



Susan in 2015



Susan at work with the 200 combine car in 1948
(from website trainweb.org)

SUSAN PUSH

The Little Engine That Can

By Lorraine Payette

"She may have seen better days, when she was in her prime..." - She May Have Seen Better Days

Mention Susan Push to almost anyone in Gananoque, and you'll be given a fond smile in return. Located on King Street near the Visitors' Centre, this delicate iron princess weighs in at a modest 90,860 lb (41,300 Kg) and is a favourite backdrop for both local and tourist photographers.

Born in 1930, she is a one-of-a-kind homebuilt diesel, rebuilt by Oshawa (electric) Railway from an electric locomotive. Manufactured as a 250 hp gas/electric powered engine, Susan was one of the earliest engines converted to diesel/electric in 1947. She worked happily for 31 years for the Thousand Islands Railway, starting with her purchase in 1931, and retired quietly in 1962. She proudly filled the need for active railroad service during that entire period.

Susan has seen two locations since being in Gananoque – first at the foot of Main Street, and then, on June 2, 1983, she was moved

to her current location at the "Umbrella" on King.

During her career, she ran up and down the TIR line making the four stops at the "Umbrella", the Gananoque Cemetery, Cheeseborough and the Gananoque Junction. One of the smallest railways in Canada, the TIR was originally three miles long, built to connect Gananoque with the Montréal-Toronto main line of the Grand Trunk Railway of Canada. The TIR held the distinction of being the only line in Canada which would allow you to buy a round trip ticket to a cemetery, making it very convenient for families to visit their deceased loved ones on a regular basis.

Susan pulled both freight and passengers after the addition of the number 200 combine car. A one-way fare to travel could be purchased for 25¢ but if a family or friends wished to see someone off at the Gananoque Junction, they could make the round trip for that same quarter.

"My dad worked as a trainman for a brief time on Susan during the early 50's," said

Derryl Wood of the Heritage Committee. "I used to pay twenty-five cents to ride to the Junction, pick up my newspapers (for my paper route), then fold them in the baggage section on the way back to town."

Sadly, time and the elements have taken their toll. Once gleaming black paint has faded and peeled, rust has settled in wherever moisture has had a chance to penetrate. She sits slowly falling apart, waiting for someone to reach out and notice her, for someone to care.

The Gananoque Heritage Committee has heard her cry and is mounting a campaign to save Susan.

"The Heritage Committee's goal is to restore and preserve Susan with a period style cover," said Wood. "The cost estimate to do this is approximately \$100,000. Stage one consists of repairing rust, sand blasting, primer coating and painting the engine. Stage two is to have an umbrella structure put over her for protection."

The Committee is hoping to raise funds through government grants, general fund raising and donations from citizens concerned about the potential loss of yet another historical artifact in Gananoque. Fund raising efforts are starting this spring, with a completion date for the project set for July 1, 2016. **LH**

EDITOR'S NOTE: To learn more about how you can help save Susan Push, please go to the "Friends of Susan Push" facebook page or contact the Gananoque Heritage Committee.