

HAMILTON
TO
THE WEST

Baptiste Creek in western Ontario fifteen miles west of Chatham on October 27th, 1854, was a very quiet place. The Great Western had a station consisting of a wood shed, water tank and sleeping quarters for the switch tender. The railway tracks pass for a long distance through an inhospitable swamp. On this date there was but one person living here for a square mile. The contractors building the railway had a gravel pit located on the shore of Lake St Clair a few miles distant being developed for the ballast of the railway.

The Great Western by all accounts had been opened prematurely, among other problems, the railway had not been adequately gravel ballasted. Without ballast there was nothing to hold the ties, and therefore the rails in place or to provide drainage from the track. In the hurry to open the railway and operate trains it was decided to operate gravel ballast trains interspersed with the regular passenger and freight traffic. Therefore double the trains and double the meets.

The day before, a mail express train had left the Suspension Bridge at Niagara Falls at two o'clock in the afternoon. It ran through the Niagara Peninsula without occasion to arrive at Hamilton on schedule. It left rounding the Bay and climbed the escarpment through Dundas and Copetown. At St George station it came upon a gravel train that had derailed, a delay ensued until the route was clear. The Express reached London late but it set off again west. The express had only travelled two and a half miles when the cylinder head burst without warning. It would seem that a small screw had broken loose and had fallen in side the cylinder binding the cylinder and piston. The engine was now unable to move. A messenger was sent on foot back to London, where another engine was requested. Another engine was sent out and the whole train was pulled back to London. Nearly four hours had been lost, just at London, before the train could again start west. It was now early morning, and a dense fog lay across the land. The Express had arrived and left Chatham near Five o'clock in the morning when it should have left by the Timetable at near Ten o'clock the night before. It was seven hours late.

At Baptiste Creek, at five in the morning; men began loading ballast on the special gravel trains.

G. F. Harris was the gravel contractor hired by the Great Western to ballast the working, but still unfinished railway. From his gravel pit on the edge of Lake St Clair he had men loading gravel on to flatcars at 5:00 AM. A steam engine pulled the loaded cars out to destinations on the GWR. The Engineer of the gravel train was John Kettlewell and the Conductor was a man

T. D. Twitchell. He was the Boss of the gravel train. He ran the ballast trains out on the mainline when he felt like it. He was the sole arbiter, all subordinates were bound to obey him. He would order out the private gravel train not only in violation of the rules and regulations of the Great Western Railway, but in "defiance every dictate of common prudence and sound judgement." Prior to this date Twitchell had been admonished about running his gravel train out on the GWR mainline close to the time of the Express trains. Engineer Kettlewell had complained to the local GWR officials, only to be rebuked, and told to follow Twitchell's orders. The GWR did not have a fulltime agent at Baptiste Creek. Instead, the contractor's handy man Patrick Pine, was the engine wiper, the switch-tender and a makeshift operator. All the rules had been given up for the profit of the contractor.

On this early 4:00 in the morning all were awake to start a days work. It was very dark and there was a very thick fog. Kettlewell searched out Patrick Pine to ask him had the express gone through. Pine replied that it had, but he would later say that the Eastbound Express had been seen, but he did not think to include the westbound. Kettlewell thought the track was clear. At 4:30; steam had been raised, gravel trains were in operation. Twitchell ordered Pine to unlock the switch, and ordered Kettlewell to get the fifteen car gravel train out on the railway. The fog was thick and cold.

The Express Passenger Train came out of the white fog and in a moment the locomotive smashed and crashed into the flatcars of the gravel train. Immediate carnage. The engine and the express car were thrown over to the side of the tracks, passenger cars were thrown about, two coaches were crushed and a third wrecked. It took five hours to pull people out of the debris. The Baptiste Creek wreck would claim 48 killed and 50 injured.

PRINCETON

JUNE 28, 1854

A train ran off the track at Princeton, June 1854 three passenger cars were derailed and two passengers were killed.

LONDON

OCTOBER 17, 1856

One mile west of London, Wednesday October 17th, 1856, a westbound Great Western Mail Train and a cattle train going east collided. Both of the engines were smashed, five cattle cars and one passenger car were destroyed.

A special train left Niagara Falls at midnight September 3rd, 1855, bringing excursionists from Chatham and Detroit back to their homes. The Engineer Thomas Finlay, stopped at Woodstock and took on water and pushed onwards, not intending to stop at Ingersoll. As his train, which consisted of the engine Hamilton and three passenger and one baggage cars approached Ingersoll, he gave the usual signal for "switch off" but as he neared the point, he found that his signal had not been attended to, and that the lights at the switch were dimly burning. The brakes were at once put on, but it was too late to be of any service, and the train dashed off the track with frightful velocity. The Engineer was thrown several feet in the air and fell upon the track. The engine Hamilton and tender were capsized and smashed to pieces, and the baggage car plunged against the tank to be useless. None of the passenger cars were derailed. Fireman John Lowry had to be pulled out of the wreckage. The injury was small.

INGERSOLL

OCTOBER 22, 1856

The Great Western engine the Hecla had been built in November of 1855 by Fairburn and Company in England and shipped to Canada. It was built according to records as a 2-4-0, but these same records indicate it was converted to a 4-4-0 a few years later.

On the night of October 22nd, 1856 the Hecla was less than one year old, when it was assigned at Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge yard to The Lightening Express. The Express this night was eight cars long. Robert Hinchie the engine driver, and fireman James Hall climbed into the cab. Hinchie probably started grumbling to Hall immediately about the Hecla, for the last time he had her, he had reported in the Official Engine Register, at London, about the dangerous state of the smoke stack of Hecla. When the steam was shut off smoke and steam poured into the cab of the engine as to render it impossible for the driver to see ahead. Never the less, The Lightening Express left Niagara Falls at midnight and traveled west. As the train progressed, Hinchie knew he was right, for in the cab of Hecla the same problem existed, for as he slowed to approach two stations he shut off the steam and could not see. It was so bad that he would later state that he had completely passed by the stations at Ontario (Winona) and Vansickles without even being aware where he was, the smoke in the cab was that blinding. Through Hamilton, up the Dundas grade, St George, Paris Junction, slowing down at Woodstock expecting to meet an eastbound cattle train, he shut off the steam. The cattle train wasn't there, so on he went now besides the steam in the cab there was a very thick fog. The Lightening Express was now running as slow as a snail with the driver devoid of vision.

At Ingersoll that night, the cattle train heading east had arrived just a few minutes before the Express was due. It had started to do some shunting of the cars. The engine derailed at this time, and the consequence was that part of the cattle train was still on the mainline.

