

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Celebrating 170 years of railway travel

Saint-Constant – On July 21 Exporail, the Canadian Railway Museum will celebrate the 170th Commemoration anniversary of the first rail line between La Prairie and Saint Jean-sur-Richelieu.

To celebrate this historic event, Exporail will have demonstrations of a working replica of the first steam engine (1849), John Molson (replica built in 1970) along with a piece of the first rail track.

Background: Champlain and Saint Lawrence Railroad

The Champlain and Saint Lawrence Railroad (incorporated 1832), Canada's first railway, ran between La Prairie on the St Lawrence River and St Johns (Saint-Jean) on the Richelieu. In effect, it served as a portage over the most troublesome part of the journey from Montreal to New York, which continued by steamer via Lake Champlain and the Hudson River. Construction began in 1835 with financing from Montreal brewer John Molson. The rails consisted of 6" (14 cm)-wide pine timbers joined by iron plates and bolts. Iron straps were then spiked to the upper surface.

The railway officially opened July 21, 1836 and began regular operations July 25. The locomotive, the wood-burning Dorchester built in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England, could reach up to 48 km/h. The railway was extended to Rouses Point, New York, in 1851 and to St Lambert, Québec, in 1852. In 1857 it amalgamated with the Montreal and New York Railroad (formerly Montreal and Lachine Railroad) under the name Montreal and Champlain Railroad Company. It was leased to the Grand Trunk Railway (GTR) in 1864, and purchased by GTR in 1872.

In 1836 the first railway line in Canada, the Champlain and St-Lawrence Railroad, connected Saint-Jean and La Prairie.

Exporail is an initiative of the Canadian Railroad Historical Association whose collection includes over 250,000 unique artifacts from the history of Canadian railway technology since 1836.

The museum is located at 110 Saint-Pierre Street, Saint-Constant and is open daily during the summer from 10 :00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Call 450-638-1522 for more information or visit the Association's website at www.exporail.org.

For more information, to confirm your attendance, or to make special arrangements to see the exhibit, please contact Amy Gregus or Heather Bisset at 514-426-7137.

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