

HENDRIE, WILLIAM, businessman and horse-breeder; b. 11 Nov. 1831 in Glasgow, eldest son of John Hendrie and Jessie Strathearn; m. first 11 Nov. 1856 Margaret Walker (d. 1873), and they had four sons and four daughters; m. secondly 22 Sept. 1875 Mary Murray, and they had a son and two daughters; d. 27 June 1906 in Hamilton, Ont.

William Hendrie received his elementary and secondary education in Glasgow, where at age 15 he took a clerkship in a law office. Instead of pursuing a legal career, however, in 1848 he found a position in the office of the Glasgow and South Western Railway. Three years later he moved to Newcastle upon Tyne, England, to work for the Northeastern Railway in its freight department. His experience there led to an offer in 1855 from the Great Western Railway in Upper Canada to join its freight department. He accepted and emigrated.

First Hendrie worked at the Great Western's Niagara Falls office, but later in 1855 he was transferred to its headquarters, in Hamilton. The challenge in freight operations was keeping records, so that goods might dependably reach their destinations despite transshipment *en route*. Hendrie perceived that the weak link was pick-up and delivery, since shipping instructions frequently were written at random on scraps of paper passed from shipper to teamster to railway freight agent. The Great Western, like other North American railways at the time, was too occupied with problems of construction and finance to contemplate expanding into the cartage business. In consequence, managing director Charles John Brydges* readily agreed to Hendrie's suggestion in 1855 that he and John Shedden*, a railway contractor and former employee of the Glasgow and South Western, should form a company to become the Great Western's exclusive cartage agent.

Hendrie and Shedden, as the firm was styled, was among the first companies in North America to use a through bill of lading or waybill to expedite transport. Not only did the agent fill out the shipping form and pick up and deliver freight, it also collected a single charge from the customer. Under the free-cartage system, as this arrangement was called, the agent remitted such sums to the railway weekly and in return received payment for the goods it had conveyed, based on negotiated cartage rates. Thus the customer enjoyed simplified billing and greater certainty of delivery; the railway avoided complicated paperwork and the expense of cartage facilities, and acquired a collecting service; Hendrie and Shedden obtained a monopoly. Having at first served Hamilton, London, and other points on the Great Western line, in 1856 the firm set up in Toronto, where it soon became cartage agent as well for the Grand Trunk there and in Montreal. This reorganization of the cartage business soon drew the protest of independent teamsters, who rioted in Montreal, twice set fire to the firm's sheds, and threatened the lives of the two partners.

The partnership lasted only to 1858, but monopoly and free cartage persisted. After the dissolution, Shedden retained the Grand Trunk and Great Western business arising east of Yonge Street in Toronto, while Hendrie kept the trade to the west. In 1859 he took his younger brother George into the business as partner, forming Hendrie and Company, and expanded to assume the Great Western agency in Detroit. Branches were subsequently opened in Saginaw and Grand Rapids, Mich., and Milwaukee, Wis. The two Canadian railways, perhaps in reaction to government opposition to their efforts to divide traffic, decided in 1862 to alter their cartage arrangements. The Great Western assigned its business to Hendrie, the Grand Trunk gave its to Shedden. This division lasted until the take-over of the Great Western by the Grand Trunk in 1882, at which time the cartage companies reverted to something like the 1858 contract. They divided the territory outside Toronto – Hendrie taking Hamilton, St Catharines, Chatham, and St Thomas – and split the Toronto business, 60 per cent going to Shedden's firm (Shedden himself had died in 1873) and 40 per cent to Hendrie's. Further, they pledged to present a united front in their dealings with the Grand Trunk, to agree upon rate

demands, and to promote each other's business. Through the 1880s and 1890s the two companies redrew their Toronto boundary, assigned customers to one another, and transferred earnings to maintain the stipulated balance of business.

The Grand Trunk, though the largest account of Hendrie and Company, was not its only business. Besides providing general cartage, the company acted as agent for smaller railroads. It held the Toronto, Grey and Bruce Railway's cartage business in Toronto until the Canadian Pacific Railway leased the line and cancelled the contract in late 1884, preferring, as general manager William Cornelius Van Horne* explained, to do business with a "cartage company entirely separate and distinct from all other interests." The contract had very likely been Hendrie's prerogative as president of the Toronto, Grey and Bruce.

