

# BY RAIL TO LONDON

by Douglas N W Smith

Pacific 5573 heads west from London station with a short two car wooden consist most likely substituting for an ailing gas-electric car on the London-Sarnia run. This circa 1952 picture gives a good overview of the extensive improvements CN made in 1936 when it expanded the number of station tracks from four to six.

*Paterson-George Collection*

In the southwestern region of Ontario lies the City of London. Founded in 1826, the small village rapidly grew to be the leading city of the region. The foundations for the city's growth can largely be attributed to the progressive spirit of its early citizens who boldly provided subsidies towards the cost of constructing the many railway companies which would serve the city. Few Canadian cities in the nineteenth century were served by as many railways as London. As each company maintained their own station in the community, few Canadian communities can match it for the sheer number of stations which have served its populace over the years.

## Great Western Railway

While 'railway fever' infected most of the residents of the Province of Upper Canada, London's residents seemed to have been particularly afflicted. Before the advent of the railway, commerce came to a standstill during the winter months when the lakes and rivers froze and in the spring and fall when the rudimentary roads became sodden quagmires. The railway, which seemingly annihilated distance and weather, carried the glittering promise of reducing freight rates and opening year-round access to the major cities of the Province and to the ports on the Atlantic coast.

On March 6, 1834, royal assent was given to a bill incorporating the London and Gore Railroad Company, one of the first railways to be chartered in British North America. The

sponsors envisioned the railway connecting Lake Huron to Burlington Bay on Lake Ontario via London. Pretty bold when one considers the first stage coach service had only commenced running a twice weekly schedule through the area in 1828. The 1834 charter languished for the next eleven years as the colonists lacked one crucial ingredient necessary to make their vision a reality - money.

When the charter was revived in 1845 under the name Great Western Railway (GWR), its purpose was broadened. The line would now link the American railways reaching Niagara Falls, New York with the expanding network in the American Midwest at Detroit. Many of the villages which lay along the broad arc traversed by the GWR across southern Ontario would become the major cities. With an infusion of British capital, the company quickly completed its surveys.

The turning of the first sod for the GWR was held at London amidst the pomp and oratory so loved by the Victorians. On Saturday afternoon, October 23, 1847, the shops and factories in the village were stilled. William McNab, the speaker of the colonial legislature and a moving force behind the GWR, Colonel Thomas Talbot, the founder of London, and the Rifle Company and Royal Artillery paraded through the streets of the village to the GWR's station site. Located one mile north of the village, the location was just east of present day Richmond Street between Ann and Oxford Streets and was very close to that later selected for the Canadian Pacific Railway's station.

### THE DEPOT EXPENSES SADDLED ON THE TOWN

Sir - Will you allow me through the medium of your columns to express what I conceive to be a most iniquitous and disgraceful transaction on the part of the Mayor and a portion of the Town Council at their regular meeting on the 3rd instant. You are aware that for some time past, the Townspeople have been in a state of excitement with reference to the location of the Depot of the Great Western Railway Company in this Town, a difference of opinion prevailing as to whether it should be placed at the North or South end of the Town, each party claiming its location to be the best, as self-interest dictated.

The Surveyor having originally located the Depot in the North from its being the shortest and cheapest route, parties interested in the South prevailed on the [GWR] directors to run a line in that direction to test its practicability. This was done and the report stated it to be practicable, but that it was half a mile longer and would cost some £2,500 more than the old line, taking into consideration the £600 already expended. A majority of the Inhabitants, however, being in favour of the South, - the Directors very properly intimated that they were willing to place the Depot wherever the majority might select, providing no additional expense should be incurred by the company.

The Northern party having made an offer to the Directors of 15 acres for Depot purposes, free of cost to the company, those of the South took steps by raising subscriptions and securing the right of way, and by the interests brought to bear on the Directors, it was finally decided on Wednesday, the 26th ult., by a resolution of the Directors at Hamilton, that the Company would subscribe the sum of £2,500. Mr Holmes and others agreed to make good the balance [of the cost] for the purchase of the right of way and Depot ground within the limits of the Town of London. But to the astonishment of all, on the Town Council meeting on Monday, the 3rd March, a resolution was carried by the casting vote of the Mayor that they, the Town Council, should assume the responsibility on behalf of the Town of said agreement voluntarily made by Holmes and others guaranteeing the additional cost of the Depot ground and right of way through the Town. By taking advantage of their position as Mayor and Councilmen to enhance the value of their private property, they shifted a heavy responsibility from their won shoulders on that of the people of the Town without ever asking the people's consent or giving the usual notice for the consideration of the whole Council.

This iniquity consummated, the Mayor by way of boast, informed the Council that the Directors had *decided in September last, that the Depot should be at the South end of the Town, and had told him, the Mayor, that their reason for not declaring it sooner, was to try and get all the money they could subscribed by the Inhabitants of the Town of London.* Hear this ye Rate payers of London! After you generously subscribe to the amount of £25,000, you are now told by your worthy Mayor, that the Directors had been deceiving you for six months and trying to fleece you out of more money . . .

W. Barker

London Free Press, March 7, 1851

While it is hard to image, the site was deep in the woods. The Toronto *Globe* described the scene as follows:

*. . . a wide space had been cleared in the forest around, and stands erected for the accommodation of the guests and spectators. The logs gathered from the clearance were piled around the scene of action, and ere the process had reached the ground, these forest galleries were covered with people . . . as the procession arrived the several bodies took up their station around the inside of the large circle, forming as it were a spacious amphitheatre*<sup>1</sup>.

Three thousand cheering spectators, virtually the entire population of the community, watched Talbot turn the ceremonial first sod for the railway.

After the high hopes at the sod turning ceremony, matters rapidly soured. The collapse of the railway boom in England and the resulting financial depression drained that source of the Great Western's finances. Signs that all were not well were apparent even before the ceremony. In September 1847, the GWR was proposing to construct the Niagara Falls-Hamilton and London-Windsor portions of the railway and use the existing London-Hamilton Plank Road to fill in the gap<sup>2</sup>.

As private enterprise could not find the funds to build railways, governments were urged to assist the companies. In 1849, the colonial government guaranteed payment of the interest on half the bonds issued by any railway with over 75 miles of constructed line. A law was passed in 1850 permitting the municipal governments to purchase stock financed by debentures. London and its shire county, Middlesex, each purchased £25,000 of GWR stock<sup>3</sup>.

This government support enable the GWR was able to sell a major block of stock to the Americans who controlled the chain of railways running from Albany to Niagara Falls. The GWR would be a valuable connection to the American Midwest, especially as plans were being laid to amalgamate the railways across New York State as the New York Central Railroad.

When actual construction of the GWR began in 1850, many questioned the wisdom of placing the station so far from the centre of London. In December 1850, London's Mayor, who also was a director of the GWR by virtue of the town's stock holdings, reported that at the last GWR director's meeting opinion had been divided as to whether the railway should be located to the north or south of Dundas Street, the community's main thoroughfare. The directors made no decision, but appointed a committee to look into the matter<sup>4</sup>.

Early in 1851, the company's engineer reported that it was feasible to locate the track closer to the settled portions of the city south of Dundas Street. The new alignment, however, would be more expensive as the route would be one half mile longer than the initial one. At a meeting in late February 1851, the GWR directors conditionally adopted the new alignment. While the railway was ready to absorb the additional cost to build the extra half mile of track, the directors were not ready to pay damages to acquire the land for the right of way and station grounds through the settled part of the town. The directors decided that the GWR would spend no more than £2,500 pounds to acquire property in London. These were major concessions as the property owners along the original northern survey had agreed to donate the land for the station ground and right of way through London.

The property owners along the southern alignment were in a quandary. While wanting the benefits which being adjacent to the GWR would bring, these men, who numbered amongst

their ranks the town's leading businessmen, did not want to freely part with their land. To the chagrin of the residents and property owners along the original route, the Mayor and Councillors in March 1851 decided to have the Town purchase the lands along the new route for the railway<sup>5</sup>.

The route selected ran midway between Bathurst and York Streets. The suggested site for the station was between Richmond and Clarence Streets on the north side of the tracks. At the time, this city-owned land was used as a public market. After the GWR agreed to the site, the town Council ordered the market building on the site moved on March 15, 1852<sup>6</sup>. While the station was actually located in the middle of the block fronting York Street, it was invariably referred to as the Richmond Street Station. The only direct access from Richmond Street, however, was by the station platform.

In their Report to the Shareholders dated June 6, 1853, the directors of the company affirmed the importance they attached to London. They stated, "At Hamilton and London, which from their position must always command a very large business, and be the points where the principal workshops of the Company must be established, permanent and substantial [station] structures have been contracted for, but in all other places inexpensive buildings will in the first place be erected, so that as the amount of business becomes ascertained, the extent of accommodation may be proportionately increased."

Because of financial pressures, the GWR's first London station was not the imposing building alluded to by the directors. It was a small wood-framed structure which fulfilled the immediate requirements at a minimal cost.

Public demand forced the GWR to open the railway before the line was adequately finished. The first completed section between Niagara Falls and Hamilton opened on November 1, 1853. Six weeks later, a ceremonial first train operated from Hamilton to London. Fifty years later, William Bow-

man, Mechanical Superintendent of the GWR, recounted his impressions of the trip on that December 15th:

*As I remember it, the weather was cold and raw, and the mud along the line was simply appalling.*

*We left Hamilton, where I was living at the time, early in the afternoon. It was near dusk when we arrived at London. The time was very slow, slow even for those days, owing to the condition of the roadbed; and it was my opinion at the time that*

*it was a foolhardy notion to attempt the trip on such a roadbed. The rocking of the coaches was frightful, and I thought at the time we would go into the mud in the ditch.*

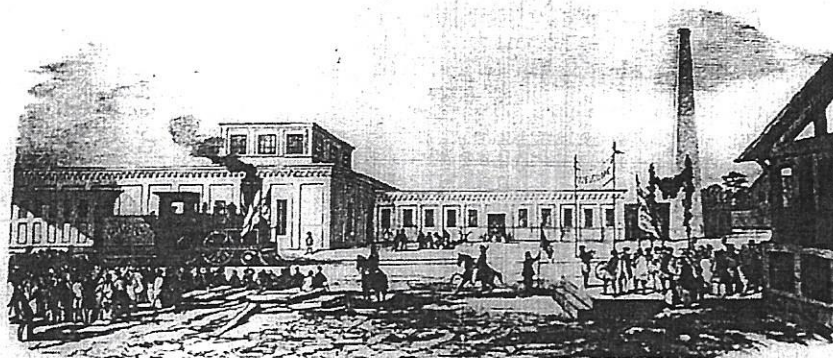
*We stopped at all the stations along the line, but it was difficult to leave the coaches, as there was [sic] no platforms as yet erected, and the mud was too deep to wade into.*

To the crowds which greeted the

locomotive and its two coaches, the train was a harbinger of London's glorious future. The city was in the midst of wild land speculation which drove the price of land along the right of way to fantastic values<sup>7</sup>. The lands adjacent to the station rapidly filled with new hotels to house travellers. London's largest and most prestigious hotel, the Tecumseh, was built immediately north of the GWR tracks on the west side of Richmond Street.

