

Since writing the last Newsletter, your Editor had the good fortune to attend the Pacific Northwest Regional Group fall meeting at Kelowna, B.C. Several members of this Study Group - including Lew Ludlow, Ken Ellison, Doug Hannan, David Harding, Bob Lee, Sam Nickle, Alex Price, Joe Smith, Tom Southey, Bill Topping, Geoff Walburn, Jack Wallace, Gene Frampton - were there, along with our President, Ed Harris. A good time was had by all. Bob Lee held a club mini-auction, the local Committee sponsored a technical session, and there was a fine buffet dinner with the ladies at which a local historian and writer - Bill Barlee - spoke. It was a most enjoyable weekend.

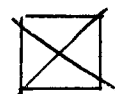
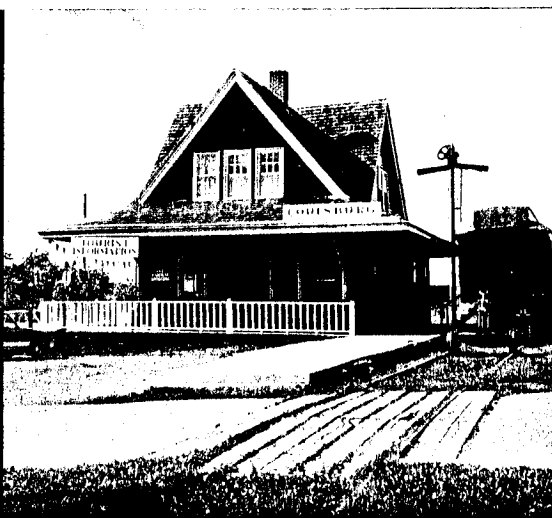
Following this, my wife and I attended the annual show of the Calgary Philatelic Society - another enjoyable event, with many BNAPSers in attendance.

During the weekend of November 19 to 23, we travelled to Kirkland Washington to visit the Ludlows, and bring our books up to date. We find this much more satisfactory than flying to Tokyo ! Then we drove to Portland, Oregon at the invitation of our member Jack White to judge and give a judging seminar at the first Metro Portland stamp show - another very fine show, with no B.N.A.exhibits. Jack, it appears, is the only BNAPS member in the State of Oregon. We'll have to try to remedy that. I did manage to find a few RPOs at the dealers.

NEW MEMBER - We welcome Ronald Battersby, 2184 Lafayette St., Victoria, B.C. - at the invitation of David Harding. Ron's postal code is V8S 2P1, and he is a Newfoundland collector. I hope we have enough Newfie material to keep him happy.

Address Change - Jean-Pierre Forest advises that his address is now - C.P.5275, 4014 des Cedres, Cap Rouge, Que. G1Y 3H6. Mike Anderman is now at Box 6449, Station "A", Toronto, Ont. M5W 1X3.

ANOTHER BNAPEX '87 SOUVENIR - Courtesy of Whit Bradley -

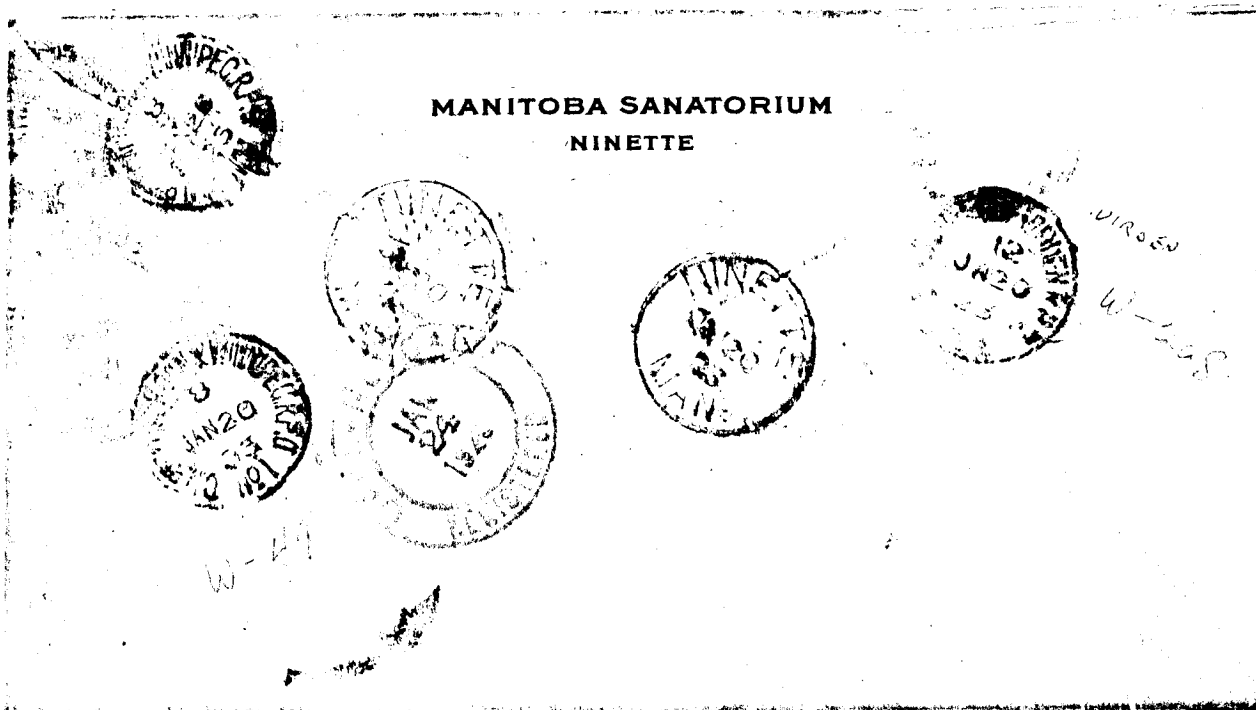


DUES OWING
\$7.00 U.S.
\$8.00 Cdn.

Sydney & Louisburg Railway Museum
Louisburg, Cape Breton

.... / 2

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP - Geoff Walburn shows that he still has a sharp eye for a nice cover as in the one below from Ninette, Man. Not only does it have a backstamp of W-208, Winnipeg & Virden, but also two strikes of W-49 - C.N.R.W.'Y. Emerson & Winnipeg, dated January 20, 1923. The latest date previously indicated by Lew was June 19, 1918. Well done, Geoff !



