

SHERBROOKE
STREET
RAILWAY

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The Sherbrooke Street Railway Company was incorporated in 1895-1896 by Messrs., William Farwell, Dalby Morkill, William Morris, Frank Thompson, J.S. Mitchell, F. P. Buck, R. H. Pope, Alexander Ames and W. Blue. The Company soon after its formation application was made to the Dominion Parliament for a charter but the notice was made too late and the charter was received from the local legislature in the spring of 1896. Local investors were only a preliminary step and additional investments was required. Sherbrooke resident Fred Griffith and later the secretary-treasurer met with the engineer constructing the Newport, Vermont waterworks system John W. Burke during the winter of 1895. Griffith brought the street railway scheme to Burke's attention. Burke represented two New England Capitalists Messrs., Percival Clements and Edgar Harding; the former was President of the Rutland Railroad and the Rutland Street Railway and Mayor of Rutland, Vermont. Burke told Griffith that they might be interested and the understanding was at the end of their meeting was that Griffith should obtain an option on the companies charter. This was done and the new company was formed in the spring of 1896 composed of Messrs., J.W. Burke, F. J. Griffith, William Morris and J. E. Flood. The charter obtained by the first company was purchased on April 16th, 1896. The City of Sherbrooke granted the company its franchise on April 22nd, 1896, and the scheme for the construction of the Sherbrooke Street Railway was launched.

Work commenced in late February, 1897 when the first poles were delivered to the rear of Number 3 firestation on Market Street, While it was planned to open the line in August, the Company had to wait until the delivery of rails for several months. During June work started on a powerhouse and July saw the Company order four closed body cars from Rhodes Curry and Company of Amherst, Nova Scotia, and four open cars were ordered from Ahearn and Soper of Ottawa.

Contractor McCartney had eighty men at work grading in September, 1897. While small details with the City of Sherbrooke dragged on during the better part of September, McCartney had his men busy grading the four mile interurban portion between

Sherbrooke and Lennoxville. Track was laid alongside the north-east side of the Sherbrooke to Lennoxville road by the end of September. The first street-cars were delivered October 7th, 1897 and were stored at the site of the carhouse on Wellington Street South just south of the Canadian Pacific (later Quebec Central wood trestle to Newington.)

Work progressed rapidly on the Belt Line in the City of Sherbrooke during October despite that rocks had to be blasted along Queen Street near Melbourne Street to widen the road. The single track circular Belt Line started from the Grand Trunk Union Station ran along Depot Street, Wellington Street South, up Aberdeen, Alexander, across to King Street West, Belevidiere to Wole, Queen and Melbourne Streets back via Moore, Dufferin, Wellington Street North and King Streets to the Union Station. The Lennoxville line ran along Wellington Street South to a junction at Aberdeen Street where it continued alongside the road to the small university town. The city route had been designed to avoid a very direct assault on the hilly topography of Sherbrooke's King Street hill.

Work continued up until Saturday midnight, October 30th. At two o'clock on the afternoon of November first, 1897 two hundred invited guests attended the inauguration of the Lennoxville line when they crowded into four cars and were conveyed to Lennoxville where the company served a luncheon at the College House. Speakers at the Luncheon included the Mayor H.R. Fraser, Percival Clements, the major stockholder, William Morris the Mayor of Asct and L. C. Bellanger an old Mayor of Sherbrooke. President Burke did not speak as he was in the process of taking Lennoxville guests on an excursion into Sherbrooke. The lennoxville line started into operation that day, but work had not been completed on the Belt Line

Several days after the line opening the company received a modern snowplow from the Tauton Locomotive Manufacturing

Company of Taunton, Mass. It had arrived in sections and the Sherbrooke Daily Record described the rollingstock as when assembled it will have the appearance of a Grand Trunk van with a heavy snowplow on each end. It is comparatively small, but evidently a compact piece of machinery The plow weighed 24,000 pounds to which is added the weight of the motor about another 2000 pounds in addition. Work had progressed on the Belt Line which was opened for traffic on November 19th, 1897.

