

THE RAILWAY STATIONS OF TORONTO

by Omer S.A. Lavallee.

Continuing our historical analysis of the railway termini in Canadian cities and towns, which was begun last autumn using the stations of Montreal as a topic, we turn now to the city of Toronto. The author is indebted to Mr. Andrew Merrilces for supplying much information, and to Mr. C.W.K. Heard for assistance in map research.

I - The Beginnings.

The present Toronto Union Station, with its amalgamated railway facilities used by Canadian National and Canadian Pacific trains and their connections over other lines, belies the existence of a diversified and picturesque collection of railway terminals in that city, which once lined the bayfront from Berkeley Street, on the east, to Queen's Wharf, at the foot of Bathurst Street.

Toronto did not open its first railway station until 1853; in May of that year, the Ontario, Simcoe & Huron Union Railway opened its first section from Toronto to Aurora, Ontario. Not alone Canada's first railway, it was also the first steam-operated line in all of Upper Canada, though a horse-operated railway had existed since 1839 at Niagara. The OS&HUR was built to the 5'6" gauge, created by Provincial enactment two years previously; the route out of Toronto was that followed today by the Canadian National Railways' Newmarket Subdivision.

This first station was little more than a rudimentary wooden shelter, affording passengers scant accomodation. Situated at the southeast corner of Bay and Front Streets, the platforms extended westerly from Bay Street nearly to Sword's Hotel, later called the Queen's¹. The OS&HUR ran along the bayshore bank from this station, pre-empting the water lots with great foresight, an action which was later to cause much difficulty with the Grand Trunk Railway of Canada. The running shed and yard of the OS&HUR was located on the west side of Brock Street (now Spadina Avenue), and an office building and station was later erected here at which trains stopped, in- and out-bound. Following the present route of the CNR, stations were located at an early date at Parkdale and at St. Clair Avenue. The present CNR depot at Parkdale is a later structure, while that at St. Clair survived untill about 1925, when it was replaced by the station at Davenport Road. Thus did what was later called the Northern Railway of Canada find its way into Toronto, and it remained Toronto's only railway for two-and-a-half years, its engines "Lady Elgin", "Toronto" and "Josephine" pulled trains in the open farmland in the hinterland of Bathurst Street, wonders in an age of wonders.

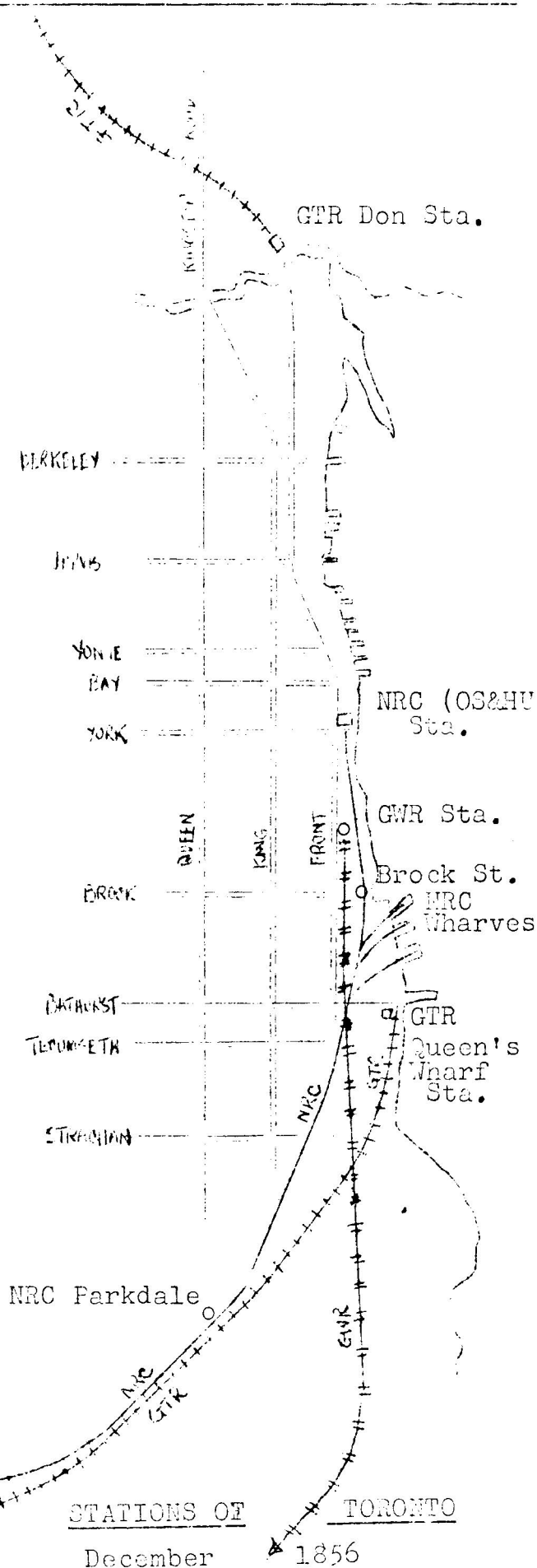
The first interloper upon this pastoral scene was the Great Western Railway, whose branch from Hamilton to Toronto was completed in December, 1855. The GWR's path is that followed today by the CNR into Toronto through Mimico and Sunnyside. Establishing its engine terminal west of Bathurst Street, where the Northern (OS&HUR) was intersected, the GWR continued on the landward side of the Northern into its own station in Front Street, west of the latter's depot.

