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THE IMPACT OF THE RAILWAY ON A PIONEER COMMUNITY. *

J. J. TALMAN

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CANADA WEST at mid-nineteenth century may rightly be called a pioneer community. The total population in 1851 was 952,004. The five largest cities, Toronto, Hamilton, Kingston, Bytown, and London accounted for only 71,267. The remaining 880,737 inhabitants were scattered in forty-two counties, fourteen of which did not include a centre which accurately could be called a village. Well over half the houses were built of log or were inferior shanties. Some of these log houses were built of squared timbers and may well have been quite comfortable but these were probably balanced by some badly built houses classed as frame. All log houses were small as their size was dictated by the length of the logs which could be handled by pioneer equipment; and observers agreed that they were generally drafty and frequently dirty. Of the total of 145,956 in 1851, only 9,331 houses were of stone or brick.¹

The most disagreeable aspects of life must have been the continual contact in cramped and crowded living quarters and the lack of communication with one's neighbours. Lack of privacy on the one hand and isolation on the other were the outstanding characteristics of pioneer days.

The wretched condition of the roads of Canada West was a byword. William Chambers, the Edinburgh publisher, who travelled through British North America just before railways became widespread, took sixteen hours to go from London to Sarnia, a distance of sixty miles. The usual time required, however, was four hours less, but still twelve hours. Even the plank toll roads in York County, according to the *Globe*, were in many cases "detestable", "a disgrace to all connected with them", and a "public imposition." With travel as difficult as it was, it is obvious that the great body of the population did not get far from home.²

Life was tedious and dull; work was hard and dangerous; food was uninteresting and non-nutritious. Diseases of all kinds were rife. Malaria, called fever and ague, was endemic and cholera now and then epidemic. If the innumerable advertisements for patent medicines

* *Author's note:* This paper was prompted by Gilbert Tucker's work *The Canadian Commercial Revolution, 1845-51*, published in 1936. At that time a reviewer found fault with the work, saying unjustifiably, I think, that there was no revolution. Unfortunately, Professor Tucker stopped just too soon. There was a revolution but it was at first essentially a revolution in thinking and it came just at the end of the period he covered. I had hoped that he would be present at these meetings. I know that all who knew him or knew of him regret his untimely death.

The aim of this paper is to consider the revolution in thinking which occurred in Canada West, largely brought about by railways, which laid the foundation for the present Province of Ontario.

¹ The inhabited houses were shown as follows: stone, 4,214, brick 5,117, frame 53,931, log, 65,503, shanties 17,191, total 145,956. Total families, 154,502, *First report of the Secretary of the Board of Registration and Statistics, on the Census of the Canadas, for 1851-2* (Quebec 1853), I, xvii, II, 430.

² William Chambers, *Things as they are in America* (Philadelphia, 1854), 132; *The Globe*, Toronto, Nov. 15, 1855.

which fill the newspapers of the 1850's may be taken as evidence, most of the population was on the market for cures for consumption, debility, impotency, barrenness, deafness, buzzing in the ears, rheumatism, tooth ache, worms, and many like complaints.³

In an effort to compensate for their isolation and to escape from their miseries the pioneers sought solace in social gatherings such as bees and camp meetings, and in drinking. The bee, a social institution built around land clearing, barn raising and, after some years of settlement, apple paring, needs no description. Camp meetings, which originated early in the century, were as socially significant as they were religious. Prevalence of drunkenness was usually admitted and the subject of much propaganda, which was successful enough, in 1852, to have a bill or "Maine Law", introduced into the legislature to prohibit the manufacture, importation, and sale of intoxicating liquors in the Province. It did not get very far.⁴ The tradition of pioneer drunkenness can easily be supported by figures. In 1851 there were 1,990 inns and taverns in Canada West; that is one tavern for every 477 inhabitants or one for every 77 families. In view of the place the tavern filled in travel and as a social centre, these figures may not be high.

