The information contained in these texts is as accurate as possible. It has been compiled from various sources that are difficult to cite. We hope that the reader will forgive us. Check back periodically, more history to follow….

RAILROADS AND BRIDGES

In 1865 there was a dire shortage of firewood in Quebec City and it became obvious that the solution to that shortage was to exploit the vast virgin hardwood forests to the north of the city. To do this a railway would have to be built from the city into those northern forests. However, because of the enormous costs of building such a railway promoters were unwilling to invest in such a project. Nevertheless, Quebec government officials invited an American, Jerome G. Hulbert, who claimed to have the expertise to build a railroad that offered high resistance and strength. This railroad would be built entirely of wood and at a reasonable cost and it would meet the needs of all concerned. The lifespan of this "Hulbert System" railroad would be approximately ten years.

In the summer of 1868, land surveyor John Sullivan began surveying the area for the best possible route to those virgin forests.

In 1869, the Quebec Government put forward its first assistance program to subsidize wooden railroads. In the Fall of 1870, the *Quebec and Gosford Wooden Railroad*, thanks to some very resourceful organizers, was officially created. The terminal was to be located north of the Jacques-Cartier River in Gosford Township in a sector known as Lac à l'Île. This project consisted of building a twenty-five-and-a-half mile link between Quebec City and the part of Ste. Catherine, which is now known as Shannon. The railway line and bridges would be built entirely of wood. Even the railway cars, with the exception of their wheels, would be made of wood. No nails or screws would be used during assembly. Several miles from the Jacques-Cartier River near Lac à l'Île, the American contractor, Mr. Hulbert established a steam-powered sawmill to prepare the rails, ties and corners.

Between St-Sauveur (Quebec City) and Lac à l'Île (old 11th range in Shannon), there is a difference in elevation of 600 feet. Construction of sand embankments and wooden viaducts supported by wooden posts were necessary to lessen slopes that were too steep for such trains to climb. The biggest challenge, however, was to provide a structure that would carry a 21-ton locomotive and its load to cross the beautiful but sometimes terrifying Jacques Cartier River.

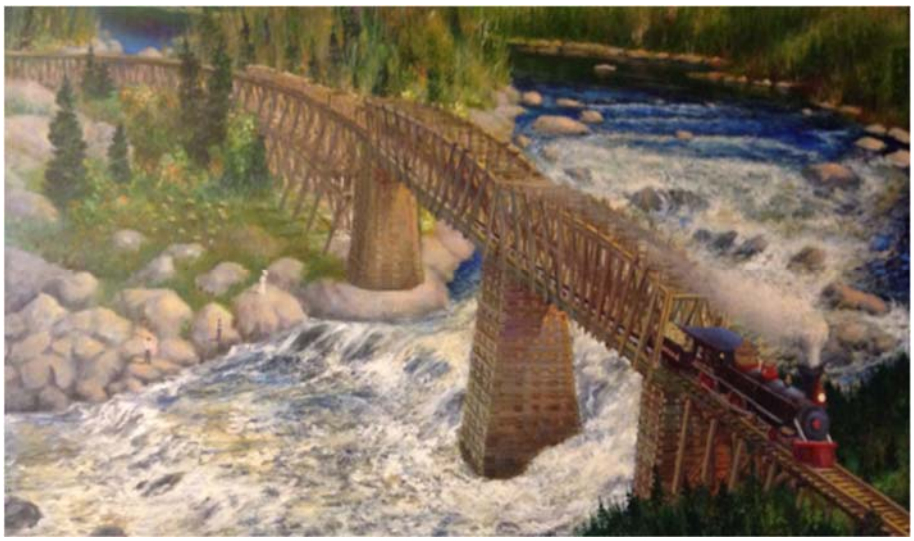
Crossing the Jacques-Cartier

As a place to cross, surveyor, John Sullivan chose a relatively narrow point in the river where there was a conveniently centred island. Near the island, there was also a waterfall followed by very powerful rapids. The bridge would cross where the rapids began and at that point would be 28 feet high.

Photo from 1907 showing the location where the Quebec and Gosford chose to cross the Jacques-Cartier River. Source: Library and Archives Canada (Ott.) PA-(e008222378-banc)

However, it was determined that it was possible to build the bridge at the base of these falls. There, the fortuitous location of a large rock considerably reduced the speed of the current and would protect the pillars from winter ice floes. At this point, the bridge would be approximately 40 feet high and would offer tourists a magnificent view of its surroundings.

