

# Unwilling Antique: The Real Story of the Carillon and Grenville Railway

by Brian Gilhuly

## ORIGINS

In 1840 and again in 1847, companies had formed to build a portage railway beside the Carillon and Grenville canals which were too small for steamboats to pass, but nothing came of either venture.<sup>1</sup> Public interest soon turned to long-distance lines connecting major centres.

Many expected that the Province of Canada's planned main trunk line of railway would link Montreal to Kingston and Toronto via Bytown, a route supported by steamship king Hugh Allan among others. But, after legislature hearings in 1851, the government determined that the main line would be built along the St. Lawrence to Kingston. And, thanks to a change in the law, only railways that were part of the main line would receive Provincial assistance.<sup>2</sup>

The issue of the main line was settled with the formation of the Grand Trunk Railway of Canada in mid-1852. Knowing that the Bytowners were already building a line to Prescott to connect to US railroads, Montreal merchants next sought to protect their traditional domination of the Ottawa trade by a direct rail link.

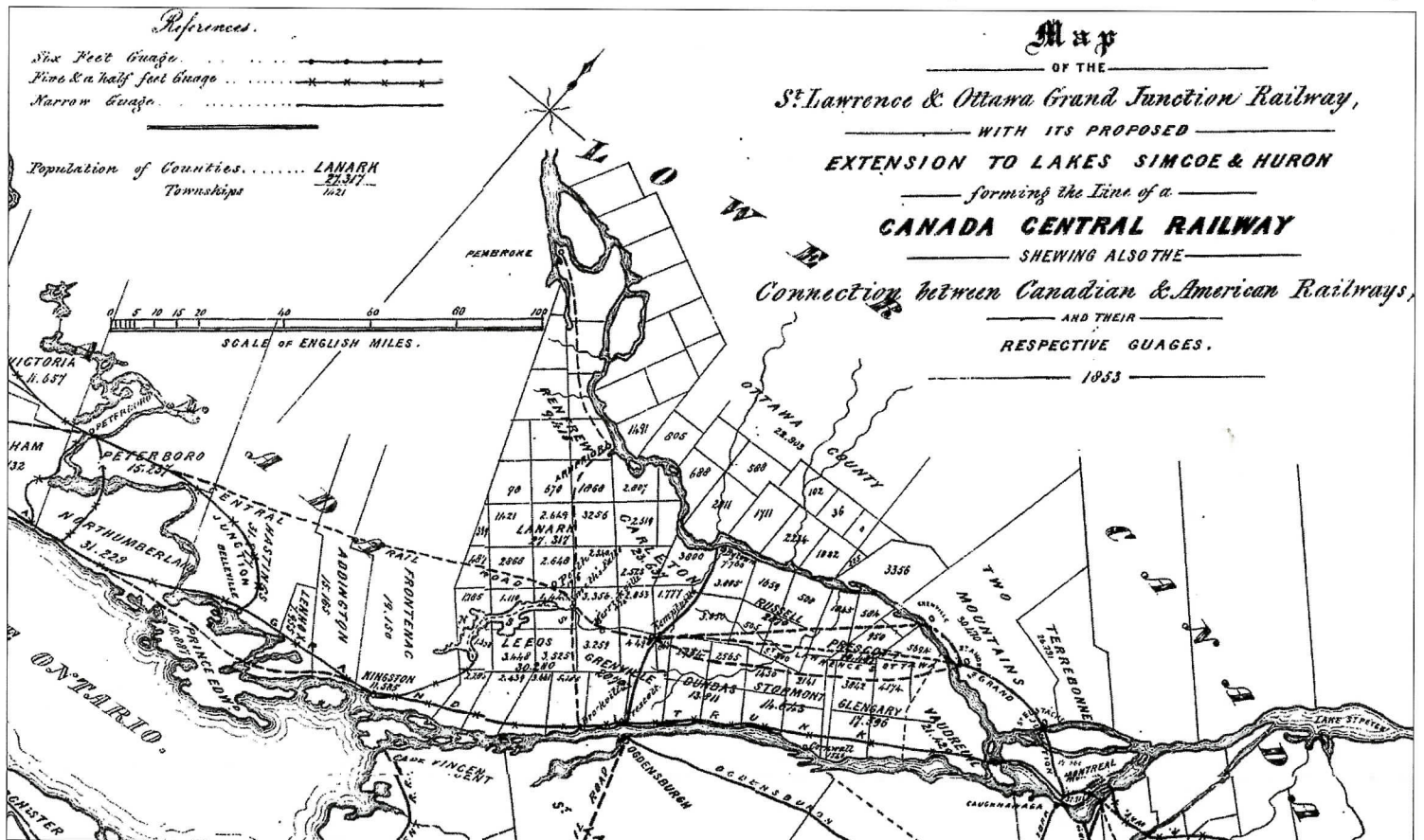
The first company to make a pitch was an unlikely candidate. The Montreal and Lachine Railroad possessed an 1850 charter for an extension from Lachine to Prescott, to be built either by itself or by a new entity, the Saint Lawrence and Ottawa Grand Junction Rail Road Company<sup>3</sup> (map 1). The fruit of a lobbying campaign featuring Tom Keefer's Philosophy of

Railroads [see "Band of Brothers Part 1: The Keefers" *Branchline* Mar/Apr 2018], the charter authorised bridging the Ottawa River at either Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue or Grenville. In late 1852, after the Montreal and Lachine had become the Montreal and New York Railroad (MNY), President William Coffin launched the new company.<sup>4</sup>

Creatively reading its charter, which set the western terminus "at or as near as conveniently may be to Prescott", the company proposed to build via Grenville to a connection with the Bytown and Prescott at Kemptville, that being as close to Prescott as was convenient for its new plan. More convenient still, it was almost as close to Bytown (map 2 next page). Like the railways it would connect, the line would use the 4'8½" gauge.

Despite its ingenuity, the plan faced difficulties. Many doubted its legality, while Montreal merchants feared that traffic would be diverted south on the MNY at Lachine. A public meeting at Bytown on Feb. 28, 1853, chaired by the mayor, overwhelmingly rejected the Kemptville route.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the 'Ottawa Grand Junction' received promises of support from some municipalities along the route.

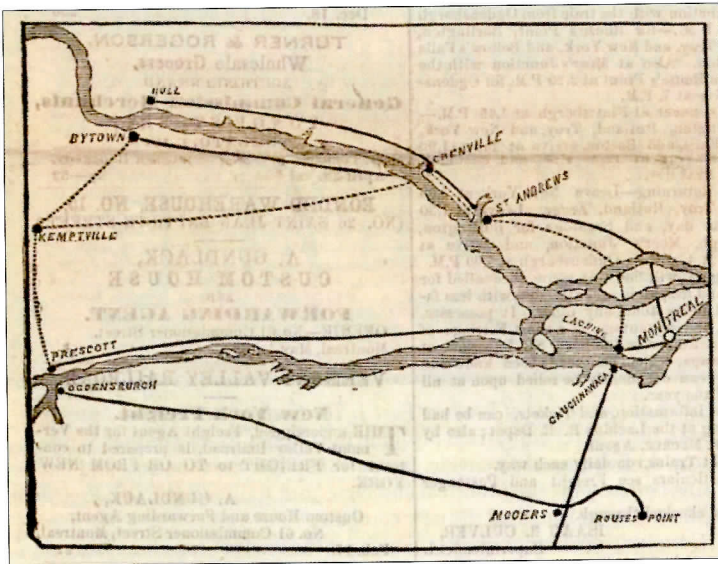
Fear that the City of Montreal might join them seems to have galvanized opposition. On Feb. 16, Alexandre-Maurice Delisle (photo 1 next page), leading a large deputation, presented a 3000-signature petition to Montreal city council opposing any support for the Kemptville route.<sup>6</sup> In English and French, M. Delisle presented an alternative vision of railways linking



**Map 1 – Grand Junction Ambitions** – This is a section of a map, from an SLOGJR directors' report, shows how their road could be extended. Their proposed Canada Central, never chartered, would have run from Kemptville via Perth and Peterborough

to the Lake Huron port of Goderich. The end of the SLOGJR persuaded T. C. Keefer, the company's Chief Engineer to abandon the railway industry. SLOGJR, (1853) Report of the Directors and Chief Engineer, Montreal, John Lovell.