But the per capita consumption of alcohol is something else again. In 1851 the distilleries of Canada West produced 2,159,268 gallons of liquor. Export was negligible. In addition, at the same time, Canada imported about 400,000 gallons. If half of this went to Canada West, its total consumption was approximately 2,359,268 gallons, or almost exactly two and one-half gallons for every man, woman, and child in the province. Whether that amount was excessive is a matter of opinion. But the figure does suggest that a fairly large quantity of legally distilled liquor was drunk. That produced illicitly cannot be estimated. For purposes of comparison it may be added that the per capita consumption of spirits in Ontario in 1952 was approximately three-quarters of a gallon. Thus a century ago the pioneer in Canada West drank over three times as much as his modern counterpart. When adjustments are made for the difference in alcoholic content in the spirits of today and a century ago, the figure becomes five times the present per capita consumption in terms of pure alcohol by weight.⁵

³ *Middlesex Prototype*, London, Dec. 21, 1851; *The North American*, Toronto, Jan. 17, 1851; *Lambton Observer*, Sarnia, Nov. 16, 1853; *Hamilton Gazette*, Hamilton, Jan. 5, 1852.

⁴ *The Weekly North American*, Toronto, Sept. 23, 1852, Mar. 17, 24, Apr. 7, 14, 1853.

⁵ The gallonage figures were arrived at by adding production totals, where provided, which showed 1,986,768 and allowing 300 days of operation for the licensed capacity of 575 gallons when that only was recorded. This gave 172,500 gallons. Owing to readjustments in publishing appendices to the journals, figures of imports and exports for 1851 are not available, but Canada imported 310,176 gallons of spirits of all kinds in 1850 and 414,387 gallons in 1852. In 1952 sales of domestic and imported spirits in Ontario totalled 3,157,417 gallons. The population was 4,597,542. Pioneer grade spirits came from the still at something over proof strength, that is more than fifty per cent alcohol by weight. In 1952, practically all spirits sold were thirty under proof or just over thirty-three per cent alcohol by weight. Thus the liquor of 1851 was about fifty per cent higher in pure alcohol by weight. *Census 1851-2*, II, 263, 431; *Tables of the Trade and Navigation of the Province of Canada for the year 1850* (Toronto, 1851); and same for the year 1852 (Quebec, 1853); *Report of the Liquor Control Board of Ontario for 1952* (Toronto, 1953), 7.

In such a rough and rugged society as this, most individuals were occupied with their own problems and a forward view was not to be expected. In 1847, George Brown, of the *Globe*, declared:

The great obstacle we encounter in Canada is the want of general sympathy through the community, the absence of nationality. We can move the different sections by appealing to their selfishness, or sectarianism, or national prejudices; but we have no common bond, no common love for the country from which we derive so many blessings.⁶

To add to individual troubles there were grave national problems. Canada appeared to be quite unready to move out of its backward state. Time after time the Governor General Lord Elgin wrote to Earl Grey, Secretary of State for the Colonies, concerning the unhappy state of the province. In 1847 he described immigration as a "frightful scourge" and added, "Thousands upon thousands of poor wretches are coming here, incapable of work, and scattering the seeds of disease and death." The next year he declared, "The finances of the Province are at the moment in a very unsatisfactory condition — The unproductive state of the Public works, and the great falling off in the Import duties — too certain an indication, I fear, of general distress — have seriously affected the Revenue."

Four months later conditions were worse if anything. On April 23, 1849, Elgin wrote:

But look at the facts. Property in most of the Canadian towns, and more especially in the Capital, has fallen 50 p[er]cent in value within the last three years. Three fourths of the commercial men are bankrupt. Owing to free trade, a large proportion of the exportable produce of Canada is obliged to seek a market in the States.

The real difficulties of the province, he believed, were commercial.⁷ And as though the normal hardships of pioneer life, complicated by commercial depression, were not enough, cholera was rife.

Despite the unpromising scene, here and there can be found the opinions of those who envisaged the great Canadian development of the 1850's. In September, 1848, the *Niagara Mail* declared:

After all we are only in the infancy of improvement — our sun is but rising — the British Provinces extending from the Gulf of St. Lawrence to the Pacific Ocean possess all the elements of a great and mighty empire, sufficient to control the destinies of this continent As far as Canada is concerned there is unprecedented unanimity among the people, and the prospect is of the most flattering and glorious description.

