

Embroid to St. Marys By-Rail Edition.

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HISTORY OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF ST. MARYS AND W. O. RAILROAD

Schemes Which Fell Through but Paved the Way to Eventual Success—Description of the New Road and the District it Serves.

Methods Adopted for Financing the Project, Municipalities Aiding—Present Management by the C. P. R.

It is a generally accepted assertion that the commercial greatness of any country, depends upon the development of its natural resources. Its sustenance, its financial backing and its prospect for increasing progress find nucleus in those material gifts of nature, that are often overlooked by the casualist.

Canada has the greatest undeveloped riches in the world. Every optimistic Canadian desires to witness an increased radiance of the "New World's Gem." Her galaxy of mines, forests, lakes and rivers enclose the secret of her future. Develop these and our prayer is fulfilled. The twentieth century which is generally conceded to be "Canada's Century," will reveal the secret to be none other than judicious commercial rivalry and railway competition. Network the continent with adequate transportation facilities, bring the producer and the consumer into direct touch, in short build railroads, and the deed is done.

All eyes and energies being focused upon this development at the present time, it should be of interest to readers of this journal to note the workings of a road which, having been well constructed, already produces results, even greater than those outlined by the fondest predictor. We refer to the St. Marys and Western Ontario Railroad. This line which is now a branch of the C. P. R., having been built by a private corporation, was finished on July 1st, 1908, and on that date became according to agreement, a part of the great system, formerly mentioned. The St. Marys and W. O. Railroad, being between its present termini, Code Junction and Embro, is (by exact) 20.7 miles long. It branches off from the main line about one mile west of Embro station (on the main line of the C. P. R.). From this point it stretches in a north westerly direction, through the townships of West Zorra, East Nissouri and Blanchard. The stations along its entire length from the south, are: Embro, Bennington, Lakeside, Uniondale and St. Marys. Of these, two, Bennington and Uniondale, are flag stations. From Code Jet. to Embro Village, the road is very winding, as it follows the course of the River Thames. These curves were deemed necessary to overcome the elevation of the country approaching the village, which altitude being eighty feet in 3 miles, necessitated the use of heavy machinery to facilitate the transportation of heavy loads. It was therefore imperative that the line be somewhat curved that the Thames river and its branch, which crossed the line at "bee line" at right angles, be spanned by large and erected by steel structures, built by the Hamilton Clear span of these bridges had are supported by about ninety piers, which are about ninety feet apart. After cement and substantial. Affluently art, Thames, the road follows the banks of that stream or crossing, crossing Commission's level at the east, for the safety of Embro, and near D. Sion's Oatmeal mills. It runs along the edge of the pond for a couple of hundred yards and by a rather abrupt curve faces due west and enters north Embro, reaching Embro Village in a twinkling.

PEOPLE OF EMBRO OBJECT.

Right here it behooves us to say that keen objection is taken by Embroians to the term "Embro Village." We use it in our narrative simply because the C. P. R. have seen fit to officially register said name in their schedules and not because we think it a fitting or orthodox cognomen. The municipal fathers have entered protest against such belittling suggestion, and have written the C. P. R. authorities, requesting them to return to the old name of Embro, plain unadorned E-M-B-R-O. We wish to advertise the town on its merits and absolutely certain that the term "village" is a misnomer from the drop of the hat, called "Commercial Boom."

EMBRO TO ST. MARYS.

