



Springfield Railway

By [Colin J. Churcher](#)

The southern part of Nova Scotia was well served by railways in the early part of the 20th century. The Dominion Atlantic Railway (DAR), later Canadian Pacific, had been built along the western shore as far as Yarmouth where it met the Halifax and South Western (H&SW), later Canadian National, which was built along the eastern shore. In addition, the H&SW built a line across the interior from Bridgewater as far as Middleton where it connected with the DAR. The Davison Lumber Company built a mill at Bridgewater with the intention of utilizing the hardwood, white spruce, hemlock and white pine that grew in the area to make lath boxes, box shooks and Union Brand hardwood flooring. The mill was opened in September 1905.

In order to harvest the lumber, Davison Lumber commenced building a railway line from Hastings Junction on the H&SW between Bridgewater and Middleton. This was known as the Davison Tramway which was incorporated under Nova Scotia law (S.N.S. 1903-4, c. 146) to:

... build a railway or tramway from Alpena to a point south of Cherryfield, both on the Halifax and South Western Ry., and from a point on the latter's Caledonia branch to the Davison Lumber Company's timber limits; power to generate , use and sell electricity.

In 1905, under a second Nova Scotia charter, (S.N.S. 1905, c. 135) the name was changed to Springfield Railway and the contract for the first ten miles was let in the same year to Cavicchi and Pagano, a well known firm of railway contractors. Construction commenced in October 1905 and the first nine miles were in operation by November 1906. A roundhouse and machine shop were constructed at Crossburn which became, initially, the headquarters of the railway. Fourteen houses were also constructed for the senior, permanent, members of the staff. A second mill was built on the railway a mile from Hastings Junction.

The first locomotive was a small Porter saddle tank which was equipped with a small coach which included a cab. It would seat about 16 people. This locomotive was first run by Edward Braine with Lorne McNair as his fireman.

Two other locomotives were acquired in 1905. #2 arrived in July from the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad and #3, a 45 ton shay, came new from Lima Locomotive Works in August. George Dorman and Reg McGill were the regular engineer and fireman respectively of #2. It was not in very good shape and needed repairs in the winter of 1905-6. In its place the H&SW leased their #44 with engineer Phillip Devew and fireman Bob Copeland. #44 was returned to the H&SW in May 1906.

The company decided to build the line themselves in the spring of 1906. As the name suggests, Cavicchi and Pagano employed a number of Italians. Some 200 Italian labourers stayed on to work on the line. They had an Italian foreman who could speak English. The Steelman was George Murray while the Walking Boss, Daniel Wier, had the reputation of being a hard driver.

Another shay, #4, arrived new in March 1906 and this was the regular engine for George Beatty and Fred Dorey. #5 came on the property in July of the same year. This came from Lima and may have been new. It was an 0-6-0 with a sloping tender. It was never a success because it tended to spread the rails. It was converted to a 2-6-0 in 1908 but this didn't make very much difference. This engine was known, for obvious reasons, as "the cow".

Crossburn was a very busy place at this time. The railway was hauling logs both day and night. A school house was built as was a club house. The latter was the social centre of the little community where one could find wrestling, boxing and dancing. The pie sales were well known, one being sold for \$26, an enormous amount for a pie in 1906. The main line was completed to South River Lake, 28.9 miles in 1908 and ballasting was completed in 1909. The

company then completed to build the following lines off the main line:

- Ell Lake spur
- Torment branch
- Nimchin branch
- Cloud Lake branch
- Twin Lake branch
- Moose Lake branch
- Tomahawk spur

This was a much cheaper method of transport than bringing the logs to the main line because logs could be loaded on to flatcars more cheaply from water than from land. The logs were loaded on to the ice in the winter and moved by water to the loading point in the summer. Another advantage is that the logs did not become worm eaten when loaded from the water. The last branch to be built was the Cloud Lake branch in 1913. This 11 mile line was never ballasted. It suffered a forest fire just after completion which destroyed some wooden trestles. Two shays and some flatcars were marooned until the trestles could be rebuilt.

The Davison Lumber Company had running rights over the H&SW to Bridgewater to gain access to their mill. These were exercised regularly by Davison Lumber Company trains using their own crews. Only those men who had written the standard rules could run on the main line, the others were restricted to the Springfield Railway. These running rights also extended to the H&SW branch between New Germany and Caledonia. In 1914 running rights were also obtained over the H&SW between Hastings Junction and Middleton. The reason for this was to obtain access to additional spurs which were built by the Davison Lumber Company off the H&SW. A number were built and at least the following are known:

- Mud Lake (from Springfield Station, H&SW, 7 miles)
- Joe Simeon Lake
- Waterloo Lake
- Shannon Lake

Another new shay, #6, arrived from Lima at Hastings Junction on Christmas Day, 1915. This was a 70 ton model and W.B. Sherrard was the first engineer. This was the last locomotive to be purchased - indeed it was the only one to survive the carnage which was to follow shortly.

The war years were generally very busy for the Davison Lumber Company. Crews made three trips per day from several different points and fifteen hour days were frequently worked. The centre of operations was moved from Crossburn to Hastings Junction around 1916. The locomotive and machinery shop was moved out and new houses were built for the permanent staff. Locomotive #1 was broken up in 1915 and #2 in 1919.

Disaster struck in November 1920 when the Davison Lumber Company went into liquidation. The once busy railway went deathly quiet and remained that way until April 1921 when the mill started up but only to cut up the left over logs. Royal Trust, which now owned everything, was intent on getting its pound of flesh. The mill finished its work on July 21, 1921 and the Springfield Railway closed down for good. There was 34 million board feet of sawn lumber in the mill yard when the operation closed. Work started on lifting the rails in 1921 and was finished in 1922. In all, some 60 miles of rail were lifted, inspected and shipped to Halifax where they were loaded on to tramp steamers and shipped via Panama to British Columbia. Of the locomotives, #4 was cut up straight away and so was #3 with the exception of the boiler which was used in a local mill. The boiler of #5 was removed from the frame and stored in the mill at Bridgewater for some time before it, too, was scrapped. #6, less than six years old at closure, was shipped back to Lima which later sold it to a lumber company in North Carolina. When the scrapper had finished there was very little left. Four Clyde cranes, a steam shovel and sixty flatcars were also cut up on the spot.

The Springfield Railway had a relatively short life although one must not forget that such railways were not regarded with the permanence with which we tend to look at railways today. It was built to obtain access to timber. When the timber was exhausted, or when the demand dropped, the line was quickly torn up.

It remains to finish these notes with a locomotive roster for the Springfield Railway.

#	Builder	Builder#	Acquired	Type	Notes
1	Porter	1612	Sep 1895	0-4-4ST	(n) Munising Railway #1, Hallston, MI; [2] Davison Lumber #1, 1905; scrapped 8/15.
2	Pittsburgh	1598	Jan 1898	4-6-0	(n) P&LE #88; [2] Davison Lumber #2, 7/05; o/s 1919, scrapped 1919.

3	Lima	990	Apr 1905	Shay 2	[n] Davison Lumber #3; scrapped 1922.
4	Lima	1647	Mar 1906	Shay 2	[n] Davison Lumber #4; scrapped 1922.
5	Lima	1017	Aug 1906	0-6-0	[n] Davison Lumber #5; r/b to 2- 6-0 1908; scrapped 1922.
6	Lima	2778	Dec 1915	Shay 2	[n] Davison Lumber #6; (2) Lima 1921-2; (3) Moltz Lumber, Lake Toxway, NC; (4) Murphy Lumber & Mill, Murphy NC.

[ARTICLES]

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