At 3:23 AM, the crew banged on the window of the Station Master; John Barr, and they told him of their problems, the engine couldn't be rerailed, the main track was fouled by the standing cattle train, could he please telegraph London to send another engine quickly.

Edward Nugent the brakeman on the freight started walking to the east, to the semaphore, at the east end of the yard. He carried with him two fog signals and his red lantern. The fog was so dense. The semaphore was set to red and as he traveled just a little more east out of the fog came The Express. He swung his red signal to no avail he thought, when he heard in the fog, the long signal "Down Brakes." Fireman James Hall later said they saw the red lantern, shut off steam, whistled for brakes and ran over the fog signals. It was too late, the wet rails only made the train slide into the standing cattle cars. The Hecla, tender, baggage car and coach were wrecked. Cattle cars were wrecked, hurling hogs and cattle all about. No human lives were lost.

Railroading in the fog.

BEACHVILLE

SEPTEMBER 8, 1857

September 1857, it had rained for two hours causing violent streams of water to whirl around the landscape. Heavy torrents of water had washed down a large quantity of sand around Beachville. The Afternoon Express plunged head first into a barricade of sand that had washed down upon the track, the engine buried in the sand, a baggage car drove to the right and was shattered. Fireman McCormick was scalded.

DORCHESTER

JANUARY 15, 1857

The accommodation train from the east due at Dorchester at 8:50 on the evening of January 15th, 1857 was nearly two hours late arriving there at 10:30 and was about to switch on to a siding to allow a night freight from the west to go by. Before this could be done a freight that had been following closely behind from the east came up and ran into the back of the standing accommodation. The passengers had a shaking up and the conductor standing on the rear platform jumped in time. The blame was that there was no telegraph at Dorchester.

Heavy rains started to fall at seven o'clock Friday night March 18th, 1859. The rains continued hour after hour, it was cold, so the rain would turn from rain, to sleet, and then to snow. Cold water was flowing in amazing quantities that had not been seen in years, The Great Western Railway continued to operate its trains on its schedules despite the weather. Passenger and freight trains continue despite the weather.

Midnight in Hamilton saw driver Alpheus Pike take the regular No. 9 Freight west out of Hamilton with eleven loaded cars. It took the switch at Desjardins Junction and assaulted the heavy grade up the Niagara Escarpment through Dundas to the summit at Copetown. Shortly after the No. 9 had left, another special or extra freight had been assembled at Hamilton. This was a longer train, twenty cars, and so a second engine or pilot engine was required. Engineer Henry Stokes was in the pilot engine watched the track carefully ahead as the extra climbed the Dundas grade. In the darkness as the rain continued he could see the creeks flooding and racing down and under the bridges and culverts. All along the climb up the side of the Mountain was water. When he reached the top of the summit at Copetown, there was the No.9 in the siding waiting. His extra pulled into the siding, so the mainline was clear, for both trains were to wait and meet the eastbound Night Express.

At 2:05 in the early morning of March 19th, out of the west came the headlight of the Night Express bound for Niagara Falls. The little engine Elk came through the rain and stopped at Copetown to take on wood. The engine driver was George Morgan of London and the fireman was Charles Virgil King. The Express this night was a baggage car, an emigrant car, two first class coaches and a sleeping car at the end, five cars in all. Conductor George Hawkins gave the order to leave at 2:16. The Night Express left Copetown and began the descent of the Niagara Escarpment. It had been raining heavy for seven straight hours, water was running in all directions. The fields were flooding.

Engine driver Henry Stokes uncoupled his engine from the double-headed extra freight, and set out to follow the Express down the grade back

to Hamilton. About four miles down before reaching the Dundas station, in the dark and rain he saw a signal. A signal, a red signal the engine was reversed over the wet slick steel rails. My God, in the rain water and mud there were people roaming in confusion, a large chasm and splintered wreck debris. The Night Express had hit a washout, the entire whole train, with the exception of the sleeping car, had gone far down the embankment. It was a point where the track crosses a deep ravine. The washout was one hundred yards wide and sixty feet deep. The passenger cars had been smashed. The dead and injured were being pulled out and housed in the only available shelter, the sleeping car teetering on the brink.

Driver Stokes started running back up the hill to Copetown, to first signal Hamilton but the telegraph did not work, it had been broken in the wreck. Hamilton would not know for hours. Stokes grabbed two cars from the siding and went back down. the injured were transferred to the freight cars and taken back to Copetown where they could receive care and shelter. He then made a second trip down with twenty platelayers or section men to assist in any further rescues. It would take a man walking two miles down the line to the Dundas station before the telegraph could contact Hamilton to send relief. That relief arrived at six o'clock in the morning.

The dead were engineer George Morgan, fireman Charles Virgil King, brakeman William Milne, Alexander Braid a former GWR locomotive superintendent, the Reverend Thomas Fawcett, and German immigrant Hans Peter Jochiman.

Three thousand cubic feet of the railway right of way had been severed by rain and water. Repairs had to be made and questions answered.

The repairs would take days, it took two days to pull the "Elk" out of the mud. Train loads of fill would be required. One o'clock Wednesday morning as a gravel train was backing nine cars slid off the end of track and into the chasm. Eventually the hole was filled and service was restored.

What was the reason? An Inquest was held. It was revealed that at the site when the railway was built a wood trestle was built over the ravine and creek. A slight washout and derailment brought attention to the ravine in 1855. The wood pile trestle was left in place; but lots of sandy fill was

taken from the adjacent mountain lands, and filled most of the trestle. Only a wood box culvert was left at the bottom. Samuel Keefer, the famous Government Engineer, was brought to testify at the inquest. He said, after an inspection that it was not a flood, but a landslide; that water had percolated through to the base of the embankment, saturated its entire mass below the level of the base of the upper slope and had reduced it to such a soft condition as to make it incapable of supporting weight

KOMOKA

DECEMBER 31, 1866

The London to Sarnia train left London at seven in the morning New Years Eve 1866 and shortly arrived at the little railway junction at Komoka and switched on to the Sarnia Branch. A few moments later the Emigrant Train also westbound but for Windsor and the Detroit Ferry came down the incline into the Komoka station. It would appear that the junction switch was left open and it simply smashed into the rear of the Sarnia train. A Paymasters car, a first class coach and a baggage car were all telescoped and wrecked.

WOODSTOCK

MARCH 28, 1867

Friday morning, March 28th, 1867, a heavy snow storm had hit the region. A Great Western freight train, on the Blue Line had left Paris; and was heading west, found that the snow had forced it to crawl along. The passenger Express had been assigned two locomotive and was making much faster time. Two miles east of Woodstock the Express ran down the freight smashing it at the rear. The concussion threw the first locomotive backwards. The baggage and express cars telescoped and then caught fire. Baggage man William Rodgers and Conductor John Farrell died in wreck.

