

ALMA AND
JONQUIERE
RAILWAY DIARY

C. H. RIFF

ALMA AND JONQUIERE RAILWAY

The Premier of Quebec announced December 9th, 1922 that an order in council had been signed ratifying a contract between the Government of Quebec and the Quebec Development Company for the building of two dams at the Grand Descharge at point where the Saguenay River drains the massive Lake St John. The plans for the power development included the erection of a dam so as to divert the entire flow of water from the Lake through the Grand Descharge. The first power development plant was to be located at Iale Maligne and was expected to produce 350,000 Horsepower. A second power development was to be built some miles lower down the Saguenay River near the mouth of the Shipshaw River. A railway WAS NECESSARY TO CARRY CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL TO THESE SITES FROM THE Canadian National's (ex Quebec and Lake St John station) of Hebertville.

The Alma and Jonquiere Railway had been incorporated by the Quebec Legislature in 1913 to build a railway from La barre or St Gideon to the Little Descharge, the Iale of Alma and Grande Discharge with a second line to Jonquiere.

Work started from the CNR at Saguenay Power Junction near Hebertville in early 1923. Three bridges were constructed by Dominion Bridge Company. The first across the Bedar River one mile north of the CNR junction sixty foot deck-plate girder girder bridge, the second across the Little Descharge was a three span deck girder bridge , and the third was a four span also across the Grand Descharge as part of the power plant. This last bridge was two ninety foot and one 220 foot through truss spans. The railway was opened very shortly afterwards. The railway company obtained two ten wheel steam locomotives from the Canadian National Railways and one ex Roberval Saguenay mogul. The rolling stock consisted of one baggage car one combination and two passenger cars, one steel snowplow and five flatcars. In 1924 the Price Brothers and Company began

construction of a newsprint mill at Riverbend across the Petite
Seschag River from the town of Alma. The Isle Maligne generating
station had a maximum capacity of 495,00 Horsepower. The electric
capacity was used by Price for their paper mill and the Aluminium
development of ALCOA nearby at Arvida. The Alma and Jonquiere
Railway would serve the paper mill of the Price Brothers at
Riverbend, and an Aluminium refinery of the Aluminium Company of
Canada at St Joseph d'Alma. Traffic consisted of hauling paper to the
CNR interchange and aluminium products between Arvida and St
Joseph d'Alma.

Effective January first, 1974 the Alma and Jonquiere Railway
was dissolved and the enterprise and assets were transferred to the
parent Roberval and Saguenay Railroad.

LOCOMOTIVES OF THE ALMA AND JONQUIERE RAILWAY.

- NO. 1066 4-6-0 Built Kingston 1903 SN 594 19 x24
ex Canadian Northern Railway 1066
ex Canadian National Railway 1066
- No. 1048 4-6-0 Built Kingston 1902 SN 542 19 X 24 56"
ex Canadian Northern Railway No. 1048
ex Canadian National Railway No. 1048
- No. 6 2-6-0 Built Montreal Locomotive Works 1910
SN 44265
ex Cavicchi and Paganno # 6
ex Roberval and Saguenay #6
- No. 14 2-6-0 Built Montreal Locomotive Works 6-1926
SN 66937 19 x20 50"
ex Roberval and Saguenay No. 14
To A&J 12-5-1937
- No. 101 S-4 Alco-MLW 9-9-1949 1000 HP
Sold to Merrillees 12-1978
- No. 102 S-4 Alco-MLW 1951 1000 HP
Sold to National Research Council 3-15-1978

Three covered hoppers 3003-3006

Baggage car

Combination baggage-passenger

First class coach ex Quebec Central Railway No. 36, ren. 93 to A&J
1940, Laconia 1907

Newsletter

October / November 1969 • 1.00

PERIODICALS READING ROOM
(Humanities and Social Sciences)



Canada Railway Society



THE

ALMA & JONQUIERE

Lake Saint Jean Shortline

By William R. Linley. Photography the Author.

Alma and Jonquiere Railway Company offers a Canadian example of the old shortline adage of just as wide, not as long as a Class One railway. A mere ten routes long, the Alma and Jonquiere connects the Lake Saint Jean communities of Isle Maligne, Riverbend, and Arvida with the Canadian National's Chicoutimi to Montreal mainline.

