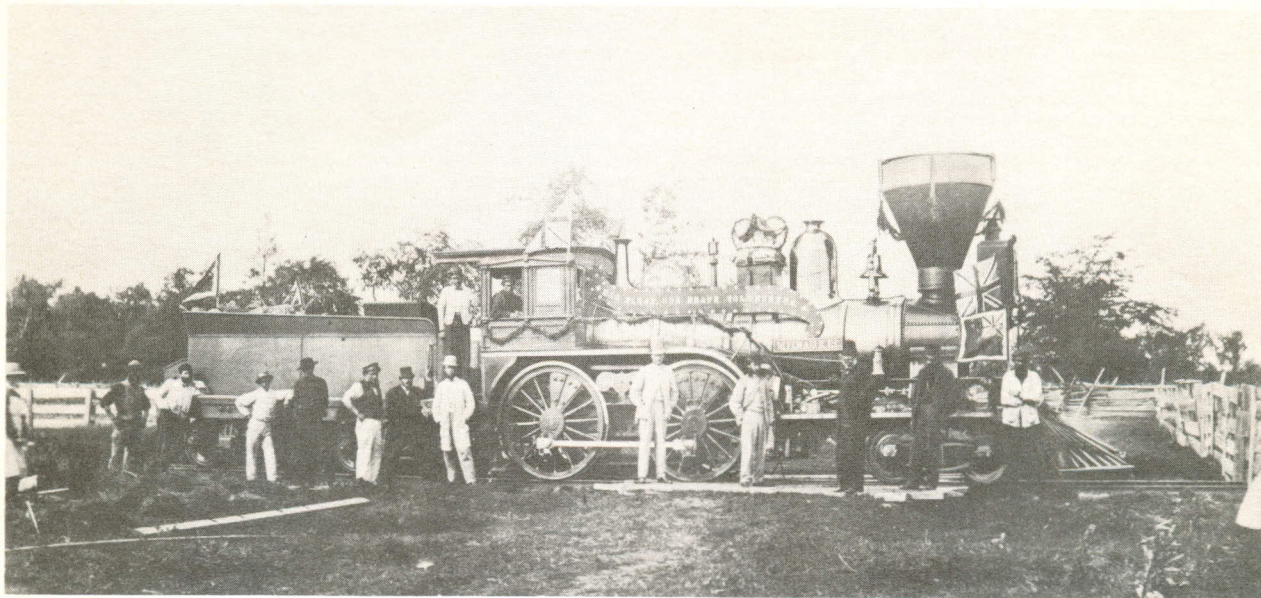


1854 Centenary 1954

Buffalo, Brantford & Goderich Railway

by Dr. Frank N. Walker



BUFFALO & LAKE HURON ENGINE "MILWAUKEE"

Public Archives of Canada

The Buffalo, Brantford & Goderich Railway, later known as the Buffalo & Lake Huron Railway, owes its beginning to a group of Brantford merchants, who had become convinced that the Great Western was going to by-pass their town by several miles and that they were still going to be dependent upon the boats of the Grand River by summer and long hauls by sleigh in the winter for their supplies of merchandise.

The murmuring that the Charter for the future Northern Railway had cost a very large sum, before it had been passed upon by the Legislature in 1849, was not very encouraging to those who wished to help themselves. But at that same session of Parliament, much other epoch making legislation was passed. Among this was the Plank Road Act whereby a group of citizens could form a company for constructing such roads without recourse to Parliament. That Act gave birth to a bright idea and at the next session, it was amended so that its privileges were extended to include Railways and Tramways.

The Brantford people "hove-to" and before the end of the year, led by Phillip VanBocklin, had subscribed for \$34,000 worth of stock in what they called the Brantford and Buffalo Joint Stock Railroad Company. In looking for advice, someone recalled that an engineer, William Wallace, had surveyed the route of a railway from Fort Erie to Sandwich on the Detroit River, and he was of sufficient stature in his profession to be called

to give evidence before the 'railway committee' of Parliament at Montreal, in 1849. Wallace was chief engineer for the New York City Railroad. This was a road 80 miles in length running from Buffalo to Hornell, at which point it met the Erie whose last 12 miles to Dunkirk, on Lake Erie, were then being rushed to completion by M.C. Story & Co., who a year later were to become the contractors for the Northern Railway of Canada.