The *Globe* concluded from the details published in a report of the Board of Registration and Statistics, that Canada was "making rapid advances in the acquisition of wealth, and laying deep and broad foundations of an extensive and flourishing community," and forecast a manufacturing community of six million providing a domestic market for most of the wheat produced in the province. The London

⁶ The *Globe*, Oct. 27, 1847.

⁷ A. G. Doughty, (ed.), *The Elgin-Grey Papers 1846-1852* (Ottawa, 1937), I, 50, 58, 267, 349, 409, 413.

Times estimated upon "a moderate calculation" that by 1874 the population of the united province would be not less than five million. A correspondent to the *Montreal Pilot* saw the way opening "for an extended commerce" which bid fair "to enrich us beyond the expectations of the most sanguine, and that too, without reference to any act of reciprocity."⁸

These opinions were all put forward prior to August, 1849. But such expressions of faith in Canada were few and far between before the last days of 1850. The vice-president of the Agricultural Association of Canada West, who asserted in October, 1850, that no other possession of Great Britain could be considered so purely an agricultural country and left the impression that in his mind this condition must ever maintain, could have found plenty of support. His belief was that the real needs of Canada West were more immigration and better fertilization.⁹

To the end of 1850 no great body of opinion existed which held that Canada, or Canada West, was on the threshold of a great development. Yet by August, 1853, there had been a complete revolution in thinking, if the editor of the *St. Thomas Weekly Dispatch* was correct when he said:

It is exceedingly gratifying to witness the spirit of enterprise and progress which has of late sprung up as it were simultaneously in every section of Upper Canada. We hear of nothing but Railways, Steamers, and Telegraph Lines. A few years since and it was not so. It seems but yesterday when the projection of a costly line of Railway such as the Grand Trunk or even Great Western would have been considered a mere chimera, an idle fancy of speculative imagination. This state of things has disappeared, the spirit of improvement is abroad, the march of Canada from end to end is onward, its prosperity is astounding, the dormant settlers who were content to live in peaceful retirement enjoying the comforts derived from hard toil and incessant plodding.

A short time later the same editor repeated the theme and showed how far public opinion had gone forward. "For the good of the public there is nothing like competition, and it is to be hoped that the Railway agitation will not subside until the immense resources of Canada are made available by every practicable and useful line."¹⁰ This broad view is noteworthy as it emanated from St. Thomas, at that time a small community of about 1,200 inhabitants. The changed thinking had gone deeply into the more sparsely settled sections.

With the date of the change clearly established, in one editor's mind at least, the problems left are to produce supporting evidence and if possible, to move back the date when the revolution occurred. Both problems can be resolved.

On November 26, 1850 the *Globe* ran an editorial which less than two weeks later was reprinted, evidently as an admitted fact, in *Goderich*.

⁸ The *Niagara Mail*, Niagara, Sept. 6, 1848, in *Elgin-Grey Papers*, I, 244; The *Globe*, Apr. 18, 1849; The *Times*, London, May 11, 1849, reprinted in The *Globe*, June 13, 1849; The *Pilot*, Montreal, undated enclosure in *Elgin-Grey Papers*, I, 428.

⁹ The *North American*, Oct. 2, 1850.

¹⁰ *Weekly Dispatch*, St. Thomas, Aug. 25, Dec. 1, 1853.

Railroads, Railroads! The Canadian world is at last thoroughly alive on the subject of Railroads. Every newspaper teems with the proceedings of public meetings, with discussions as to the best routes, urgent appeals to capitalists to lend their aid to the several schemes now before the public, and confident predictions as to the advantages to be reaped from them. Opposition seems to have died away, and there seems to be an unanimous desire to build the roads, some way or other; the prospect that something effectual will at last be done seems really good. ¹¹

