

Local Railway Items from Area Papers - 1950

19/03/1950 *Ottawa Journal*

Carleton Place

Ashton

West-Bound Freight Slices Into East-Bound

ASHTON, March 18 (Staff) Two Ottawa railway men were killed and two others were injured when a West-bound Canadian Pacific freight sliced into an East-bound freight here at 1.15 a.m. today.

Ashton is 20 miles south-west of Ottawa.

The dead:

Travers A. Short, CPR engineer of 461 Kensington avenue;

George H. Hannan, CPR fireman of 23 Adelaide street.

Both men were on the west bound train. Local No. 89, running from Ottawa to Smith Falls. The Injured:

Thomas C. Gilmer, head-end brakeman, of 217 Riverdale avenue;

A. O. Renaud, trainman of 302 St. Andrew street

Gilmer, on the east-bound train is in Ottawa Civic Hospital with severe scalds and burns, sustained when live steam from bursting engine pipes enveloped him.

Renaud, on the east-bound sustained a fracture of the nose.

Ties Up Traffic

The wreck tied up traffic on the main Canadian Pacific line between between Ottawa and Toronto, but early morning trains were being re-routed, and wrecking crews hoped to have the tracks cleared within a few hours.

The trains met in a blinding, driving snowstorm. Lack of visibility was believed to have been a contributing factor in the wreck, into which Canadian Pacific authorities already have opened their investigation.

How It Happened. .

At the moment before impact this was the picture:

The East-bound train was pulling into the passing track siding at Ashton. The engine, tender and several cars had pulled over from the main line to the siding, but the tail-end of the freight train still remained on the main track.

The West-bound train, running between Ottawa and Smiths Falls, was rolling down the main line and sliced into the last eight cars of the freight pulling on to the siding.

How it had happened that the West-bound train piled into the other freight, or why it was the East-bound train hadn't cleared the main line, Canadian Pacific officials would not say.

However, there was some reason to believe there had been a misreading of signals between the crews of both trains.

Head-end brakeman Gilmer of the West-bound train was heard to say "He gave us the high sign with his headlight".

It was possible the crew of the West-bound train saw a headlight signal through the driving snow, read it to mean the track was clear, and so continued rolling to cut into the other freight

The West-bound threw two East-bound freight cars against the Ashton flag stop station, smashing it and then itself toppled end over end.

The right-of-way was torn up for some 200 yards, littered with splintered ties and twisted steel rails.

First rescuers to reach the scene found the body of Engineer Short lying on the ground near his engine, a crumpled figure covered with blood-spotted snow.

The body of his fireman, George Hannan, was found locked in the wreckage of the cab, unseeing eyes staring ahead while the orange glow from the firebox played grotesquely over his features.

The scene was one of death and desolation the small flagstop station a crazy mass of splintered boards, rail ends jerked upward as high as 20 feet, the wreckage of box cars which had been crushed like match boxes strewn about the area, and railway ties like toothpicks studding the ground.

The eerie bright red and yellow railway flares played over the macabre spectacle as a wrecking crew of 20 men from Ottawa, Stittsville and Carleton Place methodically set about clearing the main line.

Engine Flips End Over End.

The engine of the West-bound freight had flipped end over end and crashed over on its left side near the rails, scalding steam pouring from its burst boilers.

Near by the tender stood tilted on its nose.

CPR officials said the East-bound train had gone to Smiths Falls as local No. 83, and was heading back to Ottawa as an extra freight. The West-bound freight No. 89, left Ottawa at 11.55 p.m.

Doctors from Carleton Place and Smiths Falls drove through the storm over drifted roads to reach the wreck to give aid to the injured. Engineer Short and Fireman Hannan were beyond help.

The Department of Highways rushed a snowplow in from Carleton Place minutes after the wreck was reported to keep the road open for police, ambulances, doctors and rescue workers.

Scene of the wreck was some 200 yards from Highway No. 15 linking Carleton Place and Ottawa.

19/03/1950 *Ottawa Journal*

Carleton Place

Ashton

Like the Toys of an Angry Giant (with picture)

Smashed and tossed by the tremendous impact of tons of steel, the wreckage of CPR freight No. 83 lies scattered across the main transcontinental line at Ashton, 20 miles southwest of Ottawa. The broken cars spew their cargo across the snow, the one in the right upper background spreading hundreds of cases of beer about. Seven cars, the engine and the tender are spread around in much the same confusion as would result if a small boy in temper had upset his toy train. The early morning collision Saturday of No. 83 with the rear end of an eastbound freight affected train schedules and connections from Montreal to Sudbury, while dispatchers rerouted freight and passenger to by-pass the smash-up in which two crewmen died and two others were injured. The wreckage was cleared, 250 yards of ripped up track replaced and the line opened for traffic again late Saturday. At either end of the torn right-of-way, the railway wreck-clearing cranes can be seen beginning the job of working their way to the centre of the pile-up.

20/03/1950 *Ottawa Journal*

Carleton Place

Ashton

Inquest Tuesday Into Ashton Rail Disaster

Circumstances which early Saturday morning caused a high-balling, west-bound CPR freight train to plow into the rear sections of another CPR cargo train at Ashton, killing two men and tying up the main transcontinental line with a wild tangle of smashed engine, tender and box cars will be explained to a coroner's jury at Carleton Place, five miles from the wreck scene, Tuesday evening.

The jury will then arrive at a decision as to just why Engineer Travers Short and Fireman George Hannan, both of Ottawa, were killed

Clearing Line.

Meanwhile, CPR work crews today were still toiling to clear the Ashton right-of-way of wreckage so they could lay new track.

Until the twisted trackage is replaced, CPR traffic is being rerouted round the Ashton line via Smiths Falls and Bedell.