The GWR began regular train service over the Hamilton-London line on December 21st. The London-Windsor segment opened the following month on January 23, 1854.

The incompleteness of the initial London station facilities did not hamper business. For the period December 17, 1853 to July 31, 1854, the station saw over 21,000 passengers and generated more than £9,000 of passenger revenues. The only communities generating more traffic were Hamilton, Niagara Falls and

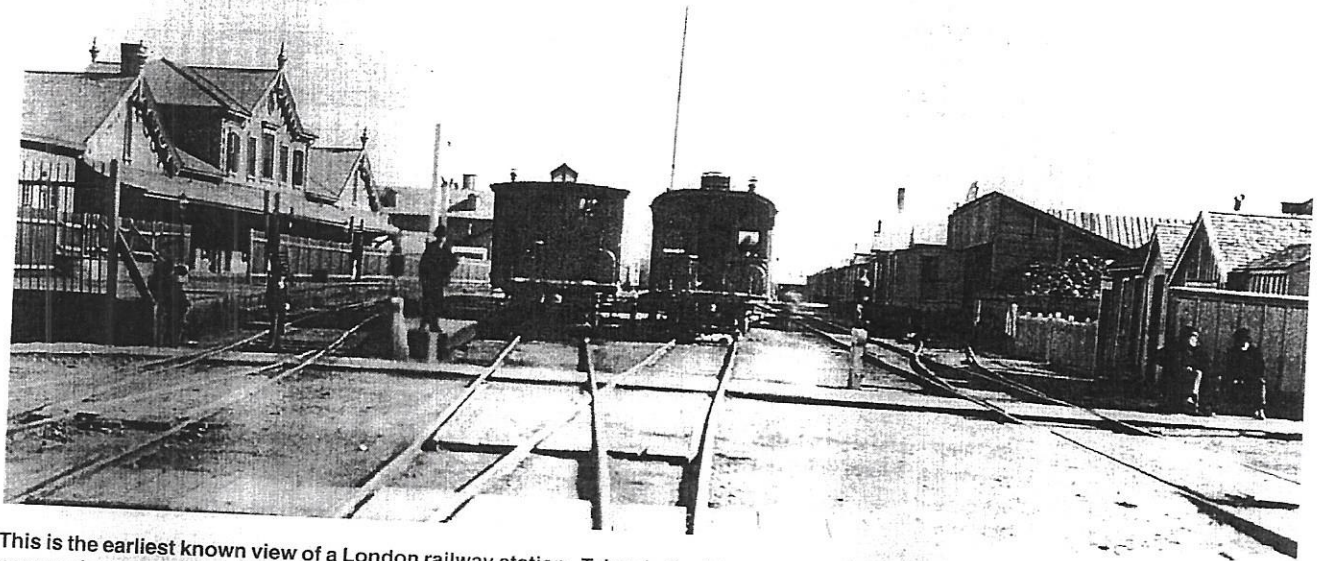


When the GWR arrived in London, the company had erected a temporary wooden building which served as the community's first station. A side of this structure is shown on the right-hand side of this woodcut which shows the arrival of the first train in London in 1853.

*Canadian Illustrated News*

PASSENGERS ARRIVING AND DEPARTING LONDON ON GWR	
	Total
Dec 17, 1853 to July 31, 1854	44,265
August 1, 1854 to Jan 31, 1855	60,113
Feb 1 to July 31, 1855	51,469
August 1, 1855 to Jan 31, 1856	62,835
Feb 1 to July 31, 1856	60,704
August 1, 1856 to Jan 31, 1857	64,814
Feb 1 to July 31, 1857	54,665
Source: GWR Annual Reports	

GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY TIMETABLE OF TRAINS AT LONDON OCTOBER 28, 1858											
Read Down						Read Up					
Night Mail	Mixed	Morning Express	Day Express	Accommodation		Accommodation	Morning Express	Day Express	Mixed	Night Mail	
2230		0715	1045	1650	lv Suspension Bridge* ar	1200	1645	2130		0305	
0345		1240	1625	2230	ar London lv	0630	1110	1600		2355	
0400	0715	1310	1640		lv London ar		1050	1540	2010	2345	
0835	1445	1715	2055		ar Windsor lv		0630	1130	1230	1930	
Note * Suspension Bridge (otherwise known as Niagara Falls) was the interchange point with New York Central and Erie trains. Because of different gauges, passengers had to change trains.											



This is the earliest known view of a London railway station. Taken in the 1860s, it shows the original layout of the station facilities and narrow right of way occupied by the Great Western Railway. The fence in front of the station was used to control crowds. The square box on the coach roof was an early attempt to improve air flow through the car while excluding cinders. The string of box cars on the right-most track are on the siding serving the large number of coal and lumber dealers whose establishments fronted Bathurst Street.

Windsor; the figures for the passenger business for the latter two towns were inflated by the large number of through passengers using the GWR to travel between American points.

The arrival of the railway fuelled a rapid spurt in London's population. While it had only been incorporated as a town in 1848, London achieved city status in 1855 as its population crested at 12,000. In recognition of the role played by the railway in this growth, the coat of arms for the new city prominently featured a 4-4-0 wood-burning steam locomotive.

The GWR officials must have been impressed with London's potential. In 1856 they decided to erect a brick station in the city when all of the other stations were cheaper frame buildings. Tenders for the imposing U-shaped brick structure, which had a central core 190 feet long by 30 feet wide with two wings, each 60 by 40 feet, were advertised in July 1856<sup>8</sup>. The new station opened on July 20, 1857 to the acclaim of the London Free Press which proclaimed, "Ample accommodation has been provided for the travelling public and it forms a very elegant introduction to the city."

Following the opening of the new station, the first station found new use as a baggage shed. The building remained in use until at least the 1880s.

#### London and Port Stanley Railway

Even as the GWR was building its line, London merchants proposed that a railway should be built from London to Port Stanley, the nearest port on Lake Erie. Access to the port was viewed as a means of preventing the GWR from having a monopoly on the freight traffic of the town as well as giving the city access to cheap steamship rates

#### TERRIFIC COLLISION ON THE GWR AT LONDON

A frightful accident, which might have resulted in appalling consequences, occurred about one mile west of London Thursday morning the 21st instant about 0125. A train of 17 cars, heavily laden with horned cattle was coming east when it met the night Express going west. The result was a collision, entirely destroying five cattle cars by the violence of the shock, while one passenger car, the baggage car and post office car were burnt. On visiting the scene of the disaster, we found the line strewn with the debris of the two trains. The engine of the cattle train - curiously enough called the *Bison* - was much shattered in the fore part of the works, massive machinery being twisted, bent and broken in a way that gave one a good idea of the force of the concussion. Proceeding a little further were the charred remains, still smouldering of a passenger car and baggage car, both of which had been precipitated down the embankment. Further on were three cattle cars, end upwards, the poor beasts being strewn around dead and wounded, forming a sickening spectacle. To the left were two other cattle cars rolled down the embankment, with many dead beasts inside. We counted no fewer than 27 head of cattle lying dead or maimed. In addition, the line was covered for a distance of many yards with broken iron, splinters, etc. A gang of men were immediately despatched to clear the line which was effected by 10 o'clock. The engine of the night train, *Mazeppa*, was not so seriously damaged as the *Bison*. The mail train consisted of four passenger cars, baggage car and post office car.

Fortunately no human lives were lost, and little personal damage done; but taking into account the severity of the accident, it is little short of miraculous how any escaped. The conductor of the passenger cars, Mr Anderson, received some severe contusions on the head and body, but no bones were broken. The Express Company's agent, Wheaton, had also a narrow escape. Mr Macdonald, in charge of the Canadian mails, barely escaped with his life. The post office car in which he was at the moment of the accident, was forced into the first passenger car, while that car was jammed into the post office car. The American mail consisted of from 15 to 20 bags; the Canadian of about 6. Everything was consumed - not a letter saved. The train caught fire from the ashes scattered from the four or five stoves used for heating the cars. Nearly the whole of the passenger baggage car was burned, together with Express Company's baggage, two tons in weight, so furiously did the fire spread. The Express Company's private chest and documents fortunately escaped uninjured.

Stratford Beacon, October 17, 1856

during the season of navigation. A charter sponsored by the leading citizens of London for the London and Port Stanley Railway (L&PS) was secured on May 23, 1853.

A maverick amongst the railway projects of the time, it relied almost completely upon local governments for its capital. From the outset, London was the major backer of the project. Its initial subscription of railway stock amounted to £50,000. The remaining stock subscribers were as follows: County of Middlesex - £25,000, County of Elgin - £20,000, Town of St Thomas - £8,500, and a paltry £10,125 by individuals.

Cost overruns almost halted construction in 1855. When seeking a further stock subscription to complete the railway L Lawrason, the L&PS's President, told London's aldermen that it had never been intended that the railway would be built by private investors as there was not enough wealth in the area to do so. As the other municipal and county governments were loath to invest more in the L&PS, the burden fell on London to see the project completed. It had invested the most money in the railway and thus had the most to lose. By the time the railway opened, the city held £75,000 in stock and £43,850 in bonds. This was almost 70 per cent of the railway's cost.

