

Local Railway Items from Ottawa Papers 1937

Saturday 02/01/1937 Ottawa Citizen Union Forwarding

Description of a Journey on an Extraordinary Railway.

Having given a fairly lengthy description of the life and works of the late John Egan and his effort to construct the Chats Canal back in the fifties, O.T.S. has been requested to publish a few facts about the old Pontiac Railroad, which was one of the most amazing examples of railway construction on the whole history of Canada, and which was built for the purpose of transporting boat passengers between Chats Lake and Lake Deschenes.

For this purpose we can do little better than present a description of this wonderful railway as written by a man who rode over it in 1855 and wrote a first hand story. The writer was W.S. Hunter Jr. After describing the Chats Falls and their wonderful beauty, he said:

"It's now time to describe the mode in which this formidable obstruction to navigation 'Chats Falls' is overcome. On landing from the steamer at the foot of Chats Lake, we find ourselves on a convenient wharf and are presently invited to take our places in an open carriage drawn by two horses, tandem fashion and soon find ourselves traveling at a pretty sharp rot along a railway track.

Was Extraordinary

"This extraordinary railway is built across the barrier of rock on piles of squared trees. These trees have been laid across each other horizontally and longitudinally in alternate layers until the required height was obtained. In order that the track may be level it has been necessary in many places to raise the pile of timber over twenty-five feet from the ground.

"There is no railing or fence of any description at the side, but during the several years that this amazing road has been in operation no accident has ever occurred on it, so well has it been managed.

"On arriving at the other end of the railway, which, by the way, is three miles long, we find that we have to descend a long flight of stairs to the wharf below. These stairs are built in a warehouse belonging to the steamboat company, and are necessary because there is about seventy feet of difference between the level of the railway and that of the river below. Descending these stairs we find ourselves on a large wharf alongside which lies the Steamer Emerald, etc., etc."

This remarkable tramway, we learn, stopped running in 1877, owing to the C.P.R. having been built into Pembroke. This was also the last year that the passenger boat "Jessie Cassels", ran to Pontiac from Aylmer. This narrow gauge railway was built away back in the middle forties - when steamboats began to ply regularly between Aylmer and the foot of the Chats. Congestion in the transfer of goods overland to the foot of the lake made it necessary.

Remembers Journey on Remarkable Railroad.

One who retains vivid memories of the old Pontiac horse railway which played an important part in the transportation affairs of the Chats Lake district many years ago, is Mr. Ernest Therien, 408 Rideau street. Writing to O.T.S., Mr. Therien says:

"I doubt if there are many living in the Ottawa Valley today who can say they had a trip on that remarkable old railway. I once had the pleasure and will never forget it, though I was very young at the time. Sometimes two horses were used, one travelling ahead of the other in the center of the track.

"The last time I saw that wonderful railway it was in ruins; the high trestles were rapidly decaying and falling apart. When I lived in Arnprior years ago, we used to cross Chats Lake to this forsaken spot to pick blueberries.

"When the railway was being built in the forties my grandfather, Charles Garrant, was chief cook in the construction camp. His youngest daughter is still alive and living in Almonte at the advanced age of 88 years."

Friday 09/04/1937 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls

Second attempt to derail train.

News of a second attempt to derail the C.N.R. "mixed" train near Smiths Falls on Tuesday night was made public here tonight by Constable Ray Morden of Lindsay who is here investigating the incident. According to reports, the attempt was unsuccessful, the engine pilot brushing aside boulders on the track.

Constable Morden declared a mitten found near the scene and small footprints indicated that the small boulders had been piled across the right-of-way by small boys. The investigation is continuing.

An attempt to derail the train was made some two weeks ago when two ties were propped across the track but on this occasion too, the engine pilot brushed

Monday 21/06/1937 Ottawa Citizen Chalk River Almonte

Three Carleton Place Residents Killed, Train Hits Auto at Almonte.

Three fatalities and one serious injury at bridge Street.

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Friday 21/06/1937 Ottawa Citizen Beachburg

New warning signs at the Canadian National Railway bridge over the Prescott highway about six miles from Ottawa have been erected by the Department of Highways of Ontario. The highway curves sharply under the bridge and is a blind turn. Suitable black and white checkerboard signs, with red reflectors have been placed at both ends of the curve. The word "subway" is painted on the signs.

