

# Local Railway Items from Area Papers - 1996

**05/01/1996**    *Globe and Mail*                      *Vankleek*

VANKLEEK SUBDIVISION FOR SALE: Canadian National has its Vankleek Subdivision up for sale. The 20-mile line links Glen Robertson (on the Alexandria Subdivision) with Hawkesbury, Ontario. Also included is the 4.4-mile L'Original spur between Hawkesbury and L'Original, Ontario, over a portion of the one-time Canadian Northern L'Original Subdivision. The CNor trackage was part of that company's main line between Montreal and Toronto/Vancouver. Service is now offered on a 6-day-a-week basis by a road switcher out of Coteau, Quebec. The Vankleek Subdivision was built by J.R. Booth, legendary lumber king of the Ottawa Valley. Booth also built the Alexandria Subdivision as the Canada Atlantic Railway and the Ottawa, Arnprior and Parry Sound Railway, connecting Ottawa with Depot Harbour, Ontario. Part of this line survives as the Renfrew Subdivision operated by CN under contract with the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton. This is only one of several lines CN wants to sell. Another likely candidate is the line between Matapedia and Gaspé, Quebec, involving the Cascapedia and Chandler Subdivisions.

**29/02/1996**    *Ottawa Citizen*                      *Kingston (CN)*                      *Cornwall*

Driver dies after car strikes passenger train

One man is dead after a passenger train collided with a vehicle at a Cornwall railway intersection Wednesday evening. Around 7:20 p.m. a car carrying three people heading northbound on Boundary Road, east of downtown Cornwall, lost control and stalled on the railroad tracks. The two passengers escaped uninjured but the driver was killed after an eastbound VIA train, heading for Montreal, collided with the car, said Staff Sgt. Richard Carter of Cornwall police. The train was delayed and traffic was rerouted for several hours. The intersection has warning lights and traffic barriers. Falling snow and slick roads are being blamed for the cause of the accident. No names were being released pending notification of next of kin.

**06/04/1996**    *Ottawa Citizen*                      *Smiths Falls*

Police identify man struck by passenger train

The Ontario Provincial Police have identified a man killed by a train Tuesday evening at a crossing near Richmond. The victim is Ian Douglas Shearer, 35, of no fixed address. Shearer was struck by the train as he walked along its tracks. Police do not suspect foul play

**19/04/1996**    *Ottawa Citizen*                      *Chalk River*

OTTAWA VALLEY LINES TO BE SOLD TO CENTRAL WESTERN RAILWAY HOLDINGS CORPORATION: Canadian Pacific is losing little time in rationalizing its assets in eastern Canada. On April 18, residents of the Ottawa Valley were greeted by news that the company was negotiating the sale of its Chalk River, North Bay and Cartier Subdivisions between Smiths Falls and Coniston (near Sudbury), and the Temiscaming Subdivision between Mattawa, Ontario, and Temiscaming, Quebec, to the Alberta-based Central Western Railway Holdings Corporation. The new railway, to be called the Trans-Ontario Railway, will total 342 miles.

The operation would emulate the highly successful Montana Rail Link in the United States which involves a hand-off of transcontinental bridge traffic by the Burlington Northern Railroad. The TOR would continue to handle CP transcontinental traffic originating or headed to Quebec and the Maritimes as well as exploit any local traffic. For instance, the paper mill at Temiscaming is served on a daily basis by a switcher operating out of North Bay while there is limited local traffic provided at on-line points between North Bay and Smiths Falls. As and when required, there are major moves from the Canadian Forces Base at Petawawa, Ontario.

The deal with Central Western comes after CP was unsuccessful in launching the Ottawa Valley Railway Company, a joint enterprise with Canadian National that would have seen the abandonment of trackage between Smiths Falls and Mattawa in favour of consolidating all through traffic on CN's Beachburg Subdivision between Ottawa and a point near North Bay. The scheme fell through last year, prompting CN to abandon that portion of its Beachburg Subdivision between Pembroke and Nipissing (near North Bay) and route traffic via Toronto.

