

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

THE R.P.O. NEWSLETTER

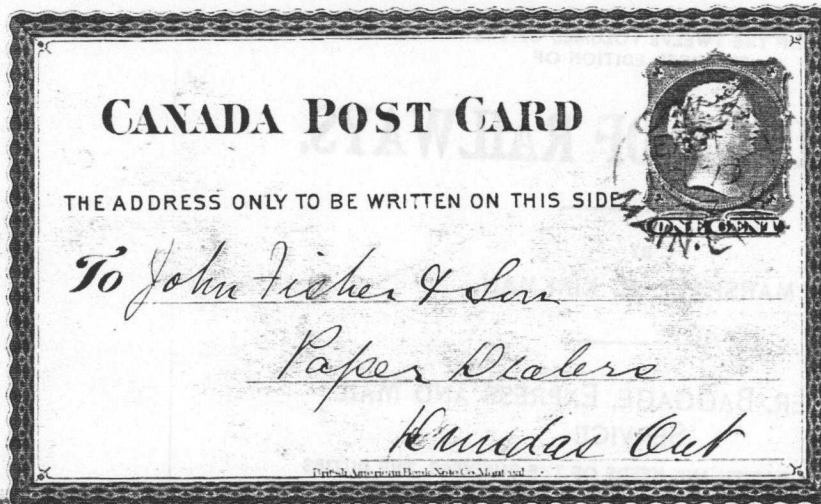
OF THE CANADIAN R.P.O. STUDY GROUP (B.N.A.P.S.)

Volume 27 - No.4

Whole No.141

April, 1999

A NEW RAILWAY LISTING - Brian Stalker has just reported an interesting find - a variety of RR-73 - G.W.R./MAIL LINE. His copy, on the postcard shown below, clearly says MAIN LINE, and is dated March 19, 1877. There are no existing proofs of either hammer, and the run is reported from April 15, 1873 to December 22, 1886. All of your Editor's examples are from the later period, showing MAIL clearly as shown in the June 10, 1886 example below.



G.W.R./MAIN LINE - RR-73A, First Report, March 19, 1877.

If not called for in Ten days return to
NOXON BROS. MANUF'G CO.

(LIMITED.)
INGERSOLL, - - ONT.
MANUFACTURERS OF

LIGHT LOW DOWN TWINE BINDERS, MOWERS
REAPERS, RAKES, HOOSIER GRAIN
DRILLS AND SEEDERS.



G.W.R./MAIL LINE - RR-73, Normal Report, June 10, 1886.

Please check your copies closely and report full indicia for all examples of either listing to the Editor as soon as possible.

PASSENGER, BAGGAGE, EXPRESS
AND MAIL SERVICE.

FORMING ONE OF THE TWELVE VOLUMES OF THE REVISED AND
ENLARGED EDITION OF

THE SCIENCE OF RAILWAYS.

BY

MARSHALL M. KIRKMAN.

PASSENGER, BAGGAGE, EXPRESS AND MAIL
SERVICE.

DESCRIBES THE GROWTH AND NEEDS OF THE BUSINESS, THE DUTIES
AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CARRIERS, AND THE THEORIES AND
PRINCIPLES THAT GOVERN THEM. IT ALSO INCLUDES AN
ACCOUNT OF THE RULES AND REGULATIONS NECES-
SARY TO SECURE ACCURACY AND CLEARNESS IN
THE FISCAL AFFAIRS AND ACCOUNTS OF THESE
IMPORTANT DEPARTMENTS OF THE SERVICE.

VOLUME V.

CHICAGO:

THE WORLD RAILWAY PUBLISHING COMPANY

1904

MAIL SERVICE OF RAILWAYS.

553

never be the same for any considerable time on the same road. Rates, therefore, for handling mails must not only be peculiar to the road to be entirely fair, but must possess flexibility proportionate to vicissitudes of service.

In the United States the rate allowed by the government is based on the average weight of the mails, including postal supplies, mail bags, sacks, stationery, etc., transported the whole length of the route.* To enable the government and the railroad company to know what the weight is, the postoffice department weighs the mails as often as once in four years. When this service is performed, the process of weighing must continue on that mail route for at least thirty consecutive working days. The average thus determined is the basis of compensation for the succeeding four years, or until a new adjustment occurs.

It has been suggested that the rates shall be based on the number of lineal feet furnished the postoffice department. Under such an arrangement compensation could be re-adjusted from time to time with much less cost and labor than at present.

