

50a The Irondale, Bancroft & Ottawa Railway (IB&O)

General summary

The IB&O was a backwoods mineral exploitation enterprise. Incorporated originally as the Snowdon Branch Railway in 1879, it was re-incorporated as the Toronto & Nipissing Eastern Extension Railway in 1880 with Henry S. Howland as president and Charles J. Pusey as vice-president. It became the IB&O in 1884 and in 1886 acquired the pioneer 6½ mile Myles Branch Tramway to Furnace Falls (built in 1880 originally with wooden rails). The IB&O opened to Irondale in 1887, to Wilberforce in 1893, to Baptiste in 1897, to Mud Creek (2½ miles east of Baptiste) in 1898. In 1899 Pusey died. In 1905 control was assumed by Zebulon A. Lash who was solicitor for the Canadian Northern Railway and a major creditor of the IB&O and Pusey personally. Lash retained control of the moribund line until 1909, when it was acquired by Mackenzie, Mann & Co. for the newly created Ontario & Ottawa Railway. From Mud Creek, the IB&O reached Bancroft (going no further) in 1910 by virtue of a junction at York River, and was leased by the Central Ontario Railway (COR). The COR in turn was acquired outright by the Canadian Northern Railway (CNoR) in 1914. The CNoR merged with the Canadian Government Railways in 1918 into what was to become officially the Canadian National Railways system in 1922-4. The first through train from Kinmount/Howland Junction to Bancroft ran on September 12, 1910. From its beginnings with its iron ore and timber traffic the line eked out a skimpy existence until its last train and abandonment on March 31, 1960, rail lifting following in July 1960.

When Mackenzie and Mann took over the IB&O, the rolling stock consisted of three locomotives, two box cars and 28 flat cars, baggage and passenger cars.

Stations

0.0 Howland Junction; 2.9 Conway (f); 4.9 Furnace Falls (f); 8.3 Howland (f); 9.3 Irondale; 11.4 Maxwell (f); 16.9 Gooderham; 24.7 Tory Hill; 27.5 Ward (f); 28.0 Monmouth Road (f); (28.9 *summit*) 30.2 Wilberforce; 33.5 Ironsides (f); 36.4 Mumford (Harcourt) (f); 39.5 Highland Grove (f); 45.0 Baptiste; 46.5 Hughes (f); 47.5 Mud Creek (terminus until 1910), 52.0 York River, junction with the COR; 53.7 Bancroft.

Stations that were flag stops, i.e., simple shelters without an agent where passengers flagged the train down, are identified with an (f), but it should be noted that in the 1930s many agency stations were converted to flag stops. Also, on the IB&O, all tickets were sold on the train by the conductor.

0.0 Originally Myles Junction, then Kinmount Junction, renamed Howland Junction in 1919 was the starting point of the IB&O. There was originally a two-storey station house with a waiting room and freight room on the first floor and living quarters on the upper floor. This building was destroyed by fire in 1917 and was replaced with a small single-storey building that is still there, turned sideways near the turntable pit. The man-powered turntable at Howland Junction was used by both the IB&O and the Haliburton line. After 1919, the service on both the IB&O and the Grand Trunk became tri-weekly Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and in 1934 to Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. In 1931, divisional control of the IB&O at Belleville was transferred to Lindsay, and from 1955 trains ran from Bancroft to Lindsay on Tuesdays and Fridays, and returned on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

2.9 Conway was a small shelter flag stop between Howland junction and Furnace Falls, where a side road met the railway.

4.9 Furnace Falls, also a flag stop, had a long platform with an open shed. Originally there had been a siding down to the iron mines but this was removed about 1900 when the mine closed and the rail bed became the road to White Lake. After a few years the shed-station building deteriorated and had to be replaced. A siding was built parallel to the main line for loading the freight cars.

9.3 Irondale was a low two-storey building with a waiting room, an agent's office and a freight room.

There were living quarters on the upper floor for the section man and his family. Irondale had a barrel-stave factory. In winter, ice was cut on Salerno Lake and conveyed to the freight cars via a slide. When the mines were operating, there were a number of houses and three hotels at Irondale.

