

History of the London & Port Stanley (L&PS) Railway



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1856: The London and Port Stanley Railway (L&PS) is inaugurated. It was initially supported by St. Thomas but it proved to be a financial disaster, as the St. Thomas merchants lost customers to London. The city purchased shares in the company for \$125,000 apiece and later sold them to the City of London, for \$25,000 per share. In addition, the expenses of building the railway were \$400,000.00 more than originally estimated.

July 8, 1856: The directors of the company travel from London to St. Thomas in an hour using the new L&PS railway line.

October 28, 1856: The London & Port Stanley railway officially opens. It was a 23-mile route.

1869: The L&PS possesses two locomotives, three passenger cars and two baggage cars in their rolling stock. An additional three passenger cars and two freight cars are added the next year. This addition enables shiploads of goods to arrive at Port Stanley and be moved onwards. The passenger cars carry people from London and St. Thomas to Port Stanley where they can swim, dine, enjoy the amusement park or dance in the L&PS Pavilion.

March 1874: The Great Western Railway, which would later be purchased by the Grand Trunk Railway, leases the L&PS tracks for twenty years.

July 15, 1887: A north-bound Grand Trunk excursion train operating on the L&PS lines collides at high speed with a south-bound Michigan Central freight train carrying oil. The trains crash on Talbot Street and cause a massive fire and explosions. Fourteen people are killed including a family of four and five other children. Sixty-five are injured by the explosion and three by the collision itself. It is the worst disaster in the city's history and is known as the "Great Wreck of 1887."

1892: The Michigan Central temporarily operates the L&PS.

December 1893: The Lake Erie and Detroit River Railway lease the L&PS lines for twenty years.

1906: The Pere Marquette Railway leases the L&PS tracks after taking over the Lake Erie and Detroit River Railway in 1903.

1912: Sir Adam Beck, founder of the Hydro Electric Power Commission in London, begins electrifying the L&PS Railway.

1914: The City of London takes over the L&PS, creating the London Railway Commission.

July 1, 1915: Electric railway service on the L&PS begins providing passengers with smoke-free transportation.

February 18, 1957: Due to the increased use of the automobile, passenger services are discontinued on the L&PS.