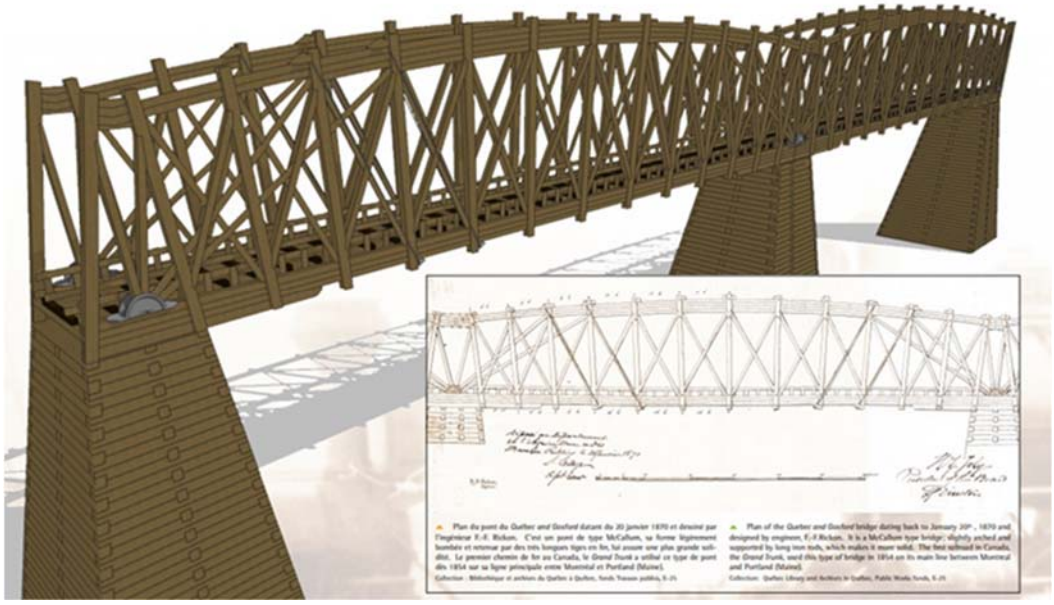
It should be noted that these falls would later be named "Sullivan Falls" as John had surveyed the land and his father Owen owned the land adjacent to the river.



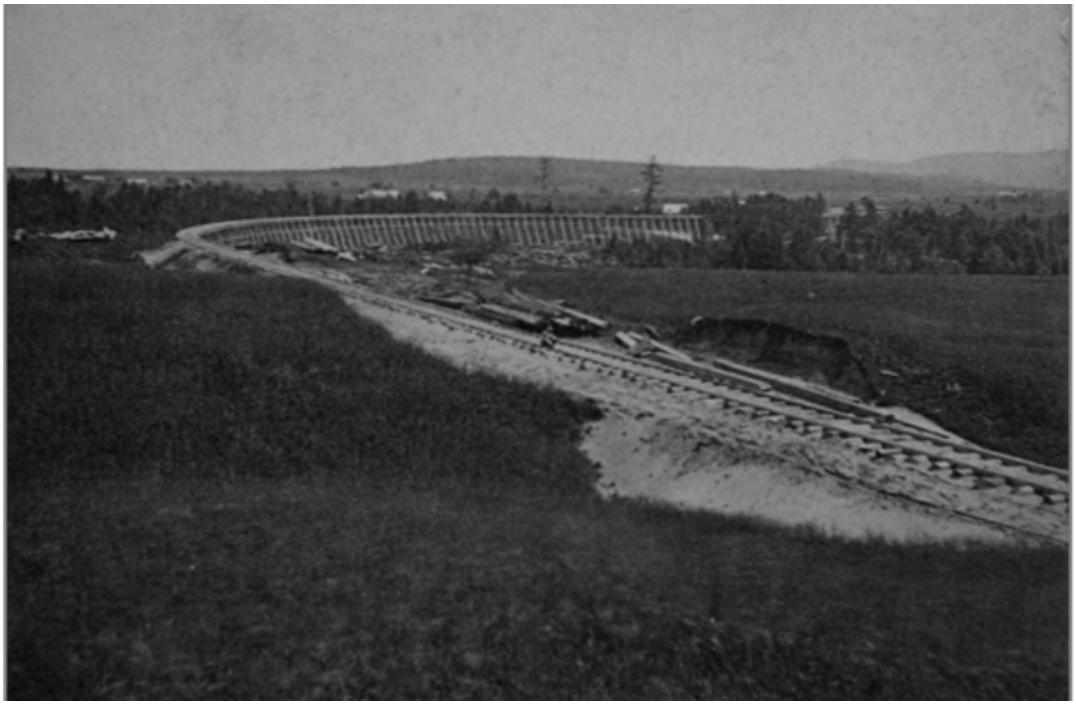
Painting of the McCullum wooden bridge at the base of the falls - Source: Mr. Marc D. Carette

