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# The 1<sup>re</sup> Cataracte

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## Divers.....from page 1A

motive is located. Another scan was done on June 6. A total of 17 passes were done up and down the river to cover the entire width," Ouellette added.

"While waiting for the scans' analysis, I really thought the locomotive had been taken out of the river at that point. I did not want to confirm it until the results came back from the University of New Brunswick. We were a little discouraged thinking the data did not look promising. Now that the data has been carefully studied and located in reference to the original survey, it looks totally different. It would appear that the information about the third span being the one that collapsed was accurate. According to the latest survey, the magnetic debris field is located between piers 3 and 4 (third span). Another interesting piece of information is the magnetic field variations are far greater this time than last (April 6th survey of the second span). With all the data plotted on the same scale of reference, the rail detected last time is now faint in the new surveyed area. This still doesn't confirm the presence of a locomotive in the river but the scan did pick up the presence of heavy metal debris down there."

"Observing closely the details on a picture of the collapsed bridge, it would seem that the bridge deck was constructed out of wood which signifies no metal except for spikes, rails, the locomotive and railway cars. So the magnetic peaks are most likely not the deck. Now that we know how dense a rail reading is on the new scan (span 2), we also know that the readings generated above the third span area are far more intense. The sizes of the metal objects detected by the magnetometer are directly proportional to the magnetic field variations. This signifies that higher magnetic field variations relate to bigger metal (magnetized) objects. These are very interesting and encouraging results."

"The locomotive itself is smaller in size than one of the docks at the Marina," Ouellette said. "By my estimates, it was approximately 25 feet in length, six to seven feet in width and 10 to 12 feet high."

**Poor visibility**  
"A second dive effort was organized when Luc Pelletier and Daniel Tardif went beneath the waters on June 14. It rained and the visibility was poor and still no locomotive," stated Ouellette.

"We put in a good effort on that day but Mother Nature did not. The dive still took place but the overcast skies made visibility even worse than last time. Daniel Tardif told me he had to feel the bottom with his hands to search. It was very similar to walking in the dark with no light. What is kind of funny is that he found the pier underwater by banging his head into a log sticking out of it! I'm not laughing at him but it really made it all clear for me when he told me that... zero visibility (too dark and turbid). Kind of gives you an idea of the conditions they had to work in. They did find some metal debris down there but no locomotive."

Ouellette's hopes did not diminish. "We were hoping that the third time would be a charm!" he said. A tentative dive date was set for Saturday, June 21, exactly 103 years to the day of the bridge collapse. More divers were expected. "We figured that as a group, they might have better luck searching the area."

On June 18, Ouellette finally managed to contact the Moncton divers who had supposedly found the locomotive back in the fall of 2000. "They assured me 100% that the train is still resting at the bottom of the Saint John River. They told me they had found it in September 2000 and that the locomotive was on its side," Ouellette said. "It was not at the time covered in silt or buried. They said it had been found exactly where it plunged 100 years ago at the time. It never drifted. It was also in fairly good condition for what it's been through. All the other pieces of the train were gone except for the locomotive. The other lighter cars most likely were pulled to shore but the much heavier locomotive was left to soak... for 103 years. He also told me that the best time to dive in the Saint John River is in the fall. The low water level and the lack of current render it more fruitful for divers wanting to find locomotives."

"We decided we were still going diving on Saturday now that we were sure we were not wasting our time," he added.

On Saturday, Ouellette and the divers were on the river from 11 a.m. until 7:30 p.m. "Mother Nature made up for the week before but there was still no sign of locomotive #508. Eight divers took the challenge today but the four to five feet visibility was still no picnic. We tried different search methods but none of them turned up the locomotive," Ouellette said.

He has challenged the Moncton divers who reportedly found the locomotive in 2000 to step up the plate and do it again next weekend.

**Window of opportunity**  
"We did not start the fundraising efforts on Saturday for the simple reason that we have not yet officially found the locomotive. It really impressed me to see the turnout we had for this event. It's encouraging to see that even though we live in a money-driven world, we can still come together and forget about that \$ for a while. I want to find this locomotive without spending a penny. There is NO reason why this cannot be done... we just have to think a little differently," stated Ouellette.

Questioned about the cost of salvaging the locomotive once it is found, Ouellette stated "It's not about how much it's going to cost but rather how much this is going to benefit the Town of Grand Falls."

"An event like this will be BIG positive news for us and will get attention from all over the world. We can make history without spending a great deal of precious money. The tools needed to make this salvage are at our disposal now! The only reason I am pushing this project the way I have been is because of the fact that this could be done without having to spend a lot of money. The barge and crane that are now working on the river on the site of the new TCH bridge will not be there for very much longer and when they are gone, it will be for good. The window of opportunity is closing fast and I need all the help I can get to make it happen. The 508 has a great deal of rich local history and is possibly still at the bottom of the river. Let's work together and rescue her from the murky waters of the Saint John River. We won't have a second chance."

"As for the fundraiser, I would like for the community to come together on this and raise the needed amount for the salvage without any government funding. We need to get it out ourselves and then approach government as a group and say to them: "We, as a community, have put in the effort into salvaging it, now we would like for the government to restore it and make it part of one of our new attractions in Grand Falls for 2004. It might just work because of the fact that we took the initiative. Local support will be the deciding factor in this one."

