stated yesterday, and he was running a single engine out at the time. He left here about 11 o'clock with a special engine carrying a white flag cleared for Carleton Place. He stopped at Irish Creek, and was there, it is said, given a clearance for Smiths Falls. About 1½ miles this side of Smiths Falls, while rounding a bad curve, he met freight train No. 39 with 21 loaded flat cars, and though the special was running comparatively easy at the time, the smash which followed is described as terrific. The whole cylinder of the special was torn from its platform and both engines left the track. They met just over a culvert at the crossing and as the engines fell into the hole the loaded cars piled one above the other into the wreck. Of the whole train of 21 cars, 16 were smashed, 12 being so completely ruined that they will likely be burned beside the track today. They included rolling stock of the C.P.R., New York Central, Grand Trunk and Utica and Black River Railways. Both engines were also torn to pieces, the headlights being compressed together into a space only a few inches in thickness.

The first thing to do after the accident happened was to look for casualties, and search was at once made for the missing. All hands turned up except Engineer Burns, and in three or four minutes the poor fellow was found beneath the ruins of his engine, still alive, but so horribly burned and crushed as to leave no doubt as to his having met his death blow. When the engines came together he had been thrown against the boiler head and there held while the whole contents of the heated boiler poured from the broken gauge glass directly over his body, liberally parboiling him from the waist up. He was taken out and conveyed to a farm house where he lingered in great agony for about 9½ hours, when death ended his sufferings.

Joe Burke, the fireman of the special, jumped when he saw the freight ahead and escaped almost miraculously. He says that as soon as the freight was sighted he told Burns of his intention to jump. Burns said nothing but at once applied the brake to the tender and seemed ready to jump as well. Just before Burke took the ? he saw Burns give the brake lever another turn as if to still further check the speed and then all was drowned in the crash. Horbridge, of Ottawa, the driver of the freight, stuck to his post and was unhurt. His fireman, young Kelly, jumped and only received a few scratches. The brakeman, George Cavanagh, of Smiths Falls, also jumped and was bruised about the head and shoulders. Kelly, the conductor, also escaped injury.

Of course, to everyone, it is apparent that someone had blundered, but just upon (rest illegible).

*31/07/1882 Ottawa Citizen Brockville*

Citizen July 31, 1882. A careful investigation into the accident leaves no doubt that the affair was the fault of the unfortunate engineer Burns, the only person who fatally suffered as a result of the accident.

Mr. Burns, the engineer, was at the time of the accident, returning from Brockville with his engine having gone to that place with a special. He had special instructions to keep the train under his charge clear of all trains and obeyed these orders until he left Irish Creek, about seven miles from Smiths Falls. Here he totally disregarded what had been told him, and instead of waiting there for the regular freight from Carleton Place then almost due, should pass him he pushed on at a high rate of speed in the expectation of reaching the next station before it had left.

More.

**30/09/1882 Brockville Recorder Brockville Brockville**

A car containing the boats used by our oarsmen at Carleton Place on Thursday was noticed this morning at the C.P.R. yard. After the men pay \$16.00, the cost of transportation to and from Carleton Place they will not have much prize money left. (Branchline).

**11/12/1882 Brockville Recorder Brockville**

On Saturday night a pitch-in occurred at the semaphore of the Canadian Pacific, just outside the town limits, between two special freight trains. One was standing on the track when the second dashed into the rear. The van and one of the freight cars on the first train were demolished and a third torn from the tracks. Traffic is said to have been delayed for a couple of hours.

**15/01/1883 Ottawa Citizen Brockville Brockville**

The rumour is again revived that the Canadian Pacific Railway contemplates putting a 400 foot extension to their lumber dock at Brockville, extending it up the river for that distance and then arranging their tracks as to unload direct from the cars to the barges or vessels. There can be no doubt that such an improvement would meet with the heartiest approval from shippers and vessel men as it would obviate much of the trouble which now exists. It would also form quite a large and safe harbour for shipping.

**06/05/1883 Brockville Recorder Brockville Brockville loop**

It was expected at a meeting of town (Brockville) council this evening, a plan by Canadian Pacific Railway engineers who surveyed the proposed right of way to the river would be submitted. (Branchline).

**17/08/1883 Brockville Recorder Brockville Brockville**

Yesterday afternoon some evil disposed boys clambered to the top of a car comprising part of a CPR freight train, which stood on the siding north of the junction, and loosened the brakes. In consequence, the whole train was started down the grade and ran over the switch, nearly telescoping the operator's office at the freight shed and causing a delay of several minutes to the incoming express.

**01/06/1884 Brockville Recorder Brockville Brockville**

Between 40 and 50 navvies employed on the new river extension of the Canadian Pacific struck this morning for higher wages. They were getting \$1.20 per day and demanded \$1.40. Mr. Hornick, the foreman, refused to comply with the demand and at once telegraphed to HQ for further orders. It is said the place of strikers can be filled in 24 hours with men who are willing to accept the old rates, and the work is not likely to stop for any length of time.

**05/07/1884 Brockville Times Brockville Brockville**

The wooden building which has been doing duty at the Hochelaga depot of the CPR at Montreal, is to be taken down and removed to Brockville, at which place it will be erected to answer for a general passenger station at the new west end pier. It is expected that the CPR passenger trains will, as soon as the piers are completed, be run down to the wharf and make direct connection with the Armstrong. By this movement, passengers will not have any delay here. For some time to come it is expected that the freight business will be done at the old quarters.

**19/10/1884 Brockville Recorder Brockville Brockville**

The confessions of Morgan, the CPR brakeman who robbed the mail, shows that most of the bags in use can be robbed without any evidence that such has been done. This revelation has produced consternation in the post office department in Ottawa and will probably lead to the bags being called in and more secure ones issued for use. Morgan passed through here today on his way to penitentiary.

**27/02/1885 Renfrew Mercury Brockville Brockville**

While a number of the C.P.R. cars were being shunted at Brockville, on Monday of last week, the four rear cars broke loose and descended a grade leading to the Armstrong's slip. Being loaded with cheese the trunks gained a considerable momentum by the time they dashed aboard the boat which was moored at the time. Fortunately there were two cars on the boat which so checked the speed of the runaways that the bulkhead at the end of the boat, though partially smashed by the collision, stopped the whole lot from going into the river, thus averting a serious accident.

**12/06/1886 Brockville Recorder Brockville Brockville**

The schooner Pride of America is expected here today with a huge cargo of railway coal.

**06/08/1886 Brockville Recorder Brockville Brockville**

The first direct consignment of tea from Yokohama to Brockville - eight cars for New York - arrived 42 days out of Yokohama.

**18/11/1886 The Equity, Bryson Brockville Bellamy's**

The Canadian Pacific Railway station at Bellamy's was destroyed by fire on Saturday. The loss will exceed \$2,000. The origin of the fire is unknown.

**20/04/1887 Ottawa Citizen Brockville**

The examination of Mr. H.B. Spencer in the case of McCarthy vs. Canadian Pacific was heard yesterday before Mr. Festmeryton. The case will be tried at Brockville at the next session to be holden there.

**09/02/1892 Renfrew Mercury Brockville**

A passenger car has been attached to the weigh freight train running daily between Brockville and Carleton Junction.

**01/09/1892 Brockville Recorder Brockville Brockville**

The new train arrangement on the C.P.R. is proving quite a convenience for people living between here and Carleton Place. A passenger car is attached to the regular freight train leaving here at 6 p.m. for Carleton Place and a similar train arrives here from Carleton Place at 11.45 a.m.

**05/10/1893 Brockville Recorder Brockville Brockville**

The Samuel Rogers Oil Company, of Toronto, have purchased the old Shepherd mill at the foot of Mill street, and will use it as a warehouse with the intention of making Brockville a distribution point for a large section. A portion of the rocky land in the rear has been secured with the mill, and the C.P.R. will run in a switch from their pier extension. The oil will be brought in tank cars and barrelled here. The firm is a large concern with extensive business connections and it will mean quite an addition to Brockville.

**15/02/1894 Brockville Recorder Brockville Brockville**

Monday night's storm.

A delay of about two hours was caused the outgoing C.P.R. express this morning, but this is said to have been due to an attempt made during the night to run a light engine, tender first, into town from the round house.

**20/07/1894 Brockville Recorder Brockville Brockville**

On Monday afternoon a gang of masons under the direction of Foreman Ross, of Ottawa, arrived here and proceeded to do some necessary work on the interior of the C.P.R. tunnel. The masonry of the arch has been gradually giving out of late years and repairs were considered imperative. The men are now working at the rock cut end.

