

Feb 17/93

THE R.P.O.NEWSLETTER

OF THE CANADIAN R.P.O.STUDY GROUP (B.N.A.P.S.)

Volume 21 - No.2

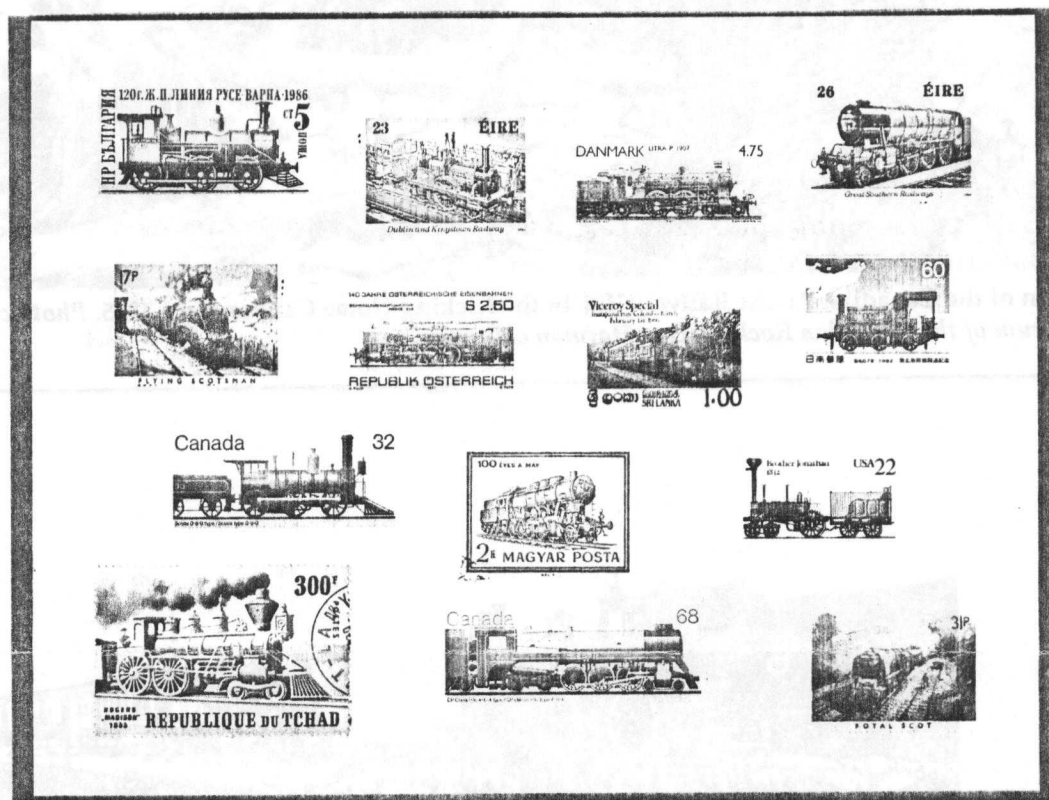
Whole No.102

February, 1993

SPECIAL ISSUE TO COMMEMORATE ISSUE NO.100 - Work is under way. Please send anything for this issue as soon as possible.

OUR FOUNDER, Lewis Ludlow - has suffered another set back. He was in hospital on January 9th being assessed for further physiotherapy and being fitted for a custom wheel chair, when he suffered a bowel obstruction and underwent surgery. At last report he was still in hospital, but recovering from this mishap.