Wallace agreed to survey the Brantford and Buffalo route and in doing so was on familiar ground until he reached the Grand River at Dunnville. From there he turned northwest as far as Caledonia, then more or less paralleled the Indian Trail to Brantford, where the people filled him with such enthusiasm for the scheme that he subscribed for \$200,000 worth of its stock, paying \$12,000 in cash. When he returned to Buffalo, where his reputation was already favoured in high places, his venture was received with acclaim in political and newspaper circles.

The 'Commercial Advertiser' came out on January 8, 1851 with,

"It is about time Buffalo began to wake up.. Let us break the 'halo of glory',.... termination of the Erie Canal,foot of inland navigation and all the magniloquent phrases.... Two railway companies were chartered through Upper Canada. One was to connect Buffalo and Sandwich, opposite Detroit, only 220 miles between the two places....

Upper Canada

Bulletin 39



Railway Society

January, 1954

Buffalo Brantford and Goderich Railway

Mr. Wallace, the capable engineer...did go forward and make a re-survey of the Niagara and Detroit Rivers road (the route later followed by the Canada Southern)...But no interest being taken in it by Buffalo, it was traded off to Sir Allan McNab & Co., for the benefit of the Great Western in consideration that they should pay the survey bill and other expenses....

"Buffalo may ask, how is she to help the matter?...Run a road from Fort Erie... so as to bring the trade and passage from the Erie road via the Hornellsville and Buffalo into line with the Canada road.... The little steamboat 'Union', a ferry at Black Rock, has not seen more than three days in a whole winter since it was built, eight or nine years ago, that she could not cross, and a boat of sufficient size for railroad purposes may cross three hundred and sixty-four days in the year...."

On February 12, of that year, 1851, the Toronto Globe, under a caption which may have given a name to a new railway, reported a meeting of Brantford citizens who formed 'The Brantford and Buffalo' joint stock railroad company. The town was pledged to take \$100,000 of stock. A delegation was appointed to go to Buffalo to engage engineers to run a trial line. From the discussion it could be seen that the route north and west of Brantford had not received any unanimous opinion. The Buffalo Commercial Advertiser heartily approved and hoped that the visitors would be well received. That paper, speaking of the Great Western, six days later, said, "It is equally legitimate for the citizens of Buffalo to attempt to secure the termination at a point opposite this city or at least to aid in the construction of the Buffalo and Brantford branch. The route is one over which much of the western passenger business will be done".

A large meeting held at Lewis' Inn, Fort Erie, on February 24, put a committee to work on the feasibility of connecting that town with the Great Western, at or near Paris. On March 8, the Buffalo paper came out with a real pep talk to its citizens. It mentioned that during the preceding year, 15,000,000 feet of lumber had been exported by the Grand River saw mills and that Brantford alone had exported 400,000 bushels of wheat, besides large quantities of flour "the greater portion going to Oswego by Welland Canal". A couple of days later the Commercial Advertiser published the report of Engineer Wallace's answers to the Railroad Committee of the Canadian Parliament for 1849 showing the route from Detroit to New York to be 85 miles shorter through Buffalo than by way of Niagara Falls and Rochester.

By this time the venture had attracted the interest of a Buffalo alderman, Myron P. Bush, and its dynamic and capable mayor, James Wadsworth. The city purchased \$70,000 in stock and was given the right to be represented on the board of direc-

tors by two members. Being one of these, James Wadsworth soon became president of the Company. In the aristocracy of Canadian railway interests, the Brantford road could no longer be ignored and Parliament that year appealed the railway privilege of the 'Plank Road Act'. Such obscure birth has, however, blurred its early history and left a vacancy in the works of writers who apparently have depended on the Provincial Statutes as a basis of their endeavours.

