

Local Railway Items from Ottawa Papers - 1993

27/01/1993 Smiths Falls Record Chalk River

COUNTY COUNCIL WANTS RAIL CORRIDOR RESERVED: If CP Rail System receives permission to abandon major portions of its Chalk River Subdivision, the Lanark County Council wants to ensure that the right-of-way is preserved as a future transportation corridor. In conjunction with Renfrew County and the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, Lanark has sent a letter to the National Transportation Agency expressing concern over the possible loss of the corridor. "The purpose is to try and retain the property for use as a transportation corridor in the future when sanity returns to our society," said a spokesperson. (Branchline).

03/02/1993 West Quebec Post Maniwaki Wakefield

HOTEL MAY BE BUILT IN CONJUNCTION WITH WAKEFIELD TOURIST TRAIN OPERATION: Marc Grondin, Hull tourist promoter and owner of the Wakefield steam tourist train operation, has announced that he is looking for a national hotel chain to build a facility in Wakefield, adjacent to the proposed new Wakefield station. The project is subject to the installation of appropriate sewer and water services and would serve to "anchor" the northern end of the train's operations. (Branchline)

18/03/1993 Le Droit Maniwaki

PROVINCIAL CHARTER REQUIRED FOR WAKEFIELD TOURIST TRAIN: A private member's bill is now before the Quebec National Assembly which would grant a provincial railway charter to the company operating the Wakefield tourist train. The need to secure a charter was required after CP Rail System indicated that it would not allow the company access to run over its Lachute Subdivision between Hull and Laman until it was recognized as a provincially-chartered railway.(Branchline).

31/03/1993 Rideau Record Smiths Falls Smiths Falls

The Smiths Falls Railway Museum has received a \$58,000 grant from the Community Features Committee of Lanark/Leeds and Grenville Counties. The money comes following an earlier federal government injection, also \$58,000. (Branchline).

20/04/1993 Ottawa Citizen Ellwood

COMMUTER RAIL LINK MENTIONED FOR OTTAWA-HULL REGION: CP Rail System has announced that it is considering whether its Ellwood Subdivision can be used as the basis for a commuter rail link between Hull, Quebec, and Ottawa, Ontario. A key element of this approach is the company's "Prince of Wales Bridge" which carries the Ellwood Sub. across the Ottawa River.

The announcement came after a flurry of public opposition on the Ontario side to Quebec proposals that a new automobile bridge be built across the Ottawa River in order to ease rush hour congestion - primarily from Quebec traffic heading to Ottawa. Regardless of where the bridge was to be located, it would have a major impact on local neighbourhoods and the public outcry was so great that municipal officials in Ontario distanced themselves very quickly from any such project.

So far, CP isn't making any firm commitments as to what action will arise from the study. The announcement was warmly received in Ottawa, however. (Branchline).

21/04/1993 West Quebec Post Maniwaki

Busy year predicted for Wakefield steam train.

Operators of the Wakefield Steam Train are hoping to double their passenger volume this year. In a pre-season press release, operator Marc Grondin predicted that he would carry upwards of 75,000 passengers during the forthcoming season.

Over the winter, a new shop has been built at the railway's Trent Yard in the north end of Hull and 2-8-0 locomotive No.909 has undergone boiler and firebox work to the tune of \$50,000. Meanwhile Grondin has also announced that a traditional style of water tower will be erected in Wakefield adjacent to the south end of the turntable lead. This handy fixture will do away with last year's time-consuming effort of having to pump water from the nearby gatineau River during 909's layover. (Branchline).

City council has finally designated Brockville's railway tunnel under the Ontario Heritage Act. Shown here in a 1953 photo with a CP engine 3011, the tunnel is 132 years old today.

Getting tunnel designated as arduous as building it.

Ask a city councillor to name a few of Brockville's historical gems, and the railway tunnel at Water Street is bound to be mentioned..

Why, then, did it take nine years and three attempts to get Canada's first railway tunnel designated under the Ontario Heritage Act as a property of architectural and historic significance?

