

**“All aboard!” The Importance of the Railroads for the Growth of the
Campbell-Stone Movement in the mid-19th Century: Connections between
Southwestern Ontario and Detroit and Points South**

Claude Cox

McMaster Divinity College

The most heavily populated area of Canada lies astride a corridor that stretches from Windsor to Toronto to Montreal. It is also the most heavily travelled part of the country, either by road or by rail. It comes as no surprise that the rail line across this expanse from its earliest days provided an essential conduit for both passengers and merchandise. Communities, with their churches, sprang up along the rail line; as the rail lines proliferated, pushed by a growing economy, little communities came to life as viable places to live. Towns and villages which failed to have a rail link sometimes fell into complete obscurity. The rise and fall of such communities directly impacted the growth of Campbell-Stone churches, as it did that of other churches and organizations; when the rail lines and passenger traffic were lost, the churches also felt the impact. There is a major piece of research awaiting someone in this changing story.

The purpose of this essay is a modest one: to assess the rail linkages in mid-19th century southwestern Ontario, especially for connections with Michigan via Detroit. The most significant RM preacher to cross from one side to the other in the mid-19th century was Alexander Campbell, who made a tour of Canada West in 1855. As it turns out, this trip occurred at the same time as such a journey became possible, because the Great Western Railway across southern Ontario had just come into operation. In the following year, 1856, Edmund Sheppard made a preaching trip from his home in Mapleton, South Dorchester Twp., that could only be made in a timely fashion with the help of the railway. Ten years later,

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Sheppard started the RM church in North Branch, MI, not that far by rail from Mapleton and St. Thomas, where he had started a congregation in 1864. First we need to set the historical and political situation in place, involving as it does two emerging countries; then we can add to this picture the development of the railways that linked southern Ontario, Michigan, and New York.

Mid-19th Century “Canada”

On July 1, 1867 three British colonies were united by Confederation to produce the four provinces of the Dominion of Canada: those colonies became Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. (Before 1867 Ontario and Quebec were Upper and Lower Canada, with one legislature.) In 1870, Manitoba joined; then, in 1871, British Columbia, but on the condition that a railway be built to connect it with the other provinces. On Nov. 7, 1885, the Canadian Pacific Railway to B.C. was finished: a person could travel from Montreal to Port Moody, B.C., a distance of 3,000 miles, in a week.¹

Next to the CPR, the most important railway in the formation of Canada was the Grand Trunk Railway, which linked pre-Confederation Canada in the 1850s.² The main rival of the GTR was the Great Western Railway, which crossed southwest Ontario first, but was absorbed by the GTR in 1882.³ Indeed the story of the development of the railways in Canada is one of the proliferation of small

¹ Desmond Morton, *A Short History of Canada* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers Ltd., 1983), p. 106.

² Ron Brown, *Ghost Railways of Ontario* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1994; repr. 1995), p. 101. This book and its companion volume, *Ghost Railways of Ontario*, volume 2 (Toronto: Polar Bear Press, 2000) provide a treasure trove of information relevant to this essay, including maps and photos of rail lines and stations across Ontario.

³ Morton, *History*, p. 101.

and larger companies that were eventually consolidated into a few major players by amalgamation, bankruptcy, and buy-out.⁴

United States in the mid-19th Century

Britain recognized the independence of the United States with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in 1783. The former thirteen colonies included the eastern seaboard as far as Florida and the west as far as the western end of Lake Superior, then what lay southwards almost to the Gulf of Mexico. It was these United States, along with, at least nominally, the vast tract represented by the Louisiana Purchase (added 1803), which fought with “Canada” the War of 1812, a war which “cleared the air” between the United States and the colonies of British North America: there was no winner, but Canada retained its independence.

By the middle of the 19th century the borders of the continental United States appeared as they are now. Soon the supremacy of the industrialized north was to be tested in the Civil War, 1861-65; one of the factors decisive for the War’s outcome was the ability of the North to move soldiers and supplies on its extensive rail network.

The population of the United States then, as now, was roughly ten times that of British North America; it became a country earlier, and these realities, together with industrialization, account for the development of the railways at an earlier date than in emerging Canada. In 1854 there were 20,619 miles of track in the United States—serviced by no less than 430 railroads;⁵ in 1850 there were only six miles of track in BNA, though by 1860 this had increased to 2,065.⁶

⁴ Between 1836 and 1922 what became the Canadian National Railway involved some 214 different railways: G.R. Stevens, *Canadian National Railways. Volume I: Sixty Years of Trial and Error (1836-1896)* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, 1960), p. xiii.

