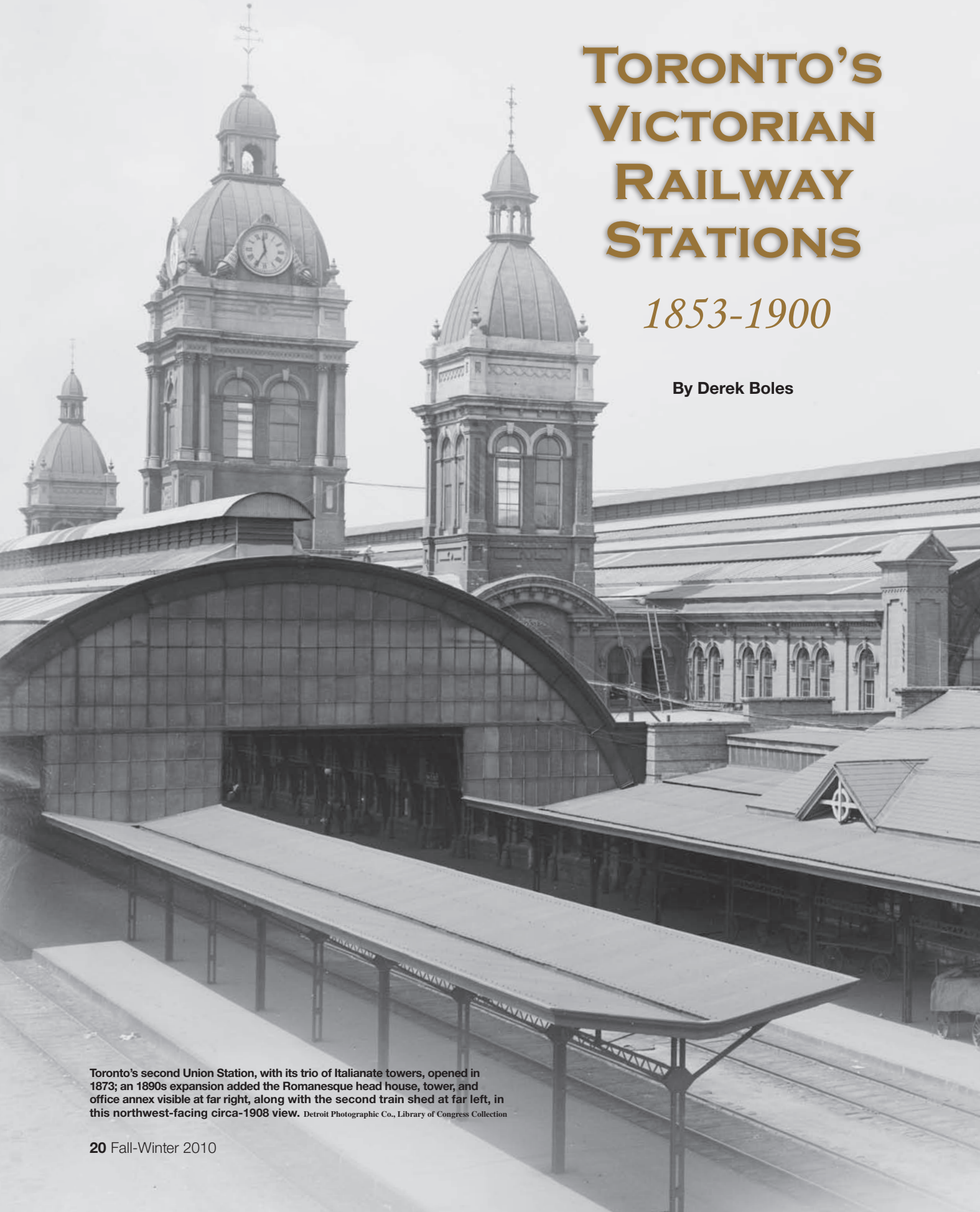
Toronto's Victorian Railway Stations

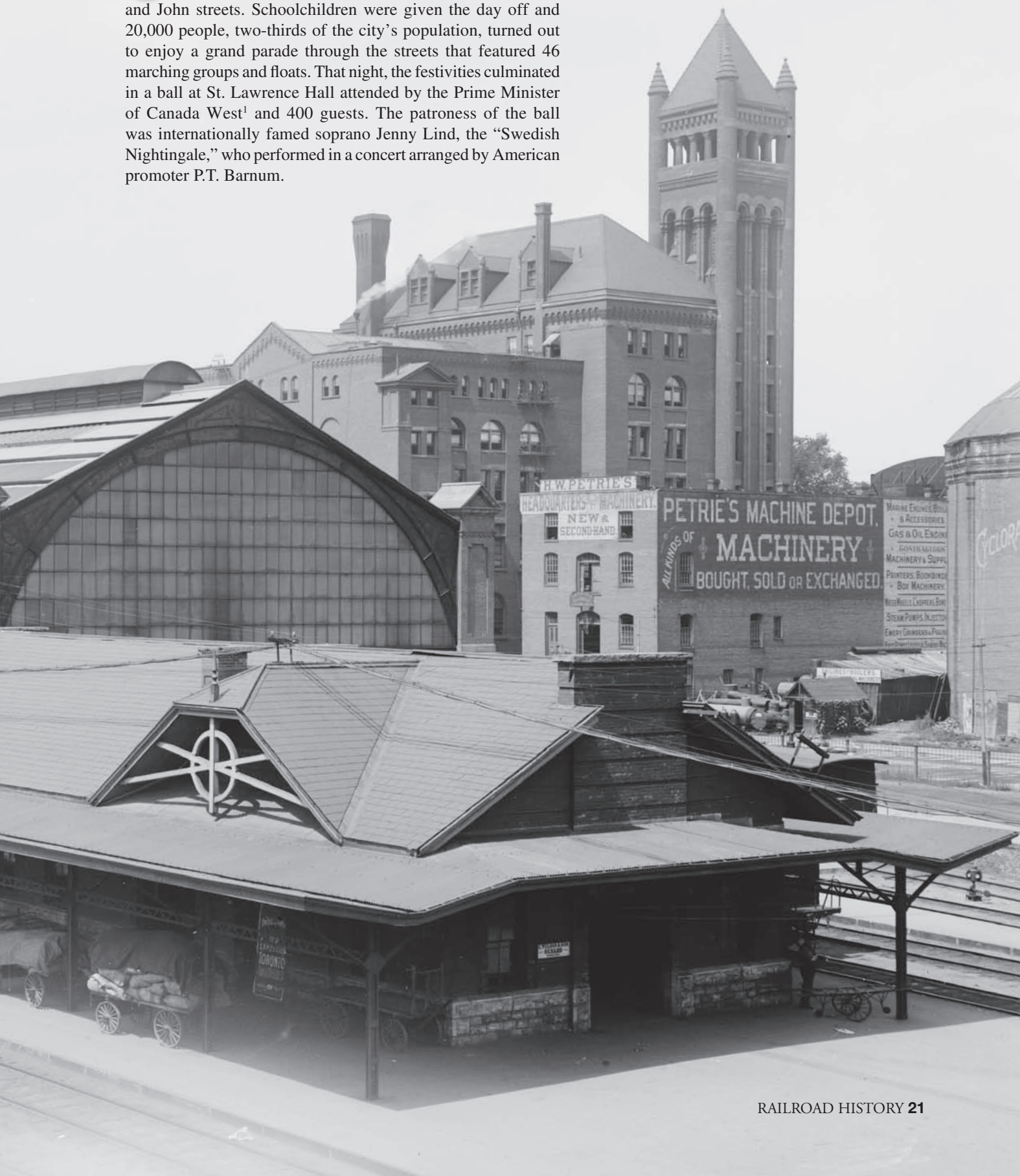
1853-1900

By Derek Boles

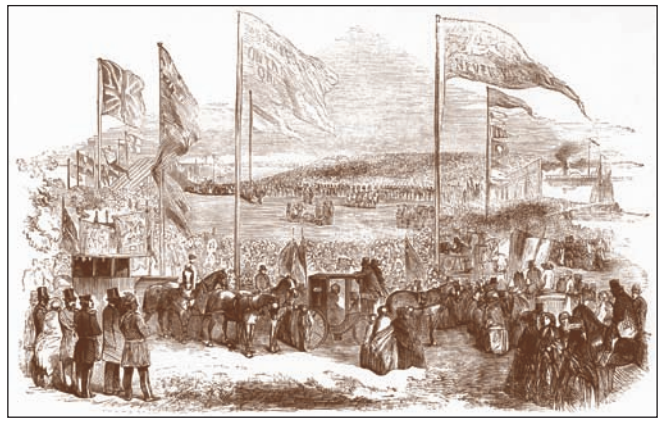


Toronto's second Union Station, with its trio of Italianate towers, opened in 1873; an 1890s expansion added the Romanesque head house, tower, and office annex visible at far right, along with the second train shed at far left, in this northwest-facing circa-1908 view. Detroit Photographic Co., Library of Congress Collection

On October 15, 1851, a gala celebration was held in Toronto on the south side of Front Street between Simcoe and John streets. Schoolchildren were given the day off and 20,000 people, two-thirds of the city's population, turned out to enjoy a grand parade through the streets that featured 46 marching groups and floats. That night, the festivities culminated in a ball at St. Lawrence Hall attended by the Prime Minister of Canada West[1] and 400 guests. The patroness of the ball was internationally famed soprano Jenny Lind, the "Swedish Nightingale," who performed in a concert arranged by American promoter P.T. Barnum.

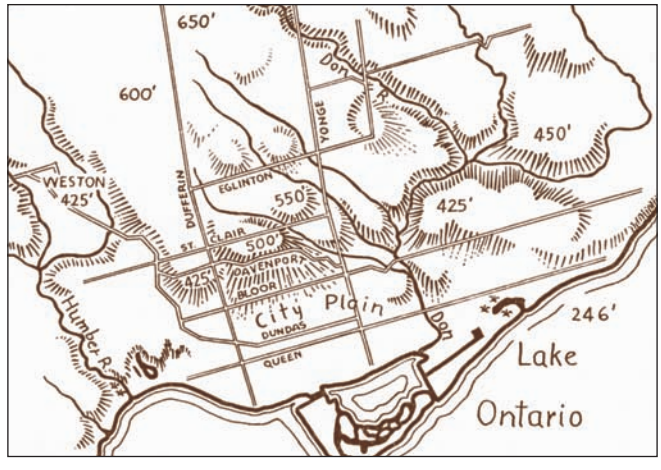


The occasion for this community revelry was the turning of the first sod for the Ontario, Simcoe & Huron Railroad, the first steam railway in Canada West. Lifting the ceremonial silver spade was the Countess of Elgin, the wife of the Earl of Elgin, the governor-general of Canada, who hovered nearby. After Lady Elgin used her dainty shovel to lift the square of sod, it was deposited into an equally dainty wooden wheelbarrow and carted away by the mayor of Toronto, who was resplendent in knee breeches, white stockings, and ceremonial sword. Following the ceremony, the sod was preserved for posterity by a young civil engineer named Sandford Fleming, who would play a principal role in building the new railway and later advance to glory as one of Canada's most illustrious engineers, inventors, and scientists.



On October 15, 1851, the sod turning for the Ontario, Simcoe & Huron, the first common-carrier steam railway to operate in Ontario, was held on the south side of Toronto's Front Street, between Simcoe and John streets. *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion*, **January 24, 1852**

The pattern of railway development in Toronto was influenced by the city's topography. All of the passenger stations described in this narrative were confined to a relatively narrow strip along the waterfront between Dufferin Street to the west and the Don River to the east. Author's Collection



Canada had long been separated by what has been characterized as the "tyranny of isolation and distance."[2] Canadians depended on road and water transportation for personal travel and the movement of goods. Because roads were usually dreadful and waterways were frozen for several months a year, a more efficient form of transportation was urgently needed. Torontonians eagerly anticipated the delights of rail transportation, which promised year-round travel and the timely delivery of essential commodities, advantages that were only fantasies before the age of rail.