On Monday night baggageman Franklin attempted to eject from the mixed train when a short distance south of Smiths Falls, three tramps who were beating their way from Ottawa to Brockville. They resisted and a scuffle ensued.

Franklin defended himself with his lantern which was finally smashed to atoms. He succeeded in putting them off, however, and gave the signal for the train to proceed. The tramps at once pulled revolvers and opened fire on him, but owing to the darkness did not get good aim and he escaped uninjured.

A number of bullets were afterwards found embedded in the car. Word of the affair was at once sent to Smiths Falls and a party was organized to go in search of the tramps, but no trace of them could be found.

There was not a little excitement at the C.P.R. dock Monday afternoon over the loss of a 48 pound cheese, which in being unloaded from the steamer Massena, slipped from a truck and rolled into the river. There is about fifteen feet of water at about the point where the boat lay and as the cheese sank like a stone, it looked as though Capt. Dana was out the price of the lost box and its contents. He was not however, as Harry Trussell and some of his companions fished it up by the aid of a coal scoop and some pike poles, and sold it back to the agent for \$1.25.

Something of a bombshell was thrown into the camp of the local C.P.R. employees last week by the announcement from headquarters that the freight house of the company, located for many years near the union depot was to be closed up at once and that as a result, several men would lose their positions. It is proposed, we understand, to so all the transferring henceforth at the dock depot which will of course necessitate much more work through the tunnel. By the new rule about seven men will lose employment, among the number being Mr. M.J. Reid, who for 13 years past has occupied the position of chief clerk at the dock shed and whose ability and courtesy during that time has made him a host of business friends. His place will be filled by Mr. Wm. Coburn, who for a longer period has filled a similar position at the Union depot shed. Charles Marquette, employed in the dock warehouse, is also cut off the list. Mr. Reid severs his connection with the road tomorrow night.

Poor Condition of CPR Loop Line

It is rumoured Monday that the CPR intends discarding its west end track for its own traffic, but will use the tunnel exclusively in getting to the waterfront. It is also said that cars to and from the BW&SSM will be ferried from the upper dock to the lower one by the CPR boat.

Some time ago, the local board of trade took up the question of an improvement in the Abbott street and long trestle bridges of the CPR loop line, both of them being reported in a dangerous condition. At the time of action it was reported that the CPR was about to abandon this line altogether and a meeting of the board was called for tonight to talk over the matter. The question, however, seems to have reached the ears of the CPR officials as Superintendent Mooney of the BW&SSM was yesterday notified by Mr. H.B. Spencer that the bridges would be put in order at once.

Visit of Lord and Lady Minto to Brockville.

Mr. Bowie Tells How the CPR Got Control of the River Front (ER) A Matter of Great Importance to the People of Brockville. Editor Recorder: Dear Sir. As one being a party to transactions referred to in letters appearing in your paper, I trust the reading and interested citizens will bear with me in placing facts before them which may be used or not as they or their representatives may see fit.

As to a public wharf or river park referred to, located east of pumping station, I quite agree with Mr. McMullen that that situation for a public wharf is not the best. West of the piers certainly would be better. But for argument sake, say that east of the pumping station be decided on, what would it cost to buy property and place piers and wharfing sufficient to furnish fourteen feet of water? Piers 400 feet in length would be required to run out fully fifty feet. The cost of these would be \$15,000 or \$20,000. These piers would require renewing every ten or fifteen years at a cost of not less than \$2,000. Now sir, are the financial affairs of this town, with its present very high rate of taxation, such as would justify such an expenditure at this moment? The taxpayer must answer this question.

As to the CPR, if the railway commission is empowered to relieve a trampled on public by judicially deciding transactions made and agreed upon, upon honor, then it is high time for the municipal representatives of this corporation to select and elect a committee empowered to secure all information possible touching on our grievances and failure of CPR to carry out all bargains made with this corporation, and refer same to the best legal light of this country to ascertain, once and for all, if we have a case or not. If the case is proved, as many old citizens who know the transaction think it can be, then it should be followed up before the railway commission for their judgement. Thus we will find out our rights and get redress if we are entitled to any.

The original bargain with the Brockville and Ottawa railway, whose charter covers all that portion of the CPR system to Perth and Pembroke, was that all works shops must be erected and kept up within the then limits of the town of Brockville. They were given the Soldier's Island on which to erect work shops. They were to erect piers and keep the same up, where present piers are to be seen today, leaving an opening in said pier system so that the flow of water would not be interfered with, so as to prevent as much as possible stagnation of water in Tunnel bay. Prior to building the present CPR piers these lots on Tunnel bay faced open and live water. Many are under the impression that this was settled by legislation; that being relieved of our indebtedness of \$400,000 to the government, this legislation let us out and cost nothing. Such is not the case. While we were relieved of the \$400,000 indebtedness, our being indebted to the government precluded us from getting our fair share of the municipal loan fund, and what our fair share of this fund should have been we lost and never got.

Mr. A. Baker, an official of the CPR called on many of the citizens of this town, urging them to arrange for a spur to the river by the west end, largely because the style of passenger cars required were unable to pass through the tunnel. This agitation on his part led to a committee being appointed consisting of E.H. Halladay, W.H. Comstock and R. Bowie, empowered to proceed to Montreal and interview the CPR authorities and find out from them what they desired and required from this corporation in connection with building this spur, which would be of mutual benefit. As per Mr. Baker's arrangement, this committee proceeded to Montreal and met Mr. Duncan McIntyre, a director of the CPR, in one of the offices of the CPR Co, and who no doubt was fully authorized to represent the CPR (future expenditure in connection with the scheme agreed upon proving this.)

The writer being personally acquainted and known to Mr. McIntyre as an old commercial traveller, when meeting him as the big magnate of the CPR, asked him to get down to square and honest talk and let us know what the CPR wanted of the town of Brockville; if reasonable and fair, we certainly would give it our recommendation and support. He leaned back and said: "Well, Bob, if the town of Brockville will purchase the right-of-way and give same to us free of cost from our present rails, leading to the tunnel via the west end to the river front west, (while we know the building of this spur to pass under the GTR system, etc, will cost a lot of money in addition to the building of the spur) we propose to and will build a million bushel elevator, we will place a car ferry on the route to Morristown capable of taking one passenger train in one trip to Morristown, we will build our pier system from the Shepherd front out into the river far enough to run straight east to connect with the old system of piers, one opening to be left which opening was to be always kept open and only shut when actually required to cross by railway people; piers to built of such height as to allow rowboats to pass under; car and repair shops to be erected at or near Brockville".

After Mr. McIntyre had made a statement as above, the writer asked him to kindly give us this in writing so that we might show the same in black and white to those who had sent us to represent them. He smiled and replied that it had cost the CPR too much already for putting propositions of this kind on paper, and if their word and honor was not sufficient to satisfy the people of Brockville then there was no more need of talking on the subject. Naturally the first thought that cropped up in our minds was what would the right-of-way cost. At this stage of the proceedings, and when we thought the right-of-way would cross a farm of Mr. Comstock's, he (Mr Comstock) stated he would give the right-of-way for nothing over any land of his that might be required.

With this as a start, and believing others would meet this move in a fair reasonable spirit, (in which I must confess we were very much disappointed), and knowing that the scheme would remove a scourge and drawback to the whole west end of this town, the filthy and foul Kingston pond then existing, we accepted his proposition by stating that we would return and use our best endeavors to have a bylaw passed for a sufficient amount to pay for the right-of-way. This we did, and by the cooperation of Mr. W.H. Jones and his many friends whom he rallied to support of what we all thought one of the best schemes ever presented to the town, it was carried. The right-of-way was bought and paid for, but held in trust till such time as the CPR fulfilled their part of the contract. Is it in trust yet?

Now sir, it is up to this point what does the word and honor of a corporation like the CPR amount to? Read their promises and look and see how much of it has been fulfilled, and each one can answer the question. Such object lessons, unfortunately, are the education of the rising generation, and word of honor, I am very sorry to say, does not appear to exist at the moment as I recognized it in the old men of my younger days.

I trust what I am placing before the public may assist the authorities in arriving at some conclusion whereby this corporation may secure justice and that some benefit may yet accrue to us from honorable intentions and fulfillments of contracts on our part, if only to the extent of securing and giving all railway systems of this place right-of-way to the river front over west end spur. Yours respectfully, R. Bowie, Brockville, Aug 8, 1904.

