

Rivers Were First High

By R. U. MAHAFFY
of The Journal

A century and a quarter ago it took two days to travel from Bytown to Montreal by stagecoach. Today, Air Canada can land you in Montreal in 35 minutes—not counting commuting time between airports.

This period spans dramatic changes in transport facilities. By Confederation year there was steamboat service between Lachine and Ottawa, via the 12½-mile portage railway from Carillon to Grenville, that had cut the travelling time to 11½ hours.

In 1882, the Canada Atlantic Railway's crack express, by "the short route" to Montreal, cut the CPR's North Shore line's running time of three and a half hours to two and a half hours. Today, the CNR's best time over the 117.6-mile route is two hours and 10 minutes.

Behind this changing pattern of transportation lies the story of the growth of settlement; the emphasis upon the staples' trade in wheat and lumber in the regional economies of the St. Lawrence and the Ottawa Valley; the upgrowth of manufacturing with its demands for cheaper transportation and economizing in time, and the rise of the modern distribution network in the exchange of goods.

At first the rivers were the great highways for transportation. From the days of Champlain the Ottawa River was known as the "highway to the west."

From the British conquest until the merger of the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay company in 1821 fur traders followed the Ottawa route to the upper Great Lakes.

In the later stages of this trade, "canots-du-maitre" — canoes 36 feet long and six feet wide and capable of carrying four to five tons of freight and a crew of up to 15 men.

But transportation in the Ottawa - St. Lawrence region did not develop by well-defined stages. On the St. Lawrence front as water transportation slowly evolved from sail to steam under the stimulus of the grain trade, roads were beginning to be opened to stage lines across the province.

And sailing schooners — despite the appearance of the first steamship on the Great Lakes in 1816 — still made the voyage from Lake Huron to Montreal via the deepened St. Lawrence canals in 1853.

Starting with the launching of Philemon Wright's regular steamboat service in 1819 with the Union of the Ottawa operating between Chaudiere Falls and Grenville, by the 1850's a chain of boats were navigating to points on the Ottawa 300 miles above Montreal.

There was no passable road between Hull and Montreal until the late 1820's, but by 1842 stagecoach travel from Ottawa to Montreal had been cut to two days with a stop-over L'Orignal.

The steamboating era in the Ottawa region got its biggest fillip from the opening of the Rideau Canal in 1832 and the carrying trade based on the timber industry.

In the early years of the canal, squared timbers were brought down the Rideau Canal for shipment to Britain, but up to 1840 much freight was carried too on barges pulled by paddle-wheel steamers.

The Ottawa and Rideau For-

warding Company, controlled by a Montreal group of merchants, monopolized navigation between Bytown, Montreal and Kingston until a skipper found a passage through the rapids of St. Anne, making up-river travel to Kingston feasible. By 1854, ships could steam up the St. Lawrence from Montreal in regular service.

A number of companies engaged in the carrying trade on the Rideau and upper and lower parts of the Ottawa River. On the Upper Ottawa, the Union Forwarding and Railway Company had by Confederation year eight vessels in service. At the same time passenger steamer service from Ottawa to Montreal was becoming more and more luxurious.

In 1872 the palatial steamer the "Peerless" was built. Harry Walker says it frequently carried more than 1,000 passengers. Rebuilt after a fire in 1885 and renamed the "Empress," this vessel had a dining room and orchestra and was the first boat on the Ottawa to be lighted by electricity.

But the advent of the railway in the 1850s with its ability to give year-round service and its advantages in haulage of freight for fledgling manufacturing industries made the days of the steamboat numbered. Village industry dependent on local materials and local markets, characteristic of the early 1860s, was on the wane by the 1870s.

The last steamer on the Rideau made its final run in 1935, but the steamboat era on the Ottawa was drawing to a close in the years before the First World War.

The first railways in the Ottawa area were intended to

serve the lumbering industry and the farming community. The Bytown and Prescott Railway, officially opened in 1855, was launched to tap the lumber resources of the Ottawa Valley.

Like many other early railroads, however, this fell into the receiver's hands and for two years Ottawa was without railway service. The Brockville and Ottawa Railway opened in 1859 Brockville and Almonte with a branch to Perth was also intended chiefly to carry lumber.

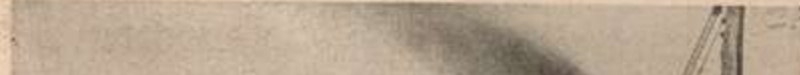
On December 21, 1867, the St. Lawrence and Ottawa Railway Company was formed to take over the defunct Ottawa and Prescott line. This was absorbed by the Canada Central which extended a branch to Ottawa in 1870, and in 1881 was taken over by the CPR.

In 1878 the Montreal Northern Colonization Railway reached Hull by the north shore route. This railway acquired by the CPR in 1882, crossed above the Chaudiere to tie in with the Canada Central from Carleton Place.

