

Local Railway Items from Ottawa Papers 1952

Friday 16/05/1952 Ottawa Citizen Kingston (CN) Cornwall

Montreal - Romeo Morin, 46-year-old railroad employe of Cornwall, Ont., who suffered a fractured skull in falling from a railway hand-car, was resting comfortably in hospital here yesterday after an 80-mile-an-hour trip from Cornwall Wednesday night. Hospital authorities in Cornwall ordered Morin, Canadian National Railways roadmaster, transferred to Montreal's Neurological Institute and Larry Miller, Cornwall ambulance driver, covered the 81 miles to Montreal in 60 minutes.

Saturday 05/07/1952 Ottawa Citizen Westport

Abandoning Old Rail Line by Austin Cross

Shed a tear for the old Brockville and Westport Railroad

Donald Gordon, president of the Canadian National, the company now owning the Brockville and Westport, applied for abandonment of the line. To this sad proposal the Board of Transport Commissioners have agreed.

Thus goes into history not only one of the most romantic railroads in Eastern Canada, but it also represents the mileage in the east for a long time.

The railway ambles seemingly aimlessly from Brockville to Westport. On the map it is represented as a straight line. Actually, no cow wandering across the countryside would choose a more meandering course. For instance, the Brockville and Westport, starts off for Westport by going due west for 5.2 miles. Yet later on, we find the B and W headed east, and crossing the Smiths Falls-Brockville highway at Forthton station. Here it is almost back where it started.

The line threads some famous communities. It touches one place called Athens. once upon a time this community was called Farmersville. Then they got a high school. Legend said that such grandeur went to their heads. With a high school they wanted a high falutin' name. Thus they chose the ultimate, the classical Athens.

Lyndhurst Had Mine

At Lyndhurst is located an old mine. It has had an interesting career. Run by remote control by Cornishmen, they once got suspicious of monkey business at Lyndhurst. So they sent a man out to investigate. He got as far as Brockville. This much is known. But the man disappeared somewhere between Brockville and Lyndhurst and was never seen again. Shortly after that the mine was closed down.

Then on to Delta. Here at what has been called Beverly they used to have open voting. A man was once killed here for voting the "wrong way", says the legend. Presumably he voted against Sir John A. Macdonald's party when Canada was a Union before Confederation.

Delta is a hallowed spot for Queen's men. For it was here that the famous Guy Curtis, renowned as the "conqueror of Yale", in an ancient and never forgotten football game, retired to look after his pigs after a glorious career on the gridiron. He was visited in the fall of 1921 and taken from his swine to return to Queens in triumph. Varsity beat Queens that day 24-1.

Consulted Witch

Not far from Delta is Plum Hollow. Here the witch of Plum Hollow used to make her auguries and people came a long way to consult the witch of Plum Hollow.

But there is at least one Ottawa man who remembers Plum Hollow for another reason. When cars were hard to get a national agency here in Ottawa had faithfully promised a Citizen man a new car.

When he turned up to get it, the sorrowful smile of the agent told the news before the man could get it out:

"Sorry, the agent in Plum Hollow got your car," he said.

At 35.1 miles from Brockville the B and W crosses the main line of the Canadian National from Toronto to Ottawa. Many people travelling to Toronto will recall this famous country junction.

Crosby, a station nestled in the woods not far from the Kingston-Ottawa Highway has been seen by many. Somebody lives in the station, and the unusual sight of lace curtains in a station is plainly viewed from a speeding car.

Height of Land

Finally before reaching the terminus comes Newboro. This is the height of land and, in the old days, ore was shipped down the waterway from Newboro to Lake Ontario and on to Ohio smelters.

Go the other way and one comes into the Upper Rideau and on to Ottawa. Thus Newboro offers a two-way waterway out of town.

Once upon a time the elegant Rideau Queen used to dock here and among the distinguished passengers to go through town was John Bracken, aboard the Rideau Queen on his way to his new job in Ottawa.

The Brockville Westport and Northwestern, to give the line its full and elegant name, finally comes to an end at Westport Mountain. The truth is that the old Brockville and Westport was trying to give the Canadian Pacific a run for its money. The B and W had tried to get a transcontinental franchise. But the franchise ended in a hill 44.5 miles west of Brockville.

R.I.P the B and W's transcontinental ambitions.

<http://news.google.ca/newspapers?id=3o0kAAAIBAJ&sjid=qt8FAAAAIBAJ&dq=canadian%20nationa%20railway%20brockville&pg=5588%2C866464>

Train Service Ending Arouses Fond Memories

Brockville, Aug. 26. Shed a tear for the passing of the old B & W. On March 4, 1888, the Brockville and Westport made its first run. On Saturday of this week it is scheduled to make its last trip over the lake-dotted, fertile farmland area that stretches 45 miles by rail from here to Westport.