The CWR, Canada's first modern short line, operates in Alberta as well as having an interest in CN's former Murray Bay Subdivision between Quebec City and Clermont, Quebec.

**29/05/1996**    *Ottawa Citizen*                      *Alexandria*                      *Carlsbad Springs*

Woman dies when her van collides with VIA Rail train

Vehicle thrown 70 metres by impact

A woman died Tuesday night when the van she was driving collided with a VIA Rail passenger train at a controlled railway crossing on Russell Road.

Emergency crews were called to the accident scene west of Carlsbad Springs around 7:50 p.m. after a dark-colored Mazda MPV mini-van with Ontario plates struck a northbound train.

The train came to a complete stop about half a kilometre from the crash site, which is three kilometres east of the Russell and Anderson Roads.

The van landed in a ditch about 70 metres from the tracks.

A nearby resident said the van collided with the train at a point about three metres from the front of the engine car. He said a battery cover was torn off and an air valve was broken on the train.

The train was heading to Ottawa from Montreal. No passengers or crew members on the train were injured. A CN Rail spokesman said that the train would be towed into Ottawa and rail traffic would be delayed for a minimum of two hours.

Witnesses at the scene said the railway safety lights and bells were working. There is no barrier at the crossing.

Police had not yet identified the woman late Tuesday. The investigation continues.

End of the Line

Recluse dies in remote shack he called home

Adam Pitz, a craggy-faced recluse who stubbornly resisted every modern convention, be it plumbing, electricity or refrigeration, finally submitted to an ancient one Tuesday when a funeral was held for him in Deep River.

Pitz was found Saturday in the sagging shack he called home on the shores of Cedar

Lake in the northern Algonquin Park outpost of Brent. He was 82.

Pitz was born in Roumania, lived in the tiny seasonal community, an outfitter's launch point and former railway junction, for about 65 years. All winter, he was the only resident which led to him being dubbed "the mayor of Brent."

A Citizen reporter and photographer visited Pitz, a life-long bachelor, in the spring of 1994 and were stunned to discover the squalor of his home and the odd circumstances of his life.

The interior of the house was blackened by fire and grime and had several of its windows boarded up. There was a strong scent of oil in the air and his clothes and hands were badly soiled by an oily substance. He had no running water or telephone and, in his later years, his hearing was failing.

The toothless, quiet man saw nothing special about his life and had difficulty understanding why a newspaper would want to write about him.

His disconnection from the outside world led to some fascinating adaptations. Though a pauper in appearance, Pitz, upon being admitted to hospital for treatment of a leg injury, was found to carry a large wad of cash in his pocket. A local man also reported seeing Pitz make trips to a stash of money in an outdoor woodpile. Strangely, he was afraid of lightning, which led to the illogical boarding of the windows.

Pitz said his father arrived in Brent in the early 1930s with the railway. At the time, Brent was a busy train junction and also had a bustling sawmill.

His father is said to have died in Brent in 1967, found frozen to death.

When asked what would happen if he were to have a heart attack in the winter; with help at least 40 kilometres away, Pitz replied: "If I have a heart attack, I'll just be dead. That's all."

Nephew Fred Pitz said Tuesday his uncle, whom he had not seen for about 20 years, died of unspecified natural causes and was discovered by an employee of the neighbouring outfitter's store.

"He just loved that part of the country," said Pitz, a Nepean resident.

"He tried living in Toronto a couple of times, but hated the hum-drum of the city."

He said his uncle occupied himself by feeding his cats and birds, listening to the radio and stockpiling preserves he made himself.

Fred said Adam indeed had kept money stashed at home but, some time ago, relatives managed to convince him to put it in the bank.

Adam's brother died about four years ago. He is survived by two nephews and two nieces.

Pitz said his uncle was to be cremated after Tuesday's service. The ashes are likely to be spread near his home in the provincial park.

How fitting.

After 65 years in Brent, the last 30 in solitude, perhaps he isn't leaving, after all.