The railway era was late in coming to Toronto. In 1834, the year the city had been incorporated with a population of 9,000, a group of businessmen met to discuss building a railway, but the project was delayed for several years by political turmoil, a rebellion, and a lack of investment capital. Meanwhile, the first railway line in Canada had opened in 1836 near Montreal. The long gestation period for Ontario railways was later characterized as "suggested in the '30s, organized in the '40s, and built in the '50s."[3] As a formalized structure and architectural statement, the station took time to evolve; its purpose was to provide an office to sell tickets to customers and to furnish them with a place to wait and to board their trains. Railways saw little point in spending money on elaborate structures, and so early stations were little more than simple wooden sheds. The *Toronto Globe* described the first Great Western Railway stations as "small and shabbily fitted up," and the *Toronto Colonist* called them "miserable shanties." One impediment to improvement was that they were a completely new form of building design, for which no precedents existed to provide architectural inspiration.

None of the preceding modes of public transportation had developed special buildings for the use of passengers. Steamship lines sold tickets at downtown offices and on the wharves just before sailing time. Stagecoach operators rented space in taverns, hotels, stores, even private homes – whatever structures were conveniently located and available. Passengers boarded their coaches on the side of the road, much as local bus riders do today. In the early years of railway development in the United States during the 1830s, stations were little more than ticket booths, but by the time the railway era began in Toronto, they had evolved into more formal structures.

Railways discovered that they could encourage travel and generate additional revenue by providing auxiliary services. These included the handling of checked baggage by porters, sending telegrams, arranging for transportation on other connecting railways and steamship lines, and shipping express parcels.

First-class passengers who were willing to pay for luxurious parlor, dining, and sleeping cars also required

more agreeable amenities in the stations before they boarded their trains. These included larger, more comfortable, and heated waiting rooms, clean and ample toilet facilities, separate accommodations for unescorted women and children, and overhead roofs to protect them from inclement weather while they were out on the platforms. In cities like Toronto that attracted large numbers of tourists and business travelers, information counters were set up to dispense promotional literature and to guide newcomers to local hotels and attractions. As passengers could often find themselves spending hours waiting for a connecting or late train, they wanted to buy food and beverages, to purchase books and magazines, and to obtain a haircut or a shoeshine. Stations increased in size to accommodate these new and profitable services.

In 1953 this bronze plaque was affixed to a column at the entrance to Toronto Union Station to commemmorate the 100th anniversary of the first departure from Toronto's (and Ontario's) first passenger-train station. Author's photo

In the century and a half since steam railways began operating in Ontario, approximately 100 passenger stations have stood within what is now the city of Toronto. This narrative will focus on railway stations located along the Lake Ontario waterfront that were built between 1853 and 1896 in a narrow geographical strip bounded by Strachan Avenue in the west and the Don River in the east. In the 19th century, a dozen different railway companies entered Toronto and among them, they built at least 16 passenger stations in the area described. This is the story of those stations and the railways that built them.

1853-1857 – The first generation of Toronto railway stations

> *Station very gritty, as a general characteristic. Station very dark, the gas being frozen. Station very cold, as any timber cabin suspended in the air with such a wind making lunges at it would be. Station very dreary, being station.*[4]
>
> **—Charles Dickens, January 1854**

The railway construction that Lady Elgin initiated in October 1851 was carried out over the next three years until the line reached Collingwood, 94 miles northwest of Toronto. Like many early railways, the Ontario, Simcoe & Huron was a portage route, connecting Lake Ontario with Georgian Bay on Lake Huron. Promoters hoped that trade from Wisconsin and Michigan that traversed the circuitous Great Lakes passage en route to the East Coast would instead use OS&H as a shortcut, eliminating hundreds of tedious miles of travel through Detroit, Lake Erie, and Niagara.

As was so often the case in the dawn of railway travel, OS&H did not build its passenger station where the host community wanted it. The city offered the railway a plot of land on the south side of Front Street between Church and Jarvis Street that had been burned over in 1849. Instead, OS&H built Toronto's first station southwest of Bay and Front streets opposite the Queen's Hotel, near what is now the eastern entrance to present-day (1927) Union Station. Contemporary newspaper accounts describe the structure as a rudimentary shed housing a ticket office that was apparently still under construction when the line opened, since the conductor had to sell tickets on the platform and aboard the train.

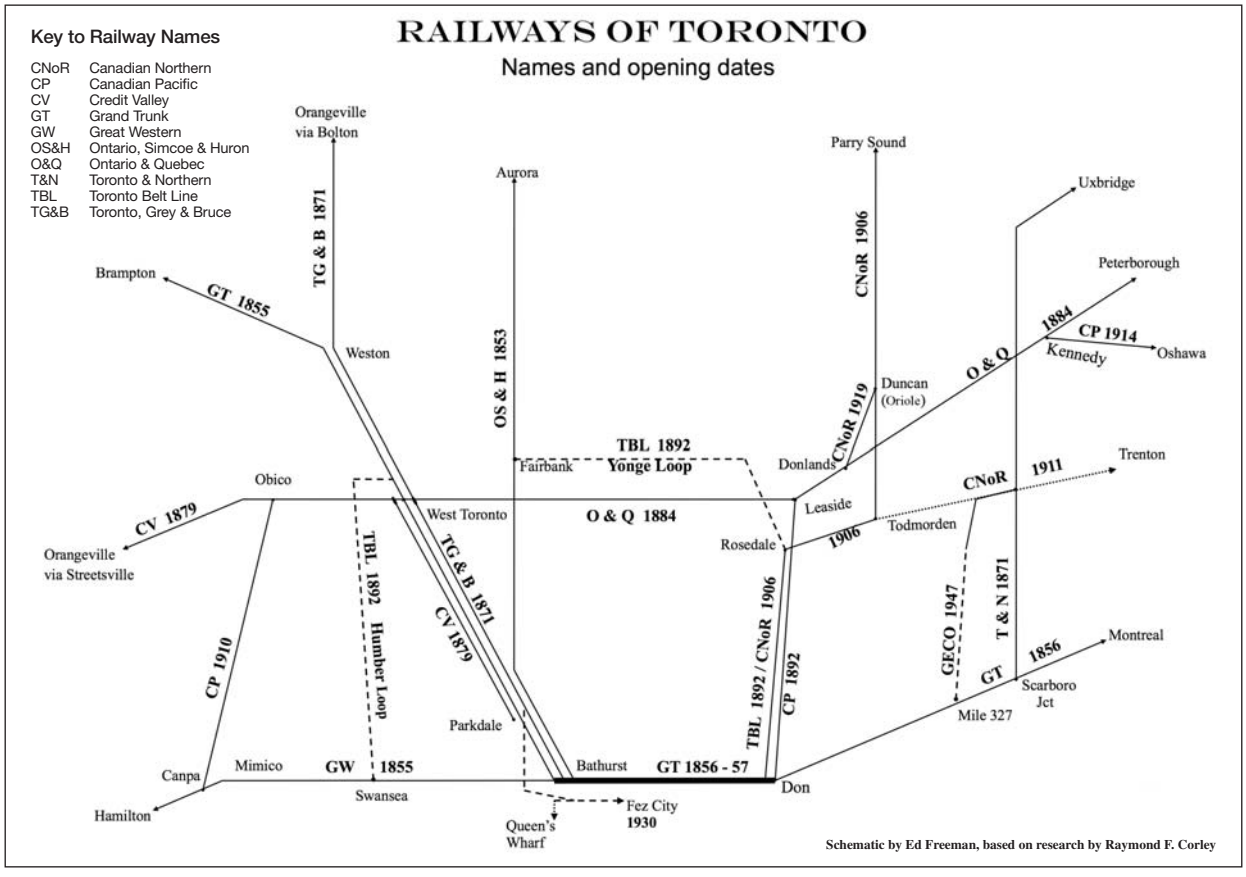
On May 16, 1853, the first Ontario, Simcoe & Huron passenger train steamed out of Toronto bound for Aurora, 30 miles to the north. Like all of Ontario's railways in that period, OS&H was built to the 5-foot, six-inch track gauge established by the colonial government. The right-of-way entered the city on the south side of Front Street, along the top of an embankment that marked the original shoreline of Lake Ontario.

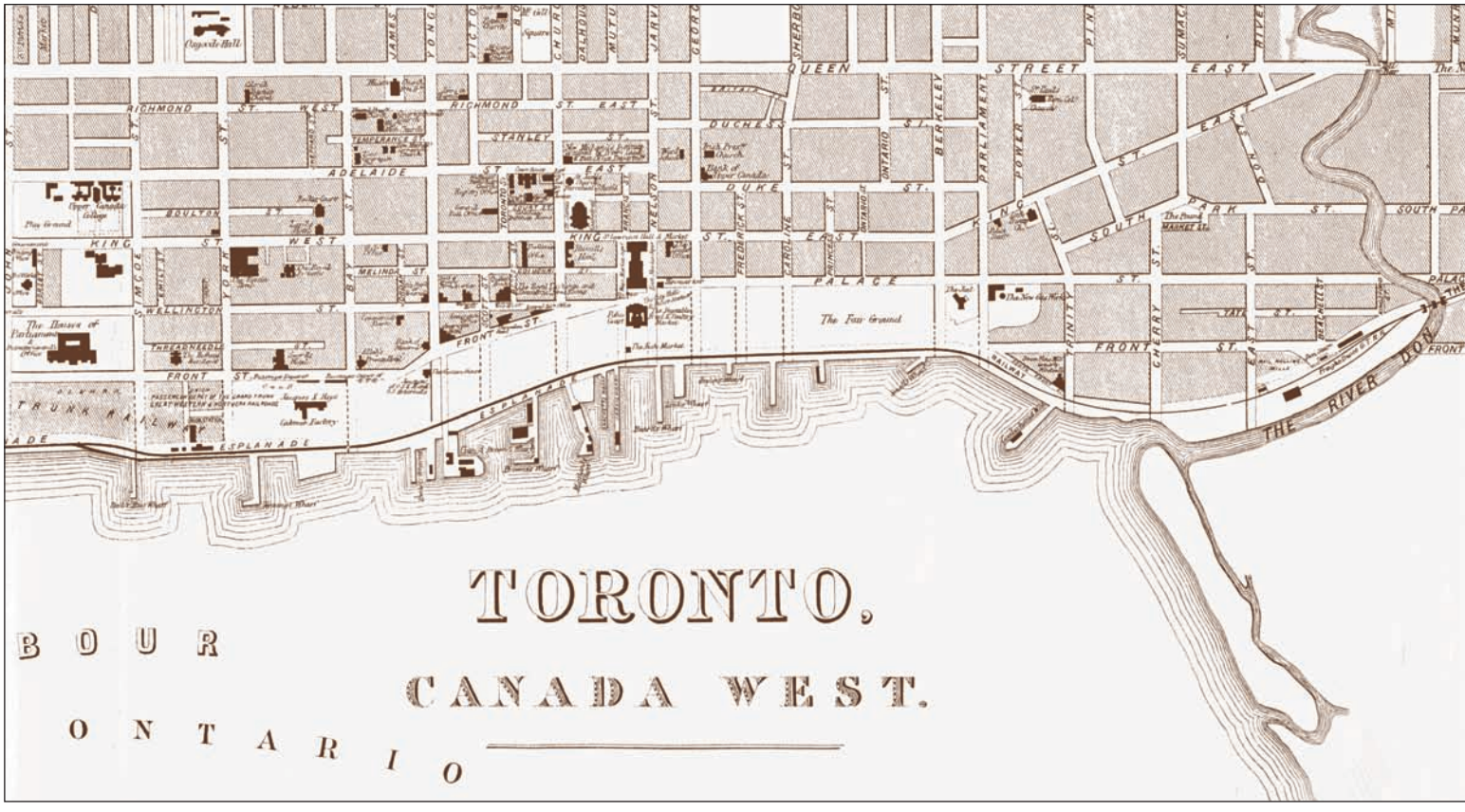
The second railway to enter Toronto was the Grand Trunk. Unlike OS&H with its modest aspirations to serve as a shortcut for shipping across the Great Lakes, the Grand Trunk, as its name suggests, was built as an ambitious trunk line across Canada East (Quebec) and Canada West (Ontario), connecting Chicago with a year-round Atlantic Ocean port at Portland, Maine. The line between Montreal and Portland opened in 1853. West of Montreal, the Grand Trunk was built in two divisions, each by different contractors, with Toronto as the fulcrum between them.

GTR's Central Division from Montreal to Toronto was built by the British contractors Peto, Brassey & Betts; the Western Division to Sarnia, Ont., was built by famed Toronto engineer Casimir Gzowski. Both divisions featured substantial brick and stone passenger stations, many of which survive, that were built in the most important communities along the way.

