

A Community Newsletter to Connect the
Past, Present and Future

CELEBRATING 109 YEARS

MARCH 1, 1912 TO 2021

SCHUMACHER, ONTARIO

RETURN TO THE RAILS?

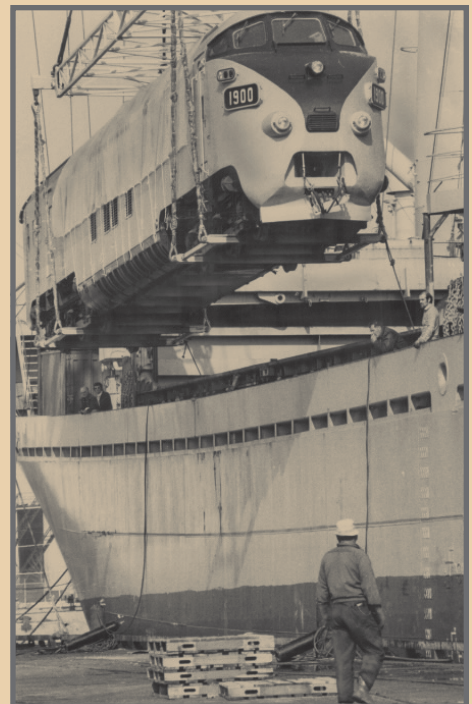


If you want proof that train service played a huge role in the development of Northeastern Ontario, consider that FW Schumacher had a train station built at Aura Lake in 1911, well before the community that would be renamed in his honour began to thrive. For over a century, passenger trains connected people from local communities to each other and to services only available in the southern part of the province.

Direct passenger rail service to Timmins ended in 1990 as a result of massive cuts at VIA Rail. (Soon after, the train tracks that passed through town were pulled out and the historic Schumacher Station was demolished to make way for the by-pass.) At that point, passengers were still able to use Ontario Northland buses to connect from Timmins to the Northlander train in Matheson. Sadly, that option was relatively short-lived. According to rail consultant Greg Gormick, "At the same time, the ONR service was nose-diving due to Ontario's failure to properly replace the exhausted European trains bought to launch the Toronto-Timmins Northlander in 1977". The lack of investment took its toll and, on September 28, 2012, the Northlander train took its final run from Cochrane to Toronto.

For the past eight and a half years, advocates have remained steadfast in their resolve to see passenger rail service return to Northeastern Ontario.

(Continued on page 2 ...)



Above: A used engine from Rotterdam in The Netherlands is unloaded after being shipped overseas to begin a new life on the Toronto-Timmins Northlander run. Left: Diesel locomotive 1504 at Timmins Station in 1966. (Photos courtesy of Ted Vail.)

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Above: The Schumacher Train Station in the winter of 1952. (Photo courtesy of Richard Lamoureux via the Still Proud to be a Schumacher Boy Facebook page.)



Above: A train passing through the Carium Road Underpass, east of Schumacher. It was constructed in 1939. (Photo courtesy of Norm Moore via Ted Vail.)

In his October 23, 2020 Timmins Today article, *Whatever Happened to Northern Ontario's Passenger Trains?*, Gormick commented, "Much could be done in Northern Ontario to make use of our now-mothballed trains to provide safe public travel in these challenging times, as Amtrak demonstrates daily". Gormick is referring to the fact that, even though the Covid19 pandemic remains a public health crisis, Amtrak trains have safely resumed long haul operations in the United States. On top of standard protocols including masking, Amtrak adds extra cars to trains to better promote social distancing amongst passengers.

Pandemic implications aside, passenger rail advocates are cautiously optimistic that the Ford Conservatives might finally be ready to fulfill their 2018 campaign promise to return passenger rail service to Northern Ontario. As reported on the Northeastern Ontario Rail Network website, page 106 of the 2021 Ontario budget (released on March 24) states that "Ontario is committed to reviewing initiatives to meet transportation needs in the North to optimize bus services and to develop options for passenger rail services across Northern Ontario. In keeping with the draft *Transportation Plan for Northern Ontario*, the government is accelerating work to examine safety and infrastructure needs for potential future passenger rail service between Toronto, North Bay, Timmins and

Cochrane. Ontario is investing \$5 million to support planning and design work. An initial business case is being finalized and is expected to be released in spring 2021."

