

Local Railway Items from Area Papers - 1989

12/02/1989 Ottawa Citizen Maniwaki

STEAM TRAIN TO WAKEFIELD ON TRACK?: Plans to revive the steam excursion train between Hull and Wakefield, Quebec, got a 'shot in the arm' on February 11. Quebec Tourism Minister Michel Gratton announced during an economic development conference that the Quebec Government will inject \$1.4 million into the Wakefield Steam Train project.

The train's promoters had asked Quebec for \$2.8 million to rehabilitate the 27 kilometre former CP Rail line and to improve the Hull station. Gratton indicated that the remaining \$1.4 million will be included in an economic development agreement to be negotiated with the federal government.

The National Museum of Science and Technology's former CP 4-6-2 1201 powered the last train over the line on September 1, 1985.

02/08/1989 Ottawa Citizen Lachute Montebello

STATION RELOCATED: CP's unique log station at Montebello, Quebec, has been relocated 300 metres onto a new foundation in the heart of the village on Notre Dame Street for use as a year-round tourist-history interpretation centre and boutique.

The 33 metre long by 12.6 metre wide station was built in 1931 from logs to complement the nearby hexagonal Log Chateau, now the Chateau Montebello. For many years the station served well-to-do tourists, big name politicians and businessmen on their way to the exclusive and private Seigniory Club, which operated out of the Log Chateau. The station last received passengers on November 14, 1981, when VIA RDC-1 6102 made the last passenger run over the Lachute Subdivision.

15/08/1989 Ottawa Citizen Beachburg

VIA AND TRANSPORT 2000 DERIDE PLAN TO ABANDON LINE:

A total of \$68 million has been approved to construct a 1.6-kilometre section of Ottawa's bus transitway between Riverside Hospital and Billings Bridge. Of that amount, some \$20 million will be required to relocate a portion of CN's Beachburg Subdivision, which hosts 10 VIA trains a day (four Toronto trains and the 'Canadian' each way).

The Citizens for Ottawa Planning, a group of Alta Vista residents, has advocated that the costs can be trimmed by \$18 million if the line were abandoned and the trains routed through Walkley Yard and through the east-end industrial area to enter Ottawa Station from the east end, thus rendering Ottawa Station stub-ended. A VIA Rail spokesman said the group's proposal would undermine VIA's schedules. "Our right-of-way now provides the best possible route between Ottawa and Toronto, and it's the best possible option for any future Ottawa-Toronto service."

A Transport 2000 spokesman indicated that if the plan was ever seriously considered, it would end up costing taxpayers a lot more than \$18 million.

08/11/1989 Pembroke Observer Chalk River Pembroke

RAIL MUSEUM FOR PEMBROKE WATERFRONT: Approval in principle has been given by Pembroke city council to establish a rail museum along the city's waterfront. Consisting of a baggage car, dining car and observation, as well as one locomotive, the display would be located near the Council for the Champlain Waterway tourist office at the city's Centenary Park.

According to Zolo Demeter of the Rail Road Heritage Association of Pembroke, the display would be a major tourist draw in addition to enhancing the waterfront in the vicinity of Canadian Pacific's Chalk River Subdivision which hugs the west shore of the Ottawa River as it passes through Pembroke.

During the next phase of the project, contacts will be made as to the availability of suitable equipment for display.

20/11/1989 The Star Alexandria

Former Gloucester football star Keith MacIsaac tackled the most important game of his life Nov. 18 in a collision with a speeding passenger train in Vars. The 27-year-old Gloucester man was travelling southbound alone on Rockdale Road at John Street and Division Street at 10 a.m. on Saturday morning when he saw railway crossing lights flashing. He hit the brakes, slid on the wet snow and black ice and veered into a ditch before slamming into the side of the train. The front of MacIsaac's 1987 Chevrolet sedan was sheared in half at the dashboard, reported Rockland OPP Const. Brad Hampson.

"It's a miracle he survived, thank God he was wearing his seatbelt," said Hampson.

MacIsaac suffered a severe head cut resulting in 40 stitches, torn knee ligaments, abdominal injuries and a chest bruise from the lifesaving seatbelt. He underwent surgery on his left knee later that night.

"I have never seen a car more damaged," declared Denis Desjardins, owner of Capital-Cumberland Towing.

"We brought the jaws of life but as it turned out we didn't need them," said Captain Sam Dagg of the Cumberland Fire Department. The driver was dragged a couple of hundred feet with the rear section of the car.

"The roof was off, and all we had to do was cut his seatbelt," Dagg explained.

Sophie Prudhomme, 11 and Josee Landry, 10 were cross country skiing 40 feet from the tracks when they heard the crash.

"We heard a boom and saw what we thought were two cars parked by the tracks. My father ran out and realized it was one car split in two," Josee said. "I was scared." Aime Prudhomme, Sophie's father called the 911 emergency number.

Claude Bertrand, owner of Vars Restaurant, also heard the crash and ran out to see what had happened.

"Blood was pouring from a cut on (MacIsaac's) head," said Bertrand who described the scene. Pieces from the wreckage were scattered over a 300-foot area, and several hundred feet from the crash site lay a tireless wheel rim shredded as thin as the foil in cigarette pack. Bertrand said.

MacIsaac's father, Arthur, spoke briefly to The Star from his Gloucester home Nov. 18 before hurrying back to Ottawa General Hospital to see his son.

"The car was cut in half - I don't know what happened, but I guess the old fellow upstairs was looking out for him," said MacIsaac who believes his son owes his life to both his seatbelt and his good physical condition.

Non railway items omitted

"Keith was alert last night (Nov. 18) and the cuts on his face and hands are healing. He's got a sore lower back and his left knee is banged up, but in a year's time he should be back to the way he was," he said.

Responding to Saturday's train accident proved painful for some Cumberland firefighters.

Several remembered the July 23 train accident that claimed the life of Gloucester fireman Lawrence Cashman. Cashman was hit by a passenger train on an unlit crossing on Sand Road in rural Vars. The 31-year-old husband and father of two was killed instantly. A couple of last Saturday's firemen were Cashman's friends. Both train collisions happened only a couple of concessions apart on the same line of track at Vars.

MAYORSINKSGATINEAUTOURISTTRAIN OPERATION:

True to his word, (Branchline, December 1989) Jean-Pierre Brunette, newly elected mayor of the Gatineau Valley municipality of La Peche (Wakefield) has vowed to end his community's involvement in attempts to turn the remaining portion of the former CP Rail Maniwaki Subdivision into a steam tourist train operation.

At a council meeting in early December, Brunette spoke against the train project saying "I have categorically said no to the train. We should spend the money on roads. I don't believe in the train."

His stance was supported by Councillor Robert Bussiere who stated that "The Wakefield tourist train project is finished. We don't want the train. It will never be viable nor have economic impacts such as job creation."

Tourist train operation to Wakefield ended on September 1, 1985.