

# Local Railway Items from Area Papers - 2000

03/02/2000 Ottawa Citizen

Smiths Falls

Cambrian Road

Passenger train collides with car

Two occupants of a Honda Accord escaped serious injury yesterday after their car went through a CN rail crossing on Moodie Drive and was struck by an eastbound VIA passenger train, which was carrying 40 passengers into Ottawa. The accident took place shortly after 11 a.m. at a crossing near Cambrian Road. The car was northbound when the passing train clipped the left-front of the vehicle, sending it into a ditch on the north side of the tracks. The train continued another half a kilometre before stopping. Ottawa-Carleton police say the warning lights and safety gate were working at the time of the accident. It's expected the 47-year-old male driver of the car will face charges under the Highway Traffic Act

31/03/2000 Ottawa Citizen

Alexandria

Maxville

Passenger train kills man

A man was killed near Maxville last night when he was struck by a VIA Rail train enroute from Montreal to Ottawa. Maxville is about 30 kilometres northwest of Cornwall and 60 kilometres southeast of Ottawa. The train was delayed for an OPP investigation, and passengers were sent to Ottawa by bus.

07/07/2000 Ottawa Citizen

Montreal and Ottawa

Plantagenet

Girl, 16, falls from bridge

A 16-year-old girl was transported by helicopter to the Ottawa Hospital's Civic site yesterday, after falling about two storeys from an old train bridge into the shallow water and rocks of the Nation River in Plantagenet. The girl whose name was not released was going fishing with a friend and the friend's boyfriend. After she fell from the bridge, the man attempted to rescue her. The other girl ran to a nearby business to call 911. Rescue workers arrived within minutes.

26/07/2000 Ottawa Citizen

Winchester

Monkland

Freight train slams into car killing driver

Car's sole occupant died at scene after failing to stop at level crossing

By Jake Rupert

Alfred Rochefort understandably didn't feel like talking much last night.

Mr. Rochefort, a Canadian Pacific freight train engineer, was driving a train from Smiths Falls to De Beaujeu, Que., just over the provincial border, yesterday morning when the unthinkable happened.

As he neared a level crossing over Highway 138 just north of Cornwall at about 10:20 a.m., Mr. Rochefort, 43, saw the warning lights go on and swing arm barriers come down.

However, this crossing would be different.

From Mr. Rochefort's left, police said a rented 2000 Pontiac Grand Am driven by an 84-year-old man crashed through the barrier and the train smashed directly into the car.

With the car crumpled in half and stuck on the lead engine of the train, Mr. Rochefort and his crew slammed on the brakes, bringing it to a stop about 500 metres down the track in the middle of the village of Monkland, about 15 kilometres north of Cornwall.

An air ambulance was dispatched, but the man was declared dead at the scene, and the helicopter was cancelled.

His body was transported to the Hotel Dieu Hospital in Cornwall, where an autopsy was scheduled to take place last night or early this morning.

Ontario Provincial Police were not releasing the man's identity, or even saying where he came from, last night.

As police were doing their work, Mr. Rochefort was at home in Smiths Falls dealing with what had happened.

"I really don't feel like talking about it right now," he said. "I'd rather try and relax."

After the man's body was cut out of the mangled car, police started their accident investigation. Their starting point was the southbound barrier lying on the side of Highway 138.

"Somehow that barrier came down," Senior Const. Hugh McClements said.

"The lights were functioning and the barriers were operating and down. Somehow the car got in front of the train."

Why the car went crashing through the barrier is what OPP's technical collision investigators will be trying to figure out in the coming days.

The car will be examined for mechanical failure, and autopsy results may shed light.

"We look at every possibility," Const. McClements said, "but it's also a possibility we may never know what caused him to go through the crossing."

26/07/2000 Ottawa Citizen

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Train plows into vehicles involved in crash

Four seniors narrowly escape death

Four senior citizens, driving in two separate vehicles, narrowly escaped death yesterday when they crashed head on, then came to a stop in the path of an oncoming freight train.

