

Local Railway Items from Area Papers - 2012

07/02/2012 Ottawa Citizen Winchester

A country road east of Kemptville has been shut down after a train collided with a vehicle. Ontario Provincial Police said no one was injured in the crash, which happened just after 5 a.m. Boundary Road has been closed between Clark and Cameron Roads as police investigate. No other information was immediately available.

14/03/2012 Ottawa Citizen Alexandria

Time-travelling Senators don fedoras and plaid suits, for '50s-style trip to Montreal

In the winter of 1924, when the railway was the only way to travel for pro hockey players, the train carrying the Ottawa Senators to Montreal for a game against the Canadiens got stuck in a snow drift.

With no way to communicate with the outside world, a young King Clancy and forward Cy Denny, both future Hall of Famers, made their way out into the blizzard to find food for the rest of the team. On their way back, Denny fell into a well that had been covered by snow and had to be hauled out. The Senators finally arrived at their hotel the next morning, but many hours late for their game with the Habs the previous night.

Train travel has long been a part of the past for the National Hockey League, although the modern-day Senators, decked out in fedoras, custom plaid suits, silk ties and highly polished black shoes, did their best to evoke the romance of that era Tuesday by taking the train to Montreal for Wednesday night's game against the Canadiens.

"It's fun and something different," said Chris Phillips, who has become a fan of the team train travel. "We took the train a number of years ago and I loved it and definitely wanted to do it again. It's a great way to go."

From hockey's earliest days and well into the 1960s, teams would book coach cars for overnight trips, and their players would settle into their seats to play cards, horse around and, naturally, share a drink or two, while forming deep bonds of brotherhood.

In one famous incident in the 1950s, members of the Detroit Red Wings got into a fight with players from the Chicago Blackhawks, who were in the next train car, after a brawl-filled game that night in Detroit. In the rematch the next night in Chicago, the two teams went at it again, with several players, including Detroit's Ted Lindsay and Chicago's Eric Nesterenko, ejected from the game.

Travel could hardly be more different in today's NHL. The players are treated like celebrities, everything is taken care of for them, their equipment is moved and waiting for them once they arrive at the rink, flight and travel arrangements booked, and their meals and training room time methodically planned.

Just about the only thing the current NHL star needs to focus on is lacing up his skates and playing the game.

The end of train travel is a source of regret to many fans.

"The distances between cities are so great now I don't think they can travel by train anymore," said Len Lawson, a longtime hockey fan who can remember well the days when the Original Six travelled by rail. "Players are certainly pampered now, but they're our heroes."

The event also gave the players a chance to have a bit of fun fantasizing about what it would have been like to play in that era.

Phillips said he thinks the flair of smooth-skating defenceman Erik Karlsson would have brought a different dimension to the game.

"It would be pretty incredible to see what he would be able to accomplish. I don't know if he could handle the travel, but on the ice he'd be fit for it."

Ottawa valley railway plans to be operating in the fall
CN wants to donate its railway line
west of Ottawa to a non-profit
community organization.

(Campbell's Bay, QC, April 23, 2012) The not-for-profit Transport Pontiac-Renfrew (TPR) has provided a progress report including information on a new Board structure and final timelines for the pending acquisition of the CN Beachburg Subdivision railway line. In an April 19th briefing session for elected officials and representatives from the municipalities through which the line runs, existing TPR executives presented a well structured overview of its developing plan. "The briefing brought our municipal stakeholders up to date," says TPR Director, Louise Donaldson. "TPR is hoping to be operating by November assuming the current timetable remains intact."

The process to acquire the line includes cooperation with the municipalities along the corridor. Following a line evaluation by a professional railway firm, the municipalities agreed to a process to issue applicable tax receipts to TPR. "We are awaiting CRA's stamp of approval for the replacement cost valuation method," says TPR Board member Daniel Amyotte. "The acquisition of the line depends on the final opinion of the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and transfer agreements with CN."

Also included in the briefing, information on a new set of By-Laws to ensure TPR, as a not-for-profit entity, is governed by and for the people of these communities. "The bylaws create a new membership which in turn will elect a new Board of Directors," says TPR Board member Lubomyr Chabursky. "The membership is divided into four groups to ensure that each constituency has a strong and balanced voice in the governance of TPR." The groups will include municipalities; community organizations and economic development organizations; industrial users; and interests of passenger users (for future commuter initiatives).