George Smalley sent in his dues with a long letter indicating a distinct lack of Map Stamps, Jubilees, etc. in the over 1100 different runs in his collection. Some of his holdings are as follows - Maps - MA-115, 163, Q-213, O-118, 210, RR-139. On E-1 - MA80, O-259, 336, 338; E-3 - O-416; E-11 - O-393B; C-4 - Q-95; C-6 - O-192, W-68; CE4 - O-370. On Jubilees - Q-165 (#1,2,3,4), 174, 213, 299, O-80, 84, 141, 298, 308B, 382, 425, RR-10, DD-26. George also comments - "The Newsletter is always a welcome piece of mail to receive. Try to keep up with what is going on in the hobby as I have not been able to get to a convention recently." Thanks, George.

Gerry Carr recently sent a letter from the Anr. Arbour, Mich. Stamp Club Show. They did it again Gerry - a machine cancel over the show cancel. Gerry notes some interesting indicia varieties, which I'm passing on to Lew. They are good examples of what a sleepy or inattentive clerk can do with little pieces of type when his eyes are closed or perhaps he can't find the correct item to insert in the dater, but hardly worth catalog status. I guess we all have some of them. Gerry also sent copies of some interesting postcards which we'll try to run from time to time (along with the album pages which Gerry sent some time ago.).

Flight of the "International Limited," Grand Trunk Railway System



A 1905 TIMETABLE - Courtesy of Father Larry Walker -

La Route la plus Directe, la plus Courte et la plus Rapide

DES STATIONS DE L'INTERCOLONIAL

WORCESTER, WOONSOCKET, PROVIDENCE, FALL RIVER,
MANCHESTER, LOWELL, LAWRENCE, EPPING ET BOSTON
VIA LEVIS, QUEBEC CENTRAL R.Y. ET SHERBROOKE.

Amqui, Laisse	I. C. R.	7.33	7.40	7.45
Cedar Hall		7.50	7.57	8.02
Sayabec		8.04	8.11	8.16
St. Moise		8.10	8.17	8.22
Petit Melis		8.45	8.52	8.57
Ste. Flavie		9.10	9.17	9.22
Rimouski		9.48	9.55	10.00
Ble		10.08	10.15	10.20
St. Pieble		10.28	10.35	10.40
Trois Pistoles		11.05	11.12	11.17
Isle Verte		11.27	11.34	11.39
Cacoana		11.40	11.47	11.52
Riviere du Loup		12.15	12.22	12.27
St. Paschal		1.07	1.14	1.19
St. Philippe de Nerl		1.18	1.25	1.30
Riviere Ouella		1.28	1.35	1.40
St. Pucome		1.30	1.37	1.42
Ste. Anne		1.38	1.45	1.50
St. Louis		1.53	2.00	2.05
St. Jean Port Joli		2.09	2.16	2.21
L. Islet		2.26	2.33	2.38
Cap St. Ignace		2.30	2.37	2.42
Montigny		2.53	3.00	3.05
St. Pierre		3.03	3.10	3.15
St. Francois		3.09	3.16	3.21
St. Valler		3.19	3.26	3.31
St. Michel		3.27	3.34	3.39
St. Charles		3.40	3.47	3.52
Levis, Arrive		4.10	4.17	4.22
Levis, Laisse	Q. C. R.	4.00	4.07	4.12
Ste. Marie		4.50	4.57	5.02
Beauce Junc.		10.50	10.57	11.02
Broughton		11.50	11.57	12.02
Thetford Mines		4.30	4.37	4.42
Garthby		5.35	5.42	5.47
Dudswell Junc.		7.30	7.37	7.42
Sherbrooke, Arrive		9.10	9.17	9.22
Sherbrooke, Laisse B. & M. R.R.		10.00	10.07	10.12
Newport, Arrive		12.10	12.17	12.22
St. Johnsbury		2.22	2.29	2.34
Wells River		2.54	3.01	3.06
Lacola		5.13	5.20	5.25
Concord		6.00	6.07	6.12
Manchester		6.30	6.37	6.42
Nashua Junc.		7.03	7.10	7.15
Epping		8.20	8.27	8.32
Dover		10.13	10.20	10.25
Somersworth		10.26	10.33	10.38
Bellows Falls		10.26	10.33	10.38
Holyoke		6.54	7.01	7.06
Springfield		7.10	7.17	7.22
Hartford	N. Y. N. H. & H. R. R.	8.18	8.25	8.30
New Haven		9.27	9.34	9.39
New York		11.40	11.47	11.52
Worcester	B. & M. R. R.	9.04	9.11	9.16
Webster	N. Y. N. H. & H. R. R.	10.05	10.12	10.17
Grosvendordale		10.20	10.27	10.32
Southbridge		10.55	11.02	11.07
Putnam		10.30	10.37	10.42
Danielson		10.57	11.04	11.09
Wauregan		11.07	11.14	11.19
Norwich		11.55	12.02	12.07
New London		12.45	12.52	12.57
Williamantic		9.35	9.42	9.47
Woonsocket		11.20	11.27	11.32
Central Falls				
Pawtucket		11.50	11.57	12.02
Providence		12.00	12.07	12.12
Fall River (via Boston)		10.00	10.07	10.12
Fall River (via Lowell)		10.06	10.13	10.18
New Bedford		10.19	10.26	10.31
Warren		10.38	10.45	10.50
Lowell	B. & M. R. R.	7.28	7.35	7.40
Lawrence		10.55	11.02	11.07
Haverhill		1.07	1.14	1.19
Salem		8.40	8.47	8.52
Lynn		9.02	9.09	9.14
Boston		8.10	8.17	8.22

CHARS DIRECTS
Le train qui laisse Levis a 3.00 P.M. a de bons chars bourres, de Levis a Boston sans changement.

CHARS PALAIS ET DORTOIRS
Le train de 3.00 P.M. a un char "Pullman" d'ortoir de Levis a Boston. C'est la seule ligne sans changement entre Levis et Boston et Levis et New York.
* Excepte lundi. † Excepte samedi.
† Arrive sur signal pour prendre ou laisser passagers.

