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The Lost Years Of The Champlain & St. Lawrence

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Despite its significance in Canadian railway history, published work dealing specifically with the Champlain & St. Lawrence is surprisingly limited¹. The origins of the company have been particularly neglected and one could suggest the first chapter of the history of the C&SL has been on the missing list since 1836.

Almost all accounts of the beginnings of the C&SL start in the autumn of 1831 despite the fact that the railway's origins go back at least three years earlier. The only English-language recognition that the line's promoters launched attempts at legislative approval for the project in both 1828 and 1830 appeared in biographical studies. Two of these were in a 1920s banking journal and two in more recent volumes of the Dictionary of Canadian Biography², none of which have been captured by Anglophone writers who have focused on the subject of the C&SL. Acceptance of an 1831 origin for the C&SL has generated untenable hypotheses about American influence on the decision of the promoters to undertake the project³. The literature fails to provide a satisfactory explanation about why the project idled and almost collapsed after incorporation in 1832. Virtually nothing is offered about possible connections to other rail, canal, and commercial projects being touted in Montreal in the early 1830s⁴. And no consideration has been given to whether the St. Johns - Laprairie route was a logical one for the construction of Canada's first railway. This paper offers a preliminary framework for that missing first chapter.

The Setting: The Changing Commercial Empire Of The St. Lawrence⁵

During the period 1800-1830, the economy of Montreal underwent a number of significant changes. The fur trade⁶ vanished with the consolidation of the North-West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821 and the subsequent routing of that trade's traffic through Hudson's



The official corporate seal of the Champlain & St. Lawrence Rail Road as adopted in 1832. This image is taken from a wax impression made in 1936 from the original steel die of the seal. The CRHA insignia was based on this seal.

Collection of Donald F. Angus.

Bay. At the same time, however, there was a significant boom in the trade in timber⁷ to the British market where tariff policies were still providing preferential access for colonial exports.

Though Lower Canada remained primarily francophone and rural, migration from Britain increased significantly after 1815⁸. By 1831, the population of Montreal exceeded 30,000 and the counties of Dorchester and Laprairie, through which the C&SL was built, had an additional 30,000. Within those rural counties, the largest centres were St. Johns with almost 2000 people and Laprairie with about 3500⁹.

Increasing agricultural populations generated a second important staple export, wheat and flour, again primarily for the British market¹⁰. A rising population also created an emerging market for manufactured goods

and supplies. Much of the incoming mercantile trade and the outbound staples trade went through the Montreal business community. As the economy developed, local financial firms appeared. The Bank of Montreal was established in 1817¹¹ and other banks and insurance companies followed soon after.

There was a simultaneous increase in activity in transportation. Montreal-based ship construction and ownership expanded as did involvement with movement of freight to the interior. Following the launch of John Molson's *Accommodation*, the first Canadian steamboat, at Montreal in 1809, the steam-powered fleet grew rapidly¹².

The increasing flow of goods and people led to rising concern about the obstacles faced within the St. Lawrence waterway system which was the key transportation artery. The Lachine Rapids, just west of Montreal, additional sets of rapids in the upper St. Lawrence, as well as those on the Ottawa and on the Richelieu between Chambly and St. Johns were all major barriers to transport within the developing economy.

Canals had been proposed as early as 1680 to address the problems on the St. Lawrence system upstream from Montreal. Little happened, however, until the State of New York began the Erie canal in 1817 and challenged Montreal's commercial dominance of the Great Lakes hinterland. In 1819, Montreal businessmen started construction of a canal at Lachine¹³ but the firm went bankrupt within two years. The venture was taken over by the Lower Canada government and the canal was completed in 1825.

In 1826, work began on the Rideau canal, an undertaking designed to provide a secure route to Upper Canada by avoiding the American border along the south bank of the St. Lawrence west of Montreal¹⁴. The route led up the Ottawa River to the site of Canada's future capital and then down the new canal to Lake Ontario at Kingston. A number of other smaller canals were built along both the lower Ottawa and the section of the St. Lawrence between Lake Ontario and Montreal¹⁵.

In a C&SL context, canal developments toward the south were more significant. As early as 1815, proposals had appeared for a canal between St. Johns and Chambly to avoid the Chambly rapids. Government funding eventually appeared, starting in 1827, though the canal was not completed until 1843¹⁶. South of St. Johns, an important event was the 1823 opening of the Champlain canal linking the southern part of Lake Champlain to the Erie Canal and the Hudson River. This development on the American side of the border provided St. Johns with an uninterrupted direct water route to the port of New York.

Railway Route Options In Or Near Montreal

In the 1820s, the geography, economics, and demographics of Montreal and its environs all indicated that if there was immediate potential for the use of rail technology, it was in settings which complemented the waterway system. The most obvious potential locations were ones to bypass the river obstacles mentioned previously or to provide more efficient service than could be offered by existing or planned canals. Any of these locations would have been relatively short and none faced any major geographic impediment as long as bridging the St. Lawrence was not considered. To assess the options for the location of Canada's first railway, however, we must also consider a critical factor, availability of and prospects for traffic.

For the route ultimately adopted for the C&SL and other potential lines running south from Montreal, the primary data available are from the St. Johns Customs House. St. Johns was the only official port of entry on the American border and all recorded cross-border traffic was captured there. There are problems of data comparability since some goods were recorded by value, some by weight, and some by quantity. As a result, the data require both assumptions and exclusions before any estimates of potential rail traffic can be generated.

Table 1 Estimates of Potential Rail Freight Traffic (000 tons)¹⁹

Years	1824	'25	'26	'27	'28	'29	'30	'31	'32	'33	'34
St. Johns	4.2	5.7	4.7	4.4	nd	5.7	5.8	5.2	5.9	8.1	nd
Lachine	cnfo	5.7	12.1	20.1	20.8	17.5	33.0	40.9	nd	47.2	40.7

(cnfo = canal not fully operational; nd = no data available)

An estimate of potential traffic based on St. Johns Customs data misses two components. Smuggling was common and we can't estimate how much cross-border traffic chose to avoid the Customs House. Customs House data also exclude domestic traffic between Montreal and the American border. There is no obvious source of data to measure these two forms of potential traffic though they could have been estimated by the original C&SL promoters¹⁷.

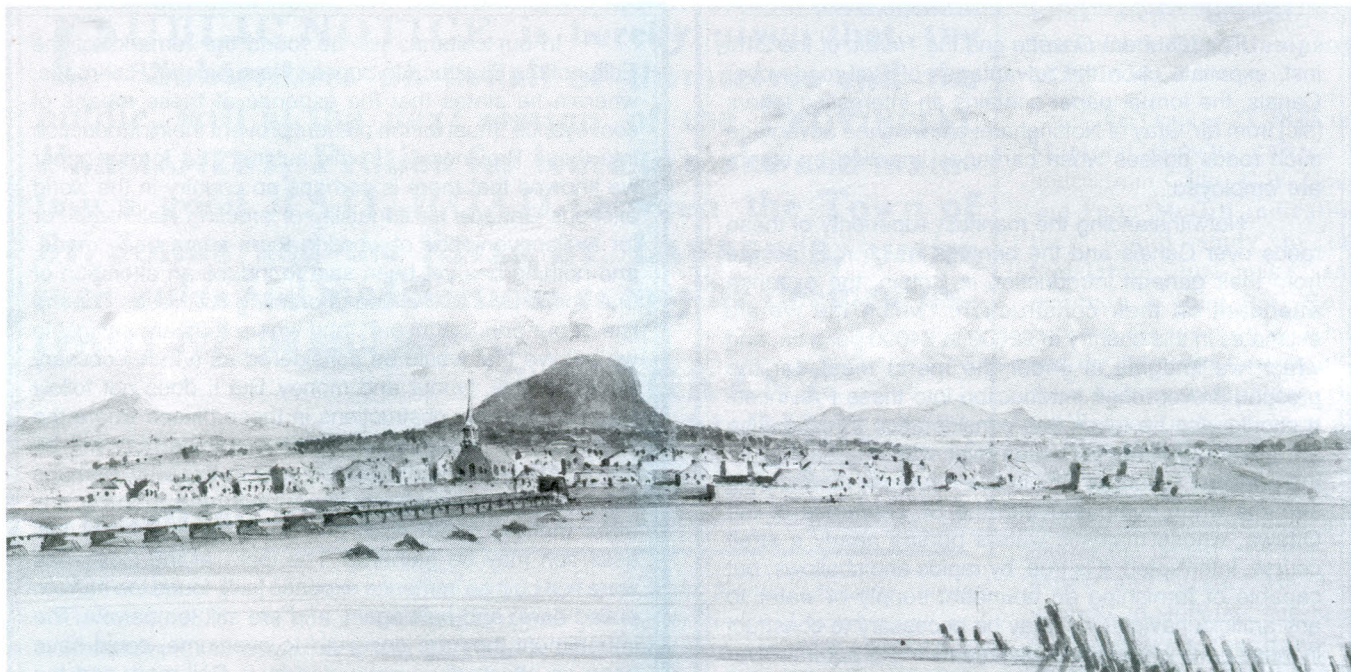
Other possible southern rail routes, all of which were being promoted before construction of the C&SL began in early 1835, included a St. Johns - Chambly line to carry traffic around the Chambly rapids, a route from Chambly toward Montreal as an alternative to one from St. Johns, and lines down both the Richelieu and St. Francis valleys to the St. Lawrence. There are no sources to document traffic on these routes but there are no reasons to assume they would have attracted more or even as much traffic as the St. Johns - Montreal route¹⁸.

With the Lachine rapids to the west and the navigable St. Lawrence to the east, we can reasonably assume anyone contemplating building a railway east and/or west from Montreal on the north side of the river would look first at the western options, either a short line around the Lachine rapids, or longer lines going beyond Lachine to the mouth of the Ottawa or still further westward to a navigable harbour on the upper St. Lawrence or Lake Ontario.

For these routes, there again is one core data source to provide a basis for estimating traffic potential. From 1825, Lachine canal records provide a baseline indication of traffic moving immediately west of Montreal though it is impossible to estimate how much more chose to avoid the canal tolls. The Lachine data, like that from St. Johns, are a mix of values, weights, and volumes with inherent risks in conversion to tonnage measures.

Within the limitations to the methodology, the following are estimates of potential freight revenue sources for railways on routes south or west from Montreal. They include grain and flour, foodstuffs and fish, ashes, liquor, tobacco, and other merchandise normally shipped by the barrel, box, or other container appropriate for rail-based handling. Excluded are bulk goods, particularly timber and other wood products, which would have been difficult to handle by rail at competitive rates, and categories like livestock for which weight estimates are impossible.

