A lot can happen over 13 decades. Apart from obvious historical and technological developments, one of the most visible changes that occurs in a company is the evolution of its logo.

Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) lived out its construction years having only “Canadian Pacific Railway” in block letters as its company logo. The only distinctive flight of fancy the company would allow itself was to arrange the words “Canadian Pacific” slightly arched on the side of its boxcars and cabooses.

After the driving of the Last Spike on November 7, 1885, CPR readied itself for the first transcontinental train run leaving Montreal and Toronto on June 28, 1886. With the inauguration of transcontinental train service came the need for a more appealing timetable. This new folder had to be properly identified, and the company name presented in a pleasing but eye-catching manner. To do this, the printers of the first timetable rummaged through their stocks of standard printers’ block logos and came up with a spade-shaped shield. On it they emblazoned the name “Canadian Pacific Railway.”

This, for all intents and purposes, was CPR’s first corporate logo. By the end of 1886, however, Canadian Pacific needed a visual link to tie it in with Canada. So CPR’s passenger department placed a beaver on the point of the shield and gave it a branch with maple leaves to grow.

Both the beaver and the maple leaf would later be officially adopted as Canada’s national symbols. By 1889, Canadian Pacific felt it should have a distinctive shield it could call its own.

It developed a more simplified crest and gave the beaver a proper resting place. Gone were the maple leaves. Throughout the 1890s the beaver and the “Canadian Pacific Railway” lettering went through several mutations, which are not shown here, before, in 1898, a final configuration was settled on for both the beaver and the lettering.

This symbol prevailed until the end of World War I when a restless art department, tired of the Victorian approach to company logos, started to tinker with the company’s corporate logo. By the end of 1886, however, Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) kept its distinctive heritage logo with the October 2001 spin-out of the rail entity of CPR reaffirmed its separate status and regained its old name: Canadian Pacific Railway.

In September 1997, to properly portray its separate status and rekindle its heritage, CPR launched a retro-looking logo, complete with beaver, maple leaf and year of incorporation. CPR kept its distinctive beaver and years having only “Canadian Pacific Railway” in block letters as its company logo. The only distinctive flight of fancy the company would allow itself was to arrange the words “Canadian Pacific” slightly arched on the side of its boxcars and cabooses.

In April 1990, the Soo Line of Minneapolis was integrated into CP Rail, and the word “System” was added to better capture the scope of the new single-line transportation company. The acquisition of the Delaware & Hudson in January 1991, brought more North American markets within the company’s reach.

To visually evoke its broader North American reach under the “CP Rail System” banner, CPR came out with a new symbol in 1993. Using components of the U.S. and Canadian flags, CPR applied this symbol to motive power, some road and rail equipment, and most of its marketing communications and advertising.

In July 1996, 25 years after the name officially disappeared with the creation of Canadian Pacific Limited (CPL), the rail entity of CPL reaffirmed its separate status and regained its old name: Canadian Pacific Railway.

The “multimark,” a triangle and a semi-circle within a square block, signifying corporate stability, direction and world-wide capabilities, was the logo developed to answer Canadian Pacific’s modern image demands. Each of the company’s transport-related modes was assigned its own distinctive color – CPR’s (known then as CP Rail) being red.

By 1987, changes within the Canadian Pacific transportation group had lessened the effectiveness of the multimark. So it was phased out, leaving “CP Rail” in its distinctive typeface as the logo.

In 2003, Canadian Pacific replaced Canadian Pacific Railway – was put in place for all corporate markings and was a symbol held in high esteem by employees.