RAILWAY SUPPLY CO., BOSTON

795

THE

DIRECT ROUTE

TO POINTS IN

NEW ENGLAND

THE

SOUTH AND SOUTHWEST.

WINTER ARRANGEMENT, OCT. 10, 1904.

CORRECTED TO APRIL 3, 1905.

THIS TIME-TABLE shows at what hour the trains are expected to arrive and depart from the several stations, BUT IT IS NOT GUARANTEED, nor does the Boston & Maine R.R. hold itself responsible for any delay or inconvenience resulting from the failure to make connections advertised with other Transportation Companies or with other trains on its own system.

DANA J. FLANDERS,
Gen'l Pass'r and Ticket Agent.

DANIEL W. SANBORN,
Gen'l Superintendent.

ARMAND LALONDE,
Canadian Freight and Pass'r Agt.,
138 St. James Street, MONTREAL, QUE.

J. B. LEPIRE,
Canadian Pass'r Agt.,
WORCESTER, MASS.

Ad. Form No. 12.

This was published bilingually, corrected to April 3, 1905, and consisted of one sheet printed on both sides. It is illustrated in full on pages 3,4, and 5, with a map showing the route in Canada on Page 6.

The filler illustrations are courtesy of Gerry Carr.

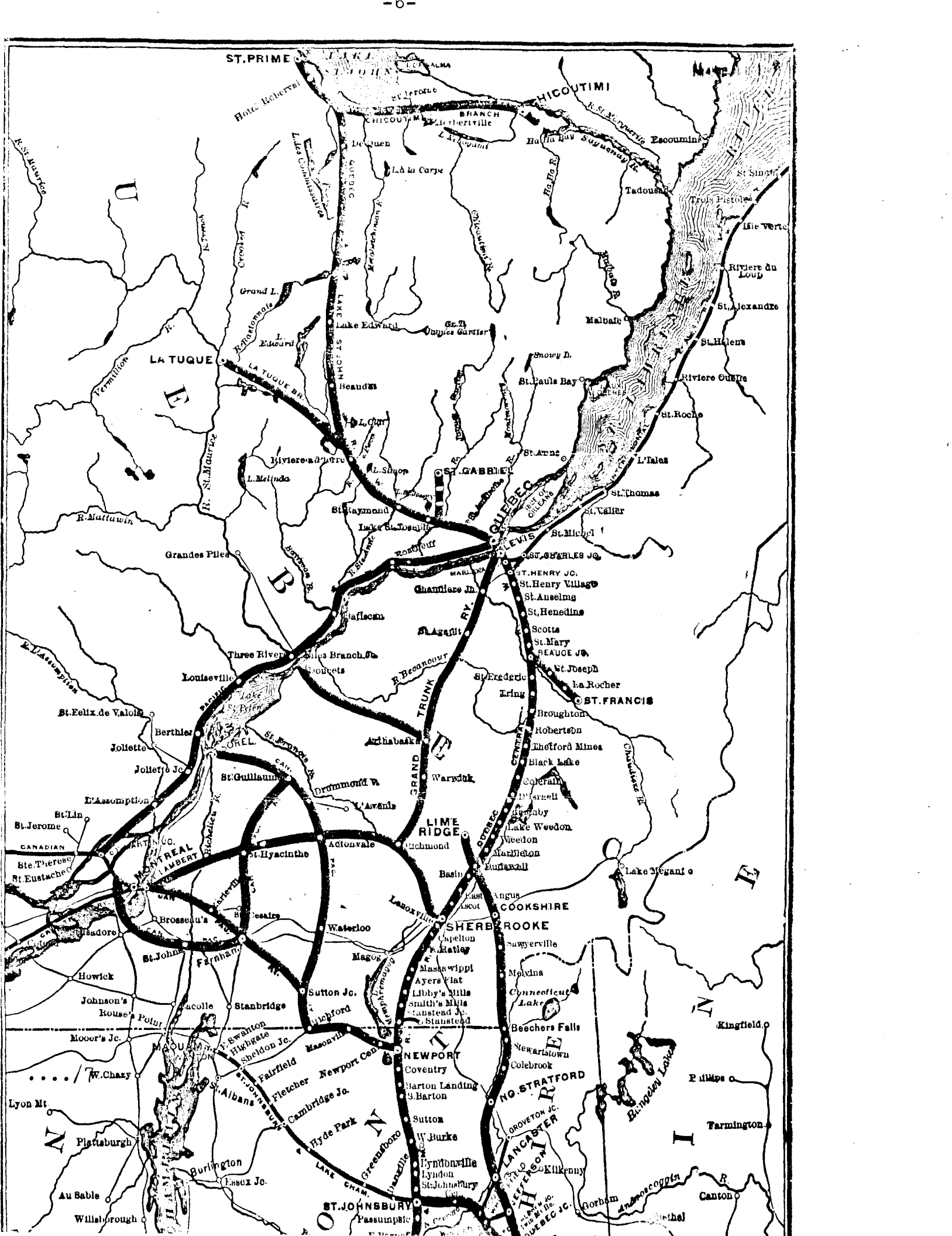


MONTREAL ET QUEBEC			
WORCESTER, WOONSOCKET, PROVIDENCE, FALL RIVER, MANCHESTER, LOWELL, LAWRENCE, EPPING ET BOSTON, VIA SHERBROOKE ET NEWPORT			
POINTE LEVI, Laisse G.T.R.	1.05	0.35	
St. Agathe	1.45	7.29	
Mathews Mills	2.00	7.48	
Lyster	2.14	8.07	
Ste. Julie	2.23	8.18	
Plessisville	2.37	8.42	
Stanford	2.48	8.53	
Doucet's Landing	12.16		
Aston	1.00		
Arthabaska	3.03	9.15	
Warwick	3.17	9.34	
Kingsey		9.52	
Danville	3.40	9.58	
Richmond	4.05	10.30	
Lewis	12.10	4.25	
Laurier	1.12	7.52	
Forestdale		7.53	
Daveluyville	12.21	7.58	
Nicolet			
St. Leonard		7.70	
St. Cyrille	13.13	7.73	
Drummondville	3.20	7.78	
St. Germain		7.79	
St. Eugene		7.80	
Bagot		7.81	
St. Hyacinthe	4.15	8.46	
MONTREAL	4.16	8.01	
St. Madeleine	5.15		
St. Hyacinthe	5.32	9.20	
St. Liboire	5.50	9.39	
Upton	5.53	9.44	
Actonville	6.09	10.00	
South Durham	6.35	10.25	
Richmond	4.05	10.45	
Windsor Mills	4.23	11.15	
Sherbrooke, Arrive	4.49	11.45	
Sherbrooke, Laisse B.&M.R.R.	9.15	5.00	
Newport, Arrive	10.55	6.40	
MONTREAL, Laisse C.P.R.	7.45		
St. Jean	8.37		
St. Guillaume	2.20		
St. Hyacinthe	4.05		
Farnham	9.08		
Acton	3.00		
Newport, Arrive	11.15		
Newport, Laisse B.&M.R.R.	11.35	7.00	
St. Johnsbury, Arrive	1.15	8.53	
Wells River	1.55	9.42	
Laconia	4.15	12.57	
Concord	5.05	2.00	
Manchester	5.43	2.50	
Nashua Jct.	6.12	3.19	
Epping	9.20	5.15	
Dover	10.13	6.00	
Somersworth	10.28	6.29	
Bellows Falls	4.35	1.15	
Holyoke	6.54	3.54	
Springfield	7.10	4.10	
Hartford	8.18	5.23	
New Haven	9.27	6.50	
New York	11.40	9.11	
Ware	10.57	6.50	
Worcester	9.19	5.51	
Webster	10.05	7.00	
Grosvenordale	10.20		
Southbridge	10.55		
Putnam	10.30	8.50	
Danielson	10.57	9.10	
Wareham	11.07		
Norwich	11.55	10.00	
New London	12.45	10.30	
Willimantic	9.35	7.00	
Woonsocket	11.49	8.57	
Central Falls		7.45	
Providence	12.09	7.17	
Fall River (via Lowell)	12.17	7.25	
Fall River (via Boston)	10.13	8.13	
New Bedford	10.13	6.13	
Warren	10.23	5.23	
Lowell	12.50	7.57	
Lawrence	6.37	3.44	
Fairhill	7.24	5.32	
Salem	8.06	8.10	
Lynn	8.40	6.32	
Boston	9.02	6.57	
Boston	7.30	4.30	

CHARS DIRECTS
 Laisse Sherbrooke pour Boston 5.00 A.M. et 9.15 P.M.
 Laisse Montreal pour Boston 7.45 P.M. (via C.P.R.)
 Laisse Montreal pour Springfield 7.45 P.M. (via C.P.R.)
CHARS "PULLMAN" DORTOIRS ET PALAIS
 Laisse Sherbrooke pour Boston et Springfield 9.15 P.M.
 Laisse Montreal pour Boston 7.45 P.M. (via C.P.R.)
