

# Local Railway Items from Ottawa Papers 2005

*Wednesday 23/02/2005 Eganville Leader Chalk River Renfrew*

Renfrew -- When a westbound freight train passed by their rented home just west of Renfrew Saturday morning, Bill Kinch thought the vibrations were a bit more noticeable than usual.

In fact, Mr. Kinch, who was lying on a couch watching Canada AM, commented to his girlfriend, Sherry Stoddart that the rail company should check out the tracks.

The couple had no idea that less than 100 yards west of their home, eight cars of a 98-car train had derailed.

Mr. Kinch and Ms. Stoddart live in the front section of the duplex which faces on to Hwy. 60. An apartment in the rear of the residence is occupied by Bob and Alissa Willmott. The rear of the residence is less than 40 feet away from the main rail line which is owned by Ottawa Valley Rail. Canadian Pacific runs trains over the line.

The Willmotts were completely unaware that several cars had jumped the tracks so close to their residence.

Mr. Kinch observed a pick-up truck on the highway stop and then reverse. He figured the occupants of the vehicle had spotted a deer in the field, and were backing up to get a better look.

"Sherry then went outside and saw the cars in the field," he said. "She came back in and called 911."

The Willmotts had no idea the accident occurred until Ms. Stoddart went and knocked on their door.

"Did you know there was a train derailment in your backyard?" Mr. Stoddart asked Mr. Willmott. The Willmotts took possession of the rear apartment on July 26 and Saturday was the first time the couples met.

Mr. Willmott, who was sleeping at the time of the accident, said their six-year-old son, Patrick heard a big bang, but before they pursued the matter Ms. Stoddart was at their door.

Neither Mr. Kinch nor Ms. Stoddart were shaken with the crash occurring so close to their residence. Rather, they were more concerned of what the outcome could have been had the cars derailed while passing through Renfrew.

The cars that left the tracks were loaded with nickel matte, a material used in the mines at Falconbridge.

"It's lucky they weren't filled with chemicals," Mr. Kinch said. "They could have been filled with oil, gas, anything. It could have happened in Renfrew and it would have been a lot worse than here."

The rear of the train had just passed through the town limits and so the three locomotives were just gaining speed when one of the cars left the tracks.

Mr. Kinch and Ms. Stoddart moved to this location last July and chose the front apartment. The derailment hasn't scared them into moving.

"That's why we didn't take the back apartment," Mr. Kinch said. "It would have been too close to the tracks."

The accident knocked down power lines running from Hwy. 60 into the Murray Galbraith farm. The Galbraiths also lost access to and from their farm for most of Saturday.

A couple of the cars rolled on their sides, away from the line, but several ended up in various positions on or close to the line. Once those cars were dragged away from the line, work crews spent the weekend repairing the section of damaged track. The line reopened to traffic Monday.

Bonnechere Excavating Inc. of R.R. 2, Renfrew, was hired to clean up the area around the derailment. Company president Barry Enright said about 15 truck loads of the material that spilled from the cars was trucked to Falconbridge. The material remaining in the derailed cars will be sucked out and blown into other rail cars later this week.

The line reopened to rail traffic Monday, but trains will be travelling through this area at reduced speeds until spring.

The line is owned by Ottawa Valley Railway.

*03/05/2005 Ottawa Citizen Alexandria Maxville*

Bang from train shunting 'just a little louder than usual' and led to an ethanol leak

Keith Jack thought it had to be some wise guy banging on the door of his apartment just before 3 a.m. yesterday, telling him to throw his clothes on, evacuate his apartment and run over to the nearby Maxville Manor seniors' residence.

Mr. Jack was awakened by a loud bang in the nearby rail yard, but thought nothing of it, figuring the railway cars were merely shunting as they always do. An evacuation in Maxville? Come on.

"I thought the guy was joking and I said this better not be a joke," he yesterday. "It was just about 3. The bang was just a little louder than usual, just like when two freight cars come together. But I looked out when I heard it and didn't think it could be anything serious."

But it was no joke when a railway car carrying ethanol, a volatile flammable liquid, bumped another car and broke open, leaking gas into an area behind the seniors residence, which includes a stream. Emergency personnel ordered an evacuation of the area. That sent about 200 Maxville residents, including 120 residents of the Manor, to the Maxville and District Sports Complex.

