

Alberton Centennial Times

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Road Building

Road building, however, received its greatest impetus after the turn of the century. the election of J.A. Mathieu to the Ontario Legislature in 1911 and the setting up of \$6,000,000 Northern and Northwestern Ontario Development Fund in 1912 coincided with an extensive settler's road program being undertaken. This district network of roads became a part of the Ontario and Manitoba highways systems through the good graces of Minnesota when, in 1921, the State of Minnesota completed some 20 miles of highway between Cusson, then an important logging centre, and Lake Kabetogama. This access to the Midwestern States also permitted Americans to visit this vacationland for the first time in numbers and then, in 1936, with the opening of the Fort Frances-Kenora highway, tourist business skyrocketed.

One of the most momentous highway conferences ever held in Northwestern Ontario took place in Fort William on September 3, 1930, when communities along the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific rail lines agreed that the Trans-Canada highway should be built from the Lakehead to Winnipeg via Dryden and Kenora and, at the same time, another highway be constructed from the Lakehead to Fort Frances.

To Lakehead

In 1936, the Northwestern Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce approved its first resolution calling for the construction of the Fort Frances-Kashbowie link of the highway with the Lakehead. Three years later the first survey was started.

Further stimulation was brought about in 1954 when the Great River Road of the Mississippi Parkway System was routed through International Falls and Fort Frances to link up with the Trans-Canada Highway No.17 just east of Kenora. Then in 1960, the opening of the Rainy River-Baudette bridge shortening the highway route to Manitoba and Winnipeg, brought closer to reality Highway No.11 from Toronto to the northwestern part of the province.

Railroads

Two years after the start of the Colonization Road, now known as Highway No. 602 between Fort Frances and Emo, the first railway to serve this region was chartered, although it was never built as such. It was the Ontario and Rainy River Railway Co., incorporated in 1886, to be built between Port Arthur and Rainy River.

Highway travel was not as simple during the 1920's as it is today. As late as December, 1929, the municipalities between Fort Frances and Rainy River formed the Fort Frances- Rainy River Road Snow Ploughing Association to finance the keeping open of this road during the winter months. The sum of \$422.50 was collected after Bruce Campbell demonstrated the use of his 12-ft. plough which was attached to the rear portion of a logging sleigh and pulled by a battery of three heavy trucks. He first used the plough for opening up the road north of Sleeman where it is presumed he was taking out pulpwood.

Sir William MacKenzie and Sir Donald Mann, to become famous as railway promoters and builders, secured control of the Manitoba and South Eastern Railway and in 1898 constructed 45 miles of tracks from St. Boniface to Marchand. To extend it to the Lakehead, the two promoters in 1899 purchased the Minnesota and Manitoba Railroad Co., and then purchased The Ontario and Rainy River Co. charter. To secure trackage into Port Arthur Mackenzie and Mann then purchased the Port Arthur, Duluth and Western Railway, which dated back to 1883.

Eighteen miles of this line provided MacKenzie and Mann with entry into Port Arthur.

Through the purchase of these three companies, MacKenzie and Mann then proceeded to extend their Manitoba and South Eastern Railway. The 62 miles from Marchand to Sprague to Rainy River. The line between Rainy River and Fort Frances, 55 miles of track, was opened on October 10, 1901. On December 30, 1902, a silver spike at Atikokan marked the closing of the gap of 212 miles between Fort Frances and Stanley Junction where the new track lined up with the Port Arthur, Duluth, and Western Railway and access to Port Arthur along the lake front. The first crossing of Rainy Lake was by trestle, and 10 years later more than a million cubic yards of rock were dumped to provide a new island-hopping route across the lake.

Americans

In 1901, the Duluth, Virginia and Rainy Lake Railway Co. was incorporated in Minnesota as a lumber railway 93 miles in length from Rainier to Virginia. In 1905, MacKenzie and Mann became partners in the Duluth, Rainy Lake and Winnipeg Railway Co., a wholly-owned subsidiary of MacKenzie and Mann, became sole owner of the Rainier-Virginia railway. On December 16, 1912, Virginia and Duluth were linked up.

In 1907, the Minnesota and International Railway reached International Falls, a subsidiary of E.W. Backus who through the Minnesota and Ontario Paper Company was beginning a vast papermill complex at International falls and Fort Frances.

On October 4, 1922, the Canadian Northern Railways, the name under which the MacKenzie and Mann railway lines had operated for many years, were nationalized by the government and became known as the Canadian National Railways.

CNR ceases

July 31, 1977, CNR passenger service ceased when the two-car railiner made its last run between Winnipeg and Thunder Bay via Fort Frances. It was introduced on June 1, 1971. With the opening of Highway No. 11 and faster Grey Goose bus service, fewer and fewer passengers were riding the rails. The same had happened to the Duluth, Winnipeg, and Pacific when, in the 1950's a railiner displaced the regular passenger train and then it, too, disappeared from services.

During the 90's discovery of the first iron ore at Atikokan stimulated interested in base metals and some ore was mined and smelted at the Lakehead. With the discovery of new large iron ore deposits under Steep Rock Lake, the outbreak of new large iron ore deposits under steep rock Iron Mines Ltd. came into production. This Steep Rock iron mining development led to the opening of Highway No.11 between Port Arthur-Fort William and Atikokan on August 13, 1954 with the Hon. Leslie Frost, then prime minister of Ontario, wielding the famous broadaxe.

During the past years, as Fort Frances developed and maintained its importance as a transportation centre, one factor was frequently overlooked: millions of feet of logs and pulpwood sticks had been

transported over the lakes and rivers which comprise the Rainy Lake watershed. Now these tows, too, have become things of the past as trucks carrying up to 25 cords bring the logs to the mills.

42-Duluth, Winnipeg and Pacific Railway - DWP

From the Classic Trains Website-

“Earliest predecessor Duluth, Virginia & Rainy Lake, a logging road, dates to 1901, and soon was purchased by Canadian Northern. Line extended north to Fort Frances, Ontario, in 1908, renamed Duluth, Winnipeg & Pacific in 1909, and reached Duluth in 1912. With Canadian Northern, became part of Canadian National in 1918. DW&P still exists on paper but is operated as part of CN.”

The Duluth, Winnipeg and Pacific Railway was a Class 1 Railroad until January 1, 1978. The line extends from Pokegama Yard in Superior Wisconsin to Fort Francis Ontario.

States served- Minnesota, Wisconsin