

OSHAWA COMMUNITY MUSEUM

PRESENTS



Tales from the Tracks: The Oshawa Street Railway

On display from May 1, 2013 - February 2014



“If any railway could be said to have a personality, then the Oshawa Railway certainly qualified. It was small enough that its entire scope could be readily grasped, but large enough to meet the needs of thriving community and major industries.”

- Clayton Morgan, *Remembering the Oshawa Railway*, 1995

EXHIBIT SPONSORS & PARTNERS



Cover photo: Bert Humphrey, the motorman, standing on the steps and Ernest Kirk, the conductor, pose in front of an OR streetcar. Circa 1915.

Photo Courtesy: *Thomas Bouckley Collection, RMG*



CURATOR'S REMARKS

by *Melissa Cole*, Curator

“Oshawa was known from here to California as the town where the railway tracks ran down the main street.”

As a child who grew up in Oshawa it was not uncommon to see or be stopped by trains entering the spur at the north GM plant that was located at Ritson and William. After researching this exhibition I realized that yes indeed it was unusual for the tracks to run down the main streets (King and Simcoe) in a town or city.

Oshawa, has enjoyed public transportation for over 100 years. In 1895 the first streetcar ran in the city. Today, instead of trolleys Oshawa has diesel-powered buses, a far cry from the public transportation system that was inspired by the foresight of Captain R.C. Carter of Deseronto, in 1887.

The Oshawa Railway was in existence for only 69 years. However, the information about our railway is quite extensive. There are many historians, train enthusiasts, and staff of the railway company that have contributed information to our Archives over the years. This exhibition will look at the founding the OR, its impact on Oshawa residentially and industrially, as well as memories citizens of Oshawa have about their beloved railway.

Tales from the Tracks features artifacts from the private collections of Andy Stuart and Gary Ryan. I would like to thank Mr. Stuart, who has walked the abandoned Oshawa Railway lines, for providing me with accurate details about the artifacts on display and the OR line.

Almost 50 years have passed since the electric lines were taken down and what remains today is a spur of the CNR. As I look out my office window, at the lake, I always think it would be pretty neat to see a streetcar arriving at Lakeview Park filled with passengers ready to enjoy a day in the park!

