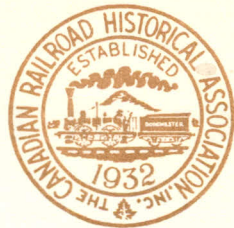


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# Canadian Rail



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## Bay of Quinte Railway

M. D. Leduc.

The small community of Deseronto on the Bay of Quinte, Ont., caught the railway fever during the latter half of the 1800's. This railway fever had become contagious throughout the continent, especially in the area which is now known as Eastern Canada. Deseronto had been established by the Rathbun family, who had settled in North America some two hundred years earlier. The Rathbuns were a very ambitious family, and this was very evident in Edward Wilkes Rathbun, the first son of the family to be born in Canada.

Edward Rathbun, whose prime interests lay in the lumber and charcoal industries, sharply turned his attention to the railway industry when iron ore was reported found in the Counties of Ad-dington, Hastings and Lennox, north of Deseronto. Smelting meant business for his charcoal plant, and the railway would be, by far, the best means for transporting both the charcoal and the iron.

Rathbun, relying on his political associate Alexander Campbell, incorporated the Napanee, Tamworth and Quebec Railway Company on May 15, 1878. This railway was to be constructed from the Bay of Quinte to the Ottawa Valley. Rathbun's reliance on Campbell, however, proved fruitless, and during the following two years the railway did not receive any government help. Rathbun started, using his own finances, but did not get very far.

The first section of the line, from Napanee to Tamworth, a distance of twenty-eight miles, resulted in a large financial loss—with a fleeing contractor and workers to be paid. Rathbun paid the expenses himself and in 1883 received a municipal subsidy from the Town of Napanee. The line was finally opened for traffic on August 4, 1884. During the same period, Rathbun established the Bay of Quinte Railway and Navigation Company, in order to connect the Town of Deseronto with the Grand Trunk main line. The Bay of Quinte line ran from Deseronto to Napanee, a distance of some four miles, and on July 1881 was completed and opened for traffic.

Thus, Rathbun had two operating railways travelling a distance of thirty-two miles from Deseronto to Tamworth. But, being ambitious, he borrowed two hundred thousand dollars and extended his lines from Tamworth to Marlbank where there was an iron field which meant more traffic. He received another subsidy and extended to Tweed. The line from Tamworth to Tweed was about eighteen miles in length and was opened for traffic on November 4th, 1889. Things began to look better, financially, for Rathbun and his railways.

With great expectations, the Napanee, Tamworth and Quebec Ry. was renamed the Kingston, Napanee and Western Railway. From Yarker, on this line, an additional four miles of track was constructed to Harrowsmith in 1889. Running rights were granted to the K.N.& W.Ry over the Kingston and Pembroke Railway for entry into Kingston from Harrowsmith. The City of Kingston granted Rathbun's railway a subsidy of seventy-five thousand dollars.

By order of Parliament in 1896, the Bay of Quinte Railway and



Navigation Company amalgamated with the Kingston, Napanee and Western Ry. Co. to form the Bay of Quinte Railway Company.

In 1898, iron ore deposits were reported north of the village of Tweed, and Rathbun received a Provincial subsidy to extend his rail line to this area. Construction began in 1902 and was completed on December 12, 1903 to Bannockburn in the Township of Madoc, approximately twenty-two miles north.

After the extension of the line to Madoc Township, Rathbun's ambitions lessened insofar as the Bay of Quinte Railway was concerned, although it is estimated that he had invested over one and a quarter million dollars in the venture. Agreements were made with Mackenzie and Mann's Canadian Northern Ontario Railway to operate the line.

Rathbun finally sold the Bay of Quinte Railway to the Canadian Northern Railway. The Bay of Quinte Railway, as a constituent railway of the Canadian Northern System, entered into the Canadian National Railways in 1919. Although the line between Yarker and Bannockburn has been long since abandoned, the section between Deseronto and Napanee is operated as a spur track while the section from Napanee to Harrowsmith forms part of the C.N.R. freight-only line from Napanee to Ottawa. Since the dissolution of the CN-CP Pool agreements, affecting the Ottawa-Toronto passenger service, it has been suggested that the CNR re-establish passenger service from Ottawa to Napanee, connecting with the Montreal-Toronto trains at Belleville. Such a service, if inaugurated, would make use of the rail line originally promoted by the charcoal "king" from Deseronto, Edward Wilkes Rathbun. The case presently rests with the Board of Transport Commissioners.