One of the most colorful chapters in Ottawa's railway history was provided by John R. Booth's Canada Atlantic Railway which was completed to Coteau Junction in 1882. Booth bought Baldwin locomotives in Philadelphia and equipped his trains with Pullman coaches, and provided fast service not only to Montreal but to Boston and New York via the Central Vermont and Delaware and Hudson lines.

Booth also built the Ottawa and Parry Sound Railway to serve his Madawaska timber holdings and to tap Great Lakes freight from the U.S. mid-west. Opened in 1896, the line was consolidated with the Canada Atlantic in 1899.

Because Booth's 400-mile railway from Depot Harbor on Georgian Bay, with its fleet



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of four large lake freighters, to the Quebec - Vermont border cut the distance between Chicago and Montreal by 800 miles he made serious inroads on Grand Trunk traffic.

In 1901 the Canada Atlantic carried 18,000,000 bushels of grain. So in 1904 the Grand Trunk took over the line in consideration of a guarantee of the principal and interest on a \$16,000,000 mortgage.

This gave the Grand Trunk — which had completed a line between Toronto and Montreal as early as 1854 — a station in the capital. The Canada Atlantic's terminal was on the site of the old Union Station built in 1909 by a Grand Trunk subsidiary.

Any map of the Ottawa district in the last quarter of the 19th century would show the area criss-crossed by railway lines as a result of the speculative boom of the day.

Many of these have disappeared. But enough of them remained in 1850 to make the government's relocation program a real conundrum. By the time the new station was opened at Alta Vista and the Queensway on Aug. 1, 1966, however, this program had been substantially completed.

The invention of the internal combustion engine in the last quarter of the 19th century paved the way for a new era in competition between transportation media.

While Europeans are credited with the first basic inventions in road transport, the earliest American internal combustion engine was built by Charles and Frank Duryea in 1893. In 1891 a steam car was displayed at Central Canada Exhibition.

According to Harry Walker, Mrs. Thomas Ahearn had an electric Stanhope buggy in the



The Run Through 'White Water'

The Rapids Prince, seen above "running" the white water of the Long Sault Rapids, recalls a vanished era when hundreds of Ottawa residents crowded its decks during summer excursions for the run through the series of rapids starting at Cornwall.

In the 1930s, as a "lookout" and deckhand on the Rapids Prince commanded by Captain Preston J. Cherry of Kingston, the writer watched the pilot guide the "Prince" between the jagged rocks just below the surface with uncanny accuracy, using such markers as an old barn or a point of land to keep in the channel. The rocks seemed to be just inches away.

The Rapids Prince and her sister ship,

the Rapids Queen, had a draught of only seven feet. These Canada Steamship Lines vessels connected with CSL steamers "Kingston" or "Toronto" at Prescott.

On the uptrip, the Rapids Prince had to use the string of canals. This kept the deck hands hopping every few hours through the night tending the lines at each lock; the deckhand was swung out on a boom to land on the canal wall and sometimes took an icy ducking.

When the St. Lawrence Seaway was begun, the Rapids Prince met an inglorious end to its illustrious career: it was used as a barge dredging Lake St. Francis.

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fall of 1900. In that year there were half a dozen owners of motor cars in Ottawa, and by 1906 Ontario permits had been issued to 52 Ottawa and district residents. In 1909 popular cars in Ottawa included the model "D" Franklin, McLaughlin - Buick, Russell and Oldsmobile.

The first trucks were electrically-powered. The Robert Simpson Company of Toronto in 1898 imported an electric delivery wagon from the Fischer Equipment Company of Chicago — the first truck to be used in Canada.

One of the first delivery trucks in Ottawa is believed to have been used by L. N. Poulin Ltd., formerly located

at the corner of Sparks and O'Connor Streets.

But motor vehicle traffic could not become a real threat to the railways until there were adequate inter-city highways. Gravel roads existed in some parts of the Ottawa Valley by 1861, and, in fact, before 1832 turnpike roads had been built between L'Orignal and Bytown, Kingston and Ottawa, Bytown and Pembroke, Prescott and Ottawa, and from Cornwall to L'Orignal but these were roads for the horse and buggy era.

In the 1870's stretches of macadamized road were built around Ottawa. E. B. Eddy in 1967 was reported to have

built a macadamized road across the gorge.

at the Hull end of the suspension bridge, in addition to more than a mile of public highway. But the first "smoking asphalt pavement" was not laid in Ottawa until 1895.

As late as 1918, however, the highway from Toronto to Montreal was "paved" only in the 19th century sense. Starting in 1919 bits and pieces of road were macadamized or given the "asphaltic concrete" treatment in the Ottawa district, but it was not until the Ontario Department of Highways was created in 1935 that highways became suitable for heavy motor vehicle traffic.