As far as the Canadian National Railways is concerned, it is another short line running up deficits-going out of existence and making way for accounts to balance. It has chalked up deficits of \$400,000 during the past six years, including an amount last year of \$83,035.

To a few businesses that have continued during recent years to depend on it for transportation of livestock, cheese, feed, fuel, cement and the like, the abandonment of the old rail line is a hard blow. But for many of the villagers .and farm families along the way, especially the old-timers, it digs deep into memories of the life and development of Leeds County over the decades.

The old-timers will tell you about the grandiose scheme for a St. Lawrence and Lake. Huron railway envisioned a century ago at a meeting- in Farmersville, long since known as Athens. The meeting came to naught. Many of the -- materials for an Italian crew to lay the line.

William Begley of Westport, who spent 39 years with B & W, .tells how he stoked that first engine for a period and then took over as engineer. And W. C. Baker, also of Westport, recalls the day he and his father were hailed as they, were crossing a road with a plow and so it happened that he turned the first - sod for the B & W. "That was in 18877," he says.

At Lyndhurst, Station Agent A. W. Hodgson called attention to the original steel rails with the lettering on each: "Cammell Sheffield Toughened Steel, 1886, P B & W & SSMR. Commented Conductor Moore "They used to say those letters stood for 'Bad Wages and Seldom See Your Money.' It was true, too. A lot of the tickets, too, were given in return for scrip. Course, prices in those days! Why, a woman back of Westport used to pack .a crock of butter at two pounds for a quarter, and down here at Crosby a man by the name of Culbert used to. sell eggs at three dozen for 25 cents. . Why, I used to stay at a hotel .in Westport for three dollars a week, and we had all homemade cooking including the bread. Huh, when "I got married I was -only making \$42 a month!

And work, I used to do more work in a day than I do in a month," he continued. In the days of the old wood burners I'd push in a couple of cords of wood, sit back and take a breath and go at it again. The winters we used to have! I've seen us take two days to go from Newboro to Westport; And the cold! There were no mitts.

or gloves, no goggles. Why, John Graham, the first engineer, never wore a mitt in his life.

"Those .were the days when Jim Mooney used to ride the cow-catcher on a chair. That's a fact. And there were no air brakes, only hand brakes, you'd go past a station more often than you'd stop at it. And the baggage cars, they were under six feet and had to bend to get about."

Conductor Moore remembers, too that a horse-drawn stage picked up passengers in Westport for Kingston. Horse-drawn carriages gathered up mail at the various stations and delivered it to tiny post offices. Here, hacks and hotel buses, waiting for the train to cross the teetering trestle long since discarded lined up to furnish, transportation downtown.

Not so today. A paved highway alongside has changed the picture. In the station here the other morning every one within earshot looked surprised when a .man at the wicket asked for "two tickets to Westport, return." It turned out that young Bill Askland and his dad were interested - in short line, single track, railroads. Bill said, his train, was an electric one. His father told us that the National Model Railroaders Association, Niagara Frontier region,. was holding a convention here Oct. 3 and 4, and had considered a trip over the B and W.

"Have you got your seasick tablets?" Conductor Moore called out as I boarded the train. Besides Bill, his dad and myself, the only other passengers were a Dutch family who couldn't speak English, on their way from the Netherlands to Lyndhurst to the farm of Cecil McFadden, cattle drover.

Nowadays you wouldn't choose to go from here to Westport by train. The roadbed, seems to get bumpier as the train gets closer to Westport. Chugging along in the cab for a short distance with Engineer D.E.Moran demonstrating the controls of engine 86, some 40 years in service, you think it is rougher than riding a farm, tractor.

But 25, 30, 40, 50 years ago, people enjoyed riding on the B & W. Trains pulled out of here during the summer season with great numbers of fishermen and campers, many of them from the United States, bound for Charleston Lake near Athens, Upper and Lower Beverly. at Delta and the Rideau Lakes beyond. Special trains made excursions to Delta for the famous merchants picnics of those days. Women all along the route used the B & W for shopping expeditions to this town and a good visit on the way. Monday mornings and. Friday evenings trains would be lively with boys and girls who attended high school away from home. A.E. Watt, station agent in Athens from 1918 until the beginning of this year remembers when the B & W had six trains a day, four of them passenger.

The last run? Maybe George T. Fulford, M.P., and a few officials will be on board. Says the conductor, It'll be the same as any other. And what'll we have left? A lot of fond memories.

A railroad which has been as much a part of this country as the scenic beauty and fertile farm land which stretches on both sides of its tracks will make its swan song this afternoon when the Brockville and Westport Railway ceases operations.