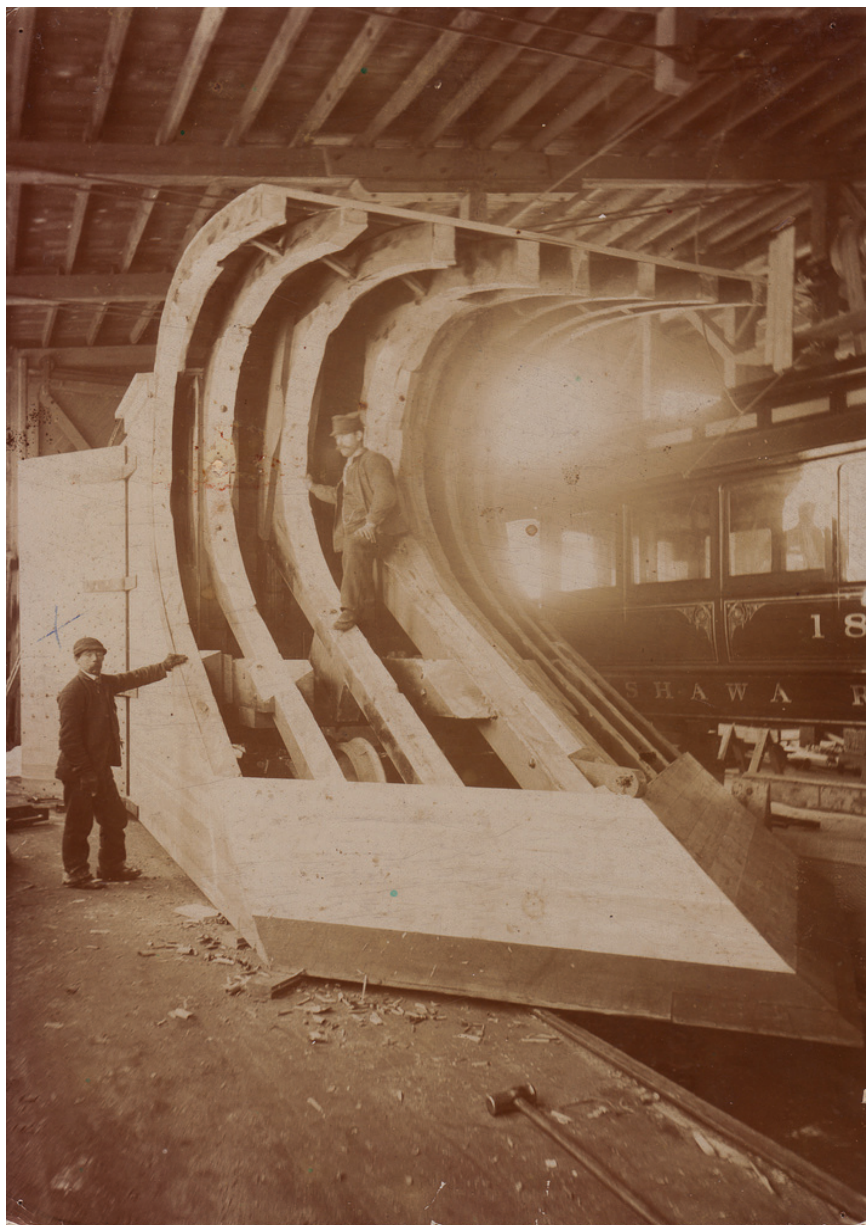


Charter Obtained in June 1887

Oshawa had grown by leaps and bounds, until in 1887 when Captain R.C. Carter of Deseronto Ontario realized that an urban transportation system was vital. Captain Carter was head of the Rathbun Company of Deseronto where they controlled the railway car building works in that town. They also had a lumber and shipping business. In June of 1887 the company was successful at obtaining a charter to build a railway in Oshawa.

This charter gave the company, named the Oshawa Railway and Navigation Company, the authority to build a railway commencing at the Port of Oshawa on Lake Ontario to the Oshawa Station at the Grand Trunk Railway (Simcoe & Bloor) and then through the town of Oshawa by a bolt line or a single line of railway to the towns of Myrtle, Lindsay, Burketon, Bobcaygeon and on to a junction with the CPR at Mattawa, with power to extend also to the towns of Whitby and Bowmanville. The company was also granted the power to work ferries on waters touched by the railway, to buy or charter sailing vessels, steamships and other kinds of crafts, to carry on the business of wharfing and warehousing and to acquire by lease or purchase all lands, elevators, docks, warehouses and other real estate required for the efficient working of the company as authorized by the act of Parliament.

The incorporators were R.C. Carter, George Crawford, Allen Chadwick, Robert Crawford, J.F. Wilson, W.F. Conan, and James McGill. In 1891 the name of the organization was changed to the Oshawa Railway Company and eventually became known to many as the OR.



A snow plough under construction at the Rathbun Company's car works in Deseronto, Ontario. In the background a car of the Oshawa Railway Company is being built. The snow plough was being built for the Great Northern Railway.

Photo courtesy: Deseronto Archives



Oshawa Railway Timeline of Major Events

- 1887 Oshawa Railway and Navigation Company is chartered
- 1891 Corporate name changed to Oshawa Railway Company
- 1895 Construction of railway lines begin
- 1895 First streetcar operated from Alexandra Street to Grand Trunk Railway depot
- 1895 Streetcars operated to Port Oshawa
- 1896 Car barns at corner of Athol & Simcoe Streets burned, three of four cars destroyed.
- 1910 GTR takes over operating control of OR
- 1911 GTR takes over full ownership of OR
- 1923 GTR taken over by Canadian Government and included in CNR. OR becomes a subsidiary
- 1924 Simcoe Street line extended to Rossland Road (Ross' Corners)
- 1926 North Oshawa spur electrified