In Fall 2020, the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) surveyed Northerners about the "unique transportation needs of people, Indigenous communities and businesses along the rail corridor between Toronto, North Bay and Cochrane/Timmins." More than 7200 people shared their feedback. When asked for reasons why they had used the Northlander train service in the past, 66% of respondents replied that it allowed them to work, read or entertain themselves while traveling; 63% identified concerns with winter road conditions; 50% stated a preference for travel by train; 49% had a desire to avoid road traffic; and 36% disliked driving for long-distances. For full details see: www.ontario.ca/page/consultation-transportation-opportunities-along-northeastern-ontario-rail-corridor.

Long winters and far travel distances are a reality of Northern Ontario life, so it's safe to say the factors which made the Northlander an appealing transportation option a decade ago would continue to entice people to travel by train today. While a rapid return to train service in the region is unlikely, the knowledge that there are efforts underway to eventually bring it back is encouraging.



WOODWORKING WOMAN

In the 1940s, the Community Programs branch of the Provincial Government introduced special interest courses for residents of Schumacher. Woodworking was of great interest to our mother, Billie Little. She enrolled and waited patiently for the first night of class, held in the wood shop at Schumacher Public School.

Mother came home from her first class very upset and angry. She was the only female registered and the men wanted her to leave; they didn't want a woman in their class. Obviously, they had assumed Billie would be a man! The instructor, Mr. McDonnell, decided Mother could remain and many of the men left the course. Mother persevered and finished the course with flying colours. She enrolled every year for that class and managed to acquire many necessary tools for woodworking as well. Consequently classes were eventually organized for women only.

Our mother was an excellent carpenter and produced some beautiful furniture (including shelves, lamp bases, and a piano bench and stand) that we are proud to show off in our homes. When

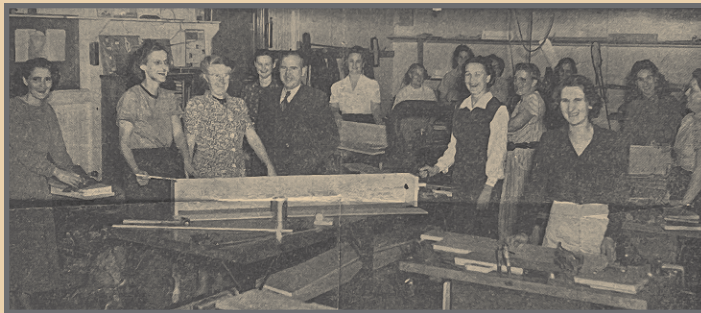
our parents bought a house at 122 Second (Dwyer) Avenue, the basement was enclosed in wood (a common practice at the time). Billie decided that the wood should be replaced by poured concrete. She worked hard to build the necessary frame. A cement mixer was rented. Neighbour men were invited to help. Mother even went downtown to purchase a case of beer so she could reward the workers.

The Saturday designated for concrete pouring arrived bright and warm. Dad, Alf Little, watched from the sidelines. It wasn't long before he started giving instructions. Billie would have none of that! She made it clear to everyone that this was her project. Dad could watch, but he was not to tell the crew what to do.

The walls of the basement were complete with concrete. The next winter, she worked in small batches putting a cement floor in place. We were so proud of her work and wonder if it is still there?

Contributed By:

Linda Little Griffis & Judy Little Kleven



This photo of a Women's Woodworking Class appeared in the November 4, 1950 edition of *The Timmins Daily Press*. Billie Little is pictured second from left, near instructor Mr. J.A. McDonnell. Please let us know if you recognize any of the other women!

EDITOR'S NOTE: The house at 122 Second (Dwyer) Avenue was torn down at some point prior to March 1, 2010. City of Timmins records indicate that the vacant land was sold to a neighbouring property owner on that date. It is now an extension of their yard.