Lachine canal data record passenger traffic for the years after 1824 but comparable estimates about passenger traffic to and from the south are not available. The only piece of data located about passenger traffic to/from the south is an estimate of 5000 passengers on stages running between St. Johns and the St. Lawrence during 1831. This estimate



A watercolour painting of St. John's done in March 1838 by William Robert (1818-1845). The town then looked much as it had when the railway was first promoted, a decade before. National Archives of Canada, photo No. C-40032.

was offered by Jason Peirce of St. Johns in testimony before an Assembly Committee on behalf of the C&SL project in late 1831. For comparison, Lachine canal data for 1831 show 11,000 passengers on vessels using the canal²⁰.

Based on these estimates, all other things equal, one would have expected those considering building a railway during this period to favour a route westward from Montreal rather than a line toward the south. But all other things were not equal.

A New Technology For Lower Canada

The Canadas had very limited experience with tramways and inclined planes before 1836. There is evidence of three used in conjunction with British military engineering or ordnance projects, one at the Quebec Citadel in the 1820s, one near the north end of the Rideau Canal also in the 1820s, and one on the Niagara escarpment in the period pre-1790²¹. There are also hints of two private lines in the 1820s. A tramway may have been used for timber transport at Kingsey in the St. Francis valley east of St. Johns though the evidence supporting the claim is rather thin²². Another tramway, which I have not seen referred to in any secondary source, may have been operated at John MacPherson & Company's freight-forwarding facility on the Lachine canal. Evidence documenting the existence of this line is equally slim - a single newspaper reference²³.

If it existed, the MacPherson tramway was the only one of the five near Montreal. The military-related lines were all at distant locations in the world of the 1820s, 160 miles down the St. Lawrence at Quebec City, 120 miles northwest at the site which became Ottawa, and 330 miles southwest on the Niagara frontier. The St. Francis valley line, if it existed, was equally remote in terms of a Montreal

perspective. No evidence has been found to indicate that any of these had any particular effect on public perceptions, the press, the C&SL, or any of the other proposals for locomotive-powered railways. These earliest Canadian²⁴ examples of rail-based transport seem to have been as obscure in their own time as they are in the modern record of Canada's railway history.

The earliest identified Canadian references to locomotive-powered railways are, of course, in press accounts of developments in Britain²⁵ though these were soon complemented by reports from the USA. Coverage of the new technology was erratic at best, and reports from overseas appeared weeks after the event. Newspapers focused on headline events (such as the openings of the Stockton & Darlington in 1825 or the Liverpool & Manchester in 1830²⁶) and generally failed to provide continuing reports on ongoing stories or critical analysis of developments.

In the winter of 1824-25, several references appeared in the Montreal *Gazette*²⁷ to the potential for railways in Lower Canada and, in mid-1825, we see the first indication that someone was considering acting on the idea. On June 11, 1825, the *Gazette* reported that 'enterprising and spirited individuals' were advocating construction of a railway from St. Johns to Longueuil on the south shore of the St. Lawrence directly opposite Montreal and a short distance downstream from Laprairie.

The principals were not identified nor were any details offered save for the proposed route. The project may have been just an idea in the mind of the editor though the *Gazette* assured readers that 'we have heard it confidently asserted that measures are being taken.' Without further detail, however, any relationship to the origins of the C&SL remains unknown.

The *Montreal Gazette* and the *Herald* of the 24th inst. expatiate upon the advantages of Rail-roads over Canals, the former paper contains an interesting letters [sic] from Mr. Gray of Nottingham, shewing the advantage such roads posses when carriages impelled by steam are employed...

Notwithstanding the manifest superiority of these roads over Canals and the benefits which may accrue from their general introduction in Britain, the expense attendant on their construction, (which the *Herald* estimates in this country at £2000 to £4000 per mile, and which we imagine is under the mark) must, for the present, prevent their introduction into these Provinces. It should also be taken into consideration in estimating the advantages of Rail roads over water-carriage, that the principal Rivers of Britain are but small meandering streams when compared with the St. Lawrence or the Ottawa, whose majestic waters pursue nearly a strait course, interrupted, it is true, by rapids and shallows; but capable of furnishing an abundant supply of water to any artificial navigation it may be necessary to construct in those parts where the impediments of the natural River cannot otherway be overcome. This essential distinction between the water communications of Britain and those of Canada, excites a doubt with us whether, *on the line of our principal rivers*, Rail-roads would be attended with that vast advantage, which some of our brother Editors in Montreal appear to contemplate, even if the commerce of the country was sufficient to defray the cost attendant upon the establishment and support of such a vast extent of Rail-roads as would be necessary to connect the distant parts of these Provinces; but in entering into this discussion, we are, perhaps, anticipating a state of advancement which the Canadas will be many years in attaining. Would it not therefore be more profitable to direct our views to those benefits immediately within our reach? Since we may be assured that the most certain means of attaining that prosperity which will enable us to realize these grand speculations, will be found in a sedulous attention to the improvement, as far as present resources will permit, of those advantages which the natural situation of these Provinces so conspicuously offers. - *Quebec Mercury*.

In our columns will be found the remarks of the Editor of the *Quebec Mercury* on the subject of Rail-roads, wherein he states that the expense of these means of conveyance "must for the present prevent their introduction into these Provinces". On this subject in a former paper we showed that there is perhaps no country in the world exceeds Canada for its facility of erecting Rail-roads, or for the convenience of working them when once made, and nothing has yet been said to induce an alteration of that opinion. As to the idea of erecting Rail-roads "on the line of our principal rivers", and where they are navigable we believe that would be considered as an unnecessary waste of time, labour and money. But it does not follow from this that the obstructions in those places where the navigation is impeded by shoals or rapids may not be overcome by this improvement; and in this way, perhaps more cheaply and effectually surmounted than by any other method. From what has been done proof of this assertion may be gathered. The locks at the Cascades were first built an immense expence [sic], found too narrow, pulled down and built again, and are still too narrow. The impediment they are designed to overcome, could have been as effectually surmounted by a Rail-road, and the latter could have been built at a less expence than all this pulling down and building up has cost. The lock at the Coteau-Du-Lac is equally if not more objectionable than them, and must incur the double expense of rebuilding before it be effective for any vessel exceedind a common Batteau in size. The La Chine Canal has already cost upwards £60,000 which is more than would have constructed a rail-road of the same extent even at the highest rate of expence, say £4000 per mile. The same may be said of the Military Canal at Grenville; and the same will occur in many places on the rapids of our rivers. Instead therefore of the adoption of Rail-Roads in such places being too expensive for our present resources, it will perhaps be found from the natural advantages our country possess for this description of conveyance, that they are the cheapest which can be resorted to. We have a well written paper on this subject in our possession, where the writer objects to over coming our rapids by Rail-Roads, from the time this plan would require to load and unload the boats. This difficulty may be easily overcome, a mechanical apparatus could be so contrived as to raise a boat with her whole cargo on board and place her on a machine upon the Rail-Road waggon at once.

If this description of conveyance be examined with the eye of an experienced Engineer, it will present advantages for the frontier of an enemies' country which belong to no other. When the subject of a water conveyance by a Canal from Lake Champlain to the river St. Lawrence, was agitated some years ago, the more violent opponents of that measure in searching for arguments against it, opposed the plan on the principle of its opening too ready access into the heart of the country, should a war ever take place with the United States. But it is obvious by a Rail-Road from above St. Johns to the deep water below Laprairie where the country is level, all the benefits of easy conveyance could be embraced, while in the event of hostilities, the communication could be cut off by breaking up the Rail-Road on the shortest notice.

The great railway debate of 1824. During 1824 occurred the first serious consideration of the possible construction of railways in British North America. This was the year before the Stockton & Darlington opened in England, and five years before the Rainhill Trials. Interest was heightened by a book entitled "Observations on a General Iron Rail-Way" by Thomas Gray. The fourth addition of this work, greatly enlarged, appeared in 1824 and was read with much interest in North America. The Montreal Gazette printed several editorials and comments on the subject, and, in its issue of December 1 1824, published these two editorials, one in favour of railways, the other, copied from the Quebec Mercury, against. That in favour expressed the Gazette's own opinion. The comment about cutting the railway if there was an invasion from the United States addressed a definite concern of many Canadians, for the War of 1812 had ended less than ten years before.

PUBLIC NOTICE is hereby given that the Subscribers on behalf of themselves and the public, will at the next session of the **PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT**, Petition for leave to make and maintain a good **RAIL ROAD** between the Town of **ST. JOHNS** and the **RIVER ST. LAWRENCE**, under such rules and modifications as may be deemed necessary for the said object.

**C. W. GRANT.
PETER MCGILL.
HORATIO GATES.**

Montreal, 23d October, 1828.

The announcement that began it all. This notice appeared in the Montreal Gazette starting on October 23, 1828. The notice continued to appear for the remainder of October and well into November. The actual item was only one column wide; it is reproduced here larger than actual size. National Library of Canada

The Roots Of The C&SL, 1826-1828

In 1826, at least one of the primary roots of the C&SL appeared. Horatio Gates and other Montreal businessmen attempted to get legislative approval for a canal from St. Johns to either Laprairie or Longueuil²⁸. Gates' efforts were unsuccessful that year or in 1827 when a second attempt was made but they demonstrate his interest in transportation links between St. Johns and the St. Lawrence. Despite the rejections, Gates tried again in 1828, this time with a proposal for a railway to address the transport problems between the upper Richelieu and the St. Lawrence²⁹.

During the summer of 1828, an extensive series of reports and letters about local railway possibilities appeared in Montreal and Quebec City newspapers³⁰. These focused on alternate routes from St. Johns to either the St. Lawrence or to Chambly, options which would direct traffic from the south toward either Montreal or the lower Richelieu and Quebec City. A letter to the *Montreal Gazette* from 'A Merchant'³¹ noted the rivalry between the cities, stating that 'each is enflamed by the desire of drawing the commerce of Lake Champlain to itself.' The writer also recognized the limits to the appeal any short portage railway would have, suggesting that shippers of timber and bulk cargo would prefer all-water routes without transfers and their associated additional costs.

Two important things are missing from the press coverage. There is nothing to clarify why the focus was on a route toward Lake Champlain nor were the principals promoting the routes identified. We can only assume that the St. Johns - St. Lawrence project was Gates' rail-based successor to his canal proposals of 1826-27 since the new concept soon became a matter of public record.

First Steps Toward The Formation Of A Company, 1828-1830

On October 23, 1828, the *Montreal Gazette* carried a notice from Gates, C.W. Grant and Peter McGill indicating they would apply to the legislature 'to make and maintain a good Rail Road between the town of St. Johns and the River St. Lawrence³².' As a distinct undertaking, the C&SL goes back at least as far as that notice³³.

Horatio Gates was a leading Montreal retailer and one of the largest exporters of ashes and grain. He had interests in shipping, had been involved with the Bank of Montreal from its foundation in 1817, and was President of the bank in 1826 and from 1832 till

his death in 1834. His commercial ties into the USA in the late 1820s appear to have been centered on the area south of Lake Ontario rather than the Lake Champlain region and there is no obvious explanation for his interest in a canal or rail route toward Lake Champlain unless it was simply seen as an investment opportunity.