 Laisse Montreal pour Springfield 7.45 P.M. (via C.P.R.)
 Arrête sur signal pour prendre ou laisse passagers. * Exce pte Lund.
 Change a Lakeport. Par Lakeport ou Manchester.



Standard Passenger Train, Canadian Northern Railway



The following extracts from the April, 1971, issue of the Post Office magazine "Communication '71" are courtesy of Ed Mahoney. They celebrate the end of the Railway Mail Service.

Retired and ex-RMCs seeing off the H & C 12 on its last run were: (seated, left to right) R. M. 'Lowell' Raymond, R. A. Mathews, H. R. 'Barney' Barnes; (standing) Fred Quinn, Bill Cody, Romeo Ruot, Bill Dawson and Leon J. Ruot. Mr. Barnes was the clerk-in-charge in 1910 on the first run of the H & C RPO. Messrs. Raymond, Mathews, Barnes and L. J. Ruot represent almost 200 years of service in RPOs.



A short history of the RMS

- 1838 — Railway post offices started in England.
- 1854 — The first RPO in North America was established between Niagara Falls and London, Ontario, eight years before the first one in the United States. A Canadian postal official, A. G. McWhinney, was loaned to the U.S. to help install railway mail service there.
- 1857 — RPOs were running on over 1400 miles between Quebec city and Windsor, Ontario. Before the advent of railways, this trip took 10½ days; after, it took only 49 hours.
- 1871 — Postal services were extended to the new provinces of Manitoba and British Columbia, using stage coaches and U.S. railways.
- 1875 — Mail began moving on the Prince Edward Island Railway.
- 1876 — The Halifax to Quebec city Intercolonial Railway was completed.
- 1885 — A postal car ran daily from Winnipeg to Montreal.
- 1886 — The Canadian Pacific Railway was completed. On June 28, a train left Montreal, arriving in Port Moody, B.C. on July 4, with a railway mail car.
- 1889 — The first convention of the Railway Mail Clerk's Association was held in Toronto.
- 1897 — A railway mail service branch was created, headed by a Controller who was responsible only to the Minister. Also that year, RMCs started taking 'case examinations'.

"This was the era during which the expression was borrowed: 'Wooden Cars and Iron Men'. The cars were side passage affairs — a combination mail and smoker — heated by Baker heaters and lit by coal oil lamps," wrote H. A. Clarke, former national secretary of the Canadian RMCs Federation. (September 1958 edition of *The Railway Mail Clerk*).

The RMS continued to grow for years as the railways opened new branch lines.

In 1952, the Post Office operated 177 RPOs across Canada, employing 1368 clerks. They logged 57.5 million miles that year, but by 1961, only 65 RPOs were in operation and the 647 RMCs logged only 29.7 million miles.

By the early fifties, Canada had developed good all-weather roads and railway customers turned to the fast, economical highway service. The railways were forced to cut back schedules and abandon many branch lines. With them went the RPO.

The introduction of 'all up' letter service in 1948 also led to the decline of the RPO. Sending mail by air tended to lighten the work load of the RMC.

By 1966, all RPOs west of Winnipeg were cancelled, and on February 2, 1971, CN train 7 arrived in Winnipeg, ending RMS in western Canada.

Since January 1st, five RPOs have been phased out: Halifax & Liverpool; Halifax & Campbellton; Quebec & La Tuque; Montreal, Long Lac & Winnipeg; and Toronto & Capreol.