**Map 2 – Direct vs. Indirect** – This sketch map appeared in the *Montreal Herald* of Mar. 1, 1853 with a letter from Montreal and Bytown director William Workman. He aimed to demonstrate the superiority of the M&B's direct route to Ottawa (solid line) over the St. Lawrence and Ottawa Grand Junction route (dashed line) from Lachine to Kemptville. Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec | BAnQ numérique.

Quebec City to Georgian Bay, with the Montreal-Bytown section to be built by his new company. A prominent businessman and Conservative, M. Delisle was a director of the Champlain and St. Lawrence Railroad, the MNY's great rival.

### MONTREAL AND BYTOWN RAILWAY

On April 22, 1853, Delisle and associates received a charter empowering the Montreal and Bytown Railway Company (M&B), to build to Bytown via Saint-Eustache, with a bridge at either Grenville or Hull.<sup>7</sup> Stock subscriptions were opened in May and municipalities were courted. Months of mutual mudslinging between presidents Coffin and Delisle enlivened the letters columns of Montreal newspapers, but by August the M&B had carried the day. The City of Montreal and the counties of Terrebonne, Two Mountains, and Ottawa (Div. 2) would invest. It was time to find a contractor, who would be expected both to construct the railway and to sell its bonds to investors.

### The Contractors

M&B director W. C. Evans suggested Sheffield UK firm, James Sykes and Company.<sup>8</sup> Its principal was only twenty-seven but had been in the railway-building business since 1844. With his civil engineer brother William as partner, Sykes was already active in North American markets. Sheffield newspapers cited work in "the States", and the firm won the contract to construct the St. Andrews and Quebec Railway in New Brunswick in 1851. The following year, William surveyed a route from Windsor to Victoria Beach for the Nova Scotia government and in January 1853, James Sykes and Co. submitted a proposal to construct the entire Nova Scotia Railway.

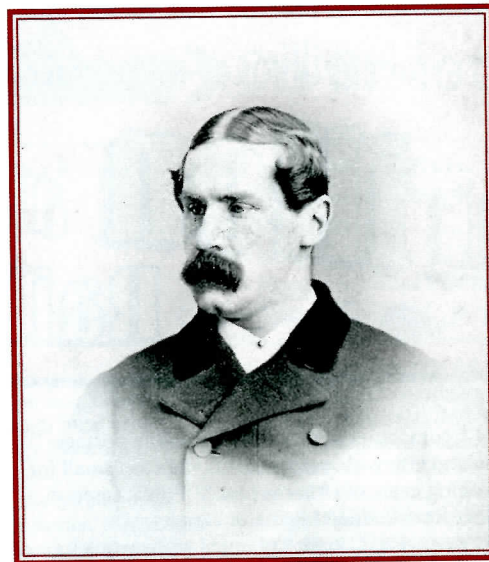
While that did not happen, 1853 was a banner year for James Sykes; his fourth child, and first son, was born; he sold his grist mill to focus on his expanding railway business; and his company entered two new markets: Mexico and Canada.<sup>9</sup> For the Canadian projects – the Montreal and Bytown and the Brockville and Ottawa – he brought in Manchester engineer Charles DeBergue as a financial partner and the firm was then sometimes known as Sykes, DeBergue and Company.

William Sykes took charge of both Canadian projects and moved to Montreal in June. He signed the construction contract (see sidebar, last page) for the M&B with A.-M. Delisle on Nov. 7, 1853. His surveyors took the field earlier.

### Construction

When it contracted with James Sykes and Co., the M&B's situation was already precarious. Take-up of its shares was disappointing; fewer than 1000 (of 24,000) shares were subscribed by 125 buyers, many from Argenteuil County, and the total paid up by subscribers was only £930. On the positive side, enough Ottawa County landowners offered a free right-of-way that the company adopted the north shore route. The M&B received £49,000 in municipal debentures from Terrebonne and Ottawa counties for 592 shares, with £150,000 more to come from Montreal and Two Mountains if their conditions were met.

The M&B and the Quebec-based North Shore Railroad agreed in January 1854 on a common gauge (5'6" for interchange with the Grand Trunk),



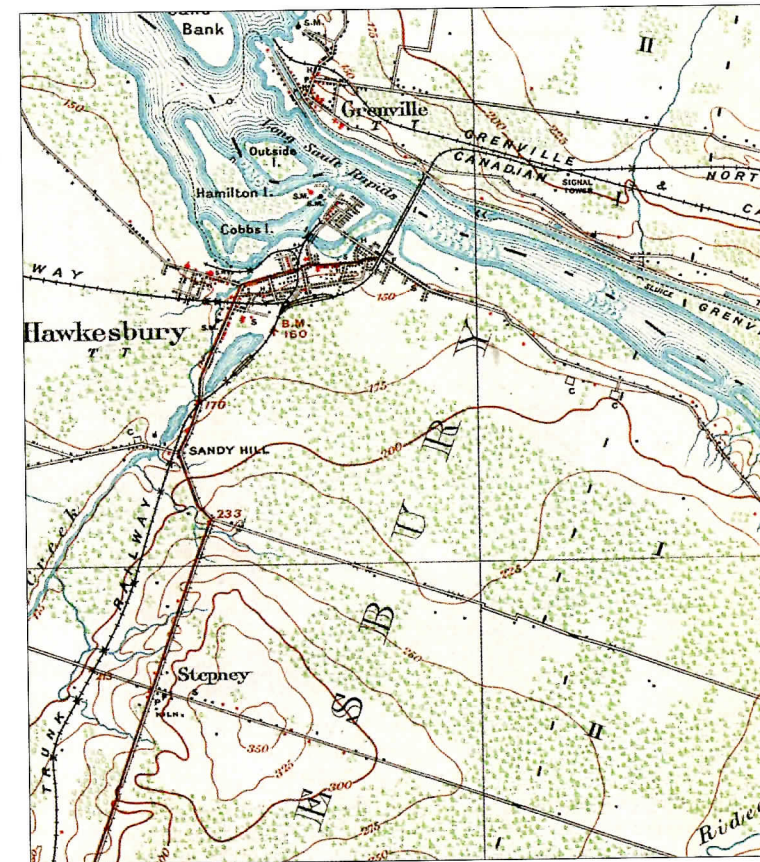
**1. – Alexandre-Maurice Delisle, President of the Montreal and Bytown.** A.-M. Delisle (1810-1880) became one of the wealthiest Francophone businessmen of his time. He was an ardent supporter of the Conservative party and held various public offices when that party was in power. His promotion of the M&B is widely cited as the beginning of French-Canadian industrial capitalism. McCord Museum I-14421.1. William Notman photograph 1865.

a shared Montreal terminus, and a joint effort to charter an extension from Bytown to Lake Huron.

M&B Secretary/Treasurer Sydney Bellingham, with Delisle's backing, ran for the legislature in Argenteuil riding in 1854. That, plus the prospect of portage traffic, led the M&B to begin construction with its Carillon to Grenville section. Locally popular, the decision violated a promise to the City of Montreal that construction would begin there and proceed westward.<sup>10</sup> Upon his election in July, Mr. Bellingham left the M&B board but remained an advocate for the road. Enthusiasm for the project in Argenteuil was such that landowners between Carillon and Grenville allowed construction to proceed before the right-of-way was purchased.