Grand Trunk planned to build a grand station at Toronto, similar to its eastern terminal at Portland, Maine. Unfortunately, the most important municipality west of Montreal would not be endowed with a station even equivalent to the ones erected in much smaller communities, because of delays in bringing Grand Trunk's line into Toronto. By the time the routing issue was resolved, GTR was overextended financially, and the city would not get a station worthy of its stature until 1873.

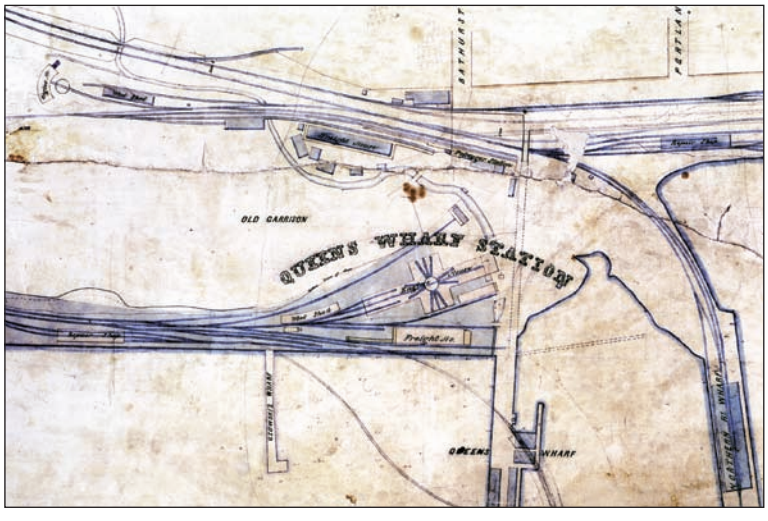

QUEEN STREET WEST
KING ST. WEST
WELLINGTON AVENUE
WELLINGTON PLACE
FRONT ST.
The Provincial Lunatic Asylum
The Ontario Simcoe and Huron Railway
The Grand Trunk Railway
The Hamilton and Toronto or Great Western Railway
THE GARRISON RESERVE
Depot Grounds of the Ontario Simcoe and Huron Railway
Victoria Square
Garrison Square
TORONTO HARBOUR
LAKE


Key to Railway Names
CNoR Canadian Northern
CP Canadian Pacific
CV Credit Valley
GT Grand Trunk
GW Great Western
OS&H Ontario, Simcoe & Huron
O&Q Ontario & Quebec
T&N Toronto & Northern
TBL Toronto Belt Line
TG&B Toronto, Grey & Bruce
RAILWAYS OF TORONTO
Names and opening dates
Orangeville via Bolton
TG & B 1871
Brampton
GT 1855
Weston
Aurora
OS & H 1853
Parry Sound
CNoR 1906
Uxbridge
Peterborough
1884
CP 1914
Kennedy
Oshawa
O & Q
Duncan (Oriole)
CNoR 1919
TBL 1892
Fairbank
Yonge Loop
Donlands
Trenton
CNoR
1911
Obico
CV 1879
Orangeville via Streetsville
West Toronto
O & Q 1884
Leaside
Todmorden
1906
Rosedale
TBL 1892 Humber Loop
TG & B 1871
CV 1879
CP 1910
TBL 1892 / CNoR 1906
CP 1892
GECO 1947
T & N 1871
GT
1856
Montreal
Scarboro Jct
Mile 327
Parkdale
Canpa
Mimico
GW 1855
Swansea
Bathurst
GT 1856 - 57
Don
Hamilton
Queen's Wharf
Fez City 1930
Schematic by Ed Freeman, based on research by Raymond F. Corley



above: Toronto's first railway entered the city in 1853 along the south side of Front Street. The gap between the Grand Trunk's Queen's Wharf and Don station facilities was closed early in 1857. In 1858, between Brock and Church streets, the tracks were moved south on newly created landfill along the Esplanade. This 1858 map shows Toronto's railway facilities just after the tracks were relocated away from Front Street. The first Union Station had just opened for business, and can be seen in the center of the map, just to the left of the word "Esplanade". The locations of the 1853 Ontario, Simcoe & Huron and 1857 Grand Trunk Bay Street stations can still be seen on the map, on the south side of Front just west of Bay. Author's Collection

below: Queen's Wharf was the site of GTR's 1855 passenger station (seen just above the "F") and Great Western's 1855 station directly to the north. In 1871, the Queen's Wharf facilities were acquired by the Toronto, Grey & Bruce Railway. Library and Archives Canada, NMC 16924-2



GTR's Western Division was completed first, and service between Toronto and Brampton, 21 miles to the west, began in October 1855. Grand Trunk's first Toronto passenger station stood at Queen's Wharf at the foot of Bathurst Street. The building was a simple wooden shed at the end of a single track. GTR also established freight and locomotive facilities at this location, and the busy wharf was used for transshipping goods between rail and water.

Close on the heels of Grand Trunk came the third railway to enter the city, Great Western, whose main line had opened in 1854 between Niagara Falls and Windsor, Ont. (across the Detroit River from Detroit), about 235 miles. GWR was conceived as an international bridge route, connecting the Michigan Central and New York Central railroads along a corridor through southern Ontario that was shorter than an all-American route along the south shore of Lake Erie. Consequently, Buffalo, N.Y., and Detroit were linked by rail across Canada 2-1/2 years before a rail connection was established between Toronto and Montreal. GWR chose Hamilton, Ont., 40 miles west of Toronto, as its administrative and operational center, in an aggressive effort to establish the city as the railway hub of Canada West and draw business and manufacturing away from Toronto.

Consequently, the branch from Hamilton to Toronto seemed almost an afterthought, opening on December 3, 1855, just weeks after Grand Trunk had first entered the city. Thus Toronto was connected by rail directly with

New York via the Niagara Suspension Bridge some 10 months before Grand Trunk opened its line to Montreal.

Great Western's first Toronto passenger station was situated at the foot of Bathurst Street, only a few hundred feet north of Grand Trunk's Queen's Wharf station. Like the other buildings that made up the first generation of stations, the GWR facility was little more than a wooden shed. At a time when most people traveled about town on foot, the Bathurst Street location was considered to be a major inconvenience, as it was too far west of the city's commercial center.

In August 1856, Grand Trunk's Central Division opened between Toronto and Oshawa, Ont., about 34 miles. The Toronto passenger station was a stone and brick structure situated just west of the Don River. On October 27, 1856, GTR opened its line between Montreal and Toronto, a cause for much celebration in both cities. Grand Trunk now had two lines entering Toronto that were separated by a three-mile gap. Through passengers were carried across the city in a horse-drawn omnibus that lumbered between the Queen's Wharf and Don stations. The railway closed the gap by negotiating with the Ontario, Simcoe & Huron to share the right-of-way along the south side of Front Street. GTR then built another temporary passenger station at the corner of Bay and Front streets adjacent to, and east of, the OS&H station. Grand Trunk's Bay Street Station opened on February 12, 1857.

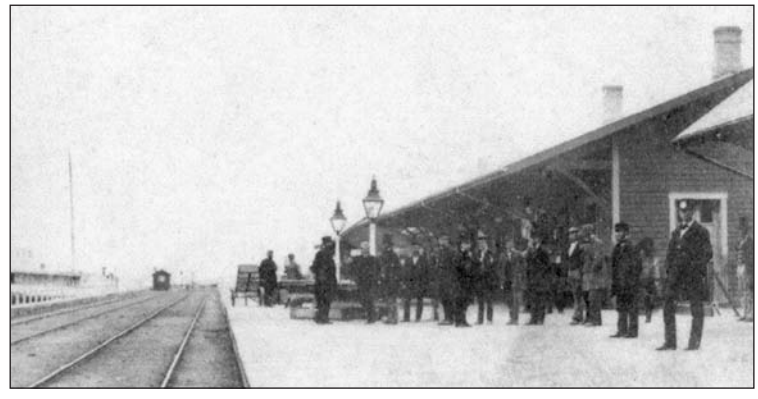
On March 23, 1857, Grand Trunk introduced an overnight train with primitive sleeping accommodations between Toronto and Montreal. Because trains were not allowed to run on Sundays, both the eastbound and westbound Saturday night departures were halted halfway at Kingston, Ont., where passengers were forced to lay over until Monday morning before resuming their journeys. One wonders how many passengers would even bother initiating such a trip on a Saturday evening.

The Great Western station over by Bathurst Street experienced an unwelcome brush with history and tragedy on March 12, 1857. That afternoon, almost 100 passengers boarded the accommodation train for Hamilton, which departed at 4:10 p.m. Among those on board was Samuel Zimmerman, the most influential railway contractor of his time and reputed to be the richest man in Canada. In the early days of railroading, industrial magnates of Zimmerman's stature had not yet acquired their own private rail cars, and he traveled in the first-class coach along with other passengers. Zimmerman had been criticized for the shoddy construction of Great Western in his quest for profits, and the railway had already experienced several serious accidents.

At 5:45 p.m., the train was approaching a bridge over the Desjardins Canal near Hamilton. An axle on the locomotive broke, the engine derailed, and the wheel flanges tore up the flimsy wooden span. The locomotive and three cars plunged 60 feet to the frozen canal below. Victims were either crushed in the wreck, burned to death in the resulting fire, or drowned in the icy water. Fifty-nine people died, including Zimmerman, in whose pocket was found a charter for the proposed Canada Southern Railway. It was the worst train wreck ever involving a train to or from Toronto, and the second-worst rail disaster in Canadian history.

above: Toronto's first Union Station opened on June 21, 1858. This watercolor by artist William Armstrong has been reproduced in almost every book about Toronto's history. Toronto Public Library, MTL 1121

below: This is the only known photograph of Toronto's first Union Station and may have been taken by Armstrong, who was the city's leading photographer at the time. Library and Archives Canada, 000945391



1858 – Toronto's first Union Station

In 1858, Grand Trunk built a more permanent station that would be Toronto's first Union Station, in a city where the three existing railways had already built five different passenger stations. "Union" stations by definition are shared by two or more carriers. The first purpose-built Union Station in North America had opened in Providence, R.I., in 1848, but such facilities were rare because companies were fiercely competitive and not prone to cooperate with one another. Union stations tended

to be built in cities where serious restrictions existed on available land, and Toronto qualified in that respect. The city's three railways were already crowded into a narrow band along the waterfront, and the only way for them to expand was to fill in the harbor. This expansion was limited by the city's "Windmill Line," an imaginary boundary south of which the wharves and infill shoreline could not encroach.

A union station offered considerable advantages over separate facilities. For passengers, changing trains was more convenient when the carriers were concentrated at one facility. Torontonians had already endured the inconvenience of having passenger stations spread out as many as three miles apart. For the railway companies, a shared station resulted in considerable economies of expense, since duplicate facilities could be avoided.

Union Station was situated on reclaimed land along the Esplanade, 200 feet west of York Street, halfway between Front Street and today's Bremner Boulevard. Unfortunately, Grand Trunk was still in financial straits, and could afford only to build a modest wood-framed union station in what was the most important Canadian city west of Montreal. The station opened to the public on June 21, 1858, with six trains a day to the east and four to the west.[5]

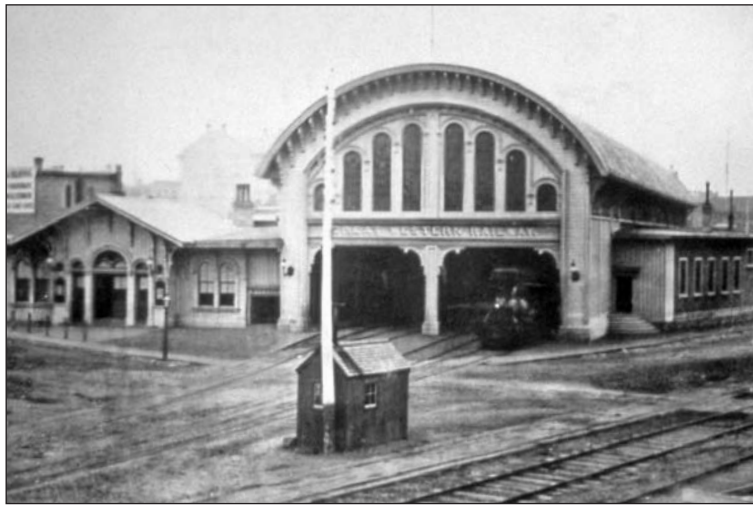
On July 5, the Ontario, Simcoe & Huron, by this time renamed the Northern Railway of Canada, moved into Union Station, shifting its tracks south of Front Street along the Esplanade. Great Western soon followed, the new station being a mile closer to downtown than its original station west of Bathurst Street.