April 24th is the end of the Ottawa & Toronto; the Montreal & Toronto; and with the arrival at 11:45 a.m. in Levis, P.Q. of the Campbellton & Levis, the end of the RMS in Canada.



RMCs making their last run are (left to right) Aubrey Winters, Moncton; Jack McLean, Moncton; R. Bain McAllister, Campbellton; Robert L. Quinn, Saint John; G. A. 'Oley' Olcamp, Edmonton (clerk-in-charge). Mr. Winters and Mr. McLean normally got on at Moncton but made a special trip to Campbellton to be on the last run.

On the last run of the Moose Jaw & Calgary RPO on June 23, 1965 were: (left to right) W. T. (Spud) Murphy; RMC clerk-in-charge Stan Amos; and RMCs Justus Webster, Andy Anderson and Johnny Melville.



Shenanigans abounded

Of course, the railway mail clerk could not have enjoyed his work without occasionally getting into a little mischief. Here's a few of his favorite tricks:

- tampering with government property, such as when Halifax & Campbellton RMCs used to stop at a lake near Truro for a swim, using old air-mail bags for trunks.

- taking unusual security precautions, such as when the RMCs had to pick up the payroll for the coal miners in Glace Bay before leaving Halifax.

"They were all paid in cash," said Roy MacKenzie of Transportation section, Halifax district office, "and there was always over \$100,000.

"The mail clerk would take a couple of dozen money bags, put them in the back of the truck and sit on them," he said.

- setting up housekeeping in the mail car, especially on the longest runs (the 811-mile Toronto & Fort William, 642-mile Calgary & Vancouver, 630-mile North Bay & Fort William, or the 482-mile Saint John & Montreal).

The crew had to take enough food along for the entire trip since they were cut off from the dining car.

Some 'cooks' would put a pot roast on the gas range, letting

it simmer while the potatoes baked in the gas lights. One cook used a white tablecloth and exquisite silverware to set the sorting table.

A fellow in Winnipeg district always brought an attache case, loaded with all the equipment necessary to mix cocktails.

Another served tea on a cloth covered table, using a china tea set.

Of course, not all could be gourmet chefs. There was a clerk-in-charge on the Toronto & Sydney who put a can of beans in the gas light to heat, but forgot it. It exploded and he was picking beans out of the sorting cases for months.



Halifax PRO Clarence Tobin explained that "they would get a short air mail bag, cut the corners off for leg holes, and go in the lake. But there was a kick-back to it because when they got back in the car and took off the bags, there was blue dye all over their bodies."

- playing "catsey" on the sorting table. Catsey, a cutthroat euchre, was the RMC's favorite card game.
- grocery "shopping" along the line, such as trapping rabbits, removing moose and deer from the train's cow-catcher, picking blueberries, or buying maple syrup and eggs from farmers.

This was especially true during the war years when food was rationed. John Cousens of Transportation Branch said he could recall "arriving in Winnipeg with 106 dozen eggs, two 50-pound sacks of potatoes, five pounds of butter and a 25-pound bundle of rhubarb. The transfer staff distributed most of it."

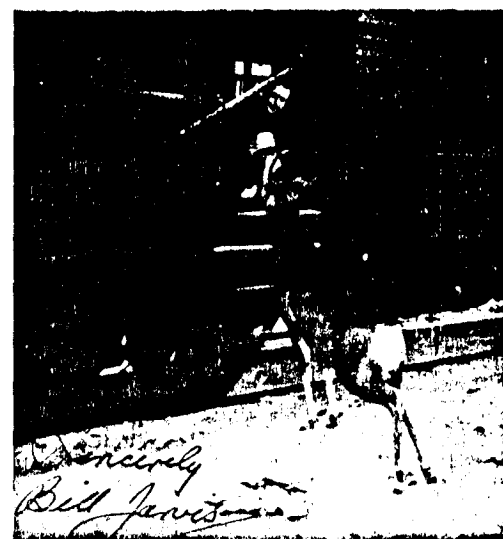
- using hotel clerks as informants to warn them when the RMS inspector would make his "unexpected" visit. The RMCs would be prepared with cigars, cigarettes being taboo on mail cars.



- admitting unauthorized objects into the mail car, such as when an RMC managed to sneak a blind "pit pony" on the Sydney & Truro RPO. (Pit ponies worked underground in Sydney's mines). But, the CNR caught him and made him pay express rates.
- handling bread - shaped parcels roughly. They knew that a bottle of liquor would be inside and would have their cups ready.



by Carol Cooper



"What do you mean, you want it toasted?"

Oh, yes, we are the Railway Mail Clerks was the song of the Halifax, Truro and Sydney RPO.

Composed by a former crew — C. J. Tobin, K. D. Giddins, H. C. Johnson, A. Winters, R. D. MacKenzie and F. J. Lovett — it goes:

Oh, yes, we are the Railway Mail Clerks
Mail Clerks are we.
We work both night and day
To keep the mail a-rolling on its way.
Oh, yes, we are the senior service
Tried and true are we,
We will work the nation's mail
From Newfie to B.C.

Oh, yes, we are good civil servants,
Mail Clerks are we.
We ride the Silvery Rail around the clock
Never do we fail.
Oh, yes, we are the Railway Mail Clerks
Speedy men are we,
Best service to the public
From the R.M.C.

Communication '71 thanks Mr. Lovett, now a postal clerk at the Halifax District Office, for sending this in.



"Considered elite of postal corps"

Most post offices don't sway, roar, bounce, lurch, jerk or scream around curves. Neither do they have jittery sorting cases.

Working long hours in a speeding railway mail car, racing against time and the volume of mail, the railway mail clerk was a unique person.

Of the RMCs, the *London Evening Free Press* said in 1947, "All have steady nerves. They think there is no one so interesting as a railway mail clerk. They will travel hundreds of miles on a day off to honour an associate or attend the funeral of an RMC they have never met."

"Prior to the airlifting of first class mail, the RMCs had a very high morale," said John Cousens, a former Winnipeg district RMC now with Transportation Branch at HQ.

"They were looked upon as being the elite of the postal service," he said.