- 1- Sword's Hotel was approximately where the new Royal York extension is situated.

The year 1856 was an eventful one for Toronto; in that year, the G Grand Trunk Railway of Canada opened lines westward and eastward from the city, the former to Guelph in July, 1856, the latter to Oshawa in the following month. With the Northern and the Great Western already on the scene, there was not much space available, even for the august Grand Trunk. Therefore, for a time, the Eastern Division terminated at a station on the east side of the Don, the route following the present CNR Oshawa Sub-division. The Western Division, to Guelph, followed the Northern into Toronto from a point near Lansdowne Avenue, paralleling it as far as Strachan Avenue, where it took off, crossing the Great Western at level and out to a station at Queen's Wharf. This depot was a plain wooden shed, and between August 1856, and some time early in 1857, Grand Trunk passengers destined through Toronto from the Western Division to the Eastern Division, were carried by omnibus from the Queen's Wharf to Don Station, and vice versa. The omnibus service was offered by a man named Jones, who came from the United States.

Thus we picture the Toronto of October 1856, when Upper and Lower Canada were first linked by rail. The GTR had two separate stations, at the Don and at Queen's Wharf, with passengers being "omnibussed" between the two stations. The GWR and NRC also had separate stations, both in Front Street.

Late in 1856, the GTR sought to rectify its cumbersome two-station arrangement, and, coming to an interim arrangement with the Northern, extended its line westward from the Don past the old gaol at the foot of Berkeley Street to Front Street, and along the south side of that thoroughfare into the Northern Railway's depot at Bay and Front Streets. For a few months another traffic arrangement was in force, very much to the detriment of the GTR, whereby its freight was moved from the Queen's Wharf to Bay Street over the Northern, and in the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the affairs of the



Grand Trunk Railway of Canada, which was made in 1860, much was made of the fact of Northern delay of traffic in transit between the GTR yards at Queen's Wharf and Bay Street.

Early in 1857, however, the GTR built its own line, going east from the Queen's Wharf, crossing the NRC to the landward side at Bathurst Street, south of what was called the Prince of Wales' Walk. It proceeded thence along Front Street, joining the eastern line at Bay Street. In later years, the GTR extended its line in from Strachan to Bathurst, beside that of the Northern Railway of Canada.