The L&PS station site at the corner of Colborne and Bathurst Streets, south of the GWR main line, was acquired from the County of Middlesex Agricultural Society. Tenders for the wood-framed station were opened on June 2, 1856. When the line opened on September 25, 1856, the station hosted a single daily round trip which left London at 0900 and returned to the city at 1500.

The building's most memorable moment occurred three weeks later during the four day gala which celebrated the opening of the railway. On October 16th, a fourteen car train bearing invited guests steamed out of the station for Port Stanley to the thunderous military salute of several cannons and the cheers of 6,000 spectators. Returning from the shores of Lake Erie, the railway hosted a luncheon for three hundred guests. At the head table were the Mayors of Toronto, Detroit and London, the Managing Director of the GWR, and a host of local dignitaries.

L&PS SCHEDULE EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 27, 1856					
Read Down			Read Up		
Except Sun			Except Sun		
0700	1500	lv London ar	1100	1900	
0830	1630	ar Port Stanley lv	0930	1730	

The following day Nat Smith began a livery service linking the L&PS and GWR stations to facilitate connections. Ten days later, the L&PS added a second daily except Sunday round trip to Port Stanley.

In 1858, the legislature passed a law allowing the city to turn over to the L&PS the land lying north of Bathurst Street and south of the Great Western line between Wellington and Burwell Streets. The L&PS erected their enginehouse and freight shed upon the land.



**To Merchants and Forwarders!**

**A NEW ROUTE OPENED**

FOR THE CONVEYANCE OF FREIGHT

**TO & FROM LONDON, CANADA WEST.**

**THE LONDON AND  
PORT STANLEY RAILWAY**

Will, on the 25th September, 1856, commence carrying

**FREIGHT AND PASSENGERS**

And no delay will take place in the immediate delivery of goods arriving at Port Stanley for London and intermediate stations.

**A LINE OF STEAMERS**

FROM MONTREAL,

**TOUCHING AT OGDENSBURG & OSWEGO**

FOR

**AMERICAN FREIGHTS,**

Will be placed upon the Port Stanley Route. Arrangements are also making for connection, by Steamers, with

**BUFFALO AND CLEVELAND.**

The communication opened by the London and Port Stanley Railway will greatly increase the facilities for the transportation of Freights to and from the Seaboard, by the St. Lawrence, the Atlantic Cities, and all parts of the United States, direct with London, Canada West, at which City a great portion of the Northern and Western Trade is already concentrated.

**W. BOWMAN,**

Superintendent.

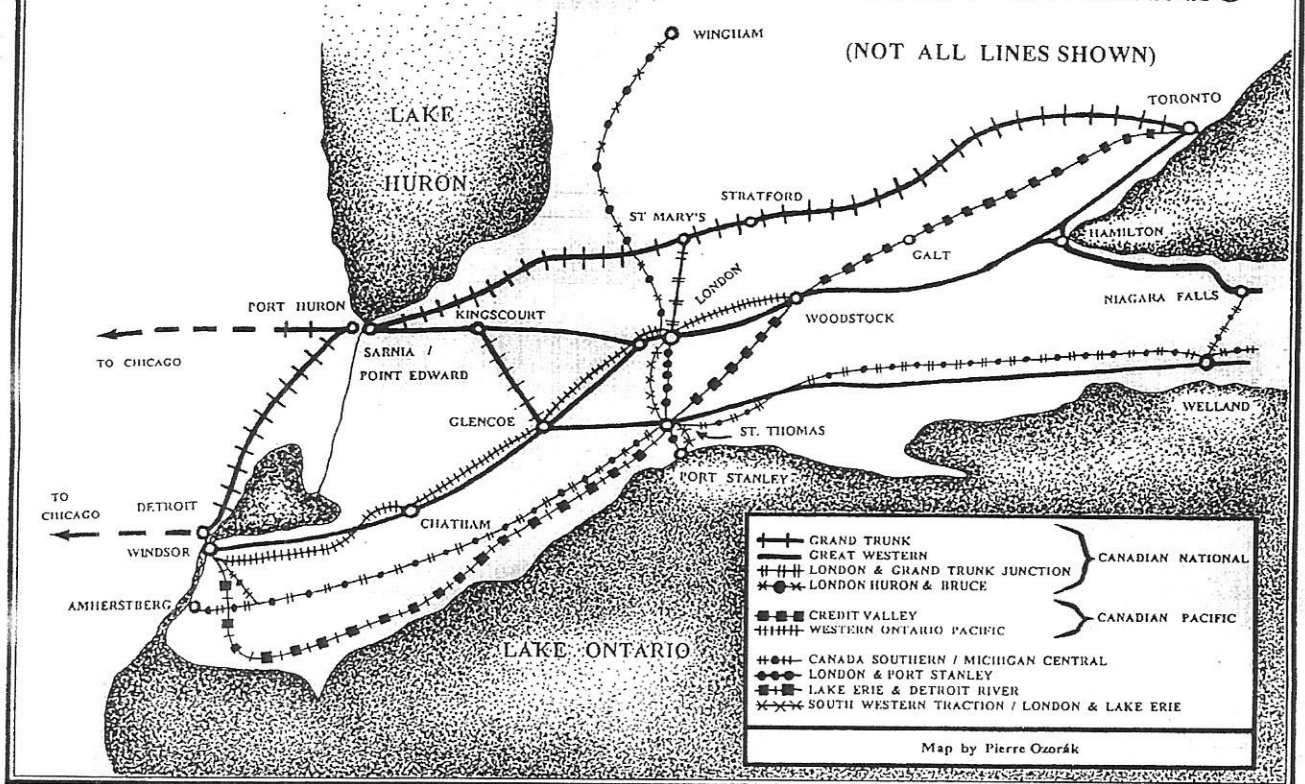
Office of the London and Port Stanley Railway Co.,  
London, Canada West, September, 1856.

### The Grand Trunk Railway

The Grand Trunk Railway (GTR) was the third railway to reach London. Initially, it was planned to link Montreal, Toronto, and Quebec City to a year-round ocean port thereby breaking the six month isolation of the colony when the St Lawrence River was frozen. A competition determined that Portland rather than Boston would be the port city. The early plans called for the GTR's western terminus to be at Hamilton. The GWR was to provide the western link to the railways in the American midwest at Detroit.

Captivated by the remarkable growth of traffic pouring out of the American midwest, the GTR's directors decided early in 1853 to build their own line from Toronto to Detroit via Guelph, Berlin (now called Kitchener) and Point Edward, a settlement adjacent to Sarnia. This fateful decision made the GTR and GWR competitors for the American traffic. As a result, southwestern Ontario became a checkerboard of competing rail projects as the GWR's response was to invade the GTR's territory by constructing branch lines to Guelph, Berlin and Sarnia in the 1850s.

# RAIL LINES IN SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO



While London remained a tempting target for the GTR, a string of financial crises, which began in April 1854 with the outbreak of the Crimean War, hampered the company. Matters reached such a low point that the company had to halt construction of the Toronto-Sarnia line at Stratford.

London's merchants looked askance at the GTR's Point Edward extension which they feared would divert the trade of the nine townships lying north of the city to rival communities along the GTR line. A public meeting was held in London's Town Hall on November 26, 1852 to discuss the matter. By popular vote, the Mayor was authorized to purchase GTR stock in an effort to influence the company to reroute its line to pass through London enroute to Point Edward. When this step failed, the extension of the L&PS northward across the GTR line to a point on Lake Huron was discussed in 1854 and 1855<sup>9</sup>. The financial difficulties involved in completing the Port Stanley-London portion of the L&PS effectively laid this idea to rest.

The London council, however, continued to seek a GTR connection. In 1855, a committee of the council was empowered to offer the GTR free station grounds in the city if the Toronto-Point Edward main line were diverted to run through London. While the GTR's Canadian directors were favourably disposed to the offer, the English Board, which had the final say, was cool to the idea which would have seen the GTR and GWR built parallel to one another<sup>10</sup>. By remaining well to the north of the GWR route, the GTR would have a monopoly on the traffic from the growing communities in this area.

In 1856, Stratford interests promoted the construction of a line to London as part of a line tapping the Bruce Peninsula. Not to be outdone, St Mary's, Stratford's rival, proposed that the London branch should connect with the GTR within its borders.

The citizens of this enterprising village secured a charter for the London and Grand Trunk Junction Railway (L&GTJ) on June 19, 1856 over the objections of Toronto's representatives in the legislature. The Torontonians feared that if the branch were built, the GTR would not complete its Point Edward line. This would leave the GWR as the sole Canadian connection with the midwestern American lines. Rather than co-operating with the GTR, they believed that the GWR would route this lucrative traffic to American railways through its Niagara Falls gateway thereby bypassing Toronto and depriving the GTR of a much needed source of traffic<sup>11</sup>.

The GWR was also displeased with the possibility of the GTR reaching into its territory. During the summer of 1856, directors of the two companies met in London to hammer out a mutually beneficial agreement to restrict competition. The GWR was ready to see the GTR build the L&GTJ to London. In lieu of the GT building to Point Edward, the GWR proposed that the two companies should share ownership of a London-Sarnia line. As part of the deal, the two companies would set their rates for traffic between the Detroit and Sarnia region and the Niagara Frontier and Toronto at the same level<sup>12</sup>.

Given the experiences of the next twenty years, it is doubtful if the two companies could have made such an agreement work. The passage of the Grand Trunk Relief Bill in the colonial legislature passed in May 1857 made the proposed agreement unworkable. In exchange for providing a fresh infusion of much needed government funding, the GTR agreed to complete both the Sarnia and London lines.

The GWR promptly announced it would build its long deferred London-Sarnia branch. The race was on! The GWR was the first company to reach Sarnia; its trains began running

to the town in December 1858. Because of the GTR's continuing financial troubles, it did not arrive at Point Edward until November 1859.