In this connection the understanding of the railroad companies with the express lines is interesting. The latter pay an agreed sum based on the privileges enjoyed. These privileges are

* For this purpose the lines of every company are divided by the postoffice department into routes, which correspond as nearly as possible with the divisions made by the company for the operation of trains.

CHAPTER III.

MAIL SERVICE OF RAILWAYS: ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN RAILWAYS AND THE GOVERNMENT; BASIS OF COMPENSATION TO RAILWAYS; POSTAL ROUTES, FAST MAILS, ETC.

No satisfactory basis of compensation for carrying the mails has been devised. The obstacle is the impossibility of ascertaining the cost of carriage. If this could be determined, the percentage of profit that it would be fair to allow the railroad company would be the only thing left to determine. This would be easy. But, unfortunately, there is no means of separating the cost of passenger and freight trains, respectively, and in the event this could be determined, another difficulty would still remain, namely, cost is directly dependent upon weight, speed of trains and condition of the property. The peculiarities of each line must be remembered and each train must be separately considered. Upon no two lines is the cost of operating and maintaining the same, and no arrangement can be considered equitable that ignores this.*

Not only is the cost of operating never relatively the same upon different lines, but it can

* This question is considered in the Book, "Constructing, Financing and Maintaining."

(552)

the transportation of fixed quantities of matter, including valuables and the carriage of attendants; a certain allotment of space is allowed on each train; in the event the tonnage agreed upon is exceeded, the charge is increased. In every case the price paid by the express company is a matter of negotiation and agreement.

The facilities enjoyed by the postoffice department correspond very closely with those of express companies, and the methods of handling the affairs of the latter afford many suggestions for arriving at an equitable basis for handling the mails.

Arrangements between the railroad companies and the postoffice department in the United States are not equitable. In many cases the rights of the carrier are not considered at all, or only generally.

He is told, arbitrarily, the price, and is left the poor privilege of accepting it or of arraying himself against the law-making power, and, inferentially, against the People! He has no recourse, and the government appears unable to see in the arrangement anything that smacks of dishonesty. In the first instance, it fixes the rate it will pay without consulting the carrier, and, naturally, it arrogates to itself the right afterward to change the rate thus made whenever it thinks proper.*

*In 1876 (act of July) the government arbitrarily made a reduction of ten per cent. in the rate of compensation allowed railroad companies. In 1878 (act of June) the rate of compensation was still further reduced five per cent.

The law determining the rate of compensation for transporting the mails makes no distinction between the cost of working different properties. It bases the rate on the weight of matter carried, without reference to other considerations. If the property of the carrier costs little and can be worked cheaply, good! If it costs a great deal and requires a large outlay to operate and maintain, it is all the same! It is a law of averages where averages are valueless.

However slow and uncertain in other things the government may be, it is quick to recognize the fact that it is possible to conduct a large business at relatively less cost than a small business; acting upon this knowledge, but without knowing the relations, it sharply reduces rates for the transportation of the mail as the tonnage is increased. According to the rate of reduction, the price for transporting five thousand pounds daily is only four times greater than for transporting two hundred pounds! In other words, the compensation allowed, compared with the amount carried, increases as four to twenty-five. In what manner, or by whom, this basis was arrived at, I do not know.

The details of the service are very simple, so far as the carrier is concerned, the work of opening and distributing the mails and watching after their safety en route being performed wholly by the officials of the government. At all terminal points, unless otherwise provided for by the government, the carrier is required to carry the mails

back and forth between the postoffice and the station. For this labor he is allowed the same rate per mile that he receives for carriage on his line proper. The cost, however, is much greater, for the reason that he must make special arrangements in each instance.* At local postoffices on the line of a railroad the carrier is required to carry the mails back and forth, without compensation, between the station and postoffice when they are not more than eighty rods apart; when the distance is over eighty rods, carriage is performed by the government.

In reference to the carriage of mails between stations and postoffices, an equitable arrangement requires that the service should be considered by itself, and a rate of compensation agreed upon commensurate with the expenses incurred in each instance. It does not properly form a part of the duty of carriers and should not be attached as a rider to the service required of them.

In defining the facilities that railroad companies shall provide, the law directs "That the mails shall be conveyed with due frequency and speed; and that sufficient and suitable room, fixtures and furniture, in a car or apartment properly lighted and warmed, shall be provided for route agents to accompany and distribute the mails."[†]

* An official of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad claimed that that company was compelled to pay \$1,800 for carrying the mails back and forth at Louisville, while it received only \$150 from the government.