Wednesday 23/06/1937 Ottawa Journal Ottawa Electric Rockcliffe

\$60,000 loss at OER barn at Rockcliffe

Two of three sections are burned and old cars are destroyed.

Two of three sections of the Ottawa Electric Railway car barn in Rockcliffe were gutted by a spectacular fire this forenoon, the loss including contents being estimated by Major F.D. Burpee, vice-president and general manager of the company at approximately \$60,000. The loss is fully covered by insurance.

Forty old type streetcars, the small type double enders stored in the barn, were destroyed with other equipment.

The barn was valued at \$100,000 and was built around 30 years ago.

More

Believed by Major Burpee to have been caused by a cigarette stub or a small fire lighted by tramps who have often been chased out of the barn, the fire broke out in the centre section. Because of the height of the building, about 20 feet, and the roomy space encouraging draft, the flames spread quickly. The roof is of tar and gravel and the fire leaping through the centre roof soon resulted in billowing clouds of black smoke that could be seen from remote sections of the city.

The old cars in this section quickly fell prey to the flames but two of them had been removed with the aid of one of the large modern cars a short time before. The three sections are separated by brick walls and the exterior of the structure itself is brick. The flames, however, ate into the centre section roof and across and down into the south section. It was soon evident that the latter section could not be saved so firemen concentrated on the north side, trying to save part of the centre section and the north section.

However, both south and centre sections were gutted and the east end of the north section also was damaged.

The side and rear outer walls as well as the inner walls had no windows making fighting of the fire difficult.

More

Several of the cars destroyed were the old fashioned open-sided type so popular years ago for the trips to Britannia and Rockcliffe Park. The other small closed types mainly were used as work cars, although the equipment was stored in the barn for emergency transportation purposes. The cars standing on eight track sections were destroyed.

Saturday 26/06/1937 Ottawa Citizen Renfrew Ottawa, Preston Street

Quick work of engineer averts tragedy.

Only the alertness of a Canadian National Railways locomotive engineer saved five little children from almost certain death yesterday. The youngsters had climbed up on the C.N.R. bridge which crosses Preston Street and were watching the street cars pass underneath when they saw the Deisel (sic) engine train from Madawaska approaching and getting frightened tried to squeeze themselves against the railing.

The engineer, William M. Cooper, 617, Chapel street, Ottawa, saw the children as he reached the approach to the bridge and at once applied his emergency brakes. When he jumped down from the engine, it was to find that one of the children was caught between the pilot and the bridge rail, but neither he nor his companions were at all injured beyond getting a severe fright.

More - dangerous to be on tracks etc.

Saturday 03/07/1937 Ottawa Citizen St. Lawrence and Ottawa Sussex Street

When Thomas Reynolds was general manager of the St. Lawrence and Ottawa Railway, he used to have a handsome private car which was kept in a tin covered shed back of where the T. Sidney Kirby Co. is now located on Sussex Street opposite Queen's wharf.

Saturday 31/07/1937 Ottawa Citizen Canada Atlantic

Fellows who "fire" the monster railroad locomotives of today. With their many labor-saving devices, can have little conception of what locomotive firemen of half a century ago had to put up with.

This is the opinion of William H. Taylor, of 16, McDougall avenue, who, on the 29th of March, 1936, brought in the Canadian National Railways crack transcontinental train No. 1 from Montreal, and thus wrote finis to a railroading career which commenced fifty years ago with the old Canada Atlantic Railway. Forty-two of those years were spent as locomotive engineer in the service of the same road, through a succession of changes in ownership. Mr. Taylor's reminiscences shed much interesting light on the old days and should prove memory-provoking to the hundreds of "retired" railroaders in this district.

An atmosphere decidedly militaristic surrounded "Billy" Taylor's introduction to this terrestrial sphere, inasmuch as he was born in the old military barracks (present Mines Branch building) on Sussex street, sixty-seven years ago. At that time his father, the late William Taylor, who will be recalled as the popular bugle-major of the G.G.F.G. band was in residence in the barracks.

