

# Local Railway Items from Ottawa Papers 1992

04/02/1992 *Le Droit* *Maniwaki*

STEAM WHISTLE MAY YET SOUND IN GATINEAU VALLEY:

The Gatineau Hills may yet echo to the sound of a steam locomotive, something that hasn't happened since September 1, 1985.

On February 25, seven years of blood, sweat and tears may come to a happy ending when it is anticipated that the Province of Quebec will finally officially commit \$1.4 million to an ambitious proposal to operate a steam passenger tourist train between Hull and Wakefield, Quebec. The route is the CP Rail former Maniwaki Subdivision.

Equipment for the Hull-Wakefield service will be purchased from Sweden. Promoter Marc Grondin will journey to Sweden in mid-February to buy rolling stock from the Swedish government. The purchase will include three steam locomotives, three service cars, 15 passenger cars, a yard locomotive, and other equipment for a total of \$500,000. Transport and other costs will bring the final total to \$650,000. The steam locomotives have been in 'strategic reserve' for many years.

The next few months should see quite a flurry of activity as operators of the railway set about to build a shop and turning facilities in Hull, rehabilitate the former Maniwaki subdivision and install visitor service facilities, especially at the Hull end.

As much information as possible will be provided in the April issue of Branchline. (Branchline).

19/02/1992 *West Quebec Post* *Maniwaki*

CAN VILLAGE COPE WITH TOURIST INFLUX?

As the clock ticks closer to the resumption of steam passenger rail service between Hull and Wakefield, Quebec, a new issue has emerged to tax the creativity of the train's proponents.

Wakefield merchants and residents, alike, wonder how well their tiny community will be able to cope with an influx of up to 900 passengers on a daily basis.

The train's proponents are forecasting that close to 140,000 people could visit Wakefield during the summer of 1992, far out taxing the limited visitor service facilities in the community.

At a recent meeting, merchants described their experiences between 1974 and 1985 when Wakefield service was provided by the Government of Canada using ex-CP locomotives 1057 and 1201. They spoke of the disruption to their regular business with people looking for parking and washrooms. It was also mentioned that the crowds assembling to watch the locomotive turning rituals also seriously blocked traffic on the main street.

Pro-train advocates dismissed the worries and called for innovative solutions to the problems. They see the resumption of rail service as an economic panacea.

05/03/1992 *Canadian Press* *Alexandria*

BROKEN AXLES CAUSE DERAILMENTS: On February 18, two LRC coaches on Ottawa-Montreal Train 34 derailed at speed at Glen Robertson, Ontario, when an axle broke. Fortunately there were no injuries.

A similar derailment occurred at St-Lambert, Quebec, on February 29 when an axle on one LRC coach on Quebec-Montreal Train 621 failed.

These derailments, plus a similar one at Ottawa in 1991, have resulted in VIA stepping up the frequency of axle testing of LRC rolling stock in line with recommendations made by the Transportation Safety Board. (Canadian Press, 05/03/92 via Branchline)

25/03/1992 *West Quebec Post* *Maniwaki* *Wakefield*

Business community develops plan for tourist train.

Commerce Wakefield, a local business association, is developing a strategy for handling the projected influx of passengers from the soon-to-open Wakefield Steam Train.

The group has recently discussed a consultant's proposal for added washroom and other such visitor facilities to Wakefield in time to greet the first passengers on June 27 of this year.

Up to 1,000 passengers are forecasted to visit the community on a daily basis during the summer. The group has no idea how many others will drive there just to watch the train. (Branchline)

25/06/1992 *Ottawa Citizen* *Waltham* *Hull*

CP has given notice that it proposes to apply for abandonment of the Wamo Spur (formerly the Waltham subdivision) between mile 0.0 and Mile 1.0 E.B. Eddy Forest products (the only shipper on the line), no longer requires rail service and has pulled up all its trackage. (Branchline)

*Monday* 17/08/1992 *Ottawa Sun* *Chalk River* *Almonte*

Saturday night, the RCMP concert band played at the Almonte (Ontario) fairgrounds to an enthusiastic audience. But, during the highly dramatic Phantom of the Opera theme, the 7:40 freight came barreling through town a block away from the fairgrounds

The band just couldn't compete, so they stopped. Then the fellows in the horn sections started mimicking the train horn. The concert resumed after a big round of applause.

19/08/1992 *West Quebec Post* *Maniwaki*

NEW TENDER FOR WAKEFIELD STATION: New tenders have been issued for the construction of a scaled-down station facility in Wakefield, Quebec. An original design, including a water tower cum observation tower was judged to be too expensive by the project's backers. The new structure will have a minimum of passenger comforts. In the interim, passengers aboard the Wakefield Tourist Train are handled at the unsheltered and somewhat short platform that once served the National Museum of Science and Technology's 1201 steam train excursion program'.

