

The mid-19th century marked a time of great innovation and development in Canada with the construction of the railroads. What once was long treks by ship or carriage became quicker with the invention of the locomotive, opening the doors for the tourism and trade industry to become possible for many municipalities across Canada. Prescott was one of those municipalities that benefited from the creation of the railway service. Since Prescott's founding in 1810, the town has always had an active transportation industry due to geographically being the halfway point on the journey from Montreal to Toronto, as well as its proximity to cities such as Kingston and Ottawa. It was due to Prescott's geographical location that so many railway companies chose Prescott as one of the stops along the newly built railway routes.

The first to be built in Prescott was the Bytown Prescott Railway Company which operated a railway from Prescott to Ottawa. It opened to the public on Christmas Day in 1854. The Grand Trunk Railway opened the following year, connecting Sarnia to Portland, Maine. Its railway station in Prescott, on Railway Avenue is a designated historical site and houses the Grenville County Historical Society archives. These two railways crossed at a point just northeast of Prescott which became known as Prescott Junction. The Grand Trunk decided to open a station at the junction to meet the needs of the in-transit transfer of passengers and goods from one line to another. A young businessman named Louis Hasbrook Daniels (who later became owner of the Daniels Hotel and mayor of Prescott in 1908 & 1909) was hired to lay out plans for a small village alongside surveyor James West.

The Village was established in the mid-60s and by 1871 the Prescott Junction was a vibrant community with approximately 20 establishments/dwellings. The streets of the small village had names such as Reynolds Street. The rise of Prescott Junction was quick and with the closure of the Prescott GTR station in the mid-1860s, the Junction became the main railway station serving the Prescott area. Reaching a population of fifty by the 1870s, the Prescott Junction also employed residents from other local municipalities. The main forms of employment within the Prescott Junction were with the Grand Trunk Railway and Ottawa St. Lawrence Railway companies which both held offices within the village. The Ottawa Hotel was one of these establishments that became a large part of the development of the village.

Owned by businessman John Francis, the Ottawa was one of a handful of hotels Francis operated along the St. Lawrence. Ottawa was one of the largest places of employment within the village and housed the only restaurant/bar. Another popular establishment was Beauford's Refreshments and Sleeping Rooms, which offered a quainter inn experience for travellers compared to the elaborate setting of the Ottawa Hotel. Prescott Junction was also home to its own telegraph office. Managed by telegrapher Robert Dowsley, the office was a branch of the Montreal Telegraph Company.

Although the Junction did not have a post office, an 1863 railway guide by the Canadian Postal Company shows that their postal-serviced locomotives did stop at the Prescott Junction.

For those amenities that were not available at the Junction, villagers often travelled to the neighbouring communities of Prescott and New Wexford. Children who lived in Prescott Junction attended school in the hamlet of New Wexford.

The 1880s marked a time of many changes in Prescott's railway history. By 1881 the Ottawa St. Lawrence Railway Company was forced to sell to the rapidly growing Canadian Pacific Railway Company due to major financial struggles, while the Canadian Pacific Car and Passenger Service was in discussions to move the remainder of their railcar operations from Brockville to Prescott. These operational changes resulted in the reopening of the Prescott GTR Station, and the restructuring of the rail line going towards the CPR terminal at the Prescott waterfront.

After the reopening of Prescott GTR Station in 1882, Prescott Junction rapidly experienced a decrease in business. The final nail in the coffin for Prescott Junction was the closure of its flagship establishment, the Ottawa Hotel, which ceased operations sometime around the mid-1880s. Citing monetary issues, John Francis closed the doors to his Ottawa Hotel to focus on operating the hotel he owned in the Johnstown area.

Those who lost their jobs within the Junction were transferred to work at railyards in Prescott and Edwardsburgh or searched for work in other surrounding municipalities. By the end of the 1880s, the Prescott Junction resembled a ghost town. The buildings and structures of the village fell into disrepair and were gradually removed. The last remnant of the village was the footbridge which remained until the 1970s.

Today the site of the junction has been reclaimed by forest and the northeast corner of the Prescott Golf Club.

Although the Junction ceased to exist, Prescott continued to be a major hub for the railway industry. Other industries within Prescott such as the brewing/distilling and the lumber trade industries thrived with the introduction of the railroad, exporting their goods across Ontario, Quebec, and the American Northeast. The peak of railroad usage within Prescott occurred from around 1900 until the start of WWI. During the war, the railroad in Prescott was mainly used as a hub for importing and exporting goods to be used during the war effort, with the Prescott Railcar Ferry Service having its peak years of operation during this period. Although railways were a bustling industry during the war, some railway companies suffered from the lost revenue from paying travellers.

One of these companies to go bankrupt was the Grand Trunk Railway, which was purchased by the Canadian National Railway (CNR) in 1919. Although the number of travellers that used Prescott station did not return to numbers experienced pre-war, the railway business at Prescott remained active through the following decades. It was not until the popularization of motor vehicles by the 1930s that Prescott started to see a decline in users of the railway. The railway's last major boom in Prescott occurred in the 1940s when it was called again to be used to transport goods during WWII. The opening of the 401 Highway in the 1960s singled a shift in traffic for both passengers and goods from trains to cars and trucks and by the late 20th century business at the CNR station was so reduced it was no longer viable to maintain it. Service was gradually reduced, and it finally closed its doors in 2003. For a short time, the building was leased to a retail store. In 2007 it became the headquarters of the GCHS.