A farmer, named Johnson, hauling a load of wood into Brockville today had a miraculous escape from being killed. He was caught on the Perth Street crossing, the scene of several accidents, by a CPR express, which cut the sleigh and its load away from the driver and horses and carried it a hundred yards before stopping.

Johnson was sitting on the front of the load and when the collision occurred the traces snapped and he was dragged clear of the rails. He was considerably injured.

D. McNicholl, First vice-president of the C.P.R. accompanied by Mr. J.W. Leonard assistant general manager, paid a visit to Brockville yesterday afternoon and for three hours thoroughly inspected the company's premises.

One of the big features considered by Mr. McNicholl was the deepening of the tunnel through the town to the water front, and improvements to the wharf and buildings, which, he promised, would receive immediate consideration.

An old building north of the town, formerly used as a freight shed, he recommended, be removed.

**16/04/1908    *Chesterville Record*                      *Brockville*    *Brockville***

Orders were received at Brockville last week that the CPR pilot engine was to be removed from that yard to Carleton Place. The company will do the shunting with their freight locomotives. The crew of the pilot will be given position on the main line should they decide to accept.

**16/08/1909    *Ottawa Journal*                                      *Brockville*    *Brockville***

While nine Holstein cattle were being driven to the C.P.R. freight shed to be shipped to Ottawa one of the animals fell through the decayed dock into the river. Under the wharf it was in great danger until it was lasooed. With assistance the cow was got out into the river where it was made to swim a couple of hundred yards before a suitable landing was reached. The herd was purchased in this vicinity by R.F. Slater of Ottawa.

**29/07/1910    *Eastern Ontario Review*                      *Brockville***

It is the intention of the C.P.R. to construct waiting rooms at all crossings along the Ottawa-Brockville line providing a petition of the farmers is sent in asking for the same.

**29/07/1910    *Renfrew Mercury*                                      *Brockville***

It is the intentin of the C.P.R. construct waiting rooms at all crossings along the Brockville-Ottawa line providing a petition of the farmers is sent in asking for the same.

**05/08/1910    *Eastern Ontario Review*                      *Brockville*    *Fairfield***

Brockville, Ont., July 29 - The C.P.R. Ottawa express, after leaving here this morning, narrowly escaped being dirchd north of Fairfield by an axle of the engine breaking. The engineer detected the trouble in time and shut off steam and prevented a derailment. The train and passengers were delayed until an engine was brought from Smith's Falls.

**30/08/1912    *Renfrew Mercury*                                      *Brockville***

Conductor Chapman has a souvenir which is getting to be eligible for the antiquarian section. It is a timetable of the old. B. & O. in the period when the world girdling C.P.R. ran from just Brockville to Sand Point. --the road had but five locomotives -- They were named the Mississippi, the Madawasca and the Tay. The fourth did some sputtering shunting in Brockville, and the fifth was a reserve force. The Tay worked the Perth branch. There were twenty four box cars, three passenger coaches amd a combination car. -- Central Canadian.

**10/02/1914    *Rideau Record*    *Brockville***

Wm. Stephenson, for thirty years a conductor in the service of the C.P.R. twenty-four of which were in the passenger service between Brockville and Ottawa has retired on pension. Mr. Stephenson, who is known to hundreds of the company's patrons, started his railroad career with the Grand Trunk.

**17/08/1926    *Ottawa Journal*    *Brockville*    *water***

Supplement on centenary of Ottawa. Article on construction of the Brockville and Ottawa.

On a day early in January, 1959, it was announced that the first passenger train was ready to move over the rails from Brockville to Perth...The party left Brockville in two miniature passenger coaches hauled by a wood-burning locomotive, puny in comparison with its successors, at nine o'clock upon a January morning, so bitterly cold that four hours earlier the thermometer is reputed to have stood at 40 degrees below zero. All went well until Smiths Falls was reached, the trip being made at an easy rate over a road in first class condition except for a few miles south of that town which were yet to be ballasted. Then the trouble began

Snow Blocks Trains

The line between Smiths Falls and Perth had not been run over for a few days and snow which had fallen in the interval had become part and parcel of the rails under the influence of a slight rain which, with the frost, had converted it into ice. When the little train attempted to proceed after having left Smiths Falls at eleven o'clock, the wheels revolved but would not grip. After several attempts had been made, each attended by complete failure, an order was made to back up to the station in order that the excursionists might dine while another locomotive was despatched over the line to give battle to the ice and snow itself. Dinner over, another start was made with little improvement. The cow catcher of the forward engine simply caught the snow from the centre of the track and deposited it upon the rails making progress impossible. For a second time a backing up was carried out and another loconotive was employed to precede the passenger train. At this stage of the proceedings, some of the passengers, despairing of ever reaching Perth, decided to abandon the excursion. The remainder, continued in the coaches and on the third attempt had the satisfaction of making considerable progress before it became necessary to search the ditches alongside the track for water to supply the locomotive. This experiment was repeated, slow but steady advance being made until at a point about a mile and a half from Perth, the second car suddenly came to a dead stop. A coupling had given way. No emergency equipment being carried, away went the locomotive and the other car, leaving a number of thoroughly disgusted passengers behind until it could return with a rope to hitch to the car. At length Perth was reached at 6.45 p.m. It had taken nine and three-quarter hours to make the passage of 40 miles.

After another meal the crowd returned to the station, the hour of departure having been fixed at 8 o'clock. But in the shunting operations one of the cars left the rails and about three hours were spent in replacing it. Finally at 11 o'clock, the welcome cry of "all aboard" was heard and the wearied excursionists reached their homes in Brockville at 3.30 a.m., never, it may be reasonably expected, to forget their first trip over the B. & O.

**05/08/1927    *Ottawa Citizen*    *Brockville*    *Brockville***

Brockville Out to Greet Royal Visitors Today

Crowds along the way also eager to get glimpse of the two princes.

The Prince of Wales and Prince George arrived at brockville at 10.45 a.m. a couple of hoours ahead of Premier Baldwin, and left almost immediately for golf at the Country Club.

At Smiths Falls and other points along the route from Ottawa, crowds were gathered to see thw Royal Train go by. Rain fell as the train arrived here but in a few moments the sun shone again and the royal brothers appeared in grey flannels, ready for the links. They drove away, preceded by motorcycle riders.

More.

<https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=2194&dat=19270805&id=jxovAAAAIBAJ&sjid=qNkFAAAAIBAJ&pg=4623,1400369&hl=en>

**03/10/1942    *Brockville Recorder*                                      *Brockville*    *Brockville***

Here's one for Ripley. Yesterday, the noon-hour C.P.R. train from Ottawa steamed into Brockville, whistled for the station and pulled up to the siding as proud looking as ever - but without the necessary express and passenger coaches behind. The agent on duty rushed to the engineer as the latter climbed down from the cab, enquiring as he ran what had happened to the train. The engineer, unaware of his loss, glanced over his shoulder and then took another rapid glance to make sure he was seeing right. He ran to the back of his engine, looked in all directions, climbed into the cab and steamed out of the station in reverse. He found his train quietly resting on the right-of-way about two miles from town. It had uncoupled without his becoming aware of it. They, too were at a loss to figure out what had happened. (Branchline).

**29/11/1947 Ottawa Citizen**

**Brockville**

**Smiths Falls**

Auto plows into Pool Train at Smiths Falls

One man narrowly escaped possible death and a CNR-CPR pool train from Ottawa to Brockville was delayed for almost three-quarters of an hour when an automobile plowed into the side of the engine of the train shortly after 11 o'clock Friday morning. No one was injured.

Driver of the auto, R.S. Durant, 24, Smiths Falls told The Citizen that he was driving west on Chambers street and as he approached the crossing, applied his brakes, but skidded on the icy pavement.

--

**03/02/1949 Ottawa Citizen**

**Brockville**

**Bell**

Train kills eight horses.

Brockville - Pool train No. 559, of the Ottawa-Brockville run, speeding from Smiths Falls towards Brockville soon after five o'clock Wednesday afternoon, struck a group of horses which had wandered on the track at Bell's crossing and killed eight of them. One of the eye-witnesses of the accident reported that "the sky was red with blood" when the train ploughed into the animals, the property of Joseph O'Grady of Franksville, eight miles away.