A slow-moving freight train plowed into the back end of one of the vehicles, pushing it against the other.

The occupants of both vehicles were treated for minor injuries at Renfrew Hospital and released.

"It helps to be alive and we're lucky," said Douglas Gemmil, one of the drivers. The crash happened three minutes before noon yesterday at the intersection of Highway 17 and Olmstead-Jeffrey's Lake Road in Renfrew County.

Mr. Gemmil of Cobden, and his brother, Jack, were driving to Ottawa when they saw a westbound sedan, driven by Thomas Villeneuve, also of Cobden, crossed into their lane.

Mr. Villeneuve and his wife were treated for minor injuries and released.

Ontario Provincial Police say the vehicles collided at the railway crossing, its emergency lights already activated.

"We crossed the railway track, and the other driver came into our lane and hit us. His car swung around and the freight train hit his back end, then pushed it over against ours," Mr. Gemmil said. "My brother's chest is sore and my neck hurts, but outside of that, we're OK."

The crash remains under investigation.

25/08/2000 *Ottawa Citizen**Smiths Falls**Barrhaven*

Tree cutting is VIA "overkill" councillor says

Barrhaven woman's complaint about clear-cutting along tracks persuades firm to reassess impact

A plucky Barrhaven resident stopped VIA Rail clear cutters in their tracks yesterday at least temporarily.

Vivien St. George awoke at 7 a.m. yesterday to the sound of chainsaws coming from her back yard, the sound of crews contracted to VIA Rail destroying greenspace in her neighbourhood southwest of Fallow-field and Greenbank roads.

Ms. St George sprang into action. She started calling government agencies to complain about the clear cutting, and before lunch Nepean councillor Jan Harder was in her kitchen and on her side.

"Safety is always our first concern," said Ms. Harder who said VIA Rail property was out of her jurisdiction, "but just to carte blanche take out the trees? Is this overkill? I'd say so. I think that there could be a happy medium here."

A five-man crew from Midland Vegetation Management was clearing brush that VIA says prevents drivers and pedestrians from seeing on coming trains when they cross the tracks at Jockvale Road.

Trees and shrubs also prevent train engineers from spotting trespassers, who have been a problem in the area, said VIA manager of transportation and planning Ranald MacDonald.

The crew was clearing trees and brush for 15 metres on either side of the tracks along a 400-metre stretch.

VIA regulations say sight-lines should be clear 390 metres from a level crossing in both directions, said Mr. MacDonald.

But Ms. St. George wants to save hundreds of trees growing against the chainlink fence at the edge of VIA's property, some nine metres tall. She said she believes they could be left alone without impeding sightlines or tempting trespassers.

"All it would take is maybe a half day for someone to red tag the trees to leave before the butchers come," she said.

Midland Vegetation's area manager, Jim Williams, said clear cutting along tracks is routine.

Crews working all over Canada cut and treat about two kilometres of vegetation along tracks every day. Mr. Williams said he hears a lot of complaints about the chemicals sprayed on the plants to kill them, but doesn't get many complaints about the cutting.

Midland Vegetation has been in Nepean since Monday, clearing sightlines. Next week, the crew heads to Toronto.

Ms. St George tried to get the workers to stop cutting and spraying pesticides long enough to get an environmental assessment

"There's all kinds of baby rabbits and bird's nests here," she yelled to one of the workers as he sprayed a mildly toxic herbicide called triclopyr,

"What do you want me to do?" came the response. But by 11:30 a.m. the contractors agreed to leave a three-metre buffer zone between the fence and the tracks.

The area was to be reassessed last night to determine whether cutting would resume today.

26/08/2000 *Ottawa Citizen**Smiths Falls**Barrhaven*

VIA to alert reesidents before cutting trees

Railway changes policy after battle in Barrhaven

BY JOCELYN BELL

VIA Rail is reviewing its approach to cutting down trees along railway tracks after a battle with a Barrhaven resident.