On December 8, council passed the bylaw designating the tunnel's two portals, along with the first 30 metres of the south end of the tunnel that is opened for display each summer. The tunnel is 132 years old today after opening to rail traffic on December 31, 1860.

The historic designation passed unmarked by aldermen and Mayor John Doran December 8. Instead of calling attention to the item, councillors let the bylaw stay buried amongst a host of others.

"It's probably because we were so wound up in the budget process and the sewer surcharge," said Aid. Gall Abrams, a member of the ad-hoc tunnel committee, which has now disbanded.

"I certainly noticed it, but I've been feeling the hounds nipping at my heels all fall. It's been such a busy schedule at council and at work."

The first failed attempt to have all or part of the tunnel designated came in 1983. The same year the property was first turned over to the city by Marathon Realty. History repeated itself in 1985 and again in 1990. Each time, the designation was denied for the same reason; some 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 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. Heritage Brockville has always wanted, the entire tunnel, from Water Street to Pearl Street, designated as a historic structure.

"This is an important first step," said Heritage Brockville chairman Gary Tristram.

"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."

As he told council in 1990, Tristram said his group would never stand in the way of critical repairs to the 1,730-foot tunnel.

"I don't think the Heritage Brockville of the day is the kind of group to go around chaining itself to posts or anything. We've been very amicable and open to discussion," he said.

"We didn't hold up the de-designation of the Methodist Church. We realized it was a danger," he added, referring to the removal of the historical designation of the bumed-out church on Court House Square earlier this year. The church has since been demolished for a parking lot.

"If the tunnel were to cave in, we'd probably do the same thing. We're supposed to be here to work together."

Tristram isn't surprised it took this long to have the tunnel designated a historic property.

"Not any more. I've been chairman for five years now. You get used to it," he shrugged, adding issues of heritage tend not to take centre stage.

It may still be a year or so before Heritage Brockville installs a plaque at the tunnel's south entrance to mark the historic designation.

The group has a limited budget and prefers to accumulate an order of at least five historic plaques before having them made up by a Merrickville foundry, Village Metalsmiths.

Tristram said his board will also want to consult with other groups such as the Brockville Museum about the wording of the plaque.

The cornerstone for the tunnel was laid on September 16, 1854. The tunnel became a critical line in the Brockville and Ottawa Railway Co., which was later absorbed by

the Canadian Pacific Railway system. Excavation materials from the project created what is now the large area park area in front of the tunnel. The tunnel remained in use until the 1950s.

In 1985 the two portals were reinforced and strengthened. In June of 1988 the large wooden doors at the tunnel's south end were opened to the public. An 85-foot walkway was installed and exhibits erected to tell 'the history of the tunnel.'

In 1989, \$20,000 was spent to clean up the north entrance. Two years ago, local residents and re-enactors donned costumes to commemorate the 1854 laying of the cornerstone.

CP APPLIES TO ABANDON LINE IN OTTAWA VALLEY:

On June 11, CN North America and CP Rail notified the NTA of their intent to establish a new partnership that will provide a single railway route for their competing freight services between western Quebec and North Bay, Ontario.

Under the provisions of the CNCP Ottawa Valley Partnership agreement, CP Rail System has filed a notice with the NTA that it intends to apply for the abandonment of its Chalk River Subdivision from mile 0.4 at Smiths Falls to mile 95.6 in Pembroke, and from mile 105.0 Camspur to mile 115.3 Chalk River; and the North Bay Subdivision from mile 0.0 Chalk River to mile 72.3 Mattawa.

The partnership agreement identifies CN North America's 273-mile line from de Beaujeu, Quebec, to North Bay, which passes through Ottawa and Pembroke, as the most efficient route. The route is flatter and is 46 miles shorter than CP's route. The CP lines between Pembroke and Canadian Forces Base Petawawa, and between Mattawa and North Bay will be transferred to the partnership, as will the abandoned rights of way. In the City of North Bay, the CP main line will become the partnership route. The shared line - owned equally by both companies - will be separately managed through the partnership. (Branchline with map)

DISPLAY TRAIN TO BE RELOCATED TO SMITHS FALLS RAILWAY

MUSEUM: The St. Lawrence Parks Commission has announced that it will be transferring the locomotive and rolling stock now on display in Chrysler Park (near Morrisburg, Ontario) to the Smiths Falls Railway Museum.