By the 1890s North American railways were having second thoughts about cartage monopolies and the free-cartage system. In January 1896, at what was rumoured to be the Grand Trunk's suggestion, the railways operating in the American Midwest ended free cartage. Henceforth, in the United States, companies like Hendrie's dealt only with shippers. By 1898 Hendrie was trying to sell his Grand Rapids and Milwaukee operations, which were losing money under the new policy. The cartage companies suspected that the Grand Trunk wanted to buy out cartage operations and end free cartage in Canada (it would nevertheless continue until 1913). Certainly the railway used the threat of termination as a bargaining tool. The term of Hendrie's contracts was shortened, from ten years in 1889 to two years in 1899, and to one year from 1901. Cartage rates were reduced in 1899 and the company was forced in 1905 to give up its Toronto stables, built on land leased from the Grand Trunk. Hendrie probably shared the opinion of Hugh Paton of the Shedden Company in 1896 that "there is hardly a day passes but we have to stand up for our rights."

Hendrie's repeated concessions to the Grand Trunk may have strained his relations with brother George. At their company's annual meeting in 1902 George objected to the actions of the directors in the past year. On the passage of a resolution endorsing their performance, he tendered his quarter-interest in the company to William, who had held three-quarters of the shares since the company's incorporation in 1890. For some time William had been reducing his participation in his brother's real-estate speculations and other interests in Detroit, and he accepted George's offer.

Besides cartage, William had engaged in a number of prominent enterprises with George. In 1864 he took a share in George's purchase of the Detroit City Railway, which consolidated several lines into a monopoly. For men who were making their fortunes using horses, who bred and sold them, a horse-drawn streetcar line seemed, and proved to be, a good investment. Having obtained a 30-year franchise in 1879, they were reluctant to electrify the line, even in the face of complaints in the late 1880s about high fares and poor service. Despite criticism from progressive mayor Hazen Stuart Pingree and a violent strike and riot in 1891, during which demonstrators shouted "Kill the Canuck," the Hendries gave only a little, offering "workingman's fares," and pressured council into extending their franchise, which yet had years to run. Pingree, however, called an advisory vote in 1894, in which 80 per cent of Detroit's voters demanded municipal ownership of the transit system. The intensity of public opinion persuaded the Hendries to sell in 1895, but to another private company. Since the capital of their company was well watered, the settlement of 75 cents on the dollar in all likelihood gave them substantial profit.

The Hendries developed other American investments, including two Detroit banks and Great Lakes navigation companies, which required cartage services. Like streetcar operators throughout North America, they speculated in suburban real estate in hopes

that the extension of service would enhance the value of their holdings; in 1895 they had about \$300,000 invested in Detroit land. About the same time that they had acquired the street railway, they became involved in the Michigan Car Company, a freight-car manufacturing operation promoted by a former Hamiltonian, James McMillan, who in turn invested in their railway. In 1875 McMillan and William Hendrie each pledged \$100,000 to promote two similar companies in London, Ont., the Ontario Car Company and the London Car Wheel Company, both of which proposed to buy, build, lease, and run cars on the Canada Southern Railway. The venture, unlike its American precursor, lost money and Hendrie sold out in 1882.

Hendrie's American investments appear to have been more speculative than his Canadian ones, but there was a logical integration of his operations on both sides of the border. Contracting, with its need for the efficient ordering and hauling of heavy materials and for large quantities of unskilled labour, was the earliest outgrowth of Hendrie's cartage business. His first job was laying pipes for the Hamilton Waterworks in 1857. In the early sixties he undertook the extension of switching and station facilities for the Great Western west of London. From then on, with various partners, he took on a succession of contracts for railway construction in Ontario and Michigan. His prominence as a contractor and cartage agent resulted in his participation in the promotion of several roads: he was president of the Manitoba and North Western Railway as well as of the Toronto, Grey and Bruce, vice-president of the Niagara Falls Park and River Railway, and a director of the Ontario and Quebec, the Detroit, Marquette and Mackinaw, and the Hamilton and North Western and its successor, the Northern and North Western Junction. Hendrie, though a Conservative, joined the syndicate put together by Sir William Pearce Howland and championed by the Liberal party, to bid, unsuccessfully, for the Pacific railway franchise in 1880 against a Montreal-based group headed by George Stephen*.

Railways created Hendrie's business, and cartage, contracting, manufacturing, and rail promotion ultimately involved him in the production of structural iron and steel. In 1872 he had been a founding director of the Hamilton Tool Company, which was reorganized in 1881 as the Hamilton Bridge and Tool Company, with Hendrie as president. It expanded rapidly, filling orders for railway and highway bridges, train turntables, and ironwork for office buildings and factories. So successful was the business that in 1883 Hendrie renegotiated his contract as president; he demanded, and got, \$10,000 in unissued shares for services rendered and was assured 20 per cent of profits in lieu of salary. The depression of the mid 1890s, however, caught the company overextended. Its capital, nominally \$135,000, of which \$80,000 was plant, could not keep solvent a business that during its busy season in 1883 employed 250 men. The firm was dissolved in 1894 and the following year its creditors obtained a court order forcing the auction of the works to settle unpaid accounts. Hendrie organized and headed a syndicate, publicly represented by John H. Tilden, to purchase the plant for \$49,900. The company recovered and through the late 1890s and early 1900s profited from the building surge in Canadian transportation and industry. By the time of his death, more of Hendrie's wealth was invested in Hamilton Bridge than in his cartage company.