The subject in this memoir commenced his working career at a very early age. He had scarce passed his eleventh birthday when he was engaged to drive a horse and lorry at the "cut" in Archville (Ottawa East). Which was being dug to provide the filling for the present gas works. On that job four lorries were employed two -- each horse, and as there was a very steep incline to the bottom of the pit, the upward journey provided a very heavy task for the horses. Thousands of tons of earth were taken out of that pit.

Old Barrel factory

His next job undertaken a year later, was that of firing the boiler and running the stationary engine in J. and T. Ballantyne's old barrel and stave factory, located in Archville, just north of the present railway bridge. None of the original buildings remain to mark the site of a once flourishing industry. In those days all flour was put up in barrels and the Ballantynes supplied the McKay Milling Company at the Chaudiere with a considerable quantity of the barrels in use there. It was a common thing for the factory to ship as many as sixty units a day to the Chaudiere and sometimes double that number.

During Mr. Taylor's term of employment there the barrels were carted to the Chaudiere and other points in the city by the late Isaac Biggars, who also ran the famous Beaver Hall hotel in Archville.

The wood for the barrels came from the vicinity of Merrickville and was unloaded at a little wharf located at a point between the mill and the present railway bridge. Old Ottawa East boys will have good reason to recall that little wharf for it was the nightly rendezvous of budding Isaac Waltons - and there was some great fishing at that very spot in the old days.

Young Taylor's introduction to railroad life began in the year 1886 when he became a messenger boy in the service of the Old Canada Atlantic Railway - when Morley Donaldson was master mechanic, Allan Kilpatrick was chief clerk, James O'Daugherty assistant clerk and James Ogilvie locomotive foreman. At that time the C.A.R. train hands offices and sheds were just beyond Catherine street, west of what is now the Elgin street subway. The train dispatchers office was on the northeast corner of Elgin and McLeod streets. For carrying the messages between these two points and occasionally to the general office on Sparks street, the boy was paid the munificent sum of forty cents a day - which increased to one dollar a day later when he was taken into the shops and put to the task of wiping and repairing engines.

Dirty Job

Then, in 1888, came one of the big moments in his young life, for it was in August of that year that he really commenced his "running" career, in the capacity of locomotive fireman or "tallow-pot", as the boys were wont to call these gentry. "The step-up was a welcome one," says Mr. Taylor, "but it involved no end of dirty work. Firemen in those days had to clean their own engines inside and out. They had to crawl under the engines and rake the cinders out of the ashpan with a hoe, and while present day firemen will scarcely credit the statement, it is a fact that we had to do that four or five times during a trip between Ottawa and Montreal. Engines in those days had no lubricators and had to be oiled by hand. That is why we firemen were called 'tallow-pots.'"

When he commenced running out of Ottawa to Coteau Junction it was on one of the old-fashioned wood-burning engines with Phil Roy at the controls. These engines each carried a wood car behind the tender, the contents of which usually gave out before the train had traveled thirty miles. Then a long stop would have to be made while the crew loaded her up again from plies carted from all over the countryside by local farmers. Every member of the crew, conductor included, would have to give a hand at this job. Oh yes, them were the railroading days.

Mr. Taylor recalls the building of the C.A.R. branch line between Hawkesbury and Glen Robertson, forty-six years ago. At that time he was "firing" for the late James Casey and the train crew was engaged in distributing the steel. Mr. J. O'Brien was the contractor while his brother John, was walking boss. Frank Hibbert was the civil engineer and George Root was his assistant. John Roberts was conductor of the train and Joe Ward brakeman. Roberts had a peculiar weakness, and that was for cutting his initials in all the big stones along the right of way. If the stones are still there, it is quite possible anyone looking for them will see the initials standing out as a monument to John's share in the building of this branch line.

The job was started about the middle of August and completed about the middle of December, in plenty of time to allow all the boys to return to their homes for Christmas dinner. During the greater part of the time headquarters were in Vankleek Hill; residents of that town will undoubtedly remember the many gay evenings spent in company with these chaps during off-hours.

