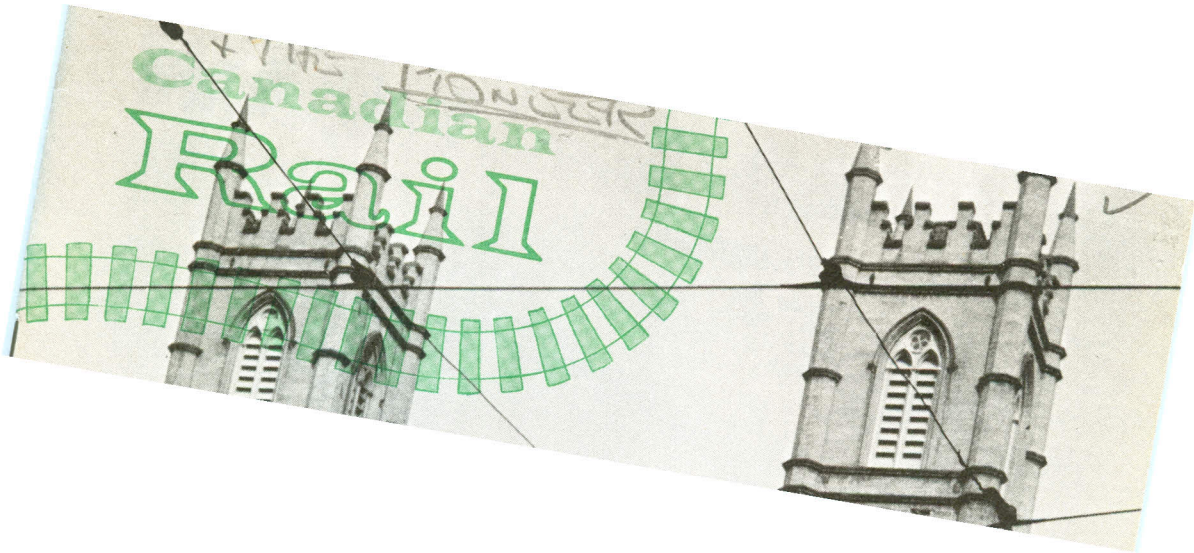


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No. 193 November 1967

The St. Andrews & Quebec Railway

(The Pioneer railroad of New Brunswick)

- by C. Warren Anderson -

In the United Service Journal of 1832, an English paper of that period, a Mr. Henry Fairbairn published the first notice, so far as is known, of a project of applying the railway system to Canada. He said - "I propose to form a railway for wagons from Quebec to the Harbour of St. Andrews upon the Bay of Fundy, a work which will convey the whole trade of the St. Lawrence, in a single day, to the Atlantic waters."

A meeting was called on October 5th, 1835 by the citizens of St. Andrews when an association was formed and an executive committee was appointed consisting of the following:

Hon. James Allenshaw, Chairman	
Thomas Wyer, Esq.	Deputy Chairman
Harris Hatch	}
John Wilson	
James Rait	
Samuel Frye	
J. McMaster	
Adam Jack	Secretary-Treasurer

Committee of management

One expects to find the "best brains" of a community to be interested in anything which promotes progress, but this is indeed an imposing list.

During the early part of December, 1835, a delegation proceeded to Quebec to bring the matter to the notice of the Government of Lower Canada, and on the 19th day of the same month resolutions favourable to the railway undertaking were adopted by both Houses of the Legislature of Lower Canada. Similar resolutions were adopted by the Houses of Assembly during the same week.

In January, 1836, another delegation proceeded to England to lay the matter of a railway before the King and Imperial Government. Resolutions similar to those passed by the Legislature of Lower Canada were passed by the Nova Scotia Government during March, 1836, and a bill was passed by the New Brunswick Government during the same month incorporating the "St. Andrews and Quebec Railroad Company" for the construction of a line from St. Andrews in New Brunswick to Lower Canada. (Authority 13-14 Vic. Cap. 117). Several other resolutions pertaining to the railway were passed at the same time.

By April 27, 1836 an estimate of the cost of construction and probable traffic had been made and laid before Lord Glenelg, Secretary of State for the Colonies. Estimated cost was placed at \$4,000,000 and the income derived from the railway was placed at \$606,000 apart from the contract for the carrying of the mails.

