

The Railway City

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Our Railroads.

RAILROADS and St. Thomas are synonymous. The one is the product of the other. The history of our city is the history of its railroads. Without railroads St. Thomas would still be a shambly little village, clinging to the brow of the western hills; inviting sleepy tourists to linger yet awhile, but offering small inducement to the man of energy or the ambitious youth.

With so many, so important, so far-reaching systems of railway communication, St. Thomas offers to manufacturers and merchants shipping facilities unrivaled in Canada. Two great systems of the Dominion compete in prices and in accommodation for the trade of the city, and one of the greatest of the American systems—the Vanderbilt—has its main line passing through St. Thomas, and its Canadian workshops and offices located here. A fourth independent system, the Lake Erie & Detroit River, is also represented. With such facilities for ready and cheap communication with all parts of the continent, is it any wonder that St. Thomas has prospered, and that its citizens look forward to a still greater career of prosperity?

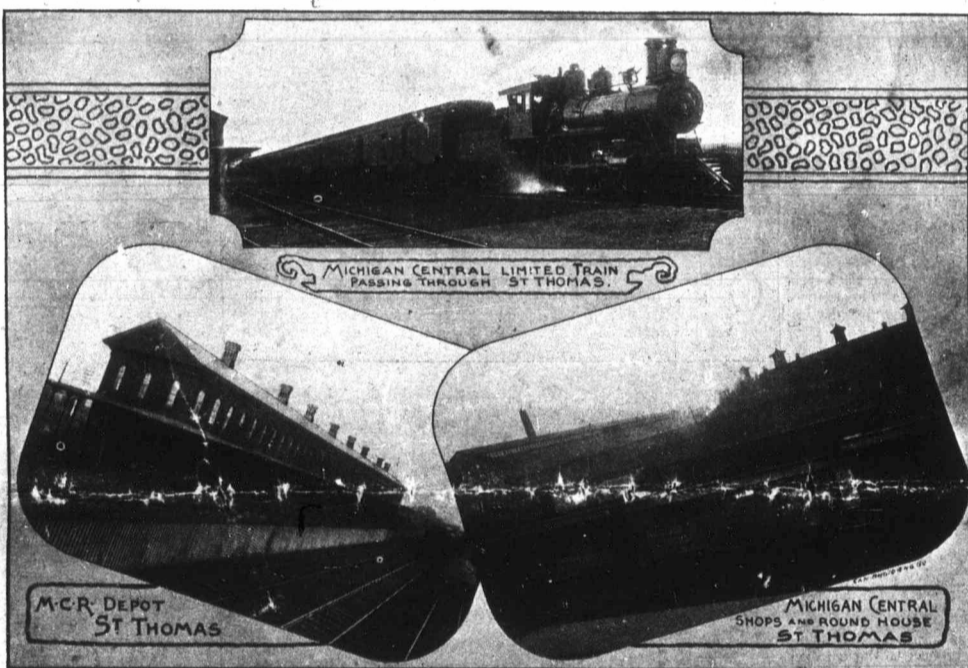
The M. C. R.

Although not the first line of railway to enter St. Thomas, the Canada Southern railway—now, the C. S. R., division of the Michigan Central railway—calls for first attention, not only because it gave to the town that impetus that soon made it a city, but because of its paramount importance as the chief factor in the city's continued prosperity.

It is difficult to determine the exact date when the idea of an Air Line through the western peninsula of Ontario from Buffalo to Detroit first existed, and in whose mind it was conceived; certain it is that for many years, long prior even to the construction of the Great Western railway, such a line was talked about. In the year 1868 W. A. Thomson procured from the Legislature of Ontario a charter for the extension of the Erie and Niagara railway westward from its terminus at Port Erie, and by an amendment in 1869 the corporate name was changed to that of "The Canada Southern Railway Company." This amended charter gave the directors power to increase the capital stock, to issue bonds, to construct the St. Clair branch, to accept aid from the municipalities who benefited by the proposed road, in the form of a loan, guarantee, bonus, purchase of right of way, station lands, or otherwise; and to the municipalities it granted power to grant such assistance, and to exempt the property of the company from taxation, or to commute for the same. With this charter in its hands, and the surveys, profiles and reports, carefully prepared, in his possession, Mr. Thomson continued to direct the attention of both English and American railway men to the advantages of the proposed line as a link in a transcontinental railway, and the very best, both in distance and alignment, that could be constructed across Canadian territory between Buffalo and Detroit. He had the means of demonstrating that the grade need not exceed fifteen feet to the mile, and that the road-bed could be inexpensively constructed. He at last succeeded in enlisting the judgment of Milton Courtright, a man of considerable railway experience, great integrity of character, and able to command, to an unusual degree, the confidence of the railway capitalists of New York City. A railway convention was held in the court house in this city on the 27th of May, 1870, at which were present a very large and intelligent representation from municipalities in the counties of Essex, Kent, Lambton, Elgin, Norfolk, Oxford, Halton and Middlesex, together with eleven of the provisional directors of the company. The convention was an immense success. It was opportune and effective. There can be no doubt that it greatly strengthened Mr. Thomson's hands in bringing his negotiations into a prompt, definite, business form, and hastened the commencement of work that might otherwise be dallied with, and through the influence of delay might be altogether lost to the country. Buffalo and Detroit were the immediate objective points, and St. Thomas was the only intervening point to which he was tied in locating the line. The 280 miles which were located and constructed under this charter compelled admiration from the first, and met the requirements of the situation most completely. The grade is nowhere above fifteen feet to the mile—practically a level; the tangents are in several instances fifty miles in length, and the connecting curves nowhere exceed three degrees. The bridges are all approached on straight lines, and the bed of the road is solid and substantial throughout. It was from the beginning designed for a double track, and the first was therefore built to the north side of the right of way. Many miles of the second track have since been constructed, and before many more years will elapse the double track will be completed between Detroit and Buffalo. The excellent policy of this enlightened and skillful engineering has been illustrated before the eyes of our citizens many times since. The engine which starts from Windsor can