† Law of 1875.

In addition to the compensation allowed for transporting the mails, based upon weight, an additional allowance is made, according to the importance of the route and the number of times the mails are carried, for what are known as postoffice cars.*

The rate for transporting the mails covers the transportation of the agents in charge of the service, also all special agents and inspectors of the postoffice department.

In the event the carrier fails at any time to transport the mail as required, or fails to deliver it on schedule time at points where mail connections are made with other routes or carriers, and connections are thereby missed, a deduction proportionate to the delinquency is made by the postoffice department from the carrier's pay. Fines are also imposed for failure to promptly carry the mail back and forth between stations and postoffices, and for other delinquencies. Deductions and fines are made directly from the carrier's pay when settlement is made, but the postoffice department allows the carrier to file applications for the remission of fines and deductions.

For delays which, in the judgment of the postoffice department, are occasioned by causes beyond the carrier's control, remissions are made.

It is the contention of the government that the interests of the postal service imperatively

* However, if the cars are less than forty feet in length, inside measurement, no extra compensation is allowed.

require these deductions and fines to be made; that the postal service is so interwoven with the schedules of trains that the non-maintenance of the latter demoralizes the former, and that only by means of fines and deductions can railways be induced to put forth sufficient effort to maintain a reasonable standard of service. This argument, however specious, is not tenable. With but few exceptions the mail service is performed on regular passenger trains, and the interests of the railways require that every practicable means be employed at all times to move trains according to published schedules. That such means are employed is indisputable, and no system of fines can improve matters.

As already intimated, it is necessary, to secure remission of fines and deductions, that causes for delay shall be beyond the carrier's control. The postoffice department decides as to the reasonableness of the excuse. Unfortunately, however, for the carrier, the department's list of excusable causes does not embrace many inseparable from the operation of railways. But as the statutes make the postoffice department the arbitrator, the carrier has no recourse.

While the postoffice department is, in the main, fair and reasonable in its interpretations, it cannot from the very nature of the case be just in all cases. Another objection is, in the preparation of evidence asking for remission of fines and deductions, the carrier is put to great expense. The information furnished must be minute in

every particular and supplemented by the oaths of parties familiar with the case. Not only is the expense considerable, but, meanwhile, the carrier is unavoidably deprived of his money.

The government settles with carriers quarterly, for the calendar year, for services performed. Payment is usually made by draft on a sub-treasurer of the United States. Formerly carriers were required to collect balances due the postoffice department from postmasters along their lines and apply the same upon the amount due from the government. But this arrangement, which was once a great annoyance and a considerable expense, has happily been changed.

In the discussions of economists, the question often recurs why the government should take charge of the handling of letters and newspapers, any more than it should take charge of the food of the community.

The great number of those engaged in transporting the mail in earlier times rendered it impossible to harmonize their interests so as to make a homogeneous service independent of the supervision of the government. It was necessary, moreover, that this homogeneity should extend as well to the international service. It is quite as essential that the people should be able to send letters to points in other countries as it is that they should be able to reach local stations. The arrangements between governments permit this.

560 PASSENGER, BAGGAGE, MAIL SERVICE.

The present customs of the postal service are the natural outgrowth of these earlier conditions.

So far as cost is concerned, there is no doubt the service could be performed much cheaper by private persons than by the government.

That part of the postal service connected with railroads is a supreme factor in social economy. Those in charge, the officials, should be men of exceptional ability. The nature of the duties requires that attendants should be of robust health, vigilant and industrious; men of experience and filled with generous pride in the efficiency of the service. This last only comes to those long associated with the service. Men whose position depends upon extraneous causes never have this feeling. For this reason those connected with the mail service should hold their positions during good behavior, with the promise of a pension when too old to work.

The postal service of railways is especially dangerous. This fact, and the fact that it requires men of experience and character, emphasize the need that when misfortune overtakes those in the service or when, through disability, they are no longer able to work, the government should take up the task of looking after their welfare.

The English make a much fuller use of their postal arrangements than the people of America. However, the latter are improving in this respect. On the continent all kinds of packages are sent by mail. In England a very effective money order system is connected with the mail service;

EVERY RAILWAY A POSTAL ROUTE. 561

also general postal savings banks, which allow a small rate of interest on deposits. We have an effective system of registering valuable packages sent by mail; also of money orders or drafts. The savings bank feature we lack, and so long as our civil service is a floating one its success would be problematical.

