

JANE'S WALK 2013

RIDING THE RAILS IN RED DEER EXISTING AND FORMER RAILWAY SITES

To a great extent, the existence of Red Deer as the distribution centre of Central Alberta and a thriving city is due to decisions made by the railways that once dominated the Red Deer landscape.

The Calgary and Edmonton Railway reached the new townsite of Red Deer in the fall of 1890 on the property of Rev. Leonard Gaetz after an arrangement for a joint half interest in the 1200-acre property was made between Rev. Gaetz and James Ross on behalf of the C&ER. Once the line was completed to South Edmonton, the Canadian Pacific Railway leased the line for its operations and named the numbered stations along the line. The four major shareholders of the C&ER included James Ross and Herbert Holt (who were contractors for the CPR construction of the transcontinental railway in 1883 between Medicine Hat and Field) and William McKenzie and Donald Mann (who later formed the Canadian Northern Railway).

CPR Station

This station was built in 1910 to replace the wooden station and freight house built in 1891. An addition to the station was built in 1911. The original station located just north of this site was relocated to south of the station, turned around and expanded for use as a freight house until it was demolished in 1965. The last passenger train was the Dayliner in 1985 marking 94 years of continuous rail passenger service between Calgary and Edmonton. The station closed in 1989 just prior to the relocation of the railyards to the west side of the city.



This station is one of five unique but similar style stations built around the same time by the CPR at divisional points. The others are in Strathcona (South Edmonton), Lethbridge, Medicine Hat and Saskatoon. All have been preserved as Canadian Heritage Stations. Red Deer's was officially recognized in November 1989 just days before it was scheduled for demolition for the eventual west extension of Ross Street.

Divisional Point

The CPR chose Red Deer as the divisional point between Calgary and Edmonton in 1908 after several improvements had been made to the railway grounds, the yard was expanded, branch lines had been built and a new agreement with the town to supply double the amount of water as before was secured. These improvements had turned Red Deer into a bustling railway town and the transportation and distribution hub of the region. The railway became the prime employer, customer, supplier and communication centre for the town. By this time the CPR had purchased all the assets of the C&ER. Prior to these changes, Red Deer in 1901 had a population of 323, less than the communities of Innisfail or Lacombe. By 1906, the population had mushroomed to 1,500 residents.

CPR Grounds, Yards and Facilities

Garden – A beautiful ornamental park was created around 1905 that enhanced the new station when it was built. It endured until 1960 when it was turned into a parking lot.

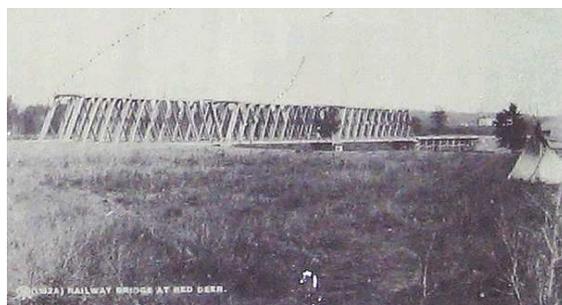
Roundhouse – A small 4-stall roundhouse was built in 1906 and expanded to 10 stalls in 1907. In the early years, it was also used for community activities including the fall fair as well as locomotive maintenance. It was last used in 1955 and demolished in 1963. There was also a 70 ft. turntable.

Coal Chute – In 1907, a grand elevated gravitational coal chute was built dominating the skyline with a trestle incline where locomotives would push box cars loaded with coal to the top. In 1923, this was replaced with a mechanical type coal chute and the trestle incline was removed. This was used until 1960.

Water Tower, Stockyards and Grain Elevators – built in 1906-07 (in 1916 there were three elevators). Five newer grain elevators were built from 1948 to the late 1950s. All were demolished by 1992.

CPR Bridge

This 2-span (each 150 ft.) steel truss bridge was built in 1908-09 to replace the 3-span (each 100 ft.) wooden truss bridge built in 1890-91. A partially earth-filled wood trestle was built on the north side flat. It was so sturdily-built that it was sometimes used by vehicles when the road bridge washed out. The bridge was abandoned in 1991,



preserved as a historic resource by citizens and is now part of the Trans Canada Trail system.

Rev. Gaetz House

Rev. Gaetz built a modest house around 1882 when he arrived from Ontario as an agent for the Saskatchewan Land and Homestead Company. He became one of the largest landholders in the district about 6 km downstream from the Red Deer Crossing settlement and was a major promoter of the area. He made an arrangement with James Ross, who was acting on behalf of the Calgary and Edmonton Railway, whereby Rev. Gaetz offered an undivided half interest of his 1200-acre property for the townsite and river crossing. Both Rev. Gaetz and the C&ER (later CPR) profited greatly from this arrangement. This allowed Rev. Gaetz to not only built a much larger house but houses for his children as well.

Canadian Northern Western Railway Bridge

The CNWR was a subsidiary of the Canadian Northern Railway, created by two major shareholders of the Calgary and Edmonton Railway, William McKenzie and Donald Mann. The new transcontinental CNorR reached Edmonton in 1905 and built a north-south line to Camrose, Stettler and Big Valley in 1911-12. At the same time, they started building a line from Stettler to the Brazeau coal fields west of Rocky running just north of Red Deer near Blackfalds. A spur line was built south to North Red Deer which was to eventually become a second north-south line but never did. It was a direct competitor to the Red Deer-based Alberta Central Railway on the south edge of town. The CNWR (by this time part of the newly-formed Canadian National Railways) built a bridge across the Red Deer River near the mouth of Waskasoo Creek in 1920 and extended the line to where the Co-op Shopping is now. However, the bridge kept washing out in the spring so the bridge was abandoned in 1941. Service to the CN station was maintained by a link to the CPR yards until 1960.