⁵ Robert Ellis Roberts, *Sketches of the City of Detroit, State of Michigan, Past and Present* (R.F. Johnstone & co, printers, 1855), p. 50. A digitized copy of this book is available on the Internet.

⁶ Kenneth W. McNaught and Ramsay Cook, *Canada and the United States. A Modern Study* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company, 1963; repr. 1969), p. 333.

Campbell's Tour of Canada West, 1855

1. From Wellsville to Niagara Falls

In an earlier examination of Campbell's trip to southern Ontario, I was unaware that its timing and itinerary were determined by the completion of the Great Western Railway, which connected Niagara Falls, Hamilton, London, and Windsor.⁷ The completed track opened on Jan. 17, 1854;⁸ it carried passengers 408.6 km. (254 mi.).⁹ Also just completed was the GWR Suspension Bridge over the Niagara gorge, connecting the GWR with New York state: it opened on Mar. 8, 1855, less than four months before Campbell described the engineering achievement of its construction.¹⁰ With the bridge, the GWR provided a direct rail connection between Chicago and New York railroads running into Buffalo; this linkage contributed in a major way to traffic through places like St. Thomas, ON, whose prosperity, thus gained, is reflected in the Princess St. Disciples Church.¹¹

The development of the railways along the American components of Campbell's tour was no less significant for his trip than that on the Canadian side. Campbell, his wife, and daughter Decima, set out from Bethany, VA, on Thurs., July 26, 1855. The suspension of steamer passage out of Wheeling on the Ohio R. a useful map of principal railways in the United States in 1850 and 1860, see p. 82; it lacks the line between Cleveland and Buffalo. In the United States there were 30,000 miles of railway track by 1860 (p. 83). Morton, *History*, p. 48, states that there were 88.5 km. (55 miles) of railway track in Canada in 1850.

⁷ "Alexander Campbell's Tour of Canada in 1855," in *The Campbell-Stone Movement in Ontario*, ed. C. Cox (Studies in American Religion, 62; Studies in the Campbell-Stone Movement 1; Lewiston, NY and Queenston, ON: Edwin Mellen, 1995), pp. 61-72. The details of this trip appear as "Notes of a Tour to Canada West--No. 1," *Millennial Harbinger*, 4th series, vol. 5, no. 9 (Sept., 1855), pp. 529-537, available on-line at <http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/acampbell/mh1855/NTCW.HTM>

⁸ Stevens, *Canadian National*, p.106. The stretch from Niagara Falls to Hamilton opened on Nov. 1, 1853; that as far as London a few weeks later, on Dec. 17.

⁹ Morton, *History*, p. 48.

¹⁰ See <http://www.iaw.com/~falls/bridges.html> for details of the construction of the Railway Suspension Bridge and a photo. Campbell's remarks about the bridge indicate that he had read the tourist brochure about it, or asked for details. In Nov., 1856, the Grand Trunk Railroad connected Sarnia, Toronto, and Montreal.

¹¹ Photo in *The Campbell-Stone Movement in Ontario*, p. 411.

apparently delayed their arrival at Wellsville, OH, that day. Four years and four months earlier, on Mar. 4, 1852, the main line of the Cleveland & Pittsburgh Railroad Company was completed as far as Wellsville.¹² Leaving that station at 9 a.m., the Campbells headed north by rail to Cleveland and then east to Buffalo, covering 230 miles in the one day.

The rail connection between Cleveland and Buffalo was built in stages and the entire line on standard gauge saw its first train on Feb. 1, 1854.¹³ It was a year and a half later that the Campbells travelled on the Cleveland, Painesville and Ashtabula RR, and the Buffalo and State Line by way of Erie through to Buffalo, whose population that year reached almost 75,000.¹⁴ The very next day after their arrival in Buffalo, i.e., on Sat., July 28, they got on the Buffalo and Niagara Falls Railroad for the twenty-two mile trip to Niagara Falls. In 1855 this railroad was merged into the New York Central Railroad which, since its formation in 1853, had held that short line under lease.¹⁵

¹² See "History of Tuscarawas County," sections 395-6, on-line at <http://www.heritagepursuit.com/Tuscarawas/TuscarawasChapX.htm>

¹³ The Franklin Canal Company was chartered in 1844 to build a railroad from Erie, PA, southwest to the Ohio border. The Cleveland, Painesville and Ashtabula Railroad was incorporated to build northeast from Cleveland to the Ohio border to join the Franklin line; the line between Cleveland and Erie, thus joined, was opened on Nov. 20, 1852. The Cleveland, Painesville and Ashtabula RR bought the Franklin Canal Company in 1854.

