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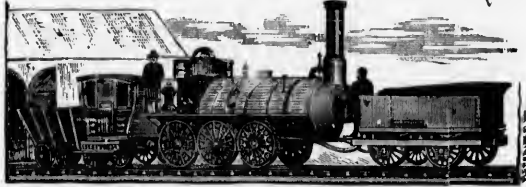
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Canadian Society of Civil Engineers.

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(To be read on Thursday the 10th December.) 21 Jan



ONE OF THE OLDEST RAIL ROADS IN CANADA.

By H. S. POOLE, M. CAN. SOC. C. E.

In 1818, when coal mines were first opened on the East River of Pictou, a tram road was made from the pits to the head of the tide, above where the iron railway bridge now spans the river; but shipments were small until a transfer of the property took place in 1827, when a new site for the wharves was selected lower down the river.

As the trade grew and the inconvenience of shipping in shallow waters was more and more felt, other sites still lower down were found, and so it came about that in the course of ten years four moves were made.

The tram road was of the now standard gauge, 4' 8½", and was worked by horses. Sidings were placed about half a mile apart, and each horse went his half mile or so with a full load, and, leaving it on the main line for the next horse to take on, returned with empty wagons from the siding.

When in 1834, it was found that much improved facilities were required to meet the growing trade, the final site was selected opposite the loading ground, some four or five miles further down the river from the shipping place in use, at a point where there was ample water for vessels of the largest size then engaged in the coal trade.

The extension then decided on was subsequently built in a more substantial manner than the upper part of the road had been made. It was finished in 1838, and in that year the first locomotive ran over a railroad in British North America.

For half a century this rail road was in operation, and for many years carried passengers as well as freight; it was finally abandoned last autumn, and the shipping of coal transferred from the loading ground where this South Pictou Railroad terminated, to wharves at the mouth of the harbour, access to which is attained over a branch of the Inter-colonial Railway to Pictou Landing. These newer wharves will accommodate any vessel that can cross the bar at the harbour's mouth, they are accessible earlier and later in the season than those at the loading ground, and from them loaded vessels can sail at any time of the tide day or night.

When the tram road gave place to the rail road, the line to the pits was also changed, and the whole length of seven miles came under new surveys.

The President of this society has spoken of the desirability of recording the names of those who were pioneers in the several branches of the profession of engineering, and the author now would name Mr. Peter Crerar as the first Railroad engineer in Nova Scotia if not in Canada.

Mr. Crerar was born in 1785 at Breadalbane in Perthshire, and came to Nova Scotia in 1817. He first taught in a school and then became deputy land surveyor, in which latter capacity he laid out several of what are now the main roads in Pictou County. He died in 1857.