Ranald MacDonald, VIA's manager of transportation and planning, said it would have been "wiser to give adjacent landowners some warning" that trees would be cut down.

Quickly adding that he wasn't obligated to tell any-one that trees were coming ; down on VIA property, Mr. MacDonald said in the future he would consider alerting residents before trees are cut "out of courtesy."

On Thursday morning, Townsend Drive resident Vivien St. George woke to chainsaws cutting down trees along the VIA Rail tracks that run behind her house. She got on the phone and kicked up enough of a fuss to stall workers from cutting down the few hundred trees at the edge of VIA property.

A manager for Rail Term Inc., the company that handles maintenance for VIA, reassessed the trees Thursday night and determined they did not impede sight-lines for the train conductor or for drivers crossing the tracks at Jockvale Road. They'll be left standing indefinitely, Mr. MacDonald said. "For now, we'll leave well enough alone."

20/09/2000 *Ottawa Citizen**Winchester*

Woman, 69, injured after train hits front of pickup truck

A woman was seriously injured yesterday when her pickup truck was hit by a freight train in North Dundas.

Shortly after 4 p.m., Catherine Whetter, 69, was driving a Dodge Dakota off her farm when a westbound CP Rail freight train, which crosses her property, struck the front of her vehicle and sent it crashing into a ditch.

Ms. Whetter was rushed by air ambulance to the Civic site of the Ottawa Hospital, where she was treated for a broken arm, fractured ribs and head injuries.

OPP investigators said it appeared Ms. Whetter mistakenly stopped her truck too close to the train-crossing, leaving the front of the vehicle in the path of the train.

Sgt. Dave Springer, in charge of the investigation, said Ms. Whetter was very lucky to survive the impact. The train was travelling at about 80 kmh.

"She's very fortunate," he said. "Another foot and the cow-plow on the front of the train would have hit the occupant area. Once that occurs, the chance of survival is very low."

Investigators said it also appeared the trailer hitch on the back of the truck punctured a fuel tank on the engine of the train, which spewed about 1,000 gallons of fuel over the area. Ontario Ministry of Environment officials arrived after the accident to clean up the spill.

Ms. Whetter was listed in serious condition last night

01/10/2000

Ottawa Citizen

Alexandria

Limoges

Town to bid a final adieu

By Joanne Laucius

Residents of the Town of Limoges plan a mass gathering next to the railway tracks to watch a black-draped train carrying the casket of Pierre Trudeau speed past tomorrow morning.

Aurele Constantineau, fire chief in the town about 30 kilometres from Parliament Hill, is meeting today with officials from schools, the boy scouts, firefighters and other groups who plan to meet in the parking lot of a hotel to watch the train pass.

A crane is to bear a huge Canadian flag that once flew over Parliament Hill.

03/10/2000

Ottawa Citizen

Alexandria

One train journey thirty years of memories.

As the funeral train made its way from Ottawa to Montreal yesterday morning, thousands gathered on railway platforms along the route to pay homage to Pierre Trudeau, and witness, however fleetingly, a moment of history passing by.

The silver train, pulled by engine 6433, sounded its whistle as it rolled into each town and village. Invariably, the train slowed, but did not stop, as Mr. Trudeau's sons smiled and waved to the crowds.

The journey took about two hours that summoned up more than 30 years of memories as ordinary Canadians recalled Mr. Trudeau and his effect on their lives.

18/10/2000

Eganville Leader

Renfrew

Barrys Bay water

Ontario's Last Remaining Wooden Water Tower Dedicated

Thanks to the dedication of a small group of people and the generosity of a great number of others, Canada's last existing wooden railway water tower has been completely restored and is now part of a beautiful park in Barry's Bay.

Village councillor John Yakabuski, who was master of ceremonies for the dedication, said the water tower was erected in 1943, but was almost demolished in 1975. A petition was started to save the tower and a year later it was designated a historical landmark, ensuring it would never be demolished. In 1989 the Barry's Bay Railway Station Restoration Committee was organized. Its main goal was to restore the turn-of-the-century station in the village. In 1998 a group which came out of this committee decided to preserve the water tower and make the area around it more appealing.