Considered as a single economic region, Quebec's Lake Saint Jean country is actually an amalgam of two distinct though complimentary regions of economic activity. To the east in the valley of the Saguenay lies an area of modern industrial activity focussing on the production of aluminum and pulp and paper. To the west and the shores of the lake, fertile soils provide the basis of a diversified farming community. The Alma and Jonquiere follows the boundary of these regions and draws traffic from both agricultural and industrial activities. The movement of aluminum and paper provide a stable traffic base supplemented by seasonal movements of fertilizers and feed.

Construction of the railway was completed in 1923 from Arvida to Saguenay, twenty-eight miles west of Chicoutimi. The junction point with the Canadian National, to Riverbend on the north bank of the Petite-Decharge of Lake Saint Jean. Soon thereafter the newly erected Price Brothers paper mill at Riverbend began to ship carloads of newsprint over the line.

During the 1920's, the increasing demand for aluminum led to the construction of the Shipshaw dams and Arvida by the Aluminum Company of Canada. Subsequently during World War II, a further surge in the demand for aluminum necessitated the erection of an aluminum reduction plant at Isle Maligne. The Alma and Jonquiere extended from Riverbend to Isle Maligne during this period to facilitate construction of the aluminum plant and of a dam to provide power for the new plant. Recently, a further extension was planned, as National Geographic maps show a projected line from Isle Maligne to the Peribonca River near Ste. Monique Lac St. Jean. A logical extension of this line to the Peribonca River would have been to Dolbeau, linking up with the Canadian National to provide a circle of track around the lake.

Current with the construction of the dam at Isle Maligne, the erection of Alcan's Isle Maligne works. The station performs an intermediate function in the aluminum production process drawing cars of aluminum from Arvida and sending carloads of aluminum billets to Alcan's Kingston, Ontario mills.

A visit to the Alma and Jonquiere's modern offices in April, 1969 provided an opportunity to meet Mr. M. Label, the line's Manager. A tour of the adjoining enginehouse was followed by the presentation of a trip pass and invitation to photograph the railway's engines. Both engines are 1,000 hp. S-4's numbers 10 and 11, built at Schenectady, New York by Alco-GE in 1946. Originally painted in a handsome combination of green, yellow and red, the two engines have recently been repainted the bright yellow and red of the nearby Roberval and Saguenay. This change in livery is indicative of the integration of the Alma and Jonquiere with the Roberval and Saguenay during 1968.

Consolidation of operations of the two Alcan lines has brought about many changes in the operations of the Alma and Jonquiere. Significant among these changes is a reduction from fifty to twenty-three in the number of A & J employees. All engine repairs other than routine servicing are now performed at the recently expanded Roberval and Saguenay shops in Arvida. Whenever either of the A & J engines travels to Arvida for an overhaul, it is temporarily replaced by an R & S unit, commonly an RS-2 or RS-10, although low-nose RS-18 No. 25 worked on the A & J early in 1969.

