

Local Railway Items from Ottawa Papers - 1990

Monday 15/01/1990 Ottawa Citizen Alexandria Ottawa

Requiem for a lost Canadian.

Heartbroken supporters say farewell.

With a mournful blast of its whistle. The Canadian pulled out of Ottawa for the last time Sunday as about 300 protesters bade farewell to a victim of the VIA cuts.

More

In another part:

Parting no sorrow for Jim and Lenny.

Aboard the Canadian Jim Barney and Lenny Austin turned a page of Canadian history Sunday, and in so doing, they closed their own careers.

The two men had the privilege of being the locomotive engineers who drove the Canadian out of Montreal Sunday for the first leg of the transcontinental journey.

More, including description of a ride in the cab.

Monday 15/01/1990 Ottawa Citizen Chalk River Pembroke

VIA: Tragedy on the last trip.

Death of pair in truck-train crash mars already bittersweet journey.

VIA Rail's transcontinental train The Canadian met tragedy Sunday five hours after it left Montreal on its final journey. Two people died when a truck collided with the train at a level crossing near Pembroke.

The driver, Richard Moores, 23 of Petawawa Township, and his passenger, Jennifer Hill, 19 of Pembroke, died at a level crossing marked with flashing lights.

The Canadian had just left Pembroke station.

The accident cast a heavy shadow over an already bitter-sweet journey.

The Canadian route, famous for its exceptional scenery, is a victim of the sweeping federal cuts to VIA Rail that came into effect today and will see the crown corporation's weekly service slashed by more than half.

Seventeen of VIA's 38 routes finished Sunday. And more than 2,700 employees - about 38 per cent of VIA's workforce of 7,800 - are out of work.

Conductor Don Green and the other three members of the VIA crew boarded the train in Ottawa for the final run of their careers.

All were headed towards early retirement once they got the train to North Bay.

Ottawa resident, Lorne Blackburn was the engineer driving the train at the time of the accident.

"Its horrible," conductor Don Green said.

A railroader with 34 years experience, Green was shaken by the crash.

"It's quite a way to end it all. I haven't seen something like this in 15 or 20 years."

Hill and Moores were on their way to Moores' house for Sunday dinner with his family. Hill was a grade 12 student and a "friendly and outgoing girl," her father Jack said.

Pembroke OPP are investigating the accident.

Groups protesting the VIA cuts saw the train off in Montreal and gathered at stations along its route.

At stops in Alexandria, Ottawa and Pembroke they carried signs criticizing the federal government for the cuts.

The lobby group, Transport 2000 helped organize the protests and had loaded a coffin draped in black in the baggage car.

Most passengers were either tourists or rail buffs, sympathetic to the protesters' cause.

By the time the train left a group of demonstrators at Pembroke station about 3 p.m. the mood on board resembled an Irish wake. Many spoke of the romance of the railway as they toasted the passing of The Canadian.

Then the train lurched violently as engineers applied the brakes.

Within a minute the train had ground to a halt. The passenger cars were silent.

Ontario Provincial Police Const. Don Boire said the lights and warning signals at the crossing were operating at the time of the crash.

"They must have been talking or something because they didn't seem to notice the train," Boire said.

Word of the accident spread slowly.

But Marilyn Masterson moved fast. The 36-year old nurse from Maine had come to Canada to make the trip of a lifetime.

Along with several reporters she jumped into hip-deep snow and ran up to the crumpled truck.

"It was just too late."

The train stood 90 minutes while police, ambulance and fire officials removed the bodies.

Guy Chartrand, president of Transport 2000 Quebec branch, was grim.

The coffin used a prop for the mob of cameras now seemed inappropriate.

"This is horrible," Chartrand said. "It's already a very sad day and this makes it worse."

A train lover, Harris is making the trip for sentimental reasons.

"It's a poor analogy now, but it's like going to a funeral."

The Canadian In Fatal Collision

The very last trip of VIA Rail's transcontinental train - The Canadian - was marred by a tragedy of a double fatality at a level crossing in Petawawa Township on Sunday afternoon.

Richard Moores, 23, of 4 Biesenthal Road, and Jennifer Hill, 17, of 225 Esther Street in Pembroke, were killed instantly when the 1986 Toyota half-ton truck he was driving was broadsided by the westbound travelling train.

The accident occurred at about 2:55 p.m. at a crossing on the Biesenthal Road, clearly marked with flashing lights, about 28 meters south of County Road 17.

Mr. Moores lived just two houses past the crossing.

The engineer on the Canadian, which was travelling at about 120 kilometres per hour, was Lome Blackburn, 58, of Richmond.

Final Canadian Stops In Pembroke

They came to bid farewell to a way of life.

About 100 people waited in the cold outside Pembroke's train station on Sunday afternoon for a last taste of history as the Canadian pulled into and out of the station for the very last time.

The last official passenger to board the train from Pembroke's station was Toddene Knoll, of Calgary.

She was returning home after a year during which she worked as a guest at Madonna House in Combermere.

She was accompanied by Father Rick Starks, who had promised her that there would be a great crowd at the station waiting to send her off.

She couldn't believe the crowd, nor could she believe she would become a part of the history that has given Canada intercontinental rail service for the past 104 years.

Among those waiting on the platform was Pembroke Mayor Terry McCann.

He recalled his early days in Eganville when, as a child, he would run to the rail tracks, place his ear to the rail, and try to hear an approaching train.

But his visit to the train station Sunday didn't have the element of fun it had held for him as a child.

He, too, came to mourn the passing of what had once been a national dream.

