

TRAX

NEWSLETTER OF THE SUDBURY NORTHERN RAILROAD

February - 2006

February, 2006 Meeting

There will not be a February meeting of the SNRC. Mike Svos had planned to have the meeting at the Hobby Depot, but will be out of town at that time. None of the members who have not held meetings in the last decade stepped forward to fill the void.

January, 2006 Meeting

The December meeting of the Sudbury Northern Railroad Club was held at Al Melanson's home on Tuesday, Jan. 10th, 2006. SNRC members thank Al for his hospitality.

Meeting Schedule - 2006

Jan.	Al Melanson - held meeting
Feb. nothing scheduled
Mar.	Garth Harris
Apr.	Dick/Richard Gattoni
May	Mike Svos
Sept nothing scheduled
Oct. nothing scheduled
Nov. <u>Train Show</u>
Dec. nothing scheduled

SNRC Club News

Who Does What in 2006

The individuals listed at the end of the TRAX newsletter continue to perform the same duties in 2006. Mike Svos continues to look after the un-rewarding job of organizing meeting locations; Garth Harris fills the treasurer's position, taking the dues and looking after the books. Al Stacey continues putting together the TRAX newsletter. Not listed below is Trevor Ross who has done a super job getting an all-clubs website up and running. Once a suitable transfer method is arrived at, Trevor will be putting the current and back issues of TRAX on-line.

Membership List

Enclosed with this month's TRAX is the 2006 Membership List. Please let the Editor know if there are any corrections required. The continued brow-beating of the last two years appears to have paid off as all of last year's members met the deadline for handing in their dues. Treasurer Garth Harris was able to provide the list of paid-up members in time for the membership list to be sent with the February TRAX.

New Member

The Sudbury Northern Railway Club welcomes new member Robert

Lachance. Robert's address is included in the 2006 membership list.

Member Back in the Fold

SNRC old-timers will remember Val Crosswell from North Bay who often, along with other North Bay-ites, made the trek down to the occasional meeting in Sudbury. Val has re-joined the Club to see what's going on in this neck of the woods. Good to have Val back as he will be able to pass on Sudbury clubs doings to the Gateway City boys and they can let us know what they are up to. Maybe SNRC should trek over there in the Spring and check out the rail activity. Welcome back, Val.

Familiar Faces Back to the Meetings

Eldon and Bruce Emmerson re-upped for 2006. Great to have them back at the meetings.

Modular News

Mike Svos tells "TRAX" he is in the process of compiling membership lists of those club members who may be in one or more clubs (SNRC, Modular, N-Trak) and who has paid their respective dues. It appears there are some individuals who are under the impression that one membership is sufficient to cover all clubs. If you have been gobbling donuts in another club for free, now is the time to get right with the big guy.

Rail News in General

For Want of a Nail...

A recent article in the financial news reports that Canadian Pacific Railway's bottom line may take a hit from lack of tires. At first one might wonder what sort of rolling stock would still have replaceable steel tires heat shrunk in place, as was the practice with steam locomotives of times past. As it turns out, the tires are rubber and never see 120 pound rail other than being carried as freight. It appears there is a world-wide shortage of the large tires used for earthmovers and other heavy mining equipment. How does this affect CPR? Much of the success of CPR's bottom line is tied to the transport of bulk coal out in Western Canada. No tires for open pit trucks results in reduced shipments of coal and less profit for the railway.

New Books. New Books

A book written in 1947 doesn't really qualify as a new book, but this classic should be in the library of everyone interested in Canadian railways and rail history. "When the Steel Went Through", by P. Turner Bone is an autobiography of a railway civil engineer who spent considerable time working on the western portions of the Canadian Pacific Railway during construction.

Born in Ayrshire, Scotland and schooled there he eventually arrived in Canada in 1882 and took up employment on the construction of the Ontario and Quebec Railway. From there he was

called to the West by some of the O&Q staff who had previously moved on to work on the CPR.

Bone includes an interesting description of railway construction in the 1880's, from surveying, planning and location layout. In a few words, the objective is to take the stuff from the high spots and fill in the low spots without taking too much or ending up with too much, keeping a workable grade and easy curves.