COPETOWN

JUNE 3, 1873

Copetown station at the top of the long Dundas grade. In the early morning of June 3rd, 1873 the stationmaster told the local switchman that a freight would be coming in first, before the New York Express, and that it had to switch off onto a siding before the express passed it. The switchman did just that but the freight had been diverted further up the line and wouldn't need the Copetown passing siding, but nobody told the switchman. The siding had been left open waiting for a freight that would never arrive.

1:40 A.M. the No. 10 The New York Express charging east the engineer noticed the open switch, whistled for brakes, the locomotive and three cars ran off the end of the switch. The engine bounded off the rails and embedded itself in the bank on the southside. The baggage car followed the engine, then the first coach derailed colliding with the baggage car. The coach's roof slid off onto the top of the baggage car. Twenty people were injured that night but there was no loss of life.

NEWBURY STATION

OCTOBER 19, 1870

The morning of October 19th, 1870, a freight train heading east had entered the siding at Newbury station; which is thirty miles west of London, to allow the Express going west to pass. The switch at the west end was closed. But the switch at the east end had been left open by a prior train. The engineer on the Express, Thomas Collison didn't see the open switch. The Express turned off into the siding at full speed and smashed into the standing freight locomotive. Engineer Collison was injured but his unfortunate fireman William Nelson was scalded to death in the wreckage.

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HAMILTON JUNCTION

JANUARY 21, 1871

Saturday evening January 21st, 1871 the Toronto train, with five freight and two passenger cars, due in Hamilton at six o'clock had just crossed the Desjardins Canal and was proceeding slowly along the curve towards the Hamilton station when it collided with a construction train which was partly in a siding and part on the mainline. The front end of the passenger engine was smashed.

OAKVILLE

JANUARY 23, 1871

Only two days after a collision at Hamilton, the morning passenger train from Toronto came into a collision with a freight train. The cause was a heavy morning fog and the condensation of steam from the locomotives prevented the drivers from seeing the signals, January 23rd, 1871

INGERSOLL

OCTOBER 2, 1871

The midnight express eastbound, October 2rd, 1871 ran into the rear of freight train No. 18 at Ingersoll. The freight train had turned into the siding but had only cleared half the mainline when the double-headed express hit the rear car and threw six cars of cattle into the ditch. Engineer Samuel Jackson was injured, the engines in need of repair and several cars smashed but there were no other injuries despite the fact that there were three drovers in the last smashed freight car.

LONDON

JUNE 20, 1872

A collision occurred one and half miles east of London near the chemical works on a Thursday afternoon, June 20th, 1872. A special Blue line freight train loaded with hogs was moving slowly and carefully on its approach to the London terminal. there is a curve at this point. The adjoining siding was filled with new boxcars just built by the Ontario Car Works that blocked the view of the engineer. A slow moving construction or work train was hidden. The engine drivers did not discover the danger of a collision until just a few rods prior to impact. The engine crews jumped. The Blue Line train being so heavy crashed into the other with such force that it drove the entire train back fifty yards. The tool car which was next to the engine on the construction train was wrecked and the caboose mounted the engine boiler tearing away the smoke stack and whatever apparatus got in the way. A workman, Michael Ward was killed as he sat in the tool car.

COPETOWN

AUGUST 24, 1872

A collision occurred on the Great Western at Copetown the morning of August 24th, 1872 when the No. 12 Express going east should have come to a standstill to allow a freight to pass at Copetown, but for some reason the engine driver drove past and before he could stop collided with No. 27 freight going west. the engine was somewhat damaged and the drawbar of 12 to 14 freight cars were broken.

London,, February 28th, 1874. The Great Western Sarnia Express stood at the station platform. It was called the Sarnia Express when in fact it was an accommodation to Sarnia and all points in between. A mixed consist, three oil tank cars, one baggage, one second class coach and another coach on the rear. It left London at 6:20 PM heading west. Three miles from Sifton's Cut, a passenger got up to visit the water closet but was surprised that the small oil light had fallen in the bathroom and shattered. The oil had just ignited, the fire at this moment was small. The passenger closed the door, not panicing, looked for something to smother the fire. He grapped at cushions but they were tied down. When he managed to get one free, he returned and found that the fire was now a blaze. The cushion now wouldn't work. With the door open and the train travelling at thirty miles per hour the flames were fanned and smoke filled the car. Panic now started. Passengers looked for a bell rope but there just wasn't one on this train. The car was filled with smoke and the entire car was on fire. Passengers while they broke the windows to escape it only made the situation worse. Conductor Mitchell who had been sitting with his daughter in the last coach came forward. The train had to be stopped! Conductor Mitchell at great peril boosted himself up the roof and managed to cross the coach and baggage car and then pull himself over and around the petroleum tank cars. Finally the engine cab was reached, the brakes applied and the engine reversed. This allowed many to escape, but there were eight people caught by the smoke and their bodies were now being cremated within the car. The Sarnia Express was stopped at Palham's farm, two miles east of Komoka. When the train did reach Komoka there were eight burnt cinders that would be laid out on planks on the Komoka station platform. At the later inquest it was stated that it was impossible to run a bell rope over oil tank cars.

THAMESVILLE

AUGUST 30, 1873

August 30th, 1873, the last days of summer, the Great Western employees had celebrated a large picnic at Belle Isle. Large trains were assembled to move the employees. The second section or train was assembled with twenty-three coaches. The engineer was J. Irvine and the fireman was L. Leslie. It left at midnight and traveled through the dark and a thick fog. At Thamesville, Conductor Ball's, Blue Line freight No. 26 had split in two and broken loose and was standing on the mainline in the fog. The excursion train ran into the back end of the No. 26 freight at about two o'clock in the morning. The engine was badly smashed as were the conductors car and two of the coaches. The engine broke loose and tumbled into the ditch. The coaches telescoped causing sixteen people to be injured. No persons died.

BAPTISTE CREEK

AUGUST 30, 1875

Freight train No. 17 going east collided with engine 30 at Baptiste Creek August 30th, 1875. The switch was misplaced the the collision occurred on the bridge crossing the creek. The engineer and fireman jumped from engine 30 only at the last minute and plunged into ten feet of water.

SIFTON'S CUT- HYDE PARK

MAY 19, 1876

Section men were working on a gravel train May 19th, 1876 when they arrived at a point four miles west of London known as Sifton's Cut, they found a tight rail, a sun kink, caused by the sun's heat. They had difficulty turning the switch and section boss David Spence felt that the switch had to be repaired and went forward to get extra men to fix the rail. The switch was inoperative but was left open. The westbound Express was running at full speed after leaving London, in the cab Engineer George Irwin and his fireman and son in law John Pringle. The locomotive hit the open switch throwing it down and the steam chambers burst throwing escaping steam into the cab scalding the engine crew. Section boss David Spence was charged with manslaughter.