The Irondale station was destroyed by fire about 1931 or 1932, and was replaced with three box cars. Two were placed alongside the tracks, one for a waiting room and a second for a freight room. The third was placed behind the others and used as living quarters for the section foreman and his family.

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11.4 Maxwells (also called **Maxwell's Crossing**) was a flag stop with a small waiting room. There was no siding because Irondale and Gooderham were in close proximity. Maxwells was on the north side of the Irondale River, the track having crossed the river between Irondale and Maxwells, crossing back to the south side again before it got to Gooderham.

16.9 Gooderham was known earlier as Pine Lake. It was changed to Gooderham in 1873 after a generous bequest by George Gooderham of the Gooderham & Worts Distillery in Toronto to build a church there. There was a long siding with switches to the main line at both ends. Earlier there was also a roundhouse on the flats at the south side of the tracks. To supply water to the engines a steam-operated stand pipe pumped water from the nearby Irondale River into the locomotive tender. The station was rebuilt after a heavy windstorm in 1947 and survived until the end of service in 1960.

24.7 Tory Hill was a small station with a waiting room. There was a siding for loading the freight cars. In the years (1912 to 1945) that the Standard Chemical Company operated at Donald, just south of Haliburton, there was a bush camp near Tory Hill to cut cordwood for their factory. It was common to see 25 or 30 teams pulling sleighs loaded with cordwood to the railway siding for shipment to Donald.

27.5 Ward was a crossroads flag stop. It was a short distance south of Esson (Otter) Lake with a siding for the local farmers to ship their cordwood.

28.9 SUMMIT

30.2 Wilberforce had a station with an adjoining section man's house. There were three sidings and a spur line to a large graphite mill on the east side of the Irondale River dam. The mill refined the ore that came from several mines in the district. It began operating in 1910 and produced graphite for use in pencils and machinery lubrication. There was also a large sawmill.

Ironsides was a flag stop where the tracks crossed the old Mumford road. It was also called Radium Springs and the trains often stopped to allow passengers to collect water from the springs.

36.4 Mumford, now known as **Harcourt**. There was a small station and a siding, with a graphite mine and mill about a half mile west. During construction of the line about a mile west a serious sink hole was encountered, which required a great amount of fill.

39.5 Highland Grove The first station was a two-storey building with a waiting room, an agent's office and a freight room on the lower floor, with the agent's living quarters on the upper floor. This station was destroyed by fire (no date). It was replaced but the second station suffered the same fate (no date). There were cattle pens and a loading chute as Highland Grove became a cattle shipping point. The trip from Highland Grove was quite scenic. The track ran right along the shores of Jordon, Diamond and Baptiste Lakes that provided spectacular views with much of their shorelines being precipitous rocks rising to great heights out of the water.

45.0 Baptiste had a station with two sidings, also earlier with an engine shed, turntable and repair shops for both locomotives and cars.

46.5 Hughes (Hughes Siding) About 1914 William Hughes had timber rights near Elephant Lake and a saw mill on Baptiste Lake. He moved his sawn lumber on a scow to a point on the Lake east of Baptiste where there was a siding. This became known as Hughes siding.

47.5 Mud Creek was the temporary terminus of the IB&O from 1898 until 1910 where there was a turntable. Traffic to Bancroft was carried by wagon or stage coach from this point. The Central Ontario Railway (COR) coming north from Madoc did not reach Bancroft until 1900, so in the meantime freight to and from Bancroft and southern points was all carried through Baptiste on the IB&O. Cattle was also driven to Mud Creek for loading in cattle cars for shipment to southern points.

52.0 York River, junction with the COR in 1910.

53.7 Bancroft The first IB&O train reached Bancroft in July 1910. The IB&O was now effectively under COR control, sharing that railway's facilities with turntable, engine shed, repair shops and water tower.

Sources and Recommendations for further reading:

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