

Caledon Citizen

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Horseshoe train wreck

A deadly anniversary

Next Monday will be the 100th anniversary of the worst train wreck in the history of the Canadian Pacific Railway's Owen Sound Division.

It was on the morning of Tuesday, September 3, 1907, that an Exhibition Special left Markdale bound for what was then known as the Toronto Exhibition (CNE).

The train in question was one of only five for which the railway offered special low fares of \$1.55, with "all tickets good to return until Tuesday, Sept. 10."

The special offer was snapped up, and the train was more than an hour late when it reached Shelburne. Scheduled to arrive there at 7:19 a.m., the train did not leave Markdale until after 7:30 and didn't make it to Shelburne until about 8:25. According to the Shelburne Economist of Sept. 5, a large number of passengers boarded the train there, and even standing room was at a premium in the five coaches. Two more coaches were added at Orangeville, and it was after 9 a.m. when the train left for Caledon village and the tortuous descent from the Niagara Escarpment chosen in 1869 by surveyors of the narrow-gauge Toronto, Grey & Bruce Railway.

The train reached the village once named Charleston at 9:20 and left a minute later, heading down the line at speeds some passengers estimated at upwards of 60 miles an hour, with engineer George Hodge at the controls.

Although he had had some experience running freights, it was only the second time the young engineer had manned a passenger train, and by all accounts he had been doing his best to make up for lost time.

Whatever the case, the steam locomotive was going so fast that it simply tipped over as it reached the horseshoe curve and wound up on its side. Five of the seven coaches also derailed, some of them being utterly destroyed.

In the end, seven passengers - three from the Shelburne area - were killed and more than 100 injured, about 40 of them so seriously they were taken by special train to Toronto. None of those seriously hurt were from the Orangeville area, presumably because all those who boarded the train at Orangeville were in the two coaches that remained on the tracks.

In 1974, the disaster was chronicled by Boston Mills Press in a small hard-cover

book, *The Great Horseshoe Wreck*, by Ralph Beaumont and James Filby. Long out of print, the book is still available from the Orangeville Public Library.

It was also front-page news in the Orangeville Sun and the Economist. The Sun story included a subhead, "Train Was Running Too Fast to Make the Curve — A Thorough Inquiry as to the Cause Will be Made."

It was, but ultimately the engineer was acquitted of a charge of criminal negligence causing death, and the railway managed to settle most of the lawsuits out of court, thanks, no doubt to the legal footwork of Toronto lawyer T. C. Robinette, father of the late equally famous J. J. Robinette.

In an introduction to the book the authors explained that to mount the Escarpment, trains had to climb 385 feet in the six miles beyond Cardwell Junction, where the line met the Hamilton and Northwest Railway. The horseshoe was a curve of 462-foot radius between Mile 37 and Mile 38, during which the railway climbed more than 85 feet.

The Sun story said the train, hauled by engine #555, "made a flying trip from Markdale. ... When the accident occurred it is estimated that the train was running between 50 and 60 miles an hour. The engineer did not slow down for the very sharp curve at the Horseshoe. ... Instead of rounding to, the trucks of the locomotive ran over the rails and continued for about 350 feet, landing in the ditch.

"The big engine lay on its side, stripped of everything, the demolished frame of the tender 20 feet behind it and the tank thrown clean over on its back. The first car was a combination mail and smoker and was well filled with men. It followed the engine and was splintered into matchwood, the tank of the engine having telescoped. The second coach became ditched just after the locomotive left the rails, rolled over two or three times and landed on its back in the field. Two were killed in the rear end of this car. ... The cars were all piled up and five of them were fit only for kindling wood. The track was not displaced and only a few ties were splintered."

Today, the curve, if not the wreck, have been memorialized through the renaming of Caledon's Third Line EHS as Horseshoe Hill Road.



Our Readers Write

Online reporting works

I am writing this letter to thank all the residents of the Town of Caledon who are presently supporting the use of the online reporting form for the Road Watch Caledon program.

Through the use of online reporting it will make reporting aggressive and dangerous driving on our roads that much easier. It has been said that there has been a noticeable increase in the number of incidents being reported to the OPP since online reporting became available.

As well, I would like to thank all the committee members of the Road Watch Caledon program for their countless hours of dedication, making decisions, attending meetings, media shoots and community events to get the word out. To Dave Rutherford, Brian Perras, Jane Clarke,

Wendy Turner, Paul Sanchez, Officer John Krug, and Councillors Doug Beffort and Richard Paterak, thank you for your continued support and belief that the program can make a difference on our roads.

Jackie Flynn, Chair
Road Watch Caledon

Friends helped in crisis

They say that you don't know who your true friends are until there is a crisis. August 15, and the days that followed, our family (Dean) learned that we are surrounded by many friends and an endless supply of support.

To the firefighters who helped to battle the fire at our barns, we cannot begin to thank you enough. You saved our house, trailer and as many structures as you could. Thank you so much for your efforts.

We would also like to thank the police and emergency crews for helping us, keeping us calm, and fuelling us with Gatorade.

We cannot forget to thank our neighbours and friends who have been vital to us in getting through this tough time. Thank you for being our shoulders. We could not have made it through this without you to lean on and your casseroles to eat.

It will not be an easy path back to normal, but the outpouring from everyone has been truly amazing, and will surely help in the future weeks. Thank you so much to everyone who has been there for our family, in any measure.

Love,

The Dean Family

Praise for walk-in clinic

I would like to comment on our walk-in clinic in Bolton.

I have frequented on too many occasions, this clinic run by Emma Fellin, who is a very caring individual who does a wonderful job running this clinic. She works way beyond what is considered a normal work day for many people, and with the amount of people in and out of that clinic I would like to add that she has done a wonderful job with the decor, making this the cleanest walk-in clinic. I have done a lot of travelling and have visited many over the years and I have to say it should not go unnoticed.

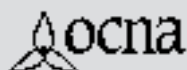
I'd like to offer my personal thanks for her efficiency and putting her own personal time and personal touches into running this clinic. She has done a wonderful job with her space and it makes it that much nicer sitting and waiting because it is a warm environment. Thanks Emma.

Laura Iamundo

Send us your letters

We welcome letters to the editor. Drop them off, mail, fax or e-mail to editor@caledoncitizen.com.

Caledon Citizen



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DEADLINES: Unfortunately deadlines do not allow us to take ads after the following specified times:

DISPLAY ADS and CLASSIFIED ADS: Monday at 10 a.m.

All ads must be paid in advance by deadline or the ad will not run. WE ACCEPT VISA, MASTERCARD & AMEX PAYMENTS OVER THE PHONE.