O'Grady had them on the property of Ed. Davis, not far from Bell's crossing and intended taking them to Prescott Thursday to be sold. The train was delayed about five minutes on arrival here. It was in charge of conductor E. Tapp, Ottawa and engineer Broom, also of Ottawa, was at the throttle.

**04/08/1953 Ottawa Citizen**

**Brockville**

**Brockville**

Brockville beats Toronto in Having "Subway".

One of Brockville's most outstanding points of interest is a smoke-blackened tunnel that runs under the Town Hall. This unique tunnel, built almost a 100 years ago, was once part of the Brockville and Ottawa Railway, now CPR.

This remarkable tunnel runs directly under the center of the town, from the banks of the St. Lawrence River northward 1,740 feet - four blocks - to connect with the tracks leading to the union station.

It is said to be the first railway tunnel in Canada and the only one in the world with doors. During the winter its stout wooden doors were closed after the last train passed through each day - although no one can explain why.

8-Year Project

This tunnel with doors took nearly eight years to build. Financial trouble stalked the progress of this subterranean passage from the time it was started in 1853 until 1859 when the first train, two small wood-burning locomotives chugged out of the wharfside depot and headed for Perth.

As Brockville grew up, a massive stone Town Hall was built above the tunnel at its southern end. Here you can see a street or overpass that is probably Canada's first "grade separation" crossing over a railway track.

In later years the railways ran their tracks through the north end of town where the union station is today. The tunnel line is still in use as a yard engine hauls freight cars over this century-old track to the wharfside shed and siding. It is perhaps ten years since they ceased to close the gates at each end of this odd tunnel.

Nothing further on railways in Brockville

**13/05/1958 Ottawa Citizen**

**Brockville**

**Smiths Falls**

Race along railway bridge fails, CPR workman killed by locomotive.

Smiths Falls - A railway employe trying to run from the path of a train on a bridge over the Rideau River here yesterday afternoon was struck and killed only a few feet from safety.

The victim was William Edward Payne, 38, of Third Street, Smiths Falls, a bridge man with the bridge and building department of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Payne was with a 10-man crew reinforcing concrete in the stone piers of the 170-foot span which crosses 30 feet above Sly's Rapids at the southeast edge of Smiths Falls. He was standing alone on the bridge deck about 20 feet from the north end when the train approached.

Foreman Mervin Cowell said he shouted a warning to Payne but his cries may have been drowned in the noise of a compressor being operated on the job. The other workmen were on a scaffold below the bridge deck.

Cowell watched helplessly as Payne made his dash from the bridge. "I thought he had made it," Cowell said. "He was only about two ties from the end when he was hit."

Payne's body was flung onto the east side of the bridge abutment by the diesel locomotive. Coroner Dr. J.J. McGuire said he died of multiple injuries, including extensive head injuries. There will be an inquest, he said. Smiths Falls Constables Don Wilson and Gordon Underwood investigated.

The train was a regular passenger unit, No. 262, bound from Brockville to Ottawa and due in at the Smiths Falls station, about two miles from the bridge, at 4.40 p.m.

It was reported that the union foreman in the crew, Wilfred Gibbons of Ottawa, saw the man on the track as the train came out of the curve south of the bridge.

The train was braked but not in time to avoid hitting the maintenance worker. The engineer was Al Imeson and the conductor was John McNally, also of Ottawa.

The tragedy was witnessed by W.B. Malloy, canalman at Old Sly's Locks. He was standing with his nephew, Harvey Traversy, and another canal worker, Arthur Truelove. They attempted to wave down the train. It stopped a short distance along the track, backed up and brought Payne's body in the baggage car to the Smiths Falls station.

--

From Bruce Chapman I dug out my dispatch books and RS-10 8469 was the culprit.

**17/06/1971 Ottawa Journal**

**Brockville**

**Jasper**

Fire Destroys Jasper Station

SMITHS FALLS (Staff) Fire of unknown origin destroyed CP Rail's 111-year-old Jasper railway station early today. The one-storey frame building building a landmark on the company's Brockville to Smiths Falls line was built in 1860. It had been closed since May of 1969. Company officials said the loss today would run around \$1,000.

Note - This may actually be the second station at Jasper, the first is believed burned in 1871.

America's oldest railway tunnel.

BROCKVILLE - Few people are aware of the existence of a railway tunnel under the city of Brockville. Even fewer know it to be the oldest in North America. Its cornerstone was laid with great ceremony on Sept.16,1854, a memorable event in the city, then only a town of 4,000, reports a historical sketch printed by the local chamber of commerce.

Throngs of people came from the surrounding area for the ceremony, it said. As it was arranged that the stone would be laid under Masonic auspices, Brother Adiel Sherwood, sheriff of Leeds and Grenville, was deputized by the provincial grand master to represent him.

A band, the firemen, Sons of Temperance, Knights of Jericho, Odd Fellows, Freemasons, as well as the directors of the railway company, the contractors and engineers, the mayor and council and many citizens formed a procession to march through the streets to the site of the tunnel. The ceremony was marked by a salute of 15 rounds fired by the Brockville militia artillery.

Before winter, excavation had been completed between the market and the river, and the contractors had begun to blast their way through the rock to the north portal, a third of a mile distant. Their methods and appliances were crude, but the work was of such quality that it has endured for over a hundred years.

The tunnel was designed to give access to the riverfront. It was not, many thought, necessary.

However, in 1852 the Brockville council pledged its support to the building of a railway line to connect the Ottawa and St. Lawrence, which led to the incorporation in the following year of the Brockville and Ottawa railway company. There was a great deal of discussion about the construction of a railroad to connect Toronto and Montreal. The promoters of the Brockville and Ottawa link believed that their project would be a valuable feeder to such a line. It would also help to develop the country lying between the St. Lawrence and the Ottawa rivers.

Supported by grants from various municipalities on the proposed route, and by subscriptions from private individuals, the company entered into a contract in 1853 with the Sheffield firm of Sykes, Debergue and Co., to complete the line within three years for 80,000 pounds. By April, 1854, 60 miles of right-of-way had been cleared.

In August, 1854, work on the tunnel began, under the English sub-contractors John Booth and his son, David.

In 1855, the firm encountered financial difficulties and was unable to carry on without substantial assistance from the municipalities, which the latter did not feel inclined to give.

The Booths had spent \$20,000 of their own money and were unwilling to involve themselves to a greater extent. Work was suspended after nearly \$500,000 had been spent. The Yorkshiresmen, who had been employed on the tunnel, had received no wages for several weeks, and threatened trouble. However, they contented themselves with seizing and wrecking the carriage of Mr. Harvey, secretary of the company.

Work was resumed on the tunnel some time later. And on Jan. 25, 1859, the first passenger train, consisting of two miniature coaches hauled by a wood burning locomotive, left Brockville's Grand Truck station. Delays occasioned by phenomenally cold weather resulted in the 46-mile trip to Perth taking nine and a half hours, rather than the scheduled three and a half hours.

The temperature is said to have been 40 below zero the day of the trial run. The wheels slipped, the couplings broke, and the passengers finally reached their destination with a rope linking their coach and the locomotive.

The Brockville tunnel was still used by diesel switching engines for some time after the last steam locomotive capable of negotiating it was scrapped in 1954, 100 years after the beginning of the tunnel.

Although now abandoned, the massive oak doors are still in place, though seldom closed now. Formerly they used to be closed each night to maintain an even temperature in the tunnel, and to keep wandering livestock out.

Such is the story of one of the earliest lines of the CPR system, running through the oldest and most unusual railway tunnel in Canada.

**17/02/1982** *Brockville Recorder* *Brockville*

*Brockville*

Brockville history buff Mildred Livingstone believes she has proof that the CPR tunnel and adjacent waterfront property in that community belong to the city and not to Canadian Pacific. Her proof is based on a 3 page 1959 document describing a contract between the Town of Brockville, James Foster a representative of the Brockville and Ottawa Railway Company at Smiths Falls, and a construction firm called Messrs. (Nathaniel) Taggart of Ogdensburg. The contract, for the sum of \$1,859.11, is for the delivery of iron, sand, wood and stone to the front of the tunnel, and is signed by the three parties and stamped with Brockville's official seal. Livingstone feels that Brockville's seal on the papers proves that the town was responsible for maintenance and ownership of both the tunnel and waterfront property adjacent to it.

City solicitors are attempting to validate the authenticity of the paper. A 1979 deal which would have seen the city acquire the tunnel and land in front of it from Marathon Realty fell through in 1980 as the city felt that the Canadian Pacific real estate arm did not have clear title to all the property. (Branchline).