The fledgling railway operation itself will be managed as a for-profit activity reporting directly to TPR. Net profits from the operation will return to TPR for its use within the specific municipalities / communities. The railway operation will be headed by former Ottawa Central Railway general manager, James Allen.

"We have a tight timeline to work right through September," says James Allen. "To begin, we hope that by early May TPR will have finalized the Safety Management System and application for insurance coverage. By the end of May, CN will be in a position to provide its formal go-ahead for the donation transaction to proceed. This is a key milestone on which all further milestones depend."

The plan to acquire the rail line has been developing since 2009 when CN placed the line on its abandonment list. Business and industry in MRC Pontiac and Renfrew County have stated that in today's post-2008 recession economy, rail is needed as a shipping option. Overall, rail access itself presents a key tool to the economic rejuvenation of the region.

The briefing was held at the closed ATC Panels facility in Pembroke. Representing only one example, the plant will be in a better position to reopen, ramp-up and re-hire if rail remains. Rail is both cost-effective and environmentally preferable especially for long-haul shipments.

From west to east, municipalities along the corridor include the City of Pembroke, Laurentian Hills and Whitewater before it crosses into Québec at Portage-du-Fort. Clarendon, Litchfield, Pontiac, and Bristol are affected in Québec ahead of the line's return to Ontario and the City of Ottawa at Fitzroy Harbour. The line continues east to Walkley Yard in Ottawa.

25/04/2012 *Ottawa Citizen**Smiths Falls*

Nepean-Carleton MP Pierre Poilievre says he's concerned about the fact that Via passenger trains will soon be moving through Barrhaven crossings at speeds of up to 160 kilometres per hour.

The issue involves express trains that move between Ottawa and Toronto in just under four hours and don't stop at the Fallowfield station. Up until now, those express trains would slow down to 24 km/h as they went through the Fallowfield station and the crossings near it. The purpose of that slowdown has been to allow a minimum of 22-30 seconds between the time that the lights and safety gates are activated and the arrival of the train. But Via has announced that it will install improved signalling technology that will maintain that interval without having to slow down the train from the 160 km/h maximum. As of May 6, crossings on Woodroffe Avenue and Fallowfield Road will have trains move through at that speed. And a crossing on Green Road will see trains move across at 140 km/h instead of the current 108 km/h. Other crossings in Barrhaven won't be affected, Poilievre said, because curvatures in the track at those points impose their own limitations on the speed of the trains. The express trains run once in each direction every day but Saturday.

Poilievre said Transport Canada has agreed to his request to send inspectors to look at the Barrhaven crossings and make sure the increased speeds don't constitute a safety hazard. He concedes, however, that Transport Canada has already approved the moves and that the higher speeds are already common all through the Via corridor.

"Because the Fallowfield station has slowed the trains in our community over a long period of time, it will be a new feature for the train to travel at that speed in our neighbourhood," he said. "I want the community to have every assurance that safety is protected and paramount."

OTTAWA A deal to save the Canadian Pacific rail line between Pembroke and Mattawa has finally collapsed, say the people trying to pull it off, because the track itself is worth more in the oilpatch than to the failing industries of the Ottawa Valley.

"It appears the Ottawa Valley will no longer be a conduit for goods passing east and west by rail," said Harry Gow, the chairman of Transport Pontiac-Renfrew and a longtime rail advocate. The group had two rounds of talks with CP after the company gave notice years ago that it intended to close the line, but they finally ended last Friday.

"They needed the rail badly, so they were going to pick it up and the deal's off," Gow said he was told by three CP executives in a conference call. The roughly 150 kilometres of rails are bound for switching yards in Saskatchewan or Alberta, Gow understands. "We don't know exactly where the rail is going, but it's going."

The line is officially a section of a longer line between Mattawa and Smiths Falls, the southern leg of which has already been pulled up in parts. It's been closed for a couple of years since a washout that CP decided not to spend the money to fix, but in the past the line has been a route for gravel used in construction, for agriculture products, and for raw materials going to factories like a panelling plant in Pembroke and finished goods coming back out. From Mattawa, the line continues to Sudbury and connects to the national network. When farmers in Eastern Ontario shipped hay west to Alberta during a drought in 2002, the loads went along this track, Gow said.

