

Local Railway Items from Area Papers - Canadian Refractories Railway

07/12/1934 Ottawa Citizen Canadian Refractories Kilmar

F. E. Lathe Addresses Engineering Institute

Tells of Development of Refractories.

Magnesite deposits in the Ottawa district are now being used extensively in industry for refractories. which are substances to line high temperature tumaces,F.E. Lathe of the National Research Council told the Ottawa branch of the Engineering Institute of Canada yesterday. The deposits are mainly at Kilmar, Que.

27/06/1936 Ottawa Citizen Canadian Refractories Kilmar

Worker Killed In Laurentian Mine

Tragedy Occurred at Canadian Refractories Ltd, Property at Kilmar.

Special to The Evening Citizen HAWKESBURY, Ont, June 27

While working in the mine of the Canadian Refractories Limited at Kilmar. several miles north of here in the Laurentian mountains, late yesterday afternoon, David Provencal. 25. of Harrington. Que., was instantly killed when he was buried beneath several tons of rock.

An inquest under Dr. James Mason of Lachute was held, the jury bringing a verdict of accidental death.

Provencal, who had been an erne ploye of the Canadian Refractories for some time, leaves a wtf and two small children.

27/03/1939 Ottawa Citizen Canadian Refractories Kilmar

Rockslide Kills Miner At Kilmar

Special to The Citizen.

HAWKESBURY. Ont.. March 26. Emo Sihdonen, 33-year-old native of Finland, was instantly killed in an accident yesterday at the magnosite [sic] mines of the Canadian Refractories Limited at Kilmar, Que. Fred Dewar. aged 25, of Grenville, Que., was injured in the same accident.

From information received, the two men were at work in a tunnel at the mine, when suddenly a rockslide buried Sihdonen, killing him almost instantly and injuring Dewar. who was badly bruised about the legs by falling rocks.

Sihdonen. married man with no children so far as could be learned, has no relatives in this country.

Coroner Dr. James H. Mason of Lachute was called and a jury empanelled which brought in a verdict of accidental death.

19/11/1940 Ottawa Journal Canadian Refractories

Kilmar Worker Fatally Injured

HAWKESBURY, Nov. 19. (Special) Emile Lalande, 32- year-old employe of the Canadian Refractories, Kilmar, Que, was fatally injured when he became caught in a belt while working athe plant early this morning.

Unemployed for some time. La lande had been working at the plant for only two weeks. He was brought to the Dr. E. P. Kelly Hospital, Hawkesbury, where he died a short time later. His skull had been fractured in the accident.

Born at St Emile de Suffolk. Que., he is survived by his widow, the former Miss Yvonne Tessier, of Rivington, Que, whom he married two years ago, and by a one- year-old son.

A verdict of accidental death was brought in following an inquest conducted at Kilmar by Coroner Dr. W. Finlay McMartin, of Lachute.

19/11/1940 Ottawa Citizen Canadian Refractories

Hawkesbury Resident Is Fatally Injured

HAWKESBURY, Nov. 19. (Special) Emile Larande, 31, of Hawkesbury. died this morning from injuries received last night about 10.30 o'clock, when he was caught in a belt in the refineries plant of the Canadian Refractories Limited at Kilmar, Que.

The injured man was rushed to Dr. E. P. Kelly's Hospital, Hawkesbury. He was suffering from compound fractures of both arms and both legs and a dislocated left knee. The thumb of his left hand was torn off.

Dr. A. J. Martin, county coroner, was called from Lachute. An inquest will be opened tomorrow morning.

Mr. Larande had been married only two years and is survived by his widow and one son.

24/06/1949 Ottawa Journal Canadian Refractories Kilmar

Megnesitlc Dolomite Thi is a mixture of Magnesitlc and dolomtic megnesium limestone and is used for refractories. It is quarried from an underground; mine at Kilmar, Que., 10 miles north of Calumet. Iron is added to it and it is calcined. Canadian Refrac tories Limited produce brick.from it for cement kilns and linig for steel plant furnaces.

