

NOTES ON CNR HISTORY IN TORONTO

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Public Relations Department,
Canadian National Railways.

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Old CNR Lines in Toronto

Six ancestor lines of Canadian National Railways operated train services in and out of Toronto at one time or another before amalgamation of several Canadian railways in 1923 to form CNR.

One of these -- Ontario, Simcoe and Huron Union Railway -- was the first steam railway in Ontario. The first run was made May 16, 1853 from Toronto to Machell's Corners, now Aurora.

The others, in order of their appearance on the scene: Great Western Railway (1855); Grand Trunk Railway (1856); Toronto and Nipissing (1871); Toronto Suburban Railway Company (1900); and Canadian Northern Railway (1906).

The provincial government-owned Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway, now Ontario Northland Railway, which reached Moosonee on James Bay in 1932, gained access to Toronto from its terminal, North Bay, over CNR lines in 1912.

Ontario, Simcoe and Huron Union Railway became Northern Railway in 1858 which, in turn, was absorbed by Grand Trunk in 1888.

Great Western Railway became part of Grand Trunk in 1882.

Toronto and Nipissing Railway was absorbed by Midland Railway of Canada in 1882 which became part of the growing Grand Trunk system in 1893.

Canadian Northern formed part of the new Canadian National Railways in 1918 and Grand Trunk was absorbed by this government system in 1923.

Toronto Suburban Railway Company was taken over by CNR in ~~1961-1962~~ (1923).

By 1860, seven years after the first railway entered Toronto, local citizens were able to travel over ancestor CNR lines to Portland, Me., and Riviere de Loup, Que., on the east, and to Collingwood, Windsor, Sarnia and Buffalo on the west.

Twenty years later, they could travel as far as Halifax on the east, and Midland, Windsor on the west.

By 1908, they could reach Prince Rupert over Grand Trunk Pacific lines and by 1915, when Canadian Northern steel reached Vancouver, Toronto passengers could travel over what are now CNR lines from coast to coast.

A costly experiment in suburban steam railroading occurred in 1892 when Grand Trunk completed a belt line around the city. This all-Toronto line folded two years later.

Old CNR Stations in Toronto

First station was Ontario, Simcoe and Huron Union Railway's "temporary" structure, built in 1853, on Front Street near Bay.

When the line began service to Macell's Corners, now Aurora, May 16, 1853, it was subsequently reported that 40 or 50 passengers waited daily at the station for the trip north.

Great Western built its first station in Toronto in 1855 on the waterfront at the foot of Bathurst Street. It was also described as "temporary" building.

Grand Trunk's first station in Toronto was built in 1856 on Front street near the Don river where Mill street is now situated.

At this time, both Great Western and Grand Trunk extended their tracks to Ontario, Simcoe and Huron Union station and for a short time these three railways used the same terminal.

In 1858, Grand Trunk built another "temporary" structure on the Esplanade at the foot of York street. It was used by the Grand Trunk, Great Western and Northern (the former Ontario, Simcoe and Huron Union).

In 1864, a permanent structure was built there to house the operations of these railways.

It is presumed that in 1871 Toronto and Nipissing Railway obtained running rights over Grand Trunk lines from Scarboro Junction to this "union" station.

In 1866, Great Western undertook the construction of a station of their own at Yonge street and the Esplanade. It is assumed Great Western used it until 1872 when the first, large union station was built.

For many years used as a wholesale fruit market, this rambling two-storey building was destroyed by fire in May, 1952. Following the fire, two old flat cars still on rails, were discovered beneath the floorboards.

First large union station was built on the site of the present one in 1872. Called the "new" Union station, it housed the operations of three CNR ancestor lines, Grand Trunk, Great Western and Northern.

Extensive additions were built in 1892.

The present Union station, shared by CPR and CNR was officially opened August 6, 1927.

Beginning with one of its ancestor lines in Toronto -- Credit Valley Railway -- CPR came into the union station scheme in the city in 1872.

While a number of other station seem to have been planned, and possibly even built in the Toronto area, it is indicated the union station scheme was the primary aim of the various railways even in the earliest times.

1852

First Locomotive

First locomotive seen in Toronto, the Lady Elgin, was purchased at Portland, Me., by Ontario, Simcoe and Huron Railway.

Her wheels first turned October 7, 1852, on tracks built near the Toronto waterfront. She was named after Lady Elgin, wife of the then governor-general of Canada.

1853First Locally-Built Locomotive

First "native" locomotive, the Toronto, was built at James Good's foundry, Queen street. It was the first Canadian-built railway engine.