By June, construction was under way in Montreal, but William Sykes was stricken with a serious illness that would sideline him for months. Nevertheless, work also began in the areas of St. Martin and St. Eustache in the course of the summer as the Carillon-Grenville section approached completion. In anticipation, William ordered a locomotive, the Ottawa, from Kinmond Brothers of Montreal, and cars from another local builder.

Back in Sheffield, James Sykes was worried about his Canadian contracts. William was too ill to manage both projects properly. M&B paper





was worthless until the company owned a right-of-way, and the municipal debentures were unsalable without a Provincial guarantee. He was able only to borrow £22,000 against £32,000 of debentures to cover some expenses. On the Brockville and Ottawa project, the municipalities were slow to turn over negotiable, provincially-guaranteed debentures as that contract required.

The rolling stock was delivered in early September.<sup>11</sup> By then, trouble was brewing. The Argenteuil landowners were becoming restless about the M&B's delay in buying their properties. The Province had gone to court to prevent Two Mountains from buying shares, and Montreal decided that its conditions had not been met.

### Tragedy and Minor Triumph

In late summer 1854, James sent civil engineer Richard Madigan to Canada to assist William. Madigan arrived in mid-September, by which time William was a bit better. On the 20th James himself sailed for North America on the steamer Arctic, accompanied by his solicitor, Mr. Hinde. They brought no large sum in gold or otherwise, just a determination to enforce their contracts. On September 27, the Arctic, steaming fast in fog off Newfoundland, rammed another ship and sank, with great loss of life. James Sykes and Charles Hinde were among the casualties.

When word of his brother's death reached William in mid-October, their crews were readying the nearly-complete Carillon-Grenville section, which the M&B opened on Oct. 25, 1854.<sup>12</sup> A-M. Delisle met the landowners the next day and promised early payment.<sup>13</sup> A muted opening celebration took place on Nov. 4 without William Sykes.<sup>14</sup> Trains probably ran daily until navigation closed in late November (map 3).

William suspended construction, as permitted by the contract, since the outbreak of the Crimean War and James' sudden death made financing more difficult. The Carillon engine shed flooded and come spring the locomotive was trapped in a "block of ice two feet thick."<sup>15</sup>

### Stalemate

Despite Delisle's promises, the M&B did not pay the landowners, so in spring 1855 they refused to let the railway run. At that point, William Sykes turned the rolling stock and the built Carillon-Grenville section over to the M&B. A Grenville M&B director, steamboat owner A-É. Montmarquet, tried unsuccessfully to organize a group to lease and operate the line for the benefit of the landowners and the Ottawa River Steamers Line.

Charles DeBergue, hitherto a silent partner, then tried to take charge. He contracted for 5000 tons of rails for the Canadian projects, and then sailed to New York with his solicitor, Mr. Chamberlin. The latter continued

to Brockville and Montreal, while DeBergue remained "skulking about Rouse's Point", apparently to avoid creditors.<sup>16</sup> Ignoring the still-bedridden William Sykes, Chamberlin took over the company's office in June. Through July he pursued arrangements with creditors and debtors, without success.<sup>17</sup> The pair then returned to the UK and when his contract for rails fell apart, DeBergue threw in the towel.<sup>18</sup>

William publicly denounced Chamberlin's takeover, accusing him of misuse of funds.<sup>19</sup> He was seemingly regaining his health and in August 1855, with the landowners' agreement, he began operating the line for their mutual benefit. The M&B went to court to regain control of its rolling stock, which was seized by a bailiff in late September and returned to its shed.

### Legislative Intervention

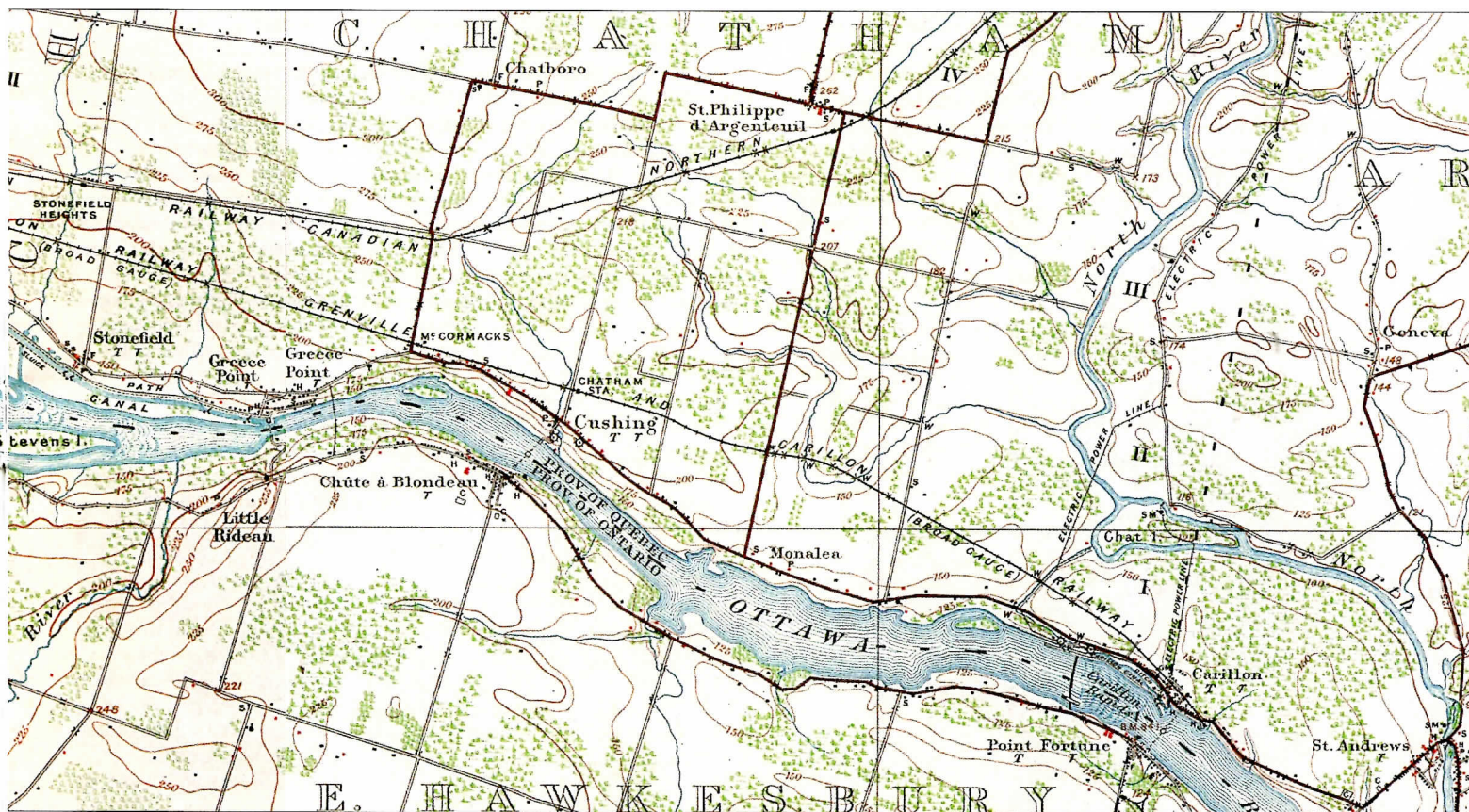
Inevitably, there were calls for the government to 'do something' to break the stalemate. As well, legislators suspected wrongdoing in the Terrebonne County share purchase, while the M&B and the North Shore Railroad were seeking support for their Lake Huron extension. When the Canadian legislature convened in Toronto in February 1856, it would have to consider the M&B from several angles.

