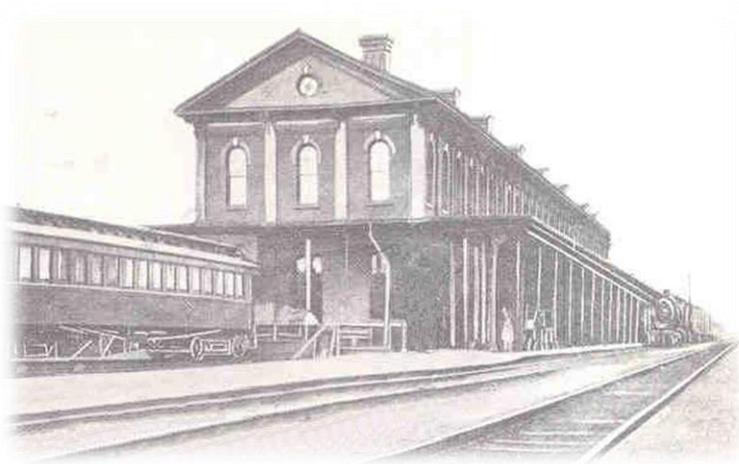


History of the Canada Southern Railway



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Pre-1873: St. Thomas has almost no industrial exports and relies entirely on agriculture. It is plagued with debt from the municipality's investment in the London and Port Stanley Railway, which did little to help the economy. The people of the town have been waiting for a southern railway since 1850 to alleviate this situation.

1845: Isaac Buchanan is one of the main promoters of railways in Upper Canada. He has been a promoter or director of many railways, including the Great Western. Buchanan wanted the Great Western Railway to build a southern railway from the Detroit River to the Niagara River. Two railways could achieve this: one from Amherstburg to St. Thomas and another from Woodstock to Brantford and Toronto.

1853: The charter for the Amherstburg to St. Thomas Railway is granted with the support of Dr. Southwick, M.P.P. of Elgin, and Arthur Rankin, M.P.P. of Essex. Buchanan fails to raise the funds necessary for building the line and the project eventually ruins him financially.

March 12, 1857: Samuel Zimmerman, financial supporter of the Erie and Ontario Railroad, is killed in the Desjardins Canal Railway Accident. The Company changes its name to the Fort Erie Railroad Company.

1862: William Thomson purchases the Fort Erie Railroad Company and the following year it becomes known as the Erie and Niagara Railroad.

1865: Directors from the Erie & Niagara Railroad attempt to charter a southern railway, but no charter is granted. William Thomson is not involved.

February 1868: William Thomson introduces his plan for an extension of the Erie and Niagara Railroad as a line from Fort Erie to the Detroit River. A charter is granted and later that year, Isaac Buchanan agrees to sell his maps and information to Thomson for the southern railway. They begin working together to build it.



Isaac Buchanan, promoter of a southern railway through St. Thomas.



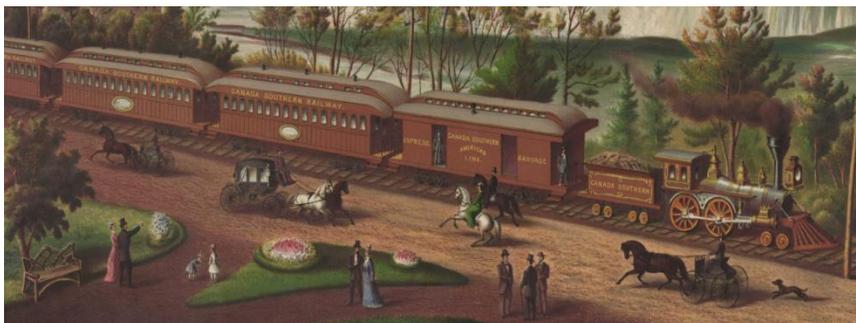
William Thomson, president of the Canada Southern.

February 1869: Harsh criticism is published by the *London Free Press* on the new line. Articles claim that it is unnecessary and a direct hit on the Great Western and Grand Trunk Railways. A St. Thomas paper, the *Canadian Home Journal*, responds that the local needs of southwestern Ontario have been neglected by these companies. Many farmers at the time had to travel very far to bring their goods to the Great Western or Grand Trunk stations.

August 1869: Thomson travels to Boston, Chicago, New York, Detroit, and Buffalo to gather American support. He is successful.

1869: Thomson renames the line the “Canada Southern Railway” (CASO or CSR) and brings in new directors, mostly American railway promoters or contractors that will help fund the \$200,000.00 deposit needed to start building. It is decided that the gauges used on the cars will match those used on the American lines to make shipping between the two countries more efficient.

December 1869: The Canada Southern is finally granted its charter to build the southern railway. Great Western directors were also given a charter to build the Great Western “Air Line” to compete against the Canada Southern. St. Thomas would soon have two major railways running through the town to connect Canada and the United States – more than they could have hoped for.



A promotional poster of a Canada Southern Train at Niagara Falls.

1870-1873: Planning the line, building bridges, buying land, and constructing the railroad proceeds. Many shops are built in St. Thomas in preparation for the coming business opportunities a major railway brings.

1871: The CASO Station is built in anticipation of the railroad's arrival the following year. It still stands today at 750 Talbot Street, St. Thomas.



August 1872: The first Canada Southern locomotive runs through St. Thomas.

December 1872: The first CASO train reaches St. Thomas from Amherstburg.

May 1873: Both the Canada Southern and Great Western Air Line have regular passenger and freight service. The Canada Southern Railway's line provides the shortest and fastest route from Michigan to New York. St. Thomas benefits greatly and industry becomes an important part of the economy.

1874: The CASO goes bankrupt. Two years later, the line is taken over by the Vanderbilts, owners of the New York Central Railroad and other railway companies.