Maxville Mayor Bill Franklin declared the area in a state of emergency about 5 a.m. Roadblocks were set up on the outskirts of town, closing regional roads 20 and 22, including a roadblock at St. Elmo to the north. Two schools in the village were also closed along with the bank and other Main Street businesses.

"The home is naturally pretty quiet at that time of the morning and staff on duty heard a large bang," said Craig Munro, executive director of the manor. "It wasn't long after that we got the call that we were going to have to move everyone out."

"It was the first time we had ever had to pull everyone out of the facility and with an average age of 85 among the residents, it was quite an effort by staff."

"We've got to keep them amused and fed and it is quite an undertaking. But everything was orderly and we evacuated without any problems. It would have been a lot more difficult if the time required to be out of the home had been lengthy."

The residents, many of whom suffer from Alzheimer's disease, and many others who must use wheelchairs, seemed unfazed as they waited in the sports complex for family and relatives, who arrived through the day to make sure they were all right. Some took relatives to their own homes, while others waited things out.

The home began calling relatives first thing in the morning, and many arrived fearing the worst, only to enjoy the relief of finding their loved one safe. Several praised the staff.

"Everyone here is marvellous," said Anne-Marie Bazinet-Miller, who arrived to find her go-year-old mother, Theresa, in great cheer. "The staff was nothing short of extraordinary."

A team composed of emergency services personnel, experts with the Ministry of the Environment and members of council met through the morning in two hours intervals for updates and to plan a course of action. A group of rail workers transferred the ethanol from the damaged tanker into another tanker. Approval for the residents to return to their homes came about 1 p.m.

Via Rail communications officer Seychelle Harding said the accident affected about 330 passengers in Montreal and Ottawa after 6:45 and 10 a.m.

52-car derailment rattles Prescott.

Frightened residents thankful tank cars were empty at time.

A 52-car derailment in Prescott brought CN passenger and freight traffic to a halt yesterday between Toronto and Montreal, one of Canada's busiest rail corridors. The tanker cars were empty at the time of the accident and Ontario Provincial Police said the only two people on the train escaped uninjured.

The accident occurred moments after the train, heading east, crossed under the Edward Street overpass, one of the main streets in the town of 4,000 people, about 45 minutes south of Ottawa. The train was on its way to Montreal and had just dropped off fuel at an Ultramar terminal in nearby Maitland before the accident.

Police said residents were not in danger and no evacuations were necessary. As of last night, there was no word on when the track would reopen.

The accident left people living nearby shaken.

"I was sitting in my living room with my daughter and we heard a big whooshing sound shortly before 4 p.m.," said Fran Campbell, who lives on the west side of the overpass.

"And I'm just so thankful that it didn't happen on this side of the overpass because the gas lines for all our homes are right next to the tracks — it could easily have blown up our house," she added.

"I was in my kitchen and looked out the window because the freight train coming through was sounding odd — there was just something different about the sound," said Scott Davis, a 37-year-old resident who witnessed the crash.

"I saw a big cloud of brown dust. Then I took a closer look and I saw the tanker cars bouncing up and down. They were running off the track and into the telephone poles.

"The cars weren't moving very fast, but they didn't stop. They just kept coming through. They were snapping the telephone poles off like they were matchsticks."

Mr. Davis was with his daughters, Allison, 6, and Emily, 7. The family's home on Prince Street is 400 metres and five houses away from the tracks.

"I told the girls to put their shoes on and I told them to get ready in case I gave the word to leave immediately," he said.

"There are tanker cars that come through here full of all kinds of chemicals. You never know what might be in them. If there was any sign of fire, we'd have been out of there."

After warning his daughters they may have to flee, Mr. Davis called 911.

"I told them we had a derailment on an eastbound train," Mr. Davis said. "They asked if we need fire, ambulance or police services and I said we're going to pretty much need everything."

Mr. Davis then left his home to make sure elderly neighbours were aware of the crash. Emergency crews responded within 10 minutes of the derailment, he said.

"When you know the kind of things that travel over freight through our backyard, it could have been a lot worse today," he said.

A steady stream of onlookers stood atop the Edward Street overpass last night as crews examined the tracks and the wreckage.

"It looks like the wheels stopped but the train kept going," said Leanne Grain, looking down at the wheels that scattered the tracks while the tankers mostly appeared to have settled on their right side.

Ms. Grain, along with other residents, said work was being done on that section of the tracks all last week.

However, CN spokesman Mark Hallman said the cause of the accident had not been determined. Mr. Hallman added that CN officials were looking at possible detours until the track was reopened.