**15/04/1982** *Brockville Recorder* *Brockville*

*Brockville*

Leeds County MLA Bob Runciman has proposed that a "first class railroad museum" be developed at Brockville. Citing the community's long association with the railway industry, Runciman has called for a project centred around a 3 mile tourist operation running from Brockville's waterfront, through the city's historic rail tunnel and north on CP's Brockville Subdivision to the provincial-municipal conservation area (known locally as the "Back Pond") at the edge of the city. Apparently Runciman has gone so far as to consult with CP officials as to the feasibility of such a project. According to the freshman MLA, Canadian Pacific has been "extremely co-operative", especially in terms of their offers to re-install track and supplying vintage railway equipment. (Branchline).

**30/09/1982** *Brockville Recorder* *Brockville*

CP Rail's Brockville subdivision, also nick-named the "bump and grind" line, has been targeted for upgrading work by VIA Rail Canada as part of an overall 10 million dollar project to cut Ottawa - Toronto running times by as much as 50 minutes. This work will involve laying newer and heavier rail in addition to straightening curves, upgrading the roadbed (parts of which are still cinders or pit-run gravel) and extending the track circuits at level crossings protected by bells and flashers. Similar, but less drastic, work is planned for CN's track between federal and Smiths Falls East. (Branchline).

**14/03/1985** *Brockville Recorder* *Brockville*

*Brockville*

Ghost- trains in the Brockville Tunnel? This is how it appeared during the afternoon of March 13, after smoke was detected curling up from beneath the doors of the abandoned railway tunnel in that community. For a while, things got to the point that smoke was even coming out the original vents for the 1700 foot long structure. These vents are located within the Brockville City Hall. From the exterior, however, they only appear as additional chimneys. In the end, the problem was traced to some - as yet - unfound youngsters who had dragged a considerable amount of wood into the bore and ignited it. Fire fighters finally managed to extinguish the blaze and measures have been taken to secure the entrances as fully as possible to prevent a re-occurrence of the incident,

Workmen engaged in rehabilitating the south end of the Brockville Tunnel to permit it to continue to withstand the heavy pounding of vehicular traffic from where it crosses under Water Street have discovered that the structure may be stronger than originally concluded in a consulting engineering report from the Kingston firm of McNeely Engineering and Structure. While scraping away the material and street over the top of the tunnel in order to install a concrete reinforcing cap under the street, it was discovered that the base of the double skin thick rubble stone tunnel liner is supported along by stone buttresses spaced at seven to eight foot intervals. The discovery was somewhat of a surprise as the consultants had previously concluded that the only support for the tunnel was coming from the till material above it and not the masonry liner. In light of the discovery, the city has now sought a second opinion from the consulting firm. In spite of the discovery, however, the city has proceeded to reinforce the crossing of Water Street. This has involved the removal of the outside skin of stone in order to pour a thick concrete arch over the liner. The arch should alleviate any fears of a potential collapse because of heavy vehicular traffic. The rehabilitation is being done in a sympathetic manner and the distinctive high hump of the street over the tunnel - long a deterrent to the successful passage of long vehicles - remains. Indeed, because of the design of the reinforcing ring, the hump is actually one inch higher than it was previously!  
(Branchline)

PROBLEMS IN LOCATING CABOOSE: Yet another controversy has emerged to dog attempts by the City of Brockville (Ontario) to mount an historic railway display at the south portal of the former CPR tunnel (nee Brockville & Ottawa Railway) which it now owns. As reported in the September issue of Branchline, the City recently acquired Caboose No. 437464 from CP Rail with the intention of restoring it and making it a focus for the railway display it intended to develop along the waterfront in the vicinity of the tunnel. The caboose's final resting place has become a point of contention. The original intention had been to display it on a short piece of track immediately in front of the south portal. The site, however, is also used to hold music concerts during Brockville's annual Riverfest Days which are held during the last week of June and the first week of July. Riverfest organizers are adamant that the car will not displace their activities. A proposal to make the caboose "portable" by rolling it into the south end of the tunnel during Riverfest and then returning it at the conclusion of the event has also been nixed. The City wants to develop the immediate southern end of the bore into a railway museum (Branchline, September 1987); also the tight clearances of the tunnel probably wouldn't tolerate something as large as the circa 1954 caboose. Other sites under consideration include Blockhouse Island, the site of the former roundhouse of the Brockville & Ottawa Railway, described in the January 1985 issue of Branchline; or the Brockville Museum, located further to the west at the corner of Water and Henry Streets. The Museum is situated on property which at one time belonged to the Central Canada Coal Company and which was served by Canadian Pacific's Brockville "Loop Line". The tracks were removed several years ago, in conjunction with a redevelopment scheme in the area. Ironically, the controversy over the caboose is somewhat reminiscent of the storm raised when the City attempted to acquire S-3 Diesel Switcher No. 6591 from CP Rail for historical display. That was solved by sending the unit to the nearby Smiths Falls Railway Museum. If the City can't get its act together over the caboose, who knows, perhaps the Smiths Falls group may soon be getting a new piece of rolling stock - one that's fully restored to boot! (Philip B. Jago, background information, the Brockville Recorder and Times, 07-10-87)

CANADA'S FIRST RAILWAY TUNNEL DESIGNATED: On December 8, City of Brockville council passed a bylaw designating the Brockville tunnel's two portals, along with the first 30 metres of the south end of the tunnel that is open for display each summer. The designation under the Ontario Heritage Act marks it as a property of architectural and historical significance. This is the fourth time that Brockville council tried to designate the 1,730-foot tunnel which opened on December 31, 1860. The first attempt was in 1983, the year the property was first turned over to the city by Marathon Realty, followed by attempts in 1985 and 1990. The reason none of them were successful was because aldermen and city staff worried the restrictions that come with designating a property under the Act could hamper future attempts at repair or renovation. Officials fretted that the city could face exorbitant costs if the repairs had to be carried out according to authentic 19th century specifications. By citing only the north and south entrances in the designation bylaw, council remains free to repair, renovate or even fill in the length of the tunnel as it sees fit. While Heritage Brockville has always wanted the entire tunnel from Water Street to Pearl Street designated as a historic structure, Gary Tristram, Heritage Brockville Chairman, says "this is an important first step. At least now we can get some official recognition for it and now the city can try to get some grant money for repainting or other things." (Branchline)



City council has finally designated Brockville's railway tunnel under the Ontario Heritage Act. Shown here in a 1953 photo with a CP engine 3011, the tunnel is 132 years old today.

Getting tunnel designated as arduous as building it.

Ask a city councillor to name a few of Brockville's historical gems, and the railway tunnel at Water Street is bound to be mentioned..

Why, then, did it take nine years and three attempts to get Canada's first railway tunnel designated under the Ontario Heritage Act as a property of architectural and historic significance?

On December 8, council passed the bylaw designating the tunnel's two portals, along with the first 30 metres of the south end of the tunnel that is opened for display each summer. The tunnel is 132 years old today after opening to rail traffic on December 31, 1860.

The historic designation passed unmarked by aldermen and Mayor John Doran December 8. Instead of calling attention to the item, councillors let the bylaw stay buried amongst a host of others.

"It's probably because we were so wound up in the budget process and the sewer surcharge," said Aid. Gall Abrams, a member of the ad-hoc tunnel committee, which has now disbanded.

"I certainly noticed it, but I've been feeling the hounds nipping at my heels all fall. It's been such a busy schedule at council and at work."

The first failed attempt to have all or part of the tunnel designated came in 1983. The same year the property was first turned over to the city by Marathon Realty.

History repeated itself in 1985 and again in 1990. Each time, the designation was denied for the same reason; some aldermen and city staff worried the restrictions that come with designating a property under the act could hamper future attempts at repair or renovation. Officials fretted the city could, face exorbitant costs if the repairs had to be carried out according to authentic 19th century specifications.

By citing only the north and south entrances in the designation bylaw, council remains free to repair, renovate or even fill in the length of the tunnel as it sees fit. Heritage Brockville has always wanted, the entire tunnel, from Water Street to Pearl Street, designated as a historic structure.

"This is an important first step," said Heritage Brockville chairman Gary Tristram.

"At least now we can get some official recognition for it and now the city can try to get some grant money for repointing or other things."

As he told council in 1990, Tristram said his group would never stand in the way of critical repairs to the 1,730-foot tunnel.

"I don't think the Heritage Brockville of the day is the kind of group to go around chaining itself to posts or anything. We've been very amicable and open to discussion," he said.

