

TRAX

NEWSLETTER OF THE SUDBURY NORTHERN RAILROAD

March - 2006

March, 2006 Meeting

Garth Harris has volunteered to host the March meeting of the Sudbury Northern Railroad (SNRC) on **Tuesday**, Mar. 14, 2006, at 7:30 PM. Instructions to reach Garth's house at 4436 Noel Crescent in Val Therese are: drive north on Hwy 69 North (as it used to be known) through Val Caron, past Dominion Drive and, just before the highway curves sharply to the right (east) at the Pizza Hut, turn right (east) on Shirley, right on Dee and onto Noel Crescent. Garth's phone number is 969-8158 if you get lost.

February, 2006 Meeting

No meeting was held in February due to lack of interest.

Meeting Schedule - 2006

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

Upcoming Events (see below for further details)

Sudbury Modular exhibits at Pioneer Manor..... May 14 & 15, 2006
Midland Railway Club 18th Annual Train Show..... May 27 & 28, 2006

SNRC Club News

Free Swag - Maybe

SNRC member Dale Wilson relates that he had a call from Ray Squires, a former member, who has some videos which have been converted from 8mm movies, as well as a book on Pennsylvania Railway operations. Dale says Ray will give them to anyone who wants them and presumes they are free for the picking up. Ray's phone number is 566-4937.

Long-Time Member

Next month's TRAX will have an update on long-time member Albert Delongchamp's whereabouts.

Correction on 2006 Membership List

Trevor Ross's phone number is 983 - 9602, not as shown.

Modular News (courtesy Richard Lefebvre)

The Modular Club has a new member, Kerry Leach, who joined

about the end of January.

The Modular Club will again set up at Pioneer Manor for the 2006 Mother's Day weekend, May 14th and 15th. Last year's presentation was much appreciated by the residents. Members of all the local model railway clubs are encouraged to drop by and view the layout and lend a helping hand. Our seniors largely helped to make Canada the country it is and deserve a show of interest and a few words.

The Club presented a framed photograph to the Pioneer Manor management showing six club members and a resident with his daughter and son-in-law posing in front of the layout.

The Midland Railway Club is holding their 18th Annual Train Show in Midland, Ontario on May 27th and 28th. Some of the Midland club came up to the Sudbury show last November and viewed some of the local layouts. Richard says he will have further details and thinks it would be nice if some of the Sudbury folks reciprocate by going down to their show. A van may be arranged. Watch TRAX for details.

Richard says there will be a new exhibitor at the Train Show this Fall.

Rail News in General

CN Mints Money

From the Toronto "Star" business section it is learned that Canadian National Railway Co. has had a successful fourth quarter in 2005 with a 14% increase in profits. Shares will split two for one, always a sign of a profitable operations. Contributing to the bottom line was the addition of BC Rail and Great Lakes Transportation divisions in 2004. Partnerships with Burlington Northern and Santa Fe will improve the container traffic at the port of Vancouver.

CP Stumbles

Tough times at Canadian Pacific Railway have resulted in several staff cuts.

In Bed Together

In another example of the cosy relations between two rivals when the almighty dollar rears its head, CNR and CPR are agreeing to share trackage in British Columbia in order to improve efficiency.

Direct to destination trains will operate into the lower B.C. mainland starting near Hope, B.C. eliminating railway-to-railway delivery closer to Vancouver. CN crews Vancouver-bound for grain terminals on the south shore of Burrard Inlet will hand over their trains to CP crews near Boston Bar, 200 kilometers east of Vancouver, while CP trains heading to port facilities on the north shore will turn over their trains to CN crews at the same point.

Doc of the Bay

Just before he left for the sunny south in Florida, Al

Melanson left a few bits of local rail news.

- INCo has now taken over the Nickel Sub and the red rovers now go out to Creighton mine. The CPR are responsible up to Clarabelle station

- The Budd car had a spot of trouble recently during the heavy snowfalls. Apparently the Budd's are not too good at ploughing out their own pathways and Doc said the crew left the Budd at the station until conditions were improved.

- The recent heavy snowfalls have caused havoc in the CP yards as front-end loaders try to move the snow from one place to another.

- A de-railment of 15 cars loaded with steel on the CPR south of Mactier resulted in traffic being backed up for four days.

- The bi-directional running is in place with south-bound traffic going on CN trackage as far as South Parry, while north-bound comes up on CP trackage. (TRAX would appreciate a more detailed description of the mechanics of this arrangement for inclusion in an up-coming TRAX)

Thanks to Doc for this news.

New Books. New Books

First. A Correction

In last month's TRAX 'New Books, New Books' the Editor of TRAX made a blunder, likely the first ever, in part of the description of "When The Steel Went Through" by P. Turner Bone. The story of the clacking skull came from this month's book and is related below.

This month's book is "Tales of a Pioneer Surveyor", by Charles Aeneas Shaw, edited by Raymond Hull and published in 1970 by Longman Canada.

Shaw was born in 1853 in Oak Hill outside of Toronto on the family farm. He passed his surveying exams at age 23. At that time the tests went from Monday morning to Saturday evening. Shaw was the only candidate out of sixteen who tried the test and passed.

Prior to getting his ticket Shaw apprenticed in both the Thunder Bay area (1872) and around the French River (1875 - 1877). These surveys were related to Prime Minister Mackenzie's land/water route for the Canadian Pacific Railway and superseded by the route proposed and carried out by Prime Minister John A. Macdonald.

Following receiving his ticket Shaw worked his way west on various surveys related to the CPR's westward construction. The story of the skull is told here in Shaw's words:

"The Indians were insatiably curious about my work, and would crowd into the office and stand behind me, silent and intent, watching my every move. Their gaze was disconcerting, and the smell of their unwashed bodies utterly revolting, yet I hesitated to incur their resentment by ordering them out. Then, one day, I found a perfect human skull, bleached by the sun. After fastening on the lower jaw with leather hinges I nailed the skull to the wall above my work table, and ran a concealed string to a hidden treadle

underneath. When my uninvited guests became too noisome I would work the treadle rapidly with my foot, causing the jaws to clatter like castanets. The exodus would be rapid and complete". p. 137

Much like the Bone book, the Editor of "Tales of a Pioneer Surveyor" provides a very detailed description of laying out a railway in four stages; planning, reconnaissance, the trial line and actual location survey. Another section repeats some of Sandford Fleming's instructions to engineers in charge of surveying parties. Without delving into engineering textbooks these are probably the best descriptions of railway layout techniques.

The descriptions of travelling across the prairies in the bitter winter weather and even reaching the point where they had to eat a skunk to survive are a far cry from today's surveyors who arrive at remote sites by helicopter and are home for supper at the end of the day.

From the Distant Past

A Railway Excursion

During July, 1881 a party of gentlemen including lumberman H.H. Cook, M.P.; R. Jaffray, Toronto banker, promoter of the Ontario Sault Ste. Marie Railway and mining properties in the Sudbury area and members of the press went on an excursion on the Northern Railway. Their intended destination was Penetanguishene.

Some of the description of the trip provides a look at the area during that period. Reading the article makes one wonder how much timber was lost to forest fires by whatever reason; locomotive sparks, settlers' land clearing, logging and saw-milling activities. In the words of the reporter here is some of what he had to say after reaching Barrie having left Toronto in the morning. Some portions of the article have been edited out.

"Shortly after leaving Barrie the borders of the forest land, the backwoods, were entered. At about twelve miles north of the town the view was a striking one. The railway ran along a comparatively high level, and to the westward extended a plain covered, as far as the eye could reach, with aspen, hemlock, and other trees. The vision extended for many miles, and only terminated with the dim outline of the Nottawasaga Mountains beyond. This ridge is of considerable elevation, and only ten or fourteen days since snow was still lying in some of the shaded ravines on its summit. Settlements were few in number, and for miles sometimes the train ran through almost unbroken forest. At Colwell station the Penetanguishene branch was taken. All along this branch the forest prevailed. The stations were clearings where saw-mills and immense piles of lumber indicated the great industry of the country. Smoke now began to obscure the sky, and very soon a few small bush fires were passed. The smoke became denser as we proceeded..... Then the fires increased in frequency and extent, and objects at a short distance seemed enveloped in a blue mist. Standing on the platform of the cars we were forced to draw breath as the train swept through the flames which skirted the track.

At last when within six miles of Penetanguishene, the train was brought to a stand still in front of an impenetrable mass of smoke and flame extending to an indefinite distance. Tongues of flame licked along the ground and up the crackling trees, while now and then a great crash varied the roar of the flames and told of a forest giant fallen before the destroying element. The men on board the train got out and held a discussion as to the best course to be taken. It was finally decided that the train should retire to Barrie before the flames behind could intercept retreat. The train only retired in time. The baggage car caught fire, but with a little effort the flames were extinguished. To Wyevale, several miles back, our passage was through at times stifling smoke and flames. There a lumber wagon was found....and off we went easterly to get around the fire. Over the roughest road imaginable, through a tangle of burned and decaying forest, enveloped in smoke, we made our way to Wyebridge..... and six miles further on we reached by a good road Midland City."

The party had tea, inspected the railway terminal, the saw mills of the Canadian Lumber Company and, finally after a four mile drive through the forest, reached Penetanguishene.

Notes on the article

- Source of the article is "In The Timber Country", Toronto "Globe", Wednesday, July 20, 1881.
- The Penetanguishene branch was built by the North Simcoe Railway Company, incorporated in 1874 and built by the Northern Railway and opened for business at the end of 1878.
- Contemporary maps of the era (circa 1880) show the Penetanguishene branch to begin at Harrison. Colwell station is identified in a 1994 "Canadian Trackside Guide" as being 5.5 miles west of Barrie on the CN Meaford Sub.
- Wyevale and Wyebridge can be seen on Ontario road maps.
- Although the Penetanguishene branch has been abandoned for some time the main line westerly out of Barrie and the branch to Collingwood are presently being operated by the short line Barrie Collingwood Railway of Cando Contracting Ltd continuing 150-plus years of rail service to that area. (see TRAX 06/05)
- One of the press members was a reporter from the Edinburgh "Scotsman". No comment was recorded of his ordeal.
- History of the Northern Railway can be found in Vol. I of "Canadian National Railways - Sixty years of trial and error", by G.R. Stevens - Clarke, Irwin, 1960

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

Take a youngster train-watching today.