In 1857, the GTR toyed with the idea of acquiring the L&PS as part of a scheme to harry the GWR. For much of the nineteenth century, promoters with well-connected politician friends were able to acquire railway charters. While they lacked the means to actually construct the line, the schemers could sell the charter at any time for a 'consideration'. For a number of years, a plan to build a short line called the Great Southern Railway between Niagara Falls and Amherstburg had been touted. Such a line would be a serious threat to the GWR as it would be both shorter and free of the heavy grades on the GWR line. The GWR, however, refused to buy the Great Southern charter. Its promoters then approached the GTR. By finishing the L&GTJ, purchasing the L&PS and building the portion of the Great Southern between St Thomas and Amherstburg, the GTR could secure a line paralleling the GWR. As well, Amherstburg appeared to be the only place where the Detroit River could be bridged. Should this prove possible, it would eliminate the nuisance and expense of ferrying freight and passengers to and from Michigan points. The GTR's Canadian Board of Directors dropped the matter after the London Board reminded them that the current financial position prohibited taking on any new projects<sup>13</sup>. As well GTR had to comply with the terms of the Relief Bill requiring it to build to complete its own line to Sarnia<sup>14</sup>.

While the Canadian directors had been dicker with the Great Southern, the GTR's main line had been completed from Stratford to St Mary's Junction in November 1857. Progress on the L&GTJ, however, had hit a road block. Though the ceremonial first sod had been turned at St Mary's on July 16, 1857, a dispute with the St Mary's town council over the fulfilment of the agreement to provide a free right of way through the town delayed completion of the L&GTJ until September 1858. Immediately after the line was opened, it amalgamated with the GTR<sup>15</sup>. Because of the hitch at St Mary's, the GT actually built the line northwards from London starting in August 1857. To avoid using the GWR, the rails were shipped over the L&PS from Port Stanley to London and then carted to the GTR line which started at the city's eastern limit<sup>16</sup>.

While the city had fought to have the GTR serve it, the decision of the company not to extend the London line to Sarnia had left bitter feelings. Consequently, the council, which had been only too willing to provide free land and funding to the GWR and L&PS, spitefully stymied the GTR's efforts to enter the city.

Believing that the L&PS would be a valuable feeder and seeking to spend the least sum necessary to secure facilities, the GTR completed an agreement with the L&PS in February 1858 whereby it would use the L&PS London station, freight shed and yard for 99 years. For this privilege, the GTR offered to pay \$10,000 to the cash-strapped L&PS. The deal, however, was never consummated as London's aldermen opposed it.

The GTR then tried another tack. On June 24, 1858, it applied to the council for permission to extend its line within the city's limits along Hamilton Road. Council delayed making a decision by appointing a special committee to look into the request. Before the committee issued its report, the railway had completed the London branch to the city limits where it erected the necessary terminal facilities. Regular passenger service to London began on September 27, 1858. The date for the opening was no mere happenstance. The GTR took over the track from

the contractors to carry crowds to the Provincial Exhibition which opened in Toronto the same day<sup>17</sup>.

The initial schedule called for two departures and arrivals each day, one train was a through passenger train to Toronto and the other a mixed train. As surprising as it may seem to the modern reader, this was the first time that travellers could journey between London and Toronto without having to change trains. At this time, all the trains operating over the GWR main line were oriented to the American connections. Toronto was on the GWR branch line. All Toronto-London passengers had to change trains in Hamilton.

The GTR hedged its bets about the final location of its passenger facilities as the first patrons of the railway found only a simple open platform just east of Adelaide Street. As the GTR expected the council would allow it to extend its line along Hamilton Road to a point where it could either share the L&PS station or build its own facility, it would have been a waste of money to provide anything more lavish.

To move passengers the mile between the GTR and its downtown ticket office, the GTR resorted to a steam omnibus with a capacity of 40 passengers. Details of the vehicle are sketchy. The *Free Press* reported that "the gigantic locomotive machine" had been built by a Mr Davidson of the City Hotel in Hamilton about three years earlier and had had a chequered career<sup>18</sup>. While the longevity of the steam powered vehicle is unknown, the GTR continued to offer this free transfer service to its passengers until it moved its trains into the GWR station.

In October, council accepted the report of the committee which recommended that the GTR's request to build along

#### THE GTR'S SECOND LONDON STATION

In recounting tales of pioneer days, one often hears descriptions of peculiar make-shifts, but certainly nothing could surpass the primitive simplicity of the old ramshackle that for years sufficed as waiting room, ticket office and baggage room combined. Many citizens will recollect this shell, for it has only been within the last decade that it was swept out of existence by fire, and none too soon, for complaints of its unfitness for the purpose it served had been frequent, culminating on one occasion in an indignant protest from the citizens, who declared their intention of having it removed as a public nuisance and a disgrace to the enterprising spirit of the Western metropolis. An ungainly structure, about 18 x 20 feet, built of rough boards, with a high pitched roof, scarcely equal in size or quality to an ordinary cow shed, was the old depot. No superfluous adornment had been lavished upon the interior, the roof and walls being simply lined with plain boards and the whole divided into two small compartments. The flooring of rough plank, as time progressed, became a resort for a myriad of rats that gambolled fearlessly in the rooms or scampered rapidly around inspiring terror in the breasts of timorous travellers. One of the apartments, transformed into a general utility room, served as a ticket office, operator's room and baggage room combined, while the other was devoted to the use of the patrons of the line, and during the winter season generally presented a curious picture. There could be no complaint as to lack of ventilation, for the wind whistled through the crevices, making it necessary to maintain a glowing fire in the little stove by which the room was heated.

*London Free Press*, August 29, 1882



The Grand Trunk's Burwell Street station was located on the eastern edge of the downtown. The 1875 building was built in the popular Venetian Gothic style which the GTR adopted for its stations in such places as Niagara Falls, Hamilton and Sarnia. Across the tracks from the station was the large GTR freight shed.

*J J Talman Regional Collection/D B Weldon Library/University of Western Ontario*

Hamilton Road be refused as it would interfere with the rights of private citizens. Faced with this position, the railway realized it would not be entering the city for some time. With winter coming on, the company provided accommodation for its passengers in a brick building - most likely a portion of the existing freight house<sup>19</sup>. As rudimentary as the passenger facilities were, the GTR trains carried 14,235 passengers (an average of 70 per day) in their first nine months of operation.

Subsequently, the GTR was granted permission to extend its line to the northwest corner of Hamilton Road and Burwell Street, a location only somewhat less remote from the centre of the city than its first station site. There a small frame station was erected which greatly displeased civic boosters. This modest building, whose value did not exceed \$500, was destroyed by a fire on December 9, 1872.

To the chagrin of the citizens, the company did not start construction of a proper station. An old coach was parked on the site. It was used as a waiting room and office for the next two years<sup>20</sup>.

In May 1874, the GTR called for tenders for a new station which would replace the lack-lustre facilities employed since the GTR's arrival in the city 16 years earlier. The new building would be built on the site of the ill-fated second station at the intersection of Hamilton Road and Burwell Street. The contractors were London residents Christie and Green. Their tender of \$9,500 was almost \$3,000 below the GTR's Chief Engineer's estimate of the cost of the building<sup>21</sup>.

The structure was built in the Gothic style which became popular in England during the early years of Queen Victoria's reign. After this style was selected for the Dominion's new Parliament buildings, its popularity swept the country. Both the GTR and GWR became its enthusiastic devotees. While GTR's London station was the first major Gothic station, the GWR followed with new Gothic brick stations at Hamilton and Niagara Falls in 1875 and 1879.

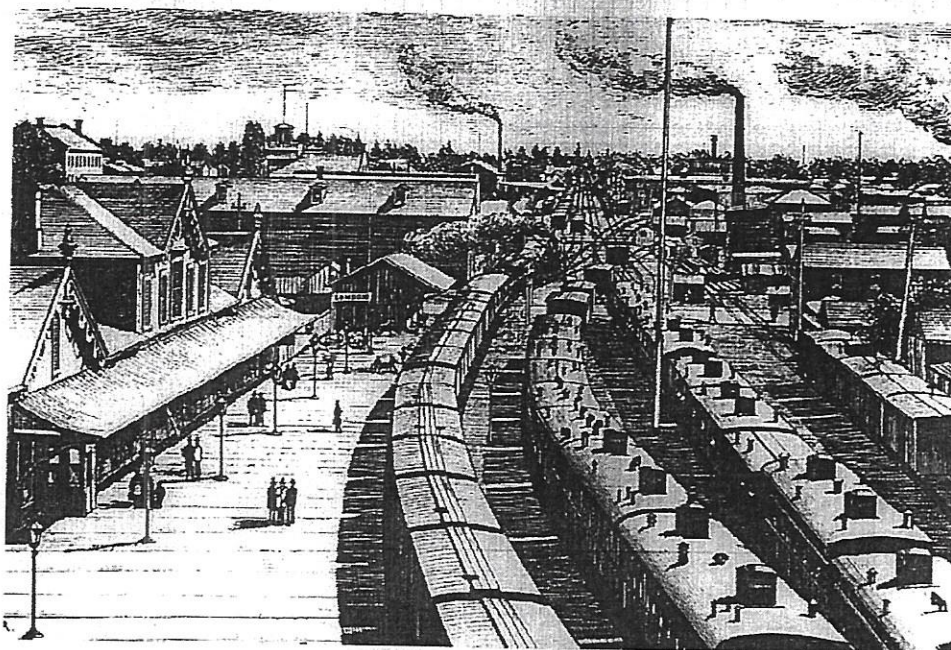
#### THE GTR'S THIRD PASSENGER STATION

The Grand Trunk authorities have at last become alive to the fact that something more substantial and seemly than an old broken down-down frame shanty, or an equally dilapidated second hand passenger coach is requisite for the accommodation of travellers by their branch line from this city to St Mary's . . . the contract to erect the building was awarded to Mr Thomas Green who started work in mid June. The new station house will be an ornament to that portion of the city in which it is placed . . . The building, which will be on the south side of the tracks, will be 137 feet 6 inches in length and 30 feet in width, will be situated near the corner of Bathurst and Burwell Streets, a short distance east of the old station. It will be one storey in height, faced with Brantford white brick, with the string courses, arches, &c., being composed of red brick. The style of the architecture is Arch-Venetian Gothic, and the roof will be one of slate, in order that any danger of fire from locomotive sparks may be averted.

The main building will be divided into a central part and east and west wings. The central part, which is 60 x 30 feet, will be devoted to large and commodious first and second class waiting rooms - each 27 x 28 feet in size - with a neat ticket office in the centre of the first class room. In the west wing, which is 35 x 26 feet, will be the offices for the agents and clerks and, adjacent to the general waiting room, the ladies waiting room. The east wing, which is 42 feet 6 inches by 26 feet, will be the baggage and express rooms and the water closets.