The various townships along the line lent their assistance to the road by the purchase of stock and smoothing the way for agreeable purchase of the right of way. No railway built in Ontario had so many friends along its route. It had the usual calls to extend itself to areas of poor transportation. Early in 1852, surveys had been completed to Goderich. The Huron Loyalist said on May 28 that a meeting had been held a couple of nights before when the citizens of the Goderich district endorsed the project and delegated one of their number, George Brown, to go to Brantford and Buffalo. On June 24, a Buffalo meeting delegated four representatives, including James Wadsworth and Myron Bush, to attend a meeting in Goderich on the 29th of that month. A letter was read from David Christie, M.P. of Brantford, inviting the people of Buffalo to get behind the railway. Mr. George Brown of Goderich said that opposition was anticipated from the Great Western.

News travelled rather quickly even in those days, for, three days before the Buffalo meeting, John Gwynne, secretary of the embryo Toronto and Guelph Railway, wrote to John Galt, son of the promoter of the Canada Land Company,

"I have been...surprised to hear that parties interested in...the Buffalo and Brantford Railroad Company should be able to gain even a temporary support of Goderich to a proposed extension from Brantford in preference to an extension from Guelph.... I know that an opinion prevails with some of your counties that the Canada Company ought long since to have procured the necessary funds to build a railroad from Toronto to Goderich.... A Company was started in London for that purpose... It was the people of Toronto who prevented that project going into operation. It is not necessary now to enumerate the faults, the follies and the jealousies of the old Toronto and Lake Huron Railroad.... There is no prospect of the Legislature sanctioning such an extension... The Buffalo and Brantford Railway Company have no power to make one foot of railway beyond Brantford!"

This opinion coming gratis from one of the ablest lawyers in the Province may have set that other capable barrister, James Wadsworth, examining the state of the Brantford and Buffalo's meagre charter. He went to England where he borrowed \$500,000 and likely was obligated by that cautious banking firm, Baring Brothers, to write a copy of the road's mortgage to them into the Act of Parliament which he anticipated applying for at

Buffalo Brantford and Goderich Railway

the next session. How much of the borrowed money had to go toward that legislation does not seem to have been recorded, but Mr. Gwynne was wrong. An Act was passed on November 10, 1852, granting permission to extend the road to Goderich. While it was before the Legislature, Mr. Wallace, the railway's Chief Engineer, was beset with letters from the Government Board of Railway Commissioners threatening to hold up the road's crossing of the Welland Canal at Port Colborne.

It is possible that, with fair treatment, the road could legally have proceeded to Goderich without further legislation. The Act shackled the Company in many ways, such as clause IX which said, "Be it enacted that the gauge of the said Railway shall be 5 feet 6 inches and neither more or less". Clause XII wrote into the Act a mortgage of over \$3,000,000 worth of the company's assets in favor of \$500,000 in English bonds. Clause XV stipulated that the section from Stratford to Goderich be completed by May, 1856, under penalty of forfeit. No mention was made of any obligation to complete the other parts of the road to which municipalities had contributed. That clause appears to have been dictated by the promoters of the Grand Trunk, which was planned to reach Stratford in that year 1856, and whose charter had been passed upon by the same Parliament six days previously.

By the Act, the name of the railway became the Buffalo, Brantford and Goderich. Its president was still James Wadsworth and the secretary was Archibald Gilkinson, who had bought one hundred pounds of the original company's stock. David Christie, M.P., purchased just half that amount, but his public position was used to forward the welfare of the project. Members of Parliament have certain privileges, and on May 23, 1853, the secretary of the railway board sent Mr. Christie on request seven books and two plans of the Buffalo, Brantford and Goderich Railway. When these were returned is uncertain, but it is clear they were not used by Mr. Keefer, engineer and most informed officer of the Board, when he made his printed report on Canadian Railways, from which historians have gleaned freely. This defect has left one of the most romantic Ontario railways an unclaimed and forgotten child.