The Buffalo and State Line Railroad from Dunkirk, NY, westward to the Ohio state line opened on Jan. 1, 1852, and was opened between Buffalo and Dunkirk on Feb. 22. The Erie and North East Railroad from the Ohio state line westward to Erie opened Jan. 19, 1852. On Nov. 16, 1853 the last two named railroads agreed to change to standard gauge and to have the Buffalo and State Line operate the Erie and North East. This meant that through passengers did not have to change trains at Erie. It was not until Feb. 1, 1854 that the first such through train passed through Erie.

The source for this complicated story of the building of the railroad between Cleveland and Buffalo is: "Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railway; Early history: 1835-1869," at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lake_Shore_and_Michigan_Southern_Railway

¹⁴ To be precise, 74,214, up from 29,773 only ten years earlier: "The History of Buffalo: A Chronology," at <http://freenet.buffalo.edu/bah/h/1865.html>

¹⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buffalo_and_Niagara_Falls_Railroad. This rail line is still used by CSX for freight and by Amtrak for passenger service.

2. At Niagara Falls, Eramosa, Toronto and Bowmanville

Presumably it was also on Saturday that the Campbells crossed over the Niagara gorge on the newly completed GWR Suspension Bridge, 230 feet, as Campbell says, above the river. He does not say how they made the 12-mile trip to St. Catharines on Monday, the 30th, but St. Catharines was the first stop on the GWR, where its station on Great Western Street is still in use by VIA Rail. At St. Catharines, Campbell “took the cure” at the medicinal springs while staying at Stephenson House. Visitors who came to see Campbell at St. Catharines included “Bro. Shepherd,” i.e., Edmund Sheppard, of Aylmer. Doubtless he made the trip on the GWR.

On Monday, Aug. 6, Campbell travelled to Eramosa: by rail on the GWR from St. Catharines to Galt—a twelve-mile branch line of the GWR went north from the Harrisburg station to Galt. From Galt the Campbells travelled by stage coach to Guelph and then by “private conveyance” to the residence of James Black.¹⁶ The stop at Eramosa included a preaching opportunity on the 7th in John Stewart’s barn, then, on the 8th, a visit with John Menzies. On the 9th the Campbells were conveyed eighteen miles by carriage to Lake Ontario for the trip by steamer to Toronto.

The stay in Toronto—whose population, Campbell notes, was about 50,000—was a busy one. There were preaching opportunities and meetings with various prominent people, Disciple and otherwise.

Next, probably on Sat., the 12th, the Campbells travelled by steamer to Bowmanville, 75 km. east of Toronto. There was no rail service yet, but doubtless it was a pleasant trip by boat.¹⁷ On Mon., the 13th, the Campbells returned by steamer to Toronto, arriving at 9 p.m.

¹⁶ The Galt & Guelph Railway opened between Harrisburg and Galt in Aug. 1854; the line between Galt and Preston opened in Nov. 1855, but the line was not open to Guelph until Sept. 1857; in 1860 the G & GR amalgamated with the GWR. See “The Great Western Railway” at <http://home.primus.ca/~robkath/railgwr.htm>

¹⁷ The Grand Trunk Railway between Toronto and Oshawa—Bowmanville is east of Oshawa—did not open until a year after Campbell’s visit, i.e., in August 1856, according to “The Founding of Pickering Village,” at <http://www.townofajax>.

3. London and Detroit

Two days later—Campbell says, “After one day’ repose with brother [Thomas C.] Scott ...”—i.e., on the 15th they arrived in London. At some point they connected with the Great Western Railway to make that trip, but Campbell does not say where that connection was made. In the summer of 1855 there was no train service out of Toronto west (or east) and it was several months before there was a connecting link with Hamilton, through which the GWR passed.¹⁸ This means that the Campbells may have travelled from Toronto to Hamilton by steamer to make the connection with the GWR.

At London, Campbell met Edmund Sheppard, who wanted him to address the RM church at Dorchester [Twp.], i.e., Mapleton, or Aylmer, but Campbell declined for reasons of health. He met several Baptist church leaders in London, and mentions them by name.

