



DID YOU KNOW.....?

By Scott E. Douglas

.....that in 1895 George Sleeman of Guelph, Ontario brewing fame built the first Electric Railway the city was desperately in need of. The original charter was drawn up and a by-law passed on August 7, 1894. Construction began in April of 1895 with the first spike officially driven in on Waterloo Avenue in front of the Sleeman home, which was adjacent to the brewery, by Sleeman's wife Sarah on June 20, 1895. The Guelph Railway Company began with three closed cars on September 17, 1895. Normal service operated from 5AM to 11PM Monday to Saturday every 20 minutes. Besides Sleeman's 'Silvercreek Brewery' being on the route the Bell Piano Company, Guelph's largest employer, was also at close proximity.



The fares were 5 cents in cash, 6 tokens for 25 cents or 25 tokens for \$1.00. However, rush hour fares were to be less money at 8 for 25 cents to be used only from 5AM to 8AM and in the evening from 5PM to 6:30PM. Later, Sleeman built a park and a skating rink on land near the brewery on Waterloo Avenue and sold a combination ticket to include admission to the park and return train fare. By 1899 the railway was looking very profitable to the city of Guelph and they approached Sleeman to purchase it. Sleeman, who had illusions of grandeur for his Railway, sent the council away with a price tag of \$100,000 a price the City could not afford. However, by 1902 the Guelph Railway Company could not meet its loan demands and control of the company passed to a consortium of the Traders Bank and the Bank of Montreal.

The City of Guelph would eventually negotiate with the bankers and for \$78,000 acquire 8 miles of track, 8 closed cars, 3 open cars and the charter controlling the track entry into the city.