- 1928 Five modern steel streetcars obtained second hand from Morris County Traction in New Jersey
- 1928 New car barn erected at Hillcroft St. used for freight locomotives, work cars and out of service street cars
- 1939 Old car barn at Athol & Simcoe Street closed
- 1940 Canadian National Transportation Ltd. busses take over for streetcars on Simcoe Street City-wide service begins
- 1958 OR fully amalgamated with CNR
- 1963 May 11: Tracks on King Street West torn up
- 1964 June 27: Electrified operations cease
- 1964 July 2: Electric power shut off

Reference:

Remembering the Oshawa Railway. By Clayton Morgan with Charles D. Taws. 1995





Oshawa Railway Roster



OSHAWA RAILWAY 300

No. 300 is a 50 tonne all steel steeple cab locomotive, built in Philadelphia by Baldwin-Westinghouse in 1920. The company which ordered the locomotive defaulted on the purchase and the engine was sold in 1923 to the Oshawa Railway Company, a Canadian National subsidiary.

No. 300 was donated to the Seashore Trolley Museum located in Kennebunkport Maine, in 1964.



Where are they now?



OSHAWA RAILWAY 45

No. 45 was built in 1925 by Niagara, St. Catharines & Toronto Railway. This car was a single ended trolley (SE) which had controls at one end with a double truck trolley (DT) that had a total of eight wheels consisting of two-4 wheel swiveling bogies, one at each end of the car.

No. 45 was retired from the OR in 1965. In that same year it was acquired by the Halton County Radial Railway Museum where it was restored and is currently operational.



Oshawa Railway Roster



Oshawa Electric Railway Car No. 42, was built for the Oshawa Railway Company in the early 1900s. This particular locomotive had been used as a switcher in Oshawa for almost 30 years. In 1928 this locomotive was converted to gas-electric at the OR Hillcroft Shops. With the assistance of a Canadian National Railway (CNR) crew ,the electric motors powering the locomotive had been removed by Oshawa Railway maintenance men in the Hillcroft Shops. (The Hillcroft Shops were located on Hillcroft Street just east of Minto Street in Oshawa near the north side). The motors at each end of the switcher were replaced by gasoline engines to power the dynamos which provided traction power.



Where are they now?

After 30 years of service with the Oshawa Railway, Car No. 42 was transferred to the Thousand Islands Railway in Gananoque and became locomotive 500. The Thousand Island Railway (TI) was a 8km long railway that ran from the town of Gananoque north to the Grand Trunk Railway (now CN) Toronto-Montreal mainline, just south of present-day Cheeseborough. The service ran for 111 years between 1884 and 1995.

Locomotive 500 was locally known as The Susan Push. It was TI's Railway sole motive power from 1931 to 1962. It was one of only eight gas-electrics ever built. In 1947, CN rebuilt the unit into a diesel-electric. When the TI Railway was integrated into the CN system in 1959, the Susan Push at 35 tonnes was the smallest locomotive on the entire system. In 1963 locomotive No. 500 was officially retired and taken out of service. On June 4 1966, after months of restoration by CN, it was donated to the town of Gananoque for public display.

Since being retired locomotive 500 or Oshawa Railway No. 42, is preserved at Sculpture Park and has been an attraction for the thousands of tourists visiting the Thousand Islands area.



Oshawa Railway Roster Where are they now?



OSHAWA RAILWAY 82

Oshawa Railway streetcar No. 82 was a DE-DT Streetcar which means it was a double ended trolley car that had controls at each end and could be operated in any direction. It had a double truck trolley car. No. 82 was built in 1923 by the Ottawa Car Company when it was acquired by the Oshawa Railway. No. 82 was retired when the bus system came to Oshawa in the 1940s.

No. 82 was sent to Niagara, St. Catharines & Toronto Railway in February 1940 but never operated there. The body was used as a cottage for some time. It is currently waiting to be restored.