Construction of the bridge began during the summer of 1870 when the river was at its lowest level. The pillars were made of wood using the dovetailing method. The architect was an American named Daniel-Craig McCallum. The McCallum style bridge

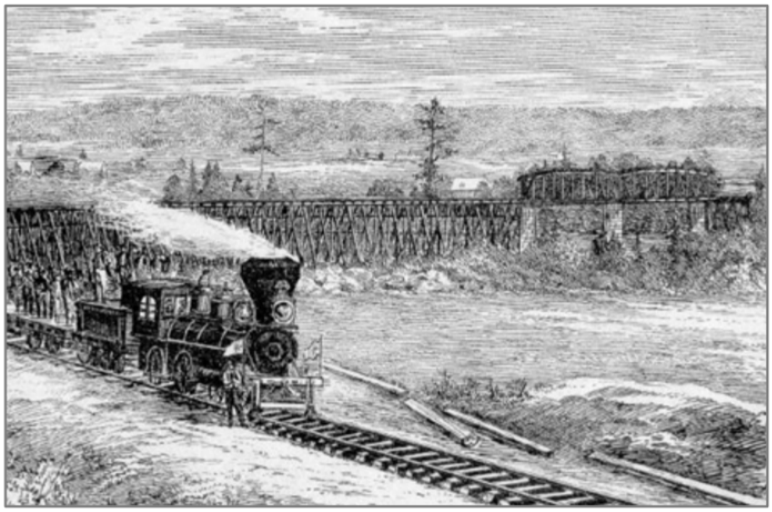
was slightly arched in order to increase its resistance to tension. A 1250-foot viaduct on posts and two McCallum type bridge sections totalling 209 feet in length were constructed on-site at a cost of $12,000.



Plan of the McCullum wooden bridge - Source: Shannon archives



Long wooden viaduct north of the Jacques-Cartier River approaching the McCallum Bridge on the Quebec & Gosford Wood Line. The bridge itself is barely visible behind the trees. Source: Ellison & Co, 1871. Marc-D. Carette Collection.



The first two-span McCallum wood bridge on the Quebec & Gosford Wood Line. Engraving published in "L'opinion publique" of 28 December 1871

In November of 1870, construction was completed and the twenty-five-and-a-half mile Gosford line cost $140,058.60. The company organized an inaugural trip on November 26th that included the Lieutenant Governor, Sir Narcisse-Fortunat Belleau, the Premier, Honorable Pierre-Joseph-Olivier Chauveau and many Members of Parliament. The magnificent "Jacques-Cartier" locomotive and its convoy of passengers and freight cars arrived at the end of the line at Lac à l'Île. Passengers were much impressed by the scenery and the speed of the train that could reach up to 20 kms per hour. A hotel with a dance hall (200' x 40') awaited them at the Lac à l'Île terminal.

The "Jacques-Cartier" weighed 21 tons.
Source: Quebec Library and Archives in Quebec – Livernois

Though the first two years were profitable, serious difficulties were eventually encountered with rain, frost, and early snowfalls, which could prevent the trains from running. After a heavy downpour, many rails would warp and their corners would gradually splinter. By the end of 1872, the wooden rails were so damaged that a great number of them needed to be replaced on a regular basis.

The following summarizes the traffic on this line in 1871 and 1872:

TRAFFIC RETURNS.

Copied from the Official Returns made to Parliament.

1871.

AFTER 1ST SEPTEMBER TO END OF WORKING SEASON.

		Car loads.
Firewood	2,215 cords	554
Spruce lumber	313,875 feet B. M.	157
Hardwood	10,960 " "	5
Square Birch	5,200 cubic feet	52
Merchandise	16,740 lbs	4
Passengers	1,344	54
	Total	826

Train Mileage.....16,740 miles.