WOODSTOCK

AUGUST 14, 1876

On the morning of August 14th, 1876, at about 9 o'clock A.M., The Globe Train running west on the Great Western Railway between Hamilton and London was on time to arrive at Woodstock. At this same time the accommodation train from Stratford on the Port Dover & Lake Huron Railway was timed to leave its station near Dundas Street heading south for Simcoe and Port Dover. The Pd & LH train steamed off and both trains smashed into each other on the crossing about one hundred yards east of the GWR station. The Globe Train had almost crossed out of reach of the other train, but the PD & LH train collided with the rear car of the Globe, and threw it off the track. Neither train was going at great speed so there was only one injury to a passenger in the Globe train. The engine of the PD & LH was damaged. The crossing was controlled by the GWR, and it would seem their watchman had lowered the semaphore for the Port Dover train

PARIS

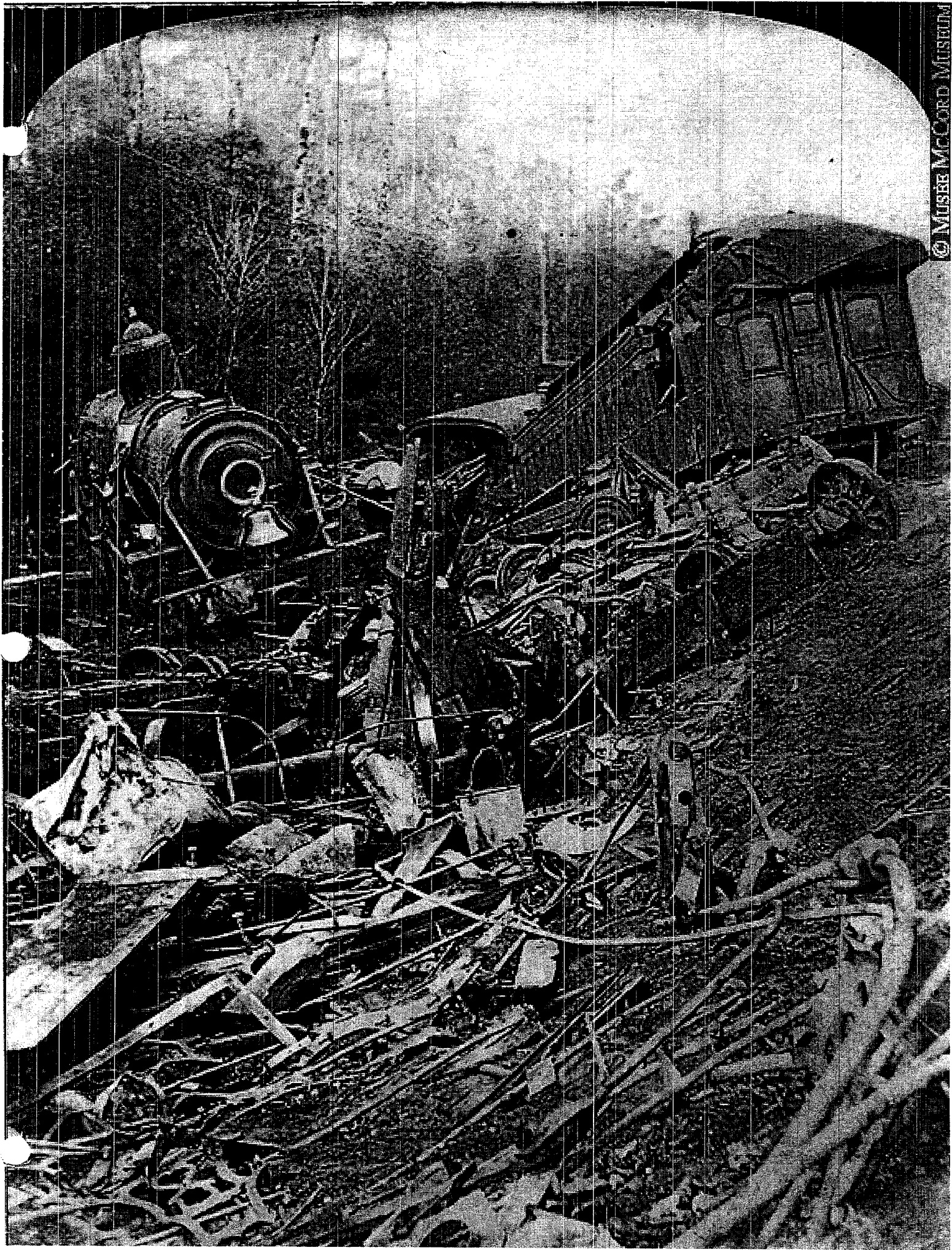
OCTOBER 6, 1876

In the fall of 1876 the Great Western Railway had a night mail east, The New York Express No,10. The traffic had increased to such an extent that two locomotives were needed on the train.

The night of October 6th, 1876, the two engines assigned were GWR 119 and GWR 205. Driver Williams in 119 and William Cooper the driver in 205. The train consisted of a baggage and express car, a second class coach, four first class coaches and four Wagner Sleeping Cars. A total of ten wooden cars.

The long train left London at 2:05 A.M., through Woodstock and on into the night. Passing the little village of Gobles one of the cast iron wheels on the tender of engine 119 split into two pieces, then fell on to the rail, and in a breath, engine 205 ran over this hunk of cast iron and was derailed. Engineer Cooper had the presence of mind to whistle Down Brakes three times, while he was slamming along the ties. Then in a second breath, 205 tore itself away from the track and took the tender of 119 with it; they then flew over a ten foot embankment and plunged in a swamp forty feet away from the track underneath was Engine driver William Cooper and fireman Irving.

As for the train, the first three cars derailed and they too went down the embankment, smashed and splintered as flames quickly started; and in moments all three cars were blazing. In the baggage car were three men, a Mr Andrews, the express messenger; a Mr Wright, the baggage master; and a Mr McBride, they died and burnt in the wreckage. Five died and many were injured at Gobles that night.