14/06/1951 Ottawa Journal Canadian Refractories Kilmar

Announce \$3,500,000 Expansion for Kilmar Plant of Rio Canadian Firm

LACHUTE, Que., June 14. William M. Cottingham, Union National MLA for Argenteuill, announced at the opening of the Lachute Fair that Canadian Refractoriea Limited is spending \$3,500,000 on an expansion program at their Kilmar plant which is approximately 75 miles northeast of Ottawa.

Norman Pitts, of Montreal. president of Canadian Refractories advised Mr. Cottingham indicated ore reserves for the next 20 year have warranted more expansion which is already in progress, representing an expenditure ot \$1,000,000 to erect a new headlrame, install efficient hoisting system, deepen the shaft, and extend the mine.

Sole Producer,

Canadian Refractories Limited is the sole producer of magnesite and chrome refractories which are essential for the manufacture of steel, nickel and copper. Operations have been continuous since 1917 at Kilmar, first as a mining company, and since 1920 as a manufacturer of finished goods. As from 1945 mining and manufacturing facilities have been modernized. A heavy media separation plant for the beneficiation of ore, one of the first in Canada, and the 245-foot rotary kiln for high temperature burning of rock, were added. Approximately 400 men are employed.

During the last war the brick production was greatly increased. but because of the higher demands from industry in which a large and important part is played by the metallurgical industries of the province of Quebec, Canadian Refractories Limited will spend an additional \$3,500,000 in the near future on a new basic brick plant In Argenteuil County. It will be the most modern plant of its kind on the North American Continent.

Magnesite Mine Supplies 27 Nations

By Fred Inglis Evenlng Citizen Btaff Writer

KILMAR High up in the rolling Laurentlans 950 feet above sea level is this sprawling company -town of Kllmar, owned by Canadian Refractories Limited. First you come upon the head frame at the mine, then the processing plant, the employes' homes and ether buildings, scattered over an area of about four square miles.

Nearly 500 men work three shifts a day to unearth and refine great quantities of gray rock called magnesite. It resembles granite and is used In making a special type of bricks and cement, for lining open hearth furnaces and rotary kilns where they make steel, copper, glass and cement.

Kilmar is 11 miles from Calumet, up a winding road, so steep at times that when you're coming down hill, you see signs that say "Low Gear".

It was ex-mayor Brennan of Calumet who told me that Kllmar was founded by J. S. Kilburn who came from Owen Sound and cpened a small quarry In 1914. The firm was known as the North American Magnesite Co.

Demand Created

The First World War created a great demand for magnesite and eventually there were two other firms, the Scottish-Canadian Magnesite and the International Magnesite, with quarries within a mile of each other.

Hundreds of teams of horses hauled loads of white ore over tortuous roads to Calumet where it was weighed and shipped in open cars to a world market. About 1927 the North American and the Scottish-Canadian firms amalgamated and about 1940 the Interrational Magnesite was absorbed.

Kilmar was named for Margaret Kllburn, daughter of George Kllburn who was president of the Scottish-Canadian Magnesite. Today the village has about 450 residents living In 60 company-owned houses and about 40 privately owned homes, permitted on company property. About seven single men, technicians, teachers and others, live in a comfortable lodge situated on the shore of Grenville Lake. Under the management of Louis Lorimer the housemaster, who works in the company laboratory, the men "batch it," cook their own food and wash the dishes. They have their own television set to help put in the winter evenings.