"We didn't hold up the de-designation of the Methodist Church. We realized it was a danger," he added, referring to the removal of the historical designation of the bumed-out church on Court House Square earlier this year. The church has since been demolished for a parking lot.

"If the tunnel were to cave in, we'd probably do the same thing. We're supposed to be here to work together."

Tristram isn't surprised it took this long to have the tunnel designated a historic property.

"Not any more. I've been chairman for five years now. You get used to it," he shrugged, adding issues of heritage tend not to take centre stage.

It may still be a year or so before Heritage Brockville installs a plaque at the tunnel's south entrance to mark the historic designation.

The group has a limited budget and prefers to accumulate an order of at least five historic plaques before having them made up by a Merrickville foundry, Village Metalsmiths.

Tristram said his board will also want to consult with other groups such as the Brockville Museum about the wording of the plaque.

The cornerstone for the tunnel was laid on September 16, 1854. The tunnel became a critical line in the Brockville and Ottawa Railway Co., which was later absorbed by

the Canadian Pacific Railway system. Excavation materials from the project created what is now the large area park area in front of the tunnel. The tunnel remained in use until the 1950s.

In 1985 the two portals were reinforced and strengthened. In June of 1988 the large wooden doors at the tunnel's south end were opened to the public. An 85-foot walkway was installed and exhibits erected to tell 'the history of the tunnel.'

In 1989, \$20,000 was spent to clean up the north entrance. Two years ago, local residents and re-enactors donned costumes to commemorate the 1854 laying of the cornerstone.

Brockville spending \$250,000 on railway tunnel upgrade.

It's better to spend more now and do the job right, city councillors decided this week when they approved a \$250,000 option to fix the north end of Brockville's railway tunnel.

"If you're going to fix it, do it right," Mayor David Henderson said Friday.

"It's a key part of the city."

While city officials have long considered the south end of the historic railway tunnel, at Armagh S. Price Park, a potential heritage tourism draw, the north end at Tunnel Avenue, just north of the downtown core, is fenced off and generally ignored by the population - other than as a dumping ground.

An assessment of the tunnel's north portal, done last year by the engineering consulting firm Genivar, "concluded that the structure is in poor condition and requires attention in the near future," according to a report from city staff.

"The two piers on either side of the entrance are shifting outward and the mortar is being washed out by ground water," adds the report.

"Genivar's engineers are concerned that there is some risk that the structure could collapse and have recommended the city limit access to the site to qualified staff and professionals."

Genivar's report proposed five options, ranging from the status quo, meaning the eventual collapse of the north portal and the prospect of a costly repair, to full restoration at an estimated cost of \$250,000.

At Tuesday's regular council meeting, councillors were presented with a motion to choose one of the less costly options, which would have spent some \$75,000 to eliminate water infiltration into the masonry from above and make drainage improvements at the ground level.

Most councillors felt that would be a stopgap measure and the city would end up having to restore the north portal eventually.

Doors at the north end of the Brockville railway tunnel on Pearl Street stand open on Friday. The structure is in bad need of repair and rather than use stopgap measures, the city will opt for a more thorough \$250,000 restoration.

"It would be pennywise and pound foolish," Councillor Henry Noble said Tuesday.

"Saving one dollar now to spend 10 later makes no sense to me."

Councillor Gord Beach, while disputing the notion that the north portal of the tunnel is a heritage site, said the restoration nonetheless needs to be done in order to preserve the structural integrity of the area of Pearl Street running above it.

Operations director Conal Cosgrove said Friday the city is now awaiting a design proposal from Genivar ahead of a restoration contract likely in the spring

Digging their work

Keith Kennedy and his crew haven't even started putting the pieces back in place, but already the north portal of Brockville's historic railway tunnel is looking better than it has in years.

A mass of overgrown brush has been cleared away in preparation for Kennedy's crew, revealing the remarkable stonework that has even an experienced mason like Kennedy standing in awe.

"This is a masterpiece of work. ... The stone carving on this tunnel is amazing," said Kennedy.

He pays tribute to the 19th century craftsmanship while standing at the base of the impressive structure as his crew members worked some 30 feet above Tuesday afternoon.

"We're going to bring it back to life," said Kennedy, who grew up in Brockville.

Keith Kennedy Historical Masonry was the awarded the \$364,415 contract to restore the tunnel's north face last month by city council.

It's a massive job, as the old limestone blocks - weighing about 350 pounds each - must be removed separately.

Each stone is cleaned, checked for cracks, and marked so they know where to put it back in line, with a fresh trowel full of historical limestone mortar to hold it in place.

It will be just like a giant jigsaw puzzle when all the pieces are finally removed and Kennedy said they'll likely be at the site until November.

When asked about the challenge that lies ahead for his five-person crew, Kennedy can't resist joking, "We can see the light at the end of the tunnel."

Given the conditions a century and a half ago when the tunnel was built, Kennedy and his crew aren't about to complain about the work.

27/08/2009 Brockville Recorder Brockville Brockville

On tour in the tunnel

Posted By Michael Jiggins, Staff Writer

It's a section of Brockville even longtime city residents never get the chance to see these days.

So you knew a group of Ottawa-based railway historians would be on board when given the chance to step back in time Thursday by walking through the normally locked iron gates of the Brockville railway tunnel to explore the mysterious darkness beyond.

The experience left members of the Ottawa Railway History Circle marvelling at more than just the incredible craftsmanship and back-breaking labour that built the tunnel between 1854 and 1860.

Group members also commented on the potential tourist attraction the tunnel could become if it were opened to the public from end to end.

"It's a wonderful opportunity for a tourist to go through the first railway tunnel in Canada," said railway circle member Colin Churcher.

Even for non-railway buffs, Churcher is certain the tunnel would hold fascination, pointing in particular to the beautiful mineral deposits that have formed like natural works of art over the past two centuries.

For railway circle member Don McQueen, yesterday's tour brought back a flood of childhood memories.

Growing up in Brockville, McQueen said he often used the tunnel as a shortcut - when it was still in operation.

He recalled having to wait until the gasses from the last train exiting had dissipated before scampering the one-third mile length.

McQueen said you knew you were safe from suffocation when the light from the other end glowed a harvest moon orange.

"Today's big difference is it's much wetter and messier," he noted.

A steady flow of water has always infiltrated the tunnel, but the grading that channelled it to the sides is no longer in place. That meant yesterday's tour required the visitors to trudge through about an inch-and-a-half of mud.

McQueen, who hadn't been in the tunnel since 1959, said it was nice to have the chance to admire the construction, notably the quarter of the tunnel that's lined with hand-cut stone.

"I'm impressed and I have been for a long time at the ability of those masons to be able to build something like this," he told The Recorder and Times. "And the sad part about it is we don't know who those guys were."

Now living in London, McQueen said he's convinced those touting the tunnel as a tourist attraction are onto something.

"It would be great. Who has the experience today of walking or riding through tunnels except in enclosed railway cars or in their vehicle?" he asked.

Although parts of it are now more than 150 years old, the march of time has certainly not compromised the tunnel's interior.

Churcher said actually touching the stone surfaces and shining a flashlight into corners of the stonework give a visitor an appreciation for the enormity of the task that photographs and drawings simply can't reproduce.

"If you think about it, they gave a bunch of people some picks and shovels and said, 'Build a tunnel,'" he said. "That's the first thing that comes to me - this was done essentially by hand. It's amazing what they were able to achieve."

"And this is what we're trying to understand with our group."

Churcher also praised city officials for allowing them to take the tour and for spending the \$364,000 to restore the tunnel's north portal.

Two of Brockville's most recognized historians led Thursday's tour, and both Doug Grant and Brian Porter said it was the first time in several years that they'd ventured beyond the gates into the tunnel.

The tunnel has been closed to the public since the city assumed ownership in the 1980s.

Porter said he never loses his sense of fascination for the structure.

"I'm astounded every time I go through by the craftsmanship that you see here. These guys knew their stuff, they knew how to do their stonework," he said.

Porter and Grant said they were buoyed by the confidence the railway circle members expressed for turning the tunnel into a larger tourist attraction.

As he strolled through the 14-foot wide, 15-foot tall opening, cut through the rock from Pearl Street under city hall to the waterfront, Grant said one thing he wasn't afraid of was collapse.

"I'm never afraid in here," he said.

"This had far more pressure from steaming trains, diesel trains and those vibrations than it does now," added Grant. "People walking through are not going to cause any damage to the structure - it's lasted this long."

