

## **RAIL HEROES: 2003**

### **John R. Booth**

John Rodolphus Booth (1827-1925), leader of Ottawa's lumber industry, created and owned the Canada Atlantic Railway, the largest railway in North America owned by one person. Based in Ottawa, by 1896 it connected the Great Lakes with the Vermont border, opening up the lumber wealth of the Ottawa Valley and Algonquin Park and becoming the most important link in the grain trade from the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean. In 1896 Sir Wilfrid Laurier called Booth's Ottawa Arnprior and Parry Sound Railway "probably the most important since the building of the CPR ."

Booth employed such leaders as the great railway engineer Walter Shanly, who designed the Canada Atlantic from Coteau to Ottawa in 1881; George Mountain, chief engineer after Shanly, who became first chief engineer of the Board of Railway Commissioners; General Manager Edson Chamberlin, who modernized and expanded the Canada Atlantic from 1886 to 1904, later becoming president of the Grand Trunk Railway; and other railroaders who went on to important roles in building the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. The Canada Atlantic provided first-class passenger service to all important Ottawa Valley towns, as well as through-Pullman trains to Montréal, Boston, and New York City.

Booth's railway pioneered the use in Canada of Westinghouse air brakes, steam heating, electric light, and Atlantic class high-speed steam locomotives. Booth created the first rail corridor to Ottawa's downtown Central Station, later the site of Union Station, now Colonel By Drive and the Government Conference Centre. He built thousands of freight cars and at least 13 high-quality passenger cars in his own workshops in Ottawa. The line became part of the Grand Trunk in 1904 and Booth became a director of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. Today it still forms an important part of the CN and Via networks between Valleyfield and Ottawa, as well as providing the route for most of the urban portion of Ottawa's only freeway, the Queensway.

For his role in pushing back the Ontario frontier and in promoting resource industries and international commerce through reliable railway networks, we are pleased to induct John Booth into the Canadian Railway Hall of Fame in 2003.

### **Lord Strathcona (Donald A. Smith)**

Donald A. Smith is forever immortalized in what Canadian Historian Pierre Berton referred to a "The Great Canadian Photograph" in his 1971 historical documentary *The Last Spike*. For it was Smith on that cool November morning in 1885 at Craigellachie, British Columbia, who had the honour of handling the spike maul and driving the ceremonial last spike in the Canadian Pacific Railway, linking the young nation with steel rails.

Donald A. Smith was a former Hudson's Bay Company trader who saw tremendous value in a national railway in the development of the Dominion of Canada. His experience with the Hudson's Bay Company on the east coast of Labrador had convinced him that the nation's future prosperity would be tied to settling central Canada and the Prairies. Of Scottish origin, Smith was a cousin of George Stephen, President of the CPR from 1881 to 1888. He, together with Stephen and James J. Hill, was part of the original CPR Syndicate and their experience



with the Saint Paul, Minneapolis, and Manitoba Railway had shown him how vitally important railways were in opening the American west. He became a major CPR shareholder and a Director of the company after 1883.

Smith was elected Chancellor of McGill University in Montreal in 1889. He was knighted in 1886 in honour of his executive role in the development of the CPR, and accordingly was created Baron Strathcona and Mount Royal. A unit of mounted rifles — Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians) — which were created by him for service during the Boer War still survives in Edmonton. He died in London in 1914 at ninety-four.

### **Ross Walker**

Friends, colleagues, customers, union leaders, and government policy makers had a word for Ross Walker. They called him a leader; and with reason. During his 47-year career with Canadian National Railways, Mr. Walker displayed leadership ability that encompassed all facets of CN's business and the industry at large. From the beginning of his railway service as an assistant agent in 1947 to his retirement as senior vice-president, Western Canada, in 1994 he excelled at his myriad assignments and trained many others to become assets to CN. This is particularly true in his roles as chief of transportation, vice-president of the Mountain Region and senior vice-president, Western Canada. In the late 1970s, CN's western operations had serious capacity problems, and was far from being able to cope with a rising torrent of Pacific Rim trade. By the mid 1990s, when the rate of western traffic growth had begun to stabilize, CN's network on the prairies and in the mountains was originating most of the company's traffic. The capacity problems were particularly bad on the main line between Edmonton and Vancouver. Mr. Walker personally led the planning and fought for the allocation of resources that resulted in a right of way that was able to cope with the heavy traffic volumes that continued to grow during the 1980s and 1990s. During that time, dozens of major producers, from pulp mills to coal mines, set up shop alongside a CN line in western Canada, and Walker played a lead role in many of those developments, notably the Northeast British Columbia Coal Mines development and a new grain terminal at Prince Rupert.

He built solid relationships with his customers across the west, and forged equally solid relationships with his unions and policy makers at every level of government. He lobbied for changes in the Crowsnest Pass freight rate structure and worked with grain industry leaders to help bring them about. As intermodal traffic grew in Canada, he lent his support to the task of enlarging CN's mountain tunnels, a project that, when it was completed, made it possible to ship containers double stacked on CN anywhere between Vancouver and Halifax. He successfully negotiated with CP Rail to buy their half interest in the Northern Alberta Railways, and then did an excellent job of integrating that property into CN's ongoing operations.

But his major contribution may have been organizational. He created a Western Canada business unit and hand picked a team that controlled as a single entity all CN operations between the Lakehead and the Pacific Coast, thereby allowing CN Western Canada to match human resources to the levels a modern railway needs, and harness them to a common sense of purpose. He was a leader, but equally a builder.

While achieving all these accomplishments, Mr. Walker represented Canadian National in the many political and social activities associated with his position with particular excellence.



Ross A. Walker throughout his career was a leader both in Canadian National and in the railway industry, and we are pleased to induct into the Canadian Railway Hall of Fame.

### **Serge Belzile**

The Quebec Railway Corporation (Société des chemins de fer du Québec) began its first short line railway operation between Québec City and Clermont in eastern Quebec in 1994. Between 1994 and 2009, the company would grow and expand to eventually comprise a group of six railways operating in Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia. In 2009, much of the QRC network was sold to CN in a transaction reflective of the continual change in the Canadian railway landscape.

The short line and regional railways that were established and operated by QRC were important to local shippers, offering high-quality customer service. Leading the development and growth of QRC since 1994 was Mr. Serge Belzile. Mr. Belzile was the company's first president and chief executive officer and his leadership, dedication, and vision has resulted in the dynamic enterprise that QRC became. Mr. Belzile was instrumental in working with financial partners to develop QRC in the mid-1990s, and worked effectively with customers, communities, and connecting carriers to establish QRC as the leading short line operator in the province of Quebec and the Maritimes for many years. During this period of development, Mr. Belzile also was a respected member of the railway industry at large, and was active in several industry initiatives. He also served on the Board of Directors of the Railway Association of Canada.

Mr. Belzile left QRC early in 2003 to pursue other interests. Although his railways are now again part of a much larger enterprise, Mr. Belzile's contributions earned him industry recognition in the Canadian Railway Hall of Fame upon his retirement.