On March 10, the legislature created a committee "to inquire into all the transactions of the Company, the subscription for Stock by certain Municipalities, & the negotiation of their Debentures therefor." It called all the key players as witnesses. It also gathered many original documents, which were reprinted along with witness testimony in its 85-page report, an invaluable source of information on the M&B. The committee recommended that "the legislature should adopt some immediate plan to place the road between Carillon and Grenville in running order."

Before doing so, the legislature in May took up a bill proposed by the M&B and the North Shore to charter the Lake Huron, Ottawa and Quebec Junction Railway (LHO&QJ) to build from Pembroke or Arnprior to Georgian Bay and to entitle its owners to 4 million acres of land grants if the line was completed on time. The M&B would be a part-owner, entitled to a share of the bounty. The land grant idea was controversial, and debate continued until late June, when the bill passed.<sup>20</sup>

Petitions reminded the legislature of the need to get the existing line

**Map 3** – Officially on the map – Even though it was only 13 miles long, the C&G was split between sheets 20 and 28 of the Army General Staff topographic map series of 1909/10, of which this is a composite. The map shows a second station, McCormacks, just a mile west of Chatham, that is also mentioned in company records. When and why it was built are unknown, but it likely was a result of the shortening of the Long Sault by the 1882 Carillon dam. Ontario Council of University Libraries [www.ocul.on.ca/topomaps/](http://www.ocul.on.ca/topomaps/)





ary/Treasurer Sydney Bellingham, with Delisle's backing, legislature in Argenteuil riding in 1854. That, plus the prospect of a profitable return, led the M&B to begin construction with its Carillon to Grenville. Locally popular, the decision violated a promise to the landowners that construction would begin there and proceed westward. This election in July, Mr. Bellingham left the M&B board but continued to advocate for the road. Enthusiasm for the project in Argenteuil was high, but landowners between Carillon and Grenville allowed the project to proceed before the right-of-way was purchased. Construction was under way in Montreal, but William Sykes was suffering from a serious illness that would sideline him for months. Work also began in the areas of St. Martin and St. Eustache in the summer as the Carillon-Grenville section approached completion. In anticipation, William ordered a locomotive, the Ottawa, from the Montreal and Ottawa River Steamers Line, and cars from another local builder. In the fall, James Sykes was worried about his Canadian contract. He was too ill to manage both projects properly. M&B paper

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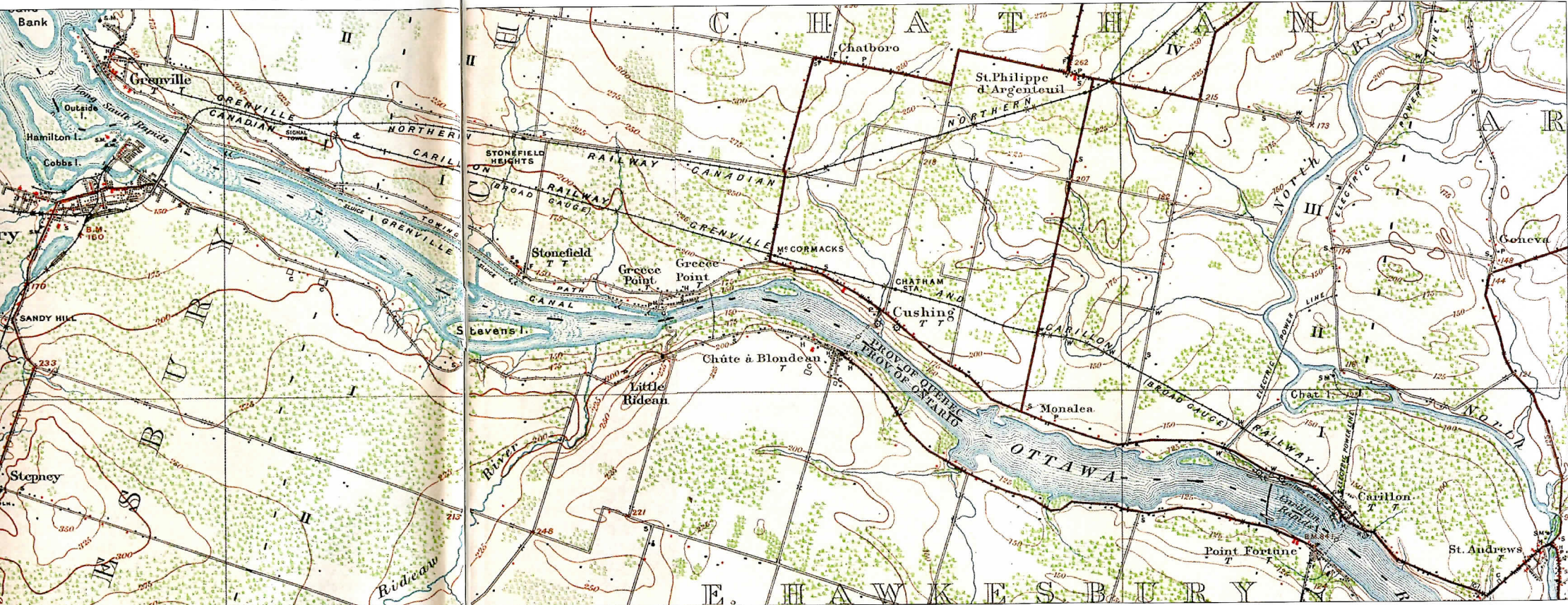
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operating. Sydney Bellingham introduced a bill on June 10 to turn over the completed line, stock, and operating authority to three trustees: the Wardens of Ottawa and Terrebonne counties, and William Sykes. The arrangement would be time-limited, and the M&B could regain control if it paid its debts. The bill was heavily altered by the Railroads Committee. William Sykes and the County of Terrebonne were excluded, and enforced trusteeship reduced to permission for a voluntary agreement between the M&B and the counties of Ottawa and Argenteuil.

The amended bill became law on July 1, 1856.<sup>21</sup> The counties and the company did not agree, so the "Act to render operative the Carillon and Grenville section of the Montreal and Bytown Railway" had no effect.

#### End of the Line

The M&B had survived numerous adverse court judgements over unpaid staff and creditors when it made the fatal mistake of failing to pay its solicitor, John J. C. Abbott. Abbott and the company's engineer sued and won a Superior Court order for the sheriff to seize and sell at auction the Carillon-Grenville line, equipment, and buildings. The proceeds would go to creditors.

The sheriff's auction on January 5, 1857 brought in £4240, enough to settle most claims.<sup>22</sup> The purchaser was a group led by John J. C. Abbott [see "Band of Brothers Part 3: The Abbotts" *Branchline* Nov/Dec 2018]. The price was about 6% of the cost of M&B construction. The Montreal and Bytown Railway Company still had its charter and its possibility of land grants, so it staggered on through additional lawsuits, but there was nothing left for creditors to seize and eventually it was wound up.