On July 26, 1858, the Smith Brothers opened a "Dining Saloon and Refreshment Rooms" at the new Union Station, seating 60 people. An ad in the *Globe* promised "Wines, Liquors, and the delicacies of the season always on hand." Lest the newspaper's readers think that the station was excessively sybaritic, the ad also promised a "Private Table reserved for Ladies and Children."[6] Among other station concessions was a barbershop, a tradition that has continued in Union Station to the present.

Little evidence remains of what this first Union Station looked like, because the only two images we have available to us today show more of the tracks and platform than of the buildings, but old maps and newspaper accounts suggest that it comprised at least two separate structures. The one closest to York Street housed baggage facilities and a men's waiting room, as separated-gender facilities were maintained in railway stations well into the 20th century. The western building contained a dining room, telegraph office, and ladies' waiting room. Some maps also show a third structure that may have been used for freight.

After less than three years, the Northern Railway had grown unhappy with its arrangement at Union Station. An NRC official commented that Grand Trunk expected its tenants to carry the entire financial burden of operating and maintaining the facility. NRC moved out of Union Station on January 7, 1861, withdrawing to its extensive locomotive and freight complex a half-mile away on the west side of Brock Street. Great Western was equally unhappy with its tenancy, but was not about to move all the way back to its original isolated station west of Bathurst Street.

The problem for both NRC and GWR was that Grand Trunk was the only railway that actually crossed the city, because it had appropriated part of the Esplanade. GTR wasn't at all eager to readily provide this access to its rivals. It was only after an acrimonious struggle that the city in 1864 made the Esplanade a public highway, with more than half of the 100-foot-wide thoroughfare opened to all three railways. At this point, both the Northern and the Great Western began laying track eastward toward the city and then built more centrally located downtown passenger stations.



In 1866, the Great Western Railway vacated Union Station and built a new passenger station at the foot of Yonge Street. This was the first station in Toronto to provide a covered train shed, and it was conveniently located adjacent to the steamship wharves, the city's better hotels, and the central business district. Toronto Public Library, T12181

1866 – The Great Western's Yonge Street Station

In the 1860s, the commercial center of Toronto was shifting to the west from the original Old Town, located east of Jarvis Street. Yonge Street had become the north-south spine of the city, and Great Western built a new passenger station at the foot of Yonge. Constructed of wood, it was designed in the Romanesque style by William G. Storm, who later designed St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, which is still standing at King and Simcoe streets.

The most striking feature of the station was a four-track arched trainshed with a galvanized iron roof. This was the first station in Toronto to provide a shed that sheltered both passengers and trains in inclement weather. A series

Great Western's Yonge Street station is seen here in 1867, a year after it opened. Horse-drawn cabs wait by the curb to transport passengers to their local destinations. The location was far more convenient than the railway's original passenger station at the foot of Bathurst Street. Ontario Archives 10021822

of eight large windows on the front of the shed, as well as a continuous series of smaller windows running along each side, provided excellent natural lighting.

On the south side of the structure was a spacious freight facility and office. On the north side, in an attached building, were the passenger facilities, which included separate waiting rooms for men and women, a telegraph office, and a refreshment room. A flat roof connecting the passenger facilities with the train shed covered the baggage facilities and a platform 195 feet long and 36 feet wide.

It was the most impressive station built in Toronto up until that time, and it was convenient to the better hotels, the city's central business district, and the Customs House. The ferry and steamship wharves were located across the street at a time when lake travel was still an important component of Ontario's transportation infrastructure.

Great Western's Yonge Street station opened on March 2, 1866. Despite its grand new Toronto terminal, Great Western still maintained a small depot at Simcoe Street for the convenience of passengers connecting with Grand Trunk trains at Union Station.

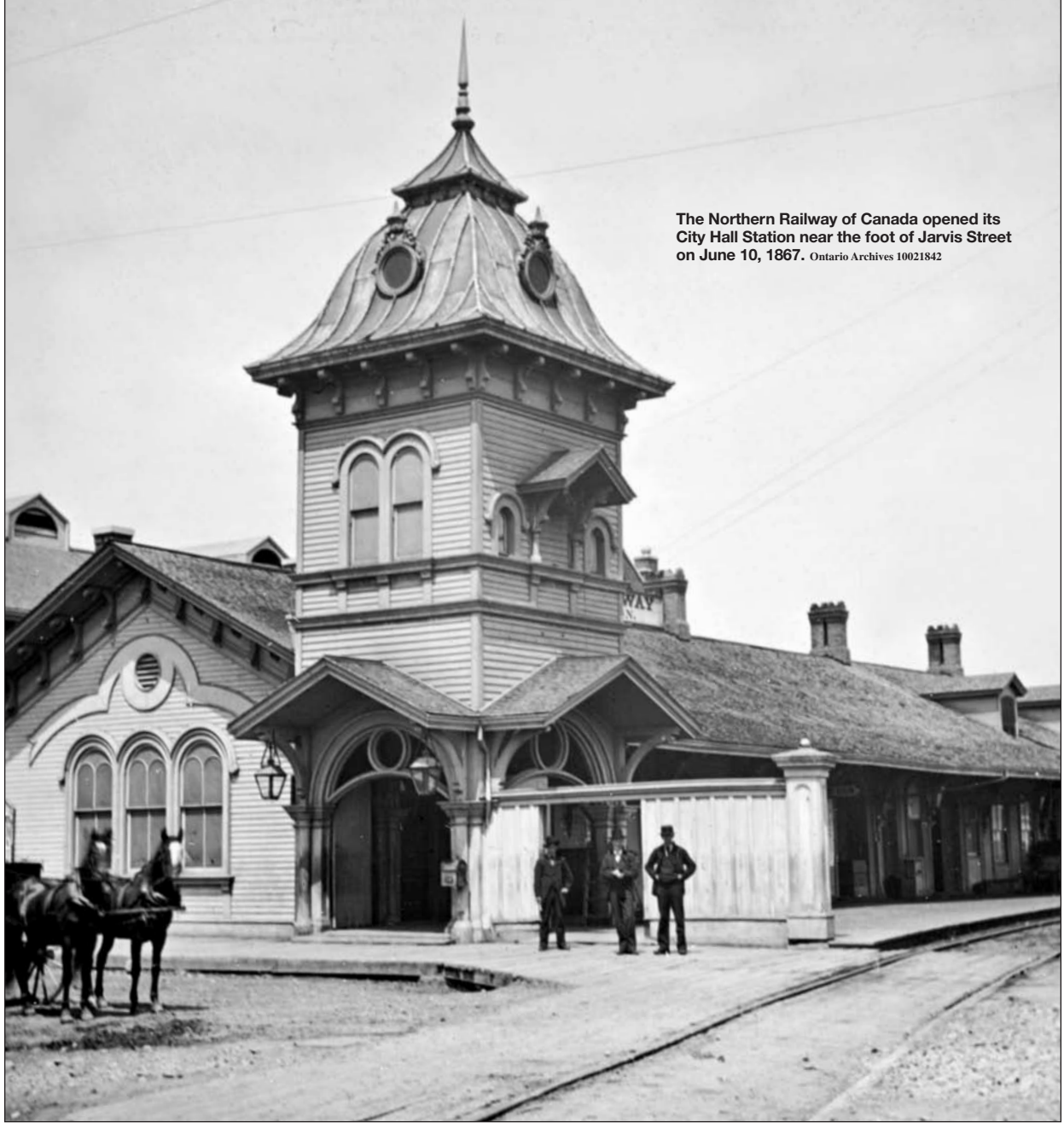
The Great Western Railway is almost forgotten now, but in its day, it was the second most important railway in Canada, after Grand Trunk. In 1870, GWR operated 133 locomotives, 129 passenger cars, 31 baggage and mail cars, and 1,737 freight cars over some 484 miles of track. Eight passenger trains a day ran into its Yonge Street station.

1867 – The Northern Railway's City Hall Station

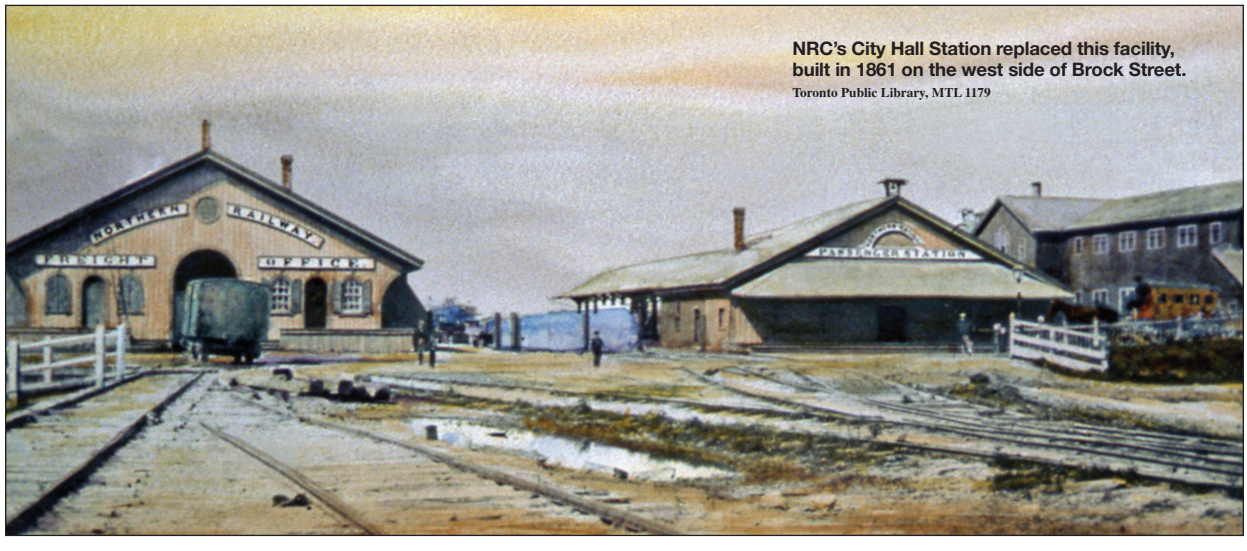
The new sharing arrangement on the Esplanade also allowed the Northern Railway of Canada to build an eastern extension along the waterfront from Brock Street to Jarvis Street, a distance of a mile. It then erected a new passenger terminal on the north side of the Esplanade, between Jarvis and Market Streets.

NRC called this facility City Hall Station, since the municipal offices were then located immediately to the north. The station was designed in the Italianate style by the Toronto architectural firm of Gundry & Langley. Its dimensions were 140 by 31 feet, with a 70-foot-high tower on the southwest corner. Contemporary newspaper accounts described it as "handsome," "ornamental," and "commodious." Among the ground-floor features were a waiting room with an 18-foot-high ceiling, a ladies' room, telegraph and ticket offices, a baggage room, and an apartment for the stationmaster. On the second floor was another apartment for NRC's chief engineer. This was an era in which even the most important officials lived close to their places of work.

The tower featured a winding staircase leading to an observation room that afforded panoramic views



The Northern Railway of Canada opened its City Hall Station near the foot of Jarvis Street on June 10, 1867. Ontario Archives 10021842



NRC's City Hall Station replaced this facility, built in 1861 on the west side of Brock Street.
Toronto Public Library, MTL 1179

of the waterfront. Architect Henry Langley may have acquired his affinity for lofty towers while executing this commission. Several of his structures survive today, including the spire of the nearby St. James Cathedral, which at the time of its completion in 1873 was the tallest structure in North America.

Trains entered the station along a single-track stub-ended siding, which sufficed because NRC seldom scheduled more than four passenger trains a day. City Hall Station opened for business on June 10, 1867. Among those attending the ceremonies was the Attorney-General of Canada West, John A. Macdonald, who three weeks later would become the first prime minister of the Dominion of Canada.

Many of NRC's passengers were farmers bringing agricultural products to sell at the adjacent city market, and the new station was obviously more convenient than the older facility at Brock Street. Trains continued to stop at Brock, where the road locomotive was detached and a yard engine used to haul the train to the terminal at City Hall Station. Although NRC was no longer a tenant at Union Station, its trains also continued to halt opposite the Grand Trunk facility on the outside platform as a convenience for connecting passengers.

