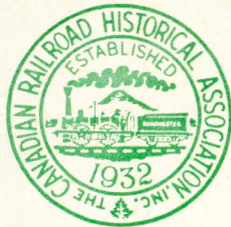


HIRAM
WALKER'S
ROAD

Canadian Rail

1932 - 1972



40th. anniversary

NO. 241

FEBRUARY 1972

HIRAM BUIDS A RAILWAY

Jack Lombard

&

Friends.

For the early explorers and first travellers across the land later to be named Canada, the streams, the rivers, the rapids and the waterfalls were only incidents in their journeyings. The severity of these "incidents" varied and - although they may have been considered as a kind of hardship in the middle years, they later were converted into "occasions" where the explorers and travellers alike paused briefly in their journeys to participate in an evening's conviviality.


Nowhere along the St. Lawrence River-Great Lakes waterway were these occasions more anticipated than at the head of the Rivière des Etroits - the River of the Straits - not far from what is today the City of Windsor, Ontario, Canada.

Less than fifty years after the unpleasantness of what - in North America - was called the War of 1812, a new kind of man from a new age of progress, was surveying the scene from the banks of the Detroit River. Born to farm life in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts - one of the original thirteen components of the burgeoning United States of America, he had learned something about grain and grain-growing at quite an early age.

He had once been in the grocery business, too, albeit briefly, and later had tried his luck as a grain merchant, selling his product to many Canadian millers and distillers. Recognizing the double use of grain - a single commodity - he was soon dreaming of owning a grain or grist mill, combined with a distillery.

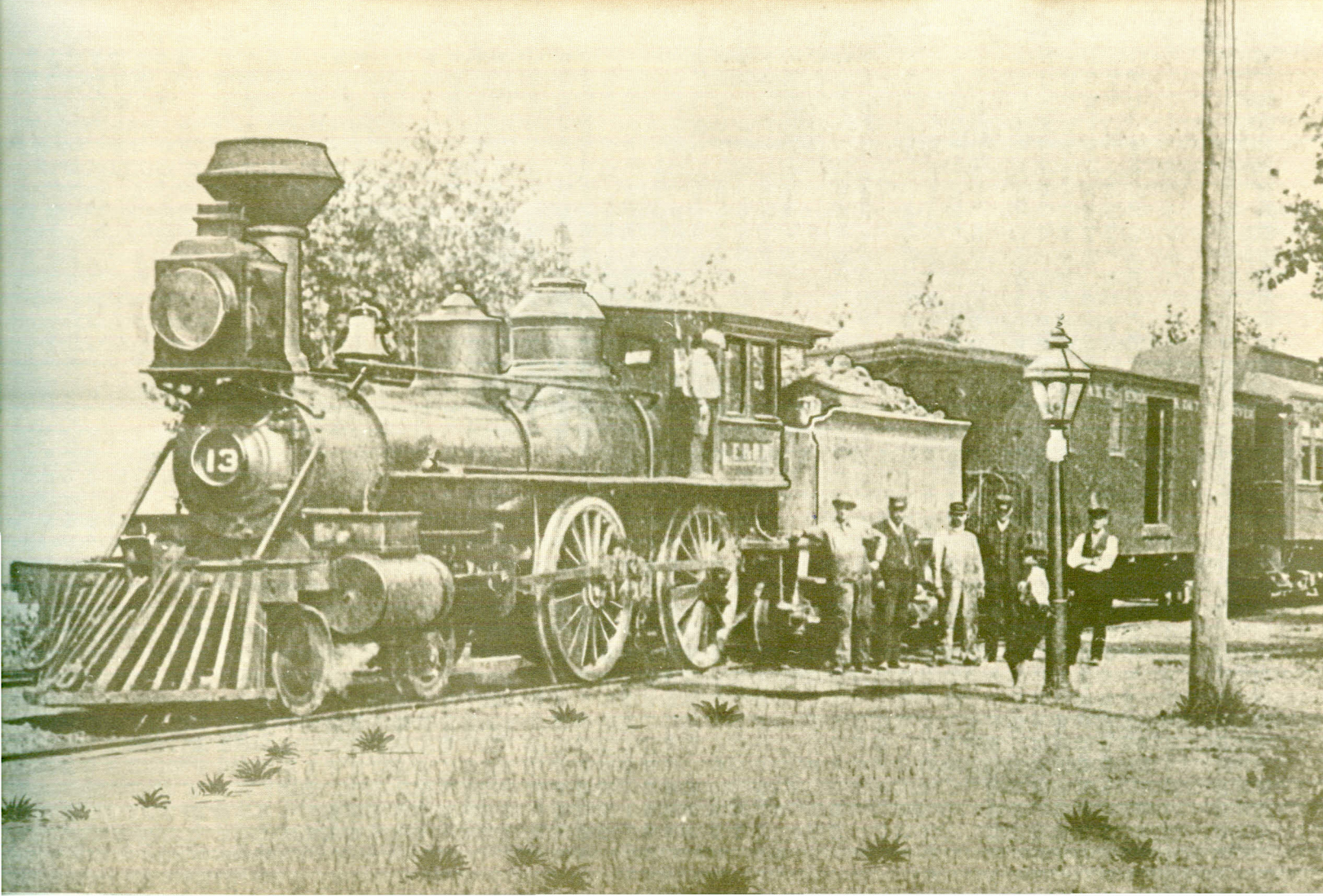
Born in 1816, he arrived at the River of the Straits in 1885. He bought his first parcel of land on the present site of Walkerville, Ontario - at no distance at all from the present city of Windsor - in 1856.