The railway equipment includes CN Mogul No. 88 (CLC April 1910, as Grand Trunk No. 1008); Wooden Baggage Car No. 11562, ex-CN No. 8851 (Pullman 1920) and Wooden Coach No. 3474, ex-Grand Trunk (Pullman 1890).

The equipment sits on a portion of the former Cornwall Subdivision - which was abandoned to make way for the St. Lawrence Seaway - directly in front of the preserved Aultsville, Ontario, Station. Aultsville was another casualty of the flooding associated with the construction of the Seaway during the late-1950s.

The locomotive and coach were delivered to the site in 1958 with the baggage car being added during the late-1960s.

The Commission wants to get rid of the locomotive and rolling stock because its budget has been restricted to the point where it can no longer afford to keep the equipment in suitable condition. The station, which is completely restored, will remain in-situ and may become either a tourist outlet for the Commission or a base for the Lost Villages Historical Society, which represents the villages flooded during the construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway.

It is not known when the equipment will be moved to Smiths Falls. (Branchline)

ALL ABOARD FOR MONTEBELLO?: Negotiations are now taking place between la Compagnie de chemin de fer Choo Choo Inc., operators of the Hull, Gatineau and Chelsea Railway, and CP Hotels' Le Chateau Montebello about the operation of a steam tourist train from Hull to Montebello, Quebec, over CP Rail's partially embargoed Lachute Subdivision. The project has the backing of area municipalities as well as hotel management. What is unclear is CP Rail's position. Were some type of accord to be reached, Choo Choo Inc., has stated that additional equipment would be purchased from Sweden to operate the service. Currently Choo Choo Inc. operates the Wakefield steam train from Hull to Wakefield, Quebec. (Branchline)

MOVEMENT OF GRAND TRUNK TRAIN TO SMITHS FALLS NOT A DONE DEAL:

Previous statements that the Smiths Falls Railway Museum will be receiving ex-Grand Trunk 2-6-0 No. 1008, as well as a baggage car and coach from the St. Lawrence Parks Commission, may have been overly optimistic. The train, on display near Upper Canada Village at Morrisburg, Ontario, is in deteriorating condition but the Parks Commission has yet to make a final decision that it will go to Smiths Falls. An official of the Commission recently admitted that something had to be done with the rolling stock but that efforts were being made to find a "local" group to assume responsibility. The train, displayed in front of the restored Aultsville Station, depicts the CN/Grand Trunk "Mocassin" (Nos. 25 and 26), an all-stops local between Brockville and Montreal that was discontinued in 1958 after more than 100 years of service. (Branchline)

25/10/1993 *Montreal Gazette* *Alexandria* *Casselman*

Two O.P.P. officers killed at crossing.

On October 24, two Ontario Provincial Police officers were killed when their cruiser was struck by VIA's Ottawa-Montreal Train 34 at a protected crossing in Casselman, Ontario, 50 km. east of Ottawa. Witnesses stated that the crossing warning lights were working.

17/11/1993 *West Quebec Post* *Maniwaki* *Wakefield*

NEW WAKEFIELD STATION ALMOST COMPLETE: Don't look now, but there is a new \$150,000 railway station in Wakefield, Quebec. The heritage style building will serve passengers using the Hull-Wakefield steam train operation as well as serving as a community meeting hall. The single storey, 900 square foot building, is wheel chair accessible. It is located to the north of the turntable park. (Branchline)

01/12/1993 *Le Droit* *Waltham*

PORTION OF WALTHAM SUBDIVISION RIGHT-OF-WAY LOST:

Transit advocates in Hull, Quebec, are decrying a decision to sell a portion of the right-of-way of CP Rail's now-abandoned Waltham Subdivision to the local campus of the University of Quebec. The right-of-way is owned by the municipality and its disposition was part of a tri-government land swap. One councillor, who denounced the move, said "We are getting rid of all our future transportation corridors. If we do that, we'll be left with nothing. We may not need trains now, but we will in time." (Branchline)