1871 statistics from the 1875 Prospectus of the Quebec and Lake St John Railway (Formerly Quebec and Gosford Railway)

1872.

WORKING SEASON, MAY TO NOVEMBER.

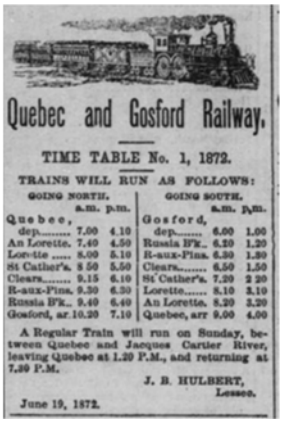
		Car loads.
Firewood	8,244 cords	2,061
Square Birch	21,000 cubic feet	210
Pine and Spruce Deals and Lumber	1,432,800 feet B M	716
Do. Saw logs	35,000 pieces	3,000
Merchandise	543,978 lbs	69
Passengers	5,382	206
	Total	6,262

Train Mileage.....182,988 miles.

1872 statistics from the 1875 Prospectus of the Quebec and Lake St John Railway (Formerly Quebec and Gosford Railway)

In 1874, the line was abandoned, except for a few sawmill owners who transported loads of lumber using horses to pull open lorries.

Though there were many stations along the way, it should be noted that one station "St. Gabriel" was located next to what is now the corner of Dublin and Gosford Roads. It was by-passed in 1901 when they built the shortcut trestle.



Quebec and Gosford Railway.

TIME TABLE No. 1, 1872.

TRAINS WILL RUN AS FOLLOWS:

GOING NORTH.	a.m.	p.m.	GOING SOUTH.	a.m.	p.m.
Quebec, dep.	7.00	4.10	Gosford, dep.	6.00	1.00
An Lorette.	7.40	4.50	Russia B'k.	6.20	1.20
Lor-tte	8.00	5.10	R-aux-Pins.	6.30	1.30
St Cather's.	8.50	5.50	Clears.	6.50	1.50
Clears.	9.15	6.10	St Cather's.	7.20	2.20
R-aux-Pins.	9.30	6.30	Lorette.	8.10	3.10
Russia B'k.	9.40	6.40	An Lorette.	8.20	3.20
Gosford, ar.	10.20	7.10	Quebec, arr	9.00	4.00

A Regular Train will run on Sunday, between Quebec and Jacques Cartier River, leaving Quebec at 1.20 P.M., and returning at 7.20 P.M.

J. B. HULBERT,
Lessee.

June 19, 1872.

1872 timetable for the Quebec and Gosford Railway.
Source: The « Morning Chronicle », 24th of July 1872.

The Quebec and Lake St. John Railway

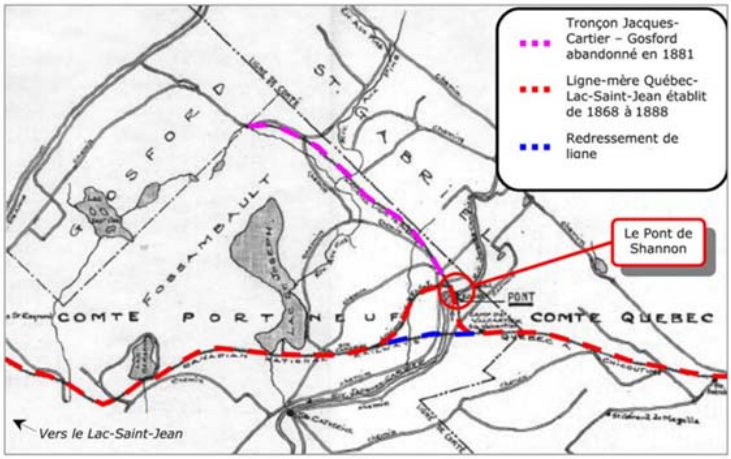
Around 1878, the *Quebec and Gosford* charter was modified to reach the Lake St. John region and promote colonization in that area. The company's name was changed to *Quebec and Lake St. John Railway.* This time the line was built using steel rails.

The route on the north shore of the Jacques-Cartier River was modified in order to reach Lake St. John. Changes were also adopted on the south shore of the Jacques-Cartier River, with the line being redirected to a new steel bridge, which had been erected in 1879.