On May 5th 1836 Sir George Grey, under Secretary of State informed the delegation which had proceeded to England on behalf of the railway, that the sum of £10,000 had been granted by the Imperial Government to the railway to be expended on exploration and survey work, and June 9th the delegation returned from England. The day after the return of this delegation several resolutions pertaining to the railway were passed at a public meeting held in St. Andrews.

On July 24, 1836 Captain Yule of the Royal Engineers was entrusted with the work of the survey, commencing at Point Levis in Quebec and running through what was thought to be wholly British territory, the survey to be made and completed by 1837.

Early in 1837 the United States Government objected to the surveys because they claimed it ran through what was United States territory. Promoters of the railway were made aware of the attitude of the United States Government on July the 3rd, 1837 and they at once interviewed Lord Glenelg. On July 24th, 1837 Sir John Harvey, New Brunswick's Governor, received from the Imperial Government in consequence of a representation from the United States, a request to prohibit any further proceedings in the construction of a railway between St. Andrews and Quebec. Captain Yule sent his regrets to the Railroad Association on the turn of events, and so the proceedings of the Association were abruptly closed. During the year 1838 an attempt was made to revive the project, but as the boundary question had become grave nothing could be done.

In February, 1839, a group of armed men from Maine tried to take possession of the disputed territory and the organization of a force to repel this invasion established the necessity of a military road through British territory. Open hostilities were averted by the "cool headedness" of the leaders on both sides. This incident is sometimes referred to as the "Aroostook War."

On October 24th, 1839 Sir John Harvey was informed by the Imperial Authorities that they were resolved to advertise for tenders for the carrying of the mails between England and Halifax by steam instead of by sailing vessels. From that time on attention seems to have been directed towards Halifax and Quebec, rather than between St. Andrews and Quebec.

The famous, or infamous, according to your view point, Ashburton Treaty, was signed at Washington, August 9, 1842, giving to the United States much of the territory thought to have been in New Brunswick, and through which the surveys for the railroad had been made.

During the year 1845 a revival of the St. Andrews - Quebec Railroad project took place apparently recalled to life by the proposal of a new scheme, namely the Halifax and Quebec Railway, the prospectus of which had been issued in England.

On October 8th, 1845 a meeting was held at St. Andrews at which a delegate was appointed by the Railroad Association to wait upon the Colonial Secretary in furtherance of the general interest in the undertaking.

A special meeting of the Saint John Chamber of Commerce was held in that city on October 24th in the same year, at which meeting two delegates from St. Andrews were heard. Resolutions were passed assuring the delegates of the Chamber's attention and consideration regardless of local interest. The people of St. Andrews continued their exertions on their own behalf. Subscription lists were opened in December, 1845 and liberal amounts were taken in the province. The capital asked for was £750,000 in shares of £25 each. At this time, in order to reduce cost, it was proposed to use wooden rails, but iron rails were eventually decided upon.

On November 26th, 1846, a meeting of the stockholders of the railway was held in St. Andrews when a local board of directors was elected. Several shares were taken in England and a London board appointed, of which a Mr. William Briggs became secretary. Notwithstanding all this enthusiasm the settlement of the Boundary question placed St. Andrews at a great disadvantage as it could not obtain a direct connection with Quebec without crossing territory which now formed part of the State of Maine. Thus the confident hope which the people of St. Andrews had formed with respect to their town becoming the Ocean terminus of a great railway was fast passing away.

However the work of grading had been commenced by day labourers in November 1847, ground having been then first broken in the rear of the town on the farms of Thomas Wyer and Henry O'Neill. Proposals were also publicly invited for the earth work, masonry, and bridging on the first four miles to Chamcook, which was let out by contract, and the sum of £74 15 S had been expended upon construction to 22nd January 1848.

Earl Fitzwilliam had made a proposition on 12th May, 1847 to the London Board to send out to the Province one hundred able bodied labourers from his Wicklow estates in Ireland, and in order that the men might obtain work upon the railroad and be subjected to no disappointment on their arrival, he placed the sum of one thousand pounds to the credit of the Company to pay their wages, at the rate of two shillings a day, for so long as it would last, probably sixteen weeks, for which the Company was to credit his Lordship in stock. This proposal having been accepted the noble one hundred left on the ship "Star" on the 17th April. The Directors had wooden shanties built for their reception.