Other evidence piles up around the same date showing that the *Globe* was not alone in its view. The *North American* declared, "The Railroad manoeuvre seems to have affected the people in all British North America. Nothing but railroads and 'new lines' are talked of." The *Examiner* stated, "Until a very late period all railroad schemes and discussions had a common result — nonentity. There was then no feeling of self dependence." The *Examiner* declared, as a Hincks organ would be expected to, that a recent Hincks Act authorizing municipalities to subscribe to Great Western Railway stock would solve the railway problem. There can be no doubt that the legislation played a part, but it is too much to suggest that an Act passed in 1850 could have brought about what amounted to a complete revolution in thinking in seven months. The *North American's* suggestion of manoeuvring was more valid. ¹²

If these comments, limited as they are to railways, fall short of the progressive view described in the *Weekly Dispatch*, more evidence is available.

An anonymous correspondent from Pickering township wrote to the *Globe* in September, 1851:

Having had occasion to pass through a considerable portion of the western part of this province, my mind was forcibly impressed with the spirit of progression which is now fast taking hold of our Canadian people, and the desire manifested by all classes of society with regard to opening up sources of communication which hitherto have been entirely neglected

This writer credited the change to the development of the educational system of Canada West. ¹³

Lord Elgin, speaking in Toronto on October 15, 1851, perhaps a more authoritative commentator than the others, did not depart from the almost universal theme.

I am aware that there are persons who apprehend that we have passed in Canada at a bound, from the extreme of caution and apathy, as regards railway undertakings, to the opposite extreme of rashness, and who think it high time to warn us to beware of the calamities which excessive speculation entailed in England in 1847 and 1848.

Elgin was not disturbed. In the case of Canada, in his mind, the part of true wisdom was to look with much confidence to the future. ¹⁴

¹¹ The *Globe*, Nov. 26, 1850; *Huron Signal*, Goderich, Dec. 5, 1850.

¹² The *North American*, Dec. 6, 1850; The *Examiner*, Toronto, Feb. 12, 1851; 13 & 14 Vict. c. 129, 1850.

¹³ The *Globe*, Sept. 16, 1851.

¹⁴ The *North American*, Oct. 17, 1851.

Illustrations and quotations could be multiplied almost indefinitely. Such expressions abound as, "the spirit of public enterprise appears to have burst forth." "the spirit of industry and improvement is abroad," "nature seems to have given every aid to the formation of a great country," "in almost all quarters there prevails a very decided spirit of improvement — a steady progress towards a great and prosperous condition. The advance is very remarkable in Western Canada."¹⁵

These statements, all made between 1851 and 1853, are to be found in travellers' accounts and journals, British as well as Canadian. Visitor and resident alike noticed the change. Practically all observers during this brief period agreed that there had been a change in thinking, particularly in Canada West; that it had come suddenly; and that it was associated with railways.

This sudden and complete change in thinking cannot be explained as a manifestation of the optimism of the frontier or the optimism of the Victorian age. Credit for the change must go to deliberate promotion by those interested in building railways. T. C. Keefer, a civil engineer, who certainly was in a position to know what he wrote about, gave a full account of the methods of the time. He revealed his opinion in the pronouncement: "The years 1852 to 1857 will ever be remembered as those of financial plenty, and the saturnalia of nearly all classes connected with railways." He described the invasion from the east of experienced railway men from England; and from the west by contractors from the United States, "practical men" who had built State canals with senators and even governors as silent partners, and who "were versed in all the resources peculiar to a democratic community."¹⁶

According to Keefer, "the convergence of these two systems on the poor but virgin soil of Canada, brought about an education of the people and their representatives more rapid than the most sanguine among them could have hoped for." The most spectacular operator in railway promotion, described though not named by Keefer, was Samuel Zimmerman. It was his boast that when the bell rang for division more members of the Canadian legislature "were to be found in his apartments than in the library or any other single resort." His operations were so extensive that he was able to gain influence even over those whom he could not directly seduce.

Zimmerman, as the best example of his genus, deserves some notice. He was born in Pennsylvania on March 17, 1815 and migrated to Canada in 1843. He was fond of repeating that he had crossed the border with only a few pence in his pocket. At other times he stated that when he came to Canada his only effects were a gray horse, a buggy, and a shovel. On his arrival he found friends, probably such friends as he could not have found in his own country.

