

Been there, done that



The former Georgetown train station was located on Main Street where Canada Trust now stands. Photos courtesy Esqueing Historical Society

History shows railway line electrification is nothing new

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With the completion of the additional track to the Iron Bridge, a great many more trains will be using it, and the sometimes heated discussions recently have revolved around the electrification of the line.

The 'powers that be' seem to forget that we have been there—done that!

Long before we had the GO Transit system, Georgetown was connected to Toronto and Guelph by the Toronto Suburban Radial Railway (TSRR), one of a system of electric railways or "interurbans" that radiated out into the countryside from a centre—for the TSRR it was Toronto.

Beginning at Dundas Street in Toronto, the line wound its way out to Cooksville, Meadowvale, Churchville, Huttonville, past Norval (where the station was at the top of the cemetery hill), to Georgetown, and across a large wooden trestle to the station on the Main Street. From there, it proceeded to Limehouse and through the quarries at Dolly Varden, on to Acton where it crossed Fairy Lake on another wooden trestle, then along the valley of Blue Springs Creek and the Speed River, and finally in to Guelph.

While construction had actually started in 1912, under the ownership of railway tycoons Sir William Mackenzie (born in Peterborough) and Sir Donald Mann (born in Acton), it took five years to complete the line. The countryside was rugged, trestles were a challenge, there were labour shortages, the First World War had begun and the finances of Mackenzie and Mann were in difficulty.



The former Wilbur Lake in Georgetown had to be drained to build a trestle for the radial railway.

In Georgetown, the building of a 96-metre trestle to cross the valley where Silver Creek Towers now stand necessitated the draining of the popular Wilbur Lake, which had been formed by the damming of the creek in that area. When the track was being laid in the area of what is now Remembrance Park, a locomotive slipped off the rails and into the mud, and extrication was a difficult procedure, providing great amusement for the local population.

In Georgetown, the station and electrical substation were built on Main Street, where Canada

Trust now sits. Two men operated the power house at the back of the building, one being George Alcott, the father of Gordon Alcott, (the founder of the Little NHL) for whom the Gordon Alcott Arena was named (now Mold-Masters SportsPlex.)

Between James and Mill Streets in Georgetown, in the area which is now Remembrance Park, tracks formed a large 'Y' making it possible for trains to turn around in Georgetown, and head back to Toronto.

In April 1917, the trains finally started running



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