09/09/1992 *Le Droit* *Waltham*

WAMO SPUR MAY BE PURCHASED BY CITY OF HULL.

The city of Hul has indicated an interest in the purchase of CP Rail's WAMO Spur. A little more than one mile in length, the trackage is all that remains of the Waltham subdivision linking Hull with Waltham, Quebec.

It is planned to use part of the WAMO Spur right-of-way as an access route to a proposed cogeneration plant and the other portion as a reserved bus lane.

CP Rail is asking \$870,000 for the 1.6km strip of land.

The Waltham Subdivision was progressively abandoned during the 1980s. (Branchline).

09/09/1992 *West Quebec Post* *Maniwaki*

WAKEFIELD TRAIN NOT PRODUCING ANTICIPATED BUSINESS SPIN-OFFS: Although the resumption of tourist train service to Wakefield, Quebec, has increased tourism in the area, it has not been the economic panacea that many thought it would.

According to local reports, at least six businesses born in the heady euphoria of the train's start-up have quietly packed it in. A variety of reasons are behind the failures including the shortness of the train's layover period, less than forecast passenger loadings, bad weather, and the recession.

Also contributing to the situation is the layout of the community itself. Wakefield stretches along the rail line, with the terminal at the extreme north end.

This means that businesses at the southern end of the community are a fair hike away from the train - too far for many it would seem.

Two shops located adjacent to the turntable, however, report excellent business.

**09/10/1992 Ottawa Citizen Renfrew**

ONTARIO'S NEWEST RAILWAY SAVES INDUSTRY: For the first time, the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton has got into the shortline operating business by purchasing 43 kilometres of CN track between Arnprior and Nepean, which CN had received permission to abandon. The abandonment would have cut a supply lifeline for tough-to-transport raw material to the BASF Canada nylon fibres plant in Arnprior. The region bought the railway for \$550,000 and leases it to BASF under a 20-year agreement. BASF bought CN Rail's equipment for \$1.3 million. The region had its own reasons to get involved after recognizing that railways are an important transit link that must be preserved. After special provincial legislation was passed, the Arnprior-Nepean Railway Co. Inc. was born. Regional planners and solicitors are negotiating a deal with Canadian Pacific to acquire the disused right-of-way between Carleton Place and Nepean, and is keeping an eye on other routes in the region that may one day be abandoned. (Branchline)

**15/10/1992 Le Droit Maniwaki**

MANIWAKI SUBDIVISION COULD BECOME "PUBLIC UTILITY CORRIDOR".

The gatineau Valley County Rural Municipality Committee has launched a fund raising campaign to acquire CP Rail's former Maniwaki subdivision between Low and Messines, Quebec. The abandoned right-of-way would be used as a "public utility corridor". The committee hopes to raise \$425,000 locally while it will seek an additional \$325,000 from the provincial government. An offer to purchase is expected near year-end. (Branchline).

**06/12/1992 Ottawa Citizen Maniwaki**

WAKEFIELD STEAM TRAIN RECEIVES FEDERAL FUNDS The federal government has awarded \$558,600 to the Tourist Development Council of Hull-Chelsea-LaPêche to go towards the completion of a garage/workshop in Trent Yard in Hull, building of a new station in Wakefield, repairs to the Wakefield bridge and other general maintenance work. Tourism Minister Tom Hocking said "the Wakefield train is an excellent example of enterprise in the area of tourism for all of Canada."

The steam train has carried about 35,000 passengers since operations commenced on June 27, 1992. Santa Claus trips were operated in December. Trips for skiers will start in January and sugar bush visits will be operated in the spring.

**31/12/1992 Brockville Recorder Brockville Brockville**

CANADA'S FIRST RAILWAY TUNNEL DESIGNATED: On December 8, City of Brockville council passed a bylaw designating the Brockville tunnel's two portals, along with the first 30 metres of the south end of the tunnel that is open for display each summer. The designation under the Ontario Heritage Act marks it as a property of architectural and historical significance.

This is the fourth time that Brockville council tried to designate the 1,730-foot tunnel which opened on December 31, 1860. The first attempt was in 1983, the year the property was first turned over to the city by Marathon Realty, followed by attempts in 1985 and 1990. The reason none of them were successful was because aldermen and city staff worried the restrictions that come with designating a property under the Act could hamper future attempts at repair or renovation. Officials fretted that the city could face exorbitant costs if the repairs had to be carried out according to authentic 19th century specifications.

By citing only the north and south entrances in the designation bylaw, council remains free to repair, renovate or even fill in the length of the tunnel as it sees fit. While Heritage Brockville has always wanted the entire tunnel from Water Street to Pearl Street designated as a historic structure, Gary Tristram, Heritage Brockville Chairman, says "this is an important first step. At least now we can get some official recognition for it and now the city can try to get some grant money for repointing or other things." (Branchline)