1881: St. Thomas becomes a city. The population has more than tripled since 1872 as a direct result of the railways.

May 1883: The Michigan Central Railway (MC) leases the Canada Southern Railway for 21 years.

1889: The Canadian Southern Railway absorbs the Erie & Niagara Railway.



*Michigan Central Railroad shops under construction,
St. Thomas, 1913.*

January 1904: The Michigan Central extends its lease of CASO tracks to 99 years.

July 1904: The CASO absorbs the Leamington and St. Clair Railway, as well as the Sarnia, Chatham and Erie Railways.

31 May 1911: Two St. Thomas men are killed in the wreck of an MC train near Ridgetown. The tracks had been tampered with, causing the train to go off the rails.

15 June 1918: The *St. Thomas Daily Times* reports a plot by two men hired by Frank Bopp, German Consul-General in San Francisco, on behalf of Kaiser Wilhelm II to blow up the MC stockyard in St. Thomas, targeting horse trains specifically. One of the men carried a suitcase full of dynamite to St. Thomas. The newspaper reported he had a “yellow streak” and substituted bricks for dynamite at the last minute to fool his partner. He later turned state’s evidence and revealed the plot to the US State Department.

1929: The facilities which the MC has been leasing are subleased to the New York Central Railroad (NYC) for 999 years. NYC assumes complete control over the Michigan Central.

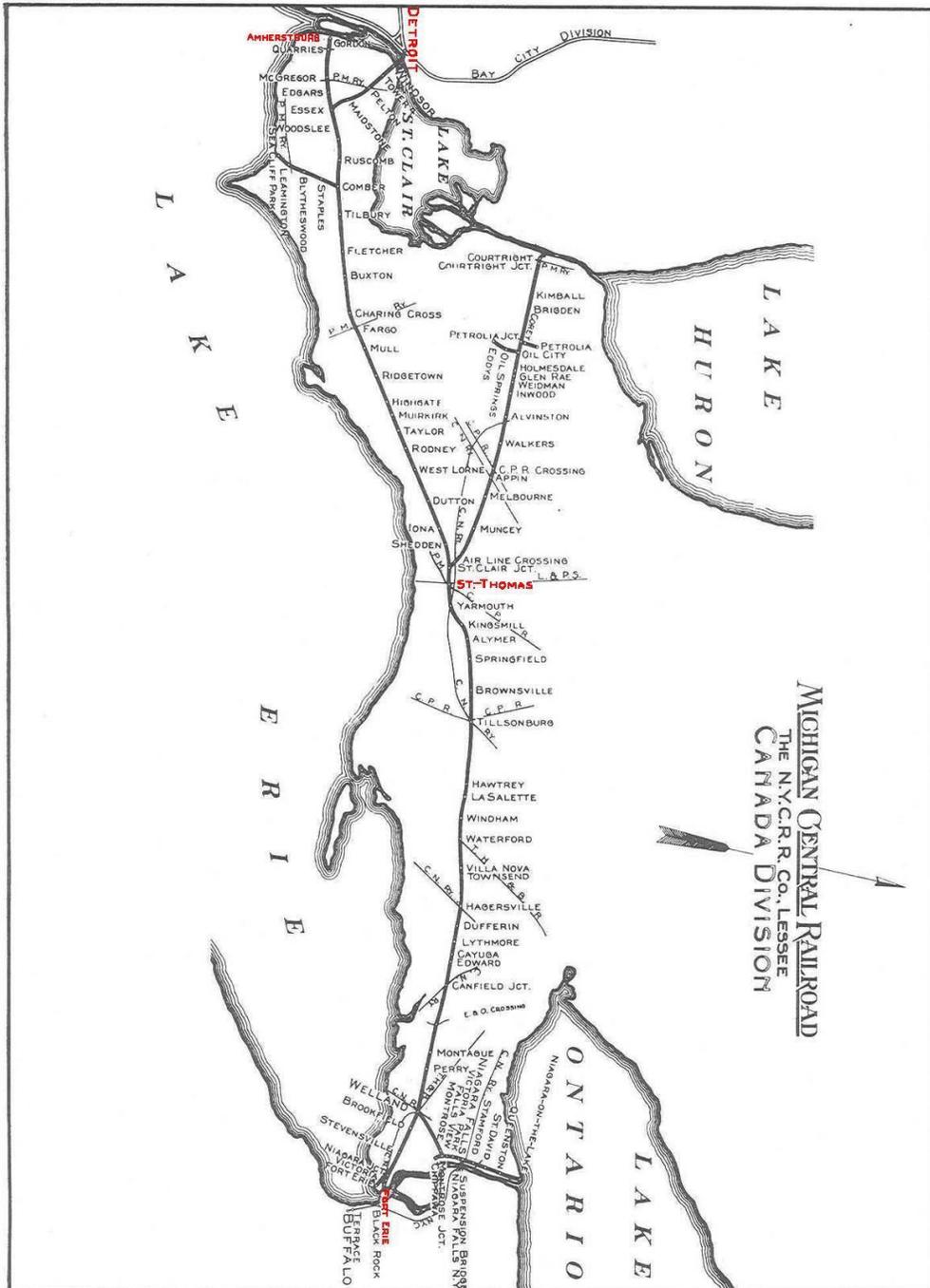


New York Central steam engine at the CASO station.

1968: The Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) merges with the New York Central Railroad, and becomes the Penn Central Company (PC).

1976: The PC and several other bankrupt railways are amalgamated to form the Consolidated Rail Corporation (Conrail) which begins operations in St. Thomas.

30 April 1985: The Canada Southern is back in Canadian hands when it is purchased jointly by the Canadian Pacific Railway (CP) and Canadian National Railway (CN) in order to eliminate competition, rather than use the line. Operations slowly wind down.



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