The old abandoned wooden rail section to Lac à l'Île was dismantled around 1880. In 1904, a businessman from Pine River, Mr. Ned Conway, convinced the company that he could repurpose the old route from 1880, which had become obsolete for the *Quebec and Lake St. John,* to build a spur. That year, three miles of railroad were built. On August 1st, 1907 the spur to Clarks was completed. It totalled 5.5 miles and was named "The Gosford Branch". Only the old *Quebec and Gosford* locomotives, conserved by the *Quebec and Lake St. John* were light enough to be used on these rails. This spur would serve the forest industry. The presence of a service lane, property of Mr. Conway, was registered at 1.4 miles from the Valcartier Station, and operated until 1929.

On August 20th, 1879, construction trains were riding the railroad between Quebec and the Connelly mills. At the same time, pillars for the steel bridge were built using Phoenix and Keystone columns. On November 9th, 1880, the new steel bridge over the Jacques-Cartier River was completed, close to where the old wooden bridge used to be. Later, around 1888 the railroad reached Lake St. John and eventually became very prosperous.

In 1892, shareholders took over the *Great Northern Railroad*, which departed from Ottawa and joined the *Quebec and Lake St. John network* at Rivière-à-Pierre. Because of the increasing number of customers, the large size of the locomotives and the increased weight of the rolling stock, every bridge between Saint-Raymond and Quebec needed replacing.



Map of the Québec-Gosford line. In purple is the section abandoned in 1881 by the Quebec and Lac-Saint-Jean Railway Company, in red, the railway route from 1880 to 1901 and, in blue, the line was straightened by the addition of a new bridge in 1901. Colour additions by Mr. Jean Lefrançois on a 1920 map from his article "Le pont de Shannon – L'histoire retracé d'une photographie".

In 1901, the railroad was preparing to change the line and build a new railroad bridge (where the trestle bridge exists today). This time, it would be stronger and there would be no dangerous curves.

The new bridge was built down stream from the Shannon Bridge in 1918 allowing the railway to be straightened out. Photo : Jean Lefrançois, 2001, from the article « Le pont de Shannon : l'histoire retracée d'une photographie »

“La Coalition pour le maintien et l’accrue du rail” were unable to convince the CN or the local municipal authorities to preserve the railway from Shannon to Limoilou. Rail service to Quebec ended in the late 1970’s. It was converted into a bike trail in 2000.

ARTS ET SPECTACLES ⊃ VOTRE AGENDA

CAHIER C — LE SOLEIL — LE MERCREDI 1er OCTOBRE 1997

MAGAZINE

Tout un tronçon disparaît!

Le CN démantèle sa voie entre Shannon et Limoilou, les fervents du rail sont déçus, les adeptes du vélo rêvent !

Guy Benjamin

■ QUÉBEC — Le retour du tramway à Québec n’est pas pour demain. La Coalition pour le maintien et l’utilisation accrue du rail n’a pas réussi à convaincre ni le CN ni les élus municipaux de conserver la voie ferrée entre Shannon et Limoilou.

Des employés de la compagnie de chemin de fer ont commencé à enlever les rails de la voie ferrée qui sillonne entre Shannon, Val-Bélair, Loretteville, Saint-Émile, le quartier Neufchâtel et Charlesbourg. Les fervents du transport sur rail sont très déçus par cette situation, eux qui voyaient en cette voie ferrée l’endroit idéal pour mettre sur les rails un premier tramway, d’ici quelques années. L’organisme Tram-Québec, un des membres de la coalition, est d’ailleurs à réaliser une étude de faisabilité pour l’implantation d’un réseau de transport léger sur rail.

PISTE CYCLABLE ET MULTIUSAGES

Cette étude, terminée au début de l’an prochain, selon M. Marc Boutin, porte-parole de Tram-Québec, risque d’arriver un peu tard. La communauté urbaine de Québec devrait déjà avoir en main depuis plusieurs semaines son étude sur la réalisation d’une piste cyclable et multiusages sur cette ancienne emprise de chemin de fer. Cette piste cyclable serait en fait la suite, vers Québec, de la piste Jacques-Cartier entre Rivière-à-Pierre et Shannon.

Voilà un des problèmes selon M. Boutin. Les gens opposent le chemin de fer au vélo. À son avis, les deux moyens de transport peuvent cohabiter sans mettre en péril la sécurité des cyclistes. Il accuse les élus municipaux de la région de manquer de vision en n’aimant le patrimoine ferroviaire se faire charcuter».