Monday morning March 30th, 1877, the famous one car Globe train was streaking westward from Toronto, allowing George Brown's newspaper, The Toronto Globe, to arrive in the morning with World News into the small towns and villages west of Toronto. This morning it was different; for the mixed train from London traveling east had pulled up to the west siding at the small station of St George. The mixed should have taken the siding, but it didn't, for some unexplainable reason it was stopping on the mainline. The Globe Train came out of the east fast. Both engine crews looked ahead, then trying to brake and then reversed their engines, then jumped for their lives. Well both engines collided as would be expected, but the impact pushed the London mixed back. Then back some more, then some more. the engine still on the rails and steam in the boiler with the throttle in reverse it was running backward through western Ontario without one person in the cab. All the crews had jumped, The London mixed was going backwards. Passengers were still in the combine unaware there was no engineer in the cab until one hero realized just what was happening. He got up left the passenger car climbed over the tender and into the cab. He shut off the steam.

INGERSOLL

MARCH 20, 1887

Sunday morning, March 20th, 1887, the Grand Trunk St Louis Express going west, arrived one hour late, as it approached the Ingersoll station. A freight train was waiting on the main track. This was still a single track line. In the cab of the Express were Engineer George Phipps and fireman John Convey; They applied the air brakes coming into the station and nothing happened. The steam shut off the Express smashed into the standing freight. The crew of the freight Alf Crouch and his fireman Coswell jumped clear.

DUNDAS

MAY 27, 1884

Engineer McFadden was running eastbound freight train No.122 with twenty-seven cars downgrade and had passed the Dundas station when one of the cars left the track half a mile east of the Dundas station. Ten cars were derailed and wrecked.

INGERSOLL

AUGUST 5, 1884

August 5th, 1884 Freight train No. 26 was leaving the station at Ingersoll, heading west, when it collided with the No. 28 special freight from the east. Alexander Johnston, the conductor of No. 26 was killed

LONDON

OCTOBER 11, 1884

A collision occurred three miles east of London, at a point known as Waubano, October 11th, 1884. Freight train No. 39, with engine 175 a Manchester 4-4-0, its Engineer Blackwell found to his surprise another train bearing down on him. It was the special or extra freight 284, engine 250, with engine driver Moore in the cab. The conductor Telford had left London East without orders.

HAMILTON

AUGUST 20, 1887

Grand Trunk freight train No. 69 left Hamilton for the west at two o'clock in the morning of August 20th, 1887. It was thought that the train was light and so an assistance engine would not be required for the Dundas Hill. Half way between Desjardins Junction and Dundas the labouring train came to a standstill on the main track. One engine was not sufficient, so the train was cut in two halves. Four loaded cars and the van were left on the grade while the first part ran up to Copetown. While the brakes were set, gravity had more strength. gradually the cars started to roll back, then with more speed and more speed. The cars rolled downhill through the West junction then back through Desjardins Junction over the canal and into Hamilton. Robert Martin was standing in front of the Hamilton station with his pilot engine, when to many bystanders surprise, the headless train smashed into the front of the engine.

February 27th, 1889, the St Louis Express was running fast eastbound; through Paris Junction, across the Grand River, on towards St George. On the outskirts of St George is the bridge, three hundred feet long and sixty feet high. The eight span wrought iron bridge was built on solid stone piers and was only eight years old.

Engineer Blackwell thought he had his speeding train well in hand, for after all he was the regular Engineer of the fast and famous Globe newspaper train. Just as his engine reached the bridge everything became strange, the engine hopped, then bounced, then seemed to plough across the iron bridge derailed. Ties under neath were splintering. Blackwell later just described it as powerless. The derailed engine pulled the passenger train out over the bridge all coming off the rails, then a crash; one of the iron spans gave way, collapsing, it pulled away the back end of the train downwards to the ground sixty feet below. The Dinning car and first class coach smashed into the ground. A Pullman car hung suspended from the bridge. The coach upended took fire. Amid debris and fire passengers crawled out of broken windows. Towns people ran towards the wreckage. The fire blazed. Rescurers worked to aid the wounded. In the St George disaster under the wreckage and the fire, ten people were killed and thirty injured.

The next day it was discovered, at the entrance of the bridge, a piece of curved iron, part of the engines driving wheel tire and with the indentations cut in the ties after this point, it was quickly determined that the steel tire had broke about 150 yards west. After that the drive rods broke, thrashing and viabrating right on this high bridge.

COPETOWN

JUNE 24, 1890

The No. 8 Express from the west, Chicago to New York in 1890 was due at Hamilton at 1:55 P.M. On June 24th, No. 8 was pulled by GTR 752, engineer George Phillips, with fireman William Smith, behind a baggage car three coaches, the Dining Car "Continental", and two Wagner Sleeping Cars, the "New Mexico" and the "Kinderhook".

One half mile west of Copetown station the rails had spread, it was summer and rails expand in the heat, a sun kink. The Express ran over these rails, now out of place and the train was at once derailed traveling two hundred yards on the ties until near Bowman Creek the two sleepers jumped and went down a thirty foot embankment. The Kinderhook turned over and was smashed. Passengers poured from the train, when this mess was accounted only one passenger lost his life, an Edward McDonnel.

ST GEORGE

NOVEMBER 4, 1891

A collision between freight No. 36 west and stock train No. 32 east. All the train hands jumped at the on coming collision, only fireman McTeer was injured. The stock train took the worst of the damage for one hundred hogs and twenty-five cattle were killed in the train wreck.

Saturday evening, six PM, August 20, 1898 the Pacific Express is due at Ingersoll at 6:15. Coming along the single track Engineer Sam Glass looked ahead and with a glance, and thought; in that instance, everything was normal -a meet with a freight ahead. Then with a brief second look, he saw in horror that the freight was fouling the mainline. He yelled at his fireman Robert Temple to jump, then slammed on the air brake and jumped himself. The Pacific Express collided with the engine of a through freight loaded with Chicago beef.

WOODSTOCK

FEBRUARY 21, 1901

Known by local historians as the Dynamite Train Wreck, February 21, 1901, a freight from the west had entered the Woodstock station slowly and was planning to take on water for the mogul.

Engineer Trotter was approaching Woodstock from the east and he knew that he had orders to take the siding at Woodstock. He clearly saw the semaphore at the eastern end of the yard was set against him; so as he applied the brakes found the train just wouldn't hold. He put on the brakes as tight as he and still no control. Trotter then reversed the engine but the rails were way to slippery. He tugged at the whistle cord repeatedly, the whistle was screaming as the train kept going. It was so noticeable that at Woodstock station the engineer of the eastbound heard and then could see the oncoming train. He then reversed his engine. It wasn't enough and the two trains collided right in front of the Woodstock station. Freight cars were thrown all about the station yard. No one was injured, everything seemed safe, but some one mentioned that one freight car contained forty tons of dynamite, and it had spuilled its contents in all directions about the wreck. Now there was a lot of concern for it was soon realized that amount of dynamite would destroy the whole town of Woodstock in moments. It was feared that even children had picked up sticks and may have taken them home to their waiting families. Strict warnings were made about the town about the dynamite. The town was safe.