Shaft Sunk

After the open pits became worked out, the firm turned to standard underground mining procedure, sunk a shaft to 700 feet depth with stopes or tunnels at levels about 150 feet apart. Here the helmeted men with pneumatic drills and blasting powder wrest the white rock from the earth and bring it to the surface. The ore is hauled to the firm's big plant about three quarters of a mile away where It is ground to a powder as fine as talcum. This powdered magnesite is fed into the upper end of a large, slowly rotating tunnel kiln, heated at the lower end. It is actually a giant steel pipe, eight feet in diameter and 263 feet long. At the "burning one" end of the kiln, the magnesite drops into an oil-fed furnace where it rotates in a temperature of 3,200 degrees, until it forms into clinkers and escapes through a series of drums onto a conveyor belt where it is cooled.

Big "Mixmaster

The clinkers are then ground to quarter-inch size and dumped into bins along side bins of powdered chrome ore, heavy black rocks that come from Cuba, the Phillipines and Rhodesia. A mobile hopper with a scale moves from bin to bin to get the right amount ot ingredients which are then dumped into a king-sized "Mix-master."

Then the coarse, semi-dry mixture goes to giant presses that stamp out special shaped bricks that spend three hours in a dry kiln and eight hours in a firing kiln. It takes only five layers of these big putty colored bricks to make a carload 50,000 pounds! They also pack "plastic" cement in paper sacks, much like builders' cement. Clinker mix, another product, is used as a temporary bottom of blast furnace floors.

Works manager J. S. C. "Cliff" Perry tells me these furnaces are used in practically all high temperature furnaces such as the steel and glass industries, copper and cement plants. Omer Smith is in charge of "research and control" at the laboratories where technicians check the quality of ingredients, test the finished products, try to improve the products and find new uses for them.

Private Railway

The company has its own railway with three dlesel electric locomotives that haul the raw material and finished products over 12 miles of mountainous country on a line that follows the old "Scotch Road" to the CPR, at Marclan, east of Calumet.

The name Marelan, pronounced Mary-Ian, is said to be coined from the name Margaret Elain, who was a member of the Kllburn family.

The CRL operates the only plant of its kind in the British Empire and is one of only two In North America. Its products go to 27 countries including Sweden, Belgium, Brazil, Venezuela, Egypt and India and to 29 of the United States, according to plant manager Fred Gauley.

Born in Grenville and scion of a pioneer family there. Fred Gauley helped to build the firm's first railroad, a secondhand 38-inch narrow gauge line bought complete from a firm at Port Arthur. He saw them switch to standard gauge in 1930.

20 Years To Go

With enough ore underground for at least another 20 years, workmen are putting the finishing touches on a large modern plant at Marelan, on No. 8 Highway, scheduled to go into production in May. Lome Duncan has been named manager of this new plant, built because the old one has outgrown its capacity. The new plant will quadruple the output and has all new equipment including a tunnel kiln and brick presses.

At the min, in charge of W. T. "Bill" Bray, the shaft has been deepened to 850 and plans call for a future shaft at another location. At the new head frame, they recently switched from car and cable hoist to skip hoisting, to bring out the ore. Personnel manager here is John White, who will be remembered by many former Forestry Corps men during the war, as a friendly, bi-lingual administrator.

The CIP is carrying out a selective cutting program on the firm's 4,500 acres of land and the company has its own reforestation plan.

From Many Points

Twenty-five percent of the employes live in Kllmar; the rest come by bus or car as far away as Vankleek Hill. Kilmar's school population of 150, half of which are local, attend two three - room company - assisted schools, now in charge of young principal Gerald Langllle, from Nova Scotia. There is a one-room French-Catholic school, an RC chapel and a Protestant Church, shared in turn by Anglicans and United Church people. A privately-owned store operates in a company-owned building and the Kilmar Home and School Association stages dramatic productions and plays badminton in a large Community Hall that seats 175 people. Proceeds go to provide hot soup and cocoa for school children.

They have their private fishing club and the lake has been stocked with trout. They have a fine artificial beach in summer and a winter ski slope and a large, lighted hockey rink.

With picture.