II - The First Union Station

All trains of the NRC and the GTR used the Bay Street depot of the Northern until May, 1858, at which time the original Grand Trunk Railway Toronto station was opened. Of frame construction, it was situated fifty feet west of Bay Street; the roof projected over the platform and was supported by ornamental scrollwork posts. Small but neat, it was considered to be a splendid depot at the time of its opening, housing two waiting rooms, lavatories, a lunch room, a barber shop, a ticket office, a baggage room and a telegraph office. During 1858, the Northern station, the original Toronto depot, was demolished, and the new station at York Street became the Union Station for the Grand Trunk, the Great Western and the Northern railways.

Before the erection of this first Union Station, the Northern Railway had a frame freight house standing on the shore just west of Peter Street. All local freight was handled at this building, through which all trains passed. Through freight was handled at the Northern Railway dock, where the NRC elevator later stood. The freight house was demolished when the tracks were later removed to the Esplanade. The Grand Trunk's terminal at this period was at the Queen's Wharf, with locomotive and car shops, and the freight house in a large frame building which also housed the passenger and baggage facilities until the removal of these facilities to the first Union Station. In the yard at Queen's Wharf stood a roundhouse which was burned down several years later and never rebuilt, the location then being changed to John Street.

In the period between May 1858 and March 1866, the first Union Station served the three railways entering Toronto. It was not long before its facilities were found to be inadequate, however, and in the mid-Sixties, the Great Western Railway prosecuted the construction of its own Toronto Terminal. A dead-end, four-track, arch-roof-trainshed building, situated at the north-east corner of Yonge Street and the Esplanade, this structure, a distinctive part of the skyline of downtown Toronto, was opened on March 5th, 1866. The waiting room and passenger facilities were in a building on the north side of the trainshed. En route in and out of the new terminal, the Great Western stopped its trains at the Union Station, as an intermediate halt. A timetable for 1868 which the author possesses shows the two stops for all trains, as "Yonge Street" and "Union Station". The Yonge Street station was used until the amalgamation of the GWR and GTR in August, 1882, when it reverted to use as a GTR freight shed, finally ending up as a fruit terminal. As such, it was destroyed by fire in the summer of 1952 after eighty-six years' use.

It was not long before the Northern Railway emulated the GWR in moving to a new terminal. In 1868, the Northern completed its so-called City Hall Station, which was between West Market Street and Jarvis Street, on the Esplanade. The name derived from the station's location at the

rear of the then City Hall -- now still standing as Saint Lawrence Market. NRC trains also stopped briefly at the Union Station (now a "union" station no longer), at the outside platform, to entrain and detrain through passenger cars and baggage. Another stop was made at Brock Street, adjacent to the Market Office and shops.

We now move forward to the year 1871 when two significant developments in Toronto's terminals took place. It was in this year that the Toronto & Nipissing Railway, said to be America's first public narrow-gauge railway, opened its service into Toronto, on July 1st. The T&N connected with the GTR at Scarboro Junction, and a third rail was used over the GTR into a new station which was built on the Esplanade between Berkeley and Parliament Streets, adjacent to the old plant of the Consumers' Gas Company (served by sidings of double-gauge) and the Gooderham distillery, the latter owners of the Toronto & Nipissing Railway. In 1871, also, the original Union Station was demolished, that a new, larger, structure might be erected on the same site, at York and Front streets. A temporary shed was built on the west side of Simcoe Street to serve as a station until the completion of the second Union Station.