The engines involved in the collision are known to be Grand Trunk locomotives 704 and 724 both 2-6-0's.

HARRISBURG

OCTOBER 10, 1901

A freight and a passenger train collided at the Harrisburg station. The engineer John Robinson of Niagara Falls was injured.

DUNDAS

DECEMBER 12, 1902

December 12th, 1902. Dundas. A heavy eastbound freight had run down the grade from Copetown and at Dundas station it had orders to put into the siding at Dundas. It was seven on a winter morning, it was still dark. In the darkness, the engineer missed the siding, and over ran the switch. With his train on the heavy downgrade he had difficulty backing the heavy train to the switch. Before he had time to put out signals, train No. 31, a Hamilton to Harrisburg local train came puffing up the steep grade and crashed his passenger engine into the freight locomotive. The engineer would later say he was confused for while he saw the engine headlight he thought it was sitting in the siding.

Decemeber the 26th, 1902, the day after Christmas, Boxing Day, the temperature was zero degrees and the snow was a blizzard. The Grand Trunk's No.5 The Pacific Express arrived from its American connections at Niagara Falls in the afternoon. The GTR attached engine 980 on the front end of the train of baggage car, express car two coaches and two Pullman Sleepers. The 980 was a big 73" drivered 4-6-0, built in the railroads own shops. Climbing into the cab were engineer J. Gilles and his fireman Colin MacKenzie. They left Niagara Falls, hit Hamilton then turned at Hamilton Junction westbound for London and the Sarnia Tunnel. The snow made the run difficult and by London the Express was two hours late. The late arrival at London made Dispatcher Kerr's job difficult, for meets had to be changed and a clear track given to the Express to allow it to at least keep some time.

In this same blizzard, a freight train was also struggling from Sarnia eastbound. Engineer Tom MacKenzie and fireman Ricketts were pushing the tiny Mogul 773's 63" drivers through the snow.

It would appear that Engineer Gilles was making up time, the Express was rolling. Dispatcher gave orders and changed orders as the night wore on. Orders were given to the Express than to the freight and then changed. The new orders didn't reach Wyoming or Kingscourt Junction in time. Kerr wanted to stop No. 5. Engine 773 arrived at the west switch at Wanstead, it was decided to do a rolling stop, so the brakeman jumped down from the engine ran ahead of the still rolling engine so as to throw the switch and allow the freight into the siding. The brakeman slipped and the switch wasn't thrown.

The freight engine rolled just past the brakeman as he stood at the switch. Now the freight would have to be backed up, the switch thrown and into the safety of the siding. As the freight was backing the Pacific Express No. 5 roared out of the blizzard and both engines were smashed together. The baggage and Express cars telescoped the following coach. Twenty-eight people were killed at Wanstead that night. Engineer Gilles and fireman Ricketts died.

The station agent at Wanstead was looking out of the window of his house across the tracks from his station. He looked west and saw the freight maneuvering at the west switch. Then in front of himself the Express roared by in front of him, at full speed! He was grabbing at his coat as he heard the explosion. He was running, the carnage and debris was to his west, running into the telegraph bay. The telegraph sounder was pounding- Stop No. 5. repeat Stop No. 5, repeat Stop No. 5. Wanstead Wreck was the only reply.

There were hearings, Kerr had the intension of stopping the freight at Wyoming then changed his mind, and the orders became confusing. Night operator Andrew Carson was so confused that he didn't set the red semaphore, in time to stop No. 5.

Wanstead for a generation became the name for disaster. Express engine 980 was renumbered GTR 316 and in 1923 became CNR 1578 and was scrapped in 1931. Freight hog 773 had had it, it had been in an earlier wreck at Trenton in November 1898 and this time the mogul was scrapped. The station at Wanstead was destroyed by a fire April 27th, 1922.

KOMOKA

JUNE 1, 1903

The London local ran into an open switch and collided with an extra freight train on September 1, 1903 at the junction village of Komoka. Four trainmen were injured in the collision, they were Engineer Coote, Conductor Adam Douglas, Brakeman Carney and an un-named fireman. Engineer and fireman escaped injury by jumping from the train just prior to the collision

PRINCETON

AUGUST 30, 1903

Midnight August 30th, 1903, two extra freights were traveling east, at Princeton the first train Engineer Nornabell went past the switch and stopped his train at the other end of the siding, with the idea of backing his train into the siding. The station semaphore was set to red and signals put out. The following freight Engineer James O'Grady ; on Grand Trunk locomotive 745, a little 2-6-0, later claimed he hadn't seen the semaphore or the signals. In the train was a tank car full of gasoline and it exploded in the middle of the train wreck. A massive explosion and one hundred yards of track and rolling stock were on fire, a roaring furnace was a description at the time.

EASTWOOD

SEPTEMBER 28, 1904

It was around 3:00 AM in the early morning of September 28th, 1904. The Grand Trunk operated day and night. Eastwood was a little station a few miles east of Woodstock. Freight train 723 running from London had left Woodstock and pulled into the station at Eastwood with thirty minutes to spare, so it was decided that they would switch a few of the cars on the sidings, while they waited for the meet of following trains. One train passed, so Engineer Alex Kirkland uncoupled from his train, and proceeded to pick up a car of horses from the siding. The car was picked up and coupled to his train. Switches were shut at the front, but with the switching the main part of the train was now on the mainline. Engineer Kirkland got down from the cab and crawled under the engine to empty the ash-pan.

Running behind No. 723 was extra No.975 a train with a GTR two year old 4-6-0,

An eastbound train 975 traveling 45 mph crashed into the rear of the standing freight. The van or caboose was splintered to shreds with Conductor Harry Fallis and brakeman Benedict inside. The caboose stove had been turned over. Over twenty cars had been wrecked, and now a fire took hold and it got bigger and bigger soon all twenty cars were a bonfire and the Eastwood Station caught on fire next.

In the collision the impact was so forceful that the whole train was pushed forward, maybe a foot, including the engine. Poor Engineer Kirkland was under his engine at the time of collision and the engine rolled over him killing him as well.

Conductor Angus McDonald on the 975 proceeded back to Woodstock to put in the call for assistance. Merton Jackson, the station agent got his family out of his burning station. Attempts were made to put out the fire with water buckets but in the end the fire just burned from 4 AM to 8AM, four hours.

KOMOKO

AUGUST 13, 1905.

