

Local Railway Items from Ottawa Papers - 1994

09/03/1994 West Quebec Post Maniwaki Wakefield

WAKEFIELD TOURIST TRAIN, STATION BECOMES TOURIST OFFICE WHILE COMPANY HAS HEAD-OFFICE SHAKE UP:

For its third year of operation, the Wakefield tourist train will have a new president. Founding president Marc Grondin has been replaced by the company's major shareholder, Jean Gauthier of Cumberland, Ontario. Gauthier has a one million dollar stake in the company and stated that he was taking over in order to protect his personal investment.

Grondin will continue with the company in a minor administrative capacity as well as pursuing other interests including the development of a tourist train between Hull and Montebello, Quebec, over CP Rail's soon-to-be abandoned Lachute Subdivision.

During 1993, the tourist train lost \$300,000 and carried 2,000 fewer riders than during its start-up year when 33,000 made the scenic trip up the Gatineau Valley. The company is looking for a turn-around this year and is looking at a number of ways to cut its operating costs.

Meanwhile, the newly-constructed Wakefield Station has become a local tourist centre. Constructed to serve the needs of the Wakefield tourist train, the \$100,000 station has been declared surplus to the needs of the train's operation by its operators, the compagnie Choo-Choo Inc. Constructed in the fall of 1993, the station has never handled revenue passengers. (The Post and Bulletin, 09/03/94 and 16/03/94, Branchline) [At press time, Choo-Choo Inc. had-sought bankruptcy protection]

09/03/1994 West Quebec Post Lachute

SAVE THE LACHUTE SUBDIVISION: A group from Quebec's lower Ottawa Valley wants to prevent Canadian Pacific from abandoning its Lachute Subdivision between St-Augustin and Thurso. The line has been identified for a possible tourist train operation which would focus on the world-famous Chateau Montebello Hotel in Montebello. According to Papineau MNA Norm MacMillan, "Montebello wants to do something like the Wakefield tourist train. I can understand CP Rail wanting to close down the track if they're not making any money, but maybe we can", said MacMillan (Branchline).

21/03/1994 Brockville Recorder Smiths Falls Smiths Falls

REEVE WANTS RAIL DISPLAY RETAINED:

Morrisburg, Ontario, Reeve Gordon McGregor is spearheading a campaign to prevent the St. Lawrence Parks Commission from transferring ex-Grand Trunk 2-6-0 No. 1008, a baggage car and a coach to the Smiths Falls Railway Museum Association. The equipment is now displayed at Chrysler Park, east of Morrisburg, and depicts the one-time GTR "Mocassin", an all-stops local which ran from Brockville to Montreal. The train was discontinued by Canadian National in 1958. The equipment is in an advanced state of deterioration as the Parks Commission can no longer afford to maintain it. Indeed, the Commission estimates that it could cost up to \$500,000 to repair the train and display it properly under some kind of shelter. Local government wants the train retained because it is a tourist attraction. On average, 200 people stop to see it on a daily basis during the tourist season. The train is displayed in front of the former Aultsville Station -which is completely restored and is alleged to date from 1866. (Branchline)

23/03/1994 Le Droit Ellwood

TRANSIT OFFICIAL IS SCEPTICAL ABOUT PROPOSED COMMUTER RAIL SERVICE: The Chairperson of the Outaouais transport commission (Societe des transports de l'Outaouais) has injected a strong note of caution into a CP Rail System proposal to establish a commuter rail service in the Ottawa/Hull region. Said Antoine Gregoire, "It's much too soon to be talking about a commuter train. There are too many questions still to be answered before starting to promote it." Gregoire said that the results of a transit options study examining commuter rail, amongst other things, won't be available until some time in the summer. (Branchline)

20/04/1994 West Quebec Post Maniwaki

FINANCIAL PROBLEMS WILL NOT PREVENT OPERATION OF WAKEFIELD TOURIST TRAIN: Financial problems notwithstanding, regular tourist train service will take place between Hull and Wakefield, Quebec. The operation, which initially filed for bankruptcy protection, has been restructured and the new president is the principal creditor. Jean Gauthier, who lost \$1 million on the operation and who now owns the equipment, has vowed to turn the train into a money-making proposition.