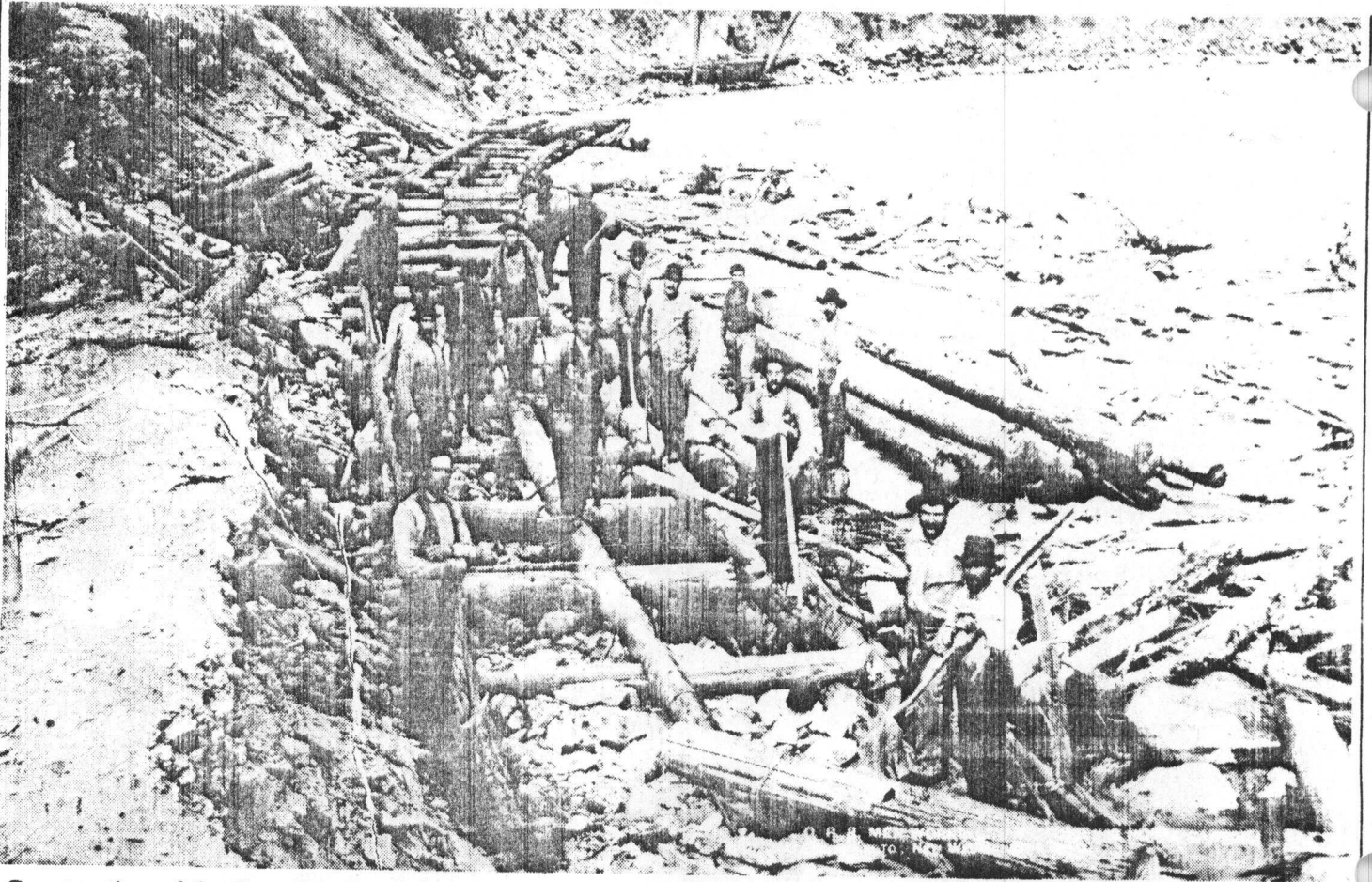
ADDRESS CHANGES - David Harding's apartment number in Issue No.100 should be 125. Add our new President, Chuck Firby to the Ex-Officio list at 6695 Highland Road, Waterford, MI, 48327, and move W.G.Robinson from the Ex-Officio list to the regular membership.



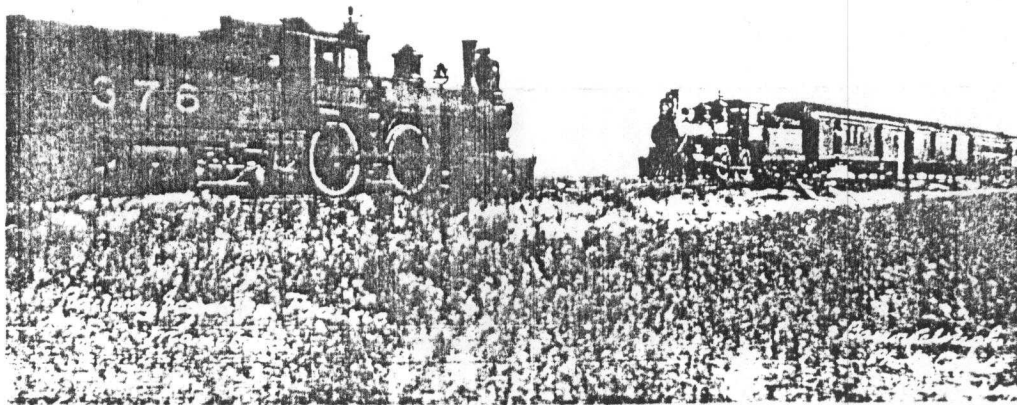
TRAIN CHRISTMAS CARD - The card above was received by your Editor from our member Malcolm Jones and his wife in England. Many thanks for such an appropriate card, Malcolm.

ANNUAL DUES for 1993 - At last count, the following members were still delinquent - Brown, Covert, Forest, Michaud, Nickle, Noble, Soper, Waugh, Gartland, Colberg, Felton, Frampton, Pereira, Walton and Woodward.

.... /2



Construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway line in the Kicking Horse Canyon circa 1885. Photo courtesy of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Don Harmon collection.



A Barraclough, Winnipeg, photograph from the early 1890's showing a meet of two C.P.R. trains at a Manitoba siding. The locomotives are of the same type - apparently coal-burning - that on the left is numbered 376. Photo from Malcolm Jones.

Railway track eliminations escalate

By Mark Hallman

December 19, 1992

Financial Post

AS PART of its accelerating track abandonment program, **CP Rail System** said Friday it has targeted a 102-kilometre line in eastern Vermont for abandonment or sale.

Sources also said CP Rail president Robert Ritchie and a **CN North America** executive will announce Tuesday formal agreement on a previously announced plan to incorporate a partnership to own and operate trackage between Montreal, Smiths Falls, Ont., and North Bay, Ont., as well as to eliminate duplications.