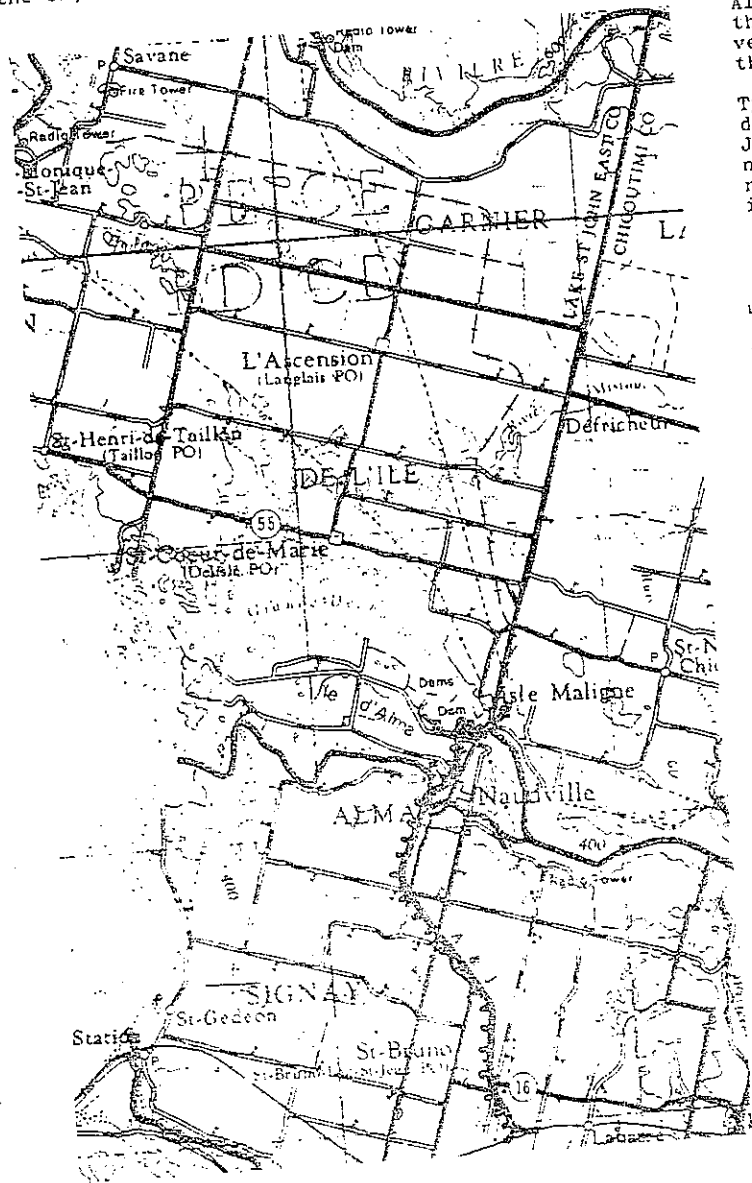
Coincident with the transfer of control to the Roberval and Saguenay was a change in operating pattern of the railway. Formerly a crew went on duty at 5:30 am and performed switching and linehaul work until noon. At 12:30 pm, a second crew began work continuing until 8:30 in the evening. Currently one crew does all work for the line, their activities being controlled by radio from the Isle Maligne headquarters. The crew comprises four men, firemen having been retired from service in 1964. Their day begins at noon and continues until 8:00 pm, occasionally earlier if no early evening switching is required at the Alcan plant.

The centralizing of engine servicing facilities at Arvida has rendered surplus the A & J's shop at Isle Maligne. Thus, despite the fact that it is a modern, fully equipped enginehouse, it will soon be closed and the property sold to Hydro-Quebec. By July 1969, an extension to the unused Alma station will provide a home for the two S-4's. The station itself will be reopened to accommodate necessary office personnel and to provide a central distributing point for the Canadian National Express agency.

from the enginehouse to the previous evening. Here, outbound cars spotted in a train and departure is made for Alma marshalled in a train and departure is made for Alma station, which is actually in Riverbend, across the Petite-Decharge from Alma. Alma station is the site of a large Price Brothers' paper mill. At the station cars are switched and cuts of loaded paper cars are added to the southbound train. Switching at the Price mill is the task of a small 50-ton GE, No. 5, serial #29870, built at Erie, Pennsylvania in 1948.

Following the stop at Alma station, the train descends a steep grade to a crossing of the Petite-Decharge. From this bridge may be seen the twin communities of Alma and Riverbend on opposite banks of the river. The speed of the train decreases rapidly immediately after crossing the river since the train is ascending the ruling grade on the railway. The pair of Alcos can manage only 2000 tons on the winding climb away from the river. The struggle is brief, however, and the 539 engines regain their burbling composure as Alma is left behind. A speed of 30 to 35 miles per hour is easily maintained for the balance of the journey to Saguenay Power as the track crosses the level farmlands which rim Lake Saint Jean.

Below is a map showing the location of the Alma & Jonquiere Railway in the Lake St. Jean region of Quebec. The town marked Naudville on the map is now called Riverbend. The A & J interchanges with the CN, whose line is at the lower edge of the map.

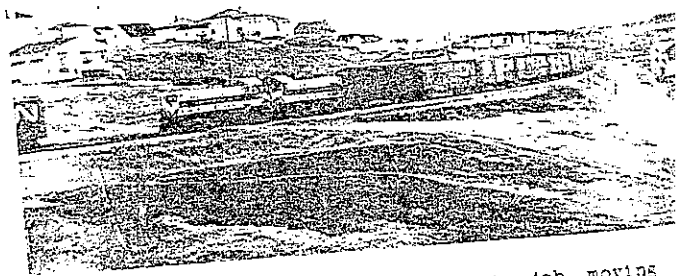


A & J 101, resplendent in its paint scheme of bright yellow and red, pauses to have its picture taken while busy switching loads of newsprint at Alma station.