¹⁵ The *Illustrated London News*, XIX, 764, Dec. 27, 1851; *Anglo-American Magazine*, Toronto, I, Oct. 1852, 318; Sir Edward W. Watkin, *A Trip to the United States and Canada* (London, 1852), 38; William Chambers, *Things as they are in America*, 137.

¹⁶ Esmé Wingfield-Stratford, *Those Earnest Victorians* (New York, 1930), 111-121; *Eighty Years' Progress of British North America* (Toronto, 1864), 221-2.

These friends, he said, took him by the hand and he had a fair measure of success.

He settled at Thorold and was concerned in the construction of four locks and an aqueduct in the Welland canal. Subsequently, he built 120 miles of the Great Western Railway, at a contract price of \$6,000,000. He was involved in the building of the first suspension bridge at Niagara Falls, the Cobourg and Peterborough Railway, the Port Hope and Lindsay line, and the Erie and Ontario. The last he built wholly at his own expense. Zimmerman was a warm advocate of the Great Western route in preference to the Great Southern through the present southwestern Ontario. In this he opposed and defeated Hincks. But with the Great Western completed, the erstwhile adversaries agreed that there was ample room for two double track railways across the peninsula.

In the best tradition of railway promoters Zimmerman had many additional interests. He owned the steamer *Zimmerman* and a part interest in the *Peerless*. He owned the Niagara docks. The Clifton House at Niagara Falls, the leading and best known hotel in the province, was his. His residence and pleasure grounds were adjacent. He had large plans for beautifying the surroundings. The improvements included an "elegant mansion house" to cost \$175,000. His stables were completed at a cost of \$48,000. He had fifty-two acres on the cliff, directly opposite the American falls, enclosed with an iron fence and privet hedge. Thus he had Niagara Falls in his garden. To round out his empire he founded the Zimmerman Bank. By 1857 he estimated that his property was worth \$3,000,000 and he was recognized as one of the richest men, if not the richest man, in the country. The press attributed his success to his industry, business talents, indomitable perseverance, shrewd foresight, and extraordinary energy. Of limited education, "he was endowed with sterling mental gifts."

Some credit also must go to his friendship with Francis Hincks whom he first met in 1843 or 1845 and of whom he said "the more I have seen of him, as a financial man, and as a private gentleman, the higher has he risen in my estimation." Hincks, on his side regarded Zimmerman, whom he called Sam, as a "valued and very excellent friend," and publicly declared, "before I saw that gentleman I had heard of him from several quarters as one of the best and most successful contractors that had ever been employed by the Government at that time, I little thought we should ever be so well acquainted."

In 1855 Zimmerman credited Hincks for his success at a dinner, fireworks display, and ball put on by the promoter at the Clifton House, before his friend left for Barbados and the Windward Islands.

I have good reason, I assure you, and so has every man in this Province, to honor this gentleman whose health I am about to propose. (Loud cheers). It may be that I have greater reason than almost anybody else, because I may have probably been benefitted more than any other individual in the Province. (Laughter and cheers). But if so, it is only because my operations have been larger. Had it not been for the financial ability of the Hon. Francis Hincks, I would not be what I am at present, nor would I have been able to entertain you here this evening. (Great applause).

Admittedly, these remarks were made at the climax of a great dinner and Zimmerman may not have meant exactly what he seemed to say but *in vino veritas*.

Zimmerman's popularity was not universal. Keefer was not the only one of his contemporaries who mistrusted the man. The *Hamilton Gazette* in 1853 commented in a painfully mixed metaphor that Zimmerman appeared to have mesmerized the Great Western Railway Board, for "let him but 'will it', they like the 'table moving' yield at once and go off at a canter." At the same time the paper did not deny his unbounded hospitality. Nobody denied that. A few months later when admirers in Niagara presented Zimmerman with a magnificent vase, the *St. Catharines Post* cynically commented "If vases costing 300 guineas are the *first fruits* what may Zimmerman not expect by and by!"

