

OTTAWA VALLEY DAYS

Bottle-in-Window Every Stop Compensation on Ice Road Journey

Written for The Journal
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With a "bottle-in-the-window" at every 10-mile break in the journey, and sometimes an evening of fiddles and dancing at each night's stopping place, winter travel on the ice roads of the Upper Ottawa in the days before the old "Lucy Dalton" pulled the Canada Central into Renfrew and Pembroke, was not without its compensations.

And so this week we take you on a journey over tortuous snow roads and river ice with the teamsters of the sleigh trains who used to bring supplies and news to the winter-bound villages. Our story (compiled from old records and Morgan's researches) will tell something also of the really rugged days of sub-zero blizzards out of which tired men and horses staggered into the warmth and refreshment of Upper Ottawa stopping places.

Arnprior Route.

In that period there was no public travel in winter. Those who had urgent business upriver had to secure transportation on one of the heavily laden snow trains.

To proceed from Bytown to Arnprior the traveller had the choice of two routes, one via the land, and another over the ice. If he wished to make use of the former he traversed the Richmond road to March, and thence to Carp and Galetta, a total distance of 42 miles. This road was also marked by taverns—Woods', considered the best hotel on the route, five miles from Bytown; "One-armed" Bell's, two miles further on; Boucher's, another four or five miles distant; Armstrong's, at Lowry's, a stopping place, not a tavern; Wood's Corners, and so on. The road passed through a section which was in places heavily wooded, in other places settled. Carp then had half a dozen small buildings and an indifferent tavern.

But the great part of winter travel from Bytown upriver moved by the ice of Lake Deschenes. Aylmer was then the starting point for the journey to Pembroke.

Joe's 'Parlor'.

From Durrell's Farm, situated about two miles above Aylmer, the road kept close to the north shore of the lake until the first

stopping place, that of Roger Moore, was reached at a point nine miles above Aylmer. After the horses had been fed, the train pushed on seven more miles to Rocky Point, kept by the LeFurgey brothers, where there was a short, rocky land road leading to the ice of the bay above.

In this bay was the well-known stopping place of the celebrated Joe Violan. Here, "Joe" a good natured halfbreed, kept open house for teamsters. As the men ate his venison steaks and great loaves of bread, Joe played on his fiddle. In return, they patronized his bar, alleviating their thirst on "MacDonald's Proof" made in Perth at 80 cents a gallon! For the "bosses" of the river Joe had a special place reserved which he called his "parlor" but the fare was exactly the same as for the Great Unwashed.

Sand Point Caravans.

From "Joe's", the train picked its way over the bad ice, avoiding the currents at the mouths of creeks, past Mohr's Bay to Quyon Landing at the stopping place of John McCabe, or two miles farther to the trading post of J. G. MacTavish. This was the winter portage around the Chats Falls.

After another overnight stop here the long line of sleighs proceeded to Sand Point where Alex MacDonnell had his headquarters and where William Craig operated the first real hotel on the route.

Sand Point was a cross roads of caravans. In its yards and bars river champions were throned and de-throned. Their historic marks were recorded by their caulked boots on tavern walls and ceilings. Here, the great Martin Hennessey and Larry Frost and the hard-hitting MacFarlanes of Clarendon, and Joe Montferrand fought interminable rounds to briefly held championships. Here, too, Montferrand lost his crown to "Silent" Alex Smith at a gory battle on the Snake Creek bridge.

Old Stopping Places.

Beyond Sand Point was the homestead halting place of Michael Roddy, big-hearted Irishman, whose stand of mighty Norway pines was a landmark of the river. Then came the clearing of Archibald Stewart

(All that remains there now is the gaunt fireplace on the point which can be seen from the CPR train window.)

The train next passed Captain Bell's place at Charlotte Creek near Castleford and then at Bonnechere Point arrived at one of the oldest clearances on the upper Chats where a man named Auldjo kept a tavern and private fur-trading post.

One of the favorite stopping places was the inn of Edward Farrell. From here the teamsters had their choice of two forks to Pembroke. If the sleighing was good they could leave the river by a bush road to Renfrew via Gibbons' farm, leaving the then village by the Carswell Hill and the Opeongo Line.

Bullis Turnpike.

If however, the drivers elected to continue on the river proceeded either to via this north shore line to Portage du Fort or by the south shore to Boltons on the Schneaux (Snow) rapids (now the site of the power development.)

But from Boltons a land detour was necessary on a rough stretch known as "Bullis Turnpike", over ravines of slashed timber and boulders that took its toll in broken whiffletrees and sloops.

At Ward's Settlement the road wound inland to Olmstead's clearance near Cobden, in the heart of the bush. Olmstead kept a good house and table, something that could not be said for many of the bush taverns. Ten miles away, after traversing the Muskrat Lake was the final stop at Spencer Allan's place.

Pembroke Settlements.

The sleighs used a lumbering "tote" road for the final stretch into Pembroke, or Miramichi, as the town was then known. (It was called Miramichi because some refugees from the great Miramichi fire in New Brunswick, had eventually made their way to Pembroke.) The land west of the Muskrat River was then a cedar swamp without a single clearance. The first block of land on the east side of the Muskrat and fronting the Ottawa was then owned and occupied by two brothers, James and Samuel McKay, lumbermen, who were supplied by the house of John Egan and Company.

Then in succession were the holdings of Peter White, James

Jardine, Michael McNeill and Daniel Fraser.

At Lowertown, then called "Campbelltown", there was a large cleared farm with a fine roomy house owned by Campbell Dunlop, who was lumberman, school teacher and innkeeper. Incidentally, with a cluster of houses, school house and blacksmith shop, pioneer Pembroke was on its way.

Below "Campbelltown" along the river front were other clearances occupied by J. S. Johnstone, W. Durrell, and Arunah Alexander and John Dunlop—all progressive lumbermen.

And now, soaring high in the blue on silver wings over the magnificent Valley of the Ottawa, an airplane covers in minutes what formerly took days of endurance by a hardy bre

whose only fillip against fatigue was a "bottle-in-the-window"!