In connection with the new building, it is intended to lay a platform 300 feet in length by 18 feet in width with the whole covered by a canopy to protect the travellers from the elements. The total cost of these improvements is expected to be \$15,000.

Based on *London Free Press*, June 9 and November 20, 1874



While the GTR's trains continued to terminate in the outskirts of London, the GWR's downtown station presented a busy scene in this 1875 view. The narrow right of way through the town is congested with the heavy traffic generated by the GWR and L&PS. Behind the "London" sign on the station platform, is the wood building which served as the city's first station.

*Canadian Illustrated News*

The new London station opened on January 1, 1875. The *Free Press* reporter, however, was not impressed with the GTR's addition to the city. Reviewing the new building, he commented, "The style is Venetian Gothic which is somewhat new in these parts. The red brick ornamentation around the tops of the windows and corners and the staircase style of roof with almost upright slated sides at once attract attention, if they do not please the eye."

As events were to unfold, the Burwell Street station would only be used as a passenger facility for seven years.

### Consolidation

London had the dubious distinction of being one of the few cities in the Dominion during the 1850s and 1860s to have three separate stations.

The situation changed in 1870. The year before, the GWR had begun negotiations to secure a piece of land adjacent to its main line which was owned by the L&PS. The 110 by 500 foot plot was along the north side of Bathurst Street between Waterloo and Colborne Streets. On April 25, 1870, the L&PS agreed to lease the land to the GWR for 99 years for an annual rental of \$1 with the stipulation that it could only be used for workshops. As the L&PS station was on this piece of land, the GWR granted the L&PS free use of its Richmond Street station and the right to operate trains over the GWR track between the junction with the L&PS at Waterloo Street and the station. At the GWR station, the L&PS was accorded the free use of the waiting rooms, platforms, and baggage checking facilities. The GWR even agreed to have its clerks sell L&PS tickets. During the summer of 1870, the L&PS trains began to operate to the GWR station<sup>22</sup>. This lease would be the source of much debate and ill-will during the second decade of the twentieth century.

In 1874, the relationship between the L&PS and GWR deepened. By this time, the L&PS was in very poor physical and financial shape. Both the GWR and GTR had completed regauging of their track from 5 feet 6 inches to the American

standard of 4 feet 8 1/2 inches. The L&PS had been built to the broad gauge, but lacked the funds to convert its track or equipment. The GWR stepped into the breach with an offer to lease the railway for 20 years. The company undertook to rehabilitate the line, convert it to standard gauge, purchase the worn-out locomotives and rolling stock, and provide its own equipment to operate the line.

Continuing its role as a supporter of railways, London pledged a bonus of \$100,000 in 1874 to the London Huron and Bruce Railway (LH&B) which sought to build a 60 mile line from London to Blyth<sup>23</sup>. After being taken over by the GWR, the LH&B completed its line from Hyde Park, a community four miles west of London, northwards through Blyth to Wingham in 1876. The opening of the line was marked by a two

day celebration whose culmination was a banquet for 800 at London's city hall on January 11, 1876. From the time passenger service was started on January 17th, the trains used the GWR's Richmond Street station.

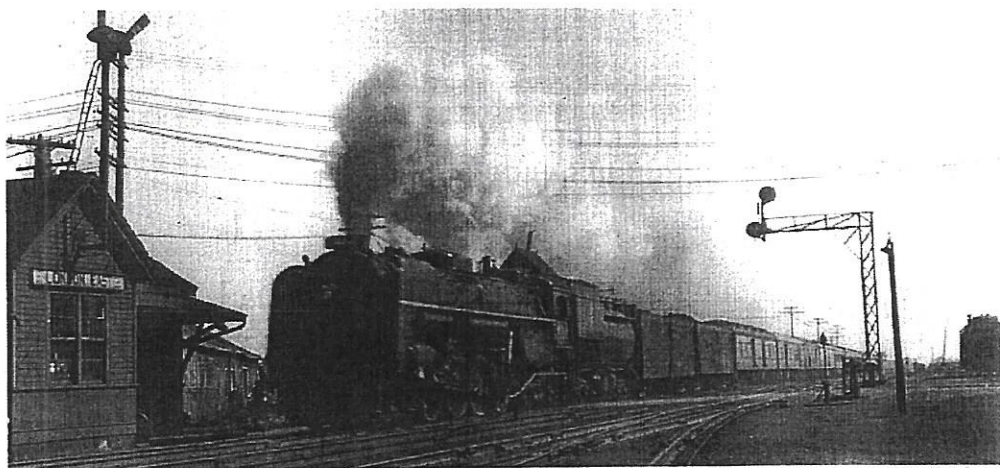
By the early 1880s, the fortunes of the GWR had taken a turn for the worse. The difficulties had started in 1869 when a charter was granted to the Canada Southern Railway (CSR) to build the long planned line from Niagara Falls to Amherstburgh through St Thomas. As it stood to lose a good deal of its through traffic to the new line, the GWR secured a charter to build a competing line. The Canada Air Line Railway would leave the GWR main line at Glencoe and run via St Thomas to Fort Erie, opposite Buffalo. Both lines were completed in 1873. Lacking a friendly western connection, the CSR almost immediately entered receivership. The fortunes of the company started to improve in 1878 after the New York Central & Hudson River Railroad (NYC&HR) took an interest in the line. The GWR derived most of its through traffic from the Michigan Central Railroad (MCR). As the MCR was controlled by the Vanderbilt family, the owners of the NYC&HR, it was not long before the MCR started sending traffic over the CSR. By 1882, the GWR was faced with the fact that as of January 1, 1883, its traffic agreements with the MCR would be terminated and most MCR traffic would thereafter be routed over the CSR.

The GTR had also moved to outflank the GWR. In 1880, it had extended its own line from Point Huron, opposite Point Edward, to Chicago. Initially called the Chicago & Grand Trunk, it would be renamed the Grand Trunk Western after a corporate reorganization in 1900. With its two competitors having direct lines to the Chicago hub, the GWR was placed in a very vulnerable position. The British investors in the GWR and GTR decided that the best course would be to fuse the two companies thereby eliminating needless competition. The GWR became part of the GTR on August 12, 1882, 28 years after the first merger discussions between the two companies had occurred.

After a connection was built to the former-GWR main line west of the Burwell Street station, the GT's passenger trains began to operate into the ex-GWR station on August 29, 1882. While passengers ceased to use the Burwell Street station, the building remained in use as a bonded freight facility. The structure was demolished in 1958 after serving as a railway storage facility for many years. When it stopped handling passengers, the staff at the Burwell Street station consisted of a passenger agent, a ticket agent who also acted as telegrapher, a baggage-man, a cashier, six clerks, while a foreman, four checkers, and twelve labourers worked in the freight shed situated across the tracks from it.

#### London's First Suburban Station

During the 1870s, London developed its first major suburb as manufacturing companies established large plants just outside the eastern border of the city. The new community which had been organized as a village in 1872 was called London East. By 1878, the bustling community was the site of the GWR car shops, the Ontario Car Company (a manufacturer of railway cars), and several petroleum refining plants. That year, the GWR spent £244 to erect a small station at Rectory Street, 1.3 miles east of



Northern 6241 rolls a swollen consist of train 17, the Inter-City Limited, past the London East station in September 1942.

*George Harris/Kenneth MacDonald Collection*

the Richmond Street station. No details have been uncovered concerning the original structure. In a 1920 inventory, the GT reported that the East London station was a wooden building measuring 80 by 17 feet<sup>24</sup>.

London East never was a major passenger point. The only trains which stopped were GWR's London-Hamilton locals and, after the amalgamation with the GTR, the London-Stratford trains. During the 1930s, only one southbound and two northbound London-Stratford trains paused at the building. Passenger trains ceased making the stop between 1932 and 1936. The building, however, remained in use for many years thereafter serving as a train order point and clerical office for the large freight yard on the east side of the city.

#### New Railways Arrive

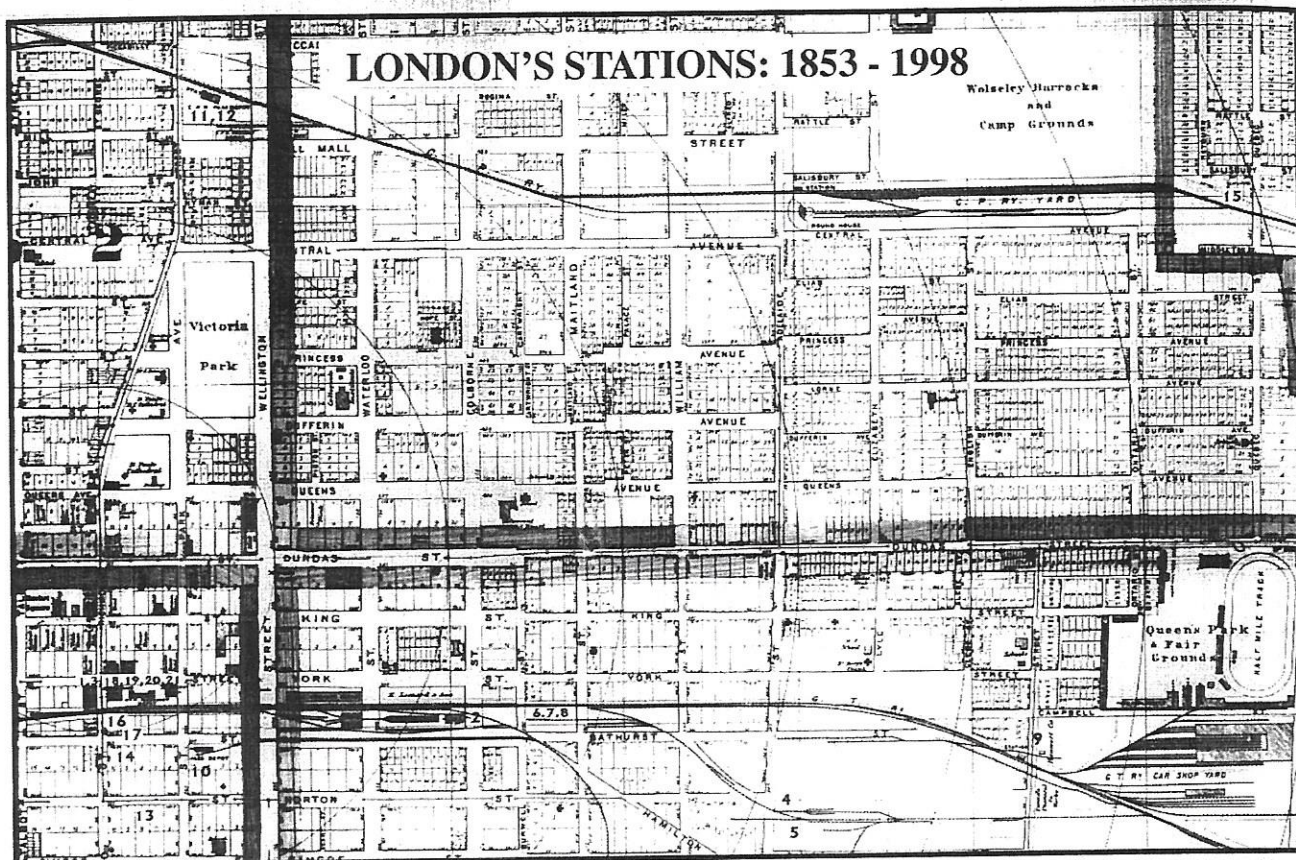
The consolidation of all the passenger traffic at the Richmond Street Station was to be brief. The merchants of the city fumed over the monopoly which the GTR now held over their affairs. At this time, government regulation did not require the railways to use standard tariffs. Shippers in communities with only one railway usually paid much higher rates than those located at competitive points served by two or more lines. One London manufacturer complained that to ship his goods from London to Montreal the GTR charged \$2.77 per set; his competitors sending the same goods to Montreal from Hamilton and Chicago paid \$0.95 and \$1.20 respectively<sup>25</sup>.