Grenville Miner Killed By Rock Fall

Hawkesbury Man Injured In Kilmar Accident

GRENVILLE, Que. Jan. 7. Staff

Bruno Charbonneau, 39, Grenville, was killed, and Lawrence Gray, 29, of Hawkesbury, seriously injured, when they were struck by a falling rock at Canadian Refractories Company's nearby Kilmar Mine yesterday.

Gray was taken to Montreal General Hospital by ambulance. He has a broken arm and broken pelvis and is suffering from shock.

The men were at the end-wall of a "raise", or passage, angling upwards at 45 degrees not far from the foot of the mine's main shaft. They were about 975 feet below ground.

They were operating a drilling "bug", boring a hole in the wall of the passage for a wooden plug used by a survey crew.

A piece of rock, weighing about a ton, broke away from the roof of the passage and fell on the men.

Charbonneau, who was above Gray, was crushed to death at once. Gray was pinned beneath his body.

Mine crews used screw jacks to raise the rock and free Gray and recover Charbonneau's body.

Charbonneau leaves a widow and three children. Gray is unmarried.

The Kilmar Mine produces magnesite, a carbonate of magnesium used to make refractories for lining high-temperature kilns and boilers.

08/01/1954 *Ottawa Citizen**Canadian Refractories**Kilmar*

Rule Death Accidental

GRENVILLE Special - Accidental death was the verdict of a coroner's jury that inquired into the circumstances surrounding fatal injuries suffered by Bruno Charbonneau at nearby Kilmar Mines on Wednesday. The dead miner was a resident of Grenville.

Coroner Dr. Jules Lafleur, of Lachute, announced the verdict after a jury visited the accident scene at the 975-foot level of the Canadian Refractories Company mine shaft here yesterday.

Charbonneau, 39-year-old machine operator at the mine, died from suffocation when he was crushed by more than a ton of rock which fell on him.

Lawrence Gray, 26, of Hawkesbury, Charbonneau's helper, who suffered a broken arm and other injuries in the same accident, was reported in fair condition at the Montreal Hospital where he was taken.

Quebec Mine Inspector Edgar Berube, of Montreal, visited the loading pocket where the accident occurred and work was resumed in the ore pass raise.

Man Injured In Mine Reported Fair

HAWKESBURY Special! Lawrence Gray, of Hawkesbury, injured Wednesday (06/01) when a rock slide at the Kilmar Mine near Lachute took the life of a coworker, was reported in "fair" condition last night at the Montreal General Hospital.

Gray suffered a broken right leg and left shoulder. He also suffered serious cuts and bruises on the face and body.

Bruno Charbonneau, 39, of Grenville, Que. was killed almost instantly in the underground slide. His funeral will be held Saturday at 10 a.m. to Notre Dame des Sept Douleurs Church, Orléans. Burial will be in the local cemetery.

23/07/1981 *Ottawa Citizen**Canadian Refractories**Kilmar*

A company-owned mini railway's last hurrah

Kilmar. There's no smoke-belching stack or eerie stream whistle. There are no lounge cars with panelled walls and silver dining service.

The doomed Dominion Timber and Minerals Railway is just not the stuff train buffs normally wax nostalgic about.

But the 20-kilometre (12 1/2 mile) railway, which crossed the Laurentians to link a magnesite mining company's two plants 90 km (55 miles) east of Ottawa still tugs at local heartstrings.

Until late last week, a 30-year-old, rusty-orange diesel locomotive hauled just-as-faded hopper cars of mineral over a tortuous route.

Its last trip ended in an era that started in 1916.

Canadian Refractories Ltd., with the only underground mine still operating in the Ottawa area, has decided that its unusual company-owned railway is no longer economical.

Soon the hauling of semi-processed magnesite from the mine here to the shipping depot down the mountain at Marelan, Que., will be contracted to truckers.

Maintaining the railway costs about \$250,000 a year, and it keeps climbing, says Canadian Refractories personnel manager John White.

The engineer, brakeman and four-man maintenance crew will be relocated within the company, which converts magnesite, a white crystal valued for its resistance to heat, into kiln liners.