The Campbells were joined on the 125-mile trip by train to Detroit by John Stewart of Eramosa and by David Oliphant. “In a few hours on a good railroad,” i.e., the GWR, he says, they found lodging with Richard Hawley in Detroit. The rail line ended in Windsor. In 1855 the crossing of the Detroit River was made in one of two ferries, the “Mohawk” or the “Argo,” the latter a steamer belonging to the city of Detroit.¹⁹

¹⁸ The Hamilton & Toronto Railway began service in Dec., 1855; it amalgamated with the GWR in 1871: “Railway Stations of Ontario,” at <http://home.primus.ca/~robkath/station.htm> The Grand Trunk Railway was in service westward to Sarnia in July, 1856, but did not pass through London; the Toronto to Montreal section opened in October of that year.

¹⁹ See “The Ferry Boat Argo,” a section of chapter 85, “Navigation on Rivers and Lakes,” in Walter Lewis, *The Frontenac: A Reappraisal* (Kingston, ON: Marine Museum of the Great Lakes at Kingston, 1987), on-line at <http://72.14.209.104/search?q=cache:AUAN7VruneQJ:www.hhpl.on.ca/GreatLakes/Documents/Frontenac/default.asp%3FID%3Dc003+May+Queen,+steamer+in+1855&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=9&gl=ca&ie=UTF-8>.

Campbell was not impressed by the situation of the RM church in Detroit. He writes:

The church in Detroit does not grow, meeting in a room instead of a meeting house, and having no Evangelist, or elder devoted to the ministry of the word in that city. Detroit, it seems to me, is a good missionary field, and ought by all means to become a missionary station. A man of God—a workman that needeth not to be ashamed—would here find a good field, and, with the Divine blessing, could achieve much good.

The “Burnets,” i.e., D.S. Burnett and his wife, from Cincinnati, arrived in Detroit just hours after the Campbells. They met with “the church” on the 19th in the morning; then he preached in the afternoon, Burnett that night, and Campbell again the next night, these last three meetings in the Lutheran meeting house. The beginnings of this, the Plum St. congregation in Detroit, are described in Sarah (Hawley) Scott’s obituary, following her death on Feb. 22, 1887:

A delegation from Scotland arrived in Detroit Aug. 1842, and a church was soon after organized, which met weekly at the house of her father, Mr. Richard Hawley, Sr., on the corner of Bates and Woodbridge st. the [sic] original members of this organization were: Mr. Richard Hawley, Sr., and wife, their daughter (the late Mrs. Scott [i.e., Sarah]), their daughter Rebecca (Mrs. Duncan), Alex. Linn and his wife, Colin Campbell and his wife, and Wm. Linn and his wife.²⁰

4. Cleveland, Wellsville, Bethany

On Tuesday, the 21st of Aug., the Campbells and Burnetts boarded the

²⁰ *Ontario Evangelist* 1, 11 (Apr. 1887), p. 3. I am indebted to Geoffrey Ellis for a copy of this obituary, of which only a part is here quoted.

steamer “May Queen” for the overnight voyage to Cleveland. In 1855 the “Ocean” and the “May Queen” made this trip daily.²¹ The “May Queen” displaced 688 tons and was, apparently, a well-known boat: it is listed as the first boat to arrive at Detroit for 1854 (Mar. 21, from Cleveland) and the first boat to depart for 1856 (Apr. 15) and 1862 (Mar. 29), in both cases for Cleveland.²²

It was their intention to attend the “Annual Meeting” at Warren, OH, but Campbell felt unwell, so the Burnetts took a train to Cincinnati and the Campbells, again on the Cleveland & Pittsburgh Railway, returned to Wellsville, OH. They were in Virginia that evening, likely taking a steamer to Wheeling, and, on the next day, Aug. 24th, they were back in Bethany.

The Significance of the Railways for Campbell’s Trip in 1855

Newly built railway lines permitted Campbell, at the age of sixty-six, to make his trip to Canada West in 1855. The Cleveland & Pittsburgh Railway was more than three years old when the Campbells travelled from Wellsville, OH, to Cleveland. But the line between Cleveland and Buffalo was completed only on Feb. 1, 1854. The Buffalo and Niagara Falls Railroad was leased by the major railroad, the New York Central, from 1853 and was absorbed by the NYC in 1855.

A few months before Campbell’s visit, on Mar. 8, the Great Western Railway Suspension Bridge opened, carrying passengers across the Niagara gorge into Upper Canada, where the GWR, which connected Niagara Falls with Windsor, had opened on Jan. 17, 1854. The GWR enabled Campbell to travel easily from Lake Ontario to Windsor and Detroit, and its recently opened branch line from Harrisburg as far as Galt, facilitated the visit to Eramosa.

