

The Lac du Bonnet Train Station

The CPR Train Station in Lac du Bonnet was not unlike any other train station in Manitoba, or indeed Canada. All stations were generally the same colour, a deep unmistakable dark wine. They were the crucial, centrally located and chief facility in towns and villages as they grew in size and importance. Stations were the hub of activity, a place where people assembled when arriving or leaving. All mail and supplies left and return that way, and in some cases, I've heard even individual liquor purchases were delivered by train, those were the days when roads and cars were in short supply. There were many very vital, very important functions carried on in the area that used the services of the Lac du Bonnet CPR Station, you will be alerted to one in the oncoming paragraphs.

Early farm life, for the young in regards to spending money was never easy or cooperative, we had to make our own way and the results, if any, were normally used for school supplies mostly, unless we cheated. Hence the frozen bush rabbit caper.

Our observation enlightened us as to the most opportune time to hunt, just after sunset when those poor creatures were advancing toward their dinner. Any time prior to that was the time to set up camp on the pinnacle of a miniature stack of alfalfa hay, provided earlier by my Dad. That uppermost height, at centre field, provided a comfortable place in which we dug down a bit to shelter us from the wind and all was ready. As the winter advanced and snow accumulated, the wind invariably blew the white stuff so as to make three-foot drifts around our little encampment. This happened especially on the side where the woods lay, where all the doomed took leave from. Hoppity loved to slide down these banks right to its meal and for those who eluded my marksmanship, sweet, green alfalfa greeted them. They had lived to dine another day. In a short period of time they had munched their way into a concave depression where they were quite safe, that is for those who made it through.



The method we devised for the carrying out our carnage necessitated the use of a five-battery flashlight, a powerhouse in those days, borrowed from an older brother. The light did not seem to bother the rabbits at all. I would lie in firing position while Audrey, my younger sister and partner in crime, held the powerhouse in a position to illuminate both the sights on the rifles barrel... and the victim. This all sounds cruel, but remember we were adding to that "small amount of income that transfers so easily to a family's bottom line". The idea was to pop off as many as possible and when rabbit mealtime was over, we retired to our own. Probably rabbit stew was on the menu. Prior to this, of course, we *executed* the pickup, while trying to remember where all the deceased lay.

You will probably remember that there were two varieties out there. The smaller bush rabbits had three places of interment. We could use them for food but the jacks were much preferred. Chickens just loved to pick at the small bush rabbits when hung in a frozen state where they could be accessed. The vast bulk though, was pressed into little barrels about thirty inches high, left outside to freeze as they came, fur and all. These were then shipped off to Soudack Fur Auction Sales Ltd. in Winnipeg who paid by the pound, re-selling them to mink farms to be fed to their stock. We had but to transfer the barrels to a platform outside the CPR Station in Lac du coming Bonnet. Later a small cheque would arrive in the mail with a notation saying that our next shipment's container was at the CPR Station. After reading the above you will have been appropriately alerted to the fact that besides being a place "*where people assembled when leaving or returning to their homes, where "all mail and supplies left or arrived"*", that there were other very vital, very important functions carried on in the area... that used the services of that colourful, important, well utilized Lac du Bonnet CPR Station. ...*Marcel R Pitre*