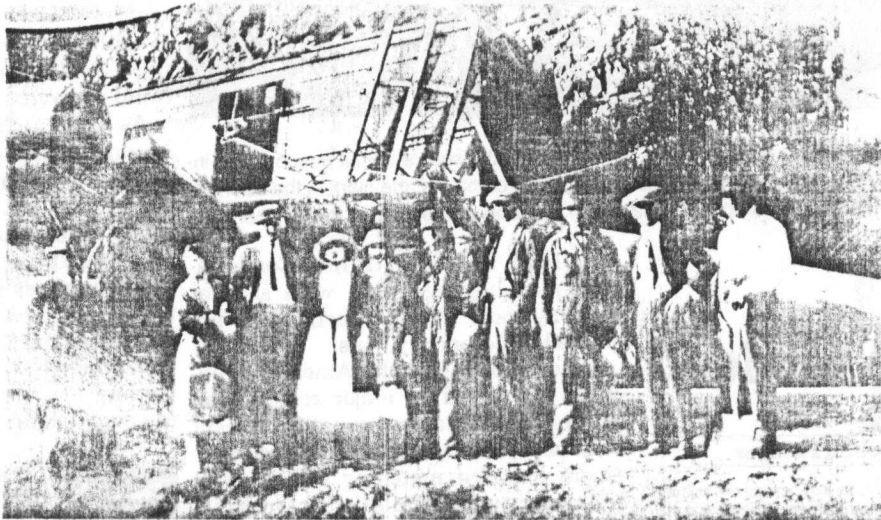
CP Rail spokesman Tim Humphreys said the railway has identified its line between Newport and Wells River, Vt., as an abandonment candidate because the trackage is uneconomic and short-line operators have shown little interest in buying it.

Humphreys said CP notified the U.S. Interstate Commerce Commission of its pending Vermont abandonment as part of its petition last month to abandon 324 kilometres of track in Maine. The Maine abandonment proceeding is part of CP's application to U.S. and Canadian regulators to eliminate all its lines east of Sherbrooke, Que., including 358 kilometres of track in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

The partnership is expected to be precedent-setting because it will be used again by both carriers throughout Ontario and Quebec, sources said.

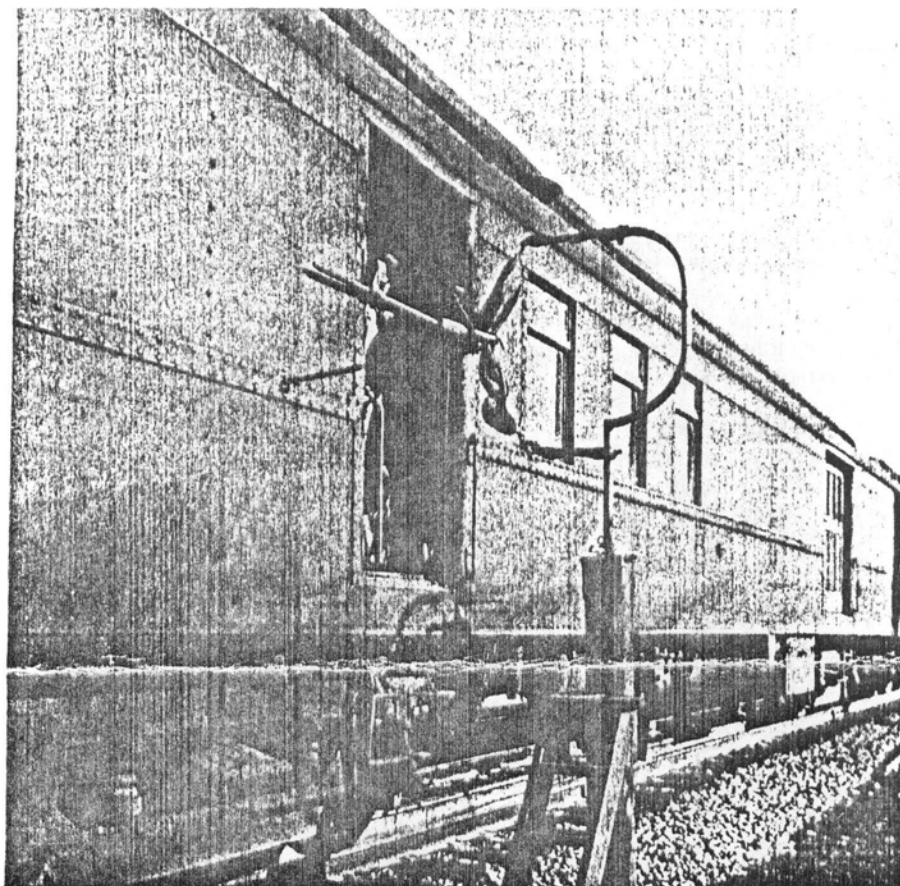
Analysts said even the parallel portions of CN's and CP's Toronto-Montreal main lines could be candidates for a joint-venture company.

The railways are shedding track and employees because of significant traffic losses to other carriers and unacceptable returns on invested capital. The companies blame high taxation and excessive regulation for much many of their ills.