Grant did have a personal interest in the route. The Grant family held the barony of Longueuil, an estate of about 100 square miles on the west bank of the Richelieu surrounding St. Johns. A railway from St. Johns to the St. Lawrence would likely go through this land and certainly increase its value. Grant's significance to the project is hard to assess, however, since his involvement seems to have diminished after the 1828 petition.

Peter McGill's personal business interests appear to have been centered on east-west and transatlantic trade rather than links to the USA. He was an important retailer, a major figure in the timber trade, and also had interests in shipping. Like Gates, he was an influential director of the Bank of Montreal, and he succeeded Gates as President of the bank. Presumably he too saw potential in the southern route as an investment but there is no evidence of any direct personal interest in that route.

Gates, Grant, and McGill (and others for whom they may have been the publicly identified representatives) may have been influenced by a number of factors in their decisions to build a railway and choose a route leading toward the United States.

As noted previously, the Champlain canal's opening in 1823 provided a direct water route from St. Johns all the way to New York. It also represented a potential threat to Montreal business interests. The year before this canal was fully operational, an American survey of canal development noted that it "diverts a valuable trade carried on from Vermont

to Montreal.³⁴ The Erie canal had opened in 1825 and started to draw traffic from the Lake Ontario basin that had previously used the St. Lawrence route through Montreal³⁵. By 1828, the Oswego canal (from the eastern end of Lake Ontario to the Erie system) was approaching completion and presented an additional threat to Montreal since it could attract traffic from the Canadian side of Lake Ontario. Other American canals loomed on the horizon. For example, starting in 1825, there were proposals for a canal to connect the American shore of Lake Ontario directly to Lake Champlain³⁶.

The fullest Montreal response to these American threats would have been to undertake major improvements on the St Lawrence between Lake Ontario and Lachine in order to maintain the traditional role of the river as the primary economic artery. That however, was beyond the financial capacity or political will available in Lower Canada. In a much more limited way, though, the development of a rail link to serve both Montreal traffic and goods coming down the St Lawrence could have been seen as a limited form of competition with the American canal ventures.

At the same time, Quebec City was resisting Montreal's quest for commercial dominance. In 1827, spurred by the Quebec City business community, the Lower Canada government had started work on a canal at Chambly, a development that would have tended to pull trade crossing the border at St. Johns down the Richelieu toward Quebec City³⁷. A St. Johns - Chambly railway, also being promoted by 1828³⁸, would have had a similar adverse effect on Montreal's position. There were also ongoing proposals for improved navigation on the lower Richelieu³⁹. The Quebec City Committee of Trade actively supported these projects in recognition of their importance in that city's rivalry with Montreal⁴⁰. The C&SL project would certainly have been seen in Montreal as a means to offset this challenge from Quebec City.

By the mid-1820s, calls for a shift in British trade policy away from the traditional colonial-mercantilist tradition in the direction of "free trade" were starting to gain support in the corridors of power in London. The Montreal business community may have sensed that the UK-Canadian trading relationship based on Imperial preference (which they tended to support very strongly) was about to change dramatically. One result of such a change would have been a commercial future for Montreal dependent on connections with the USA. While they tried to defend the economic status quo, it is possible that improving communication with the United States was a form of insurance against the future the Montreal businessmen saw looming⁴¹. A north-south route may have been accepted by default by the C&SL promoters in 1828 based on the assumption that a east-west railway would not be able to or would not be permitted to compete with the government-operated Lachine canal.

A final possibility is that the C&SL was not planned in isolation; it may have been a north-south project conceived in tandem with plans for another railway to run west from Montreal, a project which appeared on the scene in 1833 and which will be discussed below.

The focus here has been Montreal since no evidence has been found of St. Johns participation at this point. St. Johns participants played important roles starting in 1831 but initially the C&SL appears to have been a Montreal-based undertaking.

It would be three and a half years after the 1828 notice before the Champlain & St. Lawrence achieved incorporation on the third attempt. The struggle over the bill is interesting in a political context because some of the factors involved seem to have been related to conflicts that contributed to the Rebellions of 1837-38⁴², but the difficulties over incorporation are not really relevant to the focus of this paper. During the quest for incorporation, however, important details appeared about the evolution of the group behind the project and simultaneous developments within the Montreal commercial scene shed much additional light on the railway's origins.

The Wider Context Of The C&SL Project, 1830-1832

When the second attempt at incorporation was started in 1830⁴³, the publicly identified group of supporters had expanded. While Grant's name was not attached to the public notice this time⁴⁴, Gates and McGill were joined by a number of important new players. George Moffatt was a major force in both mercantile and staples trades. John Redpath had become Montreal's leading contractor as a result of his work on the Lachine and Rideau canals. Both had interests in shipping and held directorships at the Bank of Montreal. Thomas Phillips, a partner of Redpath's on the canal projects, led efforts in February and March, 1831 to get the C&SL bill through the Assembly⁴⁵.

Four leading French-Canadian businessmen also joined the group. Joseph Masson, one of the wealthiest men in Montreal, had commercial interests including trade in the Richelieu valley. Francois-Antoine Larocque had connections to Masson and interests including shipping on the Richelieu. Both were Bank of Montreal directors. Tancred Bouthelier and Phillipe de Rochblave do not appear to have been as influential as Masson or Larocque but they had a variety of interests including retail trade as well as grain and timber exporting. Recruitment of these four may well have been partly for ethno-political reasons since French-English rivalries underlaid opposition to the C&SL in the French-Canadian dominated Assembly. But if their involvement was designed to expedite legislative success, the idea did not work. The second bid for incorporation died in Committee when the Assembly rose in March of 1831.

Over this period, other business developments offer context for the C&SL project. In December of 1829, a proposal had appeared to establish steamship service between Montreal, Quebec City and key ports in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The original Montreal committee established to promote this project included McGill, Moffatt and C.W. Grant⁴⁶ who were joined by Gates and others as shareholders when the Quebec and Halifax Steam Navigation Co. was founded in 1831⁴⁷. Of interest in this wider context is the presence, among the non-Montreal shareholders, of Samuel Cunard of Halifax who played a leading role in the introduction of trans-Atlantic steamship service⁴⁸.

In late 1830, Gates led a move to establish a company to construct a basin for cargo transfers and warehousing on the Lachine canal⁴⁹. He was joined by William Forbes, who would be involved with the third C&SL attempt at incorporation, and seven others, three of whom would be included among the list of 74 C&SL founders whose names were included within the C&SL statute in 1832⁵⁰.

The next year, Gates, McGill, Masson, Larocque, Bouthellier, and Phillips sought incorporation of a company to build a canal from Lachine to the Lake of Two

Mountains on the lower reaches of the Ottawa⁵¹. They were joined by James Logan, an important figure in the retail trade who would also be a member of the first C&SL board, and Andrew White, a member of the Redpath-Phillips group on the Lachine and Rideau canal projects and a promoter of the Montreal-west railway in 1833.

In the spring of 1831, Gates and Moffatt acquired another common interest as joint trustees of the Inland Assurance Company offering insurance for shipping and cargo on the upper St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario⁵². This firm was renamed Canada Inland Forwarding and Insurance and, after Gates' death, a restructured group of principals included John Frothingham, Joseph Shuter, and Charles Brooke⁵³.

Frothingham was President of the City Bank, a C&SL founder, and member of the audit committee established after the railway's opening. Gates and Masson had been closely involved with the establishment of the City Bank⁵⁴ and Larocque was one the new Bank's founding directors. Vice President at City Bank was John Molson Jr, son of the man who became the largest C&SL shareholder. Shuter was a prominent merchant, a C&SL founder and early member of the railway's board, a Bank of Montreal director, and Peter McGill's father-in-law. Shuter and John Molson Jr would also be among the promoters of the Montreal-west railway project. Brooke was on the Bank of Montreal board and a C&SL founder.

In 1831, the Ottawa Steamboat Company was established to operate on the Ottawa between Montreal and



This view of St. John's was drawn by an unknown artist in the 1840s. Although the railway was then in operation, the general scene was little changed from what it was like in the early 1830s.

National Archives of Canada, photo No. C-40152.

the soon-to-open Rideau canal. Initial principals included Gates, McGill, and John Molson Sr. In 1835, the firm became the Ottawa & Rideau Forwarding Company with John Molson Sr, McGill, Redpath, Frothingham, and Phillips identified as owners⁵⁵.

These ventures illustrate the scope of the business connections at work among key figures involved in the C&SL project and demonstrate that the line grew out of a context which went far beyond an isolated idea of building a small railway.

Despite continued opposition to the C&SL project in the Assembly, interest in railways heated up during the winter of 1830-31. In December of 1830, Peter Fleming, who had previously suggested building a railway instead of the Chambly canal, advocated a railway from Montreal westward through Lachine, across the mouth of the Ottawa, and beyond it to Brockville⁵⁶. The *Montreal Gazette* offered strong support for Fleming's idea though his proposal did not take a more tangible form until 1833.

While reporting on Fleming's proposal for the Brockville line, the *Gazette* also noted that two more railway projects for the south shore of the St. Lawrence had appeared since 1828⁵⁷. 'Public attention has been occupied for some time with the plan for a railway from St. Johns to Laprairie, of another from St. Johns to Stanstead⁵⁸, of a third from St. Johns to Chambly⁵⁹, and of a fourth from Chambly to Longueuil.' Knowing if any principals in the latter three projects⁶⁰ had ties to the C&SL group would be highly desirable but no details have been located.

The preamble to the act incorporating the Champlain & St. Lawrence consists of one long sentence of 1388 words (not 1453 words as some accounts state). It is quoted in full below. The Latin heading translates to "Second year of William IV, Chapter 58". The preamble lists all 74 of the original incorporators, and Horatio Gates (soon to become president of the Bank of Montreal for the second time) leads the list, with John Molson immediately after. Jason C. Peirce is well down the list.