Des employés du CN ont commencé à enlever les rails sur le tronçon Shannon-Limoilou, à la grande déception des tenants du rail, qui rêvaient de voir un tramway circuler dans ce corridor qui traverse plusieurs municipalités.

Le tramway comme moyen de transport est loin de faire partie des projets de la Société de transport de la communauté urbaine de Québec. Selon Claude Larose, son président, l’autobus est encore pour de nombreuses années le mode de transport le mieux adapté à la région, compte tenu de la densité de la population. Avec l’état actuel des finances publiques, il est très prématuré de rêver au retour du tramway dans la région, selon M. Larose. Il rappelle une étude, datant de 1989, selon laquelle l’implantation d’un réseau efficace de tramway coûterait 600 millions $.

Autre problème, selon M. Larose, les voies ferrées existantes sont mal situées par rapport aux principaux axes de déplacement des usagers du transport en commun. Les circuits métrobus sont les plus occupés, et aucune voie ferrée n’est près des rues empruntées par ces autobus.

Il est très prématuré de rêver au retour du tramway dans la région

ACHALANDAGE MAXIMAL

Le président de la STCUQ voit le retour des tramways à Québec à très long terme seulement. Il faudra d’abord que les circuits d’autobus connaissent un achalandage maximal. Quand les autobus simples ne répondront plus à la demande, des autobus articulés prendront la relève. Les études sur le tramway ou autre mode de transport sur rail ne seront pertinentes qu’après, selon M. Larose. Pas d’analyse avant cinq ans au moins, pour implantation, peut-être, dix ou 15 ans plus tard, ajoute-t-il.

La question de l’environnement entre évidemment en jeu. Autobus polluer plus que le tramway alimenté à l’électricité. Les développements technologiques pourraient résoudre ce problème. La STCUQ mettra à l’essai d’ici deux ou trois ans des autobus électriques, fait savoir M. Larose, selon qui la technologie du rail est actuellement la plus coûteuse à acheter.

Maintenant qu’ils ont raté leur coup sur la rive nord, les tenants du rail commencent une grande partie de leurs énergies à convaincre les élus de la Rive-Sud de conserver la voie ferrée sur le tronçon Lévis-Saint-Romuald. Ensuite une fois, répète M. Richard Couture, président de la coalition en faveur du rail, pour y faire cohabiter les trains et les vélos.

PHOTO : LE SOLEIL, SIMON TURCOTTE

Newspaper article printed in Le Soleil on October 1, 1997, announcing the end of an era, as rails are removed in preparation for the bicycle path

The trestle bridge today is part of the bicycle path. Source: Shannon archives

Today, cyclists using the Jacques-Cartier/Portneuf path use this railroad bridge.

Valcartier Train Station

Valcartier Train Station was built at the end of what is now called Station Road. This station and its adjacent structures were built shortly after the creation of the *Quebec and Lake St. John Railway.*

Valcartier Station - Source : "*Valcartier d'hier à aujourd'hui (1914-2014)*" by Michel Litalien

The stations along the Quebec – Lake St. John Railway were as follows:

- Hedleyville Junction
- Indian Lorette
- Valcartier
- Lake St. Joseph
- St-Raymond
- Rivière-à-Pierre
- Laurentides
- Beaudet
- Stadacona
- Triton Club
- Lake Edward
- Lake Kiskisink
- Lac Gros Vision
- Lake Bouchette
- Chambord Junction
- Roberval

The *Great Northern* also planned to build a spacious train station for its travellers heading to Ottawa, however, it experienced some financial difficulties and a smaller one was built instead. Then in 1903, another railroad named Canadian Northern

acquired more than half the shares of the *Great Northern*. In 1908, after a strategic mistake, it was the *Quebec and Lake St. John's* turn to pass into the hands of *Canadian Northern.*