Stormy Weather

In later years when Mr. Taylor was at the controls of a train running on that line (he was appointed engineer in 1894) he ran into a blinding snowstorm which stalled the train for a whole day. When they left Hawkesbury early that morning the weather was fine and clear, but by the time they got to within four miles of Glen Robertson the snow lay so thick on the track that they couldn't budge an inch. As there were no diners on the train in those days, at least not on short-line trains, Conductor James Clarke had to snowshoe about four miles to get provisions for the hungry passengers. Fortunately the coaches were equipped with heaters (coal burning stoves) so that the passengers did not suffer any ill effects from the long stop over.

Memories of every old C.A.R. man travel back to those delightful picnic excursions which were run to Clark's Island, opposite Valleyfield, back in the gay nineties.

Mt. Taylor recalls that he fired the engine which pulled the train of twenty-two coaches on the first of those jolly excursions about the year 1891. That engine was gaily bedecked with flags and bunting and there were crowds of people at every railway station along the line, who cheered and entered heartily into the spirit of the occasion. Each and every one of those picnics was a decided success. Thanks to the persevering way of old Jimmy Dean, overseer of the company water service who undertook to canvass leading merchants, there was never a lack of prizes to be distributed to the winners of the various sporting events. Herman Kirk, it should be mentioned, was engineer on that fine excursion engine.

Thursday 19/08/1937 Ottawa Citizen Sussex Street Sussex Street

Youth injured in diving off bridge.

Losing his balance while attempting to dive off the C.P.R. bridge over the Rideau river near the Minto bridges, Lucien Latulippe, 17, of 200 Water street, was injured yesterday afternoon when he crashed into iron girders. He was rushed to the Ottawa General Hospital in Gauthier's ambulance.

His injuries consist of numerous cuts and abrasions to the head, chest, arms and legs. Several stitches were required to close some of the wounds. Dr.

McCullough attended the injured youth. Following treatment he was allowed to go home.

Along with a group of friends, Latulippe was diving off the bridge floor about 15 feet above the water. He climbed up a girder to a height of about eight feet above the floor of the bridge and was preparing to dive when he lost his balance. In his fall he managed to grip a girder but could not retain his hold. His body struck the railway ties and then rolled into the river after striking other girders.

Despite his injuries he was able to swim for a while and was assisted to shore by other swimmers.

Constable Roderick Grant investigated the accident.

Saturday 04/09/1937 Ottawa Citizen Canada Central

The big fire, which in 1870 swept all the Ottawa river front and much of the interior of Carleton County bulks large in the memory of Mr. John Cardill, veteran resident of Ottawa who, at the time of the great conflagration was living on a farm on the tenth line of Goulbourn. Sometime in the sixties, fire, which destroyed a part of the old Rochesterville tannery forced his father out of work there and the family moved out to Goulbourn.

At the time of the big blaze in Carleton, the Canada Central Railway was being built north and west of Bell's Corners. Mr. Cardill was one of the construction gang employed on the job: the men boarded and roomed at Nelson Corbett's rooming house in the village of Bells Corners.

Destroyed Rails.

"At the time the fire broke out," says Mr. Cardill, "I was working with a gang some distance north of the village. At that time we were engaged in loading ties on a wagon belonging to Jeremiah Sullivan, of Ramsay. The district in which we were working was mostly swamp land covered with a thick growth of cedar bushes. The flames not only swept the cedar bushes, but they burnt the newly laid ties and warped the rails which had been laid or were beside the road-bed.

"I distinctly remember that the flames spread with such rapidity through the district where we were working that we had to flee for our lives. When we reached what was known as Robinson's rock cut we found the flames had already swept through the village and there was absolutely no chance of reaching the boarding house to get our belongings. We were forced to join other unfortunate fire sufferers in a head-long flight down the Richmond road in the direction of the city.

"Those of the villagers who had buggies or wagons packed what belongings they could and fled. Those who had no vehicles left everything and fled on foot. Some of the people, mainly women and children, fairly exhausted from running and lugging what effects they could with them, stopped at Graham Bay and sought shelter there from the rushing flames. I recall that quite a number of us, mostly members of the construction crew, continued on down the road until we reached what was then known as Barry's bay - a little hamlet a short distance east of Woodroffe, now known as Springfield Park. There we spent the night.

"On returning to Bells Corners the following day we received instructions to commence immediately on the work of rebuilding the burnt section of the railroad. So anxious were the officials to have the work completed in the shortest possible time that they kept us employed day and night, with only brief rest periods, but without a wink of sleep. I well remember that when Saturday night came I threw myself down on my bunk and fell into such a sound sleep that I didn't wake up until Monday morning. That was certainly a trying ordeal."

