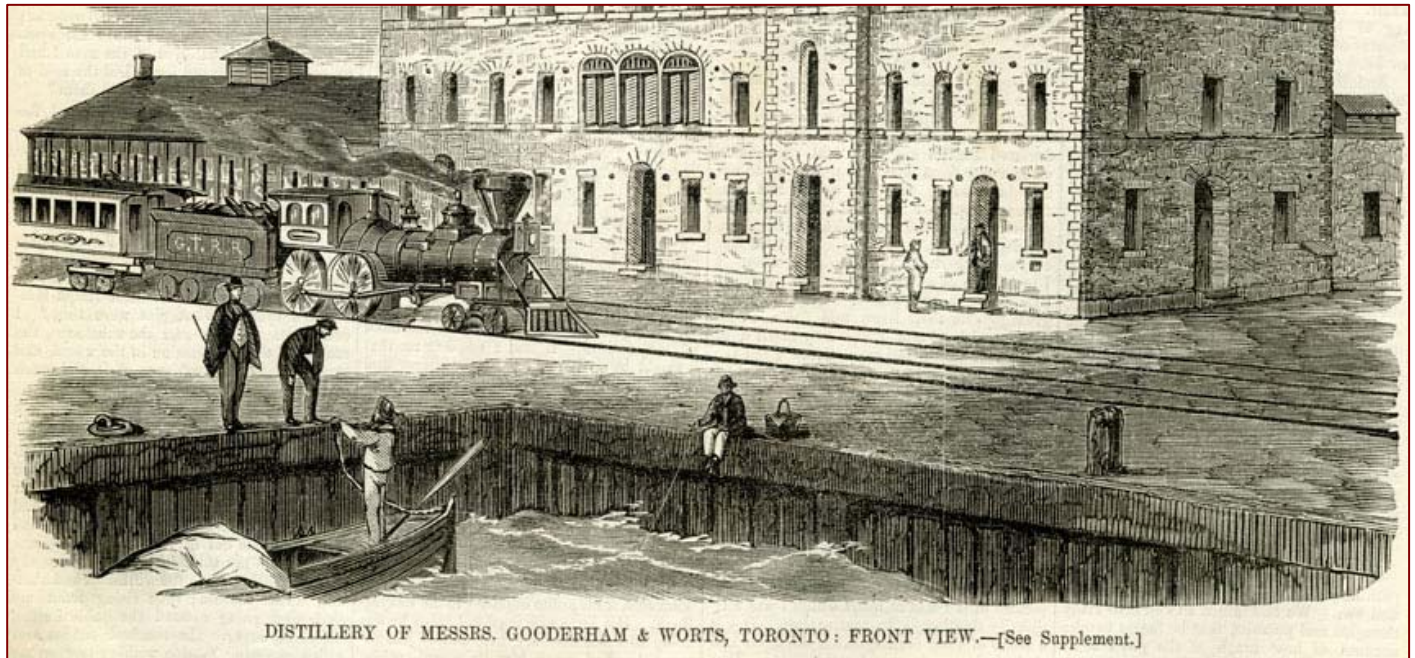


## Railway Connections



**First Railway Portrait, 1863**

**TPL**

**G**ooderham & Worts entered the Railway Age with the Stone Distillery in 1859-1860. In fact, William Gooderham's and James G. Worts' connections were so good that they persuaded the new Grand Trunk Railway to move its proposed line from north of the site along Mill Street to just south of the where the new building would rise overlooking the lake. (See maps.)

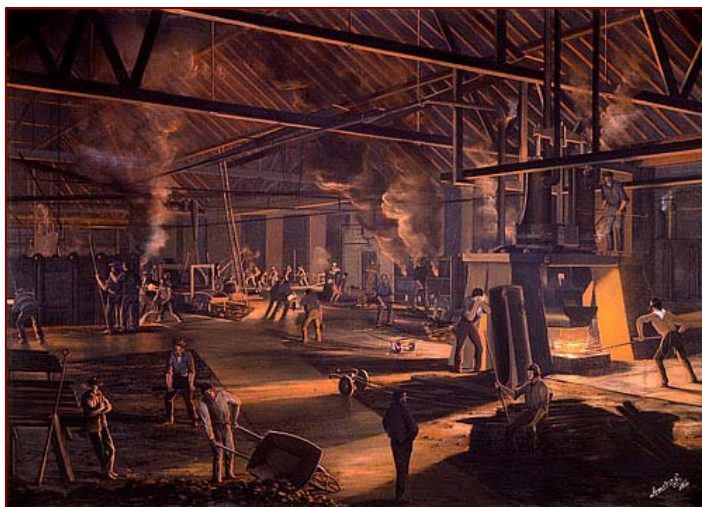
The GTR line originated at the first Union Station, located a block west of today's Union Station, linking Toronto with Montreal in these pre-Confederation times. To accommodate the Grand Trunk and other railways eager to serve Toronto, the city's original shoreline was extended, creating the Esplanade south of Front Street.

The earliest image of railway activity at Gooderham & Worts is the April 1863 drawing by D. D. Robertson that appeared in the *Canadian Illustrated News*. The engraving shows two tracks, one passing close to the distillery building where freight trains stopped to deliver their goods – such as coal for the boilers and grain for the distillery – and one to the south, bound for Kingston and Montreal.