Another train wreck from Alex Price, who says - "I know nothing about this view, a postcard. The mail car bounced pretty hard against the mountain and wiped out a telegraph pole. I would guess, by the look of the spectators, that the event occurred in the late teens or early twenties. The mail car is steel sheathed, which suggests that this affair did not occur before 1920, or thereabouts. There were surely many more of these. When a locomotive struck something, or derailed for whatever reason, the mail car was soon to follow."

.... /4



This New York Central photo, taken sometime during the 1930s, shows a mail pouch at the instant of pickup by the passing train. As soon as the pickup is complete, the clerk in the doorway will let the hook drop down and remove the bag from the loop at the rear of the catcher arm.

Bull session

Conducted by Jim Hediger

This column features brief commentary, anecdotes, human interest stories, oddities, photos, and items that really don't fit elsewhere in the magazine. Please write "Bull Session" at the top of your letter and mail it to MODEL RAILROADER Magazine, 21027 Crossroads Circle, P. O. Box 1612, Waukegan, WI 53187. Payment is made upon publication.

HANDLING MAIL was once a major part of the passenger business for railroads all across America. It began with legislation passed by Congress on July 7, 1838, that made every railroad a post route. By June 1840 railway mail cars were in use, and in April 1859 sorting en route was being handled in early railway post office cars. The introduction of all-steel mail cars came in 1888, and three years later government regulations were adopted requiring all railroads to construct postal cars conforming to specifications of the United States Post Office.

In keeping with these regulations, railway post office cars became common on most passenger trains operating during the first half of the 20th century. Full-length railway post offices were commonly found in most of the

long-haul mainline trains. Combination mail-baggage cars, with smaller railway post office apartments, appeared on secondary runs.

After World War II, America's railroads embarked on major construction programs to replace worn-out equipment with new passenger trains. Many streamliners included matching railway post office cars with regulation interior appointments. During the same period, a number of less affluent railroads rebuilt old heavyweight postal cars and repainted them to match their new streamliners.

In any era, speedy handling of the mail was the first priority of the United States Post Office and the railroads involved. Postal regulations demanded top priority with very specific rules and fines for offenders:

- Mail had to be carried on the first section of all trains.
- Mail had to be transferred first in the event of a wreck or any other break in service.
- Mail had to be handled first at all stations ahead of the baggage car traffic.
- Mail also had to be handled first even if other head-end traffic had to be left behind for lack of space.
- Mail had to be distributed and dispatched from terminals within eight hours of being received, and reports had to be made of mail remaining more than eight hours.

Two types of postal service were provided by the railroads: storage and railway post office. Storage mail moved in regular baggage cars or special boxcars equipped for passenger service. Such cars were loaded, locked, and sealed for movement to a specific destination. Railway post office (RPO) service put a post office on wheels, with mail collected, canceled, sorted, and dispatched while the train was moving at high speed.

Exchanging mail was a problem at small towns where the trains didn't have scheduled stops. Eventually a standardized mail crane was developed to work with a catcher arm on the RPO car. The local postmaster loaded a specially shaped catcher pouch with mail, evenly divided the weight, and tightened a leather strap around its middle. This pouch was hung on the mail crane at trackside.

A clerk on the passing RPO extended the mail hook mounted on the outside of a doorway. This hook was positioned to hit the middle of the pouch right at the strap. As the impact took place, momentum and bulk folded the pouch over the catcher arm and forced it into the loop near the door where the clerk could remove it.

As the catch was made, the clerk would throw off or "dispatch" a pouch of mail for local delivery. Timing was everything, as a poorly timed dispatch might wind up hitting a pedestrian, crashing through the station window, or getting lost in the trackside underbrush. If the dispatch fell short, the rush of air might pull it under the train to certain destruction. With the train passing at 70 or 80 mph, standing in the dispatch area wasn't a good idea!



Three photos by Don L. Hofsommer

The first step, once the pouch had been opened, involved applying a cancellation. As shown here aboard the Great Northern's *Empire Builder*, the clerk used a special stamp that identified the RPO route and imprinted the date.



Meanwhile, newspapers and various other large items were being sorted directly into open bags hanging on racks behind the table.



First-class mail was sorted into pigeon holes according to a very specific order for each RPO route. Clerks had to maintain a sorting proficiency with enough speed to pass regular tests.

Once aboard, the pouch was immediately opened and checked for items going to nearby towns (most postmasters banded the quick-sort items separately so they would make the proper dispatch). Cancellations were applied, and the mail was sorted into the various pouches and letter cases by destinations. The crew kept an eye on the train's schedule and watched for landmarks so they could have the next dispatch ready on time.

For security reasons, an RPO was normally the first occupied car behind the locomotive. Its doors were kept locked at all times, and the clerks were required to carry firearms "to protect the mails." Postal regulations prohibited entry by anyone who wasn't a post office employee, so even the train conductor couldn't enter the car.