"I suspect this was primarily because of the glamour attached to working on a moving platform almost without supervision and because of the high standard of perfection required with respect to distribution (4-6,000 post offices) and railway connections."

The RMC had to achieve 97 per cent on case examinations. "Exams changed every year, but nearly all marks were 99 or 100 per cent," said Clarence Tobin, PRO at Halifax Post Office and National President of the postal component, PSAC.

"If an RMC made below that," he said, "he was frowned upon by his fellow employees."

The word 'boss' was never used in the railway mail car. There were 'seniors' and 'juniors' but discipline was exercised by the group. In the close confines of the railway mail car, the RMCs had to work together to meet the many deadlines inherent in a railroad timetable.

Not meeting a deadline could mean that a town would be without mail, that a railroad connection would be missed, or that a letter carrier would have little mail for his walk.



RMC Jack Smith eyes the pile of mail bags to be opened and their contents sorted on the Montreal & Toronto RPO.



Clerk-in-charge Walter Judson clears a box on the Montreal & Toronto.



Table clerks Jack Smith and Ray Wood at work on Montreal & Toronto train 58.

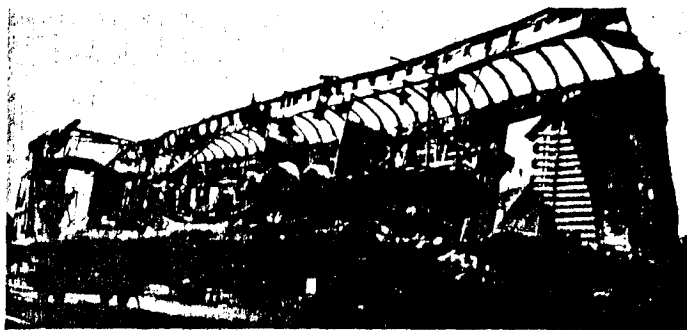


Bill Kenyon (left) unloads mail at Brandon on the Winnipeg & Moose Jaw run.



Photo: The North Bay Nugget

On the Ottawa to Capreol run, Gilles Barrette sorts mail as his running mate Ira Fahey dumps another bag onto the sorting table. Both from Ottawa, they were making their last trip January 29,



Many risks, but most RMCs sad to leave service

Near Springhill, N.S., on May 5, 1937 six railway mail clerks had just finished sorting and were preparing their evening meal when a terrific impact hurled them in all directions. The mail car was thrown on its side, resting on top of the blazing express car.

The flames spread instantly to the mail car. Brulsec and shocked, the men saved as much of the scattered mail as they could, leaving the burning car only when ordered by the conductor to do so.

On January 5, 1950, the Medicine Hat & Nelson hit an open switch at a siding just west of Cranbrook, B.C., and ran head on into a standing west bound freight extra.

RMCs Joe Sexton, Bob Henderson and Norman McGargar narrowly missed making this their last trip.

Their mail car, not visible in the photo on the right, is on its side in the ditch.

Train wrecks — one of the hazards of working on RPO — dot the history of the RMS.

Train robbers also provided some excitement, and in many incidents, RMCs risked their lives to conceal registered pouches from robbers.

At Hawkesbury, N.S. in the mid 1950s, a man stepped aboard the mail car just before the two mail clerks had a chance to close the door.

With a sawed-off shotgun, he forced the two RMCs into the tiny wash-room cubicle, piled empty

bags against the door and locked them in.

One clerk had to stand on the toilet basin to make room for the other. "They nearly suffocated — there was no window, no access to air," said Halifax PRO Clarence Tobin. Three or four hours passed before they were released.

Because the bandit had despatched the proper mail at the next catch post on the run before jumping off

the car, the field of suspects was narrowed down.

A former Christmas helper, he was sentenced to two years in jail.

Although there were many other risks involved in working for the RMS — hot cinders hitting your face in the steam engine days, or falling out of the speeding car while watching for catch posts — most RMCs were sad to leave the service.



Colourful nicknames

Many railway post offices were given nicknames by the generations of clerks who worked on them.

Some were descriptive, such as the 'Hellish, Slow & Wobbly' (Halifax, Bridgewater & Yarmouth RPO). Or the 'Judique Flyer' (Port Hawkesbury to Inverness). Apparently, Judique was once a wild Cape Breton village along the line.

Others were sarcastic, such as the 'Short Haul' (Hudson's Bay & Flin Flon RPO). A clerk could be away from home for up to three weeks on that run.

The Montreal & Brockville was the 'Mocassin' because Indians built that section of the railroad, while the Montreal & Toronto was the 'Trunk' because it was once owned by the Grand Trunk Railway.

'Big & Love' was the Biggar & Lovema, 'Sask, Hard & Wet' was the Saskatoon, Hardisty and Wetaskiwan, and the 'Swede' was the Saskatoon, Wainwright and Edmonton.

And there were many more, including the 'Crow', the 'Q', the 'Drum' and the 'ICR'.

More in June

This isn't all. Communication '71 editor Grant Johnston will be making the last Railway Mail Service run in Canada from Campbellton to Levis on April 24 and will write this up for the June edition.

Communication '71 extends its thanks to all who contributed time and material for this special tribute to the railway mail service, and especially to:

— Clarence Tobin, Roy MacKenzie and others in the Halifax district office;

— John Cousens, Charlie Smith, Dave Calderwood, Sidney Smith, John Kerr, Harold Law, Walter Gale, Dave Warkentin, and Ben Desperais, all former RMCs now at HQ;

— Merrit Chesser, Bob Garland and others on the Halifax & Campbellton, and to Mike Campbell of Saint John for writing their story.

— Bill Kenyon of Winnipeg for sending in his RMS scrapbook, the result of many years work;

— the many others who sent in poems, photos and

by Mike Campbell

Campbellton, N.B., Jan. 29, 1971: It is mid-morning and cold. A small group watches silently as a train moves slowly out of the station, picking up speed gradually as it moves along the snow-encrusted track-bed.

For those watching from the platform, it means the passing of an era. The steady clanging of the bell atop the diesel locomotive rings out the death-knell of the last surviving Railway Post Office in Atlantic Canada — Halifax & Campbellton RPO, or H & C 12.