OSHAWA R. R. Co.

LAKE TIME TABLE.

North Oshawa Leave	Lake Ontario Leave
5 40 A. M.	6 20 A. M.
6 45	7 10
10 20	10 45
11 10	11 35
12 00 Noon	12 30 P. M.
1 15 P. M.	1 40
2 05	2 35
3 00	3 25
3 30	4 05
3 50	4 20
4 50	5 15
6 05	6 30
6 55	7 20
7 45	8 10
8 35	9 00
9 25	9 50
10 05	10 30 ...

Oshawa Railway Company Timetable, June 21, 1908



Recollections of the Oshawa Railway

By: James Shetler, 1972

It's a long time ago that the Oshawa streetcars tread the rails of Simcoe Street. They were discontinued in 1940 in favour of small 27 passenger Chevrolet buses. It seemed the trend then to scrap every trolley line across the nation – someone was making a good buck on the manufacture of gasoline vehicles!

At the time of the transfer to buses, Dad was assigned the number one cap badge as he had the highest seniority of the operating crew at the time. He had been with the OR for 25 years and was a little reluctant at the time because he was afraid he might not be able to make the transition from streetcar conductor to bus operator.

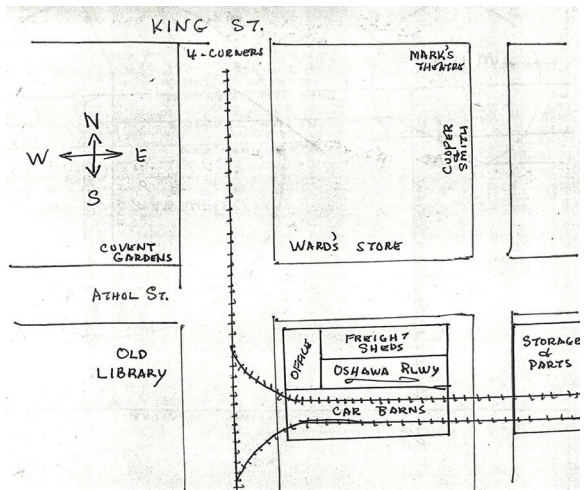
I can remember back to when I was around 5 years old, dad used to take me to work with him and I explored the car barns which seemed huge and dark at the time. And those endless deep pits where the cars were serviced. There were several large DC operators (convertors maybe) and they (the shop crew) gave us kids, old trolley ropes and used conductor hats.

As you entered the main office from Simcoe Street you entered a very high railroad type waiting room. A large pot bellied stove served for heat, and there was the usual dark stained oak type benches along the side. In the south east corner was the cashiers office (a chap named Harold Sheridan, handles this). On the north side long Athol Street were the loading platform and freight sheds. Remember the OR was both freight and passenger right up to 1940. However the freight was generally brought uptown on the back line.

Motormen and conductors both wore the blue-black type of passenger uniform with large brass buttons and mainline type of cap. As I grew older dad let me run the car from Cedardale to the lake, the whole bit, change poles and controls. I can tell you I was a very proud lad in those days; not many kids ever got the chance to run an honest to goodness streetcar.

Needless to say I may have made a mistake on occasion, I locked dad outside at the lake once, he'd gone to the little outhouse beside the tracks and I didn't know how to open the air-operated door, these new modern fandangled cars.

Another time I let go of the trolley rope while changing poles and you guessed it, the rope broke. So-O-O, dad climbed up on the roof, pushed down the pole, rejoined the rope, all the while cussing about the kids and the such. Times were hard and the pay wasn't much but dad worked through the depression and we all ate well and slept in a clean bed.



Drawing by James Shetler, 1972

The Oshawa Railway is just a memory now but I sometimes wonder where Oshawa would have been without it. Would General Motors have located here without it?



What Happened to the Caboose?

Remember the little orange or red car that was always at the end of the train? As a child I remember waiting to see that orange caboose at the end of the line it was my favourite part of the train! So what happened to the caboose and what was its purpose?