"I'm sorry that younger families won't have the opportunities to travel across the country on this train," said Mayor McCann. "My wife and I and our family had that opportunity and it was a wonderful experience. Everyone here is saddened with this news. When you see our national institutions, such as this train, being dismantled you've got a right to come here and shed a tear."

25/01/1990 Ottawa Citizen

Maniwaki

Wakefield

TRAIN SUPPORTERS REFUSE TO GIVE UP: Efforts are being made to prevent the final derailment of the proposed Wakefield tourist train operation over what remains of CP Rail's former Maniwaki Subdivision.

The project had appeared to be in jeopardy after efforts to secure partial financing from the federal government proved unsuccessful. The lack of federal support had provoked a similar response from the provincial government which had promised to match the federal contribution but not go it alone.

Now, in an effort to rescuing the project, the City of Hull, one of the three co-owners of the tracks and right-of-way, has offered to increase its financial commitment by an additional \$200,000. Hull's new commitment, in addition to other monies already promised by the City, the Hull-La Peche Tourist Council and local promoter Andy Tommy, means approximately \$1.4 million has been secured for the project.

Officials now hope that the Province of Quebec will see fit to match these commitments with an additional \$1.4 million, an amount it was supposed to have committed had the federal funding come through.

It is now time for a wait and see game, however. Organizers feel that an answer must be forthcoming prior to March 31, the end of the current fiscal year.

According to spokesperson Larry Dufour, "I feel if we don't get the final agreement from the Quebec government by the end of March, we won't get it all."

23/08/1990 Le Droit

Maniwaki

LOCAL OFFICIALS FRUSTRATED OVER LACK OF ACTION ON WAKEFIELD TOURIST OPERATION: Five years after it was discontinued, the prospect of a tourist rail line between Hull and Wakefield, Quebec, seems to be as remote as it ever was.

Although a contract operator has been found and the proposed operating company actually owns two diesel switchers, little concrete action appears to have taken place in the intervening years.

Rather, it has been a classic case of bureaucratic run-around, false hopes, broken promises, and the usual recriminations.

At issue is approximately \$1.4 million in seed money which the project needs to get on the rails - so to speak. This represents approximately 50% of the start-up costs with the balance coming from municipal governments as well as the private sector.

Still the provincial government appears reluctant to give its seal of approval with the matter to date not even before the provincial cabinet, even though the prospect of such an event has been promised on more than one occasion.

According to Hull councillor Yves Ducharme, "We've learned that the file is not complete ... We don't know who is putting sticks in our wheels, but we will get additional details."

Monday

27/08/1990

Ottawa Citizen

Lachute

Prince of Wales Bridge

With Picture.

Hanging on for the last train.

As daredevil boys hang on to the prince of Wales bridge near Lemieux Island steam locomotive 1201 crossed the Ottawa River for the last time Sunday.

"It's extremely dangerous to do that," cautioned Constable Paul Gray of the Ottawa Police. "The boys should know better."

The money-losing city excursions will not continue next year, says Paul Bown, president of the Bytown Railway Society. The train took riders on a 90-minute excursion around the city.

01/10/1990 West Quebec Post

Maniwaki

STATUS OF WAKEFIELD TRAIN HAS AREA MERCHANTS GUESSING: Wakefield, Quebec, merchants are growing more and more confused about whether the community will become the focal point for a tourist railway operation over CP Rail's one-time Maniwaki Subdivision.

More than five years have elapsed since the last train departed Wakefield for Ottawa and still the area is no closer to a resumption of operations.

Now the village has seen a number of petitions from concerned individuals about what is happening. For instance, a petition recently circulated through the community in support of the train, garnered the signatures of 34 businesses in favour of the train. The initiative was prompted by an earlier petition which saw 15 businesses and citizens oppose the train for a variety of reasons.

Many villagers, moreover, are quite confused about the proposed operation. Will it be steam or diesel? What will be the frequency of operation? Is there an infrastructure to handle the proposed ridership of 1,000 patrons per day?

Perhaps the bottom line is the question of who will pick up the tab for seed funding? No one seems to know but it appears certain that any money will have to come from the Province of Quebec, although no one on that front has been too hasty to rush in and sign a cheque. Meanwhile the right-of-way keeps on deteriorating.

Budget grinch axes Santa Claus train.

Doctor Zeuss would not be impressed! Budget constraints have meant that VIA Rail Canada has had to axe its highly successful Santa Claus train between Ottawa and Montreal. The attraction had become a yuletide tradition in Ottawa over the past decade or so. The critics are blaming VIA but the fault really lies in the level of subsidy which the crown corporation currently receives from the federal government. Unfortunately, today's bottom line economics don't leave room for such luxuries as Santa trains. What a pity..

RAIL MUSEUM ONE STEP CLOSER TO REALITY:

Plans to establish a railway museum in Pembroke, Ontario, have advanced another step following City Council approval to lease a piece of property 20 feet wide by 500 feet long, adjacent to the CP Rail right-of-way in the vicinity of the local marina. The property is to be leased to the local Railroad Heritage Association. The group also must obtain a lease from CP for a portion in addition to obtaining charitable status for the purposes of accepting donations. Also required is the signing of a guarantee that absolves the city from any liability or responsibility for problems or equipment should the project not succeed. The Association is negotiating with the National Museum of Science and Technology for the acquisition of ex-Canadian Pacific 4-8-4 No. 3100 which will be the focal point. As well, it has acquired the former CP steel water tank, located nearby and one of the last steam locomotive water tanks in the Ottawa Valley which it intends to convert into a combination observation platform and slide. Two cars may be obtained. One will be a diner while the other - some form of passenger car - will be converted into a "theatre car" for showing a 3-D movie of a train ride across Canada.