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DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

OTTAWA CANADA

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CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY COMPANY

The Canadian Pacific Railway Company is the world's most nearly complete transportation system. More than just a railway, Canadian Pacific owns, operates and manages a large fleet of ships for service on the ocean and on coastal and inland waters, an international airline, a national hotel chain, a world-wide express service and a complete telecommunications network. With assets of over \$3 billion, this highly-diversified corporation is Canada's biggest private business enterprise.

History

The CPR was formed in 1880 to connect the province of British Columbia with Eastern Canada across the Rocky Mountains and the almost uninhabited Prairies. At this time the new country faced the threat of secession by British Columbia. Led by such men of vision as George Stephen (later Lord Mount Stephen, first CP president), Donald Smith (later Lord Strathcona) and Sir William Van Horne (then general manager and later chairman and president), the CPR acquired several sections of track laid in earlier days by government agencies and, after five years of arduous construction, completed Canada's first transcontinental rail-line.

The first train left Montreal for the B.C. settlement of Port Moody on June 28, 1886, just a little more than six months after the driving of the famed "last spike" at Craigellachie, B.C., on November 7, 1885.

As the railway forged westward over the plains and through the passes of the mountains, forecasts of disaster multiplied, for the train carried neither goods nor passengers through the sparsely-settled regions. Undaunted, the nation-builders made plans to create the traffic they needed.

In 1887 three ships were chartered to transport tea and silk from the Orient to Canada's West Coast, where they would become eastbound freight for the new transcontinental railway. These vessels were the forerunners of the great CP White Empress fleet. The hotels and tea-houses established in the wilderness to entice early travellers have since grown into a chain of year-round hotels and palatial summer resorts.