Coroner Dr. J. A. McCwen, of Carleton Place, will preside at the inquest tomorrow. Chief witnesses will be members of the crew of the east-bound train which was struck by the westbound freight, The east-bound was almost completely on a siding when the other train struck it.

Engine Derailed At Franktown Blocks Traffic

CARLETON PLACE. March 24. (Special) Derailment of a CPR "swing" engine at the Franktown crossing near here at 4 p.m. Thursday during a heavy snowstorm, tied up passenger train traffic between Ottawa and Chalk River for two hours. No one, was injured.

Only last Saturday morning two Ottawa men were killed in a collision during a blinding snowstorm at Ashton Station, five miles southeast of Carleton Place on the CPR main line,

Thursday's derailment, caused by heavy snow and icing conditions, tied up both the 4.05 passenger passenger train from Chalk River and the 3.20 p.m. Ottawa to Pembroke local.

A wrecking crew from Smiths Falls was called in. and worked for two hours to right the heavy locomotive on the tracks.

Damage to the derailed engine was confined to a bent front truck.

Conductor of the train on which the engine was working, when derailed, was John Gillan who was conductor on the westbound CPR freight involved in the Ashton Station collision Saturday morning.

31/08/1950 *Ottawa Citizen**Alexandria**Ottawa Union*

Only two on board

First passenger train arrives

Employees of both railroads are all on the job on time this morning

At the Chateau Laurier, however, it will take a day before new guests can be accommodated and the cafeteria won't be open until Friday. By Saturday management expects everything will be back to normal, with grill and main dining rooms open and full services available for guests.

On the first passenger train to arrive in Ottawa after the strike was CPR 563 from Prescott, which carried two passengers from Smiths Falls.

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30/09/1950 *Ottawa Journal**Walkley Line*

Picture - King Size Scoop - this DW10 Caterpillar Diesel scraper dwarfs the shovel in the hands of Joseph Boileau of Hull, but both have their part in a \$200,000 scraping job that will see the levelling off of the five mile railway cut-off south of Ottawa. The scraper can dispose of 10 cubic yards of earth in a few minutes. Therrien Construction Company has the contract with the Federal District Commission for the job

Joe McVeigh, who used to farm 70 acres in Ottawa about two and a half miles south of Billings road on a concession road just east of the Metcalfe highway was downcast yesterday.

Joe was out of business as a farmer. He is now employed by the R.L. Crain Limited firm.

Joe's farm, house and barn has all been expropriated by the Federal District Commission to become part of the new railway cut-off from Hawthorne to near Bowesville road.

A crew from the Therrien Construction Company, were at work on the McVeigh farm.

They had brought in the first of the heavy equipment they are going to use to grade the land down two and a half feet.

They use scrapers with Diesel engines and, to insure their traction in the wet ground, a tractor bulldozer is pressed into service.

The scraper carries off 10 cubic yards of earth and the average trip is about 20 minutes.

The Therrien firm has 16 cubic-yard scrapers but they haven't reached Ottawa yet.

It won't be long before Joe McVeigh's house, barn and other farmers' homes nearby will be pulled down and the fields cut down to the proper railway grade.

Meanwhile there are cows relishing the rich autumn pastures before those scrapers start cutting.

27/11/1950 *Ottawa Journal**Carleton Place**Westport*

Trees on Railway Tracks.

While tending power lines that had fallen in Springfield Park, three members of the Fire Department were credited with saving the lives of a CPR train crew by flagging down a fast freight before it plowed into a tree lying across the tracks.

The three are Lieut Joseph "Curly" Moynahan, Fireman Norman Thebarger and Fireman Ed. Hill. All are stationed at No. 1 Station in Westboro.

The three had the live wires under control when the CPR transcontinental train, west-bound to Vancouver went by just before midnight Saturday.

Four minutes later a huge elm crashed down across the main line.

Fireman Hill knew a fast freight was due, heading west. In about 10 minutes.

A radio call to the Fire Alarm Headquarters was relayed to the CPR dispatcher but apparently never got to the freight because it roared out of the east right on schedule and heading for the tree blocking the track.

Lieut. Monaghan and Fireman Fireman Thebarger raced east down each side of the track waving flashlights. Fireman Hill drove his pumper alongside the track, turned on the siren, and began flicking his headlights. He also turned on the red, rotating flasher lights on the front of the pumper.

The freight halted only a few feet from the tree, which would have derailed the engine and tender.

20/12/1950 *Ottawa Journal**Ottawa Electric*

Track-Jump Tangle Tally: \$1,000

A derailed tram on Bank street, just north of Somerset street, tied up traffic for 40 minutes and caused more than \$1,000 damage when it plowed into two parked cars at six o'clock last evening.

The tram, one of the "Methuselah models" pensioned off by Toronto some years ago finally came to rest wedged between the second of the two parked cars and southbound tram.

Police said the derailment was apparently caused when a switch failed to function properly as the operator, Irving Robinson, 84 Bronson, avenue, was swinging north on to Bank from Somerset.

There were no passengers in either of the parked cars at the time. Passengers on both trams escaped injury.

Constable Kenneth Spratt walking along the east side of Bank street at the time, said the derailment did not become apparent until the rear end of the tram suddenly veered to the east side of the street some 120 feet north of Somerset.

Out of control, the rear end successively crashed two parked cars on the east side of Bank, owned by Jean A. Riopelle, 575 MacLaren street, and Lawrence McLean, 218 Russell avenue, respectively.

Damage to the Riopelle car, which was jolted against a fire hydrant, was \$750; to the McLean McLean car, \$200. The derailed tram suffered \$100 damage.

The front end swung to the west and, came to rest against the side of a second tram, operated by George Tanner.

Constable Spratt was aided by Sgt Reginald Raby and Constable Prosper Bruyere.