The promising career of this promoter was cut short by the Desjardins Canal train wreck, March 12, 1857. He was killed five days before his forty-third birthday.¹⁷

While men like Zimmerman worked on legislators and such people of influence, others worked on the general public. Railway directors exploited events of all kinds to foster public support, wholeheartedly assisted by the municipal authorities of those communities through which a railway was designed to pass.

The breaking ground, for the second time, for the Great Western at London on October 23, 1847, provides as useful an illustration as any. London in 1847 was a town of about 7,000. The route of the projected railway passed only a mile to the north, yet the forest had to be cleared to make an amphitheatre for the ceremony. But the rustic surroundings and small population did not preclude the usual procession, bands, speeches, and dinner. The only organization usually seen on such occasions missing from the procession was the fire company. The temperance society marched, however, and for all practical purposes that was their sole contribution to the day, for at the concluding dinner there were at least sixteen toasts drunk with all honours and enthusiasm.¹⁸

Scenes such as this were multiplied many times over. The momentum of the enthusiasm was kept up by celebrating every subsequent event, such as the arrival of the first train, which could justify a half holiday, a procession, a dinner and speeches. The value of this type of propaganda was recognized and admitted. A railway celebration in Boston, for example, changed the minds of some Toronto councillors who had intended to oppose a recommendation that the

¹⁷ Information on Zimmerman is scattered through the newspaper files of his time. The major sources are *Eighty Years' Progress*; a lengthy report of the Hincks banquet, Oct. 31, 1855, on which *The Globe* had nothing, given in *News of the Week*, Toronto, Nov. 10, 1855; a long obituary in *The Spectator*, Hamilton, reprinted in *Middlesex Prototype*, Mar. 25, 1857; Emma A. Currie, *The Story of Laura Secord and Canadian Reminiscences* (St. Catharines, 1913), 145 ff. See also *The Weekly North American*, Feb. 16, May 10, 1854; *Hamilton Gazette*, Nov. 10, 1853, Feb. 6, 23, 1854; *The London Free Press*, London, Mar. 16, 18, 26, Apr. 9, 11, 1857; *Toronto Examiner*, July 18, 1855; *The Globe*, Mar. 14, 21, 23, Apr. 8, 1857.

¹⁸ *The Globe*, Oct. 27, 1847.

corporation take stock in the Toronto and Guelph railway. The *Examiner* asserted, "The recent visit to Boston has had a wonderful effect on the minds of certain old-fashioned people; and railway converts are as thick as blackberries."¹⁹

In those days a speech by some distinguished orator was an essential part of every gala occasion. In the 1850's most speeches managed to work in railways and many the deity. The kind of thing one might expect to hear was offered in Halifax, May 15, 1851, and reported in print, in Toronto on June 6:

The whole Province, and not Halifax alone, has deep pecuniary interests in the construction of these railways. But, after six months of thoughtful reflection on this matter, I have brought my mind to the belief that there are higher interests involved even than our own. I believe [*sic*] this to be God's work, and I believe that He will prosper it. I believe that a wise and beneficent Providence never intended that millions of square miles of fertile territory, behind and around us, should be waste and unoccupied while millions of our fellow creatures rot in Alm[s] Houses and Poor Houses over the sea, or perish for lack of food. I regard these railroads, after all, but as means for the accomplishment of elevated and beneficial ends.

Nor was provincial development dependent on clearing the streets of the destitute or robbing the gallows of its prey. Natural increase also had a place. The speaker, who was Joseph Howe, added, "I never see a bride going to church with orange blossoms in her bonnet, or a young couple strolling to Kissing Bridge of a summer evening, but I involuntarily exclaim, God bless them — there go the materials to make the railroads."

The speaker rounded out his address by drawing a picture of railway building far to the west.

But when Montreal is reached, shall we stop there? Who believes it? Who can think so lightly of the enterprise of Western Canada, as to apprehend that she will not continue the iron road, link by link, till it skirts the shores of Ontario and Erie, and draws its tributary streams of traffic from the prolific regions of Simcoe, Superior and Huron.²⁰

We can only conclude that in the absence of modern forms of communication, pronouncements like these, copied from one newspaper to another must have played a significant part in making a climate healthful for railways.