Over the original Sheffield steel rails laid in 1887, the B and W. will pull into Brockville on the last trip of a career which has functioned for 64 years. At the throttle will be Dan Moran, of Brockville. Lorne Hadbottle is the fireman and C.A. (Pete) Price the conductor.

It is expected that many of the curious as well as several district residents will make the last trip. The mixed freight and passenger train is scheduled to reach Lyn Junction at 4:05 pm Standard Time. It will arrive in Brockville shortly after 5:15 pm, Daylight Saving Time.

Sidney John Sully, agent at the end of the line retired from service last month. He was agent at Westport for 36 years.

By Austin F. Cross.

Leeds County said goodbye to the historic Brockville and Westport Railway Saturday afternoon. When old engine No. 86 wheezed to a stop in Brockville, one hour late, it marked the end of the run - forever. For the line, which started off so bravely back in 1888 to beat the Canadian Pacific, with the imaginative name of Brockville, Westport and Sault Ste. Marie, ended up a bad debt at Brockville station.

All along the line people came down to observe the obsequies of the old B. & W. When the engine blew that highball before she left the station at Westport, it sounded more like a funeral wail.

It Had To Go

But the old line had to go. As a railway it was a rail fan's delight, but as a business, it was a bookkeeper's headache. Rich in history, wealthy in scenery, loaded down with sentiment, she seemed to have everything - except money. Furrowed-browed men at 360 McGill Street, Montreal, decided they would wipe out this picturesque bookkeeping item. Next week, the wreckers move in.

The Brockville and Westport reputedly has cost the CNR about \$400,000 just to keep alive. It was sad its passenger figures ran to little more than \$100 take in a whole year.

Once the line boasted of six trains a day, of 10,000 passengers in a single sunup to sundown. But it has lived on in its memories, a legend while still alive. Bus and truck have dug the grave of the railway, and the Canadian National accountants have buried it.

Postcard Country

The Brockville and Westport ran for the most part through picture post card scenery redolent with deep forests and golden meadows, and bespangled with shimmering lakes. Its tracks cross streams of game fish, and Saturday afternoon many a tourist or fisherman paused and looked up to see the old mixed local go by.

It was fitting enough that a bed of flowers waved a wan goodbye from the trackside at Delta - they were forget-me-nots.

Interesting too was the race the rabbit gave old 86. For quite a distance its pacing paralleled the train. But in the fable, the tortoise beat the hare. On Saturday afternoon, the rabbit beat the tortoise-speed of the dying old train.

When Mixed Train No. 340, to give the formal, legal title, steamed into Westport Station, there was exactly one person on the platform. He stood leaning on his cane, in the respectful attitude a man would at the bier of an old friend. He was W.J. Begley. The cane he leaned on connoted the fact that old Bill Begley had brought the first train into Westport away back on March 4, 1888. "B.&W. 1887-1926" was the inscription. He had begun railroading the year before he had brought the first train into Westport.

A Diamond Stacker

"I brought the train in that day for the first time," recalled Old Bill, sadly. "She was a diamond-stacked wood burner, Old No. 3. Then I got coal burners and I held the run 'til I retired in 1926. I never thought I would see the last train on the line."

Stepping off the train was C.E. Hull, Newboro, who had drawn the cord wood for Old No. 3 back in 1888 at Athens.

"I just had to make this last trip," said Mr. Hull.

Down to see the last train, and arriving at the depot later on were Wesley Brown of Ottawa, well known in football and service club circles. Others included Mrs. Brown and Mr. and Mrs. Eddie Friel.

To get the train "Y-ed" around was the work of a minute. Conductor Clem Moore, 63, of Brockville, wore his uniform for the first time.

"A lot of people hardly knew me dressed up," he smiled.

The crew were taking their last run glumly. For though the quick stepping "con", Mr. Moore was grinning, you felt that back of the grin was a grimace.

Clue to the way some felt was that of Cleon Price, the regular brakeman. He didn't make the historic last trip. In his place the less emotional R.W. Morris was hustled down from Belleville to fill in the spot.

Up ahead were Dan Moran, Brockville, the veteran engineer and Harry Hutt, Belleville, fireman. In the baggage car was Irvine Gregson.

The Westport Station was a-bustle with activity. Stationmaster AM. St. John was getting out his papers. Symbolic of the last day was the empty ticket rack.

The station had run out of tickets and when Leo Burkholder, Ottawa, sought to buy a ticket, from Westport to Crosby, there were no tickets. One had to be bought on the train.

A Busman's Holiday

Taking a busman's holiday was S.J. Sully, ex-station master, who on retirement was giving a convincing display of perpetual motion as he helped load express. There were parcels for Shamokin and Jersey Shores in Pennsylvania; for Akron, for other far places. The old Westport station was winding up in a flourish.