An eastbound and a westbound freight trains collided at Komoka August 13th, 1905. A few minutes before 8:00 o'clock in the morning the eastbound freight with engine 791 in charge of Conductor Hogkins was entering the siding at Komoka. Engine 403 was pulling the westbound train slowly into the station along the mainline. A dense fog which prevailed rendered it impossible for either engineer to see the other train. The eastbound engine had only entered the siding more than a few feet when its caboose was struck by the incoming No. 403.

KOMOKA

AUGUST 14, 1905

At 8:00 AM, August 14th, 1905 eastbound freight engine 791 in charge of conductor Hodgins was entering the siding at Komoka. At the same time engine 403 was pulling the westbound slowly into the station alongside the mainline. A dense fog that morning impaired visibility so as the eastbound engine had entered the siding only a few feet when it's caboose was struck by the oncoming engine 403. The signal was against the westbound but when the engineer saw it he put on the brakes but they locked and the wheels just skidded.

SARNIA TUNNEL

SEPTEMBER 20, 1905

The Grand Trunk Chicago Express arrived at Sarnia the morning of September 20th, 1905. The passenger locomotive was cut off, and the big tunnel steam locomotive No. 1301, a huge 0-10-0 tank engine was coupled on to the Express and then started the train out of the station and down through the tunnel. It hit the bottom and started the train up and out towards Port Huron the coupling between the engine and the baggage car parted. This had the effect of setting the emergency air brakes and the train came to a dead stop in the tunnel. The passenger cars sat for half an hour in the tunnel with no means of escape. The train was finally pulled out from the bore. Nobody was injured, but it was a close call.

BRANTFORD

AUGUST 18, 1923

Canadian National Railways train No. 11 crashed into a standing freight train.

THAMESVILLE

AUGUST 26, 1923

Train No. 11 The International Limited running one hour and twenty minutes late derailed the locomotive tender and four coaches.

LONDON

AUGUST 21, 1932

Eleven o'clock on the evening of August 21st, 1932 Canadian National Railways train 492 running from Sarnia to London was commanded by big and new Northern type 6127. These were the supreme Canadian National steam power. The train was fifty-six cars long. Traveling through the summer night the London terminal was not far, only three miles east. Then, either the driving axle or the driving rod snapped just as the train was passing over the Oxford Street Subway. 6127 started tearing up the track behind as the engineer tried to stop the manifest freight. Car after car derailed, cars were being thrown about, then three tank cars filled with gasoline, derailed and smashed into the wreckage and exploded. The explosion was so huge it was seen for thirty miles. Gasoline was thrown not only onto the cars but all about the Oxford Street bridge and down the railway embankment. Twenty-five cars derailed and sixteen freight cars were burning. It took hours to extinguish the huge bonfire. One coal car, sprayed with gasoline, lay wrecked directly on top of the Oxford overpass burned long and slowly. The top section of the subway was destroyed.

1934, the fifth year of the Depression, times of little Hope for many. Christmas 1934 could it be different. There were many trains at Christmas. The Canadian National Railways ran many special Christmas extra trains, one would run from London east. In the late afternoon CNR 5300, would leave the London roundhouse back to the London station and connect to its train of wooden coaches. Soon it was running through the towns and villages of western Ontario, Woodstock, Paris, Brantford. Dundas was next, pulling into the station, the engineer got down with his oil can, it was quickly apparent that the main crankpin on 5300 was over heated. Knowing that the passenger train The Maple Leaf was following it was decided that they would have to clear the mainline quickly. There was a siding east of the station, so the train slowly ran up to the siding, a switch was thrown and the train limped into the clear.

The switches were reset and locked by Brakeman Phelps, for all knew the Maple Leaf was running behind. The rear marker lights on the coaches were changed from red to green according to the rule book. The crew had a conference, the engineer felt that 5300 was in poor shape, that Hamilton should be notified and that a replacement engine should be made ready and waiting for them at Bayview Junction. Brakeman Lynch volunteered to walk back up the tracks the four hundred yards to the Dundas station and to telephone the Hamilton locomotive department.

Lynch started out walking and swinging his red lantern at his side. Looking up he saw the headlight of train 16, The Maple Leaf bearing down on Dundas from the west, For some reason, Lynch thought that his train was still on the mainline. He thought that a collision was about to take place. He ran to the mainline switch unlocked it, then hurriedly threw the switch. Unaware that Brakeman Phelps had set the switch correctly, Lynch had now set it for the siding.

Canadian National Northern 6146 rushing through the Christmas night kept seeing green lights of the Automatic Signal System. When the special was switched into the siding, Phelps would have shown the two signals up the line to go red, but once Phelps reset the switch all lights would show green, a clear track. When Lynch opened the switch the close signal and the one two miles back would go to red but this was too late. The Maple Leaf had just passed the last signal, and it didn't stop at Dundas. Full speed ahead. The engineer passed Dundas station was hitting the curve and with only one or two seconds saw the special and the red switch lantern. In one second, 6146 was on the siding, air brakes slammed on. The crash of the huge engine crashing through those old wooden coaches woke the town of Dundas. The coaches splintered, telescoped or were thrown down the embankment. Fifteen people were killed and thirty others were seriously injured, and others just injured. Ambulances raced from Hamilton, all area Hospitals called in emergency staff.

LYNDEN

FEBRUARY 15, 1935

Engineer Carlton was running big Canadian National Northern 6129 on a heavy Mimico to Sarnia freight on the morning of February 15th, 1935. Westbound he had sixty-five heavy cars he slowed and picked up a pilot or helper engine, 2528 a 2-8-0, at Bayview Junction. The pilot, with George Winchester as Engineer and William Nichols firing was assigned to run to London. Off the doubleheader went into the darkness this winter night up the Dundas grade dragging through the summit at Copetown. Ahead lay Lynden, now a junction with the Harriston Subdivision, but prior to 1906 was the mainline of the Great Western Railway west to Paris Junction. The old mainline had only been abandoned in recent years. 2528 and 6129 were to curve south here and travel through Brantford. Lyndon Junction lay ahead the early signal showed green, but the morning fog was thick, they passed the next signal. In the fog it was red.

Canadian National 2613, another 2-8-0 had been running south from Palmerston, through Guelph with a twenty-six car freight during the night, at Lynden it would intersect the CNR mainline and ride it down through Dundas to the Hamilton terminal. Engineer Connell on 2613, had pulled up to the signal it was green, the Electric Time Switch was thrown, giving him clear passage onto the mainline. Throttle thrown open, Connell started out, but then out of the fog, he could see the heavy westbound. Trouble, Connell reversed the engine on the mainline switch, 2613 pushed backward, slowly she left the mainline, back she went, the brakeman suddenly found that the Time Switch could not be overridden, the switch remained open, the mainline switch was open.