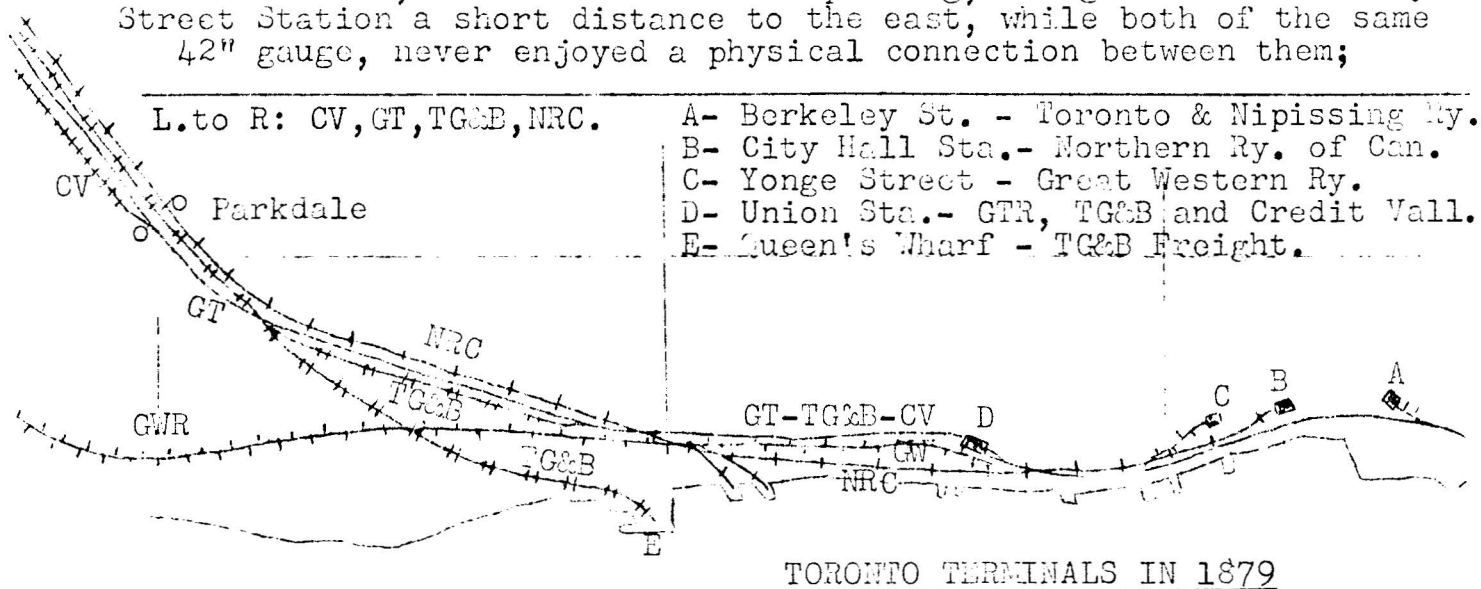
These were the years of the conversion of the broad gauge over to standard. Until the Toronto & Nipissing arrived in 1871, all railways entering Toronto had been of the 5'6" gauge, established by Provincial Statute in 1851. However, the alleged circumstances which had led to the adoption of this arbitrary railway gauge had largely disappeared and been forgotten twenty years after enactment. In the late Sixties, the Great Western, whose traffic was of a through nature to a great extent, en route across the southwestern peninsula of Ontario, destined to and from points in the United States, had placed a third rail on its main lines, so that standard gauge United States rolling stock would be moved through, without expensive and time-consuming transshipment into broad-gauge cars. The Grand Trunk had shortly followed suit, and by 1871, after the 1851 Law had been repealed, Canadian railways were busily converting over to the 4'8½" gauge, now almost universal in the United States. The Grand Trunk lines in the Toronto area were largely changed in 1871, the Great Western in 1872. The Northern, due to financial circumstances, did not adopt the standard gauge completely until 1881.

III - The Second Union Station

On Canada's sixth birthday, Dominion Day, July 1st, 1873, Toronto's second Union Station was opened to the public. This represented a great advance over the depots used hitherto; it was expansive and ample for the traffic of the time, functional yet not devoid of a certain symmetry of design lent to it by three towers along the south side of the trainshed, the centre one carrying a clock. Torontonians, all 65,000 of them, were proud of the second Union Station; they had good reason to be. It was easily the most pretentious railway terminal in Canada and was used by the Grand Trunk and also by the newly-opened Toronto, Grey & Bruce Railway, another 3'6" gauge line which had made its entrance into Toronto in 1873 by paralleling the Grand Trunk line in through what is now West Toronto (on the north side of the GTR), thence between the GTR and NRC after Lansdowne Avenue, finally crossing the GTR to the south side of the multiple roadbed near Strachan Avenue. T&N freight trains continued on the old roadbed of the GTR to Queen's Wharf, by now acquired by the T&N. Passenger trains ran on their own track along the south side of the GT-NRC roadbed as far as Bathurst Street, where the T&N went on GT rails by use of a third rail, into the new Union Station.