His name was Hiram Walker.



→ NO ONE CAN SAY AT THIS DATE THE CREW'S REACTION TO HAVING TO OPERATE AN engine numbered "13" - but here is Number 13 of the Lake Erie and Detroit River Railway, complete with flat-roofed single-door baggage car.

Photo courtesy Hiram Walker & Sons Limited.



It is said that Hiram Walker shared the opinion of the great Louis Pasteur about the quality of yeasts and the results of fermentation therewith. Regardless of the technical reasons, the whiskey which Hiram began to produce rapidly became a popular product both in Canada and the United States in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Before he knew it, Hiram had an increasingly large clientele demanding his product.

Hiram's early farm experience and natural Yankee frugality at once suggested to him that the wet, malted mash from the distillery would be an excellent source of nourishment for cattle and, before long, the distillery had "fathered" several model farms in the district, inhabited by more than 5,000 head!

It was at this juncture in his several ventures that Hiram became inextricably tangled with transportation problems and thereby with railways.

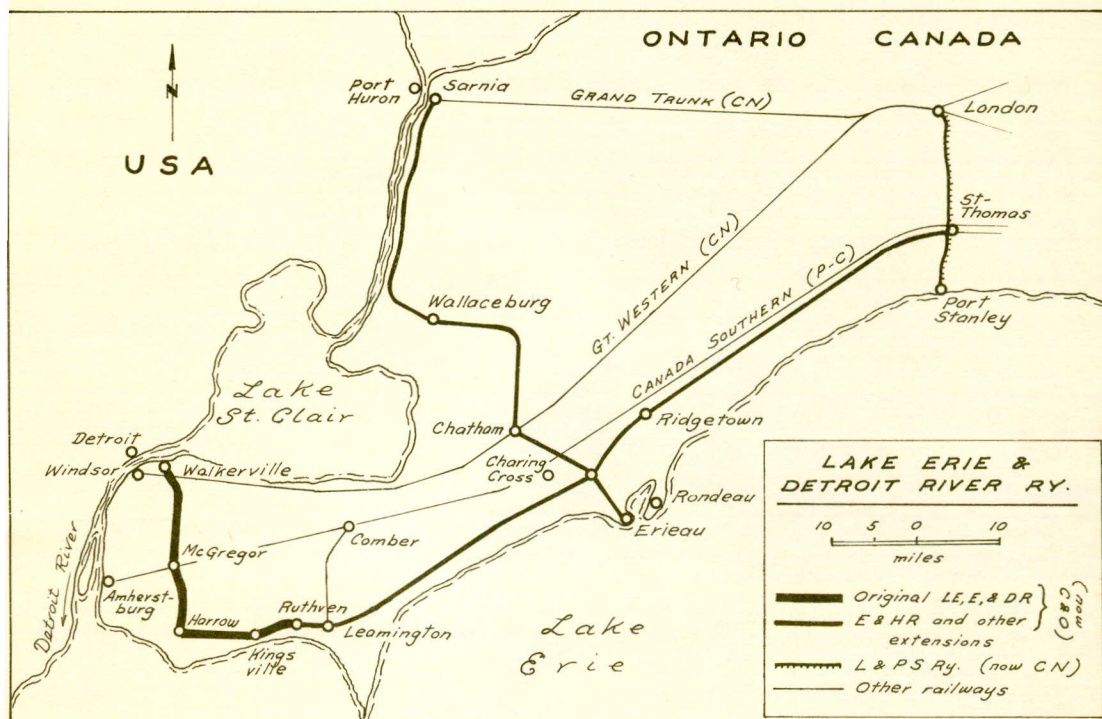
The so-called carriage roads of the 1860's were mostly of mud or of corduroy, with occasional well-constructed turnpikes which were better but more expensive to use. They were the original toll-ways. To carry heavy loads over these wretched, unimproved roads was almost impossible, even in the best weather. In and around Walkerville, the transportation facilities were fair, but were ill-suited and badly located to serve Hiram Walker's needs.