The newspapers then printed in the small towns along the line come to our rescue and provide progress reports. On June 10, 1852, the Dunnville Independent said,

"Through the kindness of Mr. Cook, we were lately shown along a good portion of the line in Humberstone. In many places it was graded and ditched, and everything was in readiness for the rails to be laid down. The works have been interrupted in some places owing to the proprietors of the land, through which the line had to pass, refusing the price that had been offered them by the company. These cases will have to be submitted to the decision of the arbitrators, and until that is done, operations cannot be proceeded with...."

The editor gave his opinion of people who were so simple as to oppose so great a benefit and advantage both to themselves and the public". The Cayuga Post, a week later, in a philosophical editorial concerned with the country's cultural advancement, said,

"Steady advancement and prosperity...require speedy intercourse with every portion of its inhabitants.... Canals and railroads are the cheapest and most remunerative means that can be put into operation".

In May, 1853, the St. Catharines Journal reported that,

"the contract for grading, bridging, etc. of the Goderich and Buffalo Railway from Paris to Goderich was let to Messrs. Morrell, Mellish, Whitehead & Co. for five hundred and fifty thousand dollars and the road is

to be ready for laying rails by September, 1854. The line from Black Rock to Buffalo had been purchased (for \$8,000). The line below Brantford is in a forward state and will be opened to Fort Erie in September next, and the line completed to Goderich in a little more than a couple of years".

That estimate would have been lived up to if the money had lasted. The Buffalo and Goderich was the only railway in Canada being over 50 miles in length to be built without the aid of Government funds at that time. The same paper said on July 21 of that year regarding the purchase, by the mayor of Brantford, of some 200 acres of adjoining lands for \$10,000, that,

"The high price of real estate there is attributed to the presence of the Buffalo & Brantford railway.... Operations have been commenced at several points between Stratford and Goderich. At the Bridgewater cutting, 200 men are at work.... the service of labourers obtain a dollar a day".

The popularity of the road increased during 1852 and 1853 due to free rides upon its gravel cars, but as time for opening arrived, we read in the Journal, reporting an instance of December 3,

"The parties in question got on at Fort Erie and rode to Port Colborne, a distance of 19 miles and were charged, some 50 cents, some 75 and others a dollar. The Superintendent, Mr. Wallace, was on the road the first few miles, and no charge was expected, but after he left the conductor, Mr. Aikens, is said to have collected as above".

The first engine was likely purchased by the Brantford and Buffalo road in the fall of 1852 and was named the Goderich. She had 66 inch drivers and was built by Schenectady. Numbers 3 and 4, the Caledonia and Cayuga, were from the same foundry as was number 2, the Waterloo, but the latter differed in having 72 inch drivers. About a year later, the company bought two engines from James Good of Toronto, the Buffalo and the Huron, each with 66 inch drivers. They were probably numbered 5 and 6, but a re-classification in 1855 blurs the early picture. The 'Good Engines' were badly damaged in a fire at Brantford in May, 1854.

On August 11, 1853, under the railway's name, the Brantford Herald commented,

"On the invitation of a number of the Directors of this important undertaking, we yesterday did ourselves the pleasure of accompanying them along the road lying between this place and Paris.... We may safely congratulate all interested... Men are employed at every point where labour can be made available, 200 are engaged near the farm of Allan Good, Esq., where an extensive embankment is being constructed... Across the valley of the Grand River a yet more notable embankment is being made, at a point where the bridge spans the river. The bridge... will be a magnificent structure supported by six stone piers containing about 5,000 yards of solid masonry. These piers, 60 feet in height, will be surmounted with timber work... 80 feet above the river will be laid the track".

An earlier note in the Brantford Courier had said that Messrs. Mellish and Russell had contracted to build the station and machine shops for the railway in that town at a cost of \$6,000 adding,

"We are also pleased to see that our enterprising town men, Messrs. VanBocklin, Winters & Co. have obtained the contract for making the cars, etc. for the road at \$250,000. Everything is in its favor, easy grade, no deep cuts, no 'bottomless pits' to traverse or overcome, and withal, good and economical management on the part of the directors".