Finally the clock hand slid around toward the vital minute. Conductor Moore, as was his wont, checked his watch against the station clock, then he went out and waved All Aboard.

When No. 86 blew the highball whistle, it was like a dirge to the town.

"I hate to hear that whistle blow," said Mrs. J.C. Stinson, daughter of former station master Sully. "I worked here with dad for seven years, and that old train has been part of my life."

Slowly, inexorably, the train started to pull out. This was no gala affair. Sad faced watched the four freight cars and the old oil-lit combination No. 7154 crawl out. Between grassy covering on the right-of-way, only the little thin old Sheffield rails were visible. Gradually the train picked up speed. It rounded the bend and the town was out of sight. Railroading in Westport was history.

MP On Board

On the train was George Fulford, MP for Leeds, who with his son made the last run. Leo Burkholder of Ottawa travelled the first eight miles to Crosby.

Then he motored to Brockville and watched the train come in there.

On and off got passengers, taking that last sentimental ride. Perhaps the most interesting passengers were Bruce and Bob Tedford of Soperton. For the boys, it was their first railway ride. They had chosen the last trip of the old Brockville and Westport to make their first train trip. Accompanying them was George Harrington.

First stop was Newboro, where rails and ties for the old railway had been shipped in by boat to this point on the Rideau Canal in 1888. Down near Crosby, W.C. Baker, now of Westport, and taking the last ride pointed to posts where he had dug the original post holes with his father back in '88.

At Delta, fishermen paused to take a last look at the old train. Here the combined resources of engineer and fireman were needed to push the broken water spout back up where it belonged.

Here too, the railway picked up a car of maple syrup billed to Fort William. There was business to the dying gasp, along the old line.

It was at Delta that the forget-me-not beside the engine waved their blue-petalled farewell to the old mogul engine.

At Lyndhurst the train had acquired an oil tank car. Other business up and down the line included setting out a car of feed from Fort William for Athens; dropping a car of flour from Fort William also to Athens. All the way the train had a car billed to Schumacher, Northern Ontario, from Westport.

William Freeman, agent at Lyndhurst for 33 years, came down to the train. CFJR Brockville had a trackside broadcast. Finally induced to break silence was Conductor Moore who exclaimed, as he was hailed to the mike:

"Many's the wonderful I have had along here; many's the great time I have had with the Leeds County people; if I told it all I could fill a book."

Earlier Westport outbound passengers had been dropped. Mary and Donnie, children of Dr. F.R. Goodfellow, Newboro and the three Hagen children, Jean, Isabel, and Carmel had gone; also Mrs. J. Orville Forrester, who got off at Newboro. Gone too were Mrs. S.J. Sully, wife of the ex-stationmaster at Westport and Mrs. W.C. Baker whose husband had dug the railway post holes back in 1888.

Athens gave the last big turnout as hundreds saw the train switch cars and incidentally lose some of her scheduled time. But the crew were in no hurry.

They seemed to want to make the final trip last.

(continued)

Here at Athens it was recalled that one time, 10,000 passengers had passed through the town on the Brockville Westport (sic). It was a far cry to the last years when the old half-coach had run empty, more days than not. Athens prompted further reminiscence from Conductor Moore who remembered he fired old No. 3 before this century, getting slivers in his hand from the cordwood. His day's take-home was \$1.25 each and every day. A day merely meant 24 hours.

Just as the conductor had his books straight and his envelopes all sealed, there was a flag at Forthton for more passengers.

Mrs. Talmage Grey, of Brockville said to a friend: "I guess we are all sentimentalists at heart." Also on at Forthton were Cecil Marshall and Gerald May. Other youngsters now on board were Eleanor and Donald Greenham in charge of their mother, Mrs. Ray Greenham of Athens.

Final passengers picked up were H. Fennel and son. The train raced now for Lyn and the junction with the main line. A slow, methodical piece of railroading saw three switches thrown, and finally old 86 got on the main line. Here on the rock ballast, heavy steel, double track, the ancient engine suddenly acted as an old mare does when she begins to feel good. She got whooping it up and she roared down the high iron like the limited.

Then she dropped her freight cars in Brockville's improbably named Manitoba Yard. She came back and coupled on. The one combination coach was all that was left of the last run.

Even now she could not finish here day. A couple of slick smooth diesels whined across the tracks and No. 86 had to wait. Then with a final triumphant blast she rattled her way down to Brockville station.

The conductor shook hands with George Fulford, his MP; the young brakeman had a date in Belleville that night and hoped he'd make it on No. 15, due soon. Sadly Engineer Moran took his 1910 vintage engine down to the roundhouse. That was the end.