Since crew members couldn't pass through a postal car, the RPO typically rode just ahead of the train's working baggage car. Express refrigerators and storage mail cars frequently rode ahead of the RPO because there was no need to have access to them en route.

from Gerry Carr

Few passenger trains ever carried more than one working RPO, though storage mail cars were common additions on major routes. Baggage cars were often used for storage mail movements, and as routes were canceled surplus RPOs were used for such traffic.

A few railroads ran solid mail trains between large cities such as Chicago and New York. Such trains carried heavy loads of storage mail with a couple of working RPOs, usually mid-train, and a rider coach or combine at the rear for the train crew. The RPOs were usually positioned with a loaded storage mail car at one end and an empty at the other. As the train raced along, the RPO crew would sort from the full car and "dispatch" into the empty. By the end of the run, the load would be ready for delivery to the local post offices.

Adding a suitable postal service to a model railroad is relatively easy as miniature RPO and baggage cars have been available since the early days of the hobby. They come in many carbody varieties and scales, so it's mostly a matter of choosing the car(s) that fit the desired era or train. Look closely at photo books about your favorite railroad to see what they used.

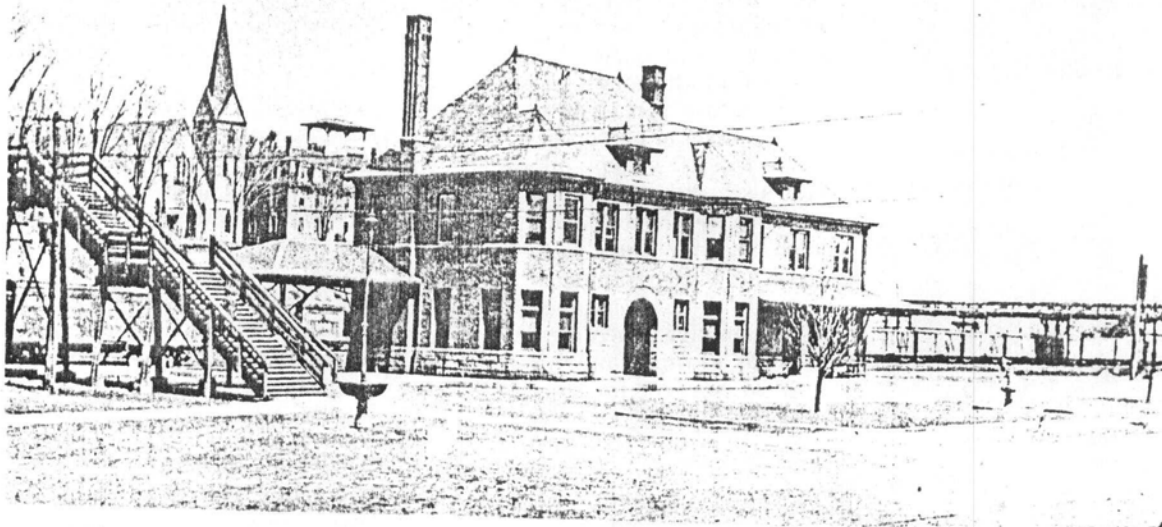
Just for the record, the last RPO trip was a New York-Washington run on the Penn Central that occurred on June 30, 1977. — *Jim Hediger*



T. H. & B. Express leaving the Tunnel, Hamilton, Canada

From Peter McCarthy -

G. T. R. Station, Island Pond, Vt.



CLOSED MAILS FOR NEWFOUNDLAND AND ST. PIERRE ET MIQUELON DISPATCHED FROM

BOSTON, MASS., ON Dec. 22 1936

At 7P M., To be forwarded by Bangor & Boston R.P.O. Tr. 261

		Number of Sacks	
From Post Office at	Addressed to Post Office At	Letters	Papers
Boston, Mass.,	St. Pierre et Miquelon	1	—

Received the above _____ sacks of letters and _____ sacks of papers at _____ M., _____ 1936.

