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CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY COMPANY

Conceived in 1880 to weld the Confederation of Canada by joining together its far-flung provinces, 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 ocean, coastal and inland water vessels; an airline; a chain of hotels across Canada; a world-wide express service and a complete telecommunications network.

History

Formed 13 years after Confederation to connect the Province of British Columbia with Eastern Canada by hurdling the Rocky Mountains and spanning the then uninhabited prairies, at a time when the country was faced with the threatened secession of British Columbia from the union, the CPR acquired several incomplete sections of track laid in earlier days by government agencies and, in five years of arduous construction, completed Canada's first transcontinental rail line.

Spurred on by men of vision, such as George Stephen (later to become Lord Mount Stephen, the first president of the railway company), Donald Smith (later Lord Strathcona), and personally led by Sir William Van Horne (then general manager, later chairman and president), the construction men linked Canada's East and West Coasts with a band of steel.

The first transcontinental train left Montreal for the British Columbia 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.

At first, as the railway drove westwards over the prairies and through the tortuous passes of the Rockies, there were many forecasts of disaster, for the road had no goods or passengers to transport through the sparsely-settled regions it served. Undaunted, the nation builders made plans for creating traffic.

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

Settling the Plains

The Canadian Pacific brought settlers from Britain and Europe to settle the untenanted plains, and irrigation schemes supervised by the company made veritable gardens out of arid and unproductive regions.