

Canadian Railway and Marine World

December, 1917.

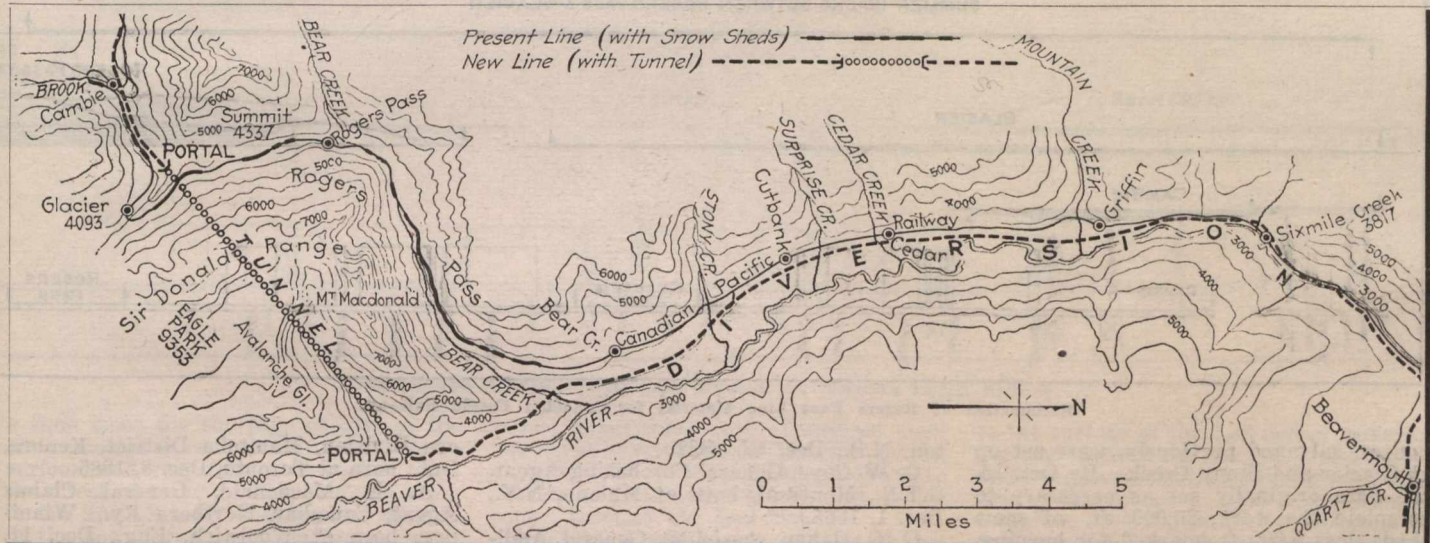
Salvaging the Canadian Pacific Railway's Old Line at Rogers Pass.

The five-mile Connaught tunnel, on the C.P.R. main line through the Selkirk Mountains in British Columbia, was opened for operation in Dec. 1916. Its use made possible the abandoning of the old main line over the Rogers Pass, with a consequent reduction in elevation of more than 500 ft. A large amount of curvature was also taken out and the distance considerably shortened. The old main line left the present line about three-quarters of a mile from the new tunnel's western portal, crossed the Illecillewaet River and Eagle Creek, followed the contour around the Cambie and Glacier loops, rising steadily on heavy grades through about two miles of snow sheds until the summit was reached at Rogers Pass. From Rogers Pass the line dropped to the east

to certain specified points on the line, was to be taken to Donald, B.C., in the Columbia River valley, as this was the nearest place having space enough available to store the amount of material which it was estimated was to be saved. The turning point of the work was the necessity of finishing it before the first snow fell, as there was every chance that if part of the line was left unprotected through the winter, with long stretches of snow shed taken out, slides would make it impossible to go in again in the spring of 1918 and bring out the rest of the line. Before work began, in fact, three small slides, one of them about 250 ft. long, were found to have already occurred and had to be cleared before the line could be used for work trains.

part to 3 and 4 in. planks and 12, 14 and 16 in. square timbers from 20 to 30 ft. long. The timber was delivered on flat cars at Donald, the cars being picked up daily at the various points where the derricks were working, by C.P.R. work trains operating over the hill until the track was broken, and afterward on the west slope, down over the Cambie loop and through the tunnel to Donald.

Final decision to salvage the line was made by the C.P.R. late in July, and the last few days of the month were spent in repairing and refurbishing outfit cars, arranging for board and commissary matters and getting equipment ready for the work. It was estimated that snow enough to shut down the work might be expected any time after Oct. 15, and that there



Old and New Lines, Canadian Pacific Railway, at Rogers Pass, B.C.

sharply, and from one mile east of Rogers Pass to Bear Creek ran through practically continuous snow sheds for three miles and joined the new main line just east of Stony Creek.

The abandoned line comprised some 20 miles of track and sidings; 25,000 lin. ft. of snow sheds, and a considerable amount of miscellaneous property, including water and oil lines, telegraph lines, tool houses, water tanks, station buildings and locomotive house equipment at Rogers Pass. Due to the abnormal conditions created by the war, the C.P.R. desired to salvage everything that would justify the expense of recovery. The general plan for the work was, first, the salvaging of snow sheds on each side of the summit, working down the hill both ways from Rogers Pass. The cribbing was to be left, as it was too firmly embedded in the side of the hill to be pulled loose without breaking, in addition to the probability that if taken out it would bring down the hill with it. Track was to be taken up, when the snow sheds were far enough ahead, so that the track gangs would not overtake the snow shed gangs. Miscellaneous structures were to be taken out as most convenient. All material, except such as might be loaded and sent direct

The question of equipment was of first importance, due to the need for rapid work. It quickly developed that practically all the equipment would have to be improvised, as no standard equipment was available in the way of locomotive cranes or other rigs that might be used for wrecking the sheds. It was therefore decided to rely principally on skid derricks, working on top of or alongside the sheds. Eight of these were built, together with a derrick car, which was put together in Vancouver and shipped to the work. Overhead cable ways were considered, but believed to be too slow, particularly as it soon developed that the cribbing would stand if the sheds were removed, so that there was no immediate danger of slides and no need of keeping equipment up out of the way. A track laying machine was also considered for taking up track, but it was thought there was not sufficient work to justify its use.

At the unloading and storage yard at Donald, a small, quick handling, movable derrick, of about 2 tons capacity, was installed, and one larger stationary derrick, with an 80 ft. boom. Two reciprocating steam saws, with boilers, were set up for working the salvaged timber into shape. The sizes of the timber ran for the most

were, therefore, not more than 75 working days which could be safely counted upon. By the first week in August camps had been established at Cambie, Donald and Rogers Pass, and work had begun on the snow sheds at several points on the west slope. Labor, although none too good, appeared plentiful, but it was difficult to get prompt deliveries on much needed equipment. By the second week in August, however, work was well under way on the sheds and some track and locomotive house material had been shipped from Rogers Pass yards. By the third week, 3,700 lin. ft. of snow shed were either partly or wholly wrecked, but it was becoming very difficult to hold labor, due to the higher rates that were being paid in the harvest fields. Men would ship to Rogers Pass, work for a few days and then drift on to the east. Instead of 300 or more men estimated as necessary for progress, the number dropped to 150, and several times to not more than 100. By the end of August, however, 6,500 lin. ft. of sheds were wholly or partially down, two miles of track were up and a considerable amount of miscellaneous material had been loaded. Work was pushed with the small force available and by mid September seven