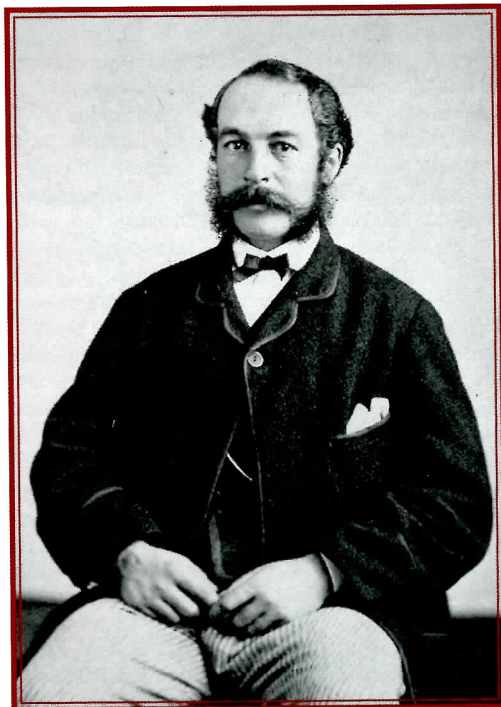
The Abbott group owned a semi-finished piece of railway which it had no charter to operate, but the group was well-equipped for the task. John Abbott was a prominent lawyer with good political connections, while brother Harry and partner Cortlandt Freer (photo 2) were railway contractors. Alexander Cross, the fourth partner, was a lawyer.

#### CARILLON AND GRENVILLE RAILWAY

##### Outlaw Years

Abbott and Freer quickly put the line into good working order, and, on April 28, the Ottawa Mail Steamers Line released its 1857 schedule including portage transport by the "Carillon and Grenville Railroad." There was no such company, and the partners had not even applied for a charter, without which no railway could operate in Canada. But this one did so, somehow. Possibly, Abbott arranged with the M&B directors to operate under its charter. Certainly, there is no record of any objection by that company in 1857, or in 1858 when the service was offered again. There was no public objection by anyone.

The legally non-existent Carillon and Grenville even filed the reports that government required from chartered railway companies. It is listed as the "Grenville and Carillon" in the first Report of the Inspector of Railways, submitted in early 1859 by Samuel Keefer. Happily, the line was free of serious accidents in 1857 and '58. A second locomotive, the Grenville,



2. – Cortlandt Freer, President of the Carillon and Grenville. Son of a Quebec City banker, Cortlandt Freer had a meteoric career. In 1857 the 25-year-old Freer partnered with Harry Abbott on a large maintenance contract with the Grand Trunk. The partners also helped John Abbott get the M&B's assets running again in 1857 and took a one-third share. President of the C&G from 1859, Freer was also superintendent of the GTR's Eastern Division until his untimely death. McCord Museum I-4349.1. William Notman photograph, 1862.

was purchased in August 1858 from D. C. Gunn of Hamilton.<sup>23</sup>

Reporting to the Board of Railway Commissioners, C&G Superintendent J. F. Barnard admitted that records had not been kept but offered his best 'guesstimates' of miles run (9500 passenger, 1500 work) and passengers carried (10,000) over 1857 and 1858.<sup>24</sup>

#### Making it Legal

On April 1, 1859, a bill to incorporate the "Ottawa Valley Railway Company" was introduced in the legislature for the Abbott group. It was a complicated proposal to operate initially as the Carillon and Grenville Railway; then, once it raised the funds, to extend to Montreal and Ottawa under its 'real' name. There would be a three-year window in which the M&B could re-purchase the line. The Railroads Committee eliminated all mention of the extension, including its name, and the legislature passed the cut-down version. The charter of the Carillon and Grenville Railway Company (C&G) came into effect on May 4.<sup>25</sup> At the first directors' meeting on May 31, Cortlandt Freer was elected President, a position he would hold until his death after a brief illness in 1863.

1859 brought the first reported accident on the C&G. In the early evening of July 1, the daughter and two nieces of the agent at Chatham took the hand car for a joyride. An unexpected encounter with a work train resulted in seven-year-old Minnie McCoy losing the toes of one foot and the hand car being "smashed". There was a second accident the next year.

Both incidents were included in the Inspector of Railways' Report for 1859 and 1860, where the Carillon and Grenville appears under its legal name. For 1860, Keefer requested more operational and financial data. Thus, the Report provides many details about the early C&G.<sup>26</sup> In 1860, there were eleven employees: one at head office, a mechanic, one four-man operating crew, a four-man track gang, and a single station agent.

The lone agent was at Chatham station, near the village of Cushing. Through passengers bought their tickets at Lachine or Ottawa and the steamboat operators handled the transfers at Carillon and Grenville. Steamboat travellers were not the C&G's only passengers, though, especially in the early years. Square timber raftsmen returned from Chatham to Grenville by rail after running timber down through the Long Sault rapids. The C&G offered a reduced fare for raftsmen, like the 'colonist' fares on other lines (image 3).

Mileage run in 1860 was again a round number (5000 passenger and 1000 work), but the passenger count was oddly precise at 22,719. Just over 12,000 were raftsmen; the remainder steamer passengers.<sup>27</sup> The C&G reported a profit of \$2175, a roughly 10% return on the initial purchase price.

When Samuel Keefer left the Railway Inspectorate in 1861, collection and publication of railway statistics became sporadic.

#### Expansion Plans Derailed

Though it was profitable, the C&G's owners didn't want a 13-mile portage railway; they meant to complete the Montreal to Ottawa link.

In March 1860, John Abbott replaced Sydney Bellingham as MPP for Argenteuil. The C&G then petitioned for amendments to its charter, mostly to add the powers denied the previous year: provisions for a new name and extensions to Ottawa and Montreal, if they could raise the capital. There was one new element; the C&G, if extended, would take over the M&B's share in the Lake Huron, Ottawa and Quebec Junction Railway (LHO&QJ). The resulting Act came into effect on May 19.<sup>28</sup>

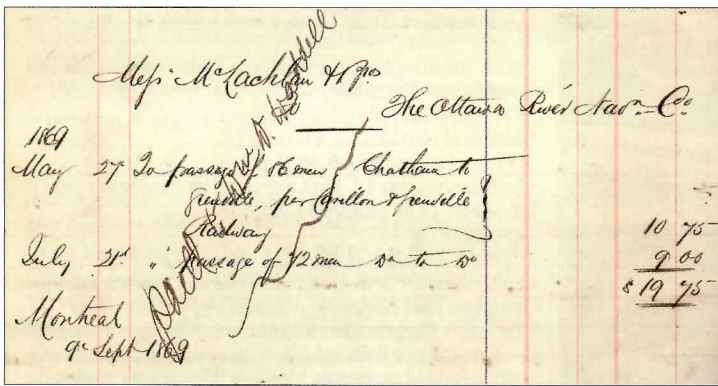
In 1861, the legislature reshaped the project to connect Quebec to Lake Huron. It dissolved the LHO&QJ and created an independent company, the Canada Central Railway, to build the western extension, while maintaining the land grant entitlements of the original partners.<sup>29</sup> The C&G would inherit the M&B's share, provided it was extended to Ottawa.

Even with the enticement of land grants, the C&G was unable to finance the extensions. British investors were leery, given the Grand Trunk's troubles, and the Civil War kept American dollars at home. Consolidation in the steamboat industry in 1864 gave the Abbott group the chance of a profitable exit.

#### OTTAWA RIVER NAVIGATION COMPANY

The Ottawa Mail Steamers Line was not a company, but an association of several cooperating steamboat owners. Having put new vessels on the route in 1860 and 1861, in 1864 the owners obtained a charter as the Ottawa River Navigation Company (ORNC).<sup>30</sup> Captain R. W. Shepherd (photo 4) was president and A.-É. Montmarquet was director. The railway journey was an integral part of the through trip, so in February 1865, the ORNC bought 95% ownership of the Carillon and Grenville. The purchase price was \$90,000, over four times what the Abbott group had paid in 1857.<sup>31</sup> Weeks later, the C&G was leased for 21 years to the ORNC, which operated the line.





3. – Raftsmen's passages – The C&G did not collect cash fares from raftsmen. Instead, parent ORNC billed their employers seasonally. This 1869 bill to McLachlin Bros. of Arnprior covers men who brought bands of timber cribs through the Long Sault in May and July. The raftsmen's fare from Chatham to Grenville that year was 12.50. Arnprior and McNab/Braeside Archives 2003-0164 F209 env. 12.