Great Western and Northern Railway trains continued to use their own termini, but stopped on the south side of the new Union Station trainshed as a "way station" for transfer of passengers and baggage, as they had at the first Union Station structure on the same site. At about this same time, the GT occupied the area east of Brock Street (Spadina Avenue) for its engine terminal, which consisted originally of two roundhouses, side by side, the easternmost one a completely covered structure, while the other was a conventional open-turntable roundhouse, such as we have today. The enclosed building was dismantled in later years, and replaced by a British-type running shed for locomotives, of the type still to be seen at Brockville, Ont., on the Canadian National Railways.

It should be here remarked that the Toronto, Grey & Bruce, entering the Union Station, and the Toronto & Nipissing, using its own Berkeley Street Station a short distance to the east, while both of the same 42" gauge, never enjoyed a physical connection between them;



in any event, there was little need for an interchange of traffic as both railways were primarily feeders for the Grand Trunk.

Grand Trunk Railway sidings served many wharves between Yonge Street and the entrance to the Don River at Cherry Street. Many of them had angles around buildings which were too sharp for locomotives and cars to negotiate and the answer was found in small turntables, over which cars were individually handled, and spotted further out on the wharves by means of horsepower.

In our account of the railway terminals of Toronto, we must now move forward to the year 1879. It was on September 19th of that year, that the Credit Valley Railway opened its first section, from Toronto to Milton. The Credit Valley (the present CPR route into Toronto via Hornby, Islington and West Toronto) came alongside the double GT-TG&B roadbed at what is now West Toronto, then known as Carlton West and later Toronto Junction. Between Lansdowne Avenue and Parkdale, where the Credit Valley Ry. legally terminated, with yard and roundhouse, there was now a multiple railway roadbed consisting, from the north to the south of the 5'6" gauge Northern Railway, the 3'6" gauge Toronto, Grey & Bruce, the standard-gauge Grand Trunk, and the Credit Valley. From Parkdale, Credit Valley trains used Grand Trunk rails into the Union Station. Within eighteen months after the opening of the Credit Valley, the Northern and TG&B changed to standard-gauge, and Toronto was, once again, a one-gauge railway centre.

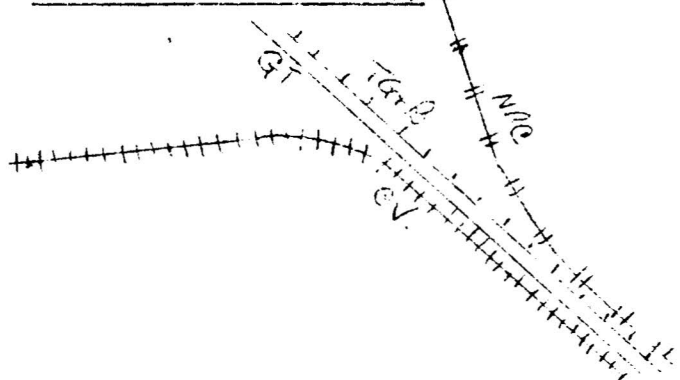
The next stage in our account is August, 1882, when the Great Western Railway of Canada was absorbed by the Grand Trunk. The GWR terminal at Yonge Street was thereafter closed to passenger traffic, and trains transferred to the Union Station. As we have seen, this arch-roof building then became a CTR freight shed. In 1883, the Canadian Pacific's subsidiary Ontario & Quebec Railway completed its line from Perth to West Toronto, crossing Toronto on an alignment north of Bloor Street. Simultaneously, the O&Q absorbed both the T&B and Credit Valley. With this change, a track rearrangement took place at West Toronto, where T&B trains were now brought across the GT tracks to the west side of the CTR, using the Credit Valley line from thence into Bathurst Street, now become Canadian Pacific. The old T&B roadbed into Parkdale, between the GT and NRC now became disused, and that portion of it west of Lansdowne Avenue only was retained for use as a switching line.