Obviously, Grant recognized before the tunnel can be opened to the public it will require some work to "provide comfort for people."

While it's impossible to get rid of the water, he said it could be easily channeled to the sides as was the case when it was in service.

However, as they toured its length, members of the railway circle were quick to say the tunnel should be left in its natural state as much as possible and not overwhelmed by artificial light and displays.

With a priceless resource in place, as he approached the tunnel's south exit, Churcher said all that's need now "is a champion" for the project.

Museum will offer dining experience unlike any other

The Brockville Museum is selling tickets for a unique fundraiser titled "Keefer's Tunnel Banquet" on Thursday, July 8. Celebrants will enjoy a four-course menu reflecting 1860, when Brockville's railway tunnel was completed, 150 years ago. Inspiration for the menu came from a banquet prepared for the Edward the 7th during a North American visit the same year, said museum volunteer coordinator Viktor Kaczowski. "French cuisine was very much de rigueur." Anyone attending the dinner in the south end of the tunnel on July 8 can return the next day in rubber boots for a guided tour of the entire, 1,700-foot-long tunnel, which has muddy sections. Local historian Doug Grant said it was Canada's first railway tunnel and its construction generated controversy -similar to the way the debate over Tall Ships Landing and the Maritime Discovery Centre has divided the community more recently. Grant said the railway tunnel is a major landmark in Brockville and in the city's history and could be developed into a bigger tourism attraction. Kaczowski said the railway tunnel is a solid structure. Repairs have been under way at its north end at Pearl Street. With proper funding and renovations, the entire tunnel could one day be opened up to pedestrians and cyclists. The July 8 banquet is sponsored by CP and the 1000 Islands Community Development Corporation, and a raffle prize of a trip for two has been donated by VIA Rail.

Brockville - The re-activated tunnel committee is hoping this time around something can be done with the city's historic railway tunnel after touring the landmark Tuesday afternoon.

After decades of in-activity and delays, the newest edition of the tunnel committee said they want to see Canada's first railway tunnel finally developed as a tourist attraction with ideas as simple as a bike/walking path.

The committee toured the 151 year-old tunnel on Tuesday afternoon along with local media walking the entire 527m (1,730 ft) length of the historic landmark.

City councillor David LeSueur and tunnel committee chair said one of the first things that needs to be done is to make sure the tunnel is safe for public use.

There are many ideas that have been suggested including a bike/walking path, a train ride and the use of dining cars as a restaurant.

The idea of developing the tunnel as a tourist attraction is not a new idea. As far back as 1974, the city was talking about the tunnel being developed, issuing its first report saying the tunnel should be developed and used as a tourist attraction.

Since then not much has been done, aside from opening the first 85 feet of the southern portion of the tunnel to visitors. LeSueur says the drainage and geological studies should be underway in about a month.

Another issue that something can be done rather quickly is cleaning up the northern end of the tunnel. Right now it is overgrown and a depository of garbage. Committee members would like to see it clean up and possibly with lights being installed to keep people from dumping there.

Once the surveys and drainage are completed and any work completed to deem the tunnel safe, LeSueur said the committee is ready to consider every option for what to do with the tunnel, from walking or biking paths, to having small trains carry people through as a tourist ride.

The tunnel was designed to permit access to the riverfront by the Brockville and Ottawa Railway. Construction of the tunnel began in September 1854 but was not opened for rail traffic until December 31, 1860. The tunnel was built to facilitate the Brockville and Ottawa Railway linking the port facilities on the St. Lawrence River ship route with the timber trade of the Ottawa Valley.

The tunnel was used until the mid 1970's. It was turned over to the City of Brockville by Marathon Realty, the real estate wing of the Canadian Pacific Railway in the 1980's.

Contains video with footage of a steam locomotive and train entering and leaving the tunnel in the winter.

Tunnel Damage Called Minor

Brockville Ontario - The damage done to the city's historic railway tunnel by last week's truck accident is "minor" and should be easily repaired, says the head of the railway tunnel committee.

"I think it's business as usual. It looks like minor damage. I think the insurance company will take care of it," said Councillor David LeSueur, chairman of the Brockville railway tunnel advisory committee.

In an email to city officials and tunnel committee members, copied to The Recorder and Times, city operations director Conal Cosgrove confirms Lesley White, the city's manager of strategic initiatives, "has contacted the City's insurance broker, who will assist us in ensuring that the cost of the repairs are covered by the truck driver's insurance."

That came as a relief to railway tunnel committee member Doug Grant, who had expressed concern about the damage caused by the mishap to the historic tunnel. "That's the important thing, that somebody's going to pay for it, other than the committee," said Grant.

The concerns came after a driverless flatbed truck shot out of control down East Market Street Friday morning, narrowly avoiding a catastrophe before coming to a stop with the front end of the cab hanging over the retaining wall of the tunnel.

No one was injured in the incident.

But there was concern about the damage done to the retaining wall, which underwent a comprehensive upgrade that included re-pointing in recent years.

The cab of the truck slammed down on the top of the wall as the wheels went over the edge, coming to a sudden stop atop the structure.

The impact caused some mortar to fall out between stones that were re-pointed two years ago and appeared to leave a crack on the flat surface at the top of the wall.

The driver of the vehicle, whose name was not released by city police, was charged under the Highway Traffic Act with failing to take precautions to ensure the vehicle would not be set in motion.

LeSueur and Grant were also worried about damage done to the wooden slats in front of the tunnel's entrance by a front-end loader needed to get the truck's wheels over the wall.

"That's a project that I'm in the middle of working on. We're replacing boards and we're going to do some more," said Grant.

The committee has hired contractors to replace the wooden deck and work will resume in the spring, he added.

The revitalization of the historic railway tunnel remains a key part of Brockville's capital plan.

In 2013, council enshrined a contribution of \$300,000 toward the the railway tunnel revitalization project, over a four-year period starting this year, on the city's list of capital priorities.

"It's all going quite well," said LeSueur, who hopes to present new drawings showing "an artistic conception" of the project early in the new year.

Ron Zajac

**Brockville Tunnel Contract Backed**

Brockville Ontario - Critical design work on Brockville's railway tunnel project, aimed at turning the tunnel into a history-themed tourist attraction, is a step closer to happening.

Council's finance, administration, and operations committee is recommending the full council approve a contract with the firm Inspec-Sol Inc., for an "upset limit fee" of \$132,500, not including HST, "to complete the engineering design and preparation of tender documents for the work required to open the Brockville Railway Tunnel to the public."

The full council is expected to put the matter to a final vote next Tuesday.

The contract is for preliminary work, including a cost estimate, on a larger restoration project currently expected to cost between \$1.5 million and \$2 million. While project skeptic Councillor Jeff Earle questioned doing yet another study of the tunnel, the project's main proponent, Councillor David LeSueur, insisted this is not a study.

The work involves drawing up tender documents so contractors can bid on the work, said city operations director Conal Cosgrove.

Some rock and masonry needs to be stabilized, he added, and other elements of the design work involve drainage matters, public safety code requirements, and the laying of a path on the ground through the tunnel.

"The purpose of this work is to put all of this together in a document that can be bid on by contractors," said Cosgrove.

"This is the next step, actually nailing down the cost of the tunnel," added LeSueur, chairman of the Brockville railway tunnel advisory committee.

For now, the overall vision is of a \$4 million plan to make a tourist attraction of Canada's oldest railway tunnel, which includes amenities added on to this basic restoration.

The tunnel committee hopes to have a small tour train taking visitors through the tunnel and to other attractions, a dining car, playground, and visitor centre, as well as a roundhouse at the north portal that could be used as a community centre.

It hopes to see that entire project done by 1 Jul 2017, coinciding with Canada's 150th anniversary.

Council has committed \$300,000 toward the railway tunnel over four years starting last year, and has also included the project on its list of capital priorities.

Fundraising is a critical part of making the project happen, and LeSueur told the committee the tunnel group has identified a number of funding opportunities for requests.

He expects to hear back about those applications in six months to a year.

"We're going after the large amounts," said LeSueur.

Applying for those grants will be difficult without having this engineering design work on hand to identify the scope and nature of the project, said Councillor Jane Fullarton.

The Inspec-Sol bid was the middle submission, in terms of cost, of three bids, with the highest coming in at \$295,715 and the lowest at \$85,565.

Cost was only one factor city officials evaluated, looking also at such things as staff experience, references, schedule, and "demonstrated understanding of the project."