The Sherbrooke Daily Record on February 21st, 1898 carried the following account of a close call on the Lennoxville route. A street car and a sleigh collided on the Lennoxville Road last evening. Frank Hammel an employee at the Magog House was returning from Lennoxville with a rig from Becks livery stable. This was near the CPR wood trestle. He met the snowplow. The wing of the snow plow stuck the sleigh, overturning the sleigh. The horse ran away. A street car was close behind the plow and into the car the horse ran into at full rate of speed, the horse was thrown down somewhat injured. The smashed remnants of the sleigh were drawn into town attached to the street car.

March 1898 the company received two additional closed cars giving the firm a total of ten street cars.

A delegation from East Sherbrooke met with President Burke requesting a new line be built to run across the St Francis River. The delegation was successful for in June 1898 a line was across the then new St Francis Bridge and then ran out along Park Avenue to Victoria Park and the Sherbrooke Exhibition Grounds.

During the early morning of December 4th, 1902 a severe snow and sleet storm struck Sherbrooke. The snow-plow was ineffective against the sleet and ice. The power wire was coated in ice so the plow could not receive electric current. Superintendent Smith had two street cars chained together to

make an early morning trip to break the ice. Each car had a motorman and a conductor and Superintendent Smith was on the first car. The first cars trolley wheel would break the ice and the second car pushing would receive electrical power. This train took two hours to get to the top of the line from the lower car barns. On reaching the top of the town the cars crossed the CPR tracks at Belvidiere and King Street. The cars then ran along side the CPR on Belvidiere Street to the CPR station at the corner of Frontenac Street. There is a small descent from the station and then the tracks rise up to the deck of the Wolfe Street Bridge. The minute the first car reached the bridge it derailed and broke away from the second car. The car was sliding to the brink of the river gorge., Superintendent Smith and Conductor Hogan managed to jump to safety as the car crashed through but the railing fell over with the street car. He ended up near the bank o the freezing river. the railing of the Wolfe Street Bridge and plunged down into the Magog River Gorge. Forty feet below The wooden car was smashed to pieces. The motorman had attempted to jump as the car went over the edge and he managed to grab a section of the bridge railing. The motorman survived the plunge down to the banks of the freezing river.

The Sherbrook Street Railway was for some years now operated in a perfunctioary manner and had been allowed to lapse into a state of decay, largely due to it not being considered a profitable property and not worth developing. In 1909, when the gross earnings on a small mileage with limited rolling stock were only \$31,222.00 The Sherbrooke Railway and Power Company was incorporated by the Quebec legislature to take over th property and frachiises of the Sherbrooke Street Railway, as well as certain water power rights held by British American Land Company, an ol English Company that was being wound up at the time. The resultant combination produced a public utility with a wide field of activity.

A new agreement was entered into with the City of Sherbrooke on February 3rd, 1910. A new franchise granted for twenty-eight years on the condition that \$500,000.00 would be spent on improvements and extensions. C.J. McCuaig a Montreal stockbroker became President of the new Company. Plans and surveys were once again made to extend the line to the paper mill towns of Brompton and Windsor Mills. It was proposed to link with the planned new interurban the Quebec Eastern to connect Sherbrooke with Quebec City.

Immediately new seventy pound rails were laid on the whole line and new track was laid on a new extension on Frontenac Street. It ran from the Belt Line at Frontenac and Dufferin up Frontenac hill to the Wolfe bridge and then connected with the Belt Line. It left again to go east on Portland Street and east on Prospect Streets as far as Quebec Street.

The Company also built in 1911 a new power plant and a transmission LINE TO Lennoxville, Capelton, Waterville, Compton, North Hatley and to Derby Line. It also acquired a small 400 Horse power installation at North Hatley.

A new line was laid was laid along Bowen Street to the car shops and terminal of the Quebec Central at Newington where the company installed a loop.

Four new cars were obtained from the Ottawa Car Company and many of the older cars were converted into Pay As You Enter one man cars.

In 1913 the line to Newington was cut back to Bowen and Woodward Street and in 1915 the Queen Street Line was abandoned in favour of the Belt Line cars using the north-west loop of the Frontenac Line which was extended eastward on Prospect and Melbourne to meet the older Belt Line.

