

The train station, heart of the village

On September 17, 1896, a special train stopped on the shores of Lac Mercier. Thirty or so dignitaries accompanied by a few elegant ladies had come by train from Montreal to attend the inauguration of the Parc de la Montagne-Tremblante, a few kilometres to the north. There was good news, too, for the settlers in attendance: there would “soon” be a station beside Lac Mercier, which the railroad had reached in 1893.



The Lac Mercier railway station at the beginning of the last century.

Source: Société d'histoire Chute aux Iroquois.

The modest station, which was not actually built until 1904, changed the



Because of its architecture, with a double-sloped roof supported by rafters whose ends are visible, the Mont-Tremblant station is the only one of its kind in the Laurentians.

Source: Société d'histoire Chute aux Iroquois.

of the hotels on Lac Mercier or Lac Tremblant. Every evening, villagers and tourists gathered at the train station to await the arrival of the train and the travellers. The crowd then moved on to the post office, where the postmaster distributed the precious letters brought by the train.

course of events. A village sprang up on the shores of Lac Mercier and, in about 1906, entrepreneurs from Montreal established a factory there for chemical products derived from the pyrolysis of wood. The rails of the railway split off to reach the factory (on the current rue du Couvent), and the material produced by the workers of Lac Mercier was carried by train to Montreal.

Over the decades, the station was the centre of village life. It was the train that brought merchandise, family, lumberjacks after their winter in the logging camps, fishers and hunters. And above all, summer visitors, who spent the season in their villas or stayed at one of the hotels on Lac Mercier or Lac Tremblant. Every evening, villagers and tourists gathered at the train station to await the arrival of the train and the travellers. The crowd then moved on to the post office, where the postmaster distributed the precious letters brought by the train.

In the 1930s, on some winter Sundays, passengers of a new sort got off the train at the Lac Mercier station. These were seasoned sportsmen and they left the station on skis heading for Mont Tremblant, the highest summit in the Laurentians. Later, a small coach would come to the station to fetch the wealthy

Americans who came to Mont Tremblant Lodge, the trendy new ski resort that opened in 1939.



The final stage of the trip to Mont Tremblant Lodge: the hotel's private coach, which picked up guests at the station.

Source: *Ville de Mont-Tremblant.*

In the '60s, competition from cars and buses slowly led to reduced service on the Montreal-Mont-Laurier line. The P'tit train du Nord disappeared for good in 1981, after a few years of seasonal service. The elected representatives and the economic and tourism development organizations of the Laurentians then launched an ambitious project: to transform the rail bed into a trail for cyclists and hikers. The P'tit train du Nord linear park was inaugurated in 1996.

Rebuilt in 1998, the Mont-Tremblant railway station now welcomes cyclists, hikers, skiers and visitors from all over the world.



In winter, the "P'tit train du Nord" sometimes had to clear a path through impressive snow banks.

Source: *Canadian Pacific Archives, NS.6066.*

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