**Anno Secundo Gulielmi IV - Cap. LVIII
(Feb. 25th 1832)**

**An Act for making a Rail-road from Lake
Champlain to the River St. Lawrence.**

Whereas the facilitating and dispatching the carriage and conveyance of goods, passengers, etc., between the navigable waters of Lake Champlain and the River St. Lawrence, opposite to the city of Montreal, by means of a Rail-road, will be of great public advantage, and will afford a more easy, cheap and expeditious conveyance for all goods, wares, commodities, passengers, etc., and generally increase the trade and commerce of this Province, and in other respects be of great public utility: and whereas the several persons hereinafter named are desirous, at their own cost and charges, to make and maintain the said Rail-road, but cannot effect the same without the aid and authority of the Provincial Parliament; wherefore for obtaining and perfecting the good effects and purposes aforesaid: be it therefore enacted by the King's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Council and Assembly of the Province of Lower Canada, constituted and assembled by virtue of and under the authority of an Act passed in the Parliament of Great Britain, entitled 'An Act for making more effectual provision for the Government of the Province of Lower Canada'; and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same, that Horatio Gates, John Molson, Samuel Gerrard, Samuel Gale, Peter McGill, John Frothingham, Thomas Blackwood, Adam L. Macnider, Joseph Donegani, John E. Mills, James Holmes, Jean D. Bernard, William Guild, James Logan, John McKenzie, William Peddie, Frederick Griffin, Benjamin Hart, Samuel A. W. Hart, Isaac Gregory, Benjamin Lewis, Abner P. Herley, George J. Holt, William L. Coit, Samuel McLure, George Brush, William Hedge, John Torrance, James Millar, William Edmonstone, Lewis Betts, Smith Sanborn, Campbell Sweeney, Benjamin Brewster, Cyrus Brewster, William Brewster, Joseph Shuter, Turton Penn, George Davies, Joseph Masson, Joseph T. Barrett, J. A. Cartier, Henry Joseph, Thomas S. Brown, Norman Williams, David Torrance, Louis Marchand, Cyrus Carlton, Stephen Field, Orlin Bostwick, Hosea B. Smith, Jason C. Peirce, Walter Benny, John Try, James Henderson, Jeth L. Weatherley, William Lymon, J. Glennon, Robert Jones, Joshua Hobart, Roswell Corse, John Matthewson, Charles S. Delorme, Charles Brooke, E.M. Leprohon, T. Bouthillier, Dwight P. Janes, Joshua Bell, Noah

Shaw, William Spier, William Freeland, John Thompson, William Forbes, Oliver Wait together with such person or persons as shall under the provisions of this Act, become subscribers to and proprietors of any share or shares in the Rail-road hereby authorized to be made, and the several and respective heirs, executors, administrators, curators and assigns, being proprietors of any share or shares in the Rail-road hereby authorized to be made, are and shall be, and be united into a Company for the carrying on, making, completing and maintaining the said intended Rail-road, according to the rules, orders and directions hereinafter expressed, and shall for that purpose be one body politic and corporate, of the name of "The Company of Proprietors of the Champlain and St. Lawrence Rail-road"; and by that name shall have perpetual succession, and shall have a common seal; and by that name shall and may sue and be sued, and also shall and may have power and authority to purchase lands, tenements and hereditaments for them and their successors and assigns, for the use of the said Rail-road, without His Majesty's Lettres d'Amortissement; saving nevertheless to the Seigneur or Seigneurs within whose censive the lands, tenements and hereditaments so purchased may be situate, his and their several and respective droits d'indemnité, and all other seigneurial rights whatever, and also to sell any of the said lands, tenements and hereditaments purchased for the purposes aforesaid; and any person or persons, bodies, politic or corporate, or communities, may give, grant, bargain, sell or convey to the said Company of Proprietors, any lands, tenements or hereditaments for the purposes aforesaid, and the same may re-purchase of the said Company without Lettres d'Amortissements, and the said Company of Proprietors and their successors and assigns shall be, and are hereby authorized and empowered from and after the passing of this Act, by themselves, their deputies, agents, officers, workmen and servants, to make and complete a Rail-road, to be called the "Champlain and St. Lawrence Rail-road", from, at or near the village of Dorchester, commonly called St. Johns, in the District of Montreal, in as direct a line as may be found practicable, and as local situation, as circumstances and the nature of the ground will admit, to the River St. Lawrence, opposite or nearly opposite to the city of Montreal: provided always, that the commencement of the said Rail-road from, at or near Dorchester aforesaid, shall not be at a greater distance from the lower extremity of the Port thereof upwards than half a mile; and provided also that the termination of the said Rail-road on the River

St. Lawrence shall be at the village of Laprairie inclusively, or at some point between the village of Laprairie and the head or upper end of the Island of St. Helen; and for the purposes aforesaid the said Company of Proprietors, their deputies, servants, agents and workmen, are hereby authorized and empowered to enter into and upon the lands and grounds of the King's Most Excellent Majesty, or of any person or persons, bodies politic, corporate or collegiate, or communities whatsoever, and to survey and take levels of the same, or any part thereof, and to set out and ascertain such parts thereof as they shall think necessary and proper for making the said intended Rail-road, and all such other works, matters and conveniences as they shall think proper and necessary for making, effecting, preserving, improving, completing, maintaining and using the said intended Rail-road and other works, and also to bore, dig, cut, trench, get, remove, take, carry away, and lay earth, clay, stone, soil, rubbish, trees, roots of trees, beds of gravel or sand, or any other matters or things which may be dug or got in making the said intended Rail-road or other works, or out of the lands or grounds of any person or persons adjoining or lying convenient thereto, and which may be proper, requisite or necessary for making or repairing the said intended Rail-road, or works incidental or relative thereto, or which may hinder, prevent or obstruct the making using or completing, extending or maintaining the same respectively, according to the intent and purpose of this Act; and to make, build, erect and set up in or upon the said intended Rail-road, or upon the lands adjoining or near the same respectively, such and so many houses, warehouses, toll-houses, watch-

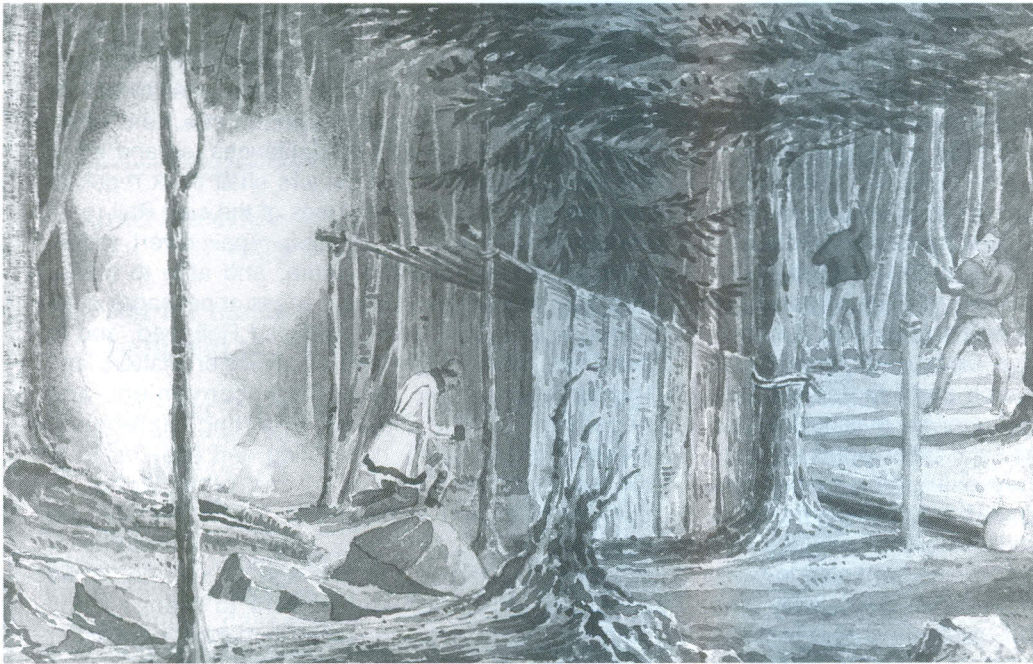
houses, weighing beams, cranes, fire engines, steam engines, or other engines, either stationary or locomotive, inclined planes, machines, and other works, ways, roads, and conveniences, as and when the said Company of Proprietors shall think requisite and convenient for the purposes of the said Rail-road; and also from time to time to alter, repair, divert, widen, enlarge, and extend the same, and also to make, maintain, repair and alter any fences or passages over, under or through the said intended Rail-road, and to construct, erect, make and do all other matters and things which they shall think convenient and necessary for the making, effecting, extending, preserving, improving, completing and easy using of the said intended Rail-road and other works, in pursuance of and according to the true intent and meaning of this Act; they, the said Company of Proprietors, doing as little damage as may be, in the execution of the several powers to them hereby granted, and making satisfaction in manner hereinafter mentioned to the owners or proprietors of, or the persons interested in the lands, tenements, hereditaments, waters, water-courses, brooks, or rivers respectively, which shall be taken, used, removed, prejudiced, or of which the course shall be altered, or for all damages to be by them sustained in or by the execution of all or any of the powers of this Act; and this Act shall be sufficient to indemnify the said Company of Proprietors and their servants, agents or workmen, and all other persons whatsoever for what they, or any of them, shall do by virtue of the powers hereby granted, subject nevertheless to such provisions and restrictions as are hereinafter mentioned.

In the fall of 1831, notice was given of the intent to again seek incorporation of the C&SL⁶¹. This notice was placed by William Forbes, involved with Gates and his colleagues in the Lachine Basin project, and Oliver Wait, a contractor associated with Redpath, Phillips, and White on the Lachine and Rideau canals. This time, the *Montreal Gazette* mounted a vigorous campaign of support. Much of this took the form of accounts of American railway developments⁶² but, in case the subtle message was missed, the paper could be explicit. For example, on October 6, the *Gazette* commented that 'Our enterprising neighbors in the United States have become sensible of the great advantages to be derived from the construction of railroads and, unlike the sages who sit in our legislature, are disposed to grant every facility to those who wish to embark on such undertaking.'

With this third attempt, despite continued uncertainties about the intent of the C&SL promoters⁶³ and a petition from the Chambly area asking for improvements to the road system instead of approval for the railway project⁶⁴, the legislative effort succeeded and the railway bill received Royal Assent in February, 1832. A much larger group of promoters had joined the project but the outcome

appears ultimately a result of a decision by Papineau to support the bill⁶⁵, a decision for which there is no clear explanation.

What was perhaps most significant about the group finally empowered to build the railway was the addition of two men from St. Johns who would ultimately play key roles. Jason Peirce was a freight forwarder and agent for Lake Champlain steamboats⁶⁶. Robert Jones was a Legislative Councilor with business interests including a toll bridge built across the Richelieu at St. Johns in 1826⁶⁷. Both had been involved in an unsuccessful 1829 attempt to gain approval for a turnpike road from St. Johns to the St. Lawrence⁶⁸. In that effort, Peirce and Jones had been joined by others including William Lindsay and William MacRae, senior officers at the St. Johns Customs House. Lindsay also had interests in shipping on the Richelieu. MacRae was a member of the Board of Commissioners for the Chambly canal⁶⁹ and was a brother-in-law of George Moffatt⁷⁰ from the C&SL group in Montreal. Neither Lindsay nor MacRae were included in the group of 74 founders named in the C&SL statute, but they soon joined Peirce and Jones within the project with Lindsay becoming the senior manager of the C&SL in November of 1834⁷¹.



This painting, done about 1836, is entitled "Preparing for a Railroad Through the Woods, Lower Canada". It must, therefore refer to the Champlain & St. Lawrence, and so is the earliest known view of railway construction in Canada. Note the dense woods that existed before the land was cleared; so different from the same countryside today.

National Archives of Canada, photo No. C-40332.