Progress on the construction of the line was very slow as between November 1847 and February 1851 grading was only completed to Bartletts Farm, 10 miles from St. Andrews and all further work was ordered stopped.

In February 1851 a contract was let for the building of the first ten miles out of St. Andrews and on March 11th the barque "Avon" from Newport arrived with a locomotive, together with the first shipment of rails. This locomotive called the "Pioneer" is presumed to have been the first locomotive to arrive in the province having been built in England by the firm of Robert Stephenson & Company the year before. This engine was an interesting type with cylinders inclined and four coupled driving wheels, but no leading or trailing wheels. It had no cab, bell, headlamp or pilot, so common to our locomotives today. These were probably added later.

As it was hard to sell stock, and much harder to obtain money on the stock already subscribed for, it was only the bold and persistent energy of the promoters which enabled the company to continue its work. Trains were running as far as Chamcook, 4 miles out of St. Andrews early in 1851, probably the first train service in the province.

A new contract was granted to James Sykes & Company of Manchester, England, on April 15th, 1851, as very little work had been done by John Brookfield who held the first contract and William Jackson his English engineer. During the same month the second cargo of rails arrived on the ship "Ansdale", which through stress of weather had been forced to put back twice to Cork and once to Halifax. It is said that a great many were sick on board and were disembarked on one of two small islands lying off St. Andrews, where a hospital was constructed to care for them. Because of this fact one of the islands is known as Hospital Island today. The new contract had been let for the entire distance from St. Andrews to Woodstock, the latter place which, for some time past, had been the goal of the company.

The construction of the line was re-commenced June 4th, 1852. A contemporary English paper, presumed to have been the "Illustrated London News", published under the date of August 14th, 1852, has the following say: "Commencement of the St. Andrews and Quebec Railway The first section of this important work was commenced with great ceremony on June 4th, 1852, which will long be remembered by the inhabitants of St. Andrews and County of Charlotte generally.

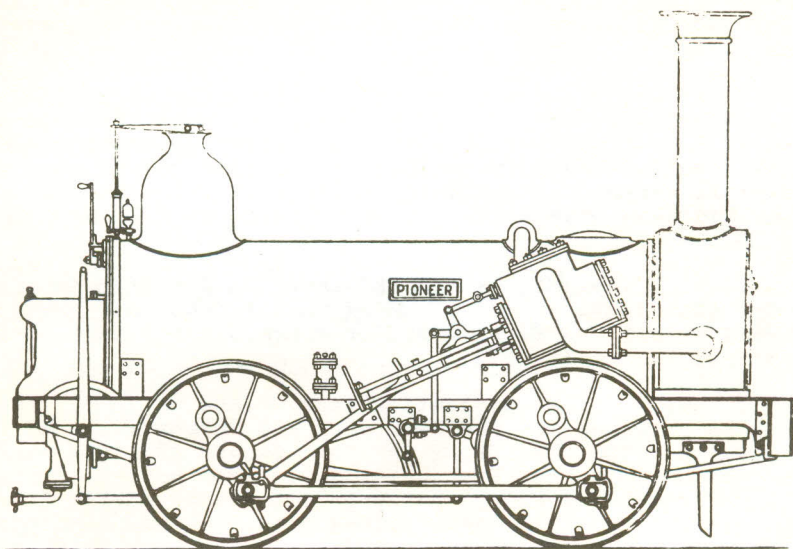
"At nine o'clock the carriages, wagons, etc., with the directors, shareholders and guests, drew up into line at Courthouse Square, and half past nine the immense procession advanced headed by the carriages of the Directors and passed through Frederick, Water, Elizabeth, Queen and Harriet Streets to the St. John road; thence via Chamcook to the Frye-road; and after a pleasant drive through the woods the procession arrived at Bartlett's farm, ten miles from St. Andrews Mrs. Murray, wife of the Administrator, raised the first turf, deposited it in the barrow, and tipped it at the end of the plank provided for that purpose..... a salute of 19 guns was then fired in honour of the occasion....."