The mention of the 'bottomless pit' was a veiled

Buffalo Brantford and Goderich Railway

reference to the trouble then being experienced by the Great Western at the Desjardins Canal. The money received by VanBocklin appears to have been really stock in the company, since, after taking \$1,000 worth when the company was formed, he later took £29,000, or something more than one half the contract price. The car factory, as established, gathered together the finest workmen and designers at that time on the North American Continent.

The Perth County News reported a 'steam excavator' being sent to Goderich to work on the railway's entrance since that part was 'the heaviest portion of the work'. The Paris Star, commenting on the completion of the Grand River railway bridge, said,

"We are sorry to state that...last Friday (November 25) Mr. W.P. Farrel, the foreman, fell 62 feet off one of the piers. Happily there is strong hopes for his recovery, though bruised and badly shaken".

On December 20, 1853, the Brantford Expositor, under the heading, "Buffalo and Brantford R.R." said,

"It will be seen from an advertisement in another column that this road is now open for transport of goods and passengers between Buffalo and Caledonia. If weather continues favourable, we confidently expect that the line will be open to Brantford about the 5th or 6th of January. On that occasion there will be a grand display in town, a great dinner in the Town Hall, and a magnificent Ball in the immense room over the machine shops at the Depot. It will be a proud day for Brantford, and we have no doubt that the first arrival of the 'iron horse' will be honoured...as no other previous event has been... The Corporation... have voted £100 as a portion of the expense of the demonstration and we have no doubt that a large amount will be added by private subscription".

The advertisement mentioned simply said that the B.B. & G. Rwy. would be open 60 miles from Caledonia on and after Tuesday 20th December, "One train will run daily, Sundays excepted, leaving Buffalo at 9 o'clock A.M.... Tickets at office, 12 Exchange Street, opposite the Mansion House, Buffalo", signed William Wallace, Supt., December 12, 1853. There were other new notices in that edition, as follows, 'Railway Reading Room open 10 January, Thos Evans'. "Railroad Stove Store, B.G. Tilsdale". "Railroad Boot & Shoe Store, Thos Roantree".

As the year ended, Brantford was full of anticipation. On January 13, 1854, the Expositor wrote,

"Friday last was the day appointed for the opening of the central section of the Brantford and Buffalo road, and a grand gala day it was to the inhabitants of this town and the surrounding country.... Shortly after noon, a procession headed by the Philharmonic Band marched to the Depot marshalled by George Babcock (the stagecoach owner). Shortly after 2 P.M., the trains arrived and were received with loud cheers, firing of cannon and every demonstration of joy.... There were three locomotives, the first one with a passenger car, the second with five and the third with one, all well filled. About 500, we understand, came over from Buffalo, including a large number of Buffalo firemen who made a very good appearance in their splendid uniforms.... The mayor of Brantford announced...that if they would go into the round house they might probably hear something.... The building, large and capacious as it is, was immediately thronged to excess, all parties as a matter of course standing up... Mr. Wadsworth and the mayor of Buffalo severally replied.... Both are evidently talented men, the former especially

is an exceedingly eloquent forcible speaker and his address...was entirely devoid of that fulsome twaddle which is so often inflicted upon people on such occasions...."

Two dinners were given to the visitors: the one by the Oddfellows to the Buffalo firemen had 200 guests, and that given by the council was 'Crowded with invited guests...Only three inhabitants of Brantford'. The Expositor concludes, "At 8 o'clock there was a general display of fireworks in front of the court house. The Grand Railway Ball took place in the second story of the Depot machine shops, which were very tastefully decorated. Not less than 1,500 persons were present, most of whom tripped it on the light fantastic toe until broad daylight. There were two bands of musicians present, one a Cotillion band from Buffalo...and the other the Brantford Philharmonic.... About 10 o'clock next morning, the Buffalonians took their departure... a number of our townspeople accompanied them to the cars and gave three hearty British cheers, as the iron horse snorted off with each train.... Everything connected with the celebration passed off without the slightest accident".

