

Section 1.—Steam Railways.*

The steam railway is still the most important transportation agency from the standpoint of investment and of traffic handled. Fortunately, the statistical field is more completely covered for this form of transportation than for any other, since there are fairly complete figures dealing with steam railway mileage, and equipment, finances, and traffic.

Historical Sketch.—Construction was begun on the first Canadian railway in 1835. This was a line only 16 miles long between Laprairie and St. Johns, Que., intended to expedite the journey between Montreal and New York. It was officially opened July 21, 1836, the motive power being the steam locomotive "Dorchester", built by Stephenson of Liverpool. About the same time, a line 6 miles long was built in Nova Scotia from Stellarton to a loading point on Pictou harbour to haul coal from the mines to vessels. On this line the motive power was at first provided by horses, but in the spring of 1839 the "Samson", a locomotive built in England, brought over in a sailing vessel and still preserved in Halifax, was put in operation. A railway from Montreal to Lachine was opened in 1847 and another line to St. Hyacinthe in 1848. In 1850, however, there were only 66 miles of railway in Canada.

Commencement of the Railway Era—The Grand Trunk.—The railway era in Canada may be said to have begun in 1851, when charters were granted providing for the construction of a main line of railway between the two Canadas. These charters were repealed when the Grand Trunk charter was granted in 1852. The result was the completion of the Grand Trunk railway between Montreal and Toronto in 1856, its extension westward to Sarnia in 1859, and eastward to Rivière du Loup in 1860. The Atlantic and St. Lawrence railway, to Portland, Maine, was leased in 1853 and in 1859, on the completion of the Victoria bridge across the St. Lawrence at Montreal, the Grand Trunk had a through route 800 miles long from Portland to Sarnia. Within the next thirty years many important railways of Ontario, including the Great Western, were acquired and the Grand Trunk lines were extended to Chicago.

Construction of the Intercolonial.—An intercolonial railway linking Nova Scotia and New Brunswick with Upper and Lower Canada had been proposed as early as the 1830's. In 1844 the Imperial Government made a survey for a military road, and in 1851 agreed to recommend to Parliament either a guarantee of interest or an advance of the sum required to build a railroad. Differences of opinion as to the route resulted in the project being dropped, but in 1853 Nova Scotia undertook to construct, by 1862, a trunk line from Halifax to the New Brunswick frontier, with branch lines to Pictou and Victoria Beach. In both Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, however, the scheme of an intercolonial railway broke down for lack of funds, and in 1867 there were only 374 miles of railway in the Maritimes. These, under the B.N.A. Act, passed to the Dominion Government. The latter undertook the completion of the railway, and in 1876 the line was opened to Rivière du Loup. Later on, by acquisition of, lease of, or running rights over, other lines, the Intercolonial was extended to Montreal.

* Revised and checked by G. S. Wrong, B.Sc., Chief of the Transportation and Public Utilities Branch of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. This Branch publishes an Annual Report on Steam Railways, as well as numerous other reports, for a full list of which the reader is referred to Chapter XXIX of this volume. Certain of the financial statistics of steam railways are compiled with the co-operation of officers of the Department of Transport.