The Great Western Railway of Canada had been opened from London, Ontario to Walkerville-Windsor in 1854, but the main line from Walkerville east ran in a rather northeasterly direction, along the shore of Lake St. Clair. Hiram's farms lay southeastward, toward the shore of Lake Erie.

After the genesis of Hiram's business in 1858, the provision of sidings and connections by the Great Western in 1862 did not improve the situation much. Multiplication of Hiram Walker's developments in the County of Essex, not very far away, emphasized the need for better transportation.

When Hiram's ventures were fifteen years old, the Canada Southern Railway was built west from Fort Erie, opposite Buffalo, at the head of the Niagara River, through St. Thomas to Amherstburgh, some distance downstream on the Detroit River from Walkerville-Windsor. Although this was a well-constructed railway, it could not help Hiram in resolving his cross-country transportation problem. Besides, the Canada Southern was a connecting link in the New York Central-Michigan Central line to Chicago and was not interested in the short-haul kind of business that Hiram had to offer.

By 1882, Hiram had been courageous enough to build a short line of railway of his own from Walkerville, to bring fodder and other necessities from the Detroit River to one of the establishments near the corner of Walker Road and Tecumseh Boulevard in present-day Windsor. This short line was opened in the summer of 1883, despite the fact that in the previous year, the cattle barns - together with some 300 head of fattened animals - had been destroyed by fire. Inconveniences also occurred in other adjacent townships. Hiram's



wide-treaded steam tractors, hauling hay, tore up country roads in Colchester Township, broke through municipal bridges and caused much annoyance to the municipal officials, local citizens and the traveling public.

These awkward incidents rapidly persuaded Hiram to undertake the extension of his little railway from the river bank south to his hay lands and barns and to include a connection with the Canada Southern at McGregor, rather than at the town of Pelton. This essential extension developed in 1887 into a more ambitious project. The Government of the Dominion of Canada inaugurated in 1885 a policy of providing generous subsidies for railway construction, which offered an amount of \$ 3,200 per mile on intraprovincial lines. Further, there were occasional subsidies available from Provincial and municipal governments.

At the time of the 1887 decision, Hiram Walker did not really need these several subsidies, but they were a nice piece of assistance on his original investment. By personal investigation, he had determined that a railway was needed, in the southern sections of Essex County and this fact, together with his own pressing needs, gave the project an alluring future and removed it from the realm of chancy speculation.

Thus it was that in 1885 the Lake Erie, Essex and Detroit River Railroad Company was incorporated, both provincially and federally -

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the latter under 48-49 Vic. Cap 21 - the original incorporators being Messrs. Hiram Walker, William Scott, N.A. McHugh, A.L. Hitchcock, G.J. Leggatt and Dr. John Coventry. The powers of the charter permitted the construction of a railway line from Windsor or Sandwich, on the Detroit River, to Kingsville; with branches to Comber, Amherstburg, Charing Cross and Rondeau.

The first meeting of the incorporators was held on July 16, 1887 and although actual construction got under way the following August 1, the subsidy on the line from Windsor to Leamington - some 37 miles - had been approved by the Federal government the previous year. It was not collected, however. At the second meeting of the provisional Board of Directors in August, 1887, Hiram announced that he had satisfied the provisions of the charter by depositing the sum of \$ 20,000 with the Bank of Montreal at London, Ontario, as well as supplying the necessary funds for the initial expenditures on the railway. Further, an additional \$ 200,000 had been subscribed in purchases of stock in the new company.


Work along the railway proceeded apace. Mr. Joseph De Gurse, civil engineer of Windsor, had surveyed the route in 1888, preparatory to grading and laying the ties and rails. It was understood as well that, from the beginning, the construction would be carried out under the direction of Hiram Walker & Sons and, at a special meeting of the Board of Directors on November 17, 1887, this arrangement was ratified.