Saturday 11/09/1937 Ottawa Citizen Renfrew Ottawa, Elgin Street

Locomotive Engineer had narrow escape.

Discussing the many narrow escapes from death and injury train crews experienced in bygone days, Mr. Water Hunt, veteran employee of the old Canada Atlantic Railway, told of an incident which occurred in the late eighties, a few years after the railway swing bridge had been built over the canal at Ottawa East.

At that time, Fred Page, one of the first employes of the C.A.R. was taking a train out of the yards and was heading in the direction of Ottawa East. For some reason he was not aware of the fact that the bridge was open until it was too late to apply the brakes. The consequence was that the engine shot headlong into the canal tearing the couplings from the first car. In that spectacular dive the locomotive turned a complete somersault and lay on its back with the wheels sticking up above the water.

Just as the engine was about to take the plunge, Page executed a flying leap from the cab window and landed in the canal a few feet from where his charge landed. Fortunately he was uninjured and experienced little difficulty in reaching shore and safety.

N.B. This took place on 1 August 1891.

Monday 13/09/1937 Ottawa Citizen Alexandria Casselman

Station at Casselman destroyed by fire.

Fire, which was discovered shortly afternoon on Sunday, completely destroyed the C.N.R. station and freight shed at Casselman, 31 miles east of Ottawa. The loss, according to railway officials, is confined to the frame building, 60 feet by 30 feet in size and erected about 30 years ago.

While the cause of the blaze is unknown, it is attributed to defective electric wiring. A passer-by noticed smoke issuing from the freight shed, which had been closed since Saturday, and raised the alarm by sounding the church bell. According to railway officials there were only a few pieces of freight and express in the building and they along with all the tickets and safe were saved.

Armed with a pumper the volunteer brigade attacked the blaze and while they were unable to save the building, prevented the flames from spreading. No delay in traffic on the Ottawa-Montreal line, which runs through Casselman, resulted from the fire.

Tuesday 27/09/1937 Ottawa Journal Ottawa Electric Rockcliffe

Residents feel that cars sheds are an eyesore.

Now is the psychological time to remove them.

- detrimental effect upon the beauty of Rockcliffe Park.

- proximity to Rideau Hall grounds.

- the fire risk because of them.

The OER owns the site of the car sheds and also the right of way having acquired them from the Keefer estate many years ago.

Could have swept through the greater part of the park.

Friday 08/10/1937 Ottawa Citizen Chalk River Carleton Place

Mail Man Killed at Carleton Place by Imperial Limited.

Fred Stanzel, mail courier, between the post office and the C.P.R. depot, was killed at 2.35 o'clock this morning when he was struck by the Imperial Limited proceeding west as he was preparing to put the night mail on this train. The body was terribly mangled and death must have been instantaneous.

So far as is known there were no eye-witnesses but it is surmised that Stanzel, who usually meets this train on track two, had to change his plans as the train was brought in on track one, owing to the train from Winnipeg being too late to make the crossing here. He was shoving his mail truck across the track and the truck had just cleared the rails when the engine caught him and carried his body some 30 yards before the heavy train could be brought to a stop.

Dr. A. Downing, the coroner, was at once called as were also Chief of Police Irvine and W.H. Hooper, postmaster, together with Stanton Stanzel, the victim's assistant. They at once took charge of the body and it was removed to the Matthews and Fleming funeral home. In the meantime Dr. Downing ordered an inquest which will be heard at 1.30 this afternoon.

The train was in charge of C. Neil, conductor and J. Dolman, engineer, both of Ottawa.

Mr. Stanzel is a son of the late Mr. and Mrs. William Stanzel and was born at Stittsville 55 years ago. For many years he conducted a cartage business here but for upwards of 20 years he has been the mail courier, meeting all trains in the discharge of his duties. He is survived by his widow, Libby Menerva Robinson Stanzel, together with three children, Oswald, Gwendolin and John. He also leaves two brothers, Steven Stanzel of Carleton Place and Alfred Stanzel of Lanark, and one sister, Mrs. John Johnston of Carleton Place.