The station is situated, to the north of the line, and slightly west of the 4th con. of West Zorra, known within the corporation as Huron street. This building was formerly the residence of J. M. Boosey, Esq., one of the pioneer villagers. Proceeding, the line crosses the 4th

con., running in a slightly northern direction to Bennington. From this point the line runs due north west, passing through the village of Lakeside, and the flag station known as Uniondale. Between these stations some very swampy land was encountered by the surveyors, and at one point, the work of construction was impeded for a week by coming in contact with a "sink hole" which was in reality an undrained peat bed. This hole required an additional depth of nearly one hundred feet of sand and gravel. Each day the depression was filled up to the road-bed level, but during the night would settle as low as ever. By persistently filling up, either of the track, giving way to the gravel which found rock bottom at a depth of about a hundred feet. From Uniondale to St. Marys the line follows the same direction, but is again considerably curved to overcome the grade into the town. Passing under the G. T. R. through the large cement subway, built for that purpose, the line deflects to the east, following the course of the Thames River. Passing through the Horse Shoe Quarries, it enters the heart of St. Marys, at its lowest level. The northern end pierces the business centre of St. Marys, at its most advantageous point for freight and passenger traffic as will be seen as we continue.

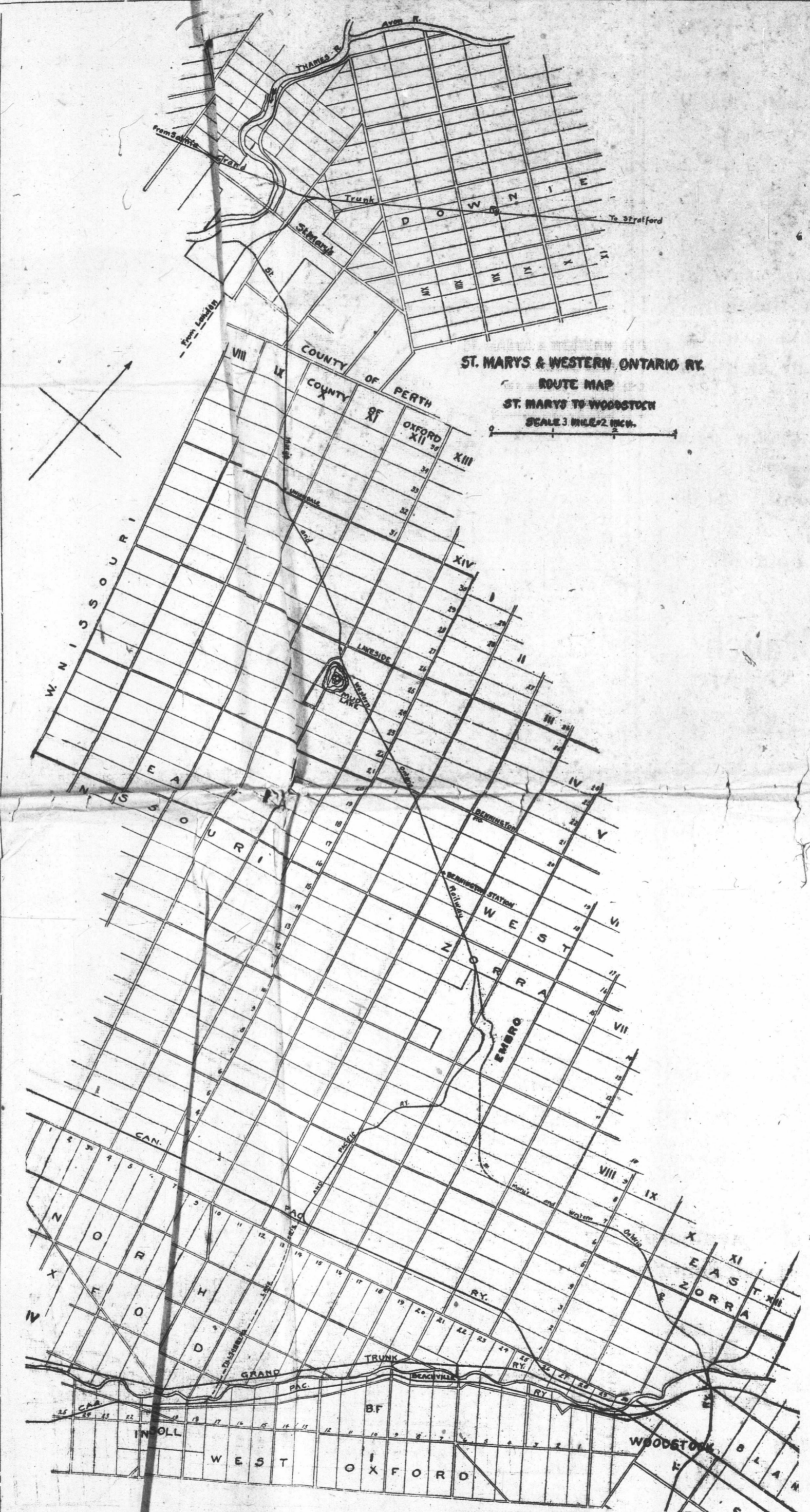
SENTIMENT IN ST. MARYS.