When the cars pull around the first turn in the tracks, one more unique service in Canadian postal history will have vanished into oblivion. The locomotive winds its way around the bend, followed by the baggage car and then the RPO. After that? Just cars.

Inside this rolling office, five men work in silence. They represent the last of a dying breed — the railway mail clerk — once as mysterious as he was glamorous, in his task of sorting the mails as he sped along the trails of winding iron tracks and swinging lanterns.

He is disappearing quietly and without fanfare into the pages of history, another victim of branch line abandonments, cutbacks in passenger train service and a swing to highway and air passage of the mails over the past two decades.

Gone is the railway mail clerk who inspired ballads and poems about his work. Few will remember the shouts from raucous revellers in saloons and taverns calling upon the piano player to play again the ballad of *The Great Mail Robbery*.

Gone is the occupation which once so intrigued young men that they studied it by correspondence, and gone is the way of life that Kipling once acknowledged when he wrote, "up, up through the night goes the overland mail."

Gone too are the once-familiar sounds of railway companies of yesteryear — the Albert, the Intercolonial, the Canadian Pacific and the Temiscouata. RPOs were as much a part of these as the chugging locomotives themselves.

On the Albert Railway, the old A & S RPO was always to be found as the snake-like behemoth journeyed from Albert to Salisbury. The Intercolonial had five RPOs. These were: Moncton & Saint John RPO, Truro & Saint John RPO, Halifax and Saint John RPO, and Halifax and Campbellton RPO. Canadian Pacific had McAdam Junction & Edmundston RPO, Saint John & Vanceboro RPO and Saint John & Montreal RPO, while the Temiscouata carried the lone Connor & Rivière du Loup RPO on its tracks.

During an average one-way trip in the heyday of the H & C RPO, the mail handled would include 500 registered letters; 600 to 700 letter packages; bags of first class mail containing an average of 1,000 direct letter packages; and 250 to 300 bags of newspapers, magazines, circular mail and parcel post items. On some days the total number of bags handled would exceed 2,000.

At the turn of the century 232 cities, towns, villages, hamlets and settlements in New Brunswick alone were dependent upon Halifax & Campbellton RPO for their mails. How many today remember places like Cowan Creek, Ellenstown, Tingby, Pepere, Moorehouse, or Milton Brae? They too have gone into the musty pages of history.

Today in New Brunswick, there are nine railway mail clerks operating on RPOs H & C 11 and H & C 12. Tomorrow there will be none. While the RPOs are doomed to extinction, one wonders at the future of the railway mail clerks who operated them.

For the present, as in the past, these men will be absorbed into the regular post offices.

Some, like Merrit Chesser of Tide Head and Fred Quinn of Campbellton have already found berths at the Campbellton Post Office. Others such as Bill Cody, Chief RMC in Campbellton, William Dawson, Donald Upton, R. Bain McAllister, all of Campbellton; Oley Olscamp, Bob Garland, and Bob Quinn of Saint John will be finding positions in various other post offices in the province according to their choice, with few exceptions.

When car 9733 returned the 376 miles to Campbellton at 1:50 a.m. on January 31, all railway post office services were terminated in Atlantic Canada.

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First RMS run in B.C. went to blazes

In 1886 the C.P.R. line was completed, giving Canada coast-to-coast railway service. As assistant to the chief post office inspector, W. E. Bennett took charge of the first mail car into British Columbia. Here is an excerpt from his reminiscences:

"The Dominion Government had constructed the section of railway from Kamloops to the Coast, but no decision had been arrived at as to where the permanent terminus was to be located. This was settled when the C.P.R. company took over the line and decided to build an extension of 12 miles to the site of the future city of Vancouver. The small town of Vancouver and surrounding rural districts had been destroyed by fire a few days before we arrived.

"We were met at Port Moody by a steamer from Victoria with several hundred excursionists. It had been my intention to return east on the first train to leave on 5th July, but I was too tired, having been without much sleep after leaving Calgary.

"The first eastbound RPO was to be in charge of a competent mail clerk, J. O. McLeod, and the second train would have one of the Victoria office staff, so I decided to take the steamer to Victoria. In doing this I may have saved myself from serious if not fatal injury, as the first train with the exception of the sleeping car, was consumed by fire at Beaver Mouth at the eastern end of Rogers Pass. Mail clerk McLeod barely escaped with his life, having been found with the valuable mail on his back trying to find his way out of a burning bush.

"The second train had a very trying time going through Rogers Pass as the bush on the mountains there was all on fire. Our train had to back up for miles at times to escape being surrounded by fire, and to wait until large trees which had fallen on the track had been chopped and removed. It was certainly a most exciting experience for all of us who went through it.

"I remained on this section for a month until everything was in working order before returning to Ottawa."

APRIL 1971

Communication '71

EDITORIAL Farewell to the RMS

IF all goes according to schedule, at 11.45 a.m. on April 24 the Campbellton and Levis RPO arrives in Levis and the Railway Mail Service passes into history.

In this edition, *Communication '71* has tried to pay tribute to the RMS and the men who worked for it. We say "tried" because Carol Cooper, who compiled the material and wrote the articles, said: "Too much had to be left out."

We wanted to write stories of the very early days of the service. Of the steam engine era, when clerks worked amidst coal dust, flying cinders and swinging lanterns. About the days when crowds gathered to watch the train come into town. About daring train robberies. And about the Newfoundland RMCs who worked on the coastal boats.

But space and time were against us. Nevertheless, we hope that we captured the essence of the RMS's invaluable contribution to Post Office and Canadian history.

Grant Johnston

THE NEWFIE CORNER - This article was taken from the "Western Star", Corner Brook, September 5, 1987. The Bishop's Falls bridge mentioned in the article is shown on the accompanying card.

Standing on the roof of Newfoundland

An enjoyable, graphic description of Newfoundland's interior and the proposed route of the trans-island railway, with some of the problems the engineers might have to overcome as they pushed the iron rails westward, is given in a series of progress reports by someone who was at the various construction sites.

It was the summer of 1891, almost four years to the month when, on June 29th 1888, the first regular passenger train left St. John's for Port aux Basques to connect with the Gulf Ferry S.S. Bruce for those passengers bound for destinations on the North American Continent.

