



# Newsletter

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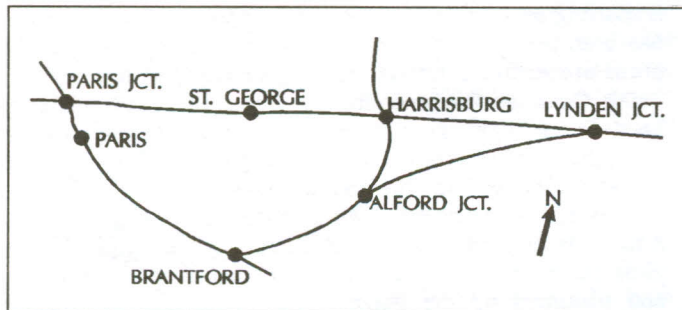
# ALFORD JUNCTION

BY RICK MANNEN

When the Great Western Railway opened for business in 1854, it gave an immediate boost to what is now southwestern Ontario. One major centre was left out, however, and this was the growing industrial town of Brantford, spurned by the GWR for failure to advance bonus money to the railway. The main line instead crossed Brant County north of the city through Harrisburg (the junction with the Galt Branch) and St. George.

Efforts were begun in Brantford to coax the GWR to build a connection, and this was finally achieved with the opening on November 23, 1871, of a 5½ mile branch to Harrisburg. It became known locally as the "B&H." Events would prove that even this connection was hardly sufficient to serve a major point such as Brantford, and agitations were continued to have the main line diverted. In 1882, the GWR passed into the Grand Trunk System and the GTR people were more attuned to Brantford's needs, the city having become the premier centre for agricultural equipment manufacture.

A new connection called the "Lynden cut-off" was opened on October 3, 1905, from Lynden Junction to a point 4.3 miles



north of Brantford on the B&H. This, in conjunction with the former Buffalo and Lake Huron (nee Buffalo, Brantford and Goderich) line from Brantford to Paris Junction, created a main line diversion through the city and two years later was double-tracked as part of the doubling of the entire former GWR main line.

At this time, the old B&H to Harrisburg was still a busy line, with frequent passenger service between Brantford, Harrisburg, St. George, and Paris Junction, and the new junction quickly became a busy place. A small building was placed at trackside to accommodate the day and night operators looking after the junction switches. The GTR gave the place the dignity of a name, calling it Alford Junction, said to be in honour of one Billy Alford, "a short and pugnacious Irishman with a long beard," who had been a conductor on the B&H for most of its existence.

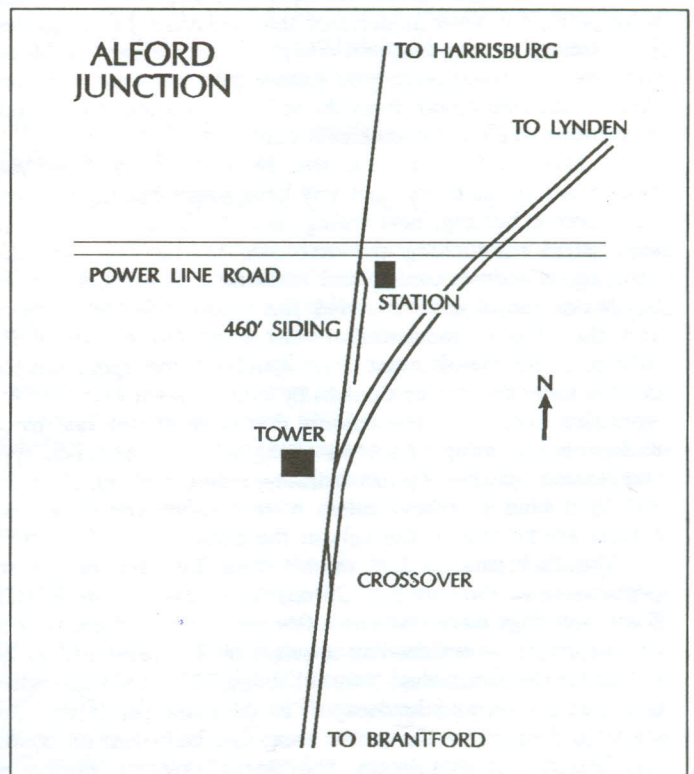
In 1908, citizen Dan Green wrote the GTR requesting they stop the 8:00 a.m. southbound and 4:05 p.m. northbound Harrisburg accommodation for the convenience of the local youngsters heading to school or college in Brantford. The railway instituted a flag stop and erected a small shelter of the usual GTR design.

In December of 1911, a modern interlocking tower and plant were installed allowing non-stop train movement – previously, all trains had been required to stop for clearance.

A 460 foot long siding was laid in 1919 for use by local

shippers of turnips, hay, grain, and other farm products and for incoming supplies for the tower staff. There was at least one wreck at Alford. Near Christmas, 1912, a way freight coming off the Lynden cut-off slammed into the morning local to Harrisburg that still had not cleared the main. There were no injuries, though engineer Patterson on the freight was somewhat shaken. Main line traffic was rerouted via St. George.

In 1923, the GTR became part of the Canadian National system and changes would soon occur locally. On July 31, 1924, the nearly two miles of the Alford Subdivision from Alford Junction to Harrisburg were taken out of service, and local trains were rerouted via Lynden Junction. The flag stop shelter was shifted eastward a few feet from its location adjacent to the B&H to be alongside the new main line. The old



B&H was used for a time for storage of out of service freight cars but was officially abandoned in 1927 and removed in 1930. The flag stop remained active into the mid 1930s.

Just south of the junction site is a high trestle crossing of Fairchild's Creek. The coming of the Second World War brought fear of possible enemy saboteurs aimed at upsetting the flow of Canadian commerce. With this in mind, the CNR built a shanty at the north end of the trestle with a watchman to oversee its security.

Little remains today at the junction site. The CN's Dundas Subdivision crosses the Powerline Road on a superelevated curve and a "V" shaped chunk of land south of the road attests to the B&H's one time approach. ■

Sources: Photos (Page 20) and information courtesy of Alford Tweedsmuir History and Alford Women's Institute. Other information from the Brantford Expositor.