Key to the turn-around will be the elimination of the costs involved in using CP Rail System trackage in the City of Hull. The Hull station has been relocated to the operation's yard facilities which are along its own right-of-way. Previously, the Hull stop was at a specially-built facility opposite CP Rail System's former Hull Station, requiring the use of the Lachute Subdivision to get to Wakefield trackage. Last year, the privilege of using the Lachute Subdivision cost more than \$175,000 as well as causing a number of dispatching and other operational delays.

One problem the new company may have is with its own trackage. The actual line is owned by the various municipalities through which it passes. One of these, the Township of Chelsea, has talked about embargoing the operation until approximately \$100,000 is expended on bank stabilization in the vicinity of the Gatineau River.

In the aftermath of the bankruptcy, some of the principal backers of the project have called for a public inquiry into how the train could have lost so much money during its first two years. (The West Quebec Post and Bulletin, 20/04/94 and 27/04/94, Branchline)

04/05/1994 Eganville Leader Renfrew Killaloe

Killaloe's New Station Park Survives First Hurdle At Public Meeting Monday

If the majority of the public sentiment expressed at Monday's public meeting is any indication, Killaloe could have its new Station Park as early as the year.

The hour-long meeting at the Medical Centre drew a good crowd and some criticism of the proposed park, but on balance the majority seemed to be in favour of it.

Reeve Emerson Lepine introduced planning board members Danny Harrington, Don Zummach, along with chairperson Kathy Lampi. Two other members, Paul Burke, and Tim Summers, were absent.

The planning board worked with members of the recreation committee, made up of Jim Lepine, Allan Mullin, Debbie Murack, Doris Burke and Marie Murray.

21/05/1994 Pembroke Weekens News Chalk River

SETBACK FOR PLANS TO TERMINATE SERVICE OVER CHALK RIVER SUBDIVISION: CP Rail System will not abandon service over its Chalk River and North Bay Subdivisions on July 1 of this year. A NTA order authorizing the company to abandon operations between Smiths Falls and Mattawa in favour of operating over Canadian National has been successfully appealed by a number of interest groups and companies. At least seven companies and organizations, including environmental ones worried about the impact of extra trains upon Algonquin Park, have filed an appeal. It could take five or six months to sort out the situation. Meanwhile, the company appears to have done little in terms of establishing new cross-over tracks, etc., with Canadian National. (Branchline)

New General Manager for Hull, Chelsea, Wakefield Railroad.

The Hull Chelsea and Wakefield Railroad, operator of the Wakefield Steam train, has appointed Marc Beaulieu to the position of General Manager. Beaulieu has been involved in a number of tourist marketing and client service activities including Air Canada and Walt Disneyworld. The HCW Railroad officially opened its new station and headquarters at 165 Deveault Street in Hull on June 19, 1994, with a special media event which included a trip to Wakefield. (6/8/1994 and 6/22/1994 Branchline)

19/08/1994 Brockville Recorder Smiths Falls Smiths Falls

FUTURE OF GRAND TRUNK RAILWAY EXHIBIT STILL UNCERTAIN: Local support to retain CN Mogul 1008 and a baggage car and coach on display at Crysler Park near Morrisburg, Ontario, is gaining momentum. The collection is managed by the St. Lawrence Parks Commission which no longer has the financial resources to maintain the display in proper shape. For several months, the Commission had talked of donating the collection to the Smiths Falls Railway Museum but strong local opposition has forced a reconsideration of the decision.

Said Morrisburg Chamber of Commerce secretary, "We feel that it's an important landmark in the community and a reminder of our history and the Lost Villages (flooded during the making of the St. Lawrence Seaway in the 1950s)."

The engine and cars are displayed adjacent to the restored Aultsville, Ontario, GTR station. The display commemorates the early days of railroading "along the front" (ie. the first concession of the townships between Cardinal and Cornwall, Ontario). This land was flooded out in the late-1950s as part of the massive St. Lawrence Seaway project. The flooding entailed the almost total removal of communities and transportation links including CN's then Cornwall Subdivision (now the Kingston Subdivision). The Aultsville Station is located on the former right-of-way, a portion of which is now the route for re-located Highway No. 2 with the remaining sections either under water or passing through fields and local bush lots. (Branchline)

27/08/1994 Cornwall Freeholder New York Central

Tracks Gone But Memories Linger On New York Central Railway

Lydia Petit took time out from weeding her garden to tell me the time she took the New York Central all the way to Finch to see a newborn baby. "That was in 1953. That baby's a doctor now in Sydenham."