The author of these interesting progress reports unfortunately has to remain anonymous because his published material was signed only by his initials, "C.A." It is quite obvious, however, that he was working on the vast project of spanning the Big Island by railway. He was probably an engineer.

At the time of his first report he was at camp at Mary March's Brook and stated that at the railway, already constructed to Exploits, was to push across country to Bay of Islands. Later, C.A., when in the storied Gaff-Topsails country, bragged, geologically speaking, that he was "Standing on the roof of Newfoundland."

FIRST NOTES

The writer dates his first notes at Mary March's Brook July 23, 1891. He wrote:

"It is satisfactory to note the

Vignettes of the west



By Don Morris

firmness of the road bed after the winter's snow and frost. All along the line the (rail) road has lost much of its unevenness that distinguishes new lines, and the oscillation of the cars is a mere nothing, even when running at a high speed."

The report continues: "The marshes and bogs have been drained whenever the line crosses them, and are as solid as the rest of the roof, proving that many of the so-called bogs and barrens only want drainage to become valuable pastoral lands."

The improvements along the line, C.A. observed, (the portion built so far) were numerous and included such things as snow fences, water storage tanks and, obviously in anticipation of the tourist traffic the

new railway would bring, hotels had been established at Clode's Sound, Terra Nova, Gambo and Norris Arm.

"But," emphasized C.A., "the greatest improvement of all is the substitution of iron for wooden bridges and the massive granite culverts made from native stone. At Suley's Brook, the huge piles of lumber show that a large number of logs were cut in the winter and nearly two million feet are now lying there awaiting shipment."

The new iron and stone bridge at Bishop's Falls, the report noted, was a remarkable structure, 650 feet long and 30 feet from the bed of the river. The large spans, it was felt, would allow free passage to any logs or ice coming down the exploits. C.A. picks up his observations:

"The country, on leaving the Exploits, assumes a very level aspect; small marshes with good grass and small belts of spruce trees alternating. This does not require the services of so many blacksmiths or teamsters this season, but will enable the contractors (the Reid-owned enterprise) to push the line on much faster than if rock-cutting was necessary."

DESCRIBED LAND

The description of the hinterland continues: "There are numerous ponds of large size in this region, such as Bond Lake, Skul Hill Pond, Joe Gload's Pond, and others. Gload's Pond is of large extent, but very shallow, and is now the headquarters of Mr. Burton, the

superintendent of the railway grading. Good land is found in the neighborhood of these ponds and the marshes are less boggy land of firmer ground than further east. This would be a magnificent region for cattle or sheep raising, but the cold in winter is more severe than further south."

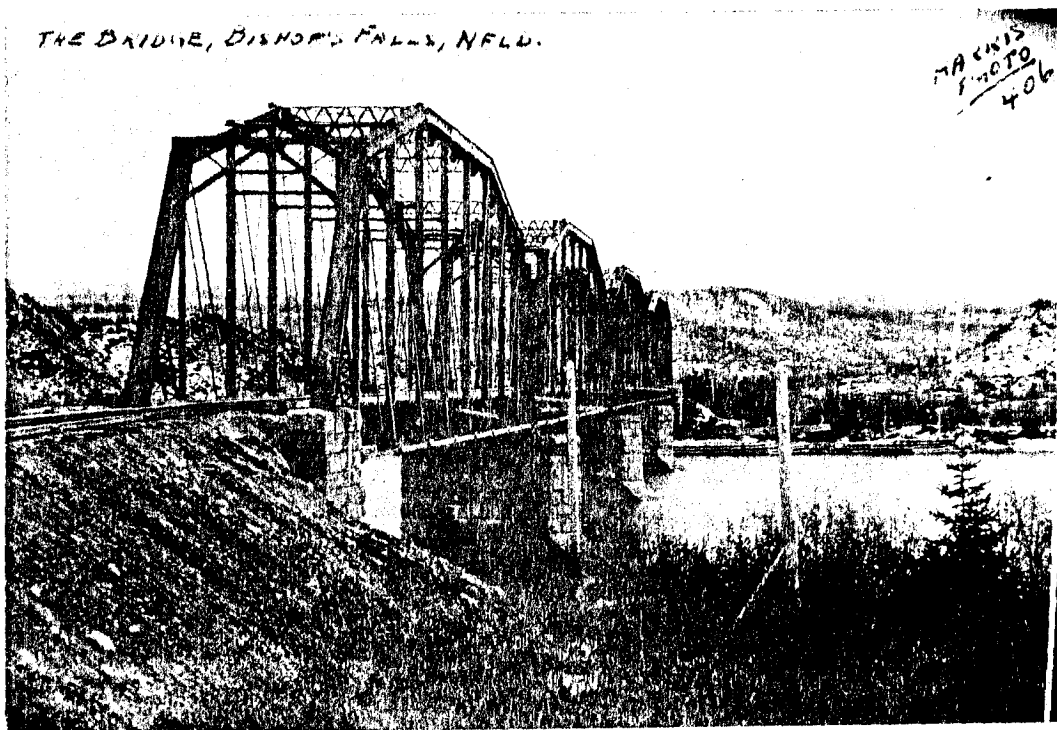
C.A.'s progress report then said that he and his crew were camped at Mary March's Brook, "enroute to Bay of Islands." They were in the heart of the country and in the centre of deer (caribou) territory. He continues:

"Even here can be seen Hodge's Hill, the Trinity Hills, Sentry Hill, the Gaff-Topsails and other hills not mentioned on any map. Mary March's Brook runs into Red Indian Lake to the southward of this and it is the principle outlet for the drainage in this part of the country. Our next camp will be the Gaff-Topsails, after which the country is wild and difficult of access until the shores of Grand Lake and Deer Lake are reached."

Note: Conclusion next week, when C.A. describes the Gaff-Topsails, the hard-work in preparing a train route in that notorious region, especially in the winter time, and other interesting observations when the "Iron Horse" was on the verge of becoming a reality - from coast to coast in Newfoundland.

(Columnist Don Morris resides at 90 Merrymeading Rd., St. John's, Nfld. A1C 2W1).

THE BRIDGE, BISHOP'S FALLS, Nfld.



That's all for now. We'll try to have another out before the year end.

Seasons Greetings.

Bill