

# THE RAILWAY LANDS



The Railway Lands in 1876 are seen in this "birds-eye" view by artist G. Gascard. The roundhouse would later occupy the centre of this view and the old Union Station can be seen on the upper right. This was replaced by the current Union Station in 1927.

The John Street roundhouse was once part of a vast complex of railway facilities that extended two miles from Strachan Avenue to Yonge Street and became known as the Railway Lands. When the railways first entered Toronto in the 1850s, there wasn't enough available property for their installations so they created new land by filling in the harbour south from the original shoreline near Front Street. This process continued until the 1920s when the harbour assumed its present configuration. In the 1960s, the railways shifted their freight yards and locomotive facilities to the suburbs. Canadian Pacific's John Street and Canadian National's Spadina facilities continued to be used for the servicing of passenger trains until the 1980s, when VIA Rail moved its yards to Mimico, five miles to the west. By this time, the Railway Lands had become the most valuable real estate in Canada and CN's Spadina roundhouse was demolished to make way for Skydome. Many of Toronto's best-known landmarks occupy property that was once used for railway purposes, including Roy Thomson Hall, the CBC Broadcast Centre, the CN Tower and the Air Canada Centre.



This image is looking west from above Church Street in 1966. The Gardiner Expressway is on the left and Front Street runs from top to bottom in the centre of this view. The roundhouse can be seen just to the right of the curve in the expressway.  
City of Toronto Archives



The vast size of the Railway Lands is apparent in this circa 1950 aerial view looking east from high above Bathurst Street. John Street and Union Station occupy the top third of the photograph.  
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