The company, a subsidiary of the Dallas-based Dresser Industries, has a 600-member staff at its plants here and at nearby Marelan, including 35 miners who work 300 metres (1,000 feet) underground.

Canadian Refractories customers include steel, copper, nickel, titanium, aluminum, cement and glass processors around the world.

The little railway's last hurrah came recently when about 800 company employees and friends climbed into gondola cars for a ride and some reminiscing about the early days.

White is hard-pressed to explain the heavy load of sentiment attached to the train.

"It's not romantic at all," White says, scanning the 65-ton engine's battered exterior.

"It's a strictly functional work train."

The diesel, made by General Electric, has been sold to the original company for yardwork, as a smaller, backup engine. Several freight cars will be scrapped.

To retired general manager Lloyd Thomas, who beginning in 1961 prepared several reports on the railway's viability, it hurts to know the rails are about to be torn up and melted down.

"It's one of the last industrial railroads to fall prey to modernization."

The Dominion Timber and Minerals line was a going concern when Thomas, now 67, arrived at Kilmar in 1937. Six years before, the narrow-gauge track and four 15-ton steam locomotives had been replaced by standard gauge and two 35-ton gasoline engines.

Mining of magnesite started here in 1914 when the First World War cut off supplies from Austria.

The Kilmar deposit was known as early as 1900 when a travelling minister took a sample to Ottawa for analysis. The minister had been curious about a local farmer's green watch fob.

It had been fashioned, he learned, from a piece of serpentine, a soft crystal that intermingles with magnesite.

At first, the raw material was carted out by horse and wagon, but the railway was soon installed over a series of cattle trails and logging roads.

In addition to being a constant hazard to roaming cattle, the early locomotives spewed out hot cinders that caused countless brush fires until they were held in check by wire traps fitted to the smoke stacks.

The Dominion Timber and Minerals line grew with the company. But in recent years, company production and operating costs have overtaken it.

The little railway will be missed.

Gertrude Brown lives with her husband, a retired company safety officer, in a flower bedecked mobile home here. As a child, she rode one of the first locomotives, and took the last ride behind the orange diesel.

There were times when the train was the only lifeline to the outside world, she recalls.

"One winter we were snowed under for three days. The only way to get home was to ride up on the engine."

To Brown and other residents, the train was much more than a company workhorse.

Dominion Timber & Minerals Railway Connected Kilmar Mine With Canadian Refractories Plant in Marelan

Kilmar Quebec - Throughout most of the past century, several different railways ran from the Ottawa and St. Lawrence Rivers up into the mountains of Western Quebec.

Trains from companies such as the Pontiac & Pacific Junction Railway, the Ottawa & Gatineau Valley Railway, and the Montfort & Gatineau Colonization Railway, all pushed into the rocky hills of the Laurentians to carry settlers north and to bring the resources of the Canadian Shield south to a growing nation. One of the lesser known of these now-abandoned lines was the Dominion Timber & Minerals Railway.

For 65 years it connected a strategically important mine in the hamlet of Kilmar, Quebec, with the Canadian Pacific North Shore railway at Marelan in what is now Brownsburg-Chatham, just across the river from Hawkesbury.

Magnesite is a mineral used in making the bricks that line high-temperature kilns, ovens, and blast furnaces.

In this way it is essential to the production of glass, cement, steel, and a variety of other industrial metals.

The mineral was discovered in the hills around Kilmar at the beginning of the last century, and by 1907 several small-scale mines had been set up to extract the ore.

Unfortunately, its low-grade and the remote location of the deposits made large-scale mining uneconomical.

That all changed with the start of World War I, as access to higher-quality magnesite from the Austro-Hungarian Empire was cut off and the local mines were forced into full production.

From very modest shipments of only 358 tons of ore in 1914, output rose dramatically to 16,285 tons in 1915, 53,796 in 1916, 58,340 in 1917, and 28,564 tons in 1918.