In addition to public occasions of one kind and another, pamphlets were used to promote the railway fever. T. C. Keefer, in spite of his strictures on railway promoters, wrote the best propaganda of this kind. His pamphlet, *The Philosophy of Railways*, written in the interest of the St. Lawrence and Ottawa Grand Junction Railway Company, was first published in Toronto in 1850 and ran through three editions during the agitation for the Great Western, Simcoe, and Toronto and Kingston Railways. The fourth edition was published in Montreal in 1853. In this fourth edition it was claimed that the influence of the pamphlet in the promotion of the earlier enterprises was generally acknowledged. In the same year, 1853, another edition was published in Montreal in French. Few pamphlets could have had the wide distribution of this one.

¹⁹ The *Examiner*, Oct. 15, 1851.

²⁰ The *North American*, June 6, 13, 1851.

Keefer reasonably arrayed the advantages which combined in a railway system, such as speed, economy, regularity, safety and convenience. He showed that many farm products would reach markets which could never be profitably transported by the best turnpike. He claimed that a railway system would add twenty-five per cent to the value of every farm within fifty miles of the track, doubling that of those near it, and quadrupling the value of timbered lands through which it passed.²¹ Undoubtedly this appeal to the self interest of those who stood to improve the value of their farms was a telling one. It also revealed one of the factors which must have done much to nourish the enthusiasm for railways in the eighteen-fifties.

The combined efforts of those interested in promoting railways bore fruit, and by the end of 1860, there were 1,892 miles completed in Canada, of which about 1,367 were in Canada West.²²

The impact of the railway on Canada West covered a wide front, social, economic, and industrial, which can only be suggested here. The railway broke down the isolation of pioneer days. The canals of earlier decades could not have the same effect for with few exceptions they simply improved existing lines of communication. The railway, on the other hand, for mile after mile, ripped through the virgin forest and opened lines of rapid communication to what had been almost completely isolated communities.

In order to express the social change in simple terms we need only look at the position in which the farmer's daughter found herself. One day her only male friends were farmers' sons within a radius of perhaps five miles, for even with good roads and horses, ten miles of travelling cut down the time for courting. The next day a survey party might go through or might even board for a time in her farm home. She undoubtedly would agree with the local editor who declared on seeing such a "squally looking set of gentlemen" that it was of such men as these that the bone and sinew of the country was composed.²³ Track layers followed the survey party, and afterwards the trains went through carrying engineers, firemen, brakemen, conductors and commercial travellers.

In addition to opening up the rural sections of the province, the building of railways resulted in the rise of many settled communities. The commuter was foreshadowed in an advertisement for the projected village which was to be called Richmond Hill. Apropos this village, the *North American* remarked, "The introduction of Railways will no doubt cause many new villages to spring up where before they never would have been thought of, and to those whose business is of such a nature that they can overtake it in reasonable hours during the day, nothing could be more pleasing or more healthful, than to leave the city and all its bustle and dust and cares behind."²⁴

The recognized place of the railway in the emancipation of Canada West and the place it had in the rise of settled communities

²¹ Thos. C. Keefer, *Philosophy of Railroads*, Fourth edition, revised (Montreal, 1853), 2, 14-16; *Weekly Dispatch*, Aug. 25, 1853.

²² *Eighty Years' Progress*, 193-4.

²³ *Weekly Dispatch*, Dec. 1, 1853; Keefer, *Philosophy of Railroads*, 10.