### Boom Years

The next decade was the heyday of the ORNC and its railway. Growing passenger traffic reflected a booming forest industry and Ottawa's new role as capital of the Province of Canada since 1857 and seat of government from 1866. That year the C&G carried 23,363 passengers and 730 tons of express shipments. It turned a profit of \$5930.<sup>32</sup> The 10-hour steamboat trip from Montreal was slower than the rail journey via Prescott (8-9 hours), but cheaper and more comfortable, offering meals and private staterooms. The following year, Ottawa became capital of the new Dominion.

As soon as it acquired the railway, the ORNC extended it to Carillon wharf, where a new station and warehouse were erected. A multi-year program of right of way improvements was launched. In 1868, the company bought a light 'platform locomotive' for \$2200, specifically for the raftsmen's shuttles. After years of growing demand, the company introduced two new boats in 1873, doubling capacity and adding overnight service, aimed at business travellers.

By this time, the original locomotive Ottawa was in bad shape and the ORNC board resolved in November that "If we can get a Locomotive from the Grand Trunk Railway Company at a fair price, it is better to purchase one, instead of repairing the Loco 'Ottawa'". By February 1874, former GTR No. 70, an 1856 'Birkenhead' "thoroughly overhauled in Grand Trunk shops", had been acquired for \$3500<sup>33</sup> (photo 5).

It probably assumed the name Ottawa that spring, but it could have been as late as 1881, when its predecessor was struck from the roster. The latter was stored unserviceable until at least 1889<sup>34</sup> and its disposition is unknown (photo 6 next page).

1873 was the all-time peak of river travel.<sup>35</sup> We know more about 1874, however, because it was the first year covered by the Railway Statistics of Canada.<sup>36</sup> In 1874 the C&G carried 5813 tons of express (all manufactured goods) and 40,952 passengers. It was a year of low timber exports, so only about 20% would have been raftsmen. The profit on railway operations was \$5547 within a total ORNC profit of \$72,410.

The ORNC directors hoped to see their tiny railway incorporated into a larger line and actively tried to sell or lease it. Beginning with the Canada



4. – Capt. R. W. Shepherd, President of the Ottawa River Navigation Co. – The Shepherd family of Como, QC, were the steamboat royalty of the Ottawa. Robert was a captain and part owner from 1846. He stepped ashore in 1853 to manage the Ottawa Mail Steamers Line and was replaced by his brother Henry. On the formation of the Ottawa River Navigation Company in 1864, he was elected president for life. His son, Robert Jr. was president when the ORNC was sold in 1906.

Central in 1870, they negotiated successively with the Montreal Northern Colonisation; Quebec, Montreal, Ottawa and Occidental (QMO&O); Canadian Pacific; and Great Northern railways over two decades, without result.

### Troubles, General and Specific

By May 1875, the 'Great Depression' that had begun with US bank failures in 1873, was bringing the Ottawa Valley lumber industry to its knees, as it did the wider North American economy. Square timber exports to Britain were less affected, so there were still 8-10,000 raftsmen. Nevertheless, by 1877 annual passenger traffic on the C&G dropped below 20,000, with only 683 tons of express, and the railway reported its first operating loss, \$1313.

The next year saw an upturn in the overall economy, but the opposite for the ORNC. As of December 1877, travellers from Montreal could take the QMO&O to a Hull station just a short cab ride from downtown Ottawa. The impact was immediate; business travellers deserted the steamers and the ORNC posted its first loss in 1878.

### Tourist Line

Facing the new reality, the ORNC ended overnight service and focussed on tourists. Boats were sold, expenditures sharply reduced. C&G passenger numbers dropped below 8500 in 1878, but recovered to around 11,000 annually through the 1880s, apart from another dip in 1882 when the Canada Atlantic Railway opened. The ORNC returned to modest profitability despite annual operating losses of around \$1000 for the railway, rising slightly at the end of the decade. In 1886, the ORNC introduced the "Beautiful New Iron Steamer Empress (photo 7 next page), built especially for tourist travel"<sup>37</sup> and renewed the operating lease of the C&G for another twenty-one years.

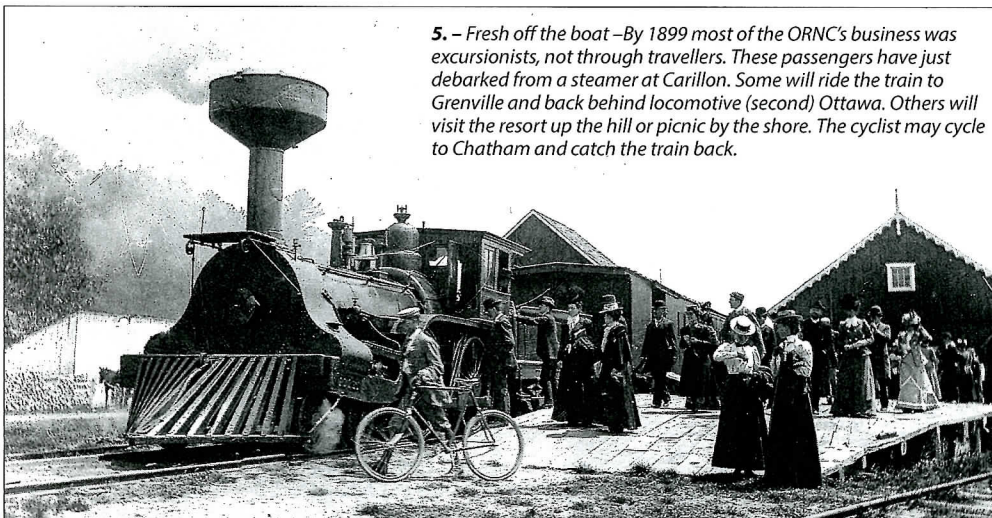
Passenger numbers dropped below 10,000 as the nineties began and hit 6000 by 1899. Almost all were tourists, as declining timber exports meant fewer raftsmen. Late-season service was reduced to two days per

week, then eliminated in 1895. The platform locomotive, unused since the mid-eighties, was removed from the roster in 1898. The G&C's annual operating losses approached \$2000. By the end of the century, square timber traffic was largely gone from the Ottawa.

### End Times

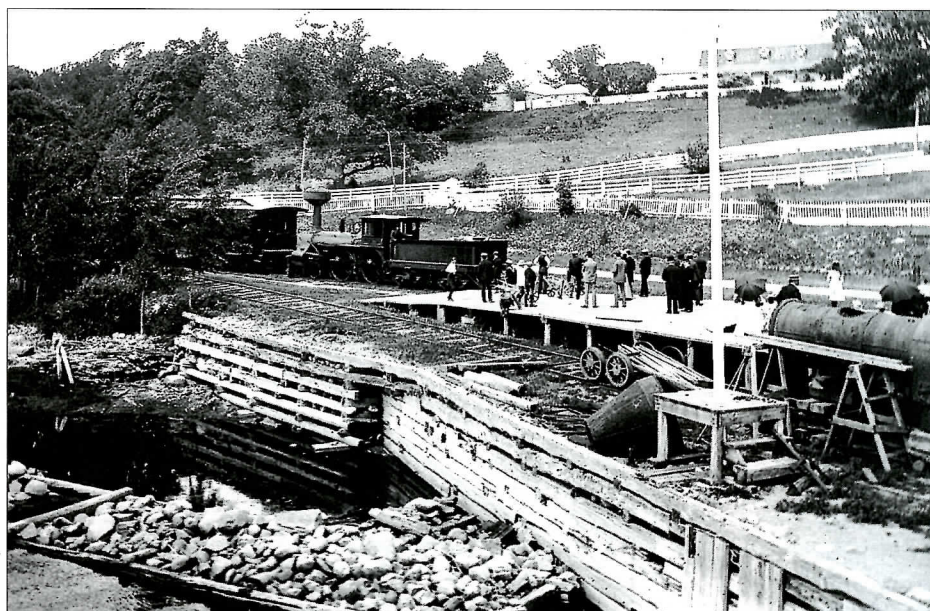
The first decade of the twentieth century would be the Carillon and Grenville's last. The ORNC's excursions, local 'market' boats, and tugboats could no longer sustain the losses on through passenger service. The number of passengers continued to sag to about 4000 a year, fewer than 30 per day on average. Railway operating losses continued to mount. Fortunately for the Ottawa River Navigation Company, the G&C and its potential land grants had long interested notorious railway promoter Charles Newhouse Armstrong.

