

1963 – A Year of Protest in Montgomery Place

Opposition to the CNR Move – We’re Family People

In February 1963, an article in the Saskatoon Star-Phoenix titled “Montgomery Opposes CN Station Proposal” outlined Montgomery Place residents’ objections to the move of the CNR south of their community.

The MP Ratepayers’ Association also composed a radio message stating its case: “We’re family people. We want the best possible place to bring up our children and we feel we’ve got it in Montgomery Place. Our protests are based on the fear that there’ll be an enormous amount of extra noise both from the trains switching and banging all night long and from the constant stream of trucks. ... We’re rather fond of our children and we’re afraid we’ll lose them because our area has no sidewalks. ... We don’t mind moving to the wrong side of the tracks voluntarily but we don’t particularly want to have a whole railway switching yard move to the wrong side of us.”

The Best Place for Citizens

Later in February 1963, in a brief presented to Saskatoon City Council, representatives of the Montgomery Place Ratepayers’ Association stated “That we protest the plan to move the CNR station and yards to the Montgomery Place area.”

“...Now, in negotiations of this sort there always is the danger that economic factors will take undue precedence over sociological ones – over human values. If that happens, a city then fails to meet its ultimate purpose – that purpose being to create the best possible place for its citizens to live.

We feel that this has happened in the present CNR relocation plan. It has happened from the standpoint of our members. They, by the very fact they moved to a quiet, semi-rural Montgomery Place, showed that the last spot they wanted to live was in the shadow of the railway station, a switching yard and a throughway for the traffic that must serve both.

We are concerned about noise, danger, and the fringe construction that is almost certain to follow. It seems sure that the area west of Montgomery Place will gradually become an industrial zone.”

Relocate East and North

Montgomery Place residents called for the CNR Station to be relocated to the existing CNR yards in Saskatoon’s southeast while moving the main yards to north Saskatoon where heavy industry and rail business already thrived. Neither of these proposed locations would interfere

with established residential neighbourhoods as the move west of Montgomery Place did. Protests fell on deaf ears in City Hall.

In March, 1963 the Montgomery Place Ratepayers' Association again protested the CNR relocation south of the community. Owners of 264 Montgomery homes, 83% of the community, signed a petition against CNR relocation so close to Montgomery Place. The March 7, 1963 petition read: "We the undersigned do not agree with the movement of the CNR yards and station to the Chappell area. However, in the event that they absolutely must go there, we request that the station and the access road to it be a minimum of 500 feet – preferably much more – west from Montgomery Place to an area not adjacent to our homes. In addition, we request that Elevator Road be made a service street serving Montgomery Place only. We further request that an adequate green-belt, sound-buffering zone be built between the Elevator Road service street and the station access road west of it."

In an accompanying letter to the City, with regards to a new access road to the CNR, the Montgomery Place Ratepayers Association added, "Furthermore, in accordance with what has been our understanding of the relocation proposals for the C.N.R. Station and Yards, we request that this access road be carried directly through to 22nd Street where it be connected to that street at whatever point of access can be arranged with the Department of Highways. We request that this direct route be built immediately rather than leaving a time which traffic to the station will be forced to use 11th Street. In addition we request that Elevator Road be made a service street serving Montgomery Place only. We further request an adequate green-belt, sound-buffering zone between the Elevator Road service street and the Station access road west of it."

Montgomery Place Pleas Ignored

Ignoring pleas from Montgomery Place, in March 1963 Saskatoon City Council ratified an agreement with the CNR for the removal of the railway's downtown yard facilities to southwest Saskatoon, a stone's throw south of Montgomery Place.

In a March 14, 1963 Saskatoon Star-Phoenix article called "Special Steps For City Bill," it was reported from Regina that "It appeared that special steps would be taken by the Saskatchewan Legislature to permit passage this year of a bill allowing the proposed agreement between the City of Saskatoon and the CNR on moving the railway to the fringes of the city."

In the fall of 1964 a new road to the CN yards – Chappell Drive - was built after complaints from Montgomery Place residents that Elevator Road had become a thoroughfare for all manner of trucks and traffic headed to the train station. Chappell Drive was built to divert traffic from Montgomery Place. The Saskatoon City Commissioner, replying to a Montgomery Place inquiry about a buffer strip around the community, wrote: "It was agreed that a much more effective barrier to sound would be to create a small subdivision immediately west of the present Montgomery Place. Such a subdivision has been planned and includes slightly over 100 building lots. This area will be serviced within the next year or so, probably even next year, in order that

homes may be built.” Thus, rather than an earth berm or green belt barrier, McNaughton Avenue was built. (*Sorry McNaughton residents.*)

In the same fashion, to the south of the existing Montgomery community, Cassino Avenue was built as a noise buffer between the trains and Montgomery Place. (*Sorry Cassino residents.*)

The Rest is History

In November 1964 the CN train station in Saskatoon, immediately south of Montgomery Place, opened officially for passenger and freight traffic.