### Search instigator vows to continue looking

## Divers fail to find locomotive

By Madeleine Leclerc

The third time was not the charm on Saturday for local civil engineer Eric Ouellette's efforts to locate a steam locomotive that sank to the bottom of the Saint John River in Grand Falls exactly 103 years to the day. Divers from Lac Baker and Rivière-du-Loup searched the bottom of the river from early morning until early evening but failed to find the Canadian Pacific Railway locomotive that crashed into the river when the bridge it was crossing collapsed on June 21, 1900.

Divers included Luc Pelletier from Lac Baker, Sébastien Sénéchal, Eric Fraser, Alain Lagacé, Michel Thibault, Léo Ouellet and Sylvain Ouellet, all from Rivière-du-Loup and Mathieu Viel of St. Marc du Lac Long, Quebec. In a first dive on May 24, search

efforts went well but failed to pinpoint the exact location of the locomotive.

"Visibility was poor but diver Luc Pelletier did, however, locate pier remnants and pieces of train rail," stated Ouellette whose hopes of finding the locomotive have driven his quest for the past year. "The rail he found was what the magnetometer survey picked up in April. He also brought up some old steel spikes which he found near one of the piers."

In an effort to have the dive efforts documented, Pierre Morin of Grand Falls agreed to videotape the event.

"This story is not over yet. I won't give up until I can clearly say, 'It's not there!'" Ouellette said.

"On June 4, another magnetometer scan was done of the entire width of the river where it is believed the loco-

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## Northwest businessman dies in Quebec plane crash

By Jeffrey Joseph Carrier

A highly-respected businessman from northwestern New Brunswick died last Wednesday in a plane crash near Labrieville, Quebec.

Donald Vallière, 50, of Edmundston, who operated a clothing manufacturing plant in the St. Basile area, was killed when his two-seat pontoon plane went down around 2:45 p.m. June 18 near the St. Lawrence River.

Labrieville is situated 360 kilometres northeast of Edmundston.

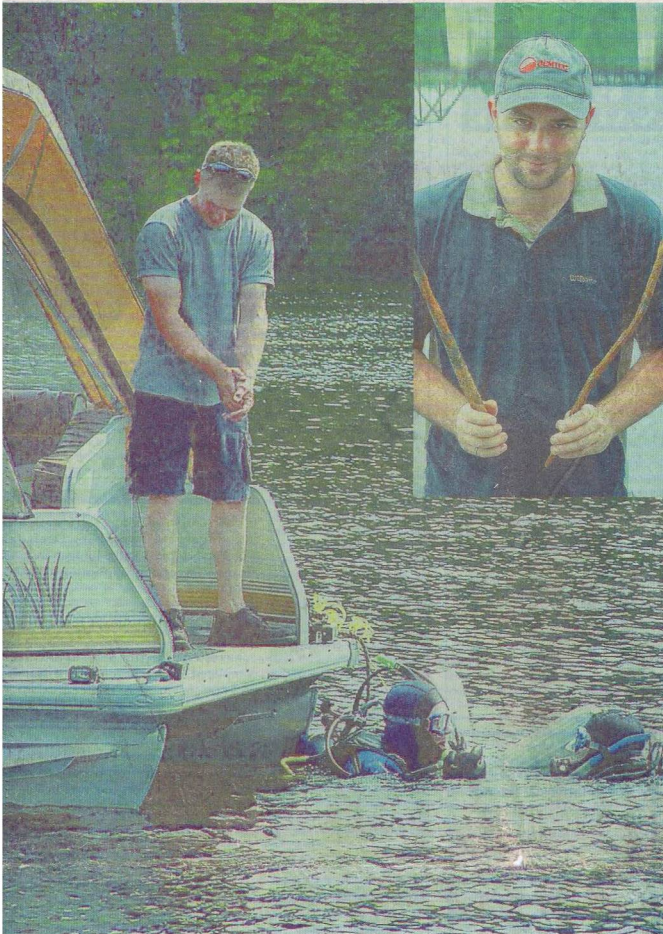
Quebec police said Friday the investigation into the crash has been turned over to the Transportation Safety Board of Canada.

Sources say Vallière was on a fishing trip to Quebec when the fatal incident occurred.

## Offices closed on July 1 Bureaux fermés le 1er juin

The offices of *The Cataracte* and the *Victoria County Record* located at 179 Main Street, Grand Falls, will be closed on Canada Day, July 1. However, the offices will be open on Monday, June 30. All news stories and advertising for the July 2nd edition must be in by 5 p.m. on Thursday, June 26. Have a safe holiday!

Les bureaux de *La Cataracte* et du *Victoria County Record*, situés au 179, rue Main, Grand-Sault, seront fermés le 1er juillet, à l'occasion de la Fête du Canada. Ils seront ouverts, toutefois, le lundi 30 juin. Les articles et la publicité pour l'édition du 2 juillet doivent être rendus aux bureaux dès 17h ce jeudi le 26 juin. Bon congé!



### Diving efforts continue

Divers joined local civil engineer Eric Ouellette's efforts on Saturday to locate a CPR locomotive which is believed to still be at the bottom of the Saint John River after the bridge it was crossing collapsed on June 21, 1900. Last Saturday marked the 103th anniversary of the bridge collapse. Inset Eric Ouellette holds two railway spikes found by divers at the bottom of the Saint John River in a recent dive. Both steel spikes are over 100 years old. (Madeleine Leclerc photos)