NORTH SYDNEY
DEC 24 1936

myone
Mail Clerk Receiving

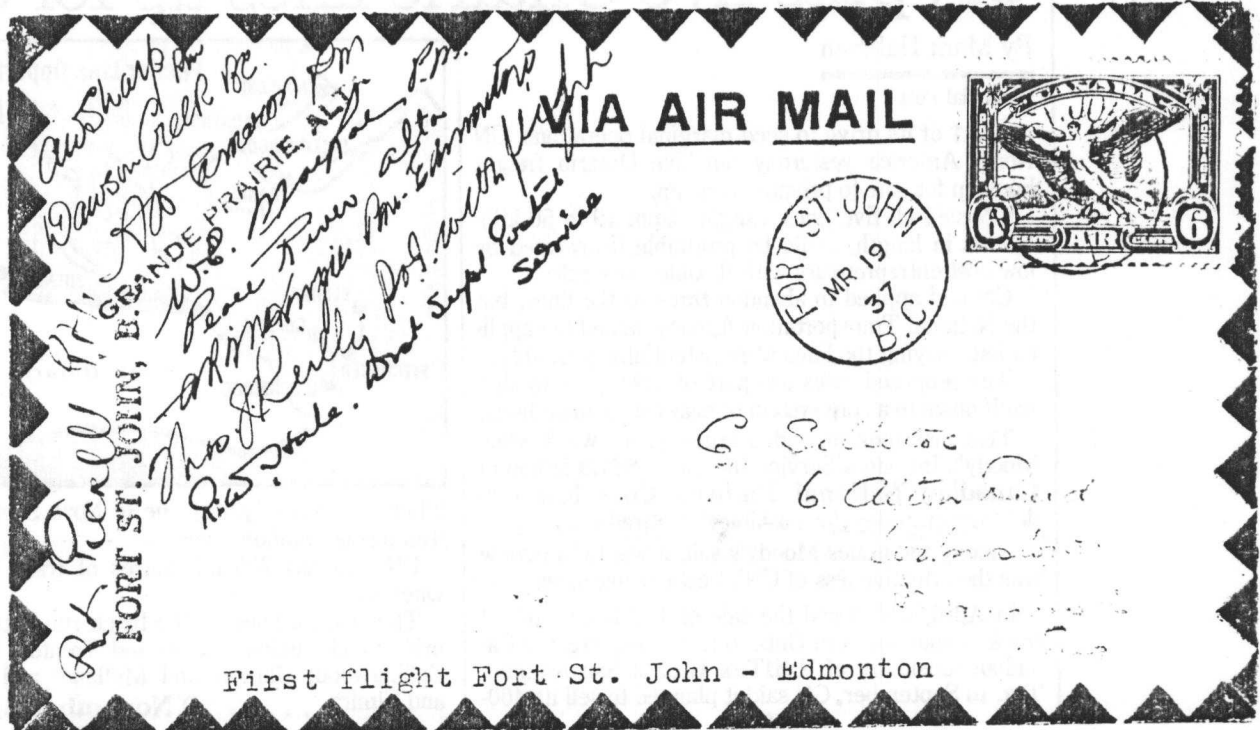
Kindly sign and Return to
Postmaster, Boston, Mass., Foreign
Section, by first dispatch.



Stans



See Page 10 of Issue No. 101 -



Note the signature of R.W.Hale, District Superintendent of Postal Services at Edmonton



G.W. Ross
**Postmaster
Royal Train**

H. C. Neal

10939- 81 ave

Edmonton

1-60 Alberta

Here is the signature of G.W.Ross, Postmaster on the Royal Train. So, who was A.B.Stewart ?

CN puts five Ontario lines up for sale

By Mark Hallman

Financial Post

AS PART of its drive to shed marginal operations, CN North America yesterday put five Ontario freight lines up for sale to private investors.

CN said all five lines, ranging from 19 to 50 kilometres in length, could be profitable if operated by low-cost entrepreneurs with flexible work rules.

CN had applied to abandon three of the lines, but the National Transportation Agency denied the applications, saying the lines were potentially profitable.

The proposed sales are part of CN's plan to slim itself down to a core system of heavy-duty main lines.

That task took on added urgency this week when Moody's Investors Service Inc. put US\$1.9 billion of Canadian National Railway Co.'s long-term debt under review for possible downgrade.

Among the issues Moody's said it wants to review was the effectiveness of CN's cost-cutting measures.

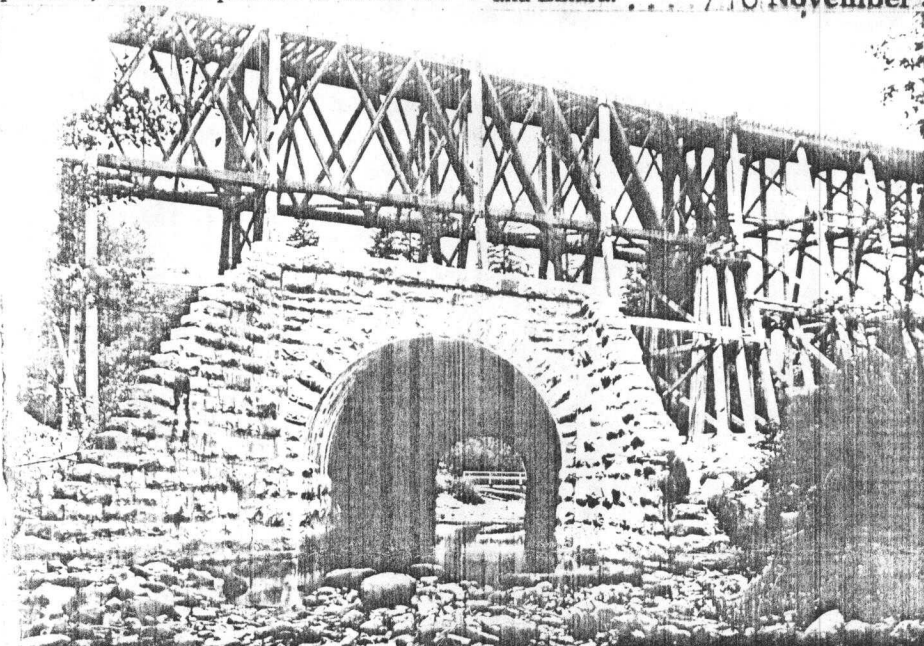
In April, CN closed the sale of 112 kilometres of track in southwestern Ontario to a newly created Canadian subsidiary of RailTex Inc. of San Antonio, Tex. In September, CN said it planned to sell its 400-



kilometre Truro-Sydney line in Nova Scotia to RailTex for \$20 million.