The autumn and winter of '87 saw the survey progressing, with acquisition of a right-of-way from various proprietors along the route. The Minister of Railways and Canals of Canada, the Honorable John Henry Pope, was consulted with regard to the subsidies available.

By the spring of 1888, contracts had been let for the grading of the line, as well as the construction of culverts and bridges, ties and rails, stations, fences and other appurtenances. The line was surveyed to run from Walkerville south to Harrow and thence eastward to Ruthven, some three miles east of Kingsville, almost on the shore of Lake Erie.

The construction of this original twenty-seven-mile line was approved by the Governor in Council at Ottawa, Canada, on April 6, 1888 and a subsidy of \$ 118,400 - or about \$ 4,385 per mile - was approved.

Work went forward so rapidly and expeditiously that by December 15, 1888, the Lake Erie, Essex and Detroit River Railway was accepting business between Walkerville and Ruthven - some 34 miles. The station stops en route were Walkerville, Pelton, Old Castle, McGreggor, New Canaan, Harrow, Arner, Kingsville and Ruthven. The line was



officially opened on December 26, 1888, having been certified as completed to the approved specifications by the Inspecting Engineer, Department of Railways and Canals, Government of Canada.

Mr. C.F. Hansen, the first superintendent of the line, did not continue long in office. He was succeeded by Mr. William Woollatt, a 34-year old veteran with 17 years of experience on the Grand Trunk and the Northern and Northwestern Junction Railways. Mr. Hiram Walker was President and Mr. Chandler Walker was Treasurer and Manager.

Within a few months, the railway was extended to Leamington, the new portion being opened on May 24, 1889. Leamington remained the terminus for three years.

The net earnings of the Lake Erie, Essex and Detroit River for 1889 were \$ 24,281.62 and for 1890, \$ 18,166.55. This latter amount was not sufficient to meet the interest on the road's bonds, which was \$ 30,000 annually. In 1891, the net revenue improved to a top of \$ 25,902.75, which was still somewhat short of the amount required to service the bond interest.

It was obvious to Hiram and the other officers that local traffic simply was not sufficient to provide the necessary revenue. The answer seemed to be to obtain some through east-west traffic and, to obtain this, the railway must be extended further. As a matter of fact, there was very little competition along the Lake Erie shore, the only railway then in existence being the Leamington and St. Clair Railway, between Leamington and Comber, on the Canada Southern Railway. This was essentially a local north-south enterprise, devoted chiefly to the lumber trade.