On February 1, Wallace ran an advertisement stating that trains left Buffalo and Brantford simultaneously at 8.30 A.M., going in opposite directions although their meeting place was not mentioned. He added, "A connection will be made at Caledonia for Hamilton, Simcoe and Port Dover. Cars connect at Brantford with stages for Paris". On February 9, the Hamilton Gazette said, "I wonder if the Great Western folks are aware of the Buffalo, Brantford and Goderich road.... If the G.W. has done so much, the B.B. & G. has done more, for as the punctuality of starting and reaching their respective destinations in due time, the G.W. cannot compete with it".

On March 28, the road asked the town of Brantford for a loan of \$150,000, an amount \$500 less than the company had paid in Parliamentary expenses, brokerage and discount on bonds, etc. The only accounts of so early a date that we have found are given. Masonry was the largest item. The ferry boat at Fort Erie cost \$35,000. The locomotives and cars to that date had cost about \$170,000. The greatest bargain was a defunct railway which ran from Black Rock to Exchange Street in Buffalo, purchased for \$8,177.84. Wallace, in his appended report, remarks that he would sooner have deferred the Brantford opening

"until connection was made with the Great Western at Paris, as in that case the whole of our motive power would have been employed in ballasting and completing the line.... As, however, the local traffic far surpasses my expectation, and as that has been done in subserviency to the running of construction trains, I am frank to acknowledge that it is, upon the whole, better that the opening was not deferred. The receipts since the opening have been sufficient to pay the ordinary current expenses, for running the road and keeping it in repair, and two and one half per cent on the capital.... No accident whatever had yet occurred.... Arrangements have been made with the American Express Company to carry their express merchandise and also with the Post Office Department in Toronto to carry the mails.... The steamer International gives great satisfaction. She crosses the river in four minutes, and the time occupied in conveying passengers from the Canadian shore to the new depot of the Albany, Boston and New York lines (in Buffalo) does not exceed twenty minutes".

On March 6, 1854, the Buffalo and Goderich reached Paris to connect with the Great Western. An eastbound connecting train left this point at 10.30 A.M. to arrive at Buffalo at 3.00 P.M. Going west

Buffalo Brantford and Goderich Railway

the train left Buffalo at 9.20 A.M. and reached Paris at 1.50 P.M. Three hundred men and 70 horses, working night and day, were employed during the last month throwing up 2,500 cubic yards of earth each 24 hours to make the connection with the Great Western.

The newspaper reports on the operation of this railway during its first year of life were most glowing and appreciative. In May, 1854, however, all its fine buildings in Brantford were destroyed by what was believed to have been an incendiary fire. Among the rolling stock destroyed were seven passenger cars and two heavy engines, the Buffalo and the Huron, purchased from Good's foundry to take trains up the grades extending from Brantford in both directions.

The road was almost completed in that year to Stratford, in fact some rails were laid down in the latter town; but at the end of the season the Company owed the contractors some \$58,000 who in turn owed their laborers half of the latter amount which was paid to the men. The railway was making \$1,500 per day and it was expected that they would be patient until the balance could be paid from earnings. However, with Christmas over the agitation for back pay was general but localized itself at Ridgeway, where in the middle of January, 30 or more men began to tear up the track. An engine sped to Fort Erie where 25 men were assembled and returned to protect the men relaying the track after having been sworn in as special constables. A fight ensued in which one man was killed. This was THE FIRST BATTLE OF RIDGEWAY.

The press reports of the service on the road continued to be most praising in character, but it was plain that more money had to be found to get the road finished to Goderich. An agent was sent to England, but money for railway purposes was not to be had; however, Messrs. Hezelstine & Powell offered to lease the road for what was said to have been three per cent of the capital expended. This was accepted and the Company was renamed in 1856 the Buffalo and Lake Huron with Captain Barlow as manager. Peculiarly, all previous history of the railway seems to have at that time disappeared and even the reports made to the Railway Commission under legislation passed in 1857

indicate that the railway had its birth in 1856.