03/07/1996 *Ottawa Citizen**Alexandria**Vars*

Vars resident killed by passenger train

A 37-year-old man was killed in a train fatality in Cumberland Township on Tuesday. Local provincial police said Joey MacRillo, a resident of a nursing home in the hamlet of Vars, died after being hit by a westbound VIA train at about 7:30 p.m. At the time he was standing on the tracks, apparently aware of the oncoming train, police said. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

10/07/1996 *Ottawa Citizen**Maniwaki*

WAKEFIELD STEAM TRAIN, RESIDENTS WANT NOTHING TO DO WITH PURCHASE OF RAIL LINE:

Hull, Quebec, taxpayers have vetoed a proposal for the city to finance the purchase of the Laman Spur, running between Laman (junction with the Lachute Subdivision) and Freeman Road. The segment is the last portion of the former Maniwaki Subdivision still owned by Canadian Pacific and was retained following the 1985 abandonment of the line in order to give CP access to the Hull Industrial Park. The trackage is used by the Wakefield Steam Train, even including part of its station and maintenance facilities and is rented by the company.

Back in 1992, when the operation was set up, Hull agreed to purchase the line but received CP Rail agreement to defer the deal for several years. Now it is time to consummate the deal and a way has to be found to raise \$1.41 million. City Council was prepared to borrow the money until a citizens' movement got together and defeated the idea, winning by five votes. Opposition to the purchase is due to a feeling that municipal governments shouldn't be directly helping private enterprise when it means increases in taxes. Said a spokesperson for the citizens' movement, "We are really against this. It's a private enterprise. We are not in agreement with helping that. People are losing jobs, their salaries are diminishing. They don't want their taxes to increase."

A spokesperson for the Wakefield Steam Train has said that the operation wouldn't be doomed if the line were bought by someone else but that it would have to consider relocating all facilities to the portion of the line not owned by CP Rail, a fairly serious expenditure involving the relocation of its shop, station and turntable.

16/07/1996 *Ottawa Citizen**Chalk River**Pembroke*

Farmer to seek payment from CP Rail for dead cattle

A Pembroke-area farmer whose cattle were killed by a CP freight train Sunday will be seeking compensation from the rail company

Early Sunday morning, an eastbound CP freight train headed for Smiths Falls killed 18 beef cattle that had wandered onto a railway line about five kilometres east of Pembroke. The cattle broke through a wire fence owned by the rail company

Owner Cecil Elliott said he has about 60 beef cattle and he expects to receive financial compensation from the rail company. He said the cattle are worth about \$1,200 each.

The cattle were probably frightened by the sound of thunder and ventured onto the tracks, said Paul Thurston, a CP spokesman in Toronto.

None of the train crew were injured in the accident, he said. Rail service was not severely affected by the 8 a.m. crash. In other accidents, five or six cows have been killed, but never so many at one time, adding that the fence was repaired Monday

Elliott said his cattle broke through the same fence several years ago but none were killed.

Northfield Station: A Place in the Country

It's a place where kids can be kids and where neighbours are neighbourly. It's not the kind of place that you drive through by accident.

"Where's Northfield Station?"

It's half-way between Dixon and Northfield, and south of the Newington Bog. That doesn't help you? Try 20 kilometres northwest of Cornwall. The easiest way to get there is to drive north from Lakeview Heights, along SD&G 15, then west at Northfield, the next settlement after Harrison's Corners. If you reach Avonmore, you've gone too far.

Two years ago, didn't I suggest you get a 1:250,000 scale map of Eastern Ontario? You can't be a true Hometown reader without a detailed map of SD&G!

I first discovered Northfield Station while on a mountain bike jaunt out of Cornwall via the former New York Central railway bed. Unfortunately, only parts of the Cornwall-to-Ottawa segment are still useable as a recreational trail today.

In the late 1950s, few people had sufficient vision to preserve the entire right-of-way as a valuable resource for the future. I wonder if we are any wiser today.