28/10/2000

Ottawa Citizen

Smiths Falls

Barrhaven

Barrhaven train station being studied by VIA Rail

VIA Rail and OC Transpo have established a working group that will look at the possibility of constructing a satellite train station northwest of Barrhaven, officials will announce today.

The area being considered for the station is Woodroffe Avenue and Fallowfield Road. A new transit station and park-and-ride facility was just built there, and will be unveiled today.

According to Nepean-Carleton MP David Pratt, one of the proponents of a new rail station, the location is ideal for both park-and-ride users and train users.

"The potential of a great facility is steering us in the face," Mr. Pratt said last night

West-enders have had to drive about a half-hour to the east-end Vanier Parkway and Tremblay Road station. On trips to Toronto the train then runs past their homes in such places as south Nepean.

"If you look at transportation needs of this region, the growth in the region makes it imperative that we expand rail infrastructure, not just intra-city traffic but inter-city traffic," said Mr. Pratt.

He said a marketing study concluded a station in south Nepean could increase market share by 10 and 15 per cent

05/12/2000

Ottawa Citizen

Walkley Line

The Holiday Train is back to help fight hunger.

Brilliantly decorated with 6,000 lights, it crosses the nation just once a year.

See it December 6, 5:30 to 6:30 pm, at Walkley Yard.

Enter along Albion Road North, off of Walkley Road.

Festivities include an appearance by actor, singer Tom Jackson. Just bring a non-perishable food item for the Canadian Association of Food Banks.

18/12/2000

Ottawa Citizen

Alexandria

Vars

Vars woman killed by VIA train

A 39-year-old Vars woman is dead after being struck by a Montreal-bound VIA Rail train, yesterday.

The incident happened in a wooded area several hundred metres from any road or crossing, between Frank Kenny Road and Bearbrook Road in Vars, just east of Ottawa. Police were notified at about 3-45 p.m.

The woman lived at Residence Champagne, a mental health facility. Town residents assumed the warning bells on the tracks were stuck again, until police and firefighters arrived.

No passengers were hurt and the train was able to continue its journey at about 5:55 p.m. Police say there's no indication of foul play.

30/12/2000

Ottawa Citizen

Vankleek

Ottawa Central Buys Railway

By Craig Skinner

The Ottawa Central Railway has purchased the Ontario L'Original Railway, from Rail-America Inc. of Boca Raton, Florida.

The L'Original Railway is a 42-kilometre rail line based in Vankleek Hill. The track runs from Glen Robertson to Hawkesbury, then to L'Original

The railway's main account is with Ivaco rolling mills, which produces steel wool products.

James Allen, general manager of the OCR, said the addition of the L'Original Railway doubles its operations.

"We've gone from 10,000 carloads to 22,000 carloads (per year)," he said.

"We have enhanced our presence in Eastern Ontario. We're now able to provide a much broader level of services to our customers."

Wayne August, assistant vice-president of investor relations for RailAmerica Inc., said the sale is part of a plan to dispose of approximately \$100 million U.S. in non-core assets during the 2000 fiscal year. "The plan was announced in the early part of the year to reduce some of the debt we incurred through our acquisitions," he said.

"We're very happy because we've pretty well exceeded our goal"

Mr. August said the L'Original Railway, which was obtained last February as part of Rail-America's acquisition of Rail-Tex Inc., didn't fit into the company's plans.

The deal was part of a series of transactions announced by RailAmerica on Dec 26, which included the sales of the company's 26.5-per-cent equity interest in the Quebec Railway Corporation back to the company, the L'Original Railway, and various other real estate and rail assets.

The deals were worth a total of \$114 million U.S.

The OCR, a division of the Quebec Railway Corporation, provides local delivery in the Ottawa area and freight service to the Pembroke area five days a week.

It also runs east six days per week, interchanging with CN in Quebec, near Valleyfield.

The OCR is based in Walkley Yard on Albion Road.