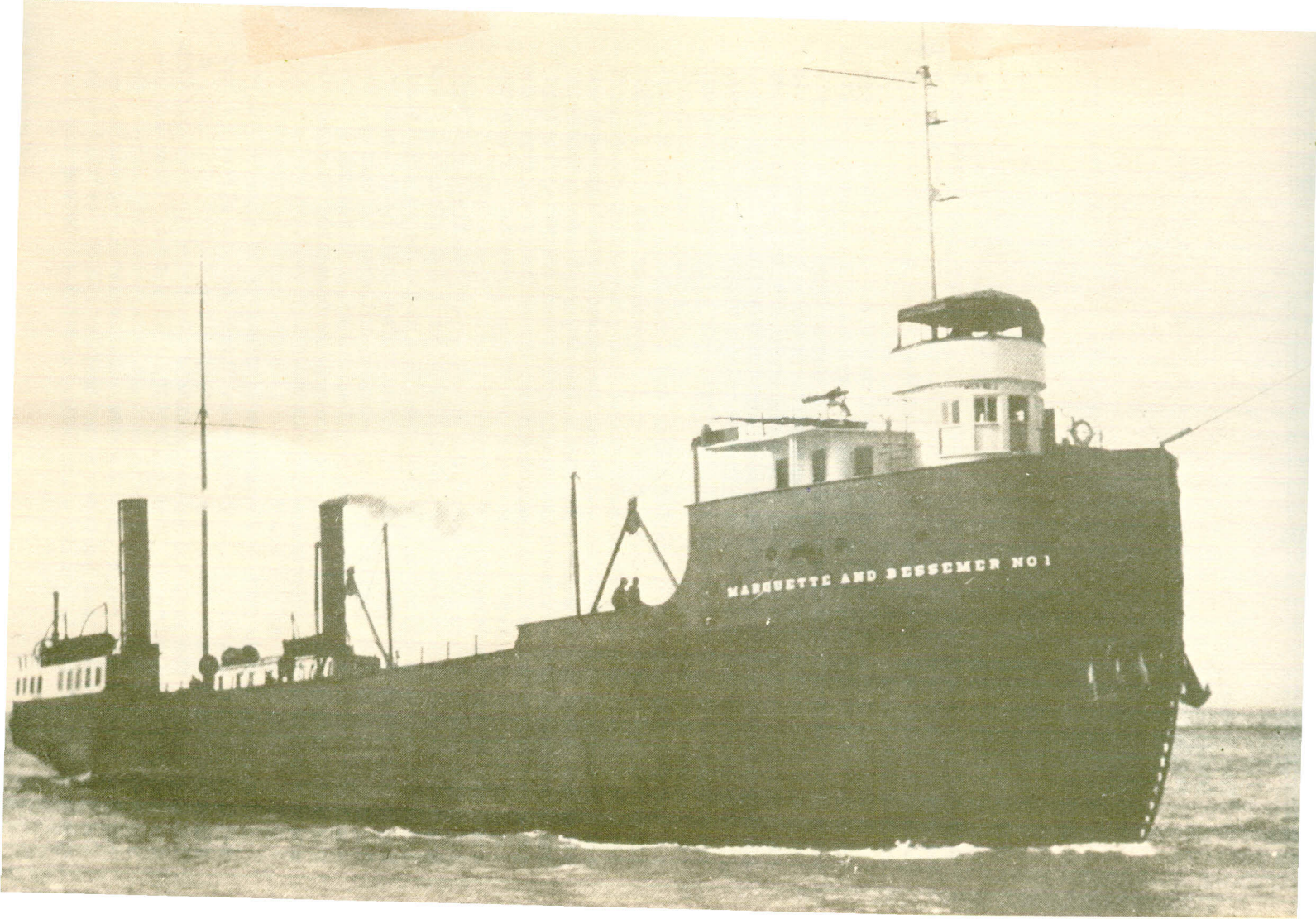
Under ever-increasing pressure from the municipalities between Leamington and Ridgeway, Hiram and his directors finally agreed to start construction eastward in 1892. With some \$ 27,500 worth of support from the municipalities, construction began in June and on December 24, the first train passed over the new extension.

The decision to build this extension resulted in something of a dilemma - legal, that is - as either the provincially or federally chartered part of the Lake Erie, Essex and Detroit River possessed the necessary corporate powers. In order to resolve the dilemma in an orderly fashion, the two companies were amalgamated in January, 1893 and the name of the Company simultaneously changed to the Lake Erie and Detroit River Railway Company.

Hiram, of course, became President of the new Company, ably seconded by Dr. S.A. King of Kingsville, as First Vice-President.

The following year, the Lake Erie and Detroit River negotiated the lease of the London and Port Stanley Railway - from London, Ont., to Port Stanley on Lake Erie - as recorded in an 1894 report to the Board of Directors:

→ MARQUETTE & BESSEMER NO. 1, DESIGNED BY KIRBY AND BUILT BY BUFFALO DRY Dock Company in 1902 for service between Port Stanley and Conneault/Cleveland, Ohio. She did not carry railway cars. Photo courtesy Marine Historical Collection? University of Detroit.



"The Company has recently leased (for 20 years) the London and Port Stanley road, which runs between the points named, with steamboat connections with Cleveland. It also controls the stock of the Lakeside Navigation Company and has put the steamer LAKE SIDE on the Port Stanley and Cleveland route."

The annual rental for the London and Port Stanley Railway was \$ 12,500.

Further enlargement of Hiram's growing railway occurred in 1898, when the Erie and Huron Railway Company was purchased for the sum of \$ 640,000. This north-south line ran from Erieau on Lake Erie, through Blenheim, to Chatham - where it crossed the Grand Trunk - to Dresden and Sarnia, on the St. Clair River. Hiram and company now had more than 200 miles of railroad, together with a steamer service across Lake Erie.

In July, 1901, the Lake Erie and Detroit River completed the extension from Ridgetown to St. Thomas - some 40 miles - and connections with several important railways.