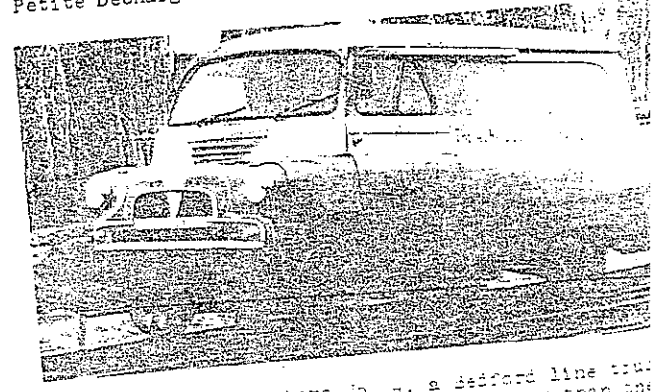
The Canadian National interchange at Saguenay Power sees outbound loads of paper and aluminum exchanged for inbound empty paper cars and gondola loads of alumina.

On the return trip to Isle Maligne a stop is often made at St. Bruno station, site of a large feed and fertilizer distributor. Curiously, perhaps uniquely among Canadian railways, mileposts along the A & J are located and lettered for the mid-point of each mile, for example mileboards are passed at mile 1.5, 2.5, and 3.5. The next stop beyond St. Bruno is at Alma station where cars are set off to be spotted at the Price Brothers mill. The remaining cars are conveyed beyond to Isle Maligne where the A & J switches the Alcan plant.

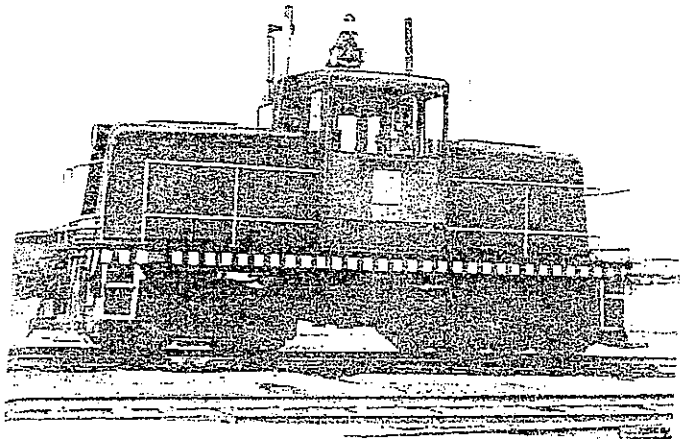
Typically this operating cycle is repeated twice a day, five days a week. Unfortunately, the Alma and Jonquiere like many of her shortline brethren does not operate on weekends, thereby depriving many railway enthusiasts of the opportunity to view an interesting Canadian railway.



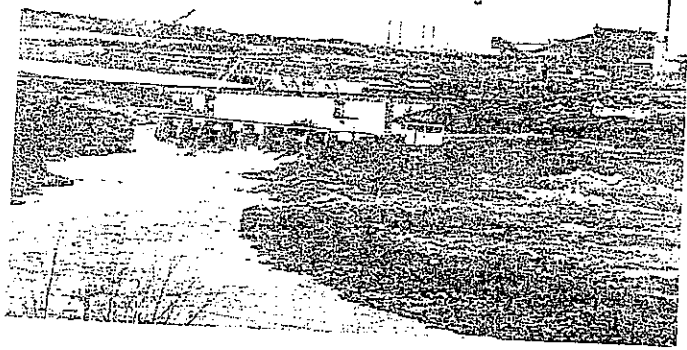
Here we see both A & J Alcos hard at the job, moving loads of paper and aluminum upgrade away from the Petite Decharge toward Saguenay Power.



This is mine # Jonquiere No. 7, a Bedford line truck the only other piece of motive power other than the diesels. Other pieces of work equipment include a snowplow and spreader.



This is Price Brothers Paper Mill plant switcher, a fifty ton GE switcher, No. 5, #29870, built at Erie, Pa., in 1948. Note the position of the beacon light above the bell atop the cab, and also the location of the horn.



Both A & J Alcos rumble across the Petite Decharge of the Saguenay, enroute to Alma with a single boxcar. The large mill in the background is the Price Brothers Riverbend paper mill. The four distant smokestacks locate the Alcan Isle Maligne aluminum reduction facility.