There's another railway bed, the recently retired CPR spur line, "The Peanut Line", that connects Cornwall to St. Telesphore, Quebec, via Williamstown and North Lancaster, that could be saved as recreational trail. What an interprovincial cross-cultural link that could be! There are some who care, but not enough that care enough.

Back to Northfield Station. Not since the late fifties has there been a train whistle heard in the hamlet. At one time, special NYC excursion trains brought people to the Avonmore Fair from Cornwall and Ottawa. At Finch they transferred onto a Canadian Pacific train that took them the last way to the fair.

Today the Northfield Community Association strives to maintain a community spirit. At the

Northfield Hall, a former United Church, the community gathers for events such as showers and card games for the seniors. In the adjacent yard is play apparatus and a ball park for the younger folk.

These facilities are where the Cornwall Township Summer Special Events program brought Halloween to Northfield this summer. Judging by the numerous parents to be seen relaxing around the shaded yard, it wasn't just the children who were enjoying themselves.

The Township conducted similar summer programs in Long Sault, St. Andrews West.

30/08/1996

Ottawa Citizen

Winchester

Dalhousie Mills

Derailment, toxic leak force 200 to flee

DALHOUSIE MILLS, Ont. In what is becoming an increasingly common event, a CP Rail freight train carrying dangerous chemicals derailed on the Ontario-Quebec border, 155 kilometres east of Ottawa, forcing more than 200 people from their homes for six hours.

The derailment occurred at 11:40 a.m. Twisted wreckage straddled the border between Dalhousie Mills, Ont. and Dalhousie, Que.

This was the 161st train to jump the tracks this year in Canada the most in a single year since 1985.

No one was injured in the crash, which saw 36 cars at the back of the two-engine, 69-car train break away from the front and plow into each other over a 400-metre stretch of CP Rail's mainline.

Three of the cars were carrying chemicals. Two carrying alcohol remained upright, but one carrying 70-per-cent pure hydrogen peroxide tipped over and leaked the chemical through a broken top valve.

Four box cars caught fire during the wreck, but were put out quickly

People in this small community reported hearing the sound of the crash more than two kilometres away

CP officials at the scene said they weren't sure what caused the crash.

"We have to check the tracks, the axles and all the mechanical components before we can say anything about the cause," said CP spokesman Michel Spenard.

Area residents were thankful the derailment was not in a populated area.

"That would have been awful," said Colleen Dance, "but nobody is hurt so it's just more of an inconvenience"

In the past six years, trains have been jumping their tracks in steadily increasing numbers.

After a decade of decline due to improved safety measures, derailments fell to just 102 in 1990. But that number rose to 156 in 1995, and this year derailments are on a pace to hit more than 240. While derailments will have doubled, rail traffic has only gone up by about 10 per cent over the same period.

"We really don't know why. It's quite perplexing," says Gary McLaughlin, who monitors railway accidents as director of investigations for the Transportation Safety Board of Canada.

The board is especially concerned that the number of derailments with multi-car or dangerous goods on board has also gone up.

McLaughlin says the problems could be anything from a rash of bearing and wheel failures to broken rails.

Others say it's because railways are trying to get by with less money

"Travellers should equip themselves with a rosary and a St. Christopher's medal and pray," says Harry Gow of Transport 2000 Canada, a consumer group that follows transport issues.

"The federal government has kept cutting its funding of railways to the point where they can barely survive."

Gow says the elimination of railway freight subsidies and the reduction of funding to VIA Rail have a major impact on the Canadian freight industry

The cuts have resulted in staff reductions, while rail traffic has gone up.

Bob Ballantyne, director of the Railway Association of Canada, says spending on technology better protects safety than does spending on people.

Transport Canada met with the major rail companies recently to create new voluntary safety procedures.

CP Rail and CN Rail will start programs of more frequent track inspections, improved wheel and bearing checks and an extended flaw detection program.

Caption to photo

TRAIN SPLITTING: More than 200 people were forced from their homes Thursday when 30 cars of a CP Rail freight train overturned and a fire broke out 155 kilometres east of Ottawa. One car leaked hydrogen peroxide. No one was injured.