His latest promotion, ironically a railway from



5. – Fresh off the boat – By 1899 most of the ORNC's business was excursionists, not through travellers. These passengers have just debarked from a steamer at Carillon. Some will ride the train to Grenville and back behind locomotive (second) Ottawa. Others will visit the resort up the hill or picnic by the shore. The cyclist may cycle to Chatham and catch the train back.





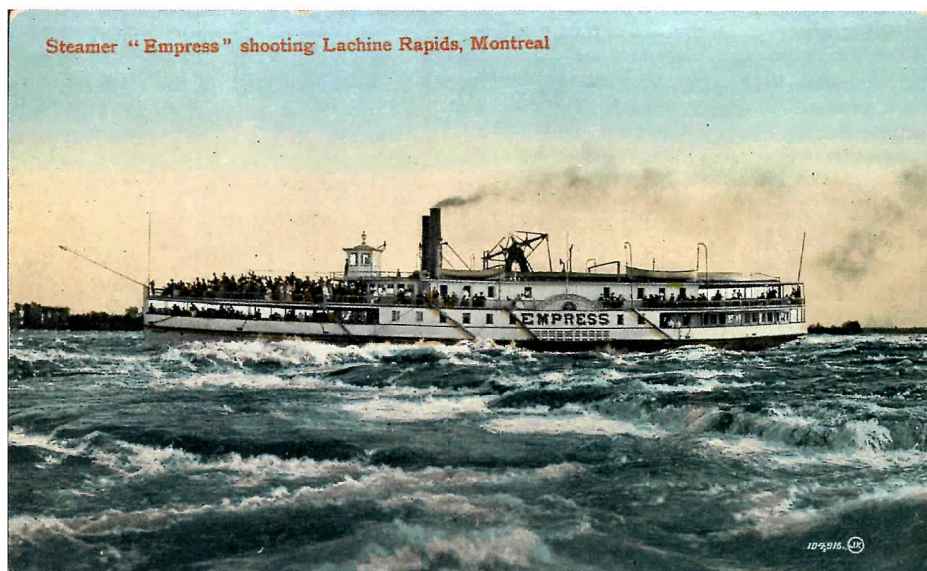
6. – Eastbound arrival – Here we see second Ottawa reversing into Carillon station, photographed from a docked steamer. Note the uniformed boat crew among those awaiting its arrival. The hulk of the first Ottawa is next to the platform in lower right. It was built only four years earlier than its replacement. At the top is the ORNC's Bellevue House resort. McCord Museum MP-1977.76.103. Alfred Walter Roper photograph, 1900.

Montreal to Lake Huron, was essentially a device for selling bonds to unwary British investors; land grant entitlements helped sales. Armstrong was generous to parliamentary friends who helped pass a 1903 charter for a Grenville-Montreal line, the Ottawa River Railway, then a 1904 amendment for an extension to Ottawa, and another in 1905 for an extension to Georgian Bay and a name change to Central Railway of Canada (CRC).<sup>38</sup> With cash in hand from CRC bond sales and more bonds to float in Britain, Armstrong was keen to exploit the allure of the C&G's claim to land grants.

The ORNC refused to sell its railway separately so, in April 1906, the CRC bought both companies for \$135,000.<sup>39</sup> It continued to operate the Montreal-Ottawa steamer service until the end of the 1910 season. At this point, dissident shareholders took control of the C&G. They decided on July 25, 1911 to sell all its physical assets to the Canadian Northern Ontario Railway (CNOR), apart from the short spur to the Carillon dock over which the CNOR got running rights. The Carillon and Grenville Railway Company retained its charter and its claim to land grants. Armstrong regained control in September 1911 and asked the courts to overturn the sale. On Feb. 27, 1914, Mr. Justice Panneton upheld its legality.<sup>40</sup> G&C land grants continued to be referenced in CRC bond advertisements.<sup>41</sup> Both companies were wound up in 1922, after Armstrong's death.

CNOR never operated the line. The physical plant was scrapped, and a portion of the right-of-way was built over by parent Canadian Northern's transcontinental main line that opened between Grenville and Montreal in 1916. Last of the Valley lines to open, it was the first to close, in 1939. ■

7. – Empress shooting the Lachine Rapids – For most of its working life, Empress operated between Ottawa and Grenville, but in 1907 it became the 'lower' boat, running from Carillon to Montreal harbour via the Lachine rapids. It returned, empty, via the Lachine Canal to Lachine wharf where up-bound passengers boarded. Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec / P186 / Fonds Laurette Cotnoir-Cappon.



<sup>1</sup> Ordinances of Lower Canada 1840 Ch. 46; Provincial Statutes of Canada (PSC) 1847 Ch. 119.

<sup>2</sup> With one exception; the Northern Railway of Canada had 'grandfathered' eligibility.

<sup>3</sup> PSC 1850 Ch. 113.

<sup>4</sup> Montreal Herald, Dec. 14, 1852, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Ottawa Citizen, Mar. 5, 1853, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> La Minerve, Feb. 18, 1853, p. 2 (English translation published Feb. 19 by Montreal Herald.)

<sup>7</sup> PSC 1853 Ch. 103.

<sup>8</sup> Canada, Report of the Committee Appointed to Enquire into the Transactions of the Montreal and Bytown Railway Company, 1856 (Enquiry <sup>1</sup> Report), pp. 78-79.

<sup>9</sup> Yorkshire Gazette, Oct. 15, 1853, p. 2. Sykes contracted with the Tehuantepec Railroad Co. of New York to build a trans-continental railway across Mexico's Tehuantepec peninsula, but the project collapsed.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 85.

<sup>11</sup> Montreal Herald, Aug. 30, 1854, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Ottawa Citizen, Oct. 28, 1854, p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Montreal Herald, Nov. 9, 1854, p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Letter. James Barclay to W. S. Hopper, Nov. 18, 1855 reminding him what happened the previous winter. Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec.

<sup>16</sup> Montreal Transcript, cited in Bathurst Courier July 13, 1855, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Brockville Recorder, cited in Bathurst Courier July 27, 1855, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian, Glamorgan, Monmouth, and Brecon <sup>19</sup> Gazette, July 12, 1856, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> Enquiry Report, p. 72.

<sup>20</sup> PSC 1856 Ch. 112.

<sup>21</sup> PSC 1856 Ch. 116.

<sup>22</sup> Montreal Herald, Jan. 6, 1857, p. 2. The sale price was reported as £5300 currency; it could also be expressed as \$21,200.

<sup>23</sup> Canada, Report of the Inspector of Railways, 1859, pp. 88-89.

<sup>24</sup> The superintendent's name appears in several variants. 9500 miles roughly equals one round trip daily, except Sunday, for two seven-month navigation seasons, while 10000 passengers is an average of 14 passengers each way per day, which seems implausibly low.

<sup>25</sup> PSC 1859 Ch. 96.

