

Reverting back to early days of transportation, a curious development took place during the first period of canal construction. It was the building of several portage railroads, of which the most significant was the "Champlain and St. Lawrence Railroad" which covered the distance of 16 miles between St. John on the Richelieu River and Laprairie on the south shore of the St. Lawrence, a few miles west of Montreal. This was the first railway to be built in Canada, and was designed to facilitate the movement overland of goods and people so as to avoid the longer voyage by water and to by-pass the rapids in the Richelieu River.

Needless to say the portage lines were soon lost in the general scramble to build railroads on a much larger scale because it was soon realized that they afforded a real solution of the transportation problem which then existed. History shows that railroads served to strengthen the links between the various centres of population and helped to bring about the economic, political and social integration of British North America in the mid-century.

Canada's first railroad era belongs to the 1840's and more particularly to the 1850's, during which time more than 2,000 miles of operating lines were built - largely in Central Canada - and more than \$100 million was invested in railroads. Up to the late 1850's, railroads afforded the most efficient means of tapping Canada's rich natural resources. For example, the Northern Railway from Toronto to Collingwood, which was completed in 1855, was not only instrumental in opening up the fertile agricultural country north of Toronto and in tapping the dense pine forests of Simcoe County, but it also made of Collingwood a port which by 1861 was handling some \$2,500,000 of trade, principally grain from the United States.

The first railroad era, like the first period of canal construction, may not have been the financial success that so many appear to have expected, but it was none the less one of the key steps in the great enterprise of building the Canadian nation.

The second era of railroad building followed Confederation, when the opening up of the west resulted in the expansion of the Canadian economy to include the Prairies and British Columbia, for which transportation facilities had to be provided. Pursuant to the terms of Confederation the Intercolonial Railway, with government assistance, was built from Riviere du Loup to the Maritimes, and was completed in 1876; and as a further part of the broad plan of a Confederation to extend from one ocean to the other, the Canadian Pacific Railway was completed in 1885. Between 1867 and 1885 operating lines increased from 2,000 to 10,000 miles, largely as a result of the construction of these two projects which gave Canada a railway system extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific.