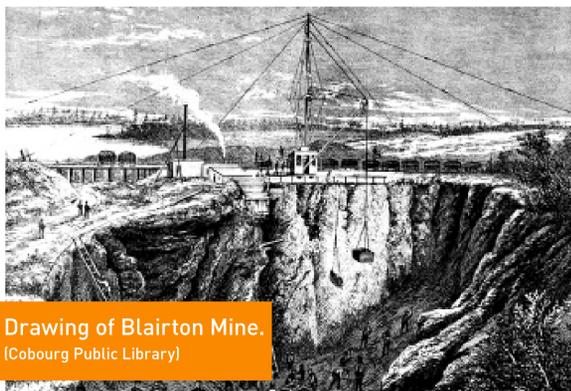


COBOURG'S CROSSEN RAILWAY CAR COMPANIES

In 1842 James Crossen immigrated with his family to the United States at the age of 16. Within a year he was in Cobourg, possibly visiting relatives, when he accepted a job as an iron finisher with the local Helm Foundry. Iron finishing was an unskilled task requiring much grinding and filing of the forged iron castings.

But James was a quick learner and by observation and hard work he gained the creative and business skills which led to his **accepting a partnership in the foundry** which was renamed the Ontario Foundry shortly after. By 1865, at 39 years of age, James Crossen had become sole proprietor of the company, soon to be president of one of the area's most successful industrial enterprises.

FROM FOUNDRY OWNER TO MAJOR RAILWAY CAR BUILDER

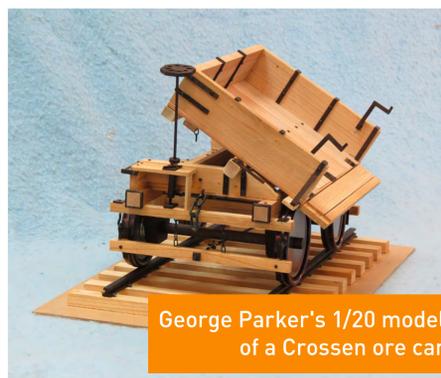


Drawing of Blairton Mine.
(Cobourg Public Library)

In the mid 1860s the dormant Cobourg & Peterborough Railway was revived as the Cobourg, Peterborough & Marmora Railway and Mining Company. It was created to mine iron ore at the Blairton mine near Marmora for transshipment through Cobourg, across Lake Ontario and eventually to Pittsburgh.

Crossen was approached to construct a hundred wooden dumping ore cars for the new company. Although he had never attempted such a task, he accepted and production began in February 1867.

The necessary castings were forged at his Ontario Foundry, located just north of King Street near St. Peter's Church of England. They were then taken to a woodworking facility adjacent to the old C&PR railway line at the harbour. The large wheels, meanwhile, arrived from a subcontractor in Montreal. During the first half of 1867 one hundred four-wheeled wooden ore cars were rolled out.



George Parker's 1/20 model
of a Crossen ore car



Small foundries still exist.
This one is in New York City.

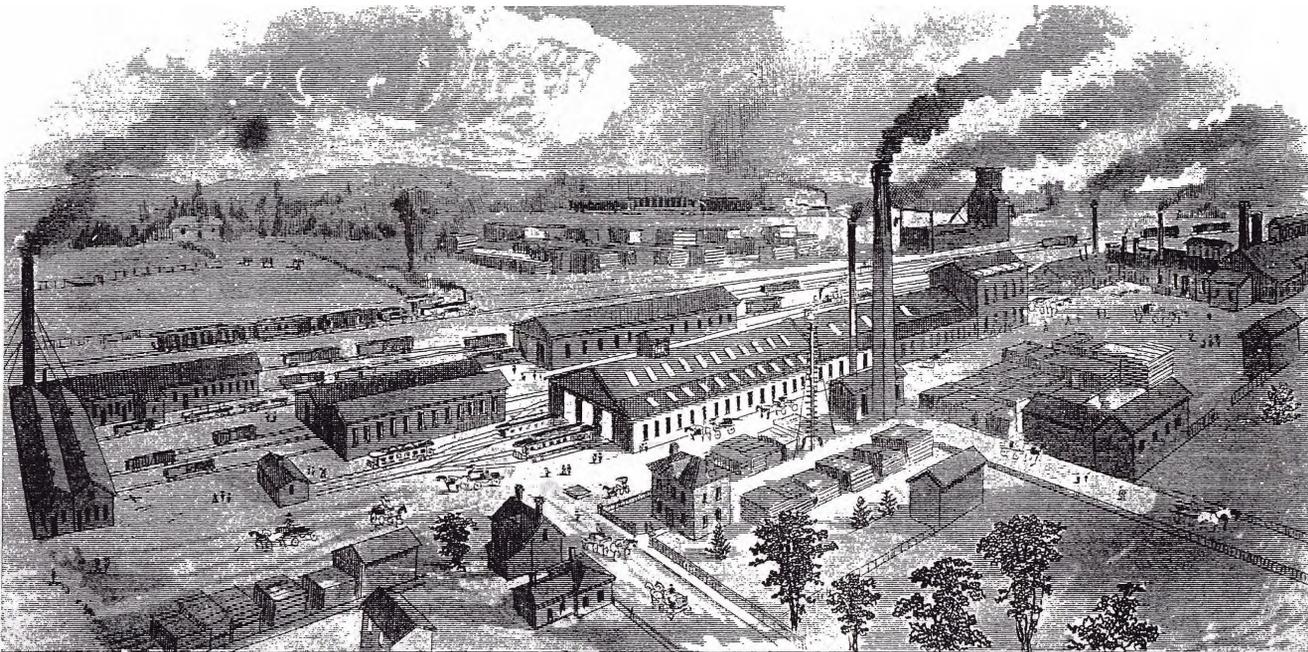
While the Ontario Foundry continued to be successful in providing agricultural implements, the next order for rolling stock is recorded in 1870 when a contract to produce two hundred box cars for the Grand Trunk Railway of Canada was announced.



THE BIG MOVE

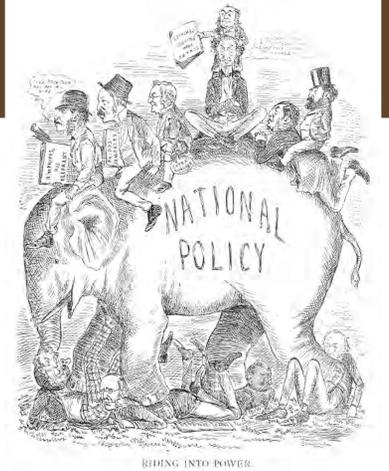
Such a large contract necessitated the purchase of land north of Seminary Street (University Avenue) with direct connection to the old C&PR tracks and thence to the Grand Trunk line. With this contact, then valued at \$160,000, Crossen became known in the railway business as a competent builder of railway rolling stock.

Orders from other railways soon followed, for a variety of platform, box and passenger cars, necessitating expanding the Seminary Street operation and reorganizing it as the Crossen Car Company, distinct from the Ontario Foundry.



THE CROSSEN CAR COMPANY,
LIMITED.

MANUFACTURERS OF SLEEPING, PARLOR,
PASSENGER, POST OFFICE,
BAGGAGE, BOX, PLATFORM,
STREET CARS & C.



It was at this difficult time that James Crossen threatened to move his business to Port Hope. A manufacturing facility was being offered there with newer equipment and a more favourable tax situation than he was experiencing in Cobourg. But after some hand wringing and arm twisting new terms were agreed to and the Company stayed in Cobourg to the end of its days.

With the return of the Conservative Party to Ottawa in 1878, and its protectionist "National Policy", **prosperity returned to the Crossen Car Company**, now able to compete favourably with such U.S. companies as Pullman. The next year Crossen was manufacturing first class passenger cars to much acclaim. The Montreal Gazette enthused, "The car is a beautiful specimen of artistic design carried out to a complete fulfillment."

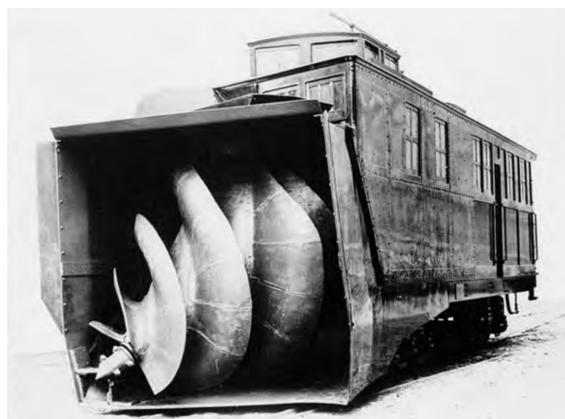
In 1881 the ever present danger of **fire, caused havoc at the premises**, including the loss of eight cars. Not to be deterred, Crossen immediately rebuilt and his reputation as a solid and reliable builder of railway cars continued to grow and the company flourished.



One special Crossen car still in existence is that built for Cornelius Van Horne, President of the Canadian Pacific Railway. It was constructed from two other cars and used by Van Horne in western Canada and is now on display at Fort La Reine Museum in Portage La Prairie, Manitoba.

UPS & DOWNS

The Canadian federal election of 1874 brought in a Liberal government. Its policies, including free trade with the United States, resulted in a significant reduction of orders for the CCC and employees were subjected to long periods of layoffs. But orders did continue to come and one, from the Quebec, Montreal, Ottawa & Occidental Railway, included an order for Crossen's first **two rotary snow plows**.



Early rotary snow plow designed in 1869 by Toronto dentist J.W.Elliot

THE TORCH IS PASSED

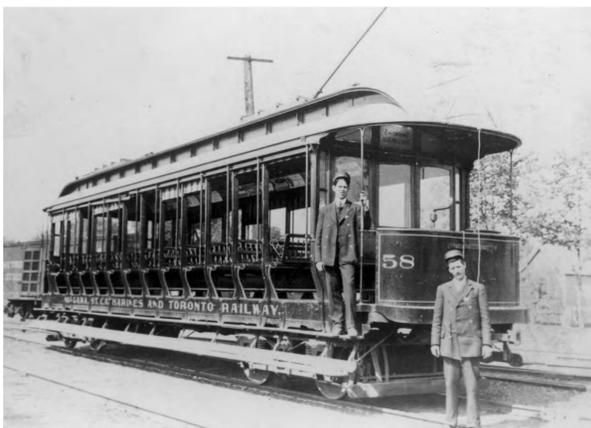


The Buckingham - 1886.
One of Crossen's first dining cars

James Crossen died suddenly in 1890 at age 65, the active leader and sole proprietor of a prosperous manufacturing company with an enviable reputation as shown by these "In Memoriam" excerpts from the *Cobourg Saturday Morning Post* and the *Toronto Globe* (Crossen Family Collection):

It is not saying too much that the cars turned out of Crossen's Car Works are ranked amongst the best in use upon this continent.

Nearly every railroad in Canada, large and small, has drawn some of its rolling stock from Cobourg, ..and the beauty and elegance of finish have never been excelled in America - but of these facts the travelling public are themselves quite well aware.



With James' son William now in charge, **the Company was reorganized as the Crossen Car Manufacturing Company of Cobourg**. Orders from the CPR declined during the 1890s and the new Company had to rely more on orders from smaller railways. A new market developed with the emergence of electric radial lines with about sixty street cars built for cities in Ontario and Quebec.

Twice in the 1890s the Company ventured into Newfoundland, not then a part of Canada. Crossen employees were sent to the island and set up shop there, manufacturing both freight and passenger cars at a time when the railway across the island from St. John's to Port aux Basques was being completed.

With the new century new customers appeared, including the Canadian Northern Railway (which ran right through Cobourg), the Temiskaming & Northern Railway, and the Central Ontario Railway (running north from Trenton). Business continued at a high level.



The Trepassey, built for
the Newfoundland Railway



TIMES CHANGE

However, within the next decade a number of factors conspired to hasten the decline and eventual disappearance of the Crossen name in the manufacture of railway cars. In particular:

- *competition, when several small independent rolling stock companies were amalgamated into the Canadian Car & Foundry Co. Ltd., headquartered in Montreal (later part of AVRO Canada and now part of Bombardier)*
- *the introduction of steel as a major component in the manufacture of railway cars*
- *the outbreak of WWI, resulting in a significant decrease in British capital available for railway construction*

By the end of 1910 the Crossen company itself had been absorbed by the Canadian Car & Foundry, though William remained as president of the Cobourg operation. In June 1915, after only 14 cars had rolled out of the plant that year, the company ceased operations entirely and closed its doors forever.

All that remains in Cobourg today as tangible evidence of the genius of James and William Crossen are their two lovely homes, located on George and Alice Streets, and a recently completed reconstruction of an 1867 Crossen ore car.



"Fairlawn" the home of William Crossen



"Cedar Hedge" the home of James Crossen

Summarized from material supplied by Ted Rafuse, author of:
*Wooden Cars on Steel Rails: A History of the Crossen Car Companies,
Cobourg, Ontario*