After placing an announcement in trade papers during World War I that the company was looking to acquire two one man cars it failed to attract any suitable cars. The company undertook to build in its own shops a car built to its own specifications for use on the Lennoxville line. The car was designed by the Companys Superintendent F. X. Couture.

In 1919 the Street Railway built a new track on what it called the Fairmount Line it left the Belt Line at Aberdeen and Alexander Streets and ran along Alexander Street crossing the CPR-QCR at grade and proceeded to Galt Street where the cars turned west onto Belvidiere Street where it turned on to Short Street running up to Drummond (Galt) Street in the new industrial area adjacent to the CPR freight yards. The Company double-tracked its route on Wellington and Frontenac Streets at this time, the system was still for the most part single track line with passing sidings.

Early in 1921, the Company purchased its first Birney Safety Car from J. G. Brill and the pattern was set for the next decade for between 1923 and 1926 thirteen Birney cars were acquired second hand from four Cities in the United States.

The Company continued to improve the Quality on its routes with new steel rails, but the advance of the automobile was started to be felt when the Street Railway in 1925 asked relief by the city for snow removal, paving of the tracks and the care of the St Francis Bridge. In 1928 the Sherbrooke Street Railway and Power Company obtained two Yellow PAYE buses. They were run KING Street East to St Henri, via Vimy, King Street West, Brooks, Aberdeen, Wellington Street South, King Street West, King Street East, First Avenue, Council Street, Murray Street, King Street East to St Henri 2,7 miles for a fare of ten cents with no transfer priviledges. In 1929 the company had developed plans to double track the section over the bridge over the St Francis River.

SHERBROOKE STREET RAILWAY EQUIPMENT

1-4 Built 1897, Rhodes, Curry & Co. 28 foot, seating 30

1 (2nd) Built 1904, Ottawa Car Co. Body only

5-8 Built 1898, Ahearn, & Soper, open single truck cars

9-10 Built 1898, Ahearn & Soper, closed single truck cars

11 Built 1904, Ottawa Car Co. Open single truck car

Rebuilt in 1912 to one man sides enclosed in wire mesh

12-15 Built 1905, Ottawa Car Co. Open single truck cars

No. 14 rebuilt into crane car

No. 15 rebuilt into closed car.

16-19 Built 1911, Ottawa Car Co. Closed single truck car

Rebuilt to one man cars.

20 Built 1917, Sherbrooke St. Ry. Closed steel single truck car.

21 Built 1918 Sherbrooke St. Ry. Closed wood single truck car.

22-23 Built 1921, J. G. Brill, single truck Birney safety car.

24-26 Single truck Birney Safety car bought 1923 from Rochester, N.H.

27-30 Built 1920, Wason Mfg. Co. Single truck Birney Safety Cars, bought 1924 from Eastern Massachusetts St. Ry, Chelsea, said to be from Dover, Sommersworth & Rochester Ry. Nos A,B,C,D

31-34 Single truck Birney Safety Cars bought from Woodside, Long Island, NY,

35-36 Single truck Birney Safety Cars bought 1926 from Williamsburg Bridge Co. New York, NY.

No. 1 Single Truck double end Snow-Plow Taunton Locomotive, scrapped 1910.

No. 1(2nd) Built 1911, Ottawa Car Co. Single truck double end snow sweeper.

No. 2 Built 1912, Sherbrooke Ry. & Power Co. Double truck double end freight motor later converted into a snow-plow.

No. 14 Built 1905, Ottawa Car Co. Crane car converted from single truck passenger car.