02/12/1993 *Pembroke Observer* *Chalk River*

FEDERATION OF NATURALISTS OBJECTS TO OTTAWA VALLEY CO-PRODUCTION AGREEMENT: The Federation of Ontario Naturalists will appeal a NTA decision allowing CP Rail System to abandon most of its Chalk River Subdivision in favour of operating its trains over Canadian National's Alexandria and Beachburg Subdivisions between De Beaujeu, Quebec, and North Bay, Ontario. "We have some real concerns with the process," said Karl Konze, environmental researcher for the Federation. According to Konze, the NTA failed to undertake a proper environmental impact assessment report in addition to failing to inform all affected users including park users and provincial conservation groups.

A spokesperson for the NTA refuted Konze's claims, stating that every effort possible had been made to assess the environmental impact as well as ensure that all groups were notified of what was planned.

The Federation of Ontario Naturalists will appeal directly to the Federal Cabinet. (Branchline)

07/12/1993 *Le Droit* *Lachute* *Montebello*

MONTEBELLO STEAM TRAIN: Choo Choo Inc., the company which operates the Hull-Wakefield steam tourist train, is negotiating a deal with CP Hotels and CP Rail System to run steam-powered tourist excursions between Hull, Quebec, and CP Hotels' Chateau Montebello in Montebello, Quebec. The hotel is located adjacent to the partially-embargoed Lachute Subdivision. According to Choo Choo Inc. president Marc Grondin, "We have had several requests and have made a marketing study which proves we could undertake excursions to Montebello. It's further than Wakefield, but the track is easier and regulations would allow us to go faster so the trip could be made in less than two hours. If the operation goes through, it will be financed entirely from private sector investments, unlike the Wakefield operation which is a combination of government (all levels) and private money. In anticipation of the new service, Grondin has indicated that he would purchase two additional locomotives plus cars. The origin of the new rolling stock is uncertain. Some press accounts have stated that it would be Swedish equipment while there are other suggestions that North American equipment (from the United States) might be utilized. (Branchline)

08/12/1993 *North Renfrew Times* *Chalk River*

ONTARIO OPPOSES OTTAWA VALLEY AGREEMENT: The Ontario Government has entered the controversy over CP Rail's decision to dose its Ottawa Valley main line in favour of routing its Montreal-North Bay traffic via the parallel CN route. Ontario Natural Resources Minister Howard Hampton has called for an environmental assessment of the project. Hampton has asked the federal government to delay implementation of National Transportation Agency authorization allowing the abandonment of parts of CP Rail's Chalk River and North Bay Subdivisions effective July 1, 1994. According to Hampton, the increased traffic over CN's line, which runs through Algonquin Park, will lead to an increase in wildlife kills, as well as the potential for fires and chemical spills. Hampton's protest is just one of a number made by environmental advocates, notably the Ontario Federation of Naturalists (Branchline).

09/12/1993 *Ottawa Citizen* *Ellwood* *Ottawa*

COMMUTER RAIL PLAN PRESENTED TO OTTAWA-CARLETON REGIONAL COUNCIL: As reported in the December issue of Branchline, CP Rail formally presented its proposal for commuter rail service in the National Capital Region to the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Council on December 8. Raymond O'Meara, CP's director general of commuter rail service, said that a service could be up and running in as little as 18 months, pending its approval by the various levels of government at the municipal and provincial levels. Equipment for a pilot project would cost about \$10 million with O'Meara recommending the purchase of used cars and locomotives for a total of three trainsets. O'Meara also recommended the establishment of five stations on the Ontario side including the Confederation Heights, Hunt Club, Leitrim Road, Carleton University and Lebreton Flats, along with the existing Ottawa Station. Stations in Quebec would be located in Hull, Gatineau and, possibly, the Gatineau Airport.

Although Council was non-committal, Regional Chair Peter Clark said, "I am intrigued by the possibilities and if we can make economic sense out of it, we should do it... It will be a cheaper option than building transitways." (Branchline)