Although the steam-powered engine is well-depicted, it bears no numbers or markings that would enable us to identify exactly which locomotive was chugging eastward. But it's clearly a 4-4-0 engine, with four small, uncoupled front wheels (two on each side) to guide the train along the wide gauge (5'6") tracks, and four large, rear driving wheels coupled to the engine to power the train forward. Of course, it features the widely flaring smoke stack, large front lamp, and protruding cowcatcher characteristic of early locomotives. (Whether the GTR ever ran into any cows being fattened in the [G&W cattle sheds](#) along Trinity Street goes unrecorded.)

The iron horse stimulated industry, commerce, and urban growth. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Toronto evolved from a regional centre to a major provincial centre, vying with Montreal for national dominance. For Gooderham & Worts, it enabled the company to dramatically increase its reach, both in markets and suppliers. By the 1870s, in fact, G&W was reportedly the largest distillery in the world, partly as a result of new transportation networks opened by rail.

The railway age also created entirely new industries. Prominent among these was Gooderham & Worts neighbour, the Toronto Rolling Mills located a couple of blocks to the east. The Rolling Mills took scrap iron and misshapen old iron rails, melted them down, and refashioned them into crisp new rails that were in huge demand until steel replaced iron later in the century. By July 1860 when the operation was described as “one of our Toronto wonders” by a *Globe* reporter, the Toronto Rolling Mills was operating a dozen furnaces, spewing “black fuliginous clouds” by day and emitting a “fiery glow” by night. About 200 “workmen of all countries and all grades” earned from 80-cents for lowly labourers to \$4.00 per day for a furnace supervisors. The reporter painted a vivid word picture of industrial life in Victorian Toronto:

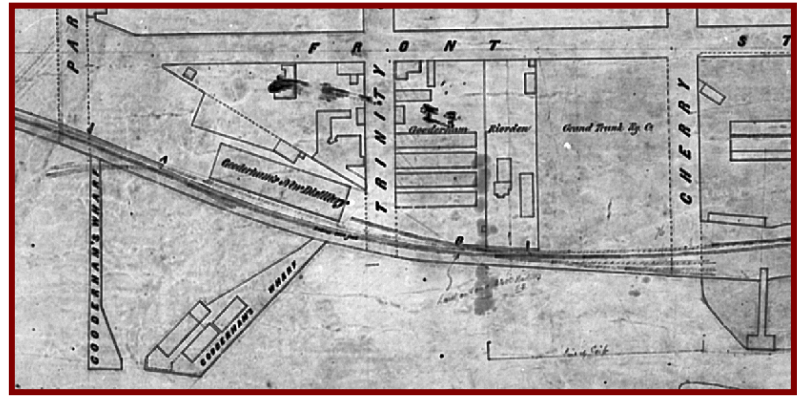
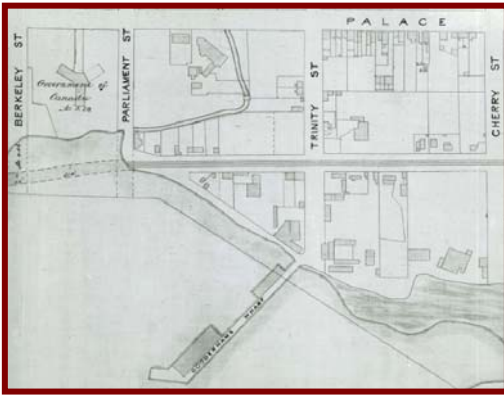


**Toronto Rolling Mills, 1864 TPL**

Half naked figures flitted before the intensely bright mouths of the furnaces; some stirring the melting iron inside, with long metal poles; some raking the bottom of the fires; some heaping on the fuel; a great bar of iron at white heat was being dragged away to the rolling machine at one part; at another a huge iron jaw was opening and shutting, like the mouth of some huge dragon, on a shapeless mass of newly puddled metal, squeezing its glowing bulk into fresh shapes every time it shut; the “rail mill” was seizing an incandescent bar ... until, in about a minute, the formless bar emerged, still at a white heat, a perfect rail.

William Armstrong, who painted the lovely pre-railway view of the distillery discussed in an [earlier article](#), also provided a stunning peak into the “dark satanic mills” created by the new industrial age. The workers were mostly clothed, but not protected by safety gear, and labouring in a fiery netherworld to supply the growing [railway system serving Toronto](#). The GTR alone needed from eight to ten tons of iron rails per year.

For 150 years trains have passed by the Distillery District. If you drop by for this year’s “Holiday Train” on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, take a moment to think about her hard-working predecessors ... then enjoy the music and modern merrymaking.



## Routing Around the Distillery

**1855 Grand Trunk Railway Map  
showing proposed Mill Street route**

**Detail from 1859 Grand Trunk Map showing  
final waterfront route LAC**

Many thanks to railway historian and heritage advocate, Derek Boles, for sharing his knowledge of early locomotives and operations.

There is some uncertainty about exactly how the early GTR tracks were aligned. Some maps show only one track, but the 1863 drawing shows two. G&W was definitely serviced by a spur line that hugged the south side of the Stone Distillery, but it may have run closer to the building than the track in the drawing.

The detail from William Kingsford's *Plan of a right of way for the Grand Trunk Railway in front of the City of Toronto*, dated 13 November 1855 is reproduced from [Stephen A. Otto's 1994 report](#), with the following citation: Archives of Ontario, RG 22, Acc. 14065, GTR Roll 38. In the 1850s, today's Mill Street was Front Street.

Please send your comments or questions to Manager of Heritage Services, Sally Gibson, [sg@thedistillerydistrict.com](mailto:sg@thedistillerydistrict.com).

For more about the history of the Distillery District, visit [www.distilleryheritage.com](http://www.distilleryheritage.com).