On August 22, 1870, the first Pullman cars began operating on Grand Trunk trains between Toronto and Sarnia, Ont., 180 miles west. The railway had operated sleeping cars since 1857 and turned over the servicing and operation of these cars to Pullman, which supplied the porters and conductors, and eventually, the cars themselves.

1871 – Narrow gauge into Toronto

In 1870, the federal government repealed the law that required the broad track gauge of 5 feet 6 inches for new construction. Over the next several years, Canadian railways converted to what was becoming the standard gauge throughout North America of 4 feet 8½ inches. However, a Scottish-born Toronto promoter named George Laidlaw saw the repeal of the Broad Gauge Act as a lucrative opportunity for massive expansion at a much lower cost. He estimated that new railways of the narrow 3-foot 6-inch gauge could be built for just 60 percent of the cost of standard gauge, because they required much lighter engineering standards, as well as savings in locomotive and rolling stock construction. Laidlaw proposed two such lines to connect Toronto with the hinterland surrounding the city.

The Toronto, Grey & Bruce would run northwest from Toronto to Orangeville and Lake Huron, with a branch to Owen Sound. The Toronto & Nipissing was to follow a course northeast from Toronto to Markham and the Kawartha Lakes region to a point on Lake Nipissing.

The Toronto & Nipissing was the first narrow-gauge public railway in North America and began operations on July 12, 1871, predating the more illustrious Colorado narrow-gauge railways by weeks. T&N was largely financed by members of the wealthy Gooderham family, who established its Toronto terminal and passenger station just west of their Gooderham & Worts Distillery complex.

This wooden passenger station was located south of Front Street, between Berkeley and Parliament streets. At 35 by 185 feet, it was the largest station on the system. Only the western portion of the building was used for passenger and ticket office purposes, the eastern 145 feet being utilized for baggage and freight. The T&N main line extended 87 miles to Coboconk, 25 miles north of Lindsay, the closest it would ever get to Lake Nipissing. T&N did not own its right-of-way into Toronto, and a third rail was laid alongside Grand Trunk's eight-mile line to Scarborough Junction, where T&N branched north. Grand Trunk was willing to cooperate in this fashion with other carriers that it did not perceive as a competitive threat.

The Toronto, Grey & Bruce Railway opened between Toronto and Orangeville on November 3, 1871. Its managers planned on using Grand Trunk's new Union Station, upon which construction was about to begin. Meanwhile, TG&B built a temporary passenger station at the foot of York Street, which consisted of general and ladies' waiting rooms, a ticket office, and a baggage room.

By 1874, the TG&B main line had extended 120 miles to Teeswater, with a 69-mile branch from Orangeville to Owen Sound. TG&B laid a third rail alongside the Grand Trunk line from suburban Weston to Parkdale, and reimbursed GTR according to the volume of traffic passing over this joint section. When the second Union Station opened in 1873, the northernmost track through the trainshed was built to 3-foot 6-inch gauge to accommodate TG&B. The single Grand Trunk track from Weston to Parkdale soon became overloaded, and TG&B built its own right of way, which opened in 1875.

The Toronto & Nipissing and the Toronto, Grey & Bruce were the only common carrier narrow-gauge railways ever built in Ontario. The economical initial construction costs were soon outweighed by considerable disadvantages. The most serious was that the rolling stock was incompatible with standard-gauge connecting railways and through freight had to be unloaded in Toronto and reloaded onto standard-gauge cars, raising costs and causing delay.

Toronto's narrow-gauge railways were also too small to compete in an era of rapidly expanding rail networks. In 1882, the Toronto & Nipissing was absorbed by the Midland Railway of Canada, which closed the Berkeley Street passenger facility and moved into Union Station. The Midland was then taken over by Grand Trunk in 1883, at which point T&N had already been converted to standard gauge.

The Toronto, Grey & Bruce was also briefly controlled by Grand Trunk, which converted the line to standard

gauge, but the larger railway's own financial difficulties forced it to relinquish control. The TG&B was then leased to Ontario & Quebec Railway in 1883, which became part of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1884. TG&B's Owen Sound harbor on Georgian Bay provided direct access to the upper Great Lakes, and would form an important marine link in Canadian Pacific's transcontinental transportation network.

1873 – Second Union Station

By the 1870s, the *Globe* had become one of the most influential newspapers in Canada. It was published by George Brown, one of the "Fathers of Confederation," who detested the Grand Trunk Railway, calling it "a sinister force of corruption and extravagance."[7] The newspaper aggressively fanned the growing resentment over the railway's increasingly inadequate Toronto Union Station. Seldom a day went by when the *Globe* failed to report on a transgression committed by the railway. Derailments were given prominent coverage and late trains were often highlighted on the front page. Lengthy articles were devoted to Grand Trunk's financial improprieties and political scandals, of which there were many. In February 1870, the paper devoted an entire paragraph to describing the carcass of a dead dog that lay near the station and that the railway had failed to retrieve. Readers were cautioned that the canine corpse "no doubt when a train comes will contribute materially to the already numerous fragrant odours which greet the nasal organs of visitors to that locality."[8]

As for the station itself, the *Globe* described it as a "tumble-down wooden shanty ... filthy in its surroundings, bad as to its external and internal arrangements, mean in its appearance, and decidedly ugly and dilapidated in condition, the Union Station presents one of the most perfect pictures of abject poverty or else of parsimony and mismanagement – perhaps all three – we ever wish to see."[9]

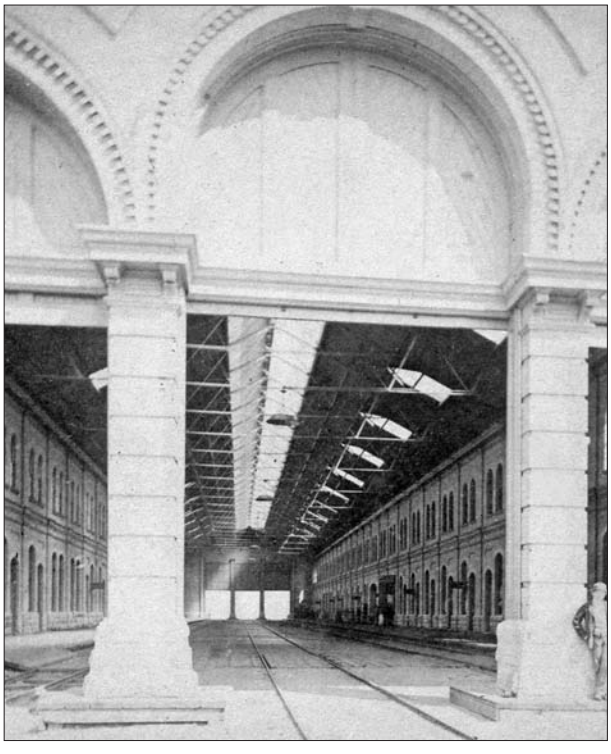
To what extent these flights of overheated prose influenced Grand Trunk to build a more agreeable passenger station is not known, but in September 1871, the company announced that it would replace Toronto's Union Station. The *Globe*'s coverage of this announcement began with another exhortation of the "miserable combination of diminutive sheds that now constitute what is called the Union Station" before it got around to describing the improvements that were planned.[10]

The facility was to be built in the same location as the existing station, but would be much larger, occupying the entire block between York and Simcoe streets. Great Western initially expressed interest in using the station, but finally declined for familiar reasons explained by a GWR solicitor named Barker several years later: "... the object

Grand Trunk demolished Toronto's first Union Station and built this magnificent replacement on the same site; it was by far the largest passenger station built in Canada up to the time of its July 1, 1873, opening. The white brick and stone did not remain pristine for long, given the heavy pollution of the era. At the bottom of this view is York Street, which provided pedestrian and vehicular access from the city.
Library and Archives Canada, PA103141

above: The grand façade of Union Station faced the harbor rather than the city, underscoring the continuing importance of lake travel well into the railway era. Toronto Public Library, T31104

below: The train shed – the largest in Canada when built – covered three tracks and was 470 feet long. The two GTR tracks at left were 5-foot 6-inch gauge, while the TG&B track at right was 3-foot 6-inch gauge. Toronto Public Library, MTL 1794



of the Grand Trunk was to charge such a rate to incoming roads as would practically leave them rent free for the very large portion of the building which they would retain for their own use."[11] However, GWR did build a small station just west of Simcoe Street for the convenience of its passengers connecting with GTR trains, which was completed in October 1871.[12]

Plans for the new station were supervised by E.P. Hannaford, Grand Trunk's chief engineer. GTR incorporated the Canada Station Co. to organize the project and finance its $250,000 cost. Toronto's first Union Station was vacated on October 24, 1871, and Grand Trunk moved into a temporary station west of Simcoe Street, which it occupied for the next 20 months.[13] The station was apparently at least as well appointed as the structure it replaced, with baggage and telegraph offices, separate ladies' and gentlemen's waiting rooms, and a ticket office. Station concessions were, by then, a lucrative source of income, and the facility featured a "refreshment room and saloon."

By this time, the design of large urban passenger stations had become much more sophisticated. Planning typically involved an architect, who designed the headhouse, in collaboration with an engineer, who usually designed the train shed and the track arrangement. Although Chief Engineer Hannaford is usually given credit for the second Union Station, Grand Trunk maintained a design and engineering office with its own staff architects. The headhouse was designed by architect Thomas Seaton

The three white towers of Toronto's second Union Station are visible on the waterfront in this 1890s "bird's-eye" view of the city. The arched roof of the 1866 Great Western station can be seen along the railway corridor at right. Toronto Public Library

Scott in the Italianate style that was then in vogue for large commercial and government buildings. Scott later designed many of Grand Trunk's most important buildings, including the ornate Bonaventure Station in Montreal.

Before construction on the Toronto station could begin, a year was spent between May 1871 and June 1872 creating a platform that would allow the building to float on the mud that was still a problem with the harbor infill created 15 years earlier. The laying of the cornerstone for the new station was held on June 13, 1872, entailing an elaborate ceremony for the city's Masonic lodges, who turned out in full force to celebrate the occasion.[14]

The contractor for the project was John Shedden & Co., who built the station of white brick, with white stone used for the Second Empire-style window arches and pilaster bases and caps. Although brick was readily available from numerous brickyards located throughout the city, stone had to be imported from out of town and was usually used only as a decorative element.

Measuring 470 feet long and 140 feet wide, the station enclosed a three-track, 60-foot-wide train shed that ran the length of the building. The development of iron as a

above: This view is looking west from York Street circa 1884. The structure at right is the new depot for the Canadian/American Express Co., an enterprise purchased by the Grand Trunk Railway in 1892. Library and Archives Canada, PA146822

facing page: At the left of this view of the west end of Union Station is the new Pullman palace car *Canadian*, built at the Grand Trunk's Pointe St. Charles shops in Montreal. The 71-foot-long car contained ten sections, one drawing room, a buffet, and a smoking room, all elaborately decorated in "Louis XV" style. Library and Archives Canada, PA146821

building material made possible wide and unobstructed interior spans, and the iron trusses supporting the shed were hoisted into place on October 25, 1872.[15] Hannaford attempted to emulate the soaring glass and steel train sheds then being built in Great Britain, but budget restraints resulted in a more modest structure without expensive expanses of glazing.

On top of the peaked shed roof was a glass skylight monitor, and rows of arched windows were set into the roof on either side to provide illumination. Each of the six portals through which the tracks entered the shed had wooden doors that could be lowered. Presumably these were used in winter to provide some protection for the passengers and for the trains, which, except for the locomotives, were made mostly of wood.

Like its predecessor, Toronto's second Union Station was a through station, with tracks branching off the main line east of York Street and west of Simcoe Street. Some contemporary city maps show a fourth through track north of the station that was intended as an excursion platform, but this feature was never built. The station facilities were housed in narrow two-story blocks on the north and south side of the trainshed. The southern block contained the ticket office, waiting rooms, baggage and freight facilities, and food and beverage concessions. Railway offices were located on the second floor and in the northern block.

The most outstanding architectural embellishment of this station was a grouping of three towers that rose above the southern block. This feature was influenced by two recently completed passenger stations in the United States. The first, La Salle Street Station in Chicago, had opened in 1866 and was an Italianate structure with three mansarded towers. The new Grand Central Depot in New York, which opened in 1871, was being hailed as the finest station on the continent. Both American stations also featured a taller center tower with a clock.