Petit has lived in Newington for 31 years. "I'm too old to have my name in the paper" she claimed, but the delightful twinkle in her eye told me she was young enough to have her picture taken.

A thunderstorm was threatening as Rita Werly took her clothes off the line. Her Northfield Station home was within sight of the old New York Central railway line, five kilometers southeast of Newington.

"My big treat as a little girl was the annual trip by train to see the Stormont County Fair in Newington. It cost 10 cents, each way. Just step on, then step off. Sometimes I used to go visit down in Cornwall too, but usually I was just too busy raising the four kids."

"We used to order from the Eaton's catalogue. We'd go down to the waiting station and pick up the good we ordered. Lyal Arbuthnot was the postmaster for years. I've lived here for 54 years."

Debbly Grangelo is too young to know more than just a bit of the history of what is now her Northfield Station home. "The front part of our kitchen was the barber shop. This was the post office. Our garage was the waiting station" Jessy, her seven-year-old Queensland Blue Heeler now guards the old building. '

Her next door neighbour Evan Lafave operates a small engine repair shop. When he's not tuning up a tiller or fixing a balky snow blower, he finds time to take a walk with "Bear", his dog, along the NYC railway bed.

"The name came with the dog. It doesn't fit, but that's what he had already been given, and he answers to it."

The shaded railway right-of-way runs between Cornwall and Ottawa. Buried under it is part of Bell Canada's fibre optic communications network.

Young Steven Lafave rides his bicycle along the level, gently curving trail. "We sometimes go down to the quarry with our bikes. Sometimes we spot fish in it."

The Seaway Valley Snowmobile Association members ride on it during the winter. Between Embrun and Russell it has been developed as an excellent cycling path. In Finch, a modern senior citizen's home has obliterated all signs of it. To the south, Highway 401 cuts through it. A cornfield north of Crysler has a poor yield diagonal running through it. The NYC cinders are too stubborn to disappear in less than 40 years.

The tracks are gone, but the traces and memories linger on. "I can remember sitting on the front porch in the evening. Its lights would flicker through them trees over there and the smoke would rise above 'em. Real pretty! I miss all that."

Those were the words of one old farmer as we shared the dancing flames of a bonfire.

Memories and traces die hard. In many ways, the New York Central line lives on.

By: Nick Wolochatiuk

09/09/1994 Journal of Commerce Chalk River

ENVIRONMENTALISTS LOSE BID TO APPEAL OTTAWA VALLEY MERGER Environmental groups have been denied the right to appeal an NTA decision allowing for the merger of CN and CP Rail operations in the Ottawa Valley. The move, involving the shift of all CP through traffic to Canadian National's Beachburg Subdivision, running through Algonquin Park, has been opposed by environmental groups worried about the impact of increased train traffic through the park. In spite of the toss, two other appeals are still outstanding before the federal court. One is from a labour group, the other is from a business organization. (Branchline).

06/12/1994 Ottawa Sun Ellwood

INITIAL ESTIMATES FOR COST OF COMMUTER RAIL IN NATIONAL CAPITAL: It will cost at least \$90 million to establish an inter-provincial commuter rail system in the National Capital Region. So said a consultant's report on the costs of developing a commuter rail option as opposed to new inter-provincial road links. The system would use existing CP Rail System trackage as well as see the re-construction of a portion of the now-abandoned Waltham Subdivision between Hull and Aylmer, Quebec. Annual operating costs are estimated to be at \$16 million, with the system carrying at least 8,000 passengers per day. The costs are higher than anticipated but still below the cost of new road links according to Transport 2000 president David Glastonbury. "It looks like a solution to the traffic problem that costs a lot less money than more linkages and roads," said Glastonbury. New roads and bridges carry at least a \$350 million price tag, not to mention the associated environmental consequences. (branchline)