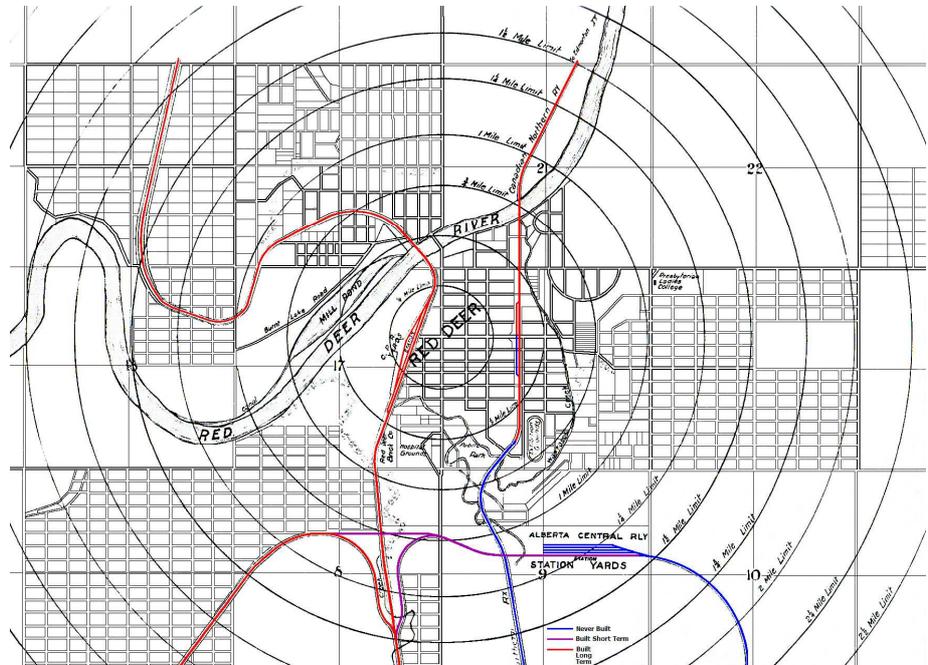
Canadian National Railway Station and Yards

The original temporary Red Deer CNR station was built in 1920 and replaced in 1923 with a unique design that was a blend of the former Canadian Northern Railway standard 3rd class station and the future Canadian National Railways 3rd class plan. The line came in from the north until 1941 at which time a connection was made with the CPR downtown yards. The CNR shared the trackage to North Junction for several years. The last passenger train ran in 1955. The station was closed and removed in 1961 after the rail line was re-relocated back to the north side of the river. The line served a grain elevator and a warehouse. There was a small turntable to the north of the station.



Alberta Central Railway Piper Creek Trestle

The Alberta Central Railway was a Red Deer-based company that envisioned a major western railway linking Churchill with Vancouver via Saskatoon and Red Deer with a connection with the CPR at Moose Jaw. It was incorporated in 1901, surveyed in 1908 and construction started in 1910 highlighted by the



driving of the first spike by Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier east of Gaetz Avenue on the south hill. A wooden trestle was built over the Piper Creek ravine in 1911 where Kin Canyon is now located. Yards and a station were built north of the current Mountview Fire Hall. There would have been a level crossing of the Canadian Northern Railway had their plans been realized. The first phase was chartered to go between Content and Nordegg. The line was graded east to near Pine Lake and west to Rocky Mountain House when the company went bankrupt in 1912 in part due to the high quality of line being built as opposed the crude line being built parallel to it by the Canadian Northern Western Railway and in part by the inflationary pressures brought on by the intense railway expansions in the area. Furthermore the ACR built two major bridges, one south of Red Deer at Mintlaw and the other at Rocky Mountain House. The CPR took over the railway construction between Red Deer and Rocky but had no interest in the eastward line. The yards were taken up, the station sold and the trestle removed in 1917.

The ACR Pier

The Alberta Central Railway built a bridge to cross over the C&E/CPR line and Waskasoo Creek in 1910 but it was never actually used except in the construction of the railway to the east. The bridge superstructure was removed but two piers remained until one was removed during the construction of Taylor Drive in the early 1990s. However, a connection was made with the C&E/CPR with the junction at Forth, south of 32nd Street. This connection to the



Rocky Mountain House line was used until 1962 when Alberta Transportation arranged for a new connection at Tuttle west of Gasoline Alley. Passenger service between Red Deer and Rocky existed between 1914 until 1956. The ACR branch was abandoned in 1983 with the last train in 1981. The Mintlaw trestle (2100 feet long over the Red Deer River) still stands and is now owned by Red Deer County. It is the third longest steel trestle in Western Canada.

45 Street Overpass and The Arches

A road overpass was built on 45th Street in 1965 over the CPR yards because trains entering and exiting the yards often blocked level crossings. The crossing at 43rd Street was closed. The overpass was removed in 1992 as part of the Taylor Drive construction. When the CPR station ornamental park was turned into a parking lot in 1960, the fountain was saved and is now located at the Arches, an ornamental structure in the form



of the front of a roundhouse that will eventually show the history of downtown Red Deer. The Michener Fountain had been salvaged by a local contractor and sold to Ken Martin of Penhold who then donated it back to the city in 2001 with the condition that it not be discarded again.

Thank you for your participation.

Paul Pettypiece

For more information on the history of railroads in Central Alberta, visit:

www.ForthJuncion.com/historical.htm