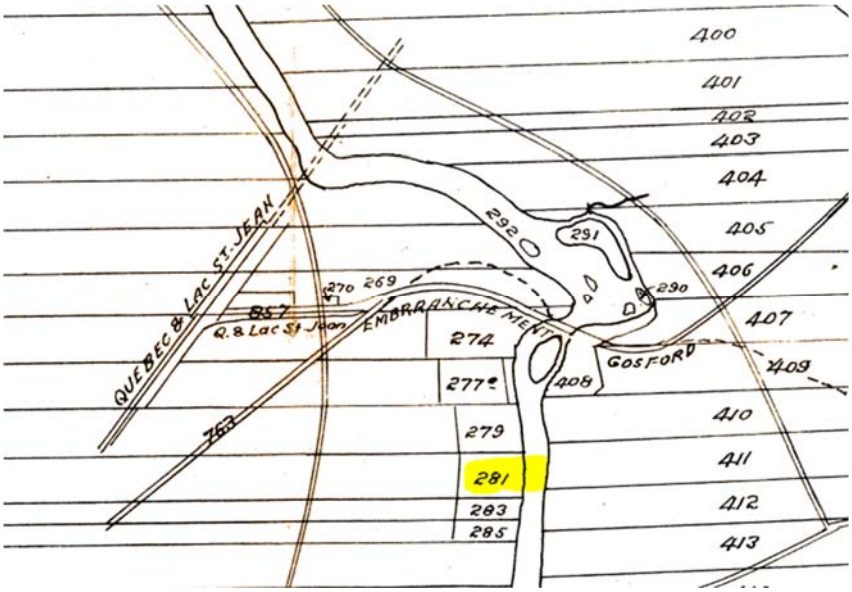
After the First World War, most of the railroads in Canada were in serious financial difficulty. In 1919 the *Canadian Government Railway* was created in order to take control of these railroads. Shortly after, its name would be changed to the *Canadian National Railway.*

Horse and buggies used ferries

In addition to the several railways, which passed through the area, the main sources of transportation in the earlier days were horse and buggy or two-wheel carts. At the time residents on the north side of the Jacques-Cartier River had to go through Ste. Catherine or St. Gabriel-de-Valcartier to get to Quebec or Loretteville.

To avoid this long route, a scow (ferry) was built approximately 4 miles above the present Shannon Bridge. It was a wooden raft with three-foot sides and could hold approximately four horses. Solid cables controlled the ferry and a ferryman operated the winch. However, this ferry was abandoned in 1914 when the area was expropriated by the Canadian Government to create a new military base, which was known as Camp Valcartier.

As a consequence, another ferry was put into operation. It was situated above the dam (lot 281) and operated until 1918.



The second ferry was much closer to the Gosford Bridge. Source: City of Shannon Archives

Modifications to the Gosford Bridge

In 1918, the ties on the Lake St. John Railway Bridge were boarded up, allowing people to walk or use their horse and buggy to cross. The ferry was then closed, as there was no need for it.

The Gosford bridge before renovations, from a postcard edited by J.P. Garneau around 1900. Source: Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, (BAnQ) Collection Magelia Bureau P557S1SS1SSS1D626P2R

The Gosford bridge in the 1920's, after renovations which included installing guardrails. Source: MRC de La Jacques-Cartier.

In the fall of 1916, the Canadian Northern Railway closed the Jacques-Cartier River Bridge to railroad circulation on the Gosford Branch. The bridge had become too fragile to support the heavy locomotives and the line had been seldom used since the closure of the Bayliss mill in 1913. After the fall of 1916, lumber and firewood transport between Clarks and Valcartier Station continued on the bridge by other means; mostly horse drawn lorries.

April 2nd, 1929 Canadian National ceded its rights to the bridge and turned it over to the municipality for one dollar. It was after this, in 1931, that the Ministry of Transport began a project that would solidify the structure of the existing bridge and pour a slab of cement to provide a 15-foot wide roadway as well as the installation of railings for security. A new mode of transportation, the automobile, revolutionized the area in many ways.

More extensive work was completed in 1997 that included the addition of a sidewalk, new railings and a lighting system for a total cost of $455,000.

In 2000 the Ministry of Transport did major structural and reinforcement of the surface of the bridge for a total cost of $470,000.

In 2016, a new modern bridge was built to facilitate the flow of two-way traffic. It cost 30 million dollars. It 2020, it was officially named *Le Pont des Irlandais*, or the Irish Bridge by the Quebec Ministry of Transportation. The old bridge was kept and renovated for pedestrians and cyclists.

"Le pont des Irlandais" built in 2016 sits next to the Gosford Bridge –
Photo credit: Conrad Léveillé

In 2005, the Municipality of Shannon acquired a caboose, restored it, and turned it into an interpretation centre about Shannon and its history of railroads. This caboose was placed on the bicycle path, which was formerly the rail line, not far from Valcartier Station and just before the railroad bridge over the Jacques-Cartier, built in the early 1900's. Unfortunately, it is no longer used as an interpretation center.

The Caboose – Source: City of Shannon archives