Completed April 16, 1853, she was moved down Yonge street to Front Street on temporary wooden rails, raised behind and laid ahead as the locomotive was "pinched" forward with crowbars. This laborious operation, witnessed by hundreds of citizens, took five days.

The Toronto was finally placed on Ontario, Simcoe and Huron Union tracks at the OS and H station at Front street, near Bay, April 26, 1853.

Another early OS and H locomotive, the Josephine, imported from Paterson, N.J., in 1853, was the proud possessor of driving wheels six feet in diameter. Largest driving wheel diameter on a modern CNR steam passenger locomotive is six feet, eight inches.

First Regular Trip

First scheduled passenger run out of Toronto was made May 16, 1853, by Ontario, Simcoe and Huron Railway when locomotive Toronto hauled four yellow-painted carloads of dignitaries to Macell's Corners, now Aurora.

Commemorating the event in Toronto today is a plaque affixed to the east column at the front of Union Station, saying: "At this place on May 16, 1853 the first train in Ontario hauled by a steam locomotive started and ran to Aurora."

The centennial of this "first" was observed last year when the CNR's museum train -- combined age of its three locomotives and six cars is 637 -- moved over the line May 16 to wind up in Aurora with Premier Leslie Frost at the throttle.

First Railway Accident

First railway accident in Toronto occurred May 15, 1853, during a test run between Toronto and Macmillan's Corners.

One of the passenger cars left the tracks at what is now Davenport road, then known as Hog's Back. It was completely wrecked as it rolled down the bank.

First ruffled passenger in Toronto: a dignified old gentleman riding on the train who complained loudly he lost his gold-rimmed spectacles during the uproar.

First Reduced Railway Fares in Toronto

As Ontario, Simcoe and Huron Railway opened for business, it was solemnly reported "Ministers of the Gospel travelled half-fare."

1855Second Line Reaches Toronto

The Toronto-Oakville-Hamilton line, route now used by CNR commuter trains, was opened December 3, 1855, by Toronto Railway, a subsidiary of Great Western Railway.

Great Western was absorbed by Grand Trunk Railway August 12, 1882 and this line was double-tracked, as it is today, by the Grand Trunk 1890-1892.

1856Third Line In Toronto

Third railway in Toronto was Toronto and Guelph Railway, part of Grand Trunk, which opened an 87-mile route between Toronto and Guelph July 1, 1856.

First Montreal-Toronto Run

First Montreal-Toronto through train arrived at the Don station October 27, 1856, having passed a sister Grand Trunk train at Kingston going in the other direction.

The event marked completion of the fourth rail route from Toronto within three years of railroading's beginnings in the city.

Toronto was now connected by rail with Hamilton and Guelph to the west; Montreal and Portland, Me., to the east.

Grand Trunk tracks were extended this year from Don station, on Front street at the Don river where Mill street is now situated, to Ontario, Simcoe and Huron Union's station at Front and Bay.

1857

First Toronto-Montreal Night Service

Grand Trunk Railway began a Toronto-Montreal daily night service March 23, 1857. The overnight run took 15 hours, a time which is cut in half today.

It is reported sleeping cars were used in this service. This is controversial as records show Great Western Railway built the first known sleeping car in the world in its Hamilton, Ont., shops in 1857, the same year this service was started.

More widely publicized was the construction of a special "sleeper" by Buffalo and Lake Huron Railway at Brantford, Ont., in 1859. It was built for the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII, when he visited Canada in 1860.

Great Western claims as well to have carried the royal personage in its sleeping car during the visit.

Both railways claimed George Pullman adapted their models for the first of his "pullmans."

Pullman rebuilt two coaches as sleepers at Chicago in 1858-1859 and built the first of his "pullmans", the Pioneer, in 1864 at a cost of \$20,178.

1871

Fifth Old CNR Route

Fifth old Canadian National rail route from Toronto was established July 1, 1871 when Toronto and Nipissing Railway opened a line from Scarboro Junction

to Uxbridge.

The line was extended to Cobocok November 26, 1872 and later became part of Midland Railway of Canada, subsequently absorbed by Grand Trunk.

Toronto and Nipissing Railway probably possessed running rights over Grand Trunk lines from Scarboro Junction to the station built by Grand Trunk at York street on the esplanade in 1864. This station was also used by Northern Railway.

1892

The Belt Line

The Toronto Belt Line Railway was a costly experiment by Grand Trunk to provide mushrooming Toronto suburbia of the nineties with a steam railway transportation service.