Every railway is a postal route. In early days mail and baggage were thrown together indiscriminately in the car. In the transportation of mails the government contracts directly with the carrier. The attendants are usually the employees of the government. In some cases, however, they are also in the service of the carrier. In such instances the custodian is sworn in as an agent of the government.

The system of distributing the mail in the cars while en route is of recent origin. It greatly facilitates rapid movement. By this means the mails for various districts and connections are separated en route. Thus, when the mail reaches Chicago, that which goes to points beyond has been assorted, so that no delay occurs. This is rendered literally true by the fact that the time tables of connecting lines are usually so arranged that the arrival and departure of connecting trains are coincident.

While the tenure of office in the postoffice department in the United States is not, on the whole, what could be desired, yet in some branches civil service rules are applied and examinations and promotions carried on with

more or less precision. These arrangements will in time, it is probable, be applied to the whole service.

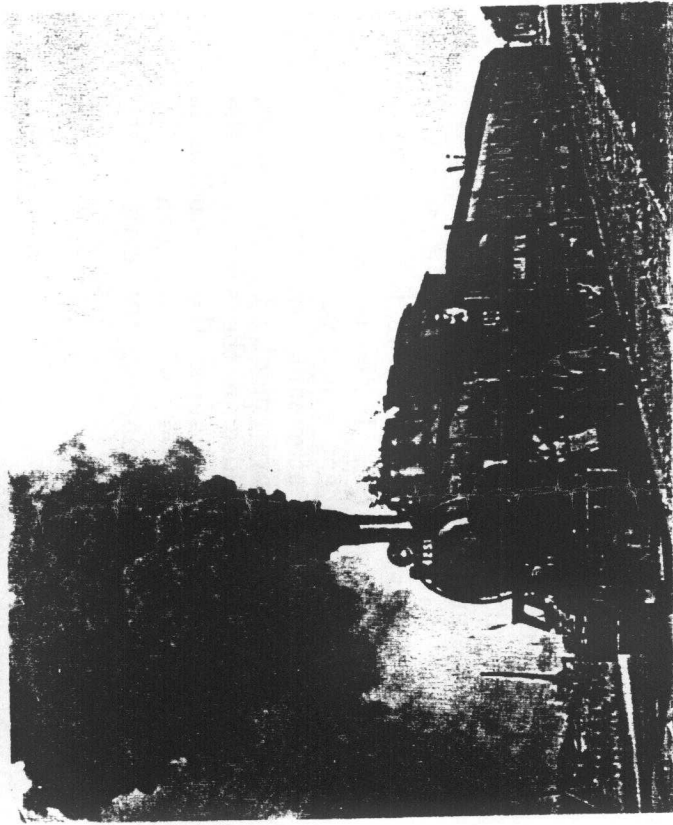
The fast mail in America is an outgrowth of the system of distributing mails en route. One idea has led on to another. However, the development of the railway postal service is altogether due to the generosity of the carrier. The government has rarely dealt fairly with the railway companies. It has acted the part of the Big Boy at school, who cuffs the little fellows and occasionally robs them of their dinners.

In the operations of business, some of the postal cars are devoted wholly to newspapers; others to miscellaneous matter.

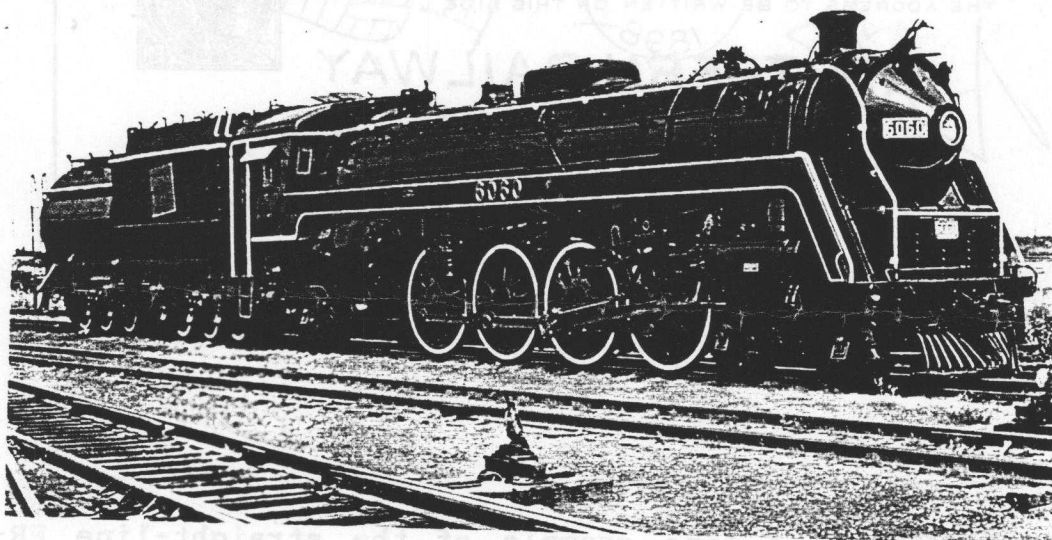
Postal cars are provided with tables, racks, boxes, pigeon holes, hooks and other furniture, such as the service requires. The number of attendants depends upon the quantity of matter to be handled. These attendants must possess fine clerical capacity and wide acquaintance with the geography of the country. They must be able to determine at a glance the most expeditious route of every letter or package they handle. This knowledge can only be fully attained by prolonged and laborious study.