After the GWR leased the L&PS in 1874, some London merchants secured a charter to build an independent railway to Lake Erie. The London Junction



The Great Western Station was built in the Regency Gothic cottage style which was in favour during the 1840s and 1850s. The central two storey pavilion, which could have been the home of a well-to-do citizen, was flanked by two broad wings. To cope with rising traffic, the GTR added the board and batten wooden extension on the left to the building after the turn of the century. At this time, the dining room was located in the brick wing beside the wooden extension. The next door lead to a refreshment room (a euphemism for a bar). This was followed by the general waiting room, the ticket office, ladies waiting room, and baggage rooms in the far wing. The division superintendent and clerical offices were on the second floor.

*London Room/London Public Library*

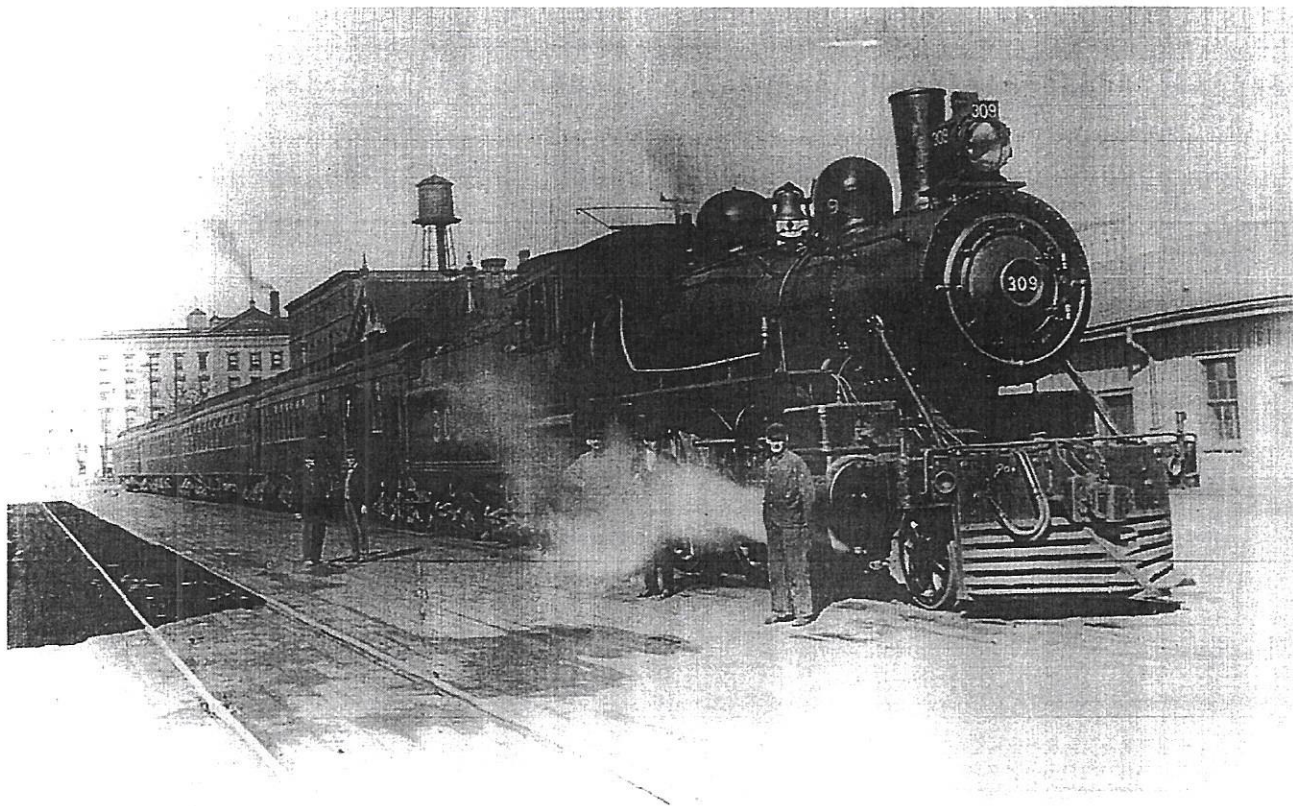


Station Number on Map	Railway Which Built the Station	Years Station Served by Passenger Trains	Subsequent History	Station Number on Map	Railway Which Built the Station	Years Station Served by Passenger Trains	Subsequent History
1	Great Western	1853-1857	Served as baggage shed until 1880s	12	Western Ontario Pacific (CPR)	1893-1971	Used as railway divisional offices, now a bar
2	London & Port Stanley	1856-1870	Demolished for Great Western enginehouse	13	Southwestern Traction	1906-1918	Now a Salvation Army facility
3	Great Western	1857-1935	Demolished for new station built on site	14	London & Port Stanley	1915-1916	Temporary storefront station on Bathurst Street east of Richmond Street
4	Grand Trunk	1858	Open platform only	15	Canadian Pacific	1912-1952	Quebec Street station used for railway offices until demolished in late 1950s
5	Grand Trunk	1858-187		16	London & Port Stanley	1917-1931	Demolished for grade separation project
6	Grand Trunk	187-1872	Destroyed by fire	17	London & Port Stanley	1931-1936	Used to house train dispatchers after passenger ticket sales and baggage transferred to CN station
7	Grand Trunk	1872-1874	Coach outfitted as temporary station	18	Canadian National	1935-1936	Temporary quarters in CN office building at corner of Richmond and York Streets
8	Grand Trunk	1875-1882	Became freight facility, extant until 1958	19	Canadian National	1936-1963	Demolished as site cleared for redevelopment
9	Grand Trunk	1878-1937	London East station	20	Canadian National (tenant of developer)	1963-1970	Moved station facilities to new building
10	London & South Eastern (MCR/NYC)	1887-1915	Used as a freight office until 1937	21	Canadian National (tenant of developer)	1970-	Building acquired by VIA from developer in 1997
11	Western Ontario Pacific (CPR)	1887-1893					

Note: ( ) acronym in brackets stands for corporate parent / CPR = Canadian Pacific Railway / MCR = Michigan Central Railway / NYC = New York Central Railroad

new agreement, which was dated March 20, 1893, included a clause making the L&SE London station, freight sheds and round-house joint facilities for the MCR and L&PS. Before the agreements could be consummated, the Miller Syndicate collapsed. Another Cleveland, a Mr Zerbe, stepped in to replace Miller. This group was as poorly financed as the first. As the Syndicate failed to pay the GTR the rental due for the passenger train, the GTR repossessed its equipment. For a three day period between

May 9th and 12th, no trains ran from London to Port Stanley. The MCR, however, continued to operate its three daily except Sunday round trips between London and St Thomas. Service to Port Stanley resumed on May 13th after the Syndicate persuaded the MCR to rent them a train. By mid July the Syndicate was forced from the scene and the MCR was operating the line on a month to month lease.



A handsome GTR passenger train stands before the London station during the early years of this century. The Tecumseh Hotel, the largest and most prestigious in the city, is the light brick building at the rear of the train.

*J J Talman Regional Collection/D B Weldon Library/University of Western Ontario*

system using alternating current which required two overhead wires. After a fire in 1907, the system was replaced with a more conventional direct current one.

When operations began between London and Talbotville, a point 2.5 miles northwest of St Thomas, on June 4, 1906, it had not yet completed its London terminal. The site selected comprised two lots on the south side of Horton Street between Richmond and Clarence Streets, just one block south of the GTR Richmond Street station. While it waited for a permanent structure to be erected, the SWT used a temporary frame depot erected on part of its Horton Street property.

The permanent station was completed in October 1906. Outwardly, it resembled the large Queen Anne style mansions being built by wealthy Edwardians. The two storey building was 80 feet long and 40 feet wide. The exterior was of red brick with yellow stone trim. A three storey tower gave the building an imposing presence. On the ground floor were the waiting rooms, ticket offices, newsstand and washrooms. Company offices were located on the second floor. The total cost of the building was the impressive sum of \$12,000<sup>39</sup>. [At this time a four bedroom house could be built for approximately \$3,000.]

After SWT completed its line to Port Stanley in October 1907, the PM's service over the L&PS rapidly lost its passengers to the hourly SWT trains which ran from early morning though late evening. When speaking of the L&PS in 1912, London Mayor C Graham stated, "It is simply a coal road now. The passenger business has been allowed to go by default."<sup>40</sup>



No photos of the Southwest Traction's London station have been found. As part of an article describing the new building which would serve as the terminal, the London Advertiser produced a sketch of the front of the building which was erected on Horton Street.