Derailement, toxic leak force 200 to flee. (with aerial photo and location map)

TRAIN SPLITTING: More than 200 people were forced from their homes Thursday when 30 cars of a CP Rail freight train overturned and a fire broke out 155 kilometres east of Ottawa. One car leaked hydrogen peroxide. No one was injured.

DALHOUSIE MILLS, Ont. In what is becoming an increasingly common event, a CP Rail freight train carrying dangerous chemicals derailed on the Ontario-Quebec border, 155 kilometres east of Ottawa, forcing more than 200 people from their homes for six hours.

The derailment occurred at 11:40 a.m. Twisted wreckage straddled the border between Dalhousie Mills, Ont. and Dalhousie, Que. This was the 161st train to jump the tracks this year in Canada the most in a single year since 1985.

No one was injured in the crash, which saw 36 cars at the back of the two-engine, 69-car train break away from the front and plow into each other over a 400-metre stretch of CP Rail's mainline.

Three of the cars were carrying chemicals. Two carrying alcohol remained upright, but one carrying 70-per-cent pure hydrogen peroxide tipped over and leaked the chemical through a broken top valve.

Four box cars caught fire during the wreck, but were put out quickly.

People in this small community reported hearing the sound of the crash more than two kilometres away.

CP officials at the scene said they weren't sure what caused the crash.

"We have to check the tracks, the axles and all the mechanical components before we can say anything about the cause," said CP spokesman Michel Spenard.

Area residents were thankful the derailment was not in a populated area.

"That would have been awful," said Colleen Dance, "but nobody is hurt so it's just more of an inconvenience".

In the past six years, trains have been jumping their tracks in steadily increasing numbers.

After a decade of decline due to improved safety measures, derailments fell to just 102 in 1990. But that number rose to 156 in 1995, and this year derailments are on a pace to hit more than 240. While derailments will have doubled, rail traffic has only gone up by about 10 per cent over the same period.

"We really don't know why it's quite perplexing," says Gary McLaughlin who monitors railway accidents as director of investigations for the Transportation Safety Board of Canada.

The board is especially concerned that the number of derailments with multi-car or dangerous goods on board has also gone up.

McLaughlin says the problems could be anything from a rash of bearing and wheel failures to broken rails.

Others say it's because railways are trying to get by with less money

"Travellers should equip themselves with a rosary and a St. Christopher's medal and pray," says Harry Gow of Transport 2000 Canada, a consumer group that follows transport issues.

"The federal government has kept cutting its funding of railways to the point where they can barely survive."

Gow says the elimination of railway freight subsidies and the reduction of funding to VIA Rail have a major impact on the Canadian freight industry

The cuts have resulted in staff reductions, while rail traffic has gone up.

Bob Ballantyne, director of the Railway Association of Canada, says spending on technology better protects safety than does spending on people.

Transport Canada met with the major rail companies recently to create new voluntary safety procedures.

CP Rail and CN Rail will start programs of more frequent track inspections, improved wheel and bearing checks and an extended flaw detection program.

20/09/1996

Ottawa Citizen

Chalk River

Carleton Place

OPP looking into death of man struck by train

The Ontario Provincial Police are investigating the death of a 22-year-old man who was crushed by a train near Carleton Place Wednesday.

Timothy Roy of Carleton Place was standing on the tracks at about 4 a.m. when he was struck by a northbound CP Rail train. The engineer saw Roy, but was unable to stop in time.

28/09/1996

Ottawa Citizen

Lachute

Gatineau

Gatineau man in hospital after his car strikes train

A 27-year-old Gatineau man is in serious but stable condition after smashing his car into a Montreal-bound train Thursday night at a Gatineau railway crossing.

The man was travelling south on Montee Paiement when he struck the side of the train at Maloney Boulevard. Firefighters used the jaws of life to free the man from the wreckage and he was transported to Gatineau hospital.