Whistles screaming, throttles slammed shut, air brakes rammed on the big doubleheader, 2528-6129 shot on to the Harriston Subdivision and crashed into 2613 which was now clear of the mainline. All the crews saw the imminent danger and jumped. In a loud explosion, that could be heard for miles, the Harriston train was pushed back seventy-five feet after the impact. 2613 boiler had been ripped off its frame and was pointing skyward. The crews picked themselves up and started searching, the crew of the pilot engine was missing. Fireman William Nichols was jammed in the cab of 2528, his leg caught. Engineer Winchester of the pilot wasn't standing, he was found lying in a ditch, beside the track dead.

The new electric timed switch and the dense fog were blamed.

BEACHVILLE

APRIL 26, 1937

An historic flood descended on the Thames River valley April 26th, 1937. Still described as the Storm of the Century. Canadian National Railways train No.6 The Inter-City Limited Chicago to Montreal was running eastbound through the maelstorm. In the cab of the big Northern type were the vetrans, Malcolm Isbister and Norman Aiken the firreman. They had stopped at Ingersol station and were heading up grade nearing the limestone quarries at Beachville. They were not far from Woodstock and they would be out of the Thames Valley in only minutes. The engineer looked ahead and all seemed normal. One o'clock in the afternoon Munroe's Crossing ahead , the track was normal, then it fell, the big Northern just fell in a moment, without warning into an unseen washout. A baggage car and a coach followed into the dirty water. The crew were dead in that moment. Oddly two others would also die, a transient Harold Brett of Shelburne had been riding on the blind end of the baggage car. Doctor J. MacDonald of Ingersol rushing to the scene of the accident was swept off a bridge

BRANTFORD

FEBRUARY 2, 1945

Train No. 5 The LaSalle due at Brantford at 7:48 P.M. Was an hour late on the evening of February 2nd, 1945. The World War was on its last days in Europe, traffic was heavy. Two engines were pulling the train 5570 and 6077 the old Pacific and a new Bullet Nosed Betty. Suddenly, the two engines left the rails between the Elgin and Clarence Street subways. One engine carreened down the embankment almost into one persons living room. Tracks were torn up. Engines smashed. But, there were dead crew, four died in a brief second, on 6077 engineer John Jarvis and his fireman L. McIntyre, and on 5570 engineer George McRitchie and his fireman James Agnew perished.

Far away at Caproel, 6077 still keeps virgil today.

COPETOWN

DECEMBER 4, 1947

Copetown, summit of the Dundas grade, a quiet place, but it would have been really quiet in the dark early morning hours of December 4th, 1947. Dark and cold, then from the east came the engines, two engines a Consolidation and Northern labouring to pull seventy cars of merchandise for Chicago, past the rattling windows of the Copetown station. Car after car they came, seventy, this was a long train, and it had orders to take a siding to clear the mainline for a passenger that was coming. The train was too long, it couldn't go in the siding, the front consolidation 2636 fouled the main. The Detroitier charged out of the darkness hit the freight knocking the pilot engine over into the ditch. The CNR Northern on the Detroitier was damaged

WOODSTOCK

APRIL 7, 1949

Thursday morning, at one o'clock, April 7th, 1949 eastbound freight Engineer Bert Tuxford had pulled into the siding at Woodstock when a westbound freight, with Engineer James Rainer at the throttle entered the switch and slammed into the other freight under the Bay Street bridge. The westbound pilot wheels were twisted back in the collision under the main driving wheels and its boiler was caved in. One of the engines was CNR 5564, a 4-6-2 built at the Grand Trunk shops in 1912 as GTR 228 and survived until March 1958.

INGERSOLL

AUGUST 10, 1982

Via train from Sarnia to Toronto was running eastbound with blue and yellow engine 6537. Twelve miles east of Ingersoll at 8:20 AM, the train was running slow, 18 miles per hour, on account of construction work being done to the tracks. The train was switched to the westbound main line to get around the construction, but it was supposed to switch back to the east-bound track but the switch was not made. The Via train continued on the west-bound track when it plowed into the face of CN engine 9629, on a freight that had stopped. Eighty-eight passengers were taken to the hospital but none were in serious condition.

STONEY CREEK

AUGUST 5, 1978

In the morning of August 5th, 1978 Engineer A. E. Hazelton had a twenty-two car freight train approaching the Lake Street overpass in Stoney Creek. Near the site of the old station the lead unit 4573 of four diesels derailed at 11 AM.

DUNDAS

MAY 4, 1984

One train moving too fast, one train moving too slow. This was the explanation that Engineer Dan White gave after a 105 car freight train, from Sarnia, bound for McMillan Yard, Toronto, smashed into the rear of a 17 car Brantford to Hamilton local near the York Road overpass between Dundas and Bayview Junction. Engine 4513 was wrecked.

THAMESVILLE

APRIL 23, 1999

Via train No. 74 was running between Windsor and Toronto on April 23rd, 1999. In the cab were veteran engineer Donald Bain and apprentice engineer Kevin Lihou. As the passenger train was approaching Thamesville it appears that the engine crew noticed that the switches had been left open, they were heading into the siding where there were standing cars of fertilizer. Up ahead they could see the approaching headlight of the westbound Via train No. 71. Someone in the cab grabbed the radio and made an emergency broadcast; yelling Train 71! Stop! Stop! Stop! They activated the engine stop switch in their last moment, just seconds before the impact. The engine was thrown over on its side fouling both east and west tracks. The passenger cars were twisted with 160 passengers on board. Via No. 71, because of the broadcast, safely applied the train brakes as they saw the dust cloud rise before them. They were less than one mile away from collision when No. 71 stopped. One hundred passengers were taken to the hospital, but none were seriously injured. Engineers Bain and Lihou were killed in the collision.

ALDERSHOT

FEBRUARY 26, 2012

Aldershot, half way between Burlington and Hamilton-Bayview has grown increasing from a small siding into an important railway site. A freight yard has developed to allow Sarnia to Toronto freight trains to set out and pick up freight cars. It then had both VIA and GO use the station, replacing the CNR Hamilton Station.

On February 26th, 2012, VIA train No. 92 from Niagara Falls to Toronto. The train came to a stop at the Aldershot station on track No. 2. The tracks were lined to route the train from track 2 to track 3 one mile from Aldershot, through a crossover with a restricted speed of 15 miles per hour. At 3:25 PM. the VIA train had accelerated to 67 MPH in that one mile when it entered the crossover near King Road. The locomotive and all five coaches with seventy passengers on board derailed, the locomotive No. 6444 rolled on to its side then hit a building. The cab roof collapsed killing two engineers, Ken Simmonds, Peter Snar and trainee Paterick Robinson. A number of passengers were injured in the wreck.