Had the Campbells come one year later, they could have taken the Grand Trunk Railway from Toronto to Bowmanville, as that opened in Aug. 1856. And it was a few months after Campbell’s visit, i.e. in Dec. 1855, that Toronto was

21 Roberts, *Sketches of the City of Detroit*, p. 49.

22 Lewis, “Navigation on Rivers and Lakes.”

connected with the GWR by way of the Toronto & Hamilton Railway. However, steamer passage between Toronto and Bowmanville was fast and pleasant in the summer, as was the case with passage from Detroit and Cleveland.

There is a time for everything, and the summer of 1855 was an ideal time for the Campbells to visit Upper Canada, and Detroit, thanks to newly established railway service. During his stay, at every stop he was visited by church leaders, some of whom had been students at Bethany. That, in turn, was made possible by the recent developments in transportation. One of the Bethany students was Edmund Sheppard, whose ministry shows widespread travel, including ministry in Michigan. We will return to one of his preaching trips, but first we must take up the construction of two more rail lines, the first one running north out of Toronto, and the second running southeast from Brantford to Buffalo.

From Toronto north to Collingwood and Meaford

In the summer of 1855 there was no completed rail line east or west out of Toronto: that would have to wait a year! However, in Oct. 1853 the Toronto, Simcoe & Lake Huron Union Railway Company was completed as far as Allandale (Barrie); and on June 2, 1855, the first train arrived in Collingwood from Toronto.²³ From there one could catch the daily steamer to Owen Sound, with a stop at Cape Rich. After 1865 one also had the option of taking the stagecoach from Meaford to Owen Sound.²⁴ In the 1860s a railway was promoted that would join Collingwood and Owen Sound, by way of Meaford, but this line

²³ Stevens, *Canadian National*, pp. 398-99.

²⁴ *St. Vincent. A Beautiful Land. An Illustrated Township History*, St. Vincent Heritage Association (Thornbury, ON: Conestoga Press, 2004), p. 299. There is a photo of such a stagecoach, whose caption reads “After 1855, Meaford was served by daily stagecoach,” But the text on the same page begins, “The visitor arriving in Meaford in 1865 might have chosen to travel by stagecoach or steamship.” I am inclined to believe the date in the text to be correct. Also on p. 299 there is a photo of the paddlewheeler “Clifton,” which stopped at Meaford twice daily during the shipping season.

was never built.²⁵ Instead the North Grey Railway Company raised the money for a line that ran from Collingwood to Meaford; the first train arrived on Nov. 14, 1872.²⁶ Owen Sound chose to bide its time, and it was an entirely different line, that of the Toronto, Grey and Bruce Railway Company, which began service by way of Orangeville (Apr. 1871) into Owen Sound in June 1873.²⁷

²⁵ *St. Vincent*, p. 109.

²⁶ *St. Vincent*, p. 111; the facing page contains a photo of the original station, which was later moved from the “Sand Hill” to the harbour. Stevens, *Canadian National*, p. 410, states that the opening of the line to Meaford occurred on Apr. 1. For an excellent early photo of a train at the Meaford station, see http://mikan3.archives.ca:80/pam/public_mikan/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=3402414&rec_nbr_list=3230890,3402414,1542990,3402398,3278310,617092,9263,616965,134369,98391&tmpl_t_nbr=201&item_index=1&total_items=1 or at www.listings.ca.com/Ontario/gallery/index5.asp That photo accompanies this article.

The locomotive in the photo is the ubiquitous “4-4-0 American,” some 25,000 of which were built in North America between 1850 and 1880; they remained in service until 1948. It was on such a train as this—with more cars, of course, that Campbell and his family travelled in Ontario. For technical details on the 4-4-0 American, see *A Source Book of Locomotives*, ed. V.C. Wall, written and compiled by B. Reed (London and Sydney: Ward Lock Limited, 1970), p. 26; for photos and information about such locomotives still running, Nils Huxtable, *Classic North American Steam* (Greenwich, CT: Brompton Books Corp., 1990), pp. 8-9.

There are photos of the Meaford station, at the harbour, with 4-6-0 Ten-Wheeler locomotives, in Beaumont, *Steam at Allandale*, pp. 94-97; these photos date from the 1940s and 1950s. An 1883 American 4-4-0 is preserved at the South Simcoe Railway; however, it awaits a new boiler. They do operate a 4-6-0. This heritage railway is located at Tottenham, southwest of Barrie. For more information on the South Simcoe Railway, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Simcoe_Railway

²⁷ Ralph Beaumont, *Steam Trains to the Bruce* (Cheltenham, ON: Boston Mills Press, 1977), p. 14. In 1884 this line was taken over by the Canadian Pacific Railway.