With a line running east and west from Union station and circling the city north of Eglinton, Grand Trunk sought to connect outlying districts on the Humber river in the west, the Don river in the east and Eglinton avenue to the north with the downtown area.

The line stayed in business from 1892 to 1894. Passengers were charged five cents station-to-station. This was considered excessive as it would have cost a dollar to make a trip around the city.

The company fell into financial difficulties even before the line was completed. The Grand Trunk stepped in to lease the undertaking for 40 years but found it had to abandon the operation.

In ensuing years, some of the line was abandoned, allowed to go to the municipalities in default of taxes by Grand Trunk, or sold to land speculators.

Much of it, however, remains today and is used by CNR for industrial sidings.

The line was built at the height of a Toronto speculating boom and the

company issued \$200,000 in bonds to perform the task. Its 20 miles of track was built in 18 months.

Rolling stock included two small locomotives and four or five passenger coaches with freight carrying facilities.

1900

Grand Trunk Begins Its First Modern "Name" Train

Grand Trunk Railway began a fast daily service between Montreal, Toronto and Chicago, linking these three major cities with its International Limited June 24, 1900.

Fastest mainline train operated by the railway, the International Limited is today still operated under the same name by CNR.

1900

The Toronto Suburban Railway Company

Sixth ancestor line of the CNR to begin operations in Toronto was Toronto Suburban Railway Company which began service on its electric lines from Keele street and St. Clair avenue to Lambton and Weston in 1900.

In 1914, a branch line was completed from Weston to Woodbridge and in 1917 regular service began over the mainline completed from Lambton to Guelph.

This company, formed in 1892, was taken over by CNR in 1918 and operated until Aug. 15, 1931 as Canadian National Electric Railways when it was abandoned.

Mainline points served were Lambton, Islington, Summerville, Meadowville, Eldorado Park, Churchville, Huttonville, Norval, Georgetown, Limehouse, Blue Springs, Eramosa, Speedwell and Guelph.

In 1918, CNR obligated itself to redeem the company's debenture stock at 25 per cent of face value. By the end of 1934, 95 per cent of the stock had

been redeemed and in 1935, tracks were torn up. Most of the right-of-way was eventually sold.

1906

The Canadian Northern Comes To Toronto

Last of the CNR's big predecessor lines to enter Toronto was Canadian Northern Railway which obtained running rights over Grand Trunk tracks from the Don river to Union station and began its Toronto-Parry Sound service in 1906.

The service was extended two years later to Sudbury.

Head office for Canadian Northern's booming operations (especially in the west) was established in Toronto in 1899 at the corner of King and Church streets.

1926

The Inter-City Limited

Another "name" train, Inter-City Limited, was established on the Toronto-Montreal run by CNR June 27, 1926.

This train is still operated today as the fast Toronto-Montreal afternoon train and the Montreal-Toronto night train.

1927

Present Union Station Opened

Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII; Prince George, later King George VI; Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin of Great Britain and Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King of Canada attended ceremonies opening Toronto's present Union Station, August 6, 1927.

The station, under construction since 1914, was opened for business August 11, 1927 at the rather melodramatic hour of one minute past midnight. When a sleepy agent opened the gates, a band of eager youngsters poured in to wander around Toronto's newest building.

Among those receiving dignitaries at the station on official opening day were Ontario's Lieutenant-Governor W.G. Ross and Premier G. Howard Ferguson.

Prince of Wales cut the ribbon to open the joint station and afterwards, with his brother, Prince George, and Mr. and Mrs. Baldwin, was presented with a lifetime railway pass.

1929

Canada's First Diesel Locomotive
Ends Maiden Trip in Toronto

First regular train in Canada hauled by a diesel-electric road locomotive was the CNR's International Limited between Montreal and Toronto September 26, 1929.

The 325-ton, two unit engine was designed by CNR engineers and produced in the Kingston, Ont., plant of Canadian Locomotive Company. It followed four years after the planning and building by CNR of the first diesel rail cars in North America. One of these travelled 2,937 miles between Montreal and Vancouver in 67 hours in 1925, a record still unbroken.

Last one of the two diesel units was retired in 1946 after, loaded with armor plate, it hauled an armored train along the Pacific coastline during World War II.

1930

Toronto-Montreal Six-Hour Service

A six-hour service was established between Toronto and Montreal April 27, 1930, by Inter-City Limited from Toronto to Montreal, and International Limited from Montreal to Toronto; both trains leaving in mid-afternoon.