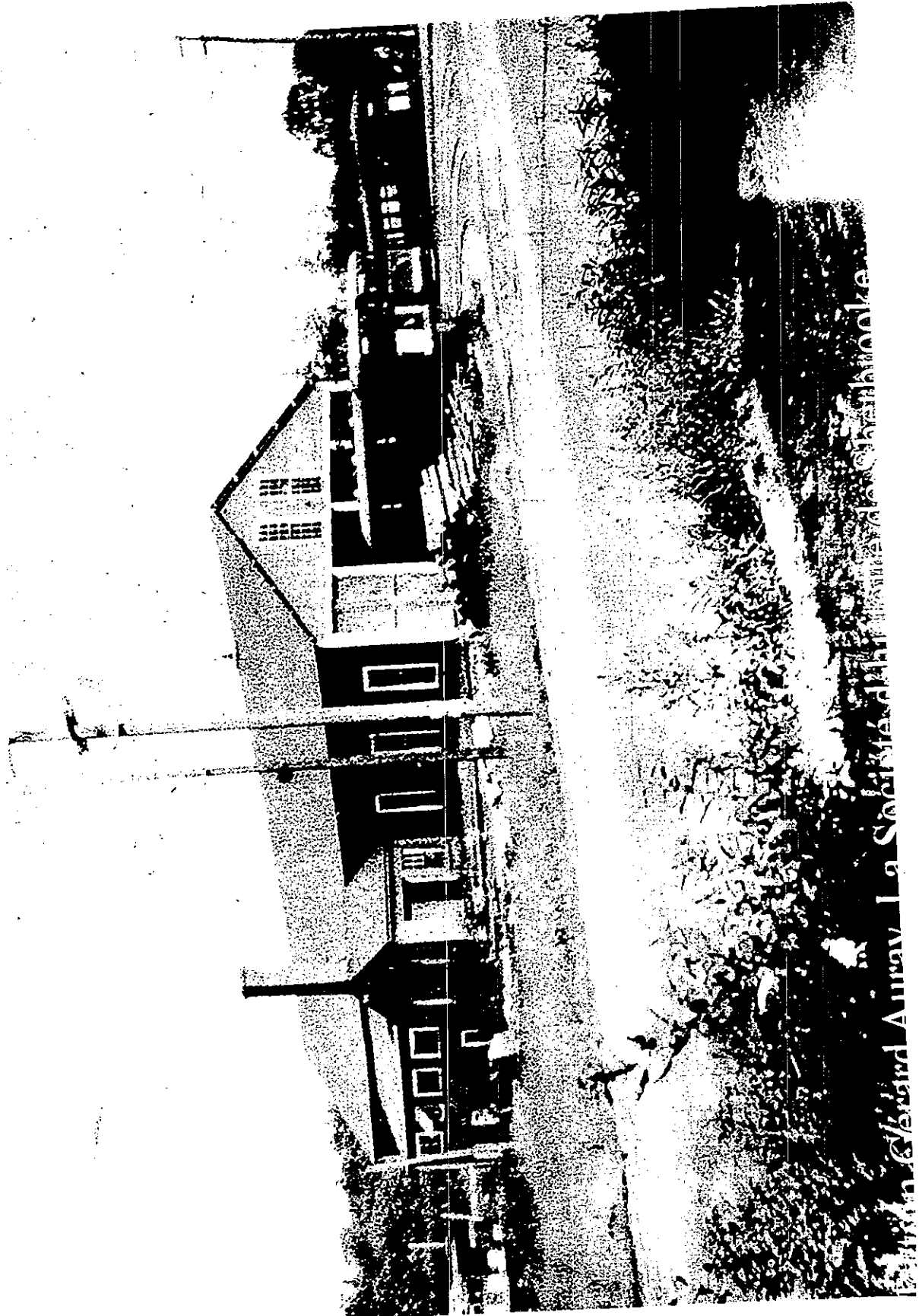
In 1938 cars 22, 23, 29, and sweeper No.1 sold to Quebec Asbestos, East Broughton, Quebec.

No. 23 was converted into a mine locomotive.

No. 22 sold to Nova Scotia Light and Power, Halifax 1942 No. 176

No. 29 sold to Nova Scotia Light and Power, Halifax 1942, No. 177

Some of the Birney bodies were sold as cottages around Petit Lac Magog and Lime Ridge Quebec.



William & Bernard Anray, La. Soc. for the Blind, Inc. 1911-1912. Photo by Charles H. Cooke