The Period Of Dormancy, 1832-1834

On May 1, 1832, a C&SL committee headed by Gates opened the book for share subscriptions⁷² but the timing was unfortunate. Within weeks, Lower Canada was caught up in an international cholera epidemic and close to 2000 died out of Montreal's population of 32,000. Among the dead were John Fleming, President of the Bank of Montreal, and Oliver Wait from Gates' C&SL committee.

The next year, there was an unusually poor harvest and cholera hit again in 1834. The prolonged business slump was described as a 'very great and unparalleled depression in trade'⁷³ by Jason Peirce at the first C&SL general meeting in late November of 1834.

Economic circumstances may explain some of the problems encountered in placing C&SL shares though Peirce's comment about depression and literature assumptions about a shortage of capital may be somewhat misleading. During 1833, for example, the City Bank placed £40,000 of new shares with little trouble⁷⁴ and the Bank of Montreal continued to post record profit levels⁷⁵.

Distractions likely affected several of the key players. Gates had become President of the Bank of Montreal following John Fleming's death. At the same time, in mid-1832, McGill and Moffatt got involved in a major land development and migration venture, the British American Land Company. McGill attended the

CHAMPLAIN AND ST. LAWRENCE RAILROAD COMPANY.

No. 79

£ 12-10/-

Montreal, 26 Aug 1836

Received from Robertson Masson Strang & Co

the sum of Twelve pounds 10/- being £2-10/-

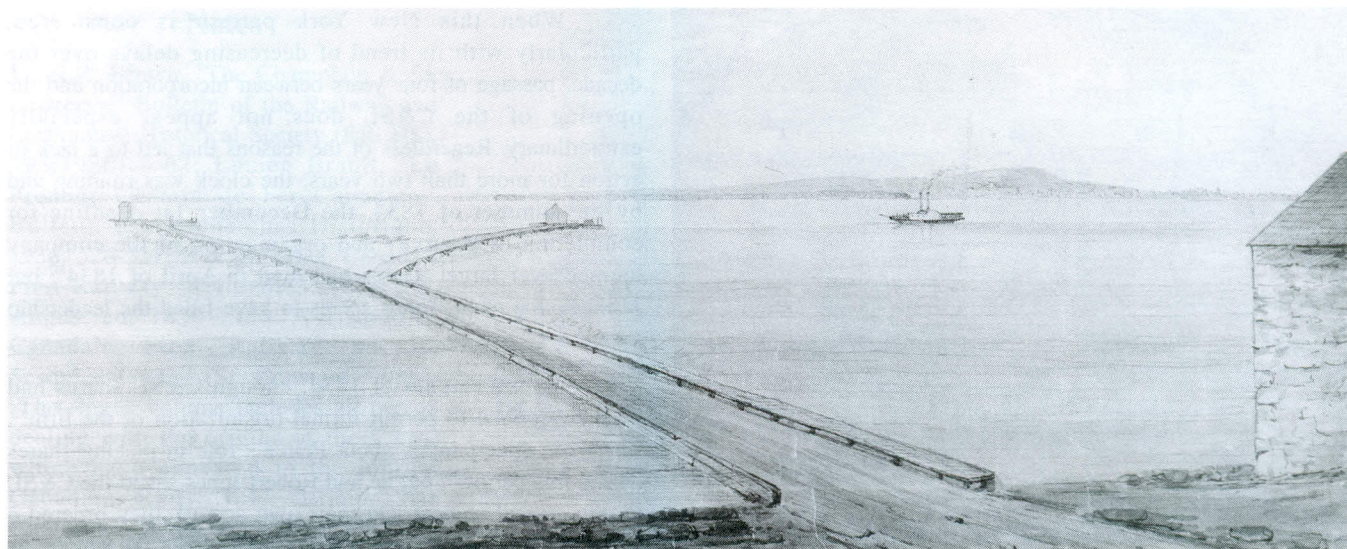
per Share for the 10 Instalment on Five Shares

of Stock in the CHAMPLAIN & ST. LAWRENCE RAILROAD COMPANY, standing in their name.

Chas. H. Treasurer.

Even after the Champlain & St. Lawrence was open for business, not all the stock that had been subscribed had been paid for. This receipt, dated August 26 1836, was for the tenth and final installment of £12 / 10 Halifax Currency (equal to \$50.00) on five shares subscribed for by Robertson Masson Strang & Co. at £25 (\$100) per share.

Collection of Fred Angus



The wharf of the Champlain & St. Lawrence Rail Road at Laprairie as it appeared after the terminus had been moved to St. Lambert in 1852. National Archives of Canada, photo No. C-34156.

organizing meeting in London and he and Moffatt became Canadian Commissioners for the firm⁷⁶. Both invested considerable time on this company's difficulties with the Assembly before approval was given in 1834 for the acquisition of 850,000 acres east of the Richelieu⁷⁷.

Still another possible explanation for a delay lurks in the background. The relationship of the Montreal-to-Brockville railway project, originally proposed by Peter Fleming in 1830, to the C&SL is uncertain but the large number of promoters involved in both undertakings raises important questions that need to be answered.

Notices appearing in the *Montreal Gazette* in 1833 and 1834⁷⁸ name 20 promoters of the proposed Montreal-to-Brockville line. Of the 14 about whom some details have been located, 12 had either direct personal involvement in the C&SL project prior to opening day in 1836 or very close connections to key figures in the C&SL group.

Frederick Griffin was secretary of Gates' 1832 committee to raise the C&SL's capital. Joseph Shuter became a member of the C&SL Board in December, 1835. Benjamin Holmes was cashier (general manager) of the Bank of Montreal and would also be a member of the first C&SL Board in November, 1834. Thomas Phillips had been active in attempts to get the C&SL bill passed in 1831. Robert Nelson (physician to John Molson Sr) would also become a member of the first C&SL Board⁷⁹. John Torrance (best known for his interests in St. Lawrence shipping and his role as a director of the Bank of Montreal), Benjamin Brewster, and Samuel Gale were all founders named in the C&SL statute.

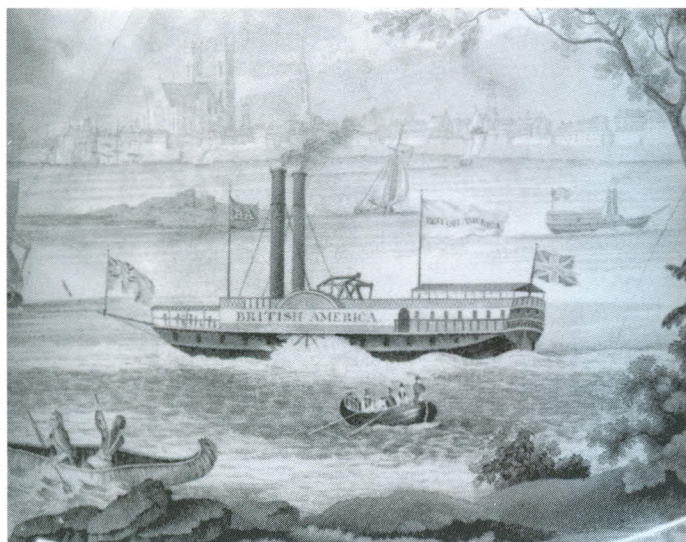
Stanley Bagg (on the City Bank Board with Phillips) and Andrew White were contractors who had been partners of John Redpath and Phillips. White had also been associated with Gates, McGill, Phillips, et al in the Lake of Two Mountains canal project. John Molson Jr (also on the City Bank Board) would inherit his father's C&SL shares in early 1836 and be the largest shareholder when the C&SL opened.

Henry Griffin was notary for John Molson Sr and a brother of Frederick Griffin who, as indicated, had close connections to the C&SL.

Though this is highly speculative, it seems possible that the C&SL project could have been deliberately delayed for a time while legislative approval for the railway west from Montreal was being sought so that the two lines could be built and opened at the same time. If that had been the objective, it was not achieved. The Brockville venture did not get legislative approval though efforts continued to at least the autumn of 1836⁸⁰ by which time the C&SL was operational.

Consideration of possible influence of the Brockville proposal on the C&SL merits further exploration for another reason in addition to the presence of the significant number of interlocking promoters. Starting in 1833, the rivalry on the St. Lawrence between the Torrance-owned Montreal Tow Boat Company and Molson's St. Lawrence Steamboat Company began to change. That year, the two firms launched a new vessel as a jointly-owned venture. It appears that competition on the river was very quickly replaced by a Torrance-Molson cartel with additional jointly-owned vessels, co-operation in scheduling, and elimination of price competition⁸¹. With both Torrance and Molson interests in both the C&SL and Brockville railway projects, it seems logical to wonder if the "co-operative" model launched on the river in 1833 may not have also been considered for the railways being planned at the same time.

While we do not have enough evidence to do more than speculate about the significance of the ties between the C&SL project and the Brockville proposal⁸², it is interesting to note that other questions of this nature apply to this same period. Peirce and Lindsay, two of the C&SL players from St. Johns, were also members of a St. Johns committee promoting a rail-way from St. Johns eastward to Lake Magog in 1835⁸³.



The "British America", built in 1829, was one of the Torrance steamboats. We see it here, pictured on a china platter made in England about 1835. The Montreal skyline and a rival Molson boat appear in the background. Note the towers of Notre Dame, not yet built, but depicted as they would be after 1843. Collection of Fred Angus.

Examination of these possible factors involved in the lack of action on the C&SL project over the period 1832-34 has obviously been based on the assumption that the time lag was unexpected or abnormal. There is no evidence about the pace of activity expected by the C&SL group when incorporation was achieved other than the deadlines in the statute⁸⁴.

There is, however, evidence from the USA which provides some context for progress on the C&SL. During the period 1831-1837, eight railways were opened in northern New York relatively close to the Canadian border. Their chronological data, drawn from von Gerstner's 1838-39 survey of American railways⁸⁵, closely parallel the C&SL experience.

**Table 2 RR Charters & Openings,
Northern New York State, 1826-37**

	Chartered	Opened	Years Delay
Mohawk & Hudson	1826	1831	5
Ithaca & Oswego	1828	1834	6
Saratoga & Schenectady	1831	1833	2
Tonowanda	1832	1837	5
Rensselaer & Saratoga	1833	1835	2
Utica & Schenectady	1833	1836	3
Buffalo & Niagara Falls	1834	1837	3
Lockport & Niagara Falls	1834	1837	3
Average of the 8 lines			3.6

When this New York pattern is considered, particularly with its trend of decreasing delays over the decade, passage of four years between incorporation and the opening of the C&SL does not appear especially extraordinary. Regardless of the reasons that led to a lack of action for more than two years, the clock was running and by the summer of 1834, the December 1st deadline for completion of a survey and organization of the company loomed ever larger. Gates had died in April of 1834⁸⁶ but Jason Peirce of St. Johns seems to have filled the leadership vacuum.