While there are alternatives, at least for getting goods to Pembroke, they all go through Toronto, a side trip of hundreds of kilometres that takes at least an extra day each way and increases costs.

"We have now shippers in quite a state of distress because their business plan relies on being able to ship more rapidly," Gow said. And while the Pembroke panel plant is now closed, for example, there is constant talk of reopening it; worse rail connections in the area won't help.

It's all part of a long, slow withdrawal from regional service by Canadian Pacific and Canadian National since the industry was deregulated in the 1990s, Gow said, one that puts industry in smaller towns on ever-shakier economic ground.

Transport Pontiac-Renfrew, whose board includes former Arnprior mayor Terry Gibeau and west-end Ottawa councillor Eli El-Chantiry, offered CP about \$1 million a year to lease the line, but it wasn't enough.

"We did entertain an offer from a party but weren't able to reach a commercial agreement that was viable for both sides," Canadian Pacific spokesman Kevin Hrysak said from Calgary. The company gave notice in 2008 that it intended to close the line and was legally allowed to start tearing it up in 2011, but waited more than a year while both sides tried to make a deal.

The ties and ballast, the gravel on which the ties rest, will be recycled one way or another, Hrysak said, and the valuable steel of the rails will indeed be repurposed on the Prairies. Eventually the company will sell the land, too.

A CN line between Pembroke and Ottawa, which crosses the Ottawa River into Quebec at Portage-du-Fort and returns to Ontario at Fitzroy Harbour, is still in Transport Pontiac-Renfrew's sights. Besides conveying freight, the group hopes a commuter rail service could work along that route.

VIA Rail Canada plans to re-place track ties in the Nepean and Barrhaven areas beginning Saturday. The company is scheduled to complete its standard maintenance by November, working overnight to avoid interfering with regular train operations. Workers will re-place 11 kilometres of ties, which keep rails the proper distance apart, starting from just west of Prince of Wales Drive to east of Highway 416. The process will include changing out the ties and track resurfacing. Any questions or comments should be directed to 1-866-757-6778.

LEBRETON'S UNDERGROUND RAILWAY

The Lost Train to Nowhere

For years it's been a barroom rumour - that somewhere below LeBreton Flats lies entombed an abandoned rail tunnel, complete with a lost train. Ian Macleod tries to pin down one of Ottawa's most elusive urban legends.

The guy on the bar stool next to mine works in the sewer business.

"So what's the weirdest thing you've seen down there?" I ask.

He takes a sip of his beer.

"One time a few years ago we found a train."

"A train? A train! Like a locomotive train?"

"Yeah."

"In a sewer in Ottawa, you found a train!?"

"Uh-huh. We were on a job down around LeBreton Flats."

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That was 10 months ago.

I've searched for the phantom iron horse ever since.

The other worker initially was reluctant to talk much, said his job would be on the line. So I prowled LeBreton Flats's fallow fields, peered down manholes, dug through archives and musty city directories, talked to puzzled city officials and curious railroad buffs.

Along the way, I bumped into the ghosts of the great tycoon E.P. Taylor, NHL legend Frank Finnigan, inventor and industrialist Thomas "Carbide" Wilson, and a 1947 Ottawa homicide case.

And, yes, there is evidence of an abandoned rail tunnel under the southwestern edge of the Flats at place called Spaghetti Junction.

See, until the mid-1960s, the area immediately west of LeBreton was the city's main train yard, called Ottawa West: 60 acres of track, locomotives, rolling stock, stock pens, coal chutes, lumber yards, freight terminals and the big, sooty CPR roundhouse at Bayview Avenue, the yard's western boundary.

To the east, smoke and steam hung over the rundown housing, grimy industries and Duke Street taprooms populating the proud and predominantly French-Canadian Flats. The federal government began expropriating and razing the working-class slum and trainyard in 1962, leaving the exposed corpse to rot.

The last freight train pulled out in 1967.

Or did it?

The real story begins a century earlier, in 1865, when Englishman Henry Brading, 33, settled in Ottawa and opened the parched lumber town's first brewery. The Union Brewery stood on the lower reach of the escarpment at 451 Wellington St, almost under the morning shadow of Christ Church Cathedral.