TRIVIA with BOB & CLAYTON

The Winter 2020 challenge was to name all the grocery stores that have existed in Schumacher. Here is Bob Rowe and Clayton McAlpine's list: Blahey's (Red & White); Zanchin's, Sebalj's, Biggs' (later McLellan's), Northern Provisions (Verbick's), Fabello's (listed as a grocery in a 1963 real estate document) and, of course, Consumer's Co-op. If they missed any, please let us know!

Here is your next trivia question:

Name all the restaurants that existed in Schumacher over the years.

Good luck! Happy Reminiscing!



THE ENNIS COLLECTION

Every photo tells a story and Roni Pitt, granddaughter of Ronald Ennis, has acquired a collection that speaks volumes about our local history. Ronald, the younger brother of renowned McIntyre Mine Manager RJ Ennis, also pursued a career in mining. He started out in Belleterre, came to Schumacher in the mid 1930s and ended up in the Ottawa area. While at the McIntyre, Ronald worked as a Mill Manager.

Roni has become the keeper of the Ennis family's mementos, including many of RJ's personal photos. She is happy to share the photos with SOS readers in the hopes of learning more about her family's history and connection to our community.



Above: This 1911 Art Tomkinson photograph is the oldest McIntyre photo most local historians have seen. It likely shows the rebuilding of the original mill (at the later site of the Schumacher Swimming pool and current Comfort Inn) after the Great Fire of 1911. Below: First Avenue (Father Costello Drive) circa 1917. Pearl Lake is to the left with the Paris Hotel at the east end of the street. Many of these homes and rooming houses eventually had front facades added and became businesses. Most still stand today. The foreground gate marked the Schumacher Mine property boundary before it was bought by the McIntyre.



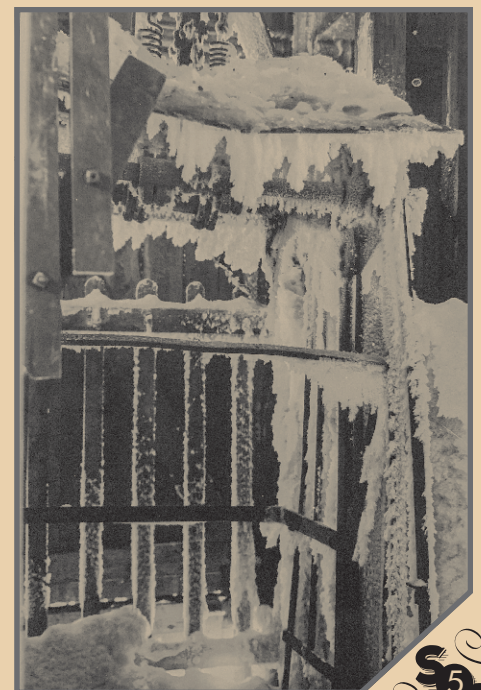
HALL UPDATE

The Schumacher Croatian Society's "Save the Hall, Buy Bricks in the Wall" fundraising campaign continues on its successful journey. As of March 31st, the campaign has reached 44% of its goal by raising over \$66 000. Donations to the campaign are still being accepted.

A dedicated crew prepared 50 Easter Bundles consisting of a dozen cabbage rolls, a baker's dozen perogy and a 14" apple strudel. This fundraising venture was so popular, it sold out in less than 24 hours! A huge shout-out to Cathy Beard, Jasmine Chenier, Shirley Deleurant, Jennifer Dunkley, Lorna Hrbolich, Margaret Johns, Kim and Ken Krcel, Darlene and Mike Polowy, Vera Romanowski, Dennis Sebalj, Karen Stefanic, June Stefanic, Ruth Wiwchar and Kathy Vukobratich for your dedicated volunteer work. Please stay tuned for more "meal bundle" offers in the near future.