When the Grand Trunk reached Stratford in September of that year it found the rails of the Brantford railway in its path, which the contractor removed. Barlow wired back to his man on the job, "Tear up the Grand Trunk and relay the Buffalo road and set men to watch it. But before this was done, a Grand Trunk engine came along with a couple of cars filled with navvies, drunk and armed to the teeth. Since neither road was going past Stratford that year, they really did not have to cross one another and before spring wiser heads appear to have ironed out the difficulties.

The railway was delayed in reaching Goderich, in part due to procrastination by Government inspectors. However, on June 28, 1858, the spectacular ceremony was held. After that was a long series of negotiations trying to get a government loan to fit the harbour for lake trade. The Prince of Wales was taken over the road from Paris to Fort Erie in 1860; but for two years before that date, the International Bridge had been on the drawing board of engineer Smith, the Buffalo partner of William Wallace. The Prince did cross the river on the Company's Ferry, International. The car they built for his entertainment was undoubtedly the most creative of any railway car constructed. Pieces of it are still preserved in the museum at Brantford.

During the winter of 1861, the Railway had contracted to carry many cargoes from Lake Michigan, but the Goderich harbour was not ready in time so they had to send their freight cars to Sarnia by the Grand Trunk and have the first ships unload at that place. The traffic was immense, and although it only lasted for a month until Goderich harbour was ready, the appetite of the Grand Trunk was so whetted that it began to buy Buffalo and Lake Huron stock.

The Goderich freight traffic in summer was heavy. Lake freighters could discharge their cargoes more quickly there and so made an extra trip during the season. Passenger excursions were spectacular and numerous in association with the Great Western and the Grand Trunk. The latter finally took over the road in 1869.

Locomotive Roster

AS OF 1858

Number	Name	Connection	Driving Wheels		Cylinders	Builder	Remarks
			No.	Diameter	Diameter & Stroke		
1	Goderich	Outside	4	66	16 x 22	Schenectady	
2	Waterloo	Outside	4	72	16 x 22	Schenectady	
3	Caledonia	Outside	4	66	15 x 22	Schenectady	
4	Cayuga	Outside	4	66	15 x 22	Schenectady	
5	Dunnville	Outside	4	66	15 x 22	Springfield	(formerly no. 7)
6	Stratford	Outside	4	66	15 x 22	Springfield	(acquired 1858)
7	Victoria	Outside	4	66	15 x 22	Springfield	(at one time no. 5)
8	Welland	Outside	4	66	15½ x 22	Good, Toronto	
9	Huron	Outside	4	66		Good, Toronto	(damaged in fire 1854)
10	Superior	Outside	4	72	16 x 22	Springfield	(one of early engines)
11	Erie	Outside	4	60	16 x 22	Springfield	(on loan to Erie & Ontario Ry.)
12	Hezeltine	Inside	4	66	16 x 22	Schenectady	
13	Powell	Inside	4	66	16 x 22	Schenectady	
14	Brant	Inside	4	66	16 x 22	Schenectady	
15	Buffalo	Inside	4	66	16 x 22	Schenectady	
16	Michigan	Inside	4	66	16 x 22	Schenectady	
17	Chicago	Inside	4	66	16 x 22	Schenectady	
18	Minnesota	Inside	4	60	16 x 22	Schenectady	
19	Milwaukee	Inside	4	60	16 x 22	Schenectady	
20	Illinois	Inside	4	66	16 x 22	Schenectady	(see photo on page 1)
21	Wisconsin	Inside	4	66	16 x 22	Schenectady	
22	Iowa	Inside	4	66	16 x 22	Schenectady	
23	Saginaw	Inside	4	66	16 x 22	Schenectady	
24	Paris	Inside	4	66	16 x 22	Schenectady	
25	Oxford	Inside	4	60	16 x 22	Schenectady	
26	Perth	Inside	4	60	16 x 22	Schenectady	
27	Haldimand	Inside	4	66	16 x 22	Schenectady	
28	Boxer	Inside	4	57	15 x 20	Boston U.S.	
29	Growler	Inside	4	57	15 x 20	Boston U.S.	