Brading bought out his partners in 1880 and renamed the operation Brading Breweries Ltd. He died in 1903 and controlling interest went to Ottawa entrepreneur Charles Magee and his family.

In 1930, Magee's sharp and ambitious 29-year-old Ottawa grandson, Edward Plunkett Taylor, took control of Brading's and turned it into the cornerstone of a business empire that made Taylor one of the most illustrious Canadian businessmen of the 20th Century.

When the Depression hit, Taylor went on an aggressive buying spree, snapping up dozens of small Ontario breweries which he consolidated and modernized or closed. The conglomerate became Canadian Breweries Ltd., later known as Carling O'Keefe.

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Meanwhile, back in 1899, Henry Kuntz of the Waterloo, Ont. Kuntz brewing dynasty opened the Capital Brewing Co. Ltd. at 386-389 Wellington St., at the southwest corner of Bay Street, across from where Library and Archives Canada now stands.

The federal government expropriated the land in 1912, but leased it back to the brewery. In 1927, Capital Brewing and Mackenzie King's government went to court in a dispute over rent and taxes. The case went all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada and Capital lost.

The financial blow allowed Taylor to move in and purchase Capital and all the Kuntz holdings in 1929. A year later, Capital moved to 840 Wellington St. (now the south side of Albert Street), at Preston Street, facing the trainyard.

Then, in 1938, Brading's uptown land at 451 Wellington St. was expropriated too, this time for the planned beautification of Ottawa. Brading's continued brewing at the site until 1944, when Taylor relocated the label to 840 Wellington St. and merged it with Capital to become Brading's Capital Brewery Ltd. (The original brewery at 451 Wellington St. continued to lease the land and operate under Taylor's O'Keefe label until 1956. The building was demolished in 1960.)

The new company embarked on a multi-million dollar plant expansion in late 1945, announcing the \$200,000 purchase of the massive International Marine Signal Building directly across Wellington, once touted by some as the longest building in the British Empire.

Stretching more than 300 metres from the former Broad Street almost to Champagne Avenue (now City Centre Drive), the structure was built in 1902 by "Carbide" Wilson to manufacture acetylene-fired marine buoys and lighthouse beacons for the world's shipping lanes.

A decade earlier, Wilson developed the first commercial process for the production of calcium carbide, a chemical compound in the manufacture of acetylene gas. His discovery led to the creation of the Union Carbide Corporation, now part of The Dow Chemical Co.

As part of the plant expansion, Brading's said a tunnel would be dug under Wellington for the movement of millions of bottles of beer from the plant on the south side to the warehouse on the north side. There was no mention of how that would be accomplished, whether by trolley, conveyor or possibly by a factory train on narrow-gauge tracks.

About two years later, on the night of Aug. 13, 1947, Horace Bisson, 44, of Stirling Avenue in Hintonburg, was riding his bicycle east along Wellington, between Preston and Champagne, when he was hit and killed by an oncoming taxi.

Cabbie Ross Manning, 21, went on trial for manslaughter. He testified he had just driven through safety barriers at the tunnel construction site when Bisson's bike veered into his path. The jury acquitted him.

The tunnel, which never again attracted attention, is believed to have operated for many years, with men moving countless cases of Brading's and Capital lager, ale and port from the plant to the sprawling warehouse, where they were shipped out on trucks.

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Snow laughs as he recounts how the inspector was far more interested in consuming beer than counting it. "By the end of the day, this fellow didn't know whether he was counting beers or sheep."

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operation to Toronto and hoisted the O'Keefe banner atop the plant.

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The warehouse property was expropriated by the National Capital Commission in 1962 - the brewery continued using the building and demolished in 1983 over the protests of heritage advocates. Fragments of the foundation and sections of concrete floor remain.

A few years ago, when the city was installing a high-pressure transmission water main along the north side of Albert, Bruce Ballantyne and other Bytown Railway Society members went to watch for any traces of the former trainyard to surface.

As the excavation project neared of the old brewers' warehouse site along Albert, "we looked down in the trench they had created and saw the tunnel opening, which was being walled up with concrete," Ballantyne told me.