The center tower of the Toronto station rose 100 feet above the main passenger entrance and housed a clock that was visible on all four sides. The prominent clock reflected the public's newly found enthusiasm for punctuality, an obsession that was mostly contrived by the railways and their need for accurate scheduling. Below the clock was an enclosed public observation gallery that became a popular vantage point for Torontonians to look out over Lake Ontario and their expanding city. Two smaller towers flanked the center tower, and all three were crowned by square domes and cupolas. The towers were the most visible landmarks on the Toronto waterfront for the next quarter-century, as iconic a symbol of the city as the 1,815-foot CN Tower became a century later.

One unusual feature was that the main entrance, as well as the impressive architectural façade, was on the

south side facing Lake Ontario, rather than the city. This underscored the continuing importance of steamship travel on Lake Ontario, but one wonders why Grand Trunk would choose this orientation, given that its purpose was to capture as much freight and passenger business as possible from the shipping companies that had enjoyed unprecedented prosperity until the railway era began 20 years earlier. This southward orientation also created problems for Torontonians who had to cross the tracks at York Street in order to enter the station. The need to traverse busy railway tracks at grade was a serious problem that escalated and plagued Toronto for the next 60 years.

Following two years of construction, the station opened on July 1, 1873, the day that Canada celebrated its sixth birthday. Toronto's 65,000 inhabitants finally had a station of which they could be proud. *Canadian Railway & Marine World* later described it as "one of the most modern and handsome stations on the continent."[16] Even Montreal, Toronto's archrival for railway dominance, would have nothing to match it for several more years.

Tragically, the new station's building contractor was not there to enjoy the accolades. Forty-six-year-old John Shedden had been killed two months earlier in a railway accident. Among his several accomplishments, Shedden was the president of the Toronto & Nipissing Railway. On May 16, 1873, he had attempted to board a moving train at the station at Cannington, Ont., about 58 miles northeast of Toronto. Losing his footing, he fell between the train and the platform, where he was crushed to death. Consequently, the opening ceremonies for the new station were subdued, with evergreen decorations and specimens of other Canadian trees placed around the facility. Explosive fusees lined the track to herald the arrival of the first train at 5 a.m.[17]

> "… the building presents a most imposing appearance, to both outside and inside. The interior arrangements have been made, regardless of expense, and are as near perfection as could possibly be attained. The station was thronged throughout the day with people anxious to make a full inspection of the building."[18]

When Union Station opened, Toronto's railways were still using three different track gauges. The Great Western and Grand Trunk had already converted to standard gauge. The Northern Railway would not convert from wide gauge until 1879. TG&B was narrow gauge and approached the

station from the west using a third rail laid adjacent to Grand Trunk's standard-gauge track. Inside the train shed, TG&B had exclusive use of the 3-foot, six-inch-gauge northern track. TG&B was not standard-gauged until 1881, the last holdout among Toronto's railways to convert.

In 1873, the name of Union Station was justified only by the tenancy of TG&B. Neither the Northern nor Great Western initially occupied the station, although their trains continued to stop on the south side of Union Station as a convenience for connecting passengers.

The opening of Union Station marked a significant shift in the importance of a railway station in the daily lives of Toronto's citizens. An urban train station had become far more than a place for business transactions between railway companies and travelers.

> "[The station] was integrated into city life, a transfusion point, a place where you were melded from one kind of environment, your home and office, to the world of travel, and then on to the place of your destination in one fluid movement. Above all, the great railroad terminals were places of human assembly, a quality every city needs for its spiritual health."[19]

1884 – The Canadian Pacific Railway network

In 1880, the Grand Trunk was still one of the longest railways in the world, extending 1,133 miles from Portland, Maine, through Montreal and Toronto to Chicago, although a short car ferry crossing of the St. Clair River was necessary near Sarnia, Ont. Most of this route ran through Canada, but much of the freight and passenger traffic carried by GTR was moving between the Atlantic Ocean and the American Midwest. Toronto was at the center of this operation and the city had grown mightily in the quarter century since Grand Trunk had provided the first direct rail link with Montreal.

However, a new rival was about to challenge Grand Trunk's hegemony in eastern Canada. The Canadian Pacific Railway Co. was incorporated in 1881 to build a line between Montreal and the Pacific Coast, mostly through 3,000 miles of vast, uninhabited wilderness. The legendary construction of the transcontinental CPR, a cornerstone of Canadian mythology, has been celebrated in books and popular culture. Less well-known is the building and acquisition of Canadian Pacific's network in southern Ontario and Quebec, where more than 70 percent of Canada's population resided.

Canadian Pacific required an eastern rail network to generate the freight and passenger traffic revenues necessary to keep the company solvent and to help pay for the building of the transcontinental route. It built new lines where needed, but preferred to buy up existing railway companies. In 1881, businessmen associated with CP revived the dormant decade-old charter of the Ontario & Quebec Railway in order to build a new line between Toronto and Eastern Ontario.

In 1886, the Canadian Pacific Railway planned a new passenger station at the foot of York Street, indicated here by the clock tower. Road access was to be via a U-shaped iron bridge above the tracks, extending east to Yonge Street. This CPR terminal was not built; the site is now occupied by Toronto's fourth Union Station, opened in 1927. Toronto Public Library, MTL 1289

Construction on the Ontario & Quebec began in 1882 but was stymied by Grand Trunk's chokehold on rail access to downtown Toronto and the waterfront. O&Q then bypassed Toronto by building its line north of the city limits from Leaside through the village of Yorkville to West Toronto Junction, near Keele Street and St. Clair Avenue, where the company built a yard, locomotive facilities, and a passenger station. This site was still five miles northwest of the central business district, and Grand Trunk was determined to use every legal machination at its disposal to prevent its upstart rivals from gaining access to the waterfront and the city center.

Ontario & Quebec countered Grand Trunk's obstructionism by taking over the Toronto, Grey & Bruce and Credit Valley railways, both of which already held access to Union Station. The Credit Valley had been built in the 1870s between Toronto and St. Thomas, 122 miles to the west, where it connected with the Canada Southern (Michigan Central) Railway, providing access to Detroit, Chicago, and the American Midwest.

By the summer of 1884, O&Q had opened its line between Toronto and Montreal and had become CPR's Ontario Division. For the first time since 1856, Grand Trunk faced competition on its most lucrative passenger service between Canada's two largest cities. Although GTR enjoyed the fastest and most direct routing, CPR would compete for the cream of the passenger traffic until the 1930s by constantly introducing the most modern and powerful locomotives and the most luxurious passenger cars on this route.

On November 7, 1885, the iconic Last Spike of the Canadian Pacific Railway was driven at Craigellachie, British Columbia. British Columbia was now connected by rail with central Canada, fulfilling a promise of Confederation made two decades earlier.

However, Toronto did not enjoy direct access to this celebrated transcontinental railway, whose main line passed hundreds of miles north of the city. When transcontinental passenger service began on June 28, 1886, the *Globe* reported that only 15 passengers had purchased tickets for the West Coast. The first train departed from Union Station with a combination car, a coach, and the sleeper *Peterboro*. Unlike the gala celebration in Montreal, "no demonstration of any kind" took place in Toronto to mark this historic occasion.[20] Toronto passengers first had to travel about 230 miles east – almost as far as Ottawa – to connect with the westbound transcontinental train from Montreal. At Carleton Place, the cars from Toronto were added onto the *Pacific Express* and Toronto-bound cars from Montreal were detached.

In 1885, CPR began to acquire leases to all the waterfront land between Yonge and York streets. When it had acquired sufficient property, the railway announced plans in 1887 to build a passenger terminal on the south side of the Esplanade between Bay and York Street, about where the south end of the Union Station trainshed is located today. It was proposed that the public access to this station be provided from iron bridges carrying Yonge and York streets high over the tracks. A surviving image of this structure shows a tall clock tower, similar to the one that CP would build 30 years later at North Toronto.

However, the city planned on using this area for public dockage and offered an exchange of land that would give CPR considerably more property between York and John streets on water lots that, once filled in, were much larger than those already in the railway's possession. The city considered the land swap a good deal since the lots it acquired were closer to Yonge Street. The company would eventually build extensive passenger, freight, and locomotive facilities in the land thus acquired, part of which survives today as the John Street Roundhouse/ Toronto Railway Heritage Centre.

By 1889, with completion of the "Short Line" across the state of Maine to the port city of Saint John, New Brunswick, CPR stretched from the Atlantic to Pacific oceans. Even the United States could not boast of a single coast-to-coast transcontinental railway under one management. However, Toronto still did not have direct access to this route, located 260 miles away at North Bay, Ont., but requiring 450 miles of indirect travel to reach that point.

Although Canadian Pacific passenger trains came into Union Station, for which the road paid substantial fees to Grand Trunk, the cumbersome roundabout route from the east via North Toronto and West Toronto added at least half an hour to train schedules. CPR decided to build a new line directly through the Don Valley from Leaside to the waterfront. Construction on the Don Branch began in 1888, despite considerable engineering challenges to overcome, including the building of five massive trestles in the valley. CPR also had to wait for the city to straighten the course of the lower Don River to allow enough room to build a right of way along the west bank. Following completion of the "Don Improvement," passenger trains began using this route in May 1893.

Competition, consolidation and cooperation

Toronto's second Union Station, regarded as the most magnificent railway station in Canada when it opened in 1873, was obsolete within a decade. It originally handled 16 trains a day; by 1880, this number had tripled. Longer and more frequent trains, pulled by increasingly powerful locomotives, meant that railway stations built just a few years earlier were no longer adequate.

The station's capacity also was hampered by fundamental design flaws. Among the many challenges that plagued station designers even into the 21st century, was the problem of pedestrian circulation – the control, movement, and organization of large numbers of people

with maximum safety, efficiency, and speed. At Union Station, arriving and departing passengers mixed freely, frequently jostling together on the same platform. No limitations existed on who could enter the trainshed, so crowds of greeters, well-wishers, and loiterers mingled with passengers getting on and off the trains, along with station employees, porters bearing luggage, mail and express wagons, and baggage carts. This situation was not only inconvenient but also dangerous.

Circulation problems were apparent outside the station as well. The main entrance and public facilities were south of the tracks, facing the lake, but most foot and vehicular traffic was from the north and had to cross three tracks at York Street to enter the station. Pedestrians always take the shortest possible route, and many people followed the dangerous path of scrambling diagonally across the tracks and through the shed in order to enter the station. This prompted Grand Trunk to erect formidable fences on either side of the tracks, forcing pedestrians to use the main entrance on Esplanade Street.

Compounding these difficulties was the overriding problem that "union" stations were intended to solve. In 1880, three of the six railways entering Toronto still used their own separate downtown stations, some located a considerable distance from Grand Trunk's Union Station. The inconvenience of passengers and their baggage having to transfer across town was regarded as a significant hindrance to the commercial interests of Toronto.

Mayor William McMurrich convened a meeting of civic and railway officials to discuss building a "Union station common to all the railways."[21] While all stakeholders agreed that such a facility was needed, the perennial problem of who was going to pay for it persisted, and discussions dragged on throughout the 1880s.

Meanwhile, Grand Trunk Railway was engaged in a frenzy of expansion. The rival Canadian Pacific was rapidly assembling a southern Ontario rail network that would directly compete with Grand Trunk. GTR was determined to acquire the smaller railways before they could be gobbled up by the upstart rival.

In March 1882, the Toronto & Nipissing, along with several other railways east and north of Toronto, were consolidated into the Midland Railway of Canada. A few weeks later, the Midland closed its Berkeley Street station and transferred its four daily trains to Union Station. Grand Trunk apparently coped with the increased traffic by laying a fourth track under the Union Station trainshed, accomplished by moving the center track to one side[22] and by expanding the number of ticket wickets.[23] Clearly, these were only band-aid solutions, and a new station was still needed.

In April 1882, Mayor McMurrich proposed expanding Union Station by extending north to Front Street so that passengers would be "saved the annoyance and danger attendant upon arrival and departure at the present point by reason of the necessity of having to cross the tracks."[24] Grand Trunk General Manager Hickson responded with a plan to build additional through tracks and platforms north of the present station.[25] Although they were never built, some contemporary maps of the city show them as "excursion platforms."

On August 12, 1882, the 800-mile Great Western Railway became the Great Western Division of the Grand Trunk Railway of Canada. The "Railway Fusion," as Toronto newspapers referred to it, was not welcomed by many Torontonians, who loathed Grand Trunk for its high-handed and arrogant management, and its bullying of politicians in order to appropriate Toronto's waterfront. Great Western's 12 trains a day were shifted to Union Station from the Yonge Street station, which became a Grand Trunk bonded freight depot.

