

From the information they obtained, the Grand Trunk as a complete system of railways, including the Victoria Bridge, was brought before the public in England under the auspices and with the influence of the agents for the province, Thomas Baring, Esq., M.P., and G. C. Glyn, Esq., M.P.

As early as 1846, the Hon. John Young, of Montreal, suggested the practicability and necessity of a bridge across the St. Lawrence, near Montreal, and succeeded in obtaining surveys and reports upon the subject from several eminent engineers; from Mr. Morton in 1846, Mr. Gay in 1847, Mr. Gzowski in 1849, and Mr. T. C. Keefer in 1851, with which, and the information he obtained on the spot, Mr. Ross on his return to England designed the structure upon the principle on which it is carried out, and upon which the provisional contract was taken, and, as Engineer in Chief of the Grand Trunk Railway, afterwards resided in Canada until the works were completed.

Upon the inauguration of the Company, the great importance of this work, the large expenditure it involved, the various opinions that existed of its practicability, and the great difficulties and risks connected with its construction in such a position, decided the Board of Directors, previous to bringing it before the public, to consult Mr. Stephenson, whose high authority and sanction it was deemed of great importance to obtain; and who, after examining the information and designs laid before him by Mr. Ross, signified his approval of them, and undertook jointly with him the responsibility of engineer to the bridge.

In the summer of 1853, Mr. Stephenson visited Canada to personally examine the site of the bridge; and with the additional information procured during the previous winter under Mr. Ross's instructions, and carefully reviewing the opinions of those best acquainted with the locality, decided conjointly with Mr. Ross upon the structure as it at present exists.

The site of the bridge is at the lower end of a small lake, called the La Prairie Basin, which is situated about one mile above the entrance to the Lachine Canal, at the west end of Montreal Harbour. At this point the River St. Lawrence is, from shore to shore, 8660 feet or a mile and three-quarters, wide. The lake, however, which is full of boulders, is extremely shallow—so much so, that excepting in the main channels it is only navigable for vessels drawing from one foot six inches to two feet of water. And even these have difficulty in approaching the shore, there being no landing-place above the site of the bridge except at the La Prairie village.