*London Advertiser*, June 1, 1906

### Stormy Relations

The dawn of the new century saw a distinct change in the relationship between London and its railways. While the Victorians had welcomed the railway and lavished civic money upon many competing railway projects, the new century would see sharp clashes between railway leaders and civic authorities.

Two major disagreements, which were to have lasting consequences, occurred in the first decade of the twentieth century. The first involved the L&PS. While the LE&DR had been taken over by the Pere Marquette Railroad in 1903, the PM did not officially take over the LE&DR's lease of the L&PS until 1906. The PM found that several bridges were too light to bear the weight of the heavier locomotives and coal cars being used. The PM's offered to bear the expense of replacing the bridges if the city council would extend the L&PS lease for thirty years beyond its 1914 expiry date.

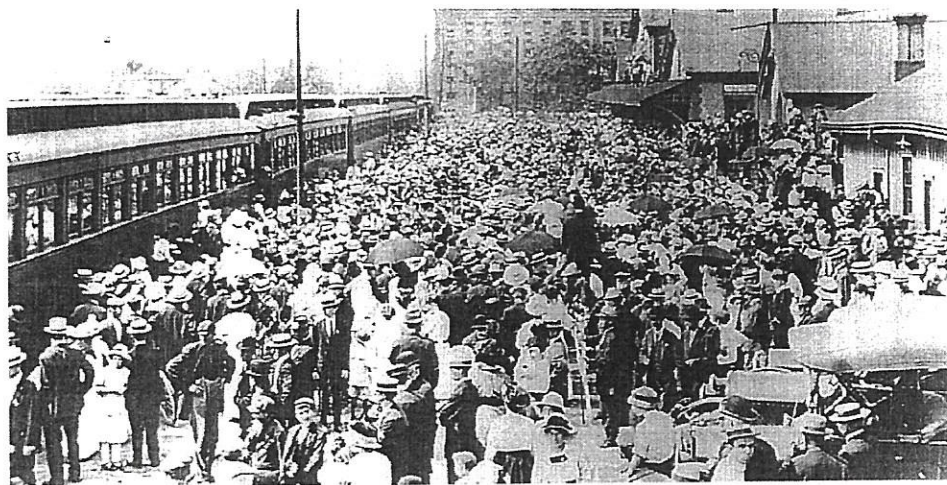
Mayor Adam Beck opposed the extension. A strong advocate of municipalities ownership of utilities, he believed that the L&PS would be better off if it were electrified and operated by the city. Shortly thereafter, Beck became a provincial cabinet minister and created Ontario Hydro, the provincial hydro utility.

### A Lost Opportunity

The late 1890s found the GTR under the dynamic management of the American Charles Hays. He resigned his position as Vice President of the Wabash Railway to become General Manager of the GTR on January 1, 1896. Faced with large increases in traffic, Hays energetically pursued plans to reduce grades and double track the main line from Montréal to Chicago. Investors rushed to provide the company with the financing needed to improve infrastructure and to replace many of the antiquated small locomotives and cars on the roster as the company's net income soared from a loss of £43,000 in 1896 to a profit of £833,326 ten years later.

By the turn of the century, the end of the fifteen year project to improve the Montreal-Toronto line was in sight. Attention then turned to the main line across southwestern Ontario. As London lay in the Thames River valley, trains had to surmount grades on both sides of the river. The heaviest grade existed from a point west of the Richmond Street station to Komoka, the junction for the Sarnia and Windsor lines. In 1900, the GTR completed plans to reduce this grade by raising its tracks over the Thames River and by digging a deep cut through the hill leading to Komoka.

Two operating problems caused the GTR to expand their initial plans. These were the desire to reduce the grade east of the station and to eliminate the many level crossings across the city, which not only slowed train operations, but were a major source of litigation due to the many accidents. After several years of discussion with the city, matters came to a head in 1906. On March 16th, the company submitted its plans to the city council. Starting from Rectory Street on the east side of the



As the troops left for the battlefields of Europe in 1915, crowds flooded the platform at the GTR's station to see their loved ones and friends depart.

*J J Talman Regional Collection/D B Weldon Library/University of Western Ontario*

city, the tracks were to be elevated across the city. The massive project would have raised the main line by 20 feet at Richmond Street and by 27.5 feet at Wharncliffe Road on the west bank of the Thames River. The section between Rectory and Ridout Streets was to be placed upon an earth embankment. West of Ridout Street, a trestle would have been erected on the existing embankment. All streets would be placed in subways except for Adelaide, William and Burwell Streets. The level crossing would be retained at Adelaide, while the GTR asked the city to close the other two streets.

The plans also included a new \$100,000 station. Adopting a suggestion of the city council, the company placed the centre of its new station over Clarence Street. The large building was to have extended from a point just east of the existing station eastward to the mid-point of the next block. At the station, there would be five station tracks and two freight by-pass tracks. Though the GTR wanted have Clarence Street closed, the city

### RICHMOND STREET STATION IN THE 1910S

In those days, before grade separation, everyone walking in the vicinity of the GTR Richmond Street station would never walk a block eastward or westward on a nearby street when they could walk from Richmond Street to Clarence Street or vice versa across the GTR station platform, for there was always action there to be seen. Clarence Street was continually blocked by trains, but that didn't matter - you just walked around them. Here there were always crowds of travellers, lugging handbags and suitcases; hand-trucks piled high with express or mail being pushed to or from the baggage cars for loading or unloading; standing engines steaming away with their safety-valves popping, impatient to be on their way; the stentorian tones of the stationmaster as he droned out the destinations of the various trains, then clanging the big gong high above the platform outside his office door, indicating that all the station-work for that particular train was finished - the GTR station was a real action centre. It had the reputation of being the hottest spot in London, and often on extremely hot days one would see GTR men with small frying-pans trying to fry an egg in the sun.

George, E. *The Steam Age in Western Ontario*, F. J. Ram, Publisher, London, Ontario, 1975

and opened its own ticket office and baggage room in a brick building facing Richmond Street. The modest nature of the facilities can be judged by comparing the investment in the London and St Thomas stations. In 1924 the Richmond Street facility was valued at \$6,254, while the new brick station in St Thomas was valued at \$45,973. A total of five men were employed at London station: three in the ticket office and two as baggagemen. During the 1920s, their wages were between \$75 and \$110 per month<sup>54</sup>.

While there were lingering problems over the London station, the revamped L&PS was an immediate success. The new electric cars, which provided both fast and frequent service, and the expanded attractions at Port Stanley revitalized the passenger business. Passenger counts went from 105,559 in 1915, the last year of PM steam train service, to 896,508 in 1916. The numbers kept climbing until they reached 1,045,496 in 1921. Faced with the increase in business, the L&PS sought to expand its London facilities. In the fall of 1921, it approached the GTR with a request to take over the ground floor of the building the GTR owned at the corner of Richmond and Bathurst Streets, put up a new express building and relocate its tracks. When the GTR tried to make the use of this building conditional upon the L&PS giving up its rights to use the Richmond Street station under the agreement of 1870, the L&PS refused and remained on the land accorded to it by BRC decision of 1915<sup>55</sup>.

The thriving fortunes of the L&PS meant hard times for the London & Lake Erie Railway. With its circuitous and roadside alignment, it could not match the trips times of the L&PS. In 1918, the company ceased operations. Its station on Horton Street is extant today as part of a Salvation Army complex.

### The Long Goodbye

Meantime, the Richmond Street station had passed its fiftieth anniversary. The event was not one which the citizens celebrated. On July 17, 1915, James Walsh of Stratford wrote a letter to the BRC complaining about the "present barn" which was an eyesore and out of date. BRC dispatched Inspector Clark to make a survey of the situation. He found the building to be in a poor state (see sidebar). Its antiquity was reflected by the state of the washrooms. While the GTR had just installed cramped indoor washroom facilities in the building, the CPR's patrons had been enjoying spacious ones for the last two decades. Clark found that the old outhouse was boarded up and awaiting approval for its demolition. In responding to Clark's report, the GTR's General Council, W Chisholm on August 4th, said, "While the passenger station at London is not a new one, it does afford reasonable facilities for the business transacted there at present and it would be impossible for this company at this time to cope with the large expenditure which the building of a new station would necessitate<sup>56</sup>."



Shortly after the turn of the century, the Grand Trunk painted the exterior brick work of its station as part of its efforts to rejuvenate the old building. In 1910, several Grand Trunk officials stand beside their official inspection train carrying GT Chairman Rivers-Wilson on his annual inspection of the property. Few would have expected the station would endure 26 more years. Charles M Hays Collection/National Archives of Canada/PA21868

To placate criticism, Chisholm informed the BRC on September 17th that the station would be redecorated. During the fall of 1915, the company also extended one platform 200 feet east of Clarence Street to accommodate the longer trains being run.

By this time, the GTR was facing a difficult financial situation due to its unwise decision to expand into western Canada. War time inflation and decisions by the BRC not to grant needed rate increases compounded the problem and left the company in a very tight financial situation. In 1916 it sought government financial assistance for its western line, the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway (GTP).

Faced with the pending collapse of the Canadian Northern (CNO), the third transcontinental railway, the government appointed a Commission to study the railway situation. In 1917, the Commission's report was received which recommended nationalizing the GTR, GTP and CNO. Out of this crisis emerged the Canadian National Railways (CNR). The GTR, which was the final component to be added to the government owned railway, was taken over in January 1923.

