



TRAIN engineer Charlie Deighan, LEFT, and his uncle, 86-year-old Bennett Deighan, talk in front of a

train in Emerald Junction. Area residents have joined forces in an effort to save the old railway station in

Emerald Junction. The elder Mr. Deighan terms the old buildii. "the only identity we have left here."

"ONLY IDENTITY WE HAVE LEFT HERE"

Emerald Junction Fighting For Old Railway Station

By BILL MCGUIRE
EMERALD JUNCTION — Residents of Emerald Junction and area have joined forces in an effort to save their railway station, a building which 86-year old Bennett Deighan says "is the only identity we have left here."

The railway and Emerald have always been closely identified ever since the first tracks were laid in the late 1860s, said Mr. Deighan, the oldest resident living in the village.

The western line from Summerside and the eastern from Charlottetown join at Emerald. Even today two freight trains make a double trip through each day and there is still a full time station agent on duty.

NEW OFFICE

But the agent works out of a new office built next to the old station. CN had planned to tear down the old station built in 1917 but Mr. Deighan said villagers protested and succeeded in having those plans delayed until a proposal could be brought forward to save the historic structure. With most other businesses closed or torn down, the station house, with its waiting rooms for men and women and offices, is the last remaining piece of history dealing with the trains in the village, states Mr. Deighan.

"My father used to tell me

that when the first train pulled into Emerald people almost went through the walls with fright because of the noise," chuckled Mr. Deighan.

His father worked for CN part-time, his duty being to keep the big water tank filled for the steam engines to load up.

Mr. Deighan said the old station was closed when CN took off the passenger trains some years ago. Buses now take passengers to connections in Amherst.

He blames the automobile for the demise of the passenger trains. "Cars killed the passenger trains."

He said 40 years ago trains were still a convenient way to travel. For \$1.40 return, a person could catch the noon train for Charlottetown, do his business and be back in Emerald in time to do the barn work, recalls Mr. Deighan.

ONCE BOOMING SPOT

In the hay day of the passenger trains Emerald was a booming little community, he pointed out. There was a blacksmith shop, large general store, bank, carriage shop, cheese factory, two room school, post office, hotel and boarding house.

All are gone now and the community doesn't even boast a store. The school is closed

because of consolidation and students are bused to Kinkora while Emerald is now a rural route for Kinkora post office. There was never a church in the village although a priest always used to live here along with a doctor.

Before the advent of the diesel engines trains were powered by steam produced by burning coal, says Mr. Deighan. His father worked for 30 years keeping the tanks full.

The old station built when the first tracks were laid was torn down in 1917 and the present station was built across the tracks. At this time, or about the close of the First World War, that the shift was made from narrow gauge tracks to the modern wide gauge.

Mr. Deighan says he remembers German prisoners of war laying down a third track to accommodate modern trains. The wide gauge was laid first from Borden to Summerside and Charlottetown and it took over five years for the eastern and western sections to be changed over, he added.

He also stated Emerald was a key loading area for potatoes but now most of the Island crop is shipped out in trucks.

SNOW HEAVY

Winters with heavy snowstorms also brought back



EMERALD JUNCTION RAILWAY STATION

memories for Mr. Deighan. He says there used to be periods of up to a week when trains would be struck in giant drifts and men would work night and day to shovel the trains free.

He warned that "if we get snow this winter like the rain we got this summer, there could be a lot of snow coming. I hear it will be a bad winter

Since the old station was closed some 10 years ago it has been vacant and idle but plans to demolish the building has sparked villagers into action.

The station could be turned into a tourist attraction and also provide a much needed store, says Mr. Deighan. It could also be a steam train museum or even a youth cen-

tre. He said a committee formed to save the station has applied for a federal grant to restore the building and the committee hopes to buy the station from CN.

"If we are successful, it will mean a bit of history has been saved," he concluded.