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A SHORT SKETCH OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES IN CANADA.

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(To be read at the monthly meeting of the Society, December 14th, 1911.)

In the eighteenth century the population of Canada was confined to the banks of the rivers and the shores of the lakes, and the price of the small amount of supplies required was largely composed of the cost of transportation in canoes in summer and shoulder packs in winter. In the course of time small canals, sufficient for canoes, were made around some of the rapids of the St. Lawrence and the Ottawa Rivers to avoid the most difficult portaging, and as the settlements spread back of the rivers, trails were cut through the forests and pack horses were introduced. Then followed corduroy roads and carts and sleighs. As the population increased, graded, and in some cases, macadamized roads were made, and here and there light draft canals.

In the year 1779 the Coteau du Lac and the Split Rock Canals around some rapids in the St. Lawrence River were undertaken, with locks 20 ft. long, 6 ft. wide, and 2 ft. of water. These were opened in 1780. Then came the Cascade Canal of the same dimensions, begun in 1782 and opened the next year, at the junction of the St. Lawrence and Ottawa Rivers. These canals were operated with good results until 1814, when their enlargement was undertaken. The work was completed in 1817, the locks having been widened from 6 ft. to 12 ft., the length and depth remaining as before.

With a view to improving the facilities of transportation by water, the following canals were built and opened, viz.:—

Transportation