

The end of the line - CPR to Eganville

by Harry Hinchley

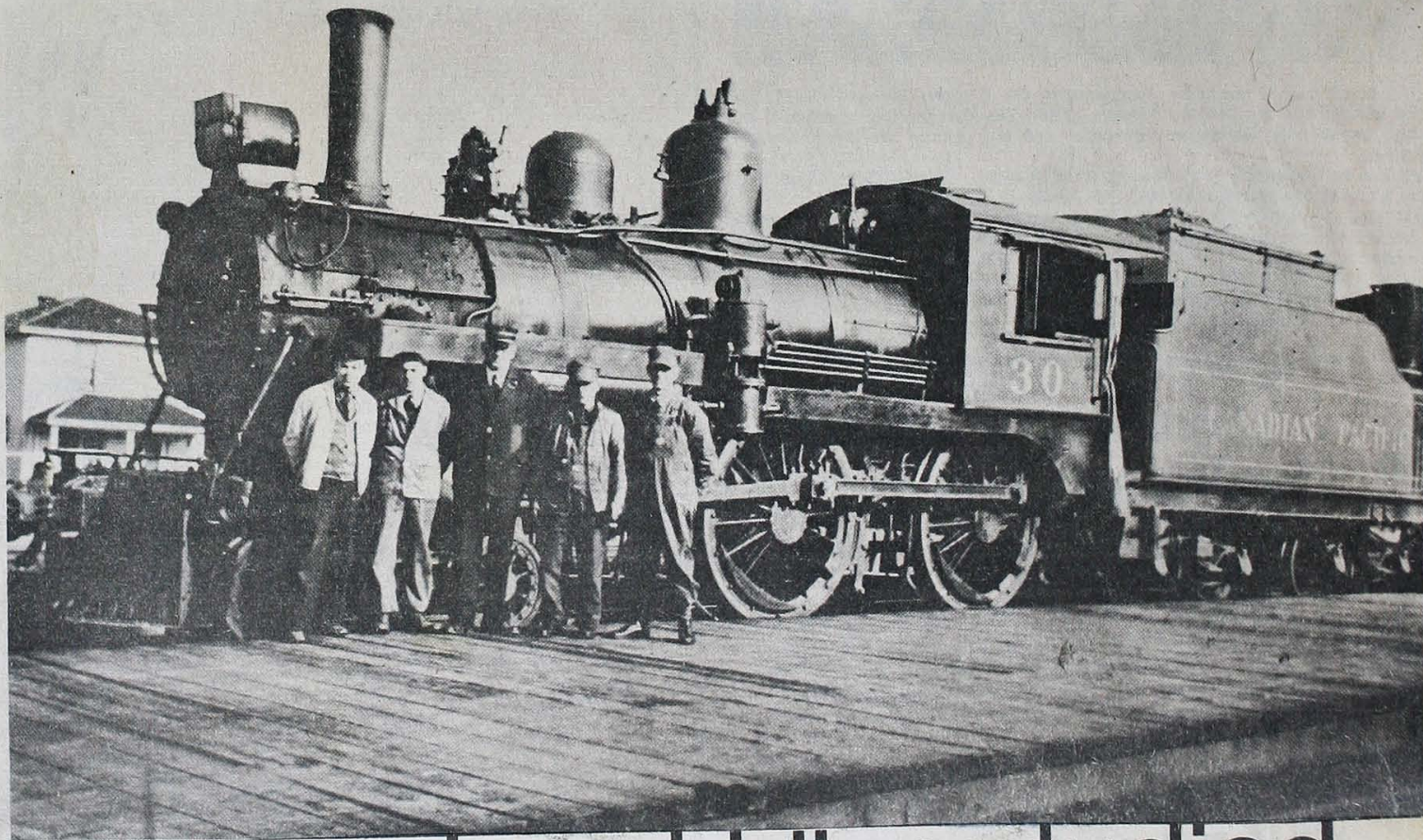
About fifteen years ago the last steam locomotive was taken off the run to Eganville. Soon afterwards all train service was discontinued on this line and the rails were torn up.

For over 50 years, 6 days a week, the CPR train for Eganville used to leave the station at Renfrew soon after the forenoon local had come in from Ottawa. It would make the trip up through Northcote and Douglas and then early in the afternoon would be back in Renfrew again.

This was a short run for a locomotive so it also had the job of doing the switching in the Renfrew yards. In the days when the whole country was served by rail there was always plenty of this work as many cars had to be spotted at the various sidings or picked up for the out-going freights.

When the CPR was built from Renfrew to Eganville in the 1890's the company had hoped to extend the line through to Georgian Bay. In order to do this it was necessary to build through the Wilno Pass which was the only feasible route for a railroad through the hills near Wilno Village. The right-of-way through this pass was claimed by J R Booth, the timber baron, who was building his own line, the Ottawa, Arnprior and Parry Sound, now the Canadian National.

A legal battle over the right-of-way through this pass resulted and J R Booth won the case. This gave him the sole right to use the Wilno pass. The CPR then gave up all plans to put their line through to Georgian Bay and constructed the railroad only as



Fate of the old 'kick and push' line studied

A move by Renfrew Reeve Audrey Green to have the county take an option on 12.8 miles of abandoned railway line between Renfrew and Calabogie failed September 29 before the county council.

Renfrew County council voted 36-30 against the option being taken at this time and left the subject of converting the old railway to recreation trail with a committee for study purposes.

Reeve Green argued that "If we don't do something now we'll never have the opportunity again," and called for the option to establish the county's interest.

But Reeve Green met stiff opposition from Admaston Reeve Len Quilty who reminded the council that the subject was being studied and should be held back.

Reeve Quilty said the first two

miles of railroad after leaving Renfrew goes through choice agricultural land.

He added that he has talked with 12 of the landowners along the Admaston stretch of the railroad. "These people have put up with this for long enough," he declared.

"An abandoned railway track is the worst place to put snowmobile trails," he added. "You have very long straight stretches. You get souped-up machines and souped-up drivers and there is a danger factor."

He suggested studying the matter and coming up with a "good" solution, pointing out that the trail could start at Ferguslea, a small hamlet along the track about four miles south of Renfrew, from an old siding.

This would eliminate a crossing of

Highway 132 by snowmobilers or other travellers, Reeve Quilty said.

Bagot and Blythfield Reeve Bob Knight pointed out that ARDA and the Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority have operated a portion of the same railway south from Calabogie as a recreation trail, adding that a large number of people use it.

He said it is already proved that railways make good snowmobile trails.

Chalk River Reeve Bob Seguin said his railway experience tells him that Marathon Realty, a railroad company-owned firm handling the sale, "is not receptive to options."

Rolph, Buchanan, Wylie Reeve Guy du Manoir said flatly the county doesn't need the old railway and said it would be "a white elephant unloaded onto the county."

Reeve du Manoir argued that it would present an on-going liability in terms of maintenance costs and insurance.

Cobden Reeve Harold Robinson said his "personal feeling is that the snowmobilers will upkeep the trails themselves and the county wouldn't have to worry about maintenance.

Reeve Quilty said ARDA would be glad to get rid of the old portion of the railway.

Reeve Quilty said that the railway, once known as the K & P (Kingston and Pembroke) should have been taken over in the sixties for a 90-mile highway from Renfrew to the 401 and Kingston. He then suggested the county should do something about rebuilding Highway 511, which runs from Perth to Calabogie. "It's the damnest road in the county," Reeve Quilty said.



A section of the old K & P at Calabogie.