CN also has 200 kilometres of track for sale in Quebec.

The Ontario lines on the block run between Cambridge and Guelph; Picton and Trenton; Barrie and Collingwood; Uthoff and Midland; and Kitchener and Elmira. . . . /10 November 5, 1992



August 17, 1992 3

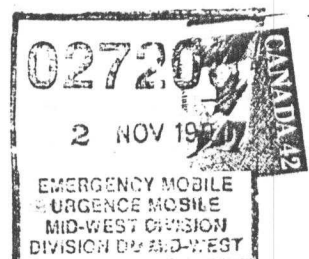
A New Listing - E-38, Type 35K, used at Headlingley, MB, Oct.-Nov.1992

CN to spin off 2 branch lines

Financial Post

MONTREAL — CN North America wants to sell two short-haul rail lines in the Quebec City region as part of its plan to create a leaner main line.

The government-owned railway wants to sell the 144-km. line running from its Limoilou yard in Quebec City northeast to Clermont, Que., and a 57-km. line from Limoilou to St-Raymond-de-Portneuf, west of Quebec City.



Tax reality may end short-line dream

Provincial taxes are unfairly high on branch lines, and the B.C. assessment policy means death to short-line freight operations, says John Meade of Revelstoke.

Along with a group of investment partners, he's trying to establish a small regional railway company, Boundary Transportation, in the North Okanagan.

At recent hearings of the Regional



by
Dawn Wickstrom
Daily News
Writer

Transportation Review Committee, Meade said the assessment of right-of-way, siding and branch line tax rates will either kill his dream, or allow the company to contribute to the area economy.

"We're trying to create an environment in which we can operate a railway," he said.

Meade pointed out that about 87 per cent of a railroad's costs are fix-

ed, and taxes account for the bulk of those fixed costs.

"In B.C. we have the highest tax rate in Canada per mile of track. Branch lines — the low-density track in areas like the North Okanagan, carry a disproportionate share of the burden," he pointed out.

"On a per-ton freight basis, railroad companies on a branch line pay 9.5 times the property tax on their main track.

They pay up to 25 times more for their right-of-way and sidings, than the tax rates on the high-density main lines between Alberta and the Coast."

Meade said regardless of whether the land where the track is laid, passes through the downtown core of a major city, or through "bush in the middle of nowhere," all land on rail right-of-way (main and branch lines) is assessed at \$2,150 per acre, and taxed accordingly.

The value of rail spurs, yard and auxiliary track, is \$62,000 per km. for both high-density main, and low-density branch, rail line systems.

Meade said the high-density main track is assessed at \$127,000 per km.

The "main" track of a branch line, such as the Okanagan rail line, is assessed at \$62,000 per km.

Meade said where it gets expensive, is when those assessments are matched up per ton of freight rolling over the rails. The track in the North Okanagan carries annual tonnage of only 2.5 million tons. There are about 240 km. of track, not counting the yard track, which is assessed at the same rate as main (between towns) track.

Meade said a total of about 54 million tons of freight annually passes over the high-density main lines operated by CN and CP Rail, between the coast and Alberta.

"Branch lines are carrying about four per cent of the equivalent tonnage of the high-density main lines, yet they're carrying 48.8 per cent of the tax burden. It just defies logic," Meade said.

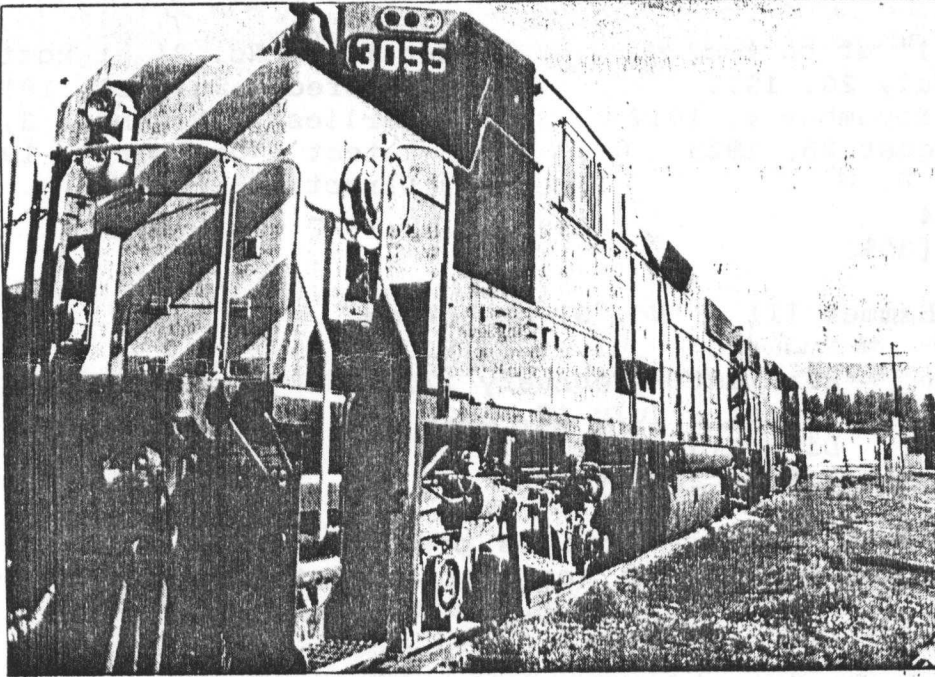
He said freight is a railway's sole source of revenue, and they compete against trucks, which don't pay an equivalent highway tax burden.