07/10/1996

Ottawa Citizen

Chalk River

Pembroke

Mayor considers train derailment a warning to town

PEMBROKE (CP) The derailment of a Canadian Pacific freight train near the Ottawa River late Saturday would have been a catastrophe if the cars had been carrying ammonia, the mayor of Pembroke said Sunday

"This is the second one (derailment) this year" in the area, Mayor Les Scott said. "This is a warning right here and it's not too often a municipality gets a warning."

No one was injured when five empty cars left the track near downtown Pembroke. The cars, which did not enter the river, had previously contained ammonia and still had some residue inside them.

13/10/1996

Ottawa Citizen

Winchester

Smiths Falls

Chemical spilled as train derailed in Smiths Falls

It will be several days before crews complete the cleanup of a chemical spill caused by a small train derailment near Smiths Falls late Sunday or early Monday

OPP Const. Neil Fennell said that for reasons still unclear, four rail cars went off the tracks in the CP Rail switching yards on the edge of town. Among them was a tanker containing 90,000 kilograms of sodium chlorate, an agent used in bleaching pulp. Fennell said an estimated 200 kg leaked out on to CP property.

Emergency officials notified area residents of the spill but felt there was no need for evacuation.

Short-line railroad seeks profit on the track

Ottawa Valley RaiLink, a new short-line railroad, began operating freight trains on the historic Canadian Pacific Railway route along the Ottawa River this week.

It was a big move for the small company which hopes to become a powerhouse in the transformation of a century-old industry. It is also a crucial part of the CPR strategy to transform its money-losing track in eastern North America into a profitable operation.

But for the 65 CPR employees in the Ottawa Valley who were not hired by RaiLink, it means months of family dislocation and worries about how long job-security guarantees can survive as CPR jobs rapidly erode.

RaiLink plans to attract customers with improved service and lower costs on the 550-kilometre line from Smiths Falls to the Sudbury area. Terms of the lease were not disclosed.

RaiLink president Gordon Clanachan said it is "a significant step toward RaiLink's goal of becoming the leading regional railway operator in Canada."

It hired 110 people, about 80 per cent former CPR employees. But when the first trains pulled out this week, many former CPR employees were left behind. The CPR said the 65 former employees will get severance, early retirement benefits or the right to bump into other jobs based on job seniority.

But, so far, the transition has been anything but smooth. Although the employees got notice in June their jobs were abolished, many weren't told until this week where they would be going. The result was months of family turmoil, worries about schools and selling houses and stormy union meetings where people fought over surviving jobs.

Kathy Charbonneau, wife of a long-service track-maintenance worker, said her husband got only two days' notice to report to a new CPR job west of Sudbury, a three-hour trip away.

It was impossible to plan a family move or sell their house north of Pembroke because a recent arbitration decision denies relocation expenses to people moving to new jobs.

"We simply cannot afford to move now," she said. "Most people would gladly take jobs with the new company, even with less pay and benefits, because jobs are scarce. But few got offers though they went to the interviews."

Roger Wieland, a 33-year-old track-maintenance worker based in Arnprior, said only a third of local maintenance crew got RaiLink jobs.

He qualifies for 90 per cent of his former pay under an employment security package, so long as he is available for CPR work assignments. Still, sitting at home is no fun. "It is very depressing to wake up in the morning and know there is no job to go to."

RAILTEX ACQUIRES VANKLEEK SUBDIVISION:

RailTex Inc. of San Antonio, Texas, has reached an agreement to acquire CN's 21-mile Vankleek Subdivision between Glen Robertson and Hawkesbury, Ontario, plus the 4.4-mile L'Original Spur, for \$1.1-million. Operations commenced on November 2 on the line (named the Ontario L'Original Railway) which is the first sale made after passage of the Ontario Labour Relations Act. That law removes successor rights that would have required buyers of small railways to hire previous union employees and honour existing labour agreements. The transaction also represents the first CN asset sale in Canada since the new Canadian Transportation Act was passed earlier this year. The sale is scheduled to close on December 2. The company is expecting to handle 6,000 carloads on the line annually, primarily steel products from the IVACO mini-mill in L'Original, Ontario.