The origins of both the car and the word are surrounded as much by legend as by fact. One popular version dates the word back to a derivation of the Dutch word “kombuis,” which referred to a ship’s galley. Use of cabooses began in the 1830s, when railroads housed trainmen in shanties built onto boxcars or flatcars.

The addition of the cupola – the lookout post atop the car – is attributed to a conductor who discovered in 1863 that he could see his train much better if he sat atop boxes and peered through the hole in the roof of his boxcar.

The caboose served as shelter at the rear of the train, minimal housing quarters, and an office for the conductor. The famous cupola on top provided an elevated perch to inspect the condition of the trains from above.

The caboose was required by law for safety reasons, but in the 1980s technology replaced the beloved and humble caboose. Flash rear-end devices (FRED) replaced the caboose, electronically telling engineers about approaching trains as well as brake line pressure and accidental train separation. However, the beginning of the end actually occurred with the advent of the air break and longer trains such that the conductor could no longer see the entire length of the train.



BEYOND THE EXHIBIT

FAMILY PROGRAMMING

Drop in Craft - Train

July 3 & July 31

12pm - 4pm

Railway Childrens Program

July 17

9am -3pm



ADULT PROGRAMMING

Bus Trip to Halton County Radial Railway Museum

The location of restored Oshawa Railway Equipment.

Fall 2013



Oshawa Historical Society Speaker Series

October 15, 2013 @ 7pm

OPL, McLaughlin Branch,

Auditorium

Ron Brown, Rails Across

Ontario

PLEASE RSVP



RESOURCES & ADDITIONAL READING

Canadian National Railways, Timetable, March 1 1925

Gascoigne, T. *The Oshawa Railway Company 1895-1963*. CNELHG Publications, 1982.

Hood, McIntyre. *Oshawa - Canada's Motor City*. McLaughlin Public Library Board, 1967.

Martin, J.E. *On a Streak of Lightning: Electric Railways in Canada*. Studio E. 1994.

Morgan, Clayton & Charles Taws. *Remembering the Oshawa Railway*. Mothersill Printing. 1995.

Oshawa Community Archives. Oshawa Railway Subject Files.

Oshawa Public Libraries, Photograph Collection, Oshawa Railway.

Oshawa Times Gazette & Oshawa Times. Various articles dating from 1910-1980.

Scalzo S. & L. Rott. *The Oshawa Line*. Upper Canada Railway Society and Electric Transit Journal.

Thomas Bouckley Collection, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery.

Video:

Inter-Urbans of Eastern Canada. Sunday River Productions

Websites:

<http://www.trainweb.org/elso/or.htm>

<http://davesrailpix.com/odds/on/on.htm>

<http://www.hcry.org>

FUTURE EXHIBITIONS

Opening June 2013

Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt Collection



2014

Spring/Summer: Stories from the Museum Collection

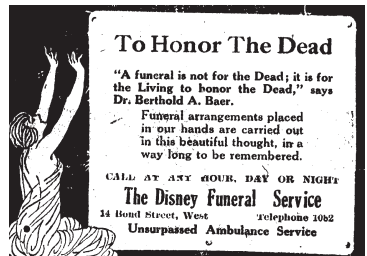
Fall/Winter: Lace Up: Canada's Passion for Skating *

** Travelling Exhibition from the Canadian Museum of Civilization*



2015

**The Return of Mourning After:
The Victorian Celebration of
Death**



MUSEUM ETIQUETTE & REMINDERS

- Oshawa Community Museum is a smoke-free building - smoking must be 9 metres away from the building.
- No food or drinks are allowed in the buildings. Bottled water with a lid is permitted.
- Oshawa Community Museum recycles its exhibition booklets - kindly place them in the wooden box at the exit doors, NOT on the floor or elsewhere in the museum.
- Please help us preserve our artifacts for future generations to enjoy by not touching any object, painting or artifact. Although if you see a little GREEN HAND that means you CAN touch that artifact!

Thank you for your co-operation!



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