The funeral will be held on Sunday afternoon at 1.30 o'clock to St. James church and cemetery.

Tuesday 12/10/1937 Ottawa Citizen Chalk River Carleton Place

Man's death declared accidental

The adjourned inquest into the death of Frederick Stanzel, mail man who met his death at the C.P.R. station here early last Friday morning was held here tonight and after hearing evidence of the railway officials. rendered the following verdict.

"We, your coroner's jury, appointed to inquire into the death of Frederick Stanzel, find that he came to his death at 2.35 a.m. Oct. 8, 1937 by being struck by the locomotive of Train No. 1 when moving hand truck across tracks to platform. We find his death accidental, no blame attached to anyone.

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Dr. A. Downing, coroner, presided, and evidence was given by T.C. Shields, night C.P.R. operator, C. Neil, conductor; J. Dolman, engineer; Charles Clifton, fireman, all from Ottawa, and Chief of Police C.R. Irvine.

No one saw the fatal accident and the evidence led the jury to believe Stanzel was about to cross the track with the railway mail truck when the (train) struck him, resulting in his instant death.

W.W. Pollock, Crown attorney examined the witnesses. The C.P.R. solicitor was C.A. Scott of Ottawa.

Saturday 16/10/1937 Ottawa Citizen Winchester Apple Hill

Apple Hill in Glengarry county, was once known as "Glen Munro" and was almost definitely named "Kennedy," in fact it was once unofficially entered in the records by the latter name and only the modesty of a man in himself and pride in his product changed it.

When the short line of the C.P.R. was projected through Glengarry in the eighties the late Alexander Kennedy, a well-to-do farmer situated five miles north of Martintown, conceived it to be a matter of great community benefit could the railway depot be established in the vicinity of his farm. He consequently offered the railway company a right of way across his property on this condition and the company in turn gave him the opportunity and privilege of naming it. People were already calling the place "Glen Munro" and "Munro's Mills" because of the presence of so many farmers of that name in the vicinity: the C.P.R. were tentatively referring to it as "Kennedy" but the fine old pioneer was prouder of the fruit atop the sun-kissed elevation on his farm than he was of his name.

Thus it was that Mr. Kennedy submitted "Apple Hill" and that's what it is today, it was euphonious and full of meaning and was promptly accepted by the nomenclature board of the C.P.R. It's a fascinating little village: the depot, homes and schools are definitely above the average.

Thursday 03/11/1937 Ottawa Citizen Renfrew Goshen

Car wrecked by train but motorist unhurt.

Goshen. A Montreal salesman escaped uninjured when the automobile he was driving crashed into the side of an eastbound C.N.R. express train between here and Glasgow yesterday morning. Hitting the center of the train, the car skidded about 160 feet and swung around, hitting the train again. The car was almost completely demolished.

The westbound steam express train was held up some time at Glasgow as the tracks intersect at this point. Provincial police and C.N.R. officials investigated. The wrecked automobile was taken to Arnprior.

Monday 27/12/1937 Ottawa Citizen Montreal and Ottawa St. Albert

St. Albert. Azarie Bourgeois, 65-year-old farmer of this village, was killed instantly early Friday afternoon when he was thrown into the path of an oncoming freight train by his horse which had bolted when frightened by the engine whistle

Mr. Bourgeois had gone to the station to discuss some personal business with the station agent. he was accompanied by a close personal friend and neighbor, Donald MacDonald. The two men had tied the horse and sleigh outside the station and went inside to see the agent. While they were talking, Mr. Bourgeois saw the approaching train and went outside to attend the horse. he had loosened the horse and was standing holding it at the head, when suddenly it bolted, dragging him close to the tracks and before he could free himself, he was thrown into the path of the Ottawa-bound train.

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Friday 31/12/1937 Ottawa Citizen Montreal and Ottawa Plantagenet

Bits of news gleaned from prints for the week of Sept 9, 1907.

John Blackburn, fireman, was killed, and Herbert Reynolds, engineer, of Rochester street, was seriously injured as the result of an accident on the C.P.R. at Plantagenet. A train of empty coaches collided with a ballast train near the station, derailing the passenger engine and wrecking several of the coaches.

Reynolds and Blackburn were found beneath the overturned engine.