The reason for the stop on “this siding” is that in the mid-1850s rail service in southern Ontario existed in the shape of an inverted “T”: by 1855 the Great Western Railway offered service east-west from Niagara, through London, to Windsor and, a year later, the Grand Trunk Railway connected Sarnia, Toronto, and Montreal, service that was again east-west. The Northern Railway group offered service northwards from Toronto to Collingwood in 1855.

In the mid-19th century the “pockets” of RM churches were located in the Talbot Settlement west of London; in the Niagara Peninsula; around Guelph, at Eramosa and Esquesing; Toronto and east of Toronto, in the area around Bowmanville; and in the Georgian Bay region. These areas were all connected by railways early in the story of railways in southern Ontario.

From Buffalo to Brantford and on to Goderich

Buffalo, Brantford and Goderich Railway opened as far as Brantford in 1854, the year before Campbell’s visit.²⁸ The rail line headed south from Buffalo along

Lake Erie, passing through Port Colbourne and Dunnville, then turned northwest through Caledonia on its way to Brantford.²⁹ Churches were quick to realize the benefits of these rail links. A few weeks before Campbell arrived in the Niagara Peninsula, the “June meeting” was held at Wainfleet, near the Buffalo and Brantford line, beginning on the third Friday and continuing through Monday. The following notice appeared in *The Christian Banner*, Vol. 9, no. 5 (May 1855), p. 140:

The railroad station *Wainfleet Centre* on the Buffalo and Brantford line is within about four and a-half miles of the place of meeting. Dunnville is between seven and ten miles of the place of meeting. It is presumable that arrangements will be made to meet those on their way to the yearly gathering with conveyances both at *Wainfleet Centre* and *Dunnville*.³⁰

The BBG connected at Paris, Upper Canada, with the Great Western Railway main line, providing a connection with it, then proceeded west to Stratford.

Edmund Sheppard and a preaching trip in 1856

Sheppard was no stranger to travel by the mid-19th century. He arrived in Pickering, just east of Toronto, from Nottingham, England, early in 1843; he was a student at Bethany College, 1846-47.³¹ In 1849 he was teaching at Mapleton, in South Dorchester Twp.; the following year Sheppard started a house church

²⁸ Brown, *Ghost Railways*, 2, p. 88.

²⁹ See the map at <http://home.cogeco.ca/~trains/rren.htm> By 1858 the line was complete to Goderich. In 1869 it was taken over by the Grand Trunk Railway, by which time it was called the Buffalo and Lake Huron Railway. This rail line appears in the map of 1907 as the southernmost line of the Grand Trunk running west out of Buffalo.

³⁰ I am indebted to Geoffrey Ellis for this reference. In a similar notice in the *Banner*, vol. 5, no. 5 (May, 1853), p. 139—providing directions to Williamsville, Rainham Twp., in the same vicinity as that of the meeting in 1855—the advice related provides stagecoach directions.

³¹ Unless otherwise indicated, the information that follows is from Cox, “A Preaching Tour by Edmund Sheppard,” *Campbell-Stone Movement in Ontario*, pp. 159-69. The original document underlying this article appeared as a letter in *The British Millennial Harbinger* 9, 3rd series (1857), pp. 259-60.

which, by Aug. of the same year, was able to put up a frame building. He was destined to spend the rest of his life in the southwestern corner of Upper Canada, except for some years, 1868-74, 1880-85, at Bowmanville:³²

- 1849-: Mapleton
- 1855: Aylmer³³
- 1864: started the church in St. Thomas
- 1881-89: Ridgetown
- 1891-94: Rodney, where he died, Apr. 30, 1894
- 1893: West Lorne.

A glance at a map shows that all these places lie south of the GWR between Edwardsburgh—nine and a half miles east of London—and Chatham to the west. The trip that Sheppard made in June 1856, accompanied by John Stewart, began on the Mon. the 9th when they took the train west from London to the Wardsville station, then headed south (by what means?) through Wardsville, probably to Eagle. The next day they travelled west along Talbot St., now Highway 3, to meet with a group in Howard Twp., i.e., at or near Ridgetown. We do not learn whom they visited in the next township west, Harwich Twp., before they returned at the end of the week to Eagle, where there was a semi-annual meeting. Sheppard preached on the Sunday. On Tues., the 17th, Butchart boarded the train at Wardsville and travelled to Eramosa, where he ends his report.