"No doubt this was the tunnel from the brewery to the warehouse and they were just plugging the entrance rather than filling in the tunnel under the street. There was no sign of any track but that may have been removed before the buildings were torn down."

Meanwhile, officials with the City of Ottawa's communications office told me there was nothing in municipal records about any tunnel, much less a lost train.

Then I came across a tattered 1949 underground engineering diagram for that stretch of Albert, which is nicknamed "Spaghetti Junction" for the tangle of old water and sewer pipes snaking beneath.

The "Brading's Brewery Tunnel" is clearly marked, a straight line traversing about 20 metres across then-Wellington, from the brewery on the south side to the warehouse on the north.

A cross-section diagram shows the passage is about 7.5 metres deep and winds under two water mains and over one sewer line, giving a contorted, elbow shape and a dubious grade for a short-track rail line.

My search was running out steam. Finally, one man, a municipal worker, sat down and told me his tale about a second brewery tunnel. One day around 1988, water pressure dropped in the area and the man and other workers later found a broken water main near a fire hydrant on the north side of Albert, about 80 metres east of the former brewery and about 120 metres east of the Brading's tunnel.

Instead of gushing water, though, there was a small, mysterious sinkhole. The worker returned alone later that day and rappelled about 10 metres down into the strange cavity.

When his feet touched the ground, he said he found himself an old rail tunnel. The passage was about two metres high, with what appeared to be rough limestone walls.

Dusty old bottles and cases of beer littered the floor.

With a flashlight, he saw the tunnel stretched east and west into the darkness and was big enough that it had consumed the torrent of water from the broken main for 16 hours with no sign of accumulation.

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It was about four metres to the west and small, similar to a mine train: an electric-powered engine hitched to a few stack cars, all on narrow-gauge track.

"It was like a city tram (with) little cars, about 14 feet long," he said, on condition of anonymity because some work rules were not followed.

"I didn't really get a chance to go exploring," he added with regret, explaining how he made a quick exit after just a couple of minutes when other workers unexpectedly arrived at street level.

Based on his account, the tunnel is thought to travel west from the former Broad Street and approximately underneath the east-west bike path running just north of Albert Street. That would have put it directly under the brewers' warehouse in the Brading days. Presumably, it meets the original passage leading into the brewery.

The water main was repaired and the sinkhole filled with enough concrete and rocks to seal the immediate void, but not the rest of the underground passage.

Brading's iron pony, it seems, still sits on its rusting track, entombed in a time-tunnel into Ottawa's past.

Colin Churcher, an Ottawa railway historian and retired Transport Canada director-general who authored *The Railway Safety Act*, believes someone should recover the mysterious relic.

"If it is there, it should get rescued and put in a museum or put on display somewhere because it is priceless," he said. "It's not generally recognized how prominent railways were in industrial development in the past. This something that really should be brought to the attention of someone who can do something about it."

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"It was like a city tram (with) little cars, about 14 feet long," he said, on condition of anonymity because some work rules were not followed.

"I didn't really get a chance to go exploring," he added with regret, explaining how he made a quick exit after just a couple of minutes when other workers unexpectedly arrived at street level.

Based on his account, the tunnel is thought to travel west from the former Broad Street and approximately underneath the east-west bike path running just north of Albert Street. That would have put it directly under the brewers' warehouse in the Brading days. Presumably, it meets the original passage leading into the brewery.

The water main was repaired and the sinkhole filled with enough concrete and rocks to seal the immediate void, but not the rest of the underground passage.

Brading's iron pony, it seems, still sits on its rusting track, entombed in a time-tunnel into Ottawa's past.

Colin Churcher, an Ottawa railway historian and retired Transport Canada director-general who authored The Railway Safety Act, believes someone should recover the mysterious relic.

"If it is there, it should get rescued and put in a museum or put on display somewhere because it is priceless," he said. "It's not generally recognized how prominent railways were in industrial development in the past. "This is something that really should be brought to the attention of someone who can do something about it."

BREWERY TRAIN DISCOVERED IN TUNNEL

Around 1988, a city worker investigating a water main break found a small train abandoned in an old tunnel under Lebreton Flats.

The electric-powered engine and cars hauled beer from the nearby Brading's brewery (later O'Keefe) on Wellington Street to a huge warehouse across the street. The little rail relic is believed to be still there.