

CP Police - The Early Years

In 1836, the first railway in Canada operated on wooden rails topped by strap iron, ran for 16 miles between LaPrairie and St. John's, in what is now the province of Quebec. By the 1860s there were about 150 settlements in Western Canada scattered around Hudson's Bay Company posts between the Red River and the Pacific Coast. The British North America Act, passed in 1867, established the Confederation of the Dominion of Canada. The Prime Minister, Sr. John A. MacDonald, along with other prominent politicians recognized the need for a transcontinental railway to ensure that the Province of British Columbia joined the Confederation.

In 1880, the Dominion Government entered into a contract with the Canadian Pacific Railway, whereby the Government required a rail line be constructed from an Atlantic Terminal to the Pacific Coast within 10 years. The first recorded instances of railway police in Canada was when the North West Mounted Police (N.W.M.P) were stationed along the railway route enforcing criminal laws for horse stealing, whiskey smuggling and altercations in labour disputes during the construction of the railway.

As the railway expanded and business increased, crimes such as thefts, pilferages and damage to property and equipment increased. To combat criminal activity a "Special Services Department" was created by Canadian Pacific (CP) in 1900 with a headquarters in Place Viger Station. The responsibilities of the Special Services Department included the enforcement of the laws and the protection of CP's interests. During 1900 to 1904, crimes investigated by the Special Services Department included thefts, attempted derailments, fraudulent claims for freight and baggage, as well as tracing lost freight and baggage.

In the early part of the 1900s, the Special Services Department provided policing for cells in the Place Viger Station basement. Chinese deportees were kept in the cells until they were escorted to Vancouver, BC by CP employees, who were used as guards along the way. In one instance, after arriving in Vancouver, there was one more body than called for on the manifest. Enquiries indicated that during a train stop in the Fraser Valley, a guard saw a Chinese on the right-of-way beside the coach and believing him to be a deportee, put him on-board. He was in fact an employee, but with the language barrier, the guard took no chances and put him in the coach with the deportees.

CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY CO.

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

MONTREAL, January 15th, 1913.

It has been decided to create a Department of Investigation, in charge of Mr. Rufus G. Chamberlin, whose title will be Chief of the Department of Investigation, and whose office will be at Windsor Street Station, Montreal.

Hereafter, all inquiries or investigations, excepting those involving the relations between officials and employees, and those which must necessarily be conducted through the Audit Department, will be under the control and supervision of the Chief of the Department of Investigation, who will report to the President.

Mr. Chamberlin will have such assistants on the different sections of the System as may be necessary to enable him to perform his work efficiently.


PRESIDENT

During the winter months in 1903 and 1904 CP crews were surveying the area between Wanapitei and Toronto, Ontario, to determine the best route. At the time, another railway company was bidding for the right-of-way in the area and it would be the railway company who registered their plan first that would be granted the right-of-way. CP survey crews had not been heard from and management, who wanted to check on the progress, sent a Special Service member to check on the crews. The member travelled from Ottawa, Ontario to Parry Sound and then on to Shawanaga by stagecoach. After being accommodated overnight at a house located on an Indian reservation with cots set up in the sleeping quarters, the member and two lumberjacks set out on foot for Byng Inlet. As there were no roads, the travelers took a trail marked with cairns of rocks and crossed frozen rivers and streams. After reaching Byng Inlet, it was learnt that the survey crew was further north near the Still River so the member hired an Indian with a canoe, to take him to the camp. After reaching the first set of surveyors, the member was told that the second crew was still further north, near the French River. As the streams and lakes were beginning to thaw, he stayed at the first camp and sent the Indian to bring back the essential information. One week later, the Indian brought the required documents to the member, who returned, alone through the forest from Byng Inlet to Shawanaga, and then to Montreal with the required reports, which he turned over to management. On May 3, 1904, it was announced that CP had successfully completed its survey and they had been first to register a plan.

On September 2, 1904, near Silverdale, British Columbia, three men robbed a CP train and stole about \$7,000. One of the robbers was identified as Bill Miner, alias, "California Billy", a notorious American stagecoach and train robber, but was never caught. He was believed to have escaped into the United States with his accomplices.

On May 8, 1906, 12 miles east of Kamloops, BC, an engineer and fireman were confronted by two masked men, carrying Colt 45s. The crew was ordered to detach the mail car and proceed up the track about one mile, where a third

companion joined the robbers and the mail clerks were forced to open the mail car door to hand over all express shipments. As there were no express shipments, the gunmen took all available registered mail parcels and left. A posse of local law enforcement officers and volunteers gave chase and after a 6-day search, police surrounded the bandits around a campfire. One bandit drew his weapon and was shot in the leg. All three were apprehended, charged and convicted of armed robbery.

On June 23, 1909, a train midway between Notch Hill and Kamloops, BC when an armed and masked man forced the crew to stop near a bonfire where three additional armed men entered the train. As there was nothing of value on the train, all assailants rode off on horses. A short time later, police saw the two men near Ashcroft, British Columbia. A local law enforcement Constable ordered the men to stop when one man drew his revolver and fired, killing the Constable, who, fired simultaneously killing the robber. The other man disappeared into the bush.

As well as routine policing, there were a number of incidents, which are somewhat out of the ordinary. In one case, the Special Services Department was requested to assist in disposing of some old deteriorated black powder and dynamite that had been recovered from an abandoned mine. The Special Service Department assisted in moving 180 twenty-five pound cans of powder and 7 cases of dynamite. When the boxcar arrived in Cochrane, AB, delivery was refused and the boxcar was placed at the end of the yard. As no one would accept responsibility, Special Services Department members personally unloaded the car, opened the cans of powder and burned the powder along with the dynamite in a nearby field.

When the Special Services Department disbanded in 1904, there was no agency to police the Company's holdings. Protection and security was negligible and arranged on a local basis without any overall supervision. The situation quickly deteriorated and crime increased to an all-time high, with losses to theft and pilferage amounting to more than one million dollars by

1912. There was no organized police force and the only protection offered to freight yards was given by elderly watchmen, who, because of the lack of training and supervision, were unable to cope with the dangerous situations they faced.

In Cochrane, AB, during 1912, a trainman was shot and killed after confronting two transients riding in a refrigerator car. One assailant confessed to the killing and was arrested, convicted and sentenced to hang.

As conditions continuously became so bad, the late Lord Shaughnessy, Chairman and President of Canadian Pacific, decided that in order to provide effective protection to CP's property an organized police force was necessary. The year, 1913 would see, under the direction of the late Chief R.G. Chamberlin, the birth of the CP's Department of Investigation, now known as the Canadian Pacific Police Service.