haul sixty loaded cars, without assistance at any points, through to Victoria, at the other end, while passengers have time and again been carried between Buffalo and Detroit at the rate of sixty miles an hour. The construction of the road commenced in 1870, and was prosecuted with such vigor that the last rail was laid on the main line on Feb. 20th, 1873. The first transfer of through freight over the Detroit river, via International Bridge, was on Nov. 6th, 1873. On Dec. 31st, 1882, the Canada Southern railway line was leased to the Michigan Central Railway Company for a term of ninety-nine years. This change was fraught with deepest interest to the people of St. Thomas, as it implied the establishment, on what

The Cantilever Bridge has been built across the Niagara River, and the beautiful view of the great cataract, as seen by passengers on the M. C. R. trains, has justly given the road the title, "The Niagara Falls Route." It is the only railroad that runs directly by and in full view of the falls; the only railroad that crosses the river gorge on the steel Cantilever bridge in full view of the falls on one side and the rapids on the other; and the only railroad that affords from its trains the most comprehensive view of the great cataract and its environment to be had from a single point. Falls View is where the Michigan Central trains from Chicago and Detroit reach the Niagara river and stop five minutes for passengers to disembark and enjoy from the elevated station, the magnificent view.



might be termed a permanent basis, of the C. S. R. as a part and parcel of the great Vanderbilt system. By the terms of the city's agreement with the C. S. R., the head offices of the latter company are to be permanently located in this city. The new management have made the road the equal of any in America, having expended a very large amount of money upon it in various ways. In 1883 the Essex Centre cut-off was constructed, whereby the main line of the road runs directly into Detroit, and since that time a magnificent iron bridge has taken the place of the wooden one across the deep ravine at the west end of St. Thomas.

and the Canada Southern run side by side, and from Canfield to St. Thomas they are never more than five or six miles apart. At Glencoe the Loop Line connects with the main line of the Great Western. The building of the Loop did not prevent the construction of the Canada Southern, so St. Thomas became the possessor of two lines of road where only one had been expected. The Loop Line is of great benefit to St. Thomas, but in the wide section of country which it makes tributary to St. Thomas. Since the amalgamation of the Great Western and Grand Trunk roads, the Loop Line has been found particularly useful for the passage of freight, and a very large number of through trains now pass over it daily. It is a well-built road, of moderate gradients and curves, and kept in first-class condition. There are in round numbers 250 men employed steadily by the G. T. R. in this city, and the average amount paid in wages is from \$15,000 to \$20,000 per month. Occasionally in busy times the wages exceed the latter amount, but the average will be found between the two sums named. Mr. O. W. Smith is agent in St. Thomas.

The C. P. R.

The Canadian Pacific railway, whose main line constitutes Canada's great national highway across the continent at St. Thomas, gives to, and receives from, the M. C. R. much freight and a large number of passengers. The Credit Valley railroad entered St. Thomas in 1881, a bonus of \$50,000 having been voted to the company by the citizens. It is of great value to manufacturers and shippers in furnishing a competing road.

The L. E. & D. R. R.

The Lake Erie & Detroit River railroad now controls the London & Port Stanley, which runs from London through St. Thomas to Port Stanley. By means of its communication is given with Cleveland in the season of lake navigation, a steamer plying regularly between the Port and Cleveland. A great excursion business is done over the road in summer, and it is expected that within a year or two the Port Stanley branch of the road will connect at St. Thomas with the main line of the L. E. & D. R. R., now extended to Ridgeway, only forty miles away.

The Roll Call.

By the foregoing it will be seen that St. Thomas is the centre of a magnificent system of railways, which may be thus summarized:—
Michigan Central—Main Line, Buffalo to Detroit.
Michigan Central—Courtright Branch, St. Thomas to Courtright.
Grand Trunk—Loop Line, Buffalo to Detroit.
Lake Erie and Detroit River—London & Port Stanley, London to Port Stanley.
Canadian Pacific—Credit Valley Division, Toronto to St. Thomas.



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