By the autumn of 1834, enough C&SL shares had been subscribed to permit formal organization of the firm⁸⁷. There are uncertainties about Peirce's role in placing shares during this period⁸⁸, but he and Robert Jones saved the C&SL in one critical respect. On their own accord, they ordered a survey of a potential route to meet the terms of the statute. At the organizational meeting on 29 November, decisions were made to accept route and specifications recommendations coming out of the survey, bring in the funds subscribed, and start construction when weather permitted in early 1835⁸⁹. The dormant project soon turned into a railway under construction and by mid-1836 the line would be open for business.

Conclusions

The goal of the research reported here has been to provide a better understanding of the vicissitudes surrounding the origins of Canada's first locomotive-powered railway. The results are mixed.

The origins of the C&SL have been pushed back three years to 1828 and it now seems that primary credit for establishing the railway should probably go to Horatio Gates. The evolution of the project over the period 1828-34 has been found to be closely connected to other commercial developments and the relationships among the C&SL promoters and across various business undertakings have been revealed in some detail. Vital questions remain, however.

Many potentially significant details are missing about both the C&SL and the Brockville railway project of 1833-36 as well as about other business undertakings at this time. At the top of this list are the complete lists of names from the first two C&SL petitions and the two Brockville project petitions since the original petitions have not been located. It also seems likely that there were other important personal and business linkages about which not even a hint has yet been uncovered. The basis for selecting the St. Johns - Laprairie route has been assessed but answers about the choice are still speculative, as are the explanations for the lull in activity by the C&SL promoters over the two years following incorporation in 1832.

While the missing first chapter on the C&SL has been started, it is still far from complete.

Notes

1 R.R. Brown, 'The Champlain & St. Lawrence,' Bulletin of the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society (BRLHS), 39 (1936) 6-62; Lucien Brault, 'Le Premier Chemin de Fer Canadien,' Bulletin des Recherches Historique, 1936, 526-537; N. & H. Mika, Canada's First Railway (Belleville, 1985); F.F. Angus, ed. 1836-1986: A Tribute to Canada's First Railway on Its Sesquicentennial (St. Constant, 1986); [The Angus volume includes all papers dealing with the origins of the C&SL which have appeared in the journal Canadian Rail]; L.F. Gillam, The Champlain & St. Lawrence Railroad (Rotherham, S Yorks, nd (c.1986)); F. Cinq-Mars, L'Avenement du Premier Chemin de Fer au Canada (St. Jean sur Richelieu, 1986); see also G.J.J. Tulchinsky, The River Barons: Montreal Businessmen and the Growth of Industry and Transportation, 1837-53 (Toronto, 1977).

2 See A. Shortt on Horatio Gates, Journal of Canadian Banking (JCB), 30 (1922-23) 44, and on Peter McGill, JCB, 31 (1923-24) 306. In the Dictionary of Canadian Biography (DCB), see J.-C. Robert on Horatio Gates, vol. VI (1987) 278, and A. Dubuc on John Molson, vol. VII (1988) 620. The book by Cinq-Mars (1986) does reveal some of the pre-1831 roots but there has not been any more recent literature in English to reflect Cinq-Mars' work or recognize the significance of the references in the four biographies.

3 Brown, for example (1936, 10), refers to possible influence of the Rainhill trials on the Liverpool & Manchester in 1829 but goes on to state that "it is much more likely that the opening of the Mohawk and Hudson Railroad was the real deciding factor." Gillam (c.1986, 9) was even more more explicit when he stated, "Doubtless the opening ... (of the Mohawk and Hudson) ... proved to be the turning point."

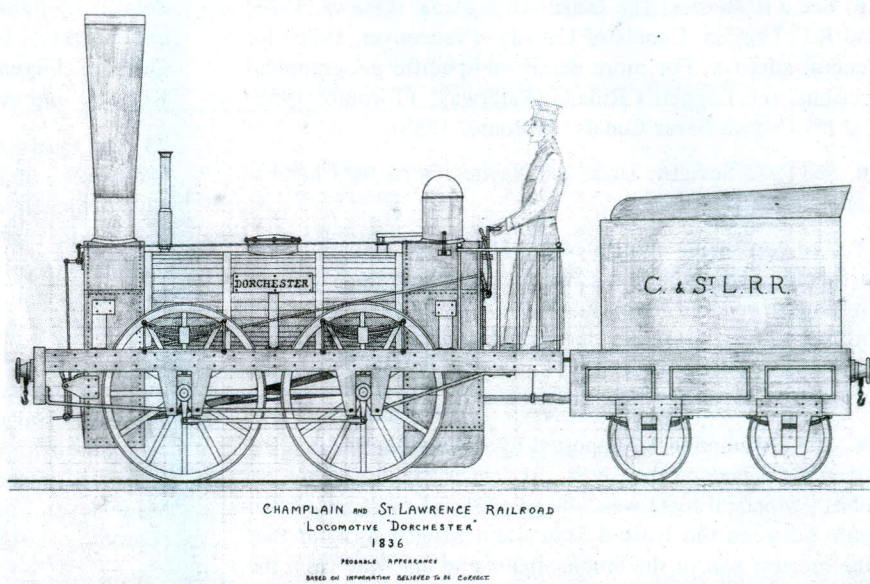
4 Two exceptions are references by Robert, DCB, vol. VI (1987) 278, to the evolution of Horatio Gates' interest from a canal to the C&SL project, and by Cinq-Mars (1986) to some of the common business interests among the C&SL promoters.

5 This subhead is based on the title of D.G. Creighton's seminal study, The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence, 1760-1850 (Toronto, 1937).

6 See H.A. Innes, The Fur Trade in Canada (New Haven, 1930).

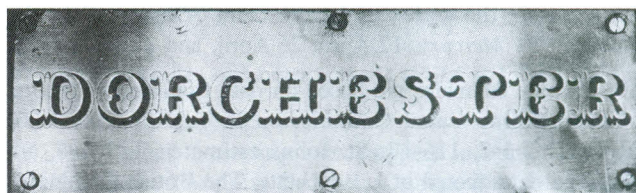
7 The major studies are those of A.R. Lower, The Assault on the Canadian Forest (New Haven, 1938) and Great Britain's Woodyard (Montreal, 1973).

8 See H.I. Cowan, British Emigration to British North America (Toronto, 1961), tables I - III, 288-90.



ABOVE: A drawing, by Robert Brown, showing the "Dorchester", the first locomotive of the Champlain & St. Lawrence.

BELOW: The "Dorchester's" name plate.



9 See 'Census and Statistical Returns for Lower Canada,' Journals of the House of Assembly of Lower Canada (JHALC), vol. 41 (1831-32), Appendix Volume, unnumbered appendix.

10 By the 1830s, the wheat and flour being exported was coming primarily from Upper Canada; see F. Ouellet, Lower Canada, 1790 -1840 (Toronto, 1980), 120-21 and table 86, 388.

11 See M. Denison, Canada's First Bank: A History of the Bank of Montreal, 2 vols. (Toronto, 1966/67).

12 See G.H. Wilson, The Application of Steam to St. Lawrence Valley Navigation, MA Thesis, McGill University, 1961, and F. Mackey's recent Steamboat Connections: Montreal to Upper Canada, 1816-43, (Montreal, 2000).

13 See G.J.J. Tulchinsky, The Construction of the First Lachine Canal, MA Thesis, McGill University, 1960.

14 Before the final decision to build the Rideau canal, serious consideration had been given at high levels in Whitehall to building a tramway rather than a canal. This idea came out of proposals from James George of Quebec City for a tramway to deal with the problems associated with the St. Lawrence route; see R.W. Passfield, 'Ordnance Supply Problems in the Canadas: The Quest for an Improved Military Transport System, 1814-1828,' HSTC Bulletin: Quarterly Newsletter for the History of Science and Technology of Canada, vol. 5, no. 2, May, 1981, 187-209.

15 See J.P. Heisler, *The Canals of Canada*, (Ottawa, 1973) and R.F. Leggett, *Canals of Canada* (Vancouver, 1976) for general surveys. For more detail on specific geographical sections, see Leggett's *Rideau Waterway* (Toronto, 1955) and his *Ottawa River Canals* (Toronto, 1988).

16 See P.-A. Sevigny, *Trade and Navigation on the Chambly Canal* (Ottawa, 1983).

17 The two senior officers of the St. Johns Customs House in the late 1820s, W.D. Lindsay and William MacRae, ultimately became involved in the C&SL project though only, it seems, after the decision had been made by the original promoters to focus on a route from St. Johns to the St. Lawrence.

18 This assumption is supported by observations within the Assembly debate on the C&SL, 21 January 1832, that the St. Johns - Montreal route was "the greatest and most frequented route between the United States and Montreal," and that "the greatest part of the articles that came that way from the States were for the consumption of Montreal," *Quebec City Mercury*, 4 February 1832; see also the letter from 'S' in the *Montreal Gazette*, 22 May 1828. Strong criticism of the proposed St. Johns - St. Lawrence route came from Quebec City interests as soon as it became public knowledge; see for example the series of letters from "Observer" in the *Quebec City Mercury*, 12 April, 26 April, and 27 May, 1828.

19 Lachine estimates are based on data from annual reports of the Lachine Canal Commission in Tulchinsky (1960) appendices 1-2, 116-17; St. Johns estimates, 1824-26, are based on data quoted in J. Bouchette, *The British Dominions in North America* (London, 1831) vol. 1, 451-52; St. Johns estimate, 1827, is based on JHALC, vol. 38 (1828-29) Appendix C; St. Johns estimates, 1829-31, are from evidence to a Legislative Assembly Committee by Jason Peirce of St. Johns when appearing on behalf of the C&SL promoters, JHALC, vol. 41 (1831-32) Appendix Volume, Minutes of Evidence, 30 December 1831; St. Johns estimates, 1832-33, are based on data in *Montreal Gazette*, 24 December 1833.

20 St Johns estimate in JHALC, vol. 41 (1831-32) Appendix Volume, Minutes of Evidence, 30 December 1831; Lachine data appear in Tulchinsky (1960) 117.

21 R.R. Brown, 'Canada's Earliest Railways,' BRLHS, 78 (1949) 50-55. It should be noted that only one, the Rideau Canal line, was a level-ground tramway; the other two were inclined planes. The Quebec plane was steam-powered while the Niagara plane was operated by a capstan. While the Quebec City and Rideau lines had been constructed in the 1820s, the Niagara incline had been used by the British military during the previous century and abandoned when the Americans assumed control of the land on the east side of the Niagara river in the 1790s.

22 Brown's 'Canada's Earliest Railways' (52-55) also deals with the "Kingsey" tramway. His references to James George and Kingsey as a location both appear open to question, especially in the absence of reference to George or to Kingsey in the passage in the Halifax *Acadian Recorder* which is his primary evidence for the tramway's existence. The *Recorder's*

detail (13 February 1830) is limited to stating that "an experiment ... has been tried in the woods 120 miles from Quebec." Given the evidence, I am not convinced that the Kingsey line actually existed.