Out of \$4 million in expected gross revenues, Meade said Boundary Transportation will be required to pay a total of \$626,000 in property taxes on track and right-of-way. Meade said companies operating on the North Okanagan branch line are "just breaking even right now."

He said traffic on the track works out to 99 car loadings per mile of track, per year, and that number could drop to about 58 car loadings per mile of track per year, if there is a drop in forestry — and manufacturing — related freight. Meade added, truck freight rates are expected to go down by 25 per cent because of the Coquihalla Connector.

Meade said the U.S. experience, where hundreds of short-line rail companies operate, has shown that regional railways work. He added, 40 to 50 car loadings per km. of track per year are needed before the company can make a profit.

"The good thing about it, is that once you're clear of that margin, nearly all of what you earn is profit," he said. "All I want is a job, and the ability to provide work and help enhance the local economy."



TAXES on the sidings and auxiliary track in Vernon's rail yard is the same as the tax burden per mile on the North Okanagan branch line between communities. John Meade of

Revelstoke says the tax assessment on track is too expensive and it's one of the factors that will lead to the premature death of the local railway if government policy isn't changed.

(Daily News Photo)

24 KELLOWNA DAILY COURIER, Wednesday, March 6, 1991

Nostalgia buffs ride historic train

ST. THOMAS, Ont. (CP) — It's like taking a trip back through time.

A ride on the Port Stanley Terminal Railroad in southwestern Ontario takes a traveller back to a time when things were less hurried and more friendly.

It takes almost an hour to make the six-mile round trip from Port Stanley to Union and back but conductor Art Boyce never lets the time drag. He fills the hour with a running commentary about the historic London and Port Stanley Railroad and the route the train takes.

The first passenger train from Port Stanley to London began in 1856. The passenger service contin-

ued until 1957, when the Canadian National Railroad bought the Port Stanley to London run and discontinued passenger service.

In 1983, a group of volunteers, including Boyce and engineer Ed Smith, got together and opened the line from Port Stanley to Union. In 1990 the line was opened up to St. Thomas and the old rails carried the first passenger train from Port Stanley to St. Thomas in 33 years.

The first and only stop on a recent ride was at Union Station. "It's the smallest Union Station in North America," Boyce said, adding the tiny station near the village of Union, is the only one left of 23 that once stood between Port Stanley and London.

These items from Doug Hannan

LEWIS M. LUDLOW
5001 - 102 Lane N.E., Kirkland, Washington 98033, U.S.A.

W-129 Hammer Analysis
March 30, 1989

W-129 RIVERS & WATROUS R.P.O. / No., Type 17A, Three Hammers.

Hammer I - 'No. 1' at bottom
Proofed - July 20, 1917
Earliest - November 4, 1917
Latest - August 26, 1928
Direction - E, W
Train - 3, 4
R.F. - 230 [30%]

Hammer II - 'No. 2' at bottom
Proofed - July 20, 1917
Earliest - November 3, 1917
Latest - October 3, 1928
Direction - E, W
R.F. - 230 [30%]

Hammer III - 'No. 3' at bottom
Proofed - July 20, 1917
Earliest - February 17, 1919
Latest - July 17, 1928
Direction - E
R.F. - 230 [40%]

Comments - The hammer dating above is preliminary and we expect that there will be extensions of the earliest and latest on the individual hammers; however, current earliest and latest recorded for the listing are included above.

If you have only the top of the strike and no 'No.' can be seen at the bottom, it is still quite easy to separate these three hammers:

1. Measure the chordal distance from the bottom of the 'I' to the bottom of the second leg of the second 'R', both of 'RIVERS'; Hammer I is distinctly less than 5 mm while Hammers II and III are noticeably more than 5 mm.
2. Measure the distance from the left leg of the second 'R' of 'RIVERS' to the bottom of the second leg of 'W' of 'WATROUS'; a chord of 7 3/4 mm, almost 8 mm, is Hammer II, while a chord of 7 mm clean is Hammer III. [Hammer I is only 6 1/2 mm for this chord.]

If any study group members can provide new data on these three hammers, please send same to the Newsletter Editor, with a photocopy of the strike involved. Train '5' has been confirmed but the hammer for it is currently unknown.

This hammer analysis was done specifically for Jack White. If any other member has a specific listing he would like to have analyzed, just drop a note and we will do so pronto.

Lewis M. Ludlow (Found in Lew's papers, not previously published)

Does anyone have anything for Special Issue #100 ?

W.G. Robinson
5830 Cartier St.
Vancouver, B.C.
V6M 3A7

Bill