Butchart's report really begins on June 3rd, a day when, as he writes, "after taking farewell of the friends and brethren of King [Twp.], we were borne speedily along the iron highway by the power of steam, controlled by human skill, till we arrived at Edwardsburgh." King Twp. is about halfway between Toronto

³² Reuben Butchart, *The Disciples of Christ in Canada since 1830* (Toronto: Canadian Headquarters' Publications, Churches of Christ [Disciples], 1949), p. 140, states that Sheppard had a second pastorate at Bowmanville, ca. 1880-85.

³³ Campbell, in his report of his trip, writes that Sheppard wished for him "to

address the church at Dorchester [Mapleton] or Aylmer.” The congregation only formally organized in 1885.

and Barrie, i.e., Butchart boarded the Toronto, Simcoe & Lake Huron Union Railway near King City, travelled south to Union Station in Toronto and boarded the GWR—connected with Toronto the preceding Dec.—and travelled west to Edwardsburgh, and then by foot south to Mapleton. All this in one day: no wonder he writes so effusively about the trip by rail that June 3rd!

From Mapleton, the journey to Detroit was not a long one by rail. There is no record that Sheppard preached in Detroit, but he did start a congregation in the village of North Branch, MI, sixty miles to the north. This village is closer to Port Huron than Detroit. In Nov. 1856 the Grand Trunk Railway opened to Sarnia, across the river from Port Huron; two years later the London and Grand Trunk Junction Railway Company, connected the GWR line at St. Mary’s with London.³⁴ Sheppard almost certainly boarded the GWR at London and travelled by way of St. Mary’s to Sarnia to arrive at North Branch. As we might expect, this church included several people from Canada.³⁵

Later connections between southwestern Ontario and Detroit

It was the railway that facilitated exchanges between Ontario and Michigan. Sheppard is but one example. David Oliphant was in Detroit in 1865, and in St. Clair and Lapeer Counties in 1875. Thomas Scott, an RM leader in Toronto, married Sarah Hawley, who funded a congregation in Ann Arbor. In the last half of the 19th century William D. Campbell, originally of the Poplar Hill church, was a well-known minister and preacher in southern Ontario (e.g., at Rodney, 1882-

³⁴ Stevens, *Canadian National*, p. 285. For a photo of the station built at St. Mary’s in 1858 and the story of the railway junction there see <http://stonetown.com/gttsm/history.htm>

³⁵ In 1870 Joseph Ash visited Michigan and wrote a report printed in *The Bible Indicator* 2, 11 (Apr., 1870), pp. 172-73. He had visited relatives some fifteen miles from Detroit and then, he says, “From there I went to Lapeer to visit a sister and family. — Near North Branch, Lapeer Co., I found a small body of brethren, several of whom formerly lived in Canada; they are of the name McKillop. These faithful brethren, though few in number, keep up meetings in a school house. They are hoping on for better times. I met with them on Lord’s day.”

84;³⁶ Toronto: Bathhurst St.;³⁷ Hamilton³⁸); he also served the Plum St. congregation in Detroit for eight years, and retired in Detroit in 1904.³⁹

Donald B. McKellar was from the same southwestern part of the province as Sheppard and W.D. Campbell.⁴⁰ In 1862 he was one of the trustees of the Mosa Twp. congregation, and preached in the surrounding area, but he also preached for a time in Yale, MI.⁴¹ McKellar and Campbell are just two of many who, especially from lower southwestern Ontario, provided ministry in Michigan. The rail line to Detroit made for easy transit.⁴²

With the proximity of Detroit and the RM presence there, it is surprising that no congregation emerges in Windsor until 1916, when the Giles Blvd. Christian Church was formed. If Detroit was close, Windsor was too far away!

And finally, “All aboard!”

By the mid-1850s, there were important rail linkages across southern Ontario: the Great Western Railway connected Niagara Falls, Hamilton, and Detroit; the

³⁶ Butchart, *Disciples*, p. 490.

³⁷ Butchart, *Disciples*, p. 521.

³⁸ Butchart, *Disciples*, p. 559.

³⁹ Butchart, *Disciples*, p. 521.