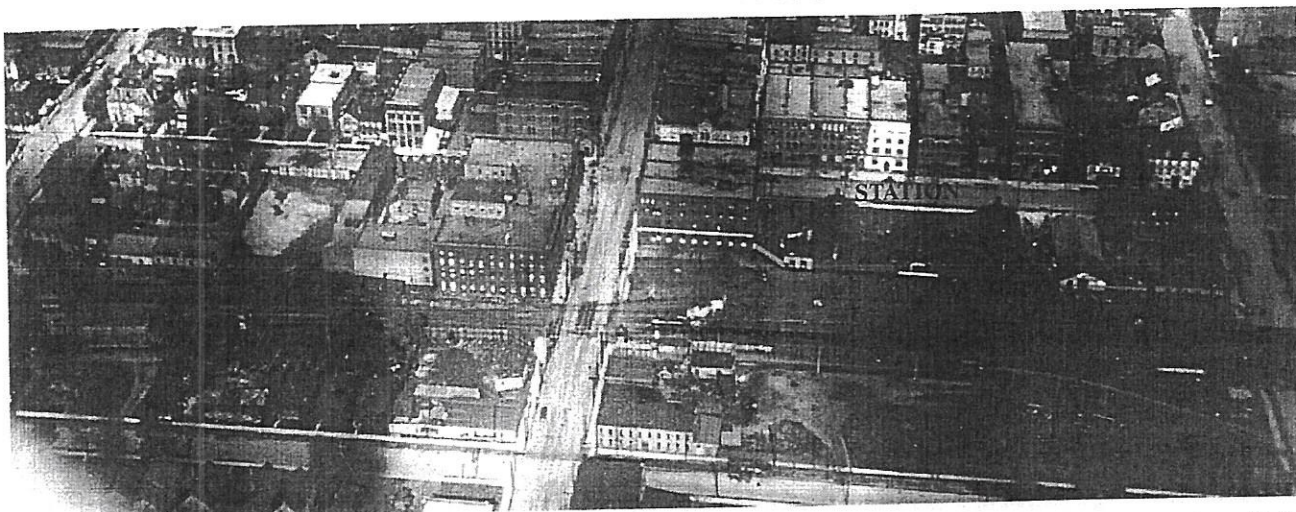
While the railway crisis was being resolved, the BRC was again considering the London station. In 1918, George Spence, the BRC's Chief Operating Officer, reported, "The station at present is clean and tidy, but it is a very old building. It is heated by coal stoves, and has had several temporary alterations and additions made to the interior which do not add to the appearance or comfort . . . The ticket office is altogether too small and the ticket wickets themselves are small and not at all suitable for the heavy business offering. They appear to be selling on an average of about 700 tickets per day, with total earnings of about \$25,000 per month. This creates a lot of traffic for the waiting room accommodation and, in addition, there is a considerable transfer traffic; passengers having to wait over from one train to another. Besides all this, the office accommodation

GRAND TRUNK AND PERE MARQUETTE TRAINS USING GRAND TRUNK'S RICHMOND STREET STATION JUNE 28, 1914

No	Train Name	Frequency	Origin	Destination	Arrive	Leave	Notes
8	Detroit & New York Express	Daily	Chicago	New York	0014	0019	Solid Through Train*
4	Lehigh Express	Daily	Chicago	New York	0343	0348	Solid Through Train*
7	Buffalo & Chicago Express	Daily	Buffalo	Chicago	0447	0452	Thru cars from New York to Chicago*
PM41		Ex Sun	London	Port Stanley		0530	
14	Chicago & Montreal Express	Daily	Chicago/Detroit	Montreal	0540	0545	Thru Chicago-Boston sleeping car
28		Ex Sun	London	Toronto via Guelph		0600	
113		Ex Sun	London	Detroit		0635	
78		Ex Sun	London	Hamilton		0720	
109		Ex Sun	London	Port Huron		0740	
165		Ex Sun	London	Wingham		0830	
PM40		Ex Sun	Port Stanley	London	0845		
110		Ex Sun	Port Huron	London	0850		
80	Ontario Limited	Ex Sun	London	Toronto		0900	
	Steamship Special	Tues, Fri, Sun	Sarnia Wharf	Toronto	0930	0935	Connects with Northern Navigation steamship from Fort William
PM		Daily	London	Port Stanley		0945	
168		Ex Sun	London	Toronto via Guelph		1000	
164		Ex Sun	Wingham	London	1000		
12		Ex Sun	Windsor	London	1023		
11		Ex Sun	Suspension Bridge	London	1056		
13	Montreal & Chicago Express	Daily	Montreal	Chicago	1106	1113	Switch Montreal-Detroit sleeping car to tr 115 Drop Toronto-London parlour car
169		Ex Sun	Toronto	London via Guelph	1115		
3	Chicago Express	Daily	New York	Chicago	1122	1127	Solid Through Train*
115		Daily	London	Windsor		1135	
6	Atlantic Express	Daily	Chicago	Buffalo/Toronto	1155	1205	
32		Ex Sun	London	Toronto via Guelph		1230	
	Steamship Special	Mon, Wed, Sat	Toronto	Sarnia Wharf	1240	1245	Connects to Northern Navigation steamship to Fort William
PM45		Ex Sun	London	Port Stanley		1315	
171		Ex Sun	Toronto	London via Guelph	1339		
111		Ex Sun	London	Port Huron		1340	
PM42		Daily	Port Stanley	London	1340		
12		Ex Sun	London	Suspension Bridge		1405	
11		Ex Sun	London	Windsor		1405	
PM47		Daily	London	Port Stanley		1430	
170		Ex Sun	London	Toronto via Guelph		1445	
114		Daily	Detroit	London	1600		
2		Daily	Port Huron	Suspension Bridge/Toronto	1610	1625	Switch in London-Toronto parlour car
PM44		Ex Sun	Port Stanley	London	1627		
167		Ex Sun	London	Wingham		1640	
172		Ex Sun	London	Toronto via Guelph		1655	
PM49		Ex Sun	London	Port Stanley		1705	
PM46		Ex Sun	Port Stanley	London	1752		
166		Ex Sun	Wingham	London	1810		
15	Pacific Express	Daily	Suspension Bridge	London	1830		Through Buffalo-Chicago coach. Switch tourist and sleeping cars to train 1
112		Ex Sun	Port Huron	London	1825		
173		Ex Sun	Toronto	London via Guelph	1845		
16	Eastern Flyer	Daily	Detroit	Toronto	1850	1853	
1	International Limited	Daily	Montreal	Chicago	1955	2020	Switch parlour car and coach to train 15 Drop parlour-buffet car
PM48		Daily	Port Stanley	London	2000		
15		Daily	London	Detroit		2005	
PM53		Daily	London	Port Stanley		2030	
87		Ex Sun	Hamilton	London	2245		
116		Ex Sun	Detroit	London	2305		Thru Detroit-Toronto sleeping car. Switch coach to train 14
37		Ex Sun	Toronto	London via Guelph	2330		
PM54		Daily	Port Stanley	London	2345		

Note: \* Through service operated jointly via Lehigh Valley Railroad

PM = Pere Marquette



A series of aerial photos were taken of London in 1919. This view shows the GTR's rambling Richmond Street station hemmed in by the London Shoe Company factory on the left and the Dominion Hotel on the right. Immediately adjacent to the GTR main line, is the small ticket office and covered platform which served the London & Port Stanley. A Grand Trunk passenger train stands on the main line.

*Bishop Barker Company/National Archives of Canada/PA30396*

at the corner of York and Clarence was the Dominion Hotel. Between 1926 and 1930, CN purchased both of these properties to assemble the grounds for the larger station it planned to build. As a temporary measure, CN demolished the Dominion Hotel and built a new express building on the site\*. CN then rearranged the ground floor of the station moving the station restaurant into the space formerly occupied by the express department.

On December 7, 1926, a delegation led by the Mayor met Sir Henry to discuss the new station and grade separation projects. As a result of the meeting, a special committee was appointed to look into the question. CN's representatives were A E Warren, the General Manager of the Central Region; C Brown, Chief Engineer; and C Forrester, Superintendent of the London Division. London's representatives were the Mayor and two aldermen. As the city knew it would have to make a significant financial contribution towards the cost of any grade separations, moderation became part of its stance. Before the end of December it was announced that the ambitious plans prepared by the GTR 20 years earlier had been dropped. Rather than completing the scheme to raise the tracks across the city, which was estimated to cost \$12 million, the parties agreed that only more modest plans would be discussed. The city stated it was even ready to consider closing some streets.

Even with this understanding, it took another three years to hammer out an agreement. CN looked at placing the new station both on the existing site and two blocks further east along York Street near Wellington Street. On December 2, 1929, the citizens were asked to vote upon a tentative agreement to have CN to build new station and freight sheds at its own expense, to close Talbot, Clarence, Waterloo, Colborne and William Streets, and to build the following grade separations:

1. subways at Richmond and Wellington Streets by December 31, 1932;
2. a subway at Ridout Street by December 31, 1937 if so requested by the city;
3. subways at Adelaide or Rectory Street, one to be completed by December 31, 1939 and the other by December 31, 1942;
4. a subway at Maitland Street by December 31, 1947; and
5. an overpass on Egerton Street by December 31, 1937.

CN was to complete the new combined station office building by December 31, 1932. With regard to the L&PS, it agreed to provide a subway from its new station to the L&PS tracks, to provide adequate facilities to handle L&PS baggage and to construct a stairway from the Richmond Street subway to the L&PS platform. After the citizens approved the agreement by a vote of 14,501 to 2,202, the city and CN signed the agreement on January 6, 1930.

Before it could start work on the Richmond Street subway, CN had to move its divisional engineering, road and water offices from various small buildings they occupied along Richmond Street between the L&PS station and the corner of Bathurst Street. They moved into the former London Shoe Factory building in November 1930.

On a visit to London on February 5, 1931, Sir Henry Thornton spoke in glowing terms of the changes to be made. He said, "When our landscaping department is finished with beautifying of the company's property in London, the Garden of Eden will look like a piker."

When pressed for details of the new station, he admitted that he could not say what type or size of station would be built as the plans were not fully completed. He concluded, "We can not say just now when the work on the station will be started, the new depot will be entirely suitable to the needs of the community."

When he spoke, the effects of the depression were bearing down upon the railway and his presidency. Since 1928, freight and passenger traffic had fallen by over 35% and the company's losses had almost tripled. The new Conservative government looked with little favour upon Thornton who had been appointed by the previous Liberal incumbents. Thornton retired in 1932 and was replaced by a Board of Trustees whose main aim was curtailing expenditures. As a result of the deteriorating financial position, the only work undertaken was the Richmond and Wellington Street subways which were completed during 1932. As part of this work, CN slightly raised, realigned and expanded the number of its tracks through this part of the city. To complete this task required moving the L&PS passenger tracks and facilities to the north side of Bathurst Street. The L&PS