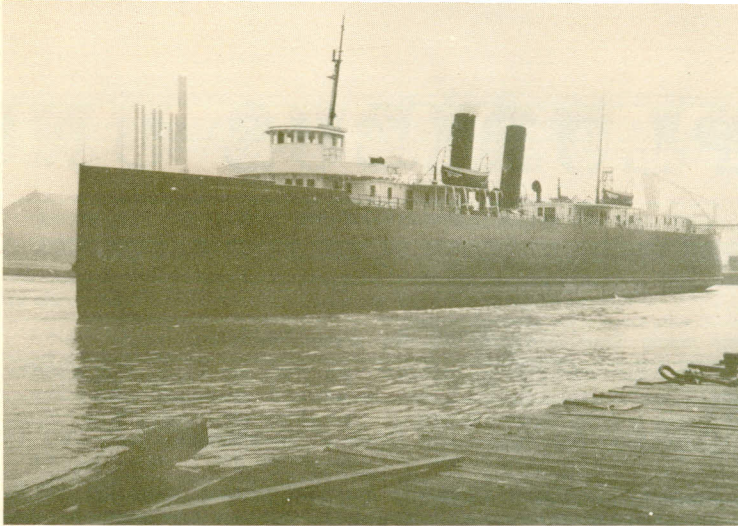
The line which had started out as a convenient accessory in the transportation of feed for Hiram Walker's cattle had now become a large corporation of both national and international importance.

A connection east from St. Thomas to the Niagara Falls gateway was obtained in 1904, through the acquisition of trackage rights over the Canada Southern Railway.

About 1900, crews on the Lake Erie and Detroit River were sometimes obliged to work as long as 16 to 22 hours per day. On Sundays, it is said, they had to clean out the ash pans and boiler flues of the locomotives at the Walkerville engine house - and then wash up, dress up - and go to church! It seems that Superintendent Woollatt was a member of the Walkerville church choir and from this vantage point, would check the congregation during the sermon, from over the tops of his spectacles! He knew each of his men by name and woe betide any of his men who weren't there!

There were times when money was pretty tight on the Lake Erie and Detroit River. On one run, the engine's cab caught fire and was almost completely burned out before the fire could be extinguished. Money was short and the cab was not rebuilt for four, long months. In the interval, the engine was kept running and, when it rained, the engineer protected himself from the elements by an umbrella, the fireman dashing out from under its protection from time to time, to shovel coal into the firebox. A likely story!

But here it is 1972 and whatever happened to Hiram's railway? Well, it was an attractive property when Hiram and his directors had finished with it and there were many prospective buyers. In 1902, a Company called the Pere Marquette Railroad - originally organized in the neighbouring State of Michigan, U.S.A. - offered to lease exclusive trackage rights, as well as other appurtenances, including the rolling stock, for a period of 21 years. The lease was agreed to and the Pere Marquette took possession on January 1, 1903. On that date, the mileage of the L.E.&D.R. - including the leased London and Port



↑ MARQUETTE & BESSEMER NO. 2 (II) (SECOND NO. 2) LAUNCHED BY AMERICAN SHIP-building Company at Cleveland, Ohio, September 2, 1910. She had no passenger accommodations, carried freight exclusively, carried 30 cars and made the 58-mile trip across the Lake in 5 hours - Port Stanley to Conneault, Ohio. She was converted to a barge in 1948. From the Marine Historical Collection, University of Detroit, Mich.

Stanley - was 285.58 miles - sidings and all! The company had access to the anthracite coal of Pennsylvania through its car ferries from Rondeau and Port Stanley across Lake Erie to Cleveland and the neighbouring port of Conneault, Ohio. The former Erie & Huron to and from Sarnia provided a good share of the revenue from its traffic in lumber and iron from the north, as well as the sugar and sugar-beet traffic around Wallaceburg.

About 1904, the Pere Marquette confirmed an agreement with the Canada Southern - part of the Michigan Central Railroad - which had first been arranged in 1882 and extended in 1894. The '82 and '94 arrangements were for operation, while the 1904 agreement was for a lease. When the Pere Marquette Railroad Company went into receivership in the State of Michigan in 1912, it was reorganized under the name of the Pere Marquette Railway Company, which undertook operation of the old company.

In more recent times, the properties and franchises of the Pere Marquette Railway Company were merged on June 6, 1947 with those of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad Company, which today, together with the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company, forms one of the "BIG 3" of the United States east coast "merger lines".

Although Hiram Walker - like Mr. Gooderham - is far better known for his whiskey than for his railway, he should also be remembered for his contribution to the inception, development and expansion of the railways of one section of Canada, at a time when such leadership was vital.

The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of:

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An Anonymous Friend.