In 1888, the Northern Railway became a part of the Grand Trunk, and the double roadbed from Lansdowne Avenue into the Union Station now became a single line with service track for industrial sidings. However, at the Toronto end, due mostly to insufficient facilities at the Union Station, Northern-line trains continued to use the old City Hall station until 1894, when additions to the Union Station were all but completed.

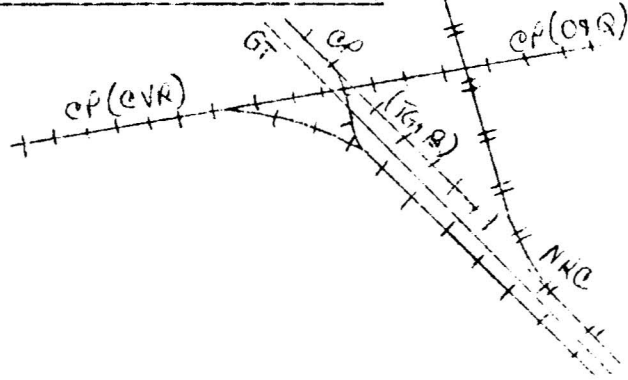
It was in 1891 that renovation of the 1873 Union Station was put in hand by the Grand Trunk. A second trainshed was added to the south side of the first one, and a new office building erected in Front Street, on the north side of the original building. These extensions were completed in 1895.

Between 1883 and 1887, Canadian Pacific trains coming in or departing via the line eastward from Toronto through Leaside, Agincourt and Peterboro, had to run in reverse direction between Toronto Union and West Toronto. Trains leaving Toronto backed to West Toronto, then proceeded normally across the North Toronto line, while arriving trains did the same thing in reverse. In 1887, however, the Leaside-Don cutoff was built enabling normal operation for CPR trains into the east end of the Union Station, still followed to this day. About 1890, the former Credit Valley Railway yard and shops at Parkdale was closed by the CPR, and

WEST TORONTO in 1879



WEST TORONTO in 1884



a start made on the present yard and shops at Lambton, West Toronto. From about 1896, Canadian Pacific obtained running rights over the Grand Trunk from Toronto to Hamilton, and freight trains running to Hamilton had to back from West Toronto to Bathurst Street, up the incline into the CPR Simcoe & Wellington freight shed (whose lead crossed all tracks

of the GTR near the foot of Tecumseth Street), change the yard engine for a road engine, then off down the incline with a flying start for Hamilton! Needless to say, things were not as complicated at the Bathurst Street manual interlocking as they are today This cumbersome arrangement was eliminated in 1910, when the Obico-Canpa cutoff opened.

In 1906, the Canadian Northern became the last new railway to enter Toronto, when the line in from Oshawa was brought down the Don valley under the Canadian Pacific near the Don Valley Brick Works. A yard and engine terminal was built here, but Canadian Northern passenger trains continued in over Grand Trunk rails to the Union Station.

In 1912, Canadian Pacific started to use its then-existing North Toronto station as an alternate terminal to the Union Depot, and initially, one overnight Toronto-Montreal train originated and terminated there. This change proving successful, the CPR decided to build a newer and larger station, incorporating it in a general scheme of track elevation of the Leaside-West Torontonline. The old station was situated on the west side of Yonge Street, but the new building was erected on the east side, and possessed four platforms. It was opened to the public on June 14th, 1916, and was built sufficiently large to allow for its use by the Canadian Northern Railway, as well, who were planning a permanent entrance into Toronto at this time. Canadian Pacific used the station extensively from its inception, being served by overnight Toronto-Montreal trains via Peterboro, the overnight Toronto-Ottawa services "Rideau" and "York" in each direction, and local trains to Lindsay, to Teeswater via Streetsville and to Owen Sound via Bolton. Ultimately, the Canadian Northern's plans for a north Toronto terminal were negated by its integration into the Canadian National system; Canadian Pacific trains continued to use this terminal for many years, but by the early Thirties, all service was concentrated once again at Union Station.

