

This was one of the last forays into steam locomotion, which was undertaken by Brooks Steam Motors between 1923 and 1929. Brooks Steam Motor Ltd. was created out of the Detroit Steam Motors Corporation and spearheaded by the American financier, Oland J. Brooks. In 1923, after demonstrating a prototype car at the Toronto Exhibition that same year, an agreement was reached with Stratford, and an old threshing factory was purchased.

Mr. Brooks had big dreams for his factory, including the manufacturing of three different vehicle models; however, only one car type was ever produced. One of the unique characteristics of the Brooks Steamer was its fabric body, which was