23 The *Quebec City Mercury*, 9 January 1830, stated that "a short piece of Rail-Road made by Messrs MacPherson & Co... which is of three-inch plank with a small edge, has been in use for three or four years ..." It is interesting to note that the reference to this tramway appeared first in a *Quebec City* paper and was reprinted in the *Montreal Gazette* nine days later. No Montreal-sourced reference to the MacPherson line has been found. While the evidence for this line is limited, it seems better than that available for the "Kingsey tramway." David MacPherson, a member of the family firm became an important player when the Grand Trunk was organized in the early 1850s; see 'The Hon. David Lewis MacPherson,' in J.C. Dent's *The Canadian Portrait Gallery* (Toronto, 1881).

24 "Canada" in this context excludes the eastern colonies, specifically Nova Scotia, where the General Mining Association opened three short tramways at coal mines at Albion Mines in Pictou County and both Sydney Mines and Bridgeport on Cape Breton Island at the beginning of the 1830s.

25 *Montreal Gazette*, 30 October and 24 November, 1824, 12 February 1825.

26 The *Montreal Gazette* carried eight reports on the L&M between 7 December 1829 and 4 November 1830.

27 *Montreal Gazette*, 24 November and 1 December, 1824.

28 *Montreal Gazette*, 11 February 1826 and 19 April 1827; Journals of the Legislative Council of Lower Canada [JLCLC] (1826) 43.

29 See *Montreal Gazette*, 4 December 1824, 16 August and 30 August 1830 for reference to problems with the roads between St. Johns and the St. Lawrence.

30 See *Montreal Gazette*, 10 April, 21 April, 12 May, 22 May, 5 June, 9 June, and 10 July for a total of 11 reports and letters, a number of which appeared first in the *Quebec City Mercury* and/or the *Quebec City Star*.

31 *Montreal Gazette*, 5 June 1828.

32 The petition was presented in the Legislative Council on 5 December 1828, JLCLC (1828-29) 45 and in the Assembly five days later, JHALC, vol. 38 (1828-29) 122.

33 Many details about individuals here and in following section are not footnoted. Three major sources have been used: the *Montreal Gazette*, 1824-1840 inclusive; biographical studies in DCB, vols. VI-X inclusive; and Tulchinsky's *River Barons* which served as inspiration and model for much of my research.

34 'The New York Canals,' in *North American Review*, vol. 14, no. 34, January, 1822, 249.

35 *Montreal Gazette*, 6 March 1824, 7 April 1824, 14 and 21 May 1825, 23 October 1826.

36 *Montreal Gazette*, 7 May 1825.

37 *Montreal Gazette*, 21 September 1829 and 21 April 1831.

38 Among its supporters was Peter Fleming, the first engineer on the Chambly canal; JHALC, vol. 40 (1831) 156.

39 *Montreal Gazette*, 12 May and 9 June 1828.

40 *Montreal Gazette*, 23 November 1828.

41 See for example the flow of reports reflecting fears about the future of the timber trade to the UK in *Montreal Gazette*, 5 and 12 February 1831, 14, 21 and 23 April 1831, 12 November 1832, and 4 March 1834, and in the *Quebec City Mercury*, 15, 18, and 22 January 1831, and 22 February 1831.

42 Reference should be made, however, to one of the most interesting contemporary accounts of the opening of the C&SL. The *Montreal Vindicator* of 26 July 1836 contains a lengthy letter from "TSB," presumably T.S. Brown, the paper's founder, a supporter of the reform movement who became one of the leaders of the patriote rebellion which broke out the next year. His account presents the C&SL within the context of the ongoing political struggle in Lower Canada. Most of the Montreal C&SL promoters were on the opposite side of the political fence and vigorously opposed the reform movement.

43 *Montreal Gazette*, 23 December 1830.

44 While Grant's name was not on the public notice in the fall of 1830, he spoke on behalf of the project before an Assembly committee in February of 1831; JHALC, vol. 41 (1831-32) Appendix Volume, Minutes of Evidence, 24 February 1831. The reason for his lowered public profile is uncertain. Perhaps it was because his position as a Legislative Councilor was seen to be in conflict. For example, in February of 1830, he had presented four petitions in the Legislative Council from residents in the St. Johns - Laprairie region seeking action to improve roads in the district. JLCLC (1830) 35. Another possibility is that his political profile might have been seen as disadvantageous to the C&SL project. When the C&SL bill was finally passed in 1832, Grant's name was not included among the 74 men who were empowered to build the railway.

45 See *Montreal Gazette*, 22 February 1831 for Phillips' public notice (required because of a change to the petition while it was before the House), and 5 April 1831 for a letter from 'A Friend To Public Improvement' which refers to the fate of the bill in the Assembly. The *Quebec City Mercury* of 5 April 1831 refuted suggestions that Quebec City influence had caused the failure of the bill while carefully recognizing that there was strong opposition to the C&SL from "those who are interested in the Chambly canal." See also JHALC, vol. 40 (1831) 273, 302, 356, 364.

1853. Champlain and St. Lawrence Railroad. 18											
TIME TABLE, No. 8.											
TO TAKE EFFECT ON MONDAY, AUGUST 1											
GOING SOUTH.						GOING NORTH.					
Miles	Leaves.	Passengers.	Express.	Passengers.	Express.	Freight.	Miles	Leaves.	Passengers.	Express.	Passengers.
Montreal	6.50 a.m.		9.30 a.m.	12.0 m.	5.30 p.m.	12.0 m.	Rouse's Pt.	9.0 a.m.	2.15 p.m.	5.0 p.m.	7.0 p.m.
9 Laprairie	-	-	-	-	-	4.0 p.m.	61 Lacolle	9.9 "	-	-	-
14 St. Lambt Junction	-	-	10.0 "	-	6.0 "	M.E.	101 Stotts	9.16 "	-	-	-
21 Lacadie	7.29 "	-	12.45 "	-	-	-	161 Gd. Ligne	9.28 "	-	-	-
271 St. Johns	7.40 "	-	1.0 p.m.	6.20 "	5.10 "	M.E.	23 St. Johns	9.40 "	2.55 "	5.40 "	7.40 "
331 Gd. Ligne	7.52 "	M.E.	1.15 "	-	5.34 "	-	291 Lacadie	9.53 "	-	-	-
371 Stotts	8.4 "	-	1.30 "	-	5.55 "	-	33 Junction	9.58 "	-	-	-
44 Lacolle	8.11 "	-	1.40 "	-	6.10 "	-	38 Laprairie	-	-	-	-
44 Rouse's Pt.	8.20 "	-	11.0 "	2.0 "	7.0 "	6.30 "	43 St. Lambt	-	-	6.13 "	-
	Arrive	Arrive	Arrive	Arrive	Arrive	Arrive	44 Montreal	10.30 "	3.45 "	6.30 "	8.30 "

REGULATIONS FOR PASSENGER TRAINS.

The Trains going South will have the right of way. Trains going North will keep clear of the card time of the Trains moving South.

REGULATIONS FOR FREIGHT AND GRAVEL TRAINS.

Freight Trains are expected to Stations, in card time; should the Freight Train be delayed 10 minutes behind the running time, the Gravel Train will track, and the Freight Train will keep clear of the Gravel Train.
A Red Flag will be displayed at the switch to the Gravel Pit, and at the dumping ground, so that the Freight Train may know where the Gravel Train is.
Conductors of Freight and Gravel Trains will compare their time daily with the Conductors of Passenger Trains.
These Regulations to take effect on Monday, the 20th June, and remain in force until further orders.

Explanation of Marks—M. E., meet Express; M. F., meet Freight.

JOHN DODSWORTH

A Champlain & St. Lawrence timetable of 1853, after the line had been extended to Rouse's Point.
CRHA Archives, Donation from J. Norman Lowe

46 *Montreal Gazette*, 21 December 1829.

47 Public Statutes of Lower Canada (PSLC), 1 Will. IV, ch. 33, 1831.

48 Three other interesting names appear in sequence in the Q&H statute, "Andrew Belcher, George Rundell, James Bridge." I suspect that errors were made in transcribing the second and third names and that these two were London goldsmiths, Edmund Rundell and John Bridge. Andrew Belcher, another Nova Scotian, had business ties to Cunard and in 1829 was Nova Scotia's Agent in London. At this time Belcher was also on the Board of the General Mining Association where Rundell and Bridge were the dominant shareholders; (see General Mining Association Deed of Settlement, 1829, Guildhall Archives, London, ms 24, 532). In the late 1830s, following its initial involvement with tramways referred to in footnote 24, this company would build the Albion Mines Railway, the second locomotive-powered railway in British North America; (see my paper on this line in *Canadian Rail*, # 474, January-February, 2000, 3-12).

49 JHALC, vol. 40 (1831) 55; *Montreal Gazette*, 4 November 1830.

50 See PSLC, 2 Will. IV, ch. 58, 1832; the 74 "founders" who were named were collectively authorized to establish the company and build the line. At the time of incorporation, no shares had been issued and it is not certain if all members of the group of 74 actually took shares when the company was formally set up in late 1834. The most readily available copy of the list is that in Mika, (1985) 16. It also appears in the preamble quoted on page 48 of this article.

51 *Montreal Gazette*, 6 October 1831.

52 *Montreal Gazette*, 26 May 1831.

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS
FORM EX 21-36

RAILWAY CENTENARY
CELEBRATION JULY, 19, 1936
To LAPRAIRIE, Que.
AND RETURN

AGENT'S STUB HALF IF
NOT GOOD FOR PASSAGE PUNCHED

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS
RAILWAY CENTENARY
CELEBRATION at LAPRAIRIE, Que.
JULY 19, 1936

COACH CLASS EXCURSION

HALF FARE IF PUNCHED HERE ★

GOOD FOR ONE PASSAGE
LAPRAIRIE, Que.
TO
MONTREAL, Que.

Not Good to leave Laprairie, Que., after
MONDAY, July 20th, 1936.

RETURN COUPON

NOT TRANSFERABLE *Exphurston*
(VOIR AU VERSO) Gen. Pm. Tral. Mgr.

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS
RAILWAY CENTENARY
CELEBRATION at LAPRAIRIE, Que.
JULY 19, 1936

COACH CLASS EXCURSION

HALF FARE IF PUNCHED HERE ★

GOOD FOR ONE PASSAGE
MONTREAL, Que.
TO
LAPRAIRIE, Que.

By "Centenary" Special Train leaving Bonaventure Station at 9.05 a.m. (Standard Time)

GOING COUPON

Not Good if Detached from Return Coupon

(VOIR AU VERSO)

Canada's first steam train



1836-1936
A Century of Achievement

On July 21, 1836, Canada's first steam train was operated between Laprairie and St. Johns Que., over the Champlain and St. Lawrence Railway—the first sixteen-mile link in the chain of railways which now constitute the Canadian National System, comprising 24,000 miles of line.

Thus, the Canadian National Railways enters its second century this year—inspired by the traditions of the past hundred years—with a trained personnel ready and anxious to serve, and with the advantage of most modern facilities and equipment.