Hendrie's success rested in the first instance upon horses, and at the height of his cartage business he owned 300 of them. At his Valley Farm, just outside Hamilton, he invested considerable money in breeding them, in addition to raising sheep and cattle. Though the operation was a charge on the revenue of Hendrie and Company – Hendrie bred and sold horses extensively, counting the British army among his customers – the farm was as much avocation as vocation. The Toronto *Globe* described it in 1879: "His efforts are made rather in the direction of producing first-class saddle, road and carriage horses, but thoroughly sound in theory so far as breeding goes, he selects for this purpose choice representatives of the very best running and trotting families to which he can gain access." Horse-breeding, which grew from his cartage business, allowed him to

indulge in racing and the bloodlines in his stable connected him to such international horsemen as Lord Derby and August Belmont.

He probably began racing in the early 1860s at Hamilton's spring steeplechases. He served as a steward of the Hamilton Riding and Driving Association, which was formed to arrange the running of the Queen's Plate in Hamilton in 1866, and which subsequently organized annual racing seasons for thoroughbreds and trotters. In the mid 1870s racing ceased in Hamilton for reasons that are not clear. It was not revived until 1893, when Hendrie and others organized first the Central Fair Industrial and Agricultural Association to acquire land for a fairgrounds and then the Hamilton Jockey Club to operate a racetrack on it. He had also promoted the sport provincially and in 1881 helped organize the Ontario Jockey Club, of which he was president from 1892 to his death. He had about 80 horses on his farm, the best of which he exhibited locally and internationally. His stable included a string of 18 thoroughbreds, which he took to the annual meetings of the Ontario Jockey Club at Woodbine Park racetrack in Toronto and to other North American tracks.

Hendrie's reputation, however, was seldom as a winner. Observers commented that, if perseverance and good humour counted, he deserved to win, but most of the racing glory in Ontario went to Waterloo distiller Joseph Emm Seagram*. Between 1890 and 1902 Hendrie won only two runnings of the Queen's/King's Plate, in 1899 and 1902; Seagram took the rest. Hendrie's first major win was a surprise victory in the 1898 Futurity Stakes at Coney Island, N.Y., by Maritimas, a 20-to-1 long shot and a "despised outsider" in the words of the *New York World*. Proclaiming "I am a sportsman, not a gambler," Hendrie donated a large portion of the \$37,150 purse to the Hamilton General Hospital. The magnanimity of the gesture emphasized the meaning of horse-racing for Hendrie and others of his class. They entered it with little expectation of monetary gain, yet only those for whom gain had been a concern, wealthy capitalists like Hendrie, could afford the expense.

Breeding and racing demonstrated to the public that Hendrie was a very rich man. Following his death in 1906, Hamilton newspapers, somewhat in awe, reported the size of his estate, \$2.3 million. Several factors complicated its devise. The estate was obligated to pay Hendrie's outstanding debts of approximately \$500,000. At the same time, the government demanded \$140,000 in succession duties. All of these charges still stood in 1907 when stock and real-estate markets were rapidly deflating. Hendrie's executors could not immediately fulfil his bequests and, amid complaints from some of his heirs, the administration of the estate continued long after its founder's demise, a consequence of unfortunate economic times. The cartage company and Hamilton Bridge continued as family concerns after Hendrie's death, under the presidency, respectively, of son George Muir and eldest son, John Strathearn*.

[David G. Burley](#)

AO, F 276; F 644, MU 21, Hendrie, Symes and Co. to Bailey, 15 Dec. 1884; 31 Jan 1885; 5 Jan., 27 May 1886; Bailey to Hendrie, Symes and Co., 18 June 1886. HPL, Arch. file, Brown-Hendrie papers. NA, MG 28, III 20, Van Horne letter-books, 8: 271-72, 342-13, 455; 10: 124-25. *Daily Mail and Empire*, 17 March 1898. *Daily Times* (Hamilton, Ont.), 19 April 1892, 15 Aug. 1903. *Detroit Journal*, 18 Jan. 1896. *Globe*, 28 April 1879, 15 Jan. 1881. *Hamilton Spectator*, 22 Sept. 1875; 1882-1902; 27 June, 19 July 1906. DHB. E. K. Dodds, *Canadian turf recollections and other sketches* (Toronto, 1909). M. G. Holli, *Reform in Detroit: Hazen S. Pingree and urban politics* (New York, 1969), 5, 37-52, 103. Middleton and Landon, *Prov. of Ont.*, 3: 1-3.

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