Having, as we hope, created in the mind of the reader, an idea of position and extent, it will be necessary for us to understand certain peculiarities and operation before an intelligent idea of general detail can be ascertained. St. Marys had but one line of railroad, actually running through the town. The new town station is built on the top of the highest section, and wholly isolated from the greatest institutions carrying on the greatest import, and export trade, private corporations wishing to take advantage of the hydraulic power furnished by the Thames river, built large flour mills and factories. St. Marys began town. Natural development in that direction, and the facilities was isolated every way than the part greater supplied with adequate alms for a transportation. Wide awake men at the head of these commercial concerns became actively alive, not only to wants of self, but also to the desires of the "Saints" in general. This, then, was an opportunity. The St. Marys and Western Ontario Railroad Company seized it.

SENTIMENT IN WEST ZORRA AND EAST NISSOURI.

That section of territory consisting of a greater part of West Zorra and East Nissouri, had never known what "railroad facilities" meant. They had for generations, conveyed their produce to market by horse labor. Wheat and oats were drawn to Beachville, Hickson, St. Marys, Ingersoll and Woodstock, in order to find suitable market. Cattle were driven sixteen, seventeen and even twenty miles to reach transportation centres. Flag stations were so remote, that passengers were put to great disadvantage and we could report names of many people who never enjoyed a trip by rail until the year 1908. Any person who has been exposed to these disadvantages will readily see how great was the impediment to a progressive people, and what a stigma rested upon the development of a country whose natural capacity was, and is second to none in this fair Dominion. Needless to say, these people talked railroad, and were only too eager to grasp the first opportunity for getting one.

The sentiment, as early as 1902, had reached the zenith of its intensity and a local periodical verbalizes the following:—"Many prominent farmers in this vicinity as well as a number of our business men, are beginning to be very much alive to the fact that we require better railway facilities than we possess. Here we are surrounded for miles in every direction by one of the most fertile soils that the sun shines upon, and we have every right to add, that nowhere on God's earth is there a more general adaptation of scientific principles to the industry of agriculture, than right about us. Give us a railroad."



POSSIBILITIES IN THE DOVER LINE.

Embro had dreamed of a line passing through her limits, some fifty years ago. The centre which could produce (sloped) millions of dollars in grain, sheep, cattle, horses, hogs, fruit, cheese and butter. What a glittering array of products! This, the centre that in consequence of its location and trades of industry, its mercantile people on the jump, and its wants of the county, and its population being multiplied.

THE FIRST SCHEME.

As far back as 1879 definite schemes are traceable. About the time of the completion of the Credit Valley Railroad to St. Thomas, a charter was secured by St. Marys capitalists to build a line from Woodstock to Lake Huron by Embro and St. Marys. Bonuses to the extent of \$60,000 were voted by St. Marys and Embro and \$10,000 by the village of Embro. The charter granted to the St. Marys Company made it imperative that the road be completed within a certain set and definite period. Too much time was devoted to minor details, the minutiae of opposition was underestimated and before any actual work had been done on the road, the time granted in the charter had expired and the project was dropped.

THE DOVER LINE POSSIBILITY.