Canadian National Railways



Canada's first streamlined locomotive—the largest streamlined locomotive in the world.

You are invited to retain this coupon as a souvenir of your journey on the Canadian National Railways as the System enters its second century of service.

(VOIR AU VERSO)

ISSUED BY
CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS

RÉSEAU CANADIEN NATIONAL
CÉLÉBRATION DU CENTENAIRE
des CHEMINS DE FER à SAINT-JEAN
et SAINT LAMBERT, Que.
18 JUILLET, 1936.

DANS VOITURES ORDINAIRES

POINÇONNAGE POUR DEMI-BILLET ★

BON POUR UN VOYAGE
SAINT-JEAN, Que.
à
MONTREAL, Que.

Le train spécial du centenaire quittera Saint-Jean après la célébration dans la soirée à 10.00 h. (heure solaire).
Ce billet nul après le 20 Juillet.

COUPON DE RETOUR

PERSONNEL *Exphurston*
(See other side) Gen. Pm. Tral. Mgr.

RÉSEAU CANADIEN NATIONAL
CÉLÉBRATION DU CENTENAIRE
des CHEMINS DE FER à SAINT-JEAN
et SAINT LAMBERT, Que.
18 JUILLET, 1936.

DANS VOITURES ORDINAIRES

POINÇONNAGE POUR DEMI-BILLET ★

BON POUR UN VOYAGE
MONTREAL, Que.
à
SAINT-JEAN, Que.

Départ du train spécial du centenaire de la Gare Bonaventure, 1.00 P.M. (heure solaire).
Arrêt d'une heure à Saint Lambert pour la cérémonie du dévoilement d'une plaque commémorative. Départ Saint Lambert 2.20 P.M.

Nul si détaché du coupon de retour.

Le premier train à vapeur au Canada



1836-1936
Un Siècle de Progrès

Le 21 juillet 1836, le premier train à vapeur au Canada fit la course Laprairie-St-Jean, Que., sur les rails du Champlain-St. Lawrence Railway, c'est-à-dire sur les premiers seize milles de voies du réseau qui s'appelle aujourd'hui le Canadien National et rayonne sur 24,000 milles de territoire canadien.

Ce Réseau Canadien National entre donc cette année dans son second siècle d'existence, fort de la tradition qu'il a établie, riche de l'expérience acquise, fier d'un personnel aussi habile que zélé, et équipé à la moderne.

Réseau Canadien National

"6400"—la première locomotive canadienne à lignes fuyantes.



Vous pouvez garder ce coupon en souvenir de votre voyage sur le Réseau Canadien National le jour où il fêta son premier centenaire.

(SEE OTHER SIDE)

ÉMIS PAR
RÉSEAU CANADIEN NATIONAL

53 *Montreal Gazette*, 20 December 1834.

54 *Montreal Gazette*, 1 October 1829.

55 *Montreal Gazette*, 5 March 1835.

56 *Montreal Gazette*, 13 December and 30 December 1830; Brockville, on the upper St. Lawrence, offered rapid-free navigation into Lake Ontario.

57 *Montreal Gazette*, 13 December 1830.

58 Stanstead is about 50 miles east of St. Johns and very close to the American border.

59 See the letter by 'Columbus' in *Quebec City Mercury*, 30 January 1830.

60 A Chambly - Longueuil canal was also being promoted at this time; again no details have been found to identify the principals involved; JHALC, vol. 40 (1831) 97.

61 *Montreal Gazette*, 22 September 1831.

62 *Montreal Gazette*, 6 October, 11 October, 13 October, 20 October, 22 October, 1 November, and 5 November 1831.

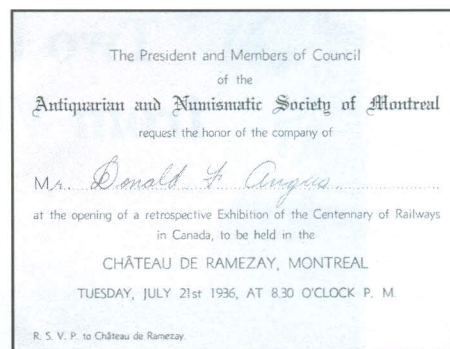
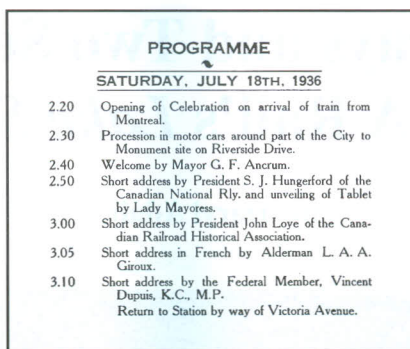
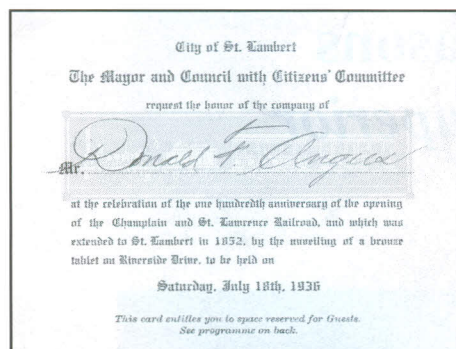
63 The all-too-brief summary of committee hearings indicates that the C&SL group was still uncertain or non-committal about the use of locomotive power. Oliver Wait was asked about the use of locomotives and his recorded reply was a terse, "We have not exactly determined." JHALC, vol. 41 (1831-32) Appendix Volume, Evidence, 26 December 1831. Discussion in the Assembly on 20 January 1832, reported in the *Quebec City Mercury*, 4 February 1832, shows that no commitments had been made by the promoters about a precise route or a northern terminus for the line.

64 JHALC, vol 41 (1831-32) 196.

65 Despite the lack of answers to numerous questions about the promoters' plans, the support of Papineau, Speaker of the Assembly and undisputed leader of the patriote group, assured passage of the bill this time; see *Quebec City Mercury*, 4 February 1832, regarding Papineau's statements on 21 and 23 January. References to Papineau such as that by Brown (1936, 29) as a "strong supporter" of the C&SL project fail to take into account the fact that his support had not been forthcoming during the first two attempts at incorporation. No explanation can be offered about why Papineau's support was won over the third time around.

66 *Montreal Gazette*, 3 April 1828. There has been some discussion about the spelling of Peirce's name. All references I have seen in the press and in Legislative Journals, 1828-36, have been to "Pierce", however it appears that he himself spelled his name "Peirce", including on his tombstone, so

In 1936 the centennial of the opening of the Champlain & St. Lawrence was celebrated by Canadian National Railways, the successor to the C&StL. These tickets were for special trips as part of the celebrations; St. Lambert and St. John's on July 18, and Laprairie on July 19. Collection of Donald F. Angus.



ABOVE LEFT AND CENTRE: The invitation and program for the celebrations by the City of St. Lambert on July 18, 1936.
 ABOVE RIGHT: An exhibition was held in the Chateau de Ramezay in Montreal, commemorating the centennial of the C&StL. This exhibition was the first major undertaking by the CRHA.
 Both items from the collection of Donald F. Angus.

we have used that spelling. This question could be answered definitively by the evidence of original documents bearing his signature.

67 PSLC, 6 Geo IV, ch. 29, 1826.

68 *Montreal Gazette*, 24 September 1829.

69 *Montreal Gazette*, 21 September 1829.

70 A. Shortt, 'George Moffatt,' JCB, 32 (1924-25) 179.

71 Lindsay's initial title was "clerk," see *Montreal Gazette*, 4 December 1834, but references to his activity by the time construction was under way in 1835-36 clearly indicate his role was that of "general manager."

72 *Montreal Gazette*, 2 April 1832; the others were Peirce, Wait, Forbes, Bouthelier, John Mills and Frederick Griffin. Griffin was a prominent Montreal lawyer and Mills was on the City Bank Board with Phillips, John Molson Jr, and Andrew White.

73 *Montreal Gazette*, 4 December 1834.

74 Denison, vol. 1 (1966) 297.

75 Denison, vol. 1 (1966) 292.

76 *Montreal Gazette*, 2 April and 17 May 1832.

77 *Montreal Gazette*, 15 February 1834.

78 *Montreal Gazette*, 22 October 1833 and 18 September 1834.

79 Nelson's status as a member of the Montreal establishment collapsed when he joined the patriote cause. After the outbreak of the 1837 rebellion, he became a key figure in the leadership and one of the most prominent exiles of 1838; Nelson's brother, Wolfred, led the force which won the only patriote military victory at the Battle of St Denis.

80 *Montreal Gazette*, 18 July and 12 November 1835, 16 July and 20 September 1836. No explanation can be offered for the failure of the Brockville project to gain Assembly approval though one obvious possibility is that the line would have provided competition to the government-owned Lachine canal. It would be over a decade before the Montreal & Lachine laid the first rails along the easternmost part of

the proposed route to Brockville.

81 Tulchinsky (1977) 52-53.

82 An interesting sidebar to these connections is the fact that Horatio Gates & Co appears to have had only one facility outside Montreal - a warehouse in Brockville; see *Montreal Gazette*, 26 May 1831 and 13 June 1831.

83 *Montreal Vindicator*, 2 October 1835; nothing has been found to indicate if there were any connections between this project and the St. Johns - Stanstead line being promoted in 1830.

84 These were extended in 1833 by an amendment (PSLC, 3 Will IV, ch.7, 1833) which gave the promoters to 1 December 1834 to complete survey work, raise capital and formally organize the company. The railway itself was to be completed by August of 1837.

85 F.C. Gamst, *Early American Railways* (Stanford, 1997), table 2.31, 282-83, (with correction of von Gerstner's inaccurate 1832 date for the opening of the M&H).

86 See *Montreal Gazette*, 12 April, 15 April, and 17 April 1834 for obituaries of Gates; see also 'Obituary notices of the late Hon. Horatio Gates,' (Montreal, 1834), CIHM microfiche series, # 89116.

87 The *Montreal Gazette*, 18 November 1834, reported that more than 500 of the 1000 authorized shares were subscribed for; all remaining shares were placed during 1835-36.

88 Mika (1985) 21, Cinq-Mars (1986) 91, and Gillam (c.1986) 12, all credit Peirce with convincing John Molson Sr to take 20 per cent of the shares. This seems to have first appeared in G.R. Stevens, *Canadian National Railways*, vol. 1 (Toronto, 1960) 26. Stevens cites Brown (1936) as his source regarding the C&SL and offers no other documentation regarding Molson's decision. Brown, however, had not linked Peirce to Molson's investment decision. As a result, the alleged Peirce-Molson "connection" appears questionable.

89 *Montreal Gazette*, 4 December 1834, provides a detailed account of this meeting with extensive attention to Peirce, Jones and the completion of the survey. The importance of the survey was noted again at the C&SL annual meeting at the end of 1835; see *Montreal Gazette*, 17 December 1835.