From the start of mining operations until 1916, the ore was carried down to the Canadian Pacific line using horse drawn carts travelling over treacherous mountain roads.

Owing to the obvious inefficiencies of this arrangement, a narrow-gauge railway was built that year to ease the shipments.

The line was approximately 20 kilometres long and ran from Kilmar southeastwards towards Wilson Lake.

From there it passed west of the lake and followed the Calumet River for a while, before heading towards Black Lake.

At this point the line turned almost directly southwards and crossed the Calumet and East Calumet Rivers over several short bridges, before turning eastwards again near McGillivray's Hill and cutting over to the tiny Kingham River.

It followed this stream for a kilometre or so, before jogging to the east and then turning sharply southwards again and making an almost straight line towards Marelan on the CP line.

From Marelan, which was originally known as Magnesite Station, or Magnesite Junction, the ore was shipped to processing facilities in either Hull or Longue-Pointe, Quebec.

In its early days, the railway was equipped with four 15 ton steam locomotives and a number of second hand ore cars.

On some days traffic was so busy that all four engines were in use at the same time, requiring the efforts of more than 30 crew.

During this time the railway, and the magnesite it carried, was critical to the manufacture of steel used for ships, tanks, and artillery pieces that helped to win the war.

With victory, however, demand for Kilmar's magnesite fell sharply and in 1919 the railway only shipped 9,940 tons of ore.

Eager to support this nascent industry, scientists at the National Research Council in Ottawa developed a new refractory material, named Magnafrit, in the early 1920s that made the most of the unique qualities of the Kilmar ore, and these efforts ultimately kept the mines, and the railroad, in business.

By 1929 almost 250,000 tons of magnesite had been pulled from the mines, justifying the expense of converting the railway to a heavier standard gauge.

With this conversion, the original rolling stock was disposed of and the steam locomotives were replaced with three 35-ton gasoline powered engines produced by the Plymouth Locomotive Works of Plymouth, Ohio.

Soon thereafter, in 1933, the two leading enterprises at Kilmar, the North American Magnesite Company, and the Scottish Canadian Magnesite Company merged to form Canadian Refractories Limited, at which point the railway assumed its more commonly known name, the Canadian Refractories Railway (CRR).

Production increased sharply again with the start of World War II, as North American industry surged to rearm Canada and the United Kingdom.

Speaking of these mines, in 1941 an Ottawa newspaper proudly proclaimed that "an obscure Canadian mineral deposit, once practically ignored, has become an element in the sinews of steel welded for the Empire's war effort."

In 1951 Canadian Refractories added a much more powerful 65-ton 550 HP General Electric diesel locomotive to its inventory, after which time the smaller Plymouths were relegated to track maintenance and yard work.

For the next 30 years the GE locomotive was employed to carry ore down the mountain and for pulling supplies back up from the river.

This level of industry continued through the 1960s and 1970s, with the Kilmar plant undergoing a major expansion in the early 1980s.

Sadly, the end of the railway came in the summer of 1981.

Faced with annual costs of almost \$250,000, the company realized it was more economical to ship the ore by truck and ceased rail operations.

The GE locomotive and one of the Plymouth engines were sold to the Ivaco Rolling Mills, a steel producer in L'Orignal, Ontario.

The other two Plymouths were scrapped.

Today the track bed of the CRR lies abandoned.

Unlike many former railways, it has not been converted into a formal trail, although parts of it are clearly used by ATVs and snowmobiles.

For the Sunday explorer segments of the route can still be easily found along the backroads south of Kilmar.

There are, for example, obvious sections running beside Scotch Road near Lake Wilson.

In other places the old line is difficult to find, and it is sometimes hard to believe that it has been only 41 years since the last train stopped running.

Still, one could do worse than spending a sunny spring day looking for this lost line and thinking about the strong people of the past who worked so hard along this now almost forgotten pathway.