⁴⁰ That is, in Aldborough, Lobo, Mosa, Dorchester, and Howard Townships: Butchart, *Disciples*, p. 57. Butchart, p. 388, calls adherents in this area “a western group” of Disciples, in contrast to groups in Wellington County and the Niagara Peninsula.

⁴¹ Butchart, *Disciples*, p. 477, citing John T. Brown, ed., “Churches of Christ,” p. 251. The latter, published in 1904, may be found at <http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/jtbrown/coc/COC1020.HTM> The digitized copy is, however, incomplete and as of yet lacks the text of D. Munro’s report on RM churches in Michigan. Munro, who was from Ridgetown (Butchart, p. 499), writes his report from St. John’s, Michigan; the report states that he had also preached for a year at Wayland, MI, and includes a fine photo.

⁴² I am indebted to Monroe Hawley for the list of names connected with Detroit that includes David Oliphant, D.B. McKellar, Thomas Scott, Sarah Hawley, and W.D. Campbell. He adds Dr. John Fry, of Selkirk, ON, who was in Detroit in 1875, and Vernon Fry, also of Selkirk, who “became a successful real estate developer and an elder in the Plum St. church.” Finally, Robert Beaty, of Toronto, was in Detroit in 1883.

Grand Trunk Railway linked Toronto with Sarnia to the west and Montreal to the east; the Toronto, Simcoe and Lake Huron Union Railway connected Toronto with Collingwood; and the Buffalo, Brantford and Goderich Railway ran through the Niagara Peninsula westward, with a connection to the GWR at Paris. Finally, a branch line of the GWR took passengers north from Harrisburg to Galt, and soon there was a GWR line into Toronto. In the first seven months after its opening, i.e., from Jan. through July of 1854, the Great Western Railway carried 210,928 passengers!⁴³ The world would never be the same.

We can summarize the recent completion of railway lines that enabled Campbell to make his trip north from Bethany, VA, and across southern Ontario, to Detroit, and home again in the summer of 1855, as follows.

- 1852, Mar.: Wellsville, OH, connected to Cleveland
- 1853: Buffalo to Niagara Falls line leased by New York Central
- 1854, Jan.: Niagara Falls west through London to Windsor
- 1854, Feb.: Cleveland and Buffalo
- 1854, Aug.: branchline connects Harrisburg, ON, and Galt
- 1855, Mar.: railway Suspension Bridge over Niagara gorge

The most critical linkage is the Great Western Railway, connecting Niagara Falls and Windsor. A year after Campbell's visit, Edmund Sheppard uses parts of the GWR to facilitate a preaching trip in southwestern Ontario.

Towns and villages prospered along the proliferating rail lines. For example, the GWR completed its line through Strathroy, not far from Poplar Hill, in 1856; in 1887 a fine, new station was built. Some sixty-nine trains a day (!) used to pass through the town of Strathroy on their way to and from Sarnia.⁴⁴ Communities, and with them churches, not on rail lines were at a disadvantage; thus placed in decline the latter suffered with the former. The RM church at

⁴³ Stevens, *Canadian National*, p. 108. The precise figure he cites is 210,928 1/2.

⁴⁴ Elizabeth A. Willmot, *When Any Time Was Train Time* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co., Limited; A Boston Mills Press Book, 1992), pp. 64-66.

Norval, in Esquesing Twp., can likely be counted as one of these. It was a significant congregation from 1820, but ceased to meet in 1873.⁴⁵ The GTR was supposed to pass by close to the south of the village, but ended up a mile and a half north of the village, which built up Brampton and Georgetown. This change, according to a certain Col. Alex Noble, “put a damper on any further business activities” in Norval.⁴⁶

The Canadian rail lines provided direct transit between Buffalo and Detroit, and, at the same time, made travel from distant points in the United States into Canada relatively easy. People like Benjamin Franklin, Isaac Errett, and James A. Harding could visit the British colony to the north again and again; and travel south to educational institutions like Bethany College or Nashville Bible School was equally possible.

(04/09/2008; photo placed in text 18/11/2011.)

⁴⁵ Geoffrey H. Ellis, *An Inquiry into the Growth of the Disciples of Christ in 19th Century Ontario*, unpublished Waterloo Lutheran Seminary M.Th. thesis, Appendix A. This thesis also provides the data of decline, and therefore, from a church standpoint, the material with which to assess the relationship between railway growth (and decline) and the growth (and decline) of churches of the Campbell-Stone tradition.

⁴⁶ From the description which accompanies a photo of the Norval station ca. 1900, at <http://images.halinet.on.ca/details.asp?ID=810&number=2>