The work on the building of the line was energetically pushed forward for by 1853 it was well advanced and this despite constant financial friction and misunderstandings between representatives of the English stock-holders and the local railway Association.

Notwithstanding all this the "Reformer", a paper published in St. Andrews, stated in an issue of 1853:

"We had the pleasure of taking a ride the other day on the first Railroad car which had been brought to the Province. The road from St. Andrews to Woodstock is now made fully eleven miles, the distance to which the car goes. There are now about 400 men working on the line."

Early in the spring of 1855 James Sykes, head of the contracting firm building the railway, left England to come to Canada to inspect the various contracts his firm had, but the sailing ship he was on was lost at sea with all hands aboard.



After the loss of James Sykes, the financial backer of the firm of Sykes and Company, Charles de Bergue of Manchester, thinking that the other Sykes brothers, William, Alexander and Samuel were incompetent to carry on, withdrew his support and the firm was thrown into bankruptcy.

As the company had had trouble with the contractors it took possession of the road in June, 1855 and all work and traffic was suspended.

On August the 10th, 1855 "Notice of Sale of the Plant and Materials" used in the construction of the St. Andrews and Quebec Railway was issued in the form of hand-bills, by Thomas Jones, Sheriff of Charlotte, at St. Andrews, N.B. By this date 25 miles of the railway had been constructed.

It is presumed that the sale was never carried out as internal evidence shows that too much had been invested in time and money to allow the road to be abandoned altogether, so in May, 1856 a new company the "New Brunswick and Canada Railway and Land Company" was formed in London to complete the railroad to Woodstock.

Satisfactory arrangements agreeable to the stockholders of the earlier companies were completed, the St. Andrews and Quebec Railroad Company ceased to exist, and work was actively resumed by the new company.

It is not within the scope of this paper to trace the progress of the "New Brunswick and Canada Railway and Land Company" (Sometimes known as the "St. Andrews and Woodstock or/and the St. Andrews and Canada Railway"). Suffice to say that some advancement

was made and the road was formally opened for the first 34 miles in October, 1857. By 1858 it had reached Canterbury 64 miles from St. Andrews and by July 1862 it was opened for traffic to Richmond a few miles further, but it passed into the hands of a receiver in 1863.

During the Trent Affair, 1862, a body of British troops travelled from St. Andrews to Richmond by train, continuing their journey by sleigh to Rivière du Loup via Woodstock. It is presumed that this was probably the first troop movement by rail in the Province. Branches were built to St. Stephen in 1866 and to Woodstock in 1868.

In 1870 the rails which had been laid as far as Richmond (simply an accidental stopping point on the road to Quebec) were removed as far back as Debec Junction a branch from this point to Houlton was completed in 1871.

A further re-organization took place in 1873, the new company to be known as the New Brunswick and Canada Railroad. This company acquired the New Brunswick and Canada Railway and Land Company, the St. Stephen Branch Railway, the Woodstock Railway Company and the Houlton Branch Railway, altogether giving the railway much more mileage than the original road. The new Company built the railway from Woodstock to Edmundston, but the Intercolonial Railway which had been completed in 1876, made this route to Quebec of little value and it was not until 1887 that the Temiscouata Railway was built and closed the last link between St. Andrews and the Province of Quebec.