One of Bone's more humorous narratives involves an incident while carrying out some drafting. Some of the local Indians started to hang around in Bone's office a bit too much interfering with his work. While they were gone he rigged up a buffalo skull with a hidden string that would work the jaw. The next time the office was over-populated with Indians, Bone worked the string to set the jaw chattering. The room was vacated in an instant.

"When the Steel Went Through" might be found at the library or, if lucky, at a used book store.

From the Distant Past

Today's locomotive engineers sit up in an air-conditioned safety cab with all of the latest technology at their finger tips. The life of a steam locomotive engineer in the 1800's was considerably less comfortable. From a Toronto newspaper* of August, 1882 a story is told of hardships endured by one crew of a freight train.

Engineer Gibson and fireman Little left Toronto during the dark of night with a Northern Railway freight for Gravenhurst. Gibson's charge was not an ordinary locomotive from the pool, but one on which the company had installed a new experimental spark arrester** on the stack. Apparently the spark arrester had not worked properly on another engine and it was suspected that the engine itself was at fault. Gibson and Little were going out with the arrester on their engine to give it another try.

All went well until they reached McFee's grade, a heavy grade between Hawkstone (about 7 miles south of Orillia) and Orillia, when all of a sudden the "furnace door was blown violently open, and a sheet of flame filled the cab." When they reached the next station Gibson found that the screen over the arrester had become plugged with small cinders over which soot had also settled, preventing a proper draught on the boiler. Also as a result, the exhaust of steam from the cylinders had nowhere to exit and as a result pressurized the firebox causing the door to blow open. After cleaning the screening Gibson and Little headed off for the remainder of the trip to Gravenhurst, arriving at 11 PM.

The next day's departure was delayed for some time as there had been a smash-up on the wharf and it wasn't until four in the afternoon that the mess was cleaned up and they were able to leave. Just south of Orillia on the same McFee's grade Gibson later reported that "the exhaust stopped just as though I had shut her off. From the Toronto "Mail":

"Just about this time the firebox door again blew open

accompanied with a blinding flash of flame and "a shower of red hot coals was driven out like so much grapeshot." Little, the fireman, was in the tender at that moment and missed the blast, but Gibson was not so lucky. He was trapped in his seat and failed in his attempt to open the forward window in the cab and escape out onto the running board. Getting back to the tender was out of the question. The locomotive was still running at twenty miles an hour propelled by the momentum of the train and causing the free-wheeling cylinders to act as air pumps blasting a continuous stream of flames out the firebox door. Gibson then tried the side window and by climbing out and resting with one arm on the roof of the cab, he was enabled to prevent his body from being burnt. One foot, however, was inside, and though protected by the boot, was badly burnt. During all this time he held bravely on to the lever until one of his fingers was almost burnt through, and he could hold on no longer. He had not sufficient power, from the position in which he was in, to shut off the steam, and the engine kept rattling along at about the same speed. Gibson feeling that he was growing weaker every minute determined to make an effort to reach the tender, as his clothes were being burnt off him. Closing his eyes, therefore, he again entered the cab, rushed through the smoke, and, lifting the cover from the tank, plunged in."

When he came out of the tank he found had been burned considerably, but was able to instruct Little to check the water gauge and also to see if the injector was working properly. As these were, the engine was reversed back to Orillia where Gibson was attended by a doctor with a reasonable prognosis for a recovery.

The paper notes that Gibson's action likely prevented the freight from colliding with a scheduled northbound express. Gibson had been an engineer with the Northern Railway for twelve years and had previously served in the British navy on board the "Excellent".

* Toronto "Mail", Monday, August 14, 1882

** an excellent book on the development of the steam locomotive is "A History of The American Locomotive - Its Development: 1830-1880", by John H. White, Jr., Dover Publications, reprinted from the 1968 original. Showing all aspects of development of the North American steam locomotive, there is a section on smokestacks and spark arresters, with a page depicting 57 different spark arresters.

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Deadline for submissions to TRAX, the 15th of the month.

Take a youngster train-watching today.