The Dover line to Woodstock presented another possibility. A scheme to extend the line through Embro to Stratford was gotten underway for a short time, but the Grand Trunk authorities thought otherwise and the line was projected to Hickson and Tavistock in variance to Embro's desire—one more spoke smashed from the wheel of anticipation.

PROPOSED EXTENSION OF THE T. L. E. & P. R.

Some years later a company was formed to promote a railroad from the south of Ontario as a wholly independent line. The scheme was in the hands of such noted men as Hon. John Carlton, Mr. Teake and C. C. L. Wilson of Ingersoll. The road in mind was to be promoted from Port Burwell to Ingersoll, to Collingwood, passing through Embro according to prediction and was to be known as the Tillsonburg, Lake Erie and Pacific Railroad. The whole idea was a most commendable one, as it would mean the distribution of coal to those isolated centres in Western Ontario directly from the Great Lakes. The prospects for freight and passenger traffic were exceedingly bright. The whole line from Fort Burwell to Collingwood was surveyed and registered. Acting proceedings began on the south section. The part from Port Burwell to Ingersoll was completed in every detail. The line was duly opened up and traffic began. It was operated independent of the large railway corporations in Canada, for a short time, but did not prove as great a boom to the country as formerly anticipated. It does not lie within the region of our wit to determine why this was the case, but some few years ago the private company disposed of their line and rights to the C.P.R., who now operate it as a part of their great railway system. It will be well to keep in mind the fact that the road between Ingersoll and northern points by way of Embro is still surveyed and that the near future may witness a new branch line connecting these points. In fact we have it on authority that the outline maps now in the hands of the C.P.R. civil engineers, pointing out the work to be carried on during the next five or six years, contain these connected surveys as lines for early construction.

REASON FOR C. P. R.'S CHANGE OF PROGRAMME.

The reason that the intended roads of the C.P.R. were not completed seems to be this: Railway competition in the great Canadian West was causing a furore among eastern magnates. The C.P.R. thought they had the field pretty much to themselves, but the Grand Trunk Pacific and the Canadian Northern had already entered the formerly forbidden area and now that Mr. James Hill proposed to get into the field the Canadian Pacific deemed it wise to relinquish further effort for a time on smaller schemes in Ontario and devote almost their whole attention and energy to the contest for supremacy in the west. Officials of the company assured Embro and St. Marys that they could give their small connecting lines no special attention for at least five years, but said they were willing to offer every possible facility to enable them to help themselves—referring of course to Embro and St. Marys.

RADIAL LINES IN FAVOR.

Fever for radical roads became an epidemic at this juncture. The Embro Courier voiced public opinion when it said in an editorial of Jan. 18, 1905: "Any company that will give Embro railway connection with any spot on this wide earth will earn—and will get it, too—the undying gratitude of all Embroians both present and to come." In 1902 Dr. Ickes and other promoters in connection with the Woodstock, Ingersoll and Thames Valley Electric Road scheme, proposed to build and operate an electric road from Beachville to Youngsville by way of Embro, West Zorra and Embro submitted by-laws for \$85,000, West Zorra for \$25,000 and Embro for \$10,000. The by-law was passed in Embro but was defeated in West Zorra. This scheme was also precipitated into the high blue atmosphere, and perhaps with ordinary mortals all further attempt would have been relinquished; but not so with this people. They had considered the advice of Josh Billings when he said: "Consider the postage stamp, my son, its usefulness consists in its ability to stick to one thing 'til it gets there." They stuck to one thing 'and they got there' for in 1905 a company known as the St. Marys and Western Ontario Railway Company was incorporated at St. Marys, having in mind the building and operating of an independent road from Sarnia through St. Marys to a point on the main line of the C. P. R. between Woodstock and London. This line was to pass through the Zorra's and Embro. The company's organization was amended in 1907. The officers of the company were as follows:

THE COMPANY'S CHARTER.

This company applied for and received a Dominion charter at the next session of the House, granting them permission to go ahead and survey the route mentioned, and then to build the road according to their arrangements as an independent company. Those obtaining the charter then