<sup>26</sup> Canada, Report of the Inspector of Railways, 1861, pp. 38, 154.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p. 36. The 1861 report is unique in that it includes total passengers and total passenger-miles, allowing us to calculate how many took 13-month through trips and how many the 7-mile trip from Chatham to Grenville.

<sup>28</sup> PSC 1860 Ch. 108.

<sup>29</sup> PSC 1861 Ch. 80.

<sup>30</sup> PSC 1864 Ch. 94.

<sup>31</sup> Minute Book of the Ottawa River Navigation Company (ORNC Minutes), p. 20. McCord Museum Archives, fonds P0009/B.

<sup>32</sup> Canada, Sessional Papers of the Dominion of Canada, vol. 4, 1868, Paper 7, p. 48-49.

<sup>33</sup> ORNC Minutes, p. 110.

<sup>34</sup> Minute Book of the Carillon & Grenville Railway Company (C&G Minutes), p. 100. McCord Museum Archives, fonds P0009/B.

<sup>35</sup> ORNC Minutes, p. 161.

<sup>36</sup> The Railway Statistics Act, 1875, required the initial report to cover the twelve months up to 30 June 1875, and so on. Many companies instead reported on the business year that ended during those twelve months. The C&G figures in the 1876 Statistics cover calendar year 1874, and the C&G's final 1910 report is in the 1912 volume.

<sup>37</sup> Licensed for 800 passengers, Empress was a rebuild of the ORNC's 1872 Peerless.

<sup>38</sup> Statutes of Canada (SC) 1903 Ch. 172; SC 1904 Ch. 112; SC 1905 Ch. 79.

<sup>39</sup> Montreal Gazette, Apr. 7, 1909, p. 4.

<sup>40</sup> Montreal Gazette, Feb. 28, 1914, p. 7.

<sup>41</sup> Guardian (Manchester, UK), April 4, 1914, p. 13.

<sup>42</sup> Enquiry Report, pp. 35-44.

<sup>43</sup> Amounts are in Sterling pounds, unless otherwise indicated. Contemporary accounts often used both Sterling and 'Currency' pounds, trusting readers to apply the appropriate conversion: £4 Sterling ≈ £5 Currency.

<sup>44</sup> Enquiry Report, p. 72.

<sup>45</sup> Based on Lee, David, Lumber Kings and Shantymen, (2006). Toronto ON, James Lorimer & Co. Ltd.



## **MONTREAL AND BYTOWN CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT** <sup>42</sup> **Responsibilities**

The M&B was to acquire the land required. Sykes & Co. was to arrange financing, build the line and facilities, and equip it with rolling stock.

### **Route**

From a Montreal terminus "at or near Viger Square," a single-track line would cross the eastern flank of Mount Royal just east of Saint Denis Street, then head north-west, crossing Jesus Island to Sainte Rose, then via Saint Eustache, Saint Andrews, Carillon, and Grenville to Ottawa. Between the latter points, both banks of the Ottawa were to be surveyed and a route chosen, based on cost and offers of municipal aid. A branch from the Montreal terminus to Hochelaga Bay was envisaged, as were possible tramway branches to Saint Jerome and Lachute. Length was estimated at 110 miles of main line and 23 miles of tramways. No tunneling was planned.

### **Specifications**

Rails were to be cold-rolled iron, 63 pounds per yard for the main line and "the same ... as the Rawdon and Industry line" (iron-strapped planks) for the tramways. Gauge was to be decided within five months.

### **Facilities**

Bytown and Montreal were to have well-appointed stone or brick stations and extensive freight and maintenance facilities. Railway offices would be in the Montreal station. Saint Andrews would have a "superior" brick station and another twelve "road stations" would include living quarters for the station masters. Road stations could be of the contractor's choice of material.

### **Equipment**

The contractor was to furnish: five express and five freight locomotives, ten first-class passenger cars, 20 second-class passenger cars, "150 in all of Goods and Lumber Wagons", five snowplows, ten hand carts, and ten "sets of repairing tools".

### **Date of Completion**

The contractor was to turn over the completed railway by Nov. 6, 1856, except that if a war or other event made UK financing impossible, the contractor could shut down for up to a year. Nov. 6, 1857 was the fallback limit.

### **Price**

The contract price was £770,000 Sterling.<sup>43</sup> Adjustments for final length would be based on £6500 per mile for the mainline and £1200 per mile for the tramways.

### **Financial Terms**

Sykes & Co. would receive no cash payment whatsoever. Their entire compensation would be paper: £260,000 in M&B shares, £150,000 in 6% municipal debentures of Montreal and Two Mountains, and £360,000 in municipal debentures if available, otherwise in 6% M&B bonds. Payment would be in ten equal installments: the first on signature and the remainder on progress.

William Sykes later was asked by a legislature Committee whether the form of payment had affected the price. He responded, "In consequence

of the mode of payment, I added fifty per cent to the valuation of the works; that is, for every hundred that I considered the works were worth, I charged hundred and fifty pounds."<sup>44</sup>

## **SQUARE TIMBER ON THE OTTAWA** <sup>45</sup>

The Ottawa Valley's economy was launched in 1806, when Philemon Wright delivered his first shipment of square timber to Quebec City for export to Britain. Square timber was an artisanal, not industrial, product and its method of transportation was unique. The Ottawa timber trade would last a hundred years, though overshadowed from mid-century onwards by the more lucrative trade in sawn lumber to the US.

Square timbers were sections of large tree trunks, usually white pine, thirty to seventy feet long. They were hewed flat on four sides so that they could be packed solidly into the hulls of ships. Britain had a long-standing trade in such timbers, which were used as heavy structural beams in buildings and docks or sawn for ship's decking, from suppliers in the Baltic states. The Napoleonic Wars led the British Government to promote imports from North America. Wright was the first of many Ottawa Valley 'timber barons' to respond.

Trees were felled in winter, sectioned, squared by skilled axemen, and dragged by horses to the nearest suitable frozen stream. The limbs and about one third of the trunk were left to rot. In spring, the timbers were floated downstream to the Ottawa or a major tributary. There, matching timbers were lashed and pinned solidly together into rafts, called 'cribs', twenty-four feet wide and as long as the timbers. The cribs would only be disassembled at Quebec when the timbers were loaded onto ships.

Next, the cribs would be fastened together into a 'raft' which a crew of 'raftsmen' would take downriver to Q d thirty and covered more than two acres; a (mostly) steerable floating island. A cookhouse was erected on a central crib, storage sheds on another, and the crew built their own log cabins on others.

Rafting from the Ottawa River above the Chaudière became practical with the invention in 1829 of the timber slide, a sluice beside a waterfall, wide enough for a crib to pass through. The process of disassembling rafts, bringing individual cribs down the slide, and re-assembling the rafts could take days at each falls.

Below Ottawa the current carried the rafts to Quebec, with the crew steering (and occasionally powering) the raft with large oars. In open water like Lac Saint-Pierre, small sails were used. Later, rafts were often towed by steam tugs.

The major difficulty of the lower Ottawa was the five-mile Long Sault rapids below Grenville. Here the raft was separated into 'bands' of five to ten cribs and each band ran the rapids with a crew of ten or so, who returned by land for their next band. At the foot of the Long Sault, bands were combined for the milder rapids at Chute-à-Blondeau and Carillon, and then fully re-assembled for the Lake of Two Mountains.

The process would be repeated in the Rivière des Prairies, then it was clear sailing to Quebec. ■

8. – Below the Chaudière – A raft belonging to J. R. Booth is being re-assembled below the Chaudière timber slide. When it is ready to go, the buildings will be near the centre of the raft. By the 1900-1905 date of this photo, the timber trade on the Ottawa was almost over. Library and Archives Canada / PA-008835. William James Topley photograph.