By this time, 55 trains a day called at Union Station. Given that it had proven to be unequal to the task of handling half that many trains just a few years earlier, it's difficult to imagine how the railways and their passengers coped with this situation, because only minor changes had been made to the facility since it opened in 1873.

Torontonians were understandably irritated by Grand Trunk's voracious appetite for taking over smaller railways, putting more strain on Union Station, and by the carrier's unwillingness to make substantial improvements to the facility. With the increased passenger traffic generated by Canadian Pacific, the station was becoming unmanageable.

The last independent railway in the Toronto area to hold out against absorption by the bigger companies was the Northern – the former Ontario, Simcoe & Huron that had initiated the railway era in Toronto in 1853. In 1879, the Northern had become part of the Northern & Northwestern Railway, which was finally absorbed by Grand Trunk in 1888. Due to the overcrowding at Union Station, former NRC trains continued to utilize City Hall Station until March 1, 1893, when it was closed. The building was demolished shortly thereafter, and the site was later occupied by the south end of St. Lawrence Market.

In 1888, the idea first surfaced that the downtown railway corridor should be raised above the streets. Toronto Mayor E.F. Clarke advised City Council that a solution to the problem of rail traffic on the Esplanade blocking access to the waterfront could be solved only through construction of a railway viaduct:

> "The arguments which have been advanced in favor of the work are many and cogent. It would be advisable before the erection of a central Union Station is entered upon that the question of the mode of entrance and exit of passenger trains to the City should be disposed of."[26]

A year later, the trade publication *Canadian Architect and Builder* chimed in with:

above: This 1894 view looks east from atop the chimney of the Toronto Railway Co. powerhouse at the foot of Sherbourne Street. The small structure surrounded by tracks, at center, was the passenger station of the Toronto & Nipissing Railway. Toronto Public Library, T32154

below: The Grand Trunk Railway absorbed the Great Western in 1882 and moved ex-GWR passenger trains to Union Station. The 1866 GWR station on Yonge Street – seen here ca. 1898 – then became a bonded freight depot. City of Toronto Archives Series 376, Volume 4, Item 26

> "The railway companies coolly propose that many of the streets should be closed, and that the few remaining ones should have bridges crossing the tracks. It should be a better plan to make steam, not the citizens of Toronto, do whatever work is required in the form of climbing."[27]

The periodical further proposed that the tracks be elevated 32 feet, and that warehouses and other freight storage facilities be incorporated into the viaduct structure. This was similar to the Pennsylvania Railroad's so-called "Chinese Wall" in Philadelphia that carried tracks into Broad Street Station. The article presciently concluded with:

> "There seems to be a consensus of opinion [that the] viaduct should be built along the city front with the object of running the railway tracks from the [new] level. There can be no doubt as to the very great benefit which would result in the city and its inhabitants if the dangers of the bayfront were removed. That they will be removed, is only a question of time. If it does not become an accomplished fact at present, it will in the future, when the increased size and importance of the city will force the carrying out of some such scheme at a much greater cost than is now requisite"[28]

At the time, two engineering reports were receiving serious consideration. Both advocated building a new Union Station on the site of the old Parliament Buildings north of Front Street between Simcoe and John streets. One report by a Mr. Wellington recommended a four-track iron or steel viaduct structure. The other proposal, by Casimir Gzowski and Walter Shanly, advocated for an earthen embankment supporting the tracks between stone retaining walls.[29]

Both reports argued for the building of a terminal station, with the tracks at a right angle to the railway corridor and ending inside the trainshed. This would require trains to back in and out, as they did in Great Western's Yonge Street Station and the Northern's City Hall Station. This arrangement also prevailed in Montreal at Grand Trunk's Bonaventure Station and at Canadian Pacific's new Windsor Station.

The main advantage to a stub-ended terminal was that the ticket office, baggage counter, waiting room, and concourse were located at the end of the tracks, so passengers could reach the platforms without having to cross tracks or climb up and down staircases, a problem that so vexed Toronto Union Station with its through-track configuration. On the other hand, the main disadvantage was that passengers had to walk much farther than when station facilities were located atop or beneath the tracks.

Canadian Pacific favored the end-of-track arrangement and even argued that a stub-ended terminal was more appropriate for an "important" city like Toronto than was a through station, which CPR claimed gave the impression that the city was just another insignificant stop in a string of many along the main line.

Grand Trunk opposed such a plan, for the simple reasons that Toronto was indeed a stop along the way for the road's lucrative Montreal-to-Chicago passenger service, and that backing through trains in and out of the station would add intolerable delays. Further refinements to the terminal schemes suggested that the headhouse straddle the tracks along a north-south axis with most trains terminating on stub-ended tracks while a couple of through tracks were set aside for trains that only paused at Toronto before continuing their journeys.

In 1889, a joint committee of City Council, Board of Trade, and the Harbour Commission advocated for a two-track railway viaduct as a cost-saving alternative to the four-track structure advocated by Messrs. Gzowski, Shanly, and Wellington. In a published letter to Mayor Edward Clarke in January 1890, CPR President William Van Horne dismissed the committee's recommendation out of hand. Van Horne claimed that Toronto's busy rail traffic absolutely required a four-track structure and that the cost of the whole project would range from $7 million to $10 million, including $500,000 for a new passenger station.[30]

The rate wars between Grand Trunk and Canadian Pacific were proving to be detrimental and expensive for both companies. On July 26, 1892, CPR, GTR, and the City of Toronto signed the Tripartite Agreement, whereby the two carriers would embark on a new spirit of cooperation. The 1873 Grand Trunk Union Station would be extensively rebuilt, and GTR and Canadian Pacific would become equal partners in the construction and management of the new facility. The agreement couldn't have come any sooner for Toronto's beleaguered second Union Station.

1896 – Third Union Station

My son, here is the place – perhaps a unique spot on earth – holy in iniquity, where to go in you go out, and to go out you go in; where to go up you go down, and to go down you go up. All in all it seems to me the choicest fruit yet culled from that broad branch of the tree of knowledge, known as the public be damned style.[31]

—Louis Sullivan, on Illinois Central's 1892 Chicago station

A complicated pact, the 1892 Tripartite Agreement was an arrangement of land swapping and construction agreements that culminated in the massive refurbishment and expansion of Union Station, a process that would take almost four years. The headhouse of the original 1873 station would be preserved, although the trainshed was to be extensively rebuilt. The valuation of the old station

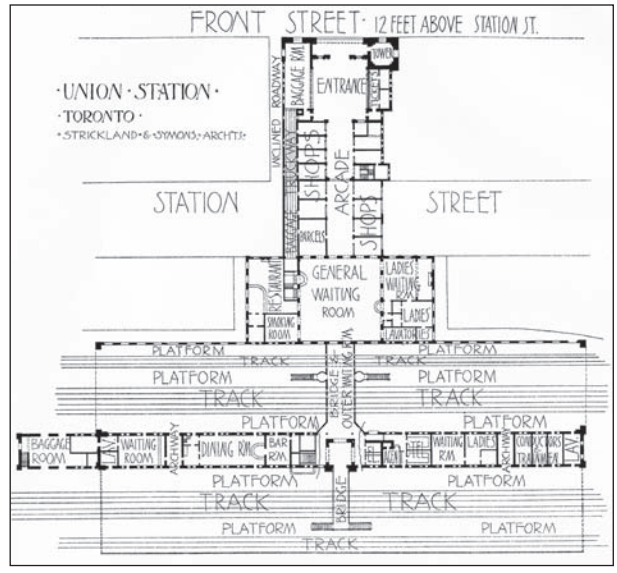
was fixed at $650,000, and the cost of the new station at $725,658.16. Union Station was finally to be extended north to city-owned land on Front Street, an expansion the city had been advocating for the past decade.[32]

The most distinctive feature of the redevelopment was a new seven-story office building and headhouse on Front Street, built of red brick and Credit Valley brown stone from the Carroll & Vick's quarries. A nine-story square tower on the northeast corner complemented the clock tower then under construction at Toronto's new City Hall, six blocks to the north at Queen and Bay streets. The new station tower was devoid of a clock, because the original station already had this feature. Upper floors were occupied by offices of the Grand Trunk and Canadian Pacific, previously scattered throughout the city. Public facilities, passenger services, and various concessions were located on the ground floor.

The new headhouse was designed in the Richardsonian Romanesque style by the Toronto architectural firm of Strickland & Symons. In an era when architects shamelessly copied successful designs from similar facilities in other cities, the Front Street headhouse closely resembled the Bradford Gilbert-designed Illinois Central Station in Chicago that had opened in 1893.

Toronto's new Union Station was finally arranged as a gateway to the city, rather than in its original 1873 orientation toward the harbor. The station complex was also built to take advantage of the slope of land that marked the old shoreline of Lake Ontario before the harbor was filled in to accommodate railway expansion in the 1850s. Passengers entered the station at street level, but by the time they crossed through the trainsheds, they were on bridges 16 feet above the tracks. It was believed that these overhead bridges, with staircases leading down to

left: An imposing Romanesque arch clad in Credit Valley stone greeted passengers entering the Front Street headhouse of Toronto's third Union Station. The structure was designed by architects Strickland & Symons and copied from the 1892 Illinois Central station in Chicago. *Art Work on Toronto 1898*; **Postcard, Author's Collection**



This floor plan and rendering show the alterations to the 1873 Union Station that were carried out in the 1890s. From the new headhouse, passengers proceeded through an arcade over Station Street into the original station and the new train shed to its south. A number of important streetcar routes also converged here. **Both,** *American Architect and Building News*, **July 23, 1894, Toronto Railway Historical Association Collection**

each platform, would once and for all solve the passenger circulation difficulties that had plagued the old station.

A new three-track train shed was built on the south of the 1873 station, covering up the once-impressive and now-grimy facade, although the three towers remained. The new shed was a utilitarian glass and steel structure, with a curved roof that bore none of the elegance of the original shed.

Several roads were permanently closed to accommodate the complex, including lower Peter, Simcoe, and York streets, and the western end of the Esplanade, which was now occupied by the new south trainshed. Since these closures restricted public access to the waterfront, the railways were required to build two new road bridges over the rail corridor at York and John streets. A new street was also created, Station Street, which ran east-west between York and Simcoe streets.

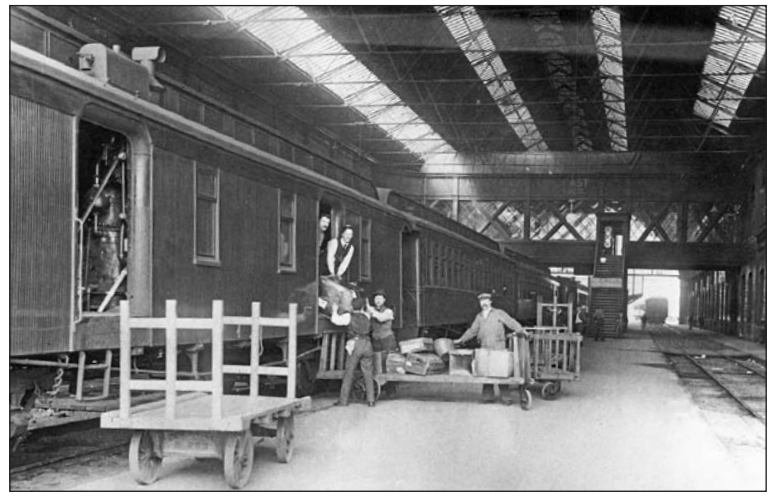
The increased rail traffic into the new station required a more sophisticated interlocking and signal system to control the eastern and western throats of the train sheds. A series of interlocking towers, or cabins, was erected by Grand Trunk and alphabetically lettered from "A" at Bay Street to "E" at Strachan Avenue. Cabin D was located west of Bathurst Street and would survive into the 21st century as an artifact at the Toronto Railway Heritage Centre, the last standing remnant of the 1896 Union Station.

The Union Station Co. was established to jointly manage the facility while CPR and GTR superintendents looked after the interests of their roads. William Gormaly was appointed superintendent of Union Station. Gormaly had first signed on with the Grand Trunk in 1857 and had managed the station since 1880.