The postal cars of railroads, like those used for baggage, are strongly constructed, so as to withstand the exposed place they occupy in the train. They are also furnished with every facility ingenuity can suggest to aid the escape of inmates in case of fire, derailment or other accident.

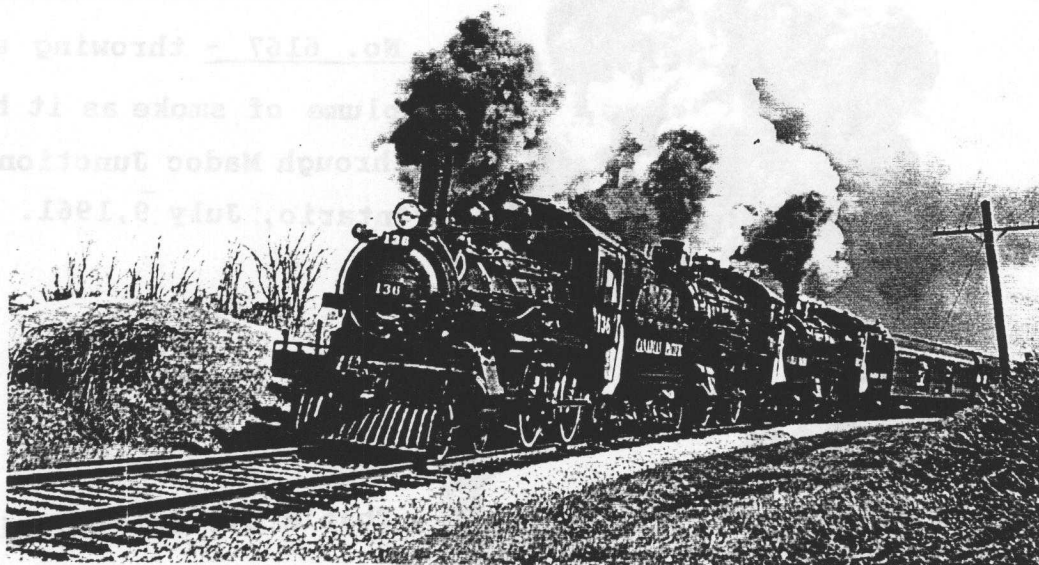
Many mishaps occur, however, notwithstanding these precautions. For this reason the government should take the same care of those disabled in the service that it does of those wounded in battle. There is no distinction between a soldier disabled in the defense of his country and a railway postal servant maimed while in the performance of a dangerous duty.