Funding for the design work is to come from the city's special railway tunnel capital account.

20/03/2015 **Brockville Recorder****Brockville****Brockville****Tunnel Jumper Charged With Stunt Driving**

Brockville Ontario - An attempt to "jump" the Water Street railway tunnel early Friday led to a 19-year-old motorist being charged with stunt driving.

City police arrived in the process of an attempted jump after receiving complaints about the operation of a vehicle on city streets shortly after midnight.

The driver was issued a summons for a future court date and the vehicle was impounded for seven days.

12/08/2017 **Brockville Recorder****Brockville**

from WAYNE LOWRIE : THE RECORDER AND TIMES: 8-12-2017

Re-Opening of the CPR Brockville Tunnel August 12th, 2017

For David LeSueur, today proves that there is light at the end of the tunnel. The city councillor and a band of volunteers have been toiling for years on their dream of re-opening the Brockville railway tunnel, which saw its last train pass through 48 years ago. Now that dream has come true with the official reopening of Canada's first railway tunnel. "It's a shock," said LeSueur, referring to the emotion of finally seeing the 157-year-old tunnel reopen after hours and years of effort to restore it.

LeSueur became involved with the tunnel dream after his first election to council in 2010. People had been telling him that it was a shame the tunnel was gated up with no public access through it, so LeSueur made it a plank in his election platform. Unlike other volunteers who were train buffs or who pushed for the reopening out of historic nostalgia, LeSueur comes at it for economic-development reasons.

LeSueur describes the tunnel as Brockville's "most unique asset." Many towns and cities are located on lakes and rivers with harbours, beaches and natural beauty, he said. "But this is the one thing that distinguishes Brockville from any other city or town in Canada," he said. "It was a waste not to share it with others."

After his election to council, the tunnel committee was reformed with LeSueur as chair. It had been disbanded about four years earlier, and many of the former members are happy to come aboard again. The idea of opening the tunnel as a tourist attraction has been around for at least 40 years.

After Canadian Pacific Railway discontinued use of the tunnel in 1969, the first of many engineering studies looked at future uses. That first study, released in 1974, proposed options for the tunnel, including opening it as a tourist attraction, using it for storage, or actually filling it in. The tunnel remained in the railway's hands until 1983 when CP Rail sold the tunnel and its waterfront lands at the south mouth of the tunnel to the city for \$1. The land was developed into the Armagh Sifton Park but the tunnel was largely left untouched except for about 80 feet at the south end of the tunnel, which was opened to the public. The rest of it was blocked by the iron gate.

After his election, LeSueur became the major political force spearheading the tunnel reopening, along with the 10-member committee. His efforts led to three more studies on the viability of the idea. The first chore was to figure out whether or not opening the tunnel would be safe from an engineering point of view, LeSueur said. That study, released in 2012 concluded that the tunnel was structurally sound and it could be opened.

Next came a market study to determine whether it could be viable as a tourist destination. City council members wanted to know if they build it, would people come? LeSueur said the market study in 2013 was positive, so city council decided to go back to the engineers for a second study on how the project could be done. That study was ready in 2014. All the project needed now was money to pay for the \$4 million project. LeSueur said the city decided to contribute \$75,000 a year over four years to start the fund raising efforts. He stresses that the \$300,000 is the only municipal contribution to the project - the rest of the money has come from the federal and provincial governments and private donations. The federal government has kicked in \$500,000, the province about \$800,000 and the rest has come from private donors. LeSueur said the tunnel fund raisers are still trying to raise about \$600,000. ... Once private donations came rolling in - some from international companies - the concerns of many councillors were soothed, he said.

The Brockville Railway Tunnel was built between 1854 and 1860 to allow the Brockville and Ottawa Railway to connect the city's waterfront industrial district to Ottawa. The railway chose to blast through the centre of the city with the tunnel, instead of the option of doing an end run to the west [following Buell's Creek as the later 'Loop Line' did -ed]. Engineers used gunpowder to blast through the solid hill of rock. It measures 14 feet, 9 inches tall and 14 feet wide. The 1,721-foot-long tunnel runs directly under city hall, which was built two years later. Two air vents from the tunnel run up through city hall and out through chimneys on its roof. The dirt from the tunnel was used for the causeway to Blockhouse Island.

A history prepared by the tunnel committee describes the inside of the tunnel this way: .

"The bottom and top thirds of the tunnel are completely lined with stone held together by water lime. The centre third of the tunnel is unlined, with the craggy rock still exposed and dripping water resulting in colourful mineral deposits in interesting formations along the walls. At each end of the tunnel portals made of limestone were constructed, with the southern portal being more extensive than the north."

from WAYNE LOWRIE : THE RECORDER AND TIMES: 8-15-2017

The reaction of visitors to Brockville's Railway Tunnel seemed to be almost universal. "It's cool," said [one visitor from] Montreal. "I think it's really, really cool." And so it was, both literally and figuratively. The temperature of the tunnel was a good 10 degrees cooler than at the sun-baked opening ceremonies held outside the doors to the structure.

Brockville Tourism estimated that 7,000 people walked through the tunnel during the first four hours after its official opening on Saturday. Indeed, the crowds were so packed at the entrance that police and security had to limit people to blocks of 500 at a time because of fire-safety regulations. For the first couple of hours after the opening, the visitors were limited to one-way traffic because of the crush of people. ... A pipe band led the walk through the tunnel followed by historic re-enactors and the first 500 visitors. The first 500 were an eclectic mix - parents with children in strollers, teens, two elderly men in electric wheelchairs, mothers with babies and some people with pets. ... Cell phones were also held high as people videoed the historic occasion. Many people seemed in awe at the magnificence of the granite walls and the limestone lining at the ends of the tunnel. The LED lighting running along the base of the tunnel illuminated the walls and the ceiling, and provided a light show of different colours. Mayor David Henderson described the lights by Philips Lighting as the same technology used at Buckingham Palace and to light up the Empire State building. In sections of the tunnel, a steady drip of spring water annoyed some visitors, although none seemed have bothered to purchase the \$2 ponchos offered at the mouth of the tunnel. But while a nuisance to some, that dripping water has contributed to the beauty of the tunnel. The water has carried minerals down the walls for the past 157 years, creating thick cakes of mineral deposits, which glimmer in the dancing LED lights.

(Many were) was spellbound by the minerals on the walls, comparing them to the caverns of North Carolina. ... There is another not-so-natural deposit left on the tunnel walls over the years. People who touched the walls were left with soot - blackened fingers from the decades of coal-fired engines that powered the locomotives.

01/04/2018 CBC News

Brockville

Brockville

Tourists and History Lovers Flock to Canada's First Railway Tunnel

Brockville Ontario - Tourists and historians are once again flocking to Canada's first railway tunnel in Brockville, home to stone walls, century-old mineral deposits, and a brand new light show.

The tunnel opened for its second season Saturday, after its debut in 2017 made it one of the top tourist sites in Ontario, said Brockville councillor David LeSueur. "The city has made it completely safe and added the light show and music," said LeSueur, who worked on the tunnel for seven years and spoke with CBC Radio's In Town and Out, Saturday.

"It's something for everyone."

The 525 metre stone tunnel, built between 1854 and 1860, runs through the downtown core of the city

It was initially built for the Brockville & Ottawa Railway.

The tunnel was last used for train travel in 1970, and the City of Brockville acquired it more than a decade after.

In August 2017, the city reopened the tunnel as a tourist attraction.

Although the rail tracks have been removed, the tunnel features a light show that highlights its engineering, architectural, and geological features.

LeSueur, who also chairs the Brockville Railway Tunnel Committee, told In Town and Out that its original walls remain untouched.

"There's a little bit of water that drips on you in certain areas. You'll see stone work. You'll see an area that they used gun powder to blast through the rock," he said.

"It comes out to the north end of the city near the CN tracks, and the line used to go all the way up to Ottawa."

Roughly 25,000 visitors walked through the tunnel during its debut weekend last year, LeSueur said.

"A lot of people say that, at the end of the day, it calms them down," he said.

"Kids like to dance to the music. Historians and photographers are hard to get out of there. They love the architectural features and the mineral deposits that have been built up for 150 years plus."

This year the tunnel reopened around Easter, LeSueur said, to welcome back families during the long weekend.

It was even home to an Easter egg hunt this year, he added.

"All the citizens of Brockville were thinking we should open it as a tourist attraction," he said.

"It's a fantastic site.