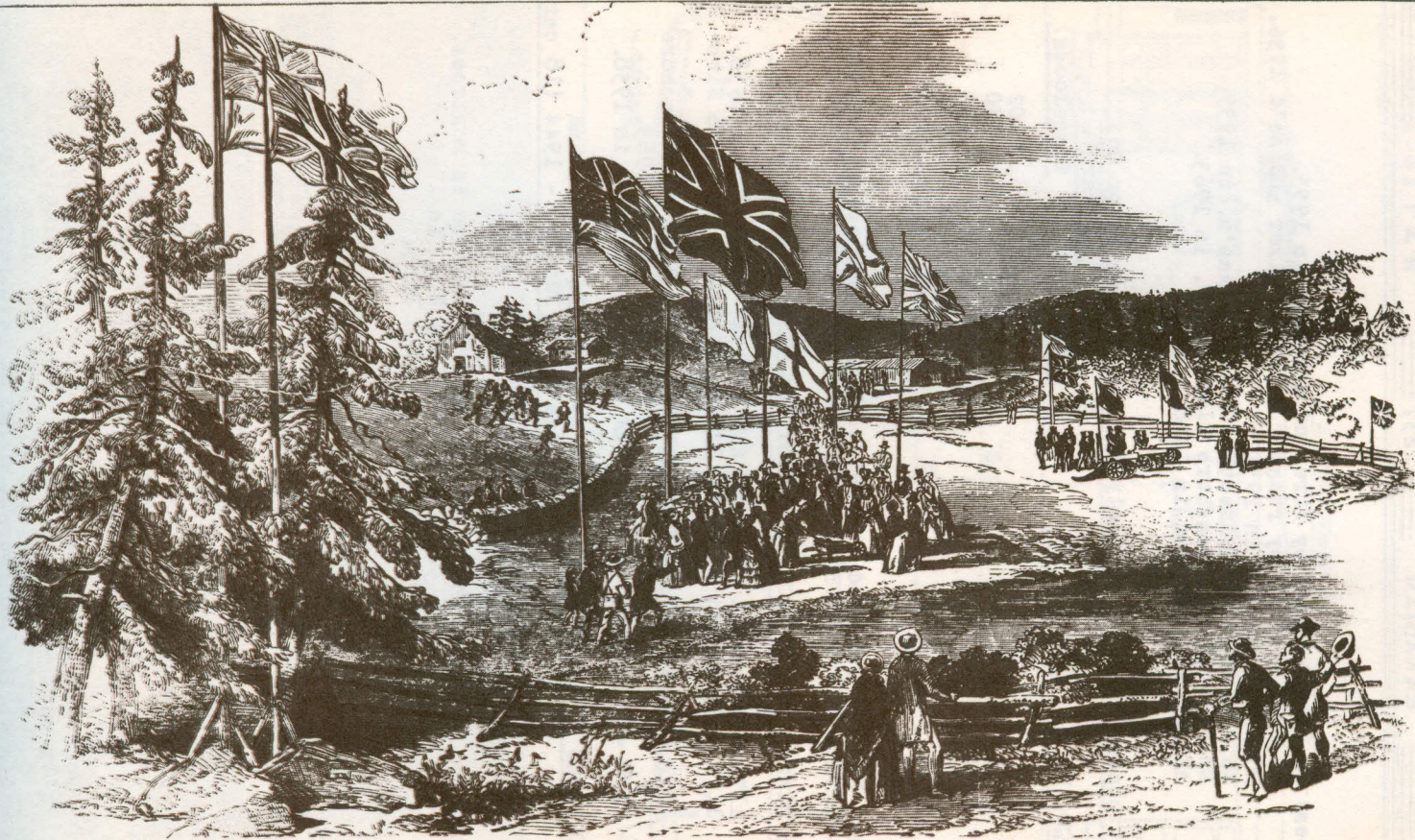
This was the final realization of the dream of the promoters more than half a century before. But it came far too late for the attainment of their hopes.

Meantime the New Brunswick Railway building out of Gibson (Fredericton) in 1870 for Edmundston acquired the New Brunswick and Canada Railroad July 1, 1882, and during the same year the Canadian Pacific Railway acquired a controlling interest in the New Brunswick Railway, the New Brunswick Railway retaining its own identity.

In 1883 the rails of the New Brunswick and Canada Railway running parallel with the then New Brunswick Railway, between McAdam and Vanceboro, were removed. In 1889 the trackage of the New Brunswick Railway became part of the Canadian Pacific Railway by a long term lease and is operated by them at the present time.

This concludes a short sketch of the St. Andrews and Quebec Railroad and its successor roads. Very little seems to be known of its early history, perhaps being overshadowed by the building of the European and North American Railway a few years later. It must be remembered that the people of St. Andrews were very sincere in their efforts to obtain rail transportation and their efforts should not be forgotten by subsequent events.





COMMENCEMENT OF THE ST. ANDREW'S AND QUEBEC RAILWAY.