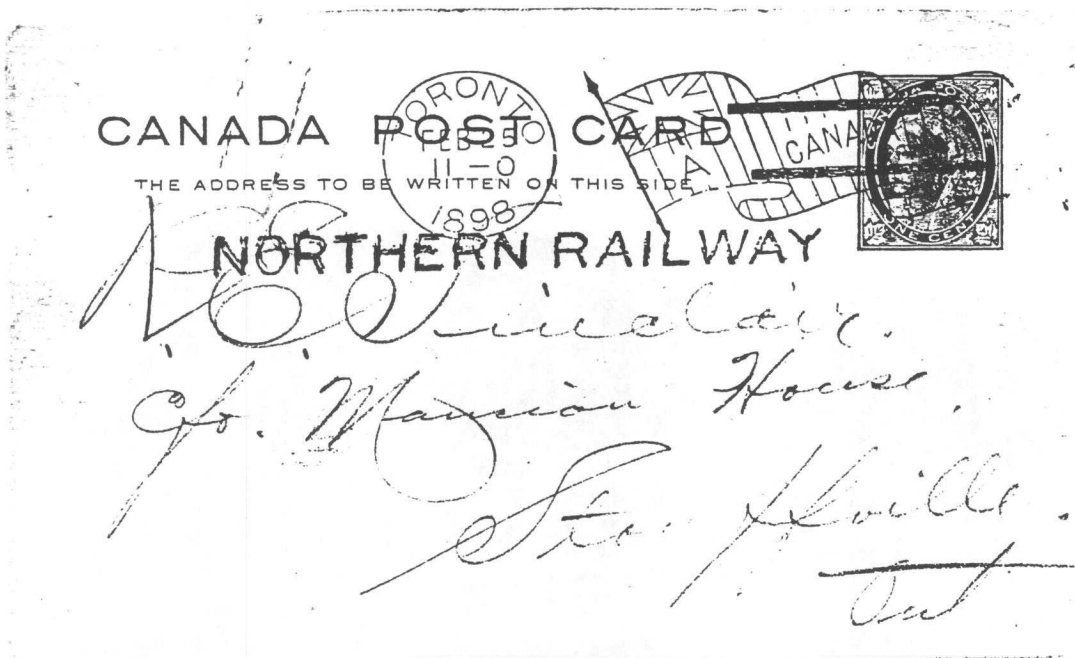
CANADIAN PACIFIC LOCOMOTIVE No. 425 - leaving Campbell's Bay on the Waltham to Ottawa passenger run, September, 1959.



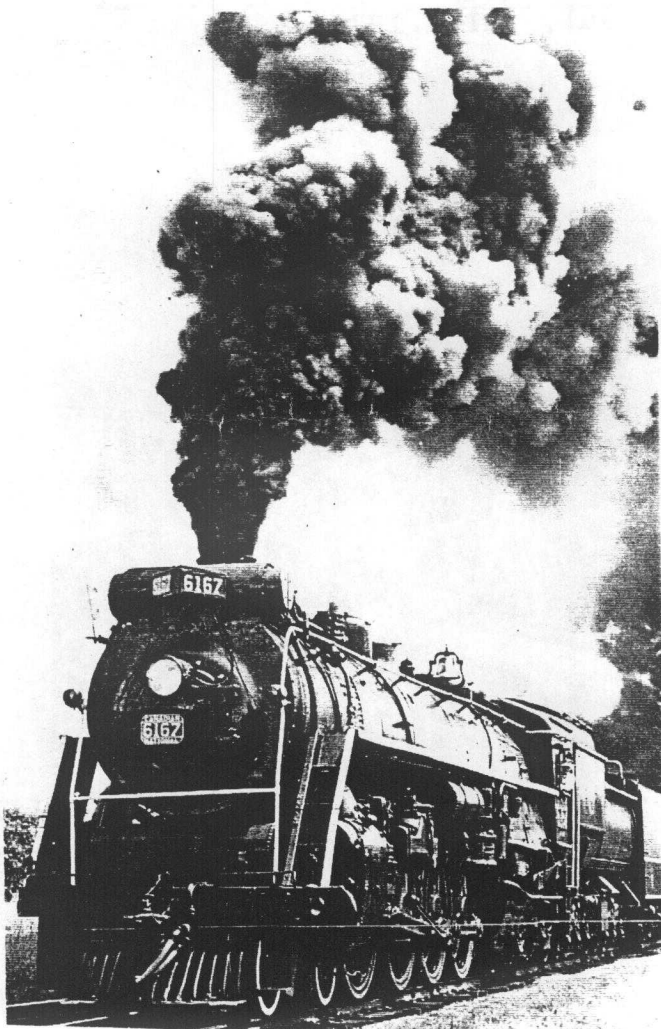
CANADIAN NATIONAL LOCOMOTIVE No. 6060 - At Point St. Charles shops,
Montreal, after major overhaul, July, 1973.



CANADIAN PACIFIC LOCOMOTIVE No.136 - Heading three locomotives on
a special trip near Orangeville, Ontario, May 1, 1960.



NORTHERN RAILWAY - A fine example of the straight-line RR-108 during the Map Stamp period.



CANADIAN NATIONAL LOCOMOTIVE

No. 6167 - throwing a fine plume of smoke as it highballs through Madoc Junction, Ontario, July 9, 1961.

That's all for this issue.

Bill

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