Top: This November 2, 1912 photo shows a group of men surveying the progress on the McIntyre Mill. Construction was entrusted to Hill-Clark-Francis Co. Middle: This undated photo shows RJ Ennis (second from left) with three unknown men walking on a tailings bridge near the McIntyre Mine. Bottom: First Avenue in Schumacher circa 1914; take note of the Majestic Theatre on the right side of the street. The automobile in the foreground belonged to RJ Ennis. Right: The caption on the back reads "The cage of the old Pearl Lake mine taken about 1915 in the spring. Note frost inside on cage caused by upcast".





EDITORIAL

It's interesting how unusual circumstances can offer unexpected opportunities. Since the pandemic began, I am much more aware of the "side hustle" businesses run by my friends and acquaintances. Recently, I joined that club and became a Norwex Independent Consultant (check out my website lisaromanowski.norwex.biz if you are interested). Anyhow, it's led me to wonder about the small businesses operated by SACHA supporters. I would love to hear from SOS readers who are entrepreneurs! Please drop an email to schumachergirl@gmail.com. At the very least, an interesting article for the newsletter might result.

As this issue goes to print, Ontario is being hard hit by a third wave of the Covid19 Pandemic. Vaccine rollout is well underway, but the province is still seeing thousands of new cases daily and southern hospitals are being overwhelmed. Case counts are rising locally and we are seeing both community spread and variant-strain cases. We are in the midst of a minimum six-week stay-at-home order and K-12 schooling has gone virtual once again. Although times remain challenging, I am still looking forward to brighter days ahead.

Until next time, stay healthy, keep following public health guidelines, and take care,

Lisa Romanowski,
SOS Editor

SACHA UPDATE

In spite of ongoing public health restrictions, the SACHA Board continues to fulfill our mandate in somewhat limited capacities. Kathy, Vera, and Lisa are handling daily operations (finances, membership, newsletter), and Lloyd is connecting with people virtually regarding some ongoing projects.

The *Schumacher Archival Assessment Project* has formed an advisory committee. The initial focus of this ongoing project will be to digitally archive material held by Schumacher community groups in order to preserve as much of their history as possible.

To commemorate SACHA's tenth anniversary, a *Schumacher International Peace Park* will be established within the Lions Club Park. Project partners (including SACHA, the Schumacher Lions Club, the Timmins Multicultural Centre, Newmont Porcupine and the Schumacher Foundation) plan to officially dedicate the Peace Park on September 21, 2021 (the United Nations' International Day of Peace).

Plans are also underway to expand lending library opportunities in the community. District School Board Ontario North East high school instructors and students will design and build the book boxes, which will be installed with a park bench at locations in Schumacher, Gold Centre, and Carium Road. SACHA, the City of Timmins, and the Schumacher Foundation are also supporters of this project.

For the most up to date info, follow us on Facebook:
www.facebook.com/SpiritOfSchumacher

READER MAIL

Thank you for the useful mask. It is comfortable and well made. Nice idea and a pleasant surprise!

Ms. Patricia MacLachlan

SACHA NOW ACCEPTS ETRANSFERS

Annual SACHA support payments can now be made by eTransfer. Use the email address schumachergirl@gmail.com.

SACHA DIRECTORS

Lloyd Salomone
Kathy Vukobratich
Vera Romanowski
Lisa Romanowski

SOS Newsletter Inquiries

schumachergirl@gmail.com
PO Box 13, Schumacher, ON, P0N 1G0

General SACHA Inquiries:

info@spiritofschumacher.ca

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SOS NEWSLETTER

The not-for-profit Schumacher Arts, Culture & Heritage Association publishes the SOS newsletter quarterly in Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter.

For PDF versions email:
info@spiritofschumacher.ca

Readers are invited to submit articles and photos celebrating Schumacher's past, present, or future for publication consideration. Please include the creator's full name and the full names of photo subjects.

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*All that is gold does not glitter,
Not all those who wander are lost;
The old that is strong does not wither,
Deep roots are not reached by the frost.*

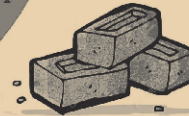
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