²⁴ The *Weekly North American*, Aug. 11, Sept. 15, 1853, Mar. 16, 1854.

is demonstrated by the number of locomotives and trains on the municipal arms of Ontario cities and towns. No fewer than eighteen railway items can be found. These may be bad heraldry but they are good history.²⁵

Industrial development was notable. The *Anglo-American Magazine* boasted that a person should visit a provincial exhibition in order to see just what the province could produce. "With sincere national pride, but without a spark of vanity on the subject, we simply defy him, to name any part of the world, so recently reclaimed from wilderness, where such a display of native productions could be got together." The lists of manufactured articles on display at the exhibitions bear out the opinion of the editor. Furthermore, the exhibits sent to the London exhibition in 1851 and the Paris exhibition in 1855 were by no means discreditable. In addition, the London exhibition revealed a new facet of Canadian natural wealth and a field for investment, in fifty-five packages of minerals and ores which were extremely well displayed.²⁶

The building of railways and manufacture of rolling stock stimulated factory development. The Great Western Railway shops in Hamilton produced a surprisingly large amount of rolling stock in view of the suddenness of the development. There the saws, chisels, planes, augers, punches and hammers were all operated by machinery. In Toronto, Good's factory could make a locomotive and tender in three weeks.²⁷

Social and industrial advance was not accompanied by a corresponding cultural advance. True, in 1854, the *Hamilton Gazette* saw in the completion of the fourth volume of the *Anglo-American Magazine*, a most gratifying demonstration that the literary taste of the province was keeping pace with the increase of physical resources. Thomas D'Arcy McGee, on the contrary, in 1857 was able to find plenty of support for his opinion that Canada lacked "a literature racy of Canadian soil."

A correspondent of the *New Era*, presumably writing from Toronto, declared in 1857 that it was a proved fact, painfully known to many, that "there is no taste, and no love of literature in Upper Canada; that men of letters are neglected, looked down upon and insulted." McGee sounded a call which had a ring somewhat more modern than one would expect to find in a ninety-eight year old statement. He advised the educated men of Canada to make their own public. "Come! let us construct a national literature for Canada, neither British nor French, nor Yankeeish, but the offspring and heir of the soil, borrowing lessons from all lands, but asserting its own title throughout all!"²⁸

²⁵ H. M. Chapin, "Canadian Municipal Arms" *The Canadian Historical Review*, XVIII, Sept. 1937, 245-61.

²⁶ *Anglo-American Magazine*, I, Oct. 1852, 298; *The Globe*, Oct. 31, 1855; *The Weekly North American*, Oct. 4, 1854; *Journals of the Legislative Assembly*, Session 1856, App. 46. A good description of Canadian industry is given in J. Sheridan Hogan, *Canada, an Essay* (Montreal, 1855), 57-8.

²⁷ *Hamilton Gazette*, July 21, 1853; *News of the Week*, May 6, 1854.

²⁸ *Hamilton Gazette*, June 8, 1854; *The London Prototype*, June 22, 1857;

At this time D'Arcy McGee himself, along with Charles Sangster, were about the only persons who had any right to be called Canadian poets, and actually, the claim of the latter was based on later works. The *Athenaeum* called McGee the one true poet in the Canadas and declared that he should not altogether give up to politics that which was meant for poetry.²⁹

If literature did not reflect the changes going on in Canada West, newspapers did, with the sudden emergence of the daily paper. Except for one ill-timed exception, the first daily came in 1849 and by 1857 there were ten. Readers began demanding fresh news and the papers were treated with very little mercy if they failed to cater to the "voracious appetites of their expectant patrons!" There was also a multiplication of weeklies.³⁰

In varied fields the pioneers of Canada West had gone a long way in a short time and it was the railway which made the difference. As the Liverpool [England] Journal said in 1854, "Railway operations [in Canada] are calling into existence new wants and new enterprises, creating new markets, and filling men with bigger thoughts." The editor of the *Weekly Dispatch* summed up the situation well in 1855, "The very people themselves have become changed. Instead of the slow and easy John Bull mode of procedure, the merchant, the mechanic, and the farmer screw up their energies to railroad speed."³¹

The *New Era*, Montreal, June 17, 30, 1857.

²⁹ Henry J. Morgan, *Bibliotheca Canadensis* (Ottawa, 1867), 267, 335.

³⁰ *The Canada Directory for 1857-58* (Montreal, n.d.), 1140-5; *News of the Week*, Mar. 24, 1855.

³¹ *Liverpool Journal*, reprinted in *Hamilton Gazette*, Feb. 6, 1854; *Weekly Dispatch*, Aug. 16, 1855.