Union Station remained in constant use throughout the rebuilding, and this created delays with the construction schedule. Railway officials had hoped to officially open the new station in time for the Christmas travel rush of 1895, but this was not to be. In December, the railways moved their offices into the new office building, with the Grand Trunk on the third and fourth floors and the Canadian Pacific on floors two and five. On New Year's Eve, the station was inspected by Charles M. Hays, the recently appointed Grand Trunk general manager, who was on his way from Chicago to Montreal to take up his new duties. Hays would later become president of the GTR, and perished in the *Titanic* disaster of April 1912 while he was on his way home from Europe to open the Grand Trunk's new Central Station in Ottawa.

The third Toronto Union Station opened officially on the evening of May 11, 1896. Thirty-two Canadian Pacific and 52 Grand Trunk trains a day used the station, a proportion of traffic that would remain more or less consistent into the Canadian National era and the present Union Station until the mid-20th century. Thousands of sightseers toured the station between 8 and 10 p.m. while being serenaded by the band of the Queen's Own Rifles. Twelve hundred electric lights emblazoned the station, while sightseers were permitted to explore the entire structure from top to bottom.[33]

Passengers entered from Front Street, through an impressive two-story Romanesque arch. Just inside the entrance was a spacious hall with walls of red sandstone imported from Scotland, a marble floor and a 35-foot-high ceiling. The entrance hall contained the ticket offices with their bronze railings and mountings, and the baggage counter, where passengers could shed



above: This 1905 view looks west and shows the interior of the original 1873 train shed, which was extensively altered in the 1890s. The elevated, glazed walkway over the tracks linked the new Front Street headhouse with both the old and new train sheds. Library and Archives Canada, PA181479

below: A circa-1908 view inside the new (south) train shed, where the overhead walkway terminates at the platform between Tracks 5 and 6. On the right, the obscured façade of the 1873 station's headhouse is visible. City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 5040

themselves of impedimenta before proceeding further into the station. Due to the steep fall of land south of Front Street, passengers then passed through an arcade above Station Street that was lined with shops on both sides. The grouping of separate business establishments under a common roof for the convenience of customers was introduced for the first time in Canada at the Toronto Arcade on Yonge Street in 1888, but was still a novelty in 1896, and the arrangement was a forerunner of the indoor shopping malls that became ubiquitous three-quarters of a century later.

Continuing south, passengers then proceeded into a newly constructed annex between the office building and original station, which contained waiting rooms, lavatories, and a restaurant. The general waiting room was the largest interior public space in the station, with a 45-foot ceiling, marble floors and oak-panelled walls, and illuminated by upper-story windows on all sides. High above the floor in the center of the ceiling was an impressive multi-colored glass dome. Off to one side was the ladies' waiting room with deep carpets, overstuffed chairs, and a fireplace. On the other side was the restaurant, the walls of which were covered with mirrors. Sadly, no photographs of these interior public rooms are known to exist.

Proceeding further, passengers found themselves on a bridge that passed 16 feet above three tracks in the original 1873 north train shed, from which departed all eastbound trains. The north shed had been extensively remodeled to resemble the new south shed, and staircases led from the bridge down to each platform. After passing through the north shed, passengers next entered the original 1873 station building, which still housed a dining room, a bar, additional waiting rooms, and lavatories. Passengers boarding westbound trains proceeded even further south on another pedestrian bridge that passed over the tracks in the new south trainshed. The bridge ended between tracks five and six, with a final staircase descending to the platform.

The public soon discovered that stringent measures were in place to prevent the dangerous overcrowding under the trainshed that had vexed the old station. No one was admitted down to the platforms without a ticket. Those who were meeting arriving passengers had to wait upstairs in the general waiting room. Since arriving passengers were able to exit the station directly from the lower level, this requirement was immediately perceived as a serious flaw in the station design. Several years later, it led to international embarrassment when the British ambassador to the United States visited the city and wandered out onto Front Street before his reception party could find him. Toronto's reputation as a progressive transportation city was not enhanced by the *Globe* headline "Ambassador Confused."[34]

The York and John street bridges were finally opened in August 1897. Their construction had been delayed by several factors, including a shortage of available ironwork, the material for the timber decking being lost in a shipwreck, and the usual squabbling between the City and the railways over the configuration of the roadway.

The York Street bridge featured a teamway and elevator on the west side to carry mail and express directly down to the platforms. The Toronto Railway Co. installed streetcar tracks on the bridge, intending to provide car service to the busy ferry docks for the first time, because the railway corridor had always blocked a southward extension of the transit system. These tracks were never used, and streetcar service to the ferry docks had to wait another three decades until the Toronto Transportation Commission took over the ferry service and extended the "Bay" route south over the temporary Bay Street bridge in 1927.

Over on the west side of Union Station, a pedestrian bridge was built directly from the platforms over the tracks to the corner of Simcoe and Front. This became known as the "Bridge of Sighs," as anxious immigrants could be seen carrying all their worldly belongings across the span after arriving in Toronto for the first time.

Canadian Pacific built a new locomotive servicing facility at the foot of the newly extended John Street. In time, the roundhouse came to be unofficially named after the street.

The new Union Station became the southern terminus for the recently electrified Yonge streetcar line of the Toronto Railway Co. The proprietor of TRC was William Mackenzie, whose Canadian Northern Railway trains would begin using Union Station a decade later and become the third Canadian transcontinental railway. The streetcar route began in the north end of the city at the Canadian Pacific crossing just east of North Toronto Station and came all the way down Yonge Street to Front. The cars then turned west and deposited departing rail passengers across Front Street from the main station entrance.

At this point, cars looped counter-clockwise around the station headhouse, moved down the grade on Simcoe Street, then east on Station Street where detraining passengers boarded the streetcars underneath the protective canopy provided by the new station arcade.

Unfortunately, the excavation for the new Station Street wasn't deep enough, and TRC's electric streetcars were too tall to fit under the arcade with their trolley poles extended. After the usual sabre rattling over whose responsibility is was to fix the problem, the city lowered the street by six inches.

The third Union Station was a sprawling complex that never worked very well, either from an architectural or engineering point of view. Only three years after it opened, an 1899 issue of *Railway and Shipping World* stated that "the general consensus of opinion is that the Toronto Union is one of the most inconvenient stations in (North) America, expensive to run and unsatisfactory in very many other respects."[35] In 1907, the *Globe*, never a paper to shy

above: Two Canadian National steam cranes help dismantle the south train shed of the old Union Station in the early summer of 1927. For the first time in more than 30 years, Torontonians could see the original façade of the 1873 Union Station. The tower clock was later removed and preserved. City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1257, Series 1056, Item 606

below: Demolishing the old Union Station was no easy task, requiring one of Canadian National's most powerful steam locomotives to pull the building down in early 1928. City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 14

away from stringent criticism of the railways, published a lead editorial in which it stated: "It is safe to say that no city of 250,000 inhabitants in the civilized world is provided for so disgraceful an apology for a Union Station as the city of Toronto."[36]

Postscript

When Toronto architects Strickland & Symons designed the new Union Station headhouse in 1893, they were clearly influenced by the Romanesque-style Illinois Central Station in Chicago. Ironically, the seeds of the Toronto station's eventual replacement had already been planted in Chicago that year at the World's Columbian Exposition. The temporary buildings created for the fair, specifically the terminal station designed by Charles B. Atwood, ushered in the Beaux-Arts style of monumental train stations. In Canada, that architectural style found its ultimate expression in the present Toronto Union Station.

Construction began in 1915, but was delayed by a wartime shortage of construction workers, financing, and building materials. The magnificent Beaux-Arts headhouse was completed in 1920, but the station sat empty and unused while the railways, the city, the federal government, and the Harbour Commission argued over what route the tracks should take to enter the facility. Finally, it was decided to open the new station in August 1927. Early that summer, the south trainshed was demolished and, for the first time in more than 30 years, Torontonians could see the original façade of the 1873 Union Station.

On August 10, 1927, all trains were finally shifted to Toronto's fourth Union Station, and demolition of the 1873 station began. The clock that had been a familiar landmark on the Toronto waterfront for more than half a century was carefully dismantled and installed in the town hall

The 19th-century Union Station was replaced by this Beaux-Arts structure in 1927. It is now the busiest transportation terminal in Canada, with 200,000 people passing through the facillity every weekday. Owned by the City of Toronto, Union Station currently is undergoing a $640-million (Cdn.) renovation to restore the structure and expand and enhance its traffic flow. Author's Collection

at Huntsville, Ont., 125 miles north of Toronto. It is the only surviving remnant of the railway stations described in this article.

The tower that had housed the clock was much more stubborn. John Shedden & Co.'s structure resisted numerous attempts to pull it down, including building wooden cribs beneath it and setting them on fire. Finally, Canadian National enlisted the services of its most powerful locomotive, one of the 4100-series 2-10-2 "Brutes," built for freight transfer service up the steep grade between Mimico and Danforth yards. A steel cable was attached between the engine and the tower, and the locomotive began tugging; the cable snapped. Finally, the tower came down in late January 1928. By May, everything south of Station Street was gone, and Canadian National began construction of a new express and office building that was completed in 1929. The 1895 office building on Front Street survived until 1931, when it, too, was demolished.

The last surviving station described in this narrative was the Great Western passenger station at the foot of Yonge Street. Following its conversion to a Grand Trunk freight facility, the building became a wholesale terminal for fresh fruit brought in from the United States. On May 17, 1952, the ramshackle building caught fire and burned to the ground. The Sony Centre (a performing arts venue originally opened as the O'Keefe Centre in 1960) and a new condominium now occupy the site.

The only remaining 19th-century railway buildings in the city are now located at the Toronto Railway Heritage Centre at Roundhouse Park. CPR's Don Station, opened in 1896 at Queen Street, was moved to Todmorden in 1969, and finally to Roundhouse Park in 2008. Cabin D, also built in 1896, was moved to John Street in 1983 and situated on its permanent foundation in the park in 2009. Both buildings were completely restored in 2010.

Notes

1. The term "Canada West" described the area covered by the former Province of Upper Canada, "Upper" referring to the area's upstream location on the St. Lawrence River. Consisting of all of present-day southern Ontario and much of northern Ontario, it was a distinct political subdivision. It was renamed Province of Ontario in 1867. The term Canada East described the area covered by the Province of Lower Canada, meaning the regions along the downstream portion of the St. Lawrence – essentially what is today southern Quebec.
2. H. Roger Grant, *The Railroad: The Life Story of a Technology*, Greenwood Press, 2005.
3. *History of Transportation in Canada* by G.P.deT. Glazebrook, Ryerson Press, Toronto, 1938.
4. Charles Dickens, *Household Words*, 21 January 1854.
5. The *Globe*, June 16, 1858
6. The *Globe*, July 30, 1858
7. The *Globe*, July 11, 1861
8. The *Globe*, February 20, 1871
9. The *Globe*, November 19, 1870
10. The *Globe*, September 8, 1871
11. The *Globe*, July 23, 1880
12. The *Globe*, November 1, 1871
13. The *Globe*, October 25, 1871
14. The *Globe*, June 14, 1872
15. The *Globe*, October 26, 1872
16. *Canadian Railway & Marine World*, October 1927
17. The *Globe*, July 2, 1873
18. *Daily Leader*, July 2, 1873
19. *All Aboard: The Railroad in American Life* by George H. Douglas, Paragon House, 1992
20. The *Globe*, June 29, 1886
21. The *Globe*, July 31, 1880
22. The *Globe*, January 30, 1882
23. The *Globe*, March 6, 1882
24. The *Globe*, April 11, 1882
25. The *Globe*, August 23, 1882
26. Jesse Edgar Middleton, *Municipality of Toronto*, Dominion Publishing, Toronto, 1923
27. *Canadian Architect and Builder*, Vol. 2, Issue 10, Oct.1889
28. ibid
29. ibid
30. *The Viaduct, Esplanade and Don Improvement Questions*, Letter from the President of the Canadian Pacific Railway Co. to the Mayor of Toronto, January 23, 1890
31. Louis Sullivan, *Kindergarten Chats* (New York, Wittenborn, Schultz, 1947), p. 23. Sullivan was commenting on the Illinois Central station in Chicago, upon which Toronto's 1896 Union Station was partly based.
32. The *Globe*, July 7, 1892
33. The *Globe*, May 12, 1896
34. The *Globe*, April 3, 1907
35. *Railway and Shipping World*, January 1899
36. The *Globe*, January 14, 1907.◆