About 1910, it became obvious that the enlarged 1873 Union Station was becoming inadequate once again for larger trains and more numerous services. Plans were laid before World War I to build a new station between York and Bay Streets, and to utilize an elevated approach to the new station, crossing all of the north-south streets at grade separation. Toronto harbour was beginning to take shape at this time, the bayfront bank was being filled in and new streets created. The Explanade of the 1850's and 1860's was now fully half-a-mile inland in places and completely obliterated in its central section by railway tracks.

In 1915, construction was started on the new, third Union Station. As the building rose, so did the hopes of Torontonians that the now somewhat antiquated and Victorian 1873 station would soon be replaced by a structure more in keeping with the city which had by now become second in Canada in point of population. The new building was a roomy structure, its great pillared facade fronting Front Street. Though it was completed in 1920, it was not opened until 1927, due to delay in the completion of the elevated approach tracks. Finally, after seven years' delay, and still lacking the elevated approach (a temporary low-level trainshed having been built in the interim), it was opened by His Royal Highness, Edward, Prince of Wales, on August 6th, 1927. In a ceremony which consumed only eleven minutes, the Prince and his entourage cut a ribbon opening the station, went to the Canadian National wickets and received the first ticket issued; he then went to the Canadian Pacific side and did the same. Finally, he unlocked the doors with a golden key and declared the station open to the public. All of this was done to the accompaniment of choirs singing "God Save the King", and "Land of Hope

and Glory".

On August 10th, 1927, trains began using the new station which, with the postal building, occupied the whole block on the south side of Front, between York and Bay Streets. In the ensuing period, the present high-level approach and trainshed was completed. The 1873 Union Station was dismantled forthwith and, symbolic of the power of the new age, the tall clock tower of the old depot, which once had claimed pre-eminence in Canada, was brought down by a chain wrapped around its base, and pulled by a Canadian National 2-10-2 type steam locomotive.

The link with the past remains today in the form of a plaque which is mounted at the east end of the columned facade of the present Union Station, commemorating, for those who care to pause momentarily to read the inscription, the departure of the engine "Toronto" for Aurora, on May 16th, 1853, within yards of the original station site.

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 o "TUNNELS", a paper by Omer S.A. Lavallee, the o
 o concluding part of which was scheduled to be o
 o carried in this issue, will be carried in that o
 o for the month of June, instead. o
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OUR COVER PHOTOGRAPH:

Our cover this month marks the passing of street railway service from the streets of Canada's capital. On Thursday, April 30th, regular service will cease on the remaining rail route, "A", BRITANNIA, after eighty-nine years' rail service. The picture was taken on an Association excursion in OTC car 685 in December, 1957, as the car was westbound on Somerset Street. The motorman, OTC Chief Instructor McBurney, is reflected in the rear-view mirror. The photograph was taken by Paul McGee, one of our members whose pictures show a remarkable talent for originality.

Montreal North passes.....

MTC MONTREAL NORTH AND MILLEN ROUTES REPLACED

One week before the scheduled abandonment date of May 3rd, Montreal Transportation Commission placed busses on the Millen and Montreal Nord car routes, pending permanent bus route changes to take effect May 3rd, which need not be detailed here. The advancement on the originally scheduled date was evidently brought about by the City of Montreal's desire to start roadwork on Millen in the vicinity of the CNR underpass, until lately used by the streetcars only.

The interesting and picturesque line to Montreal Nord, opened originally by the Montreal Park & Island Railway in 1896, with its single track private-right-of-way, was the scene of five outings by the Association in its concluding weeks of operation, using, with one exception, cars in the MTC-CRHA Historical Collection. On Sunday, April 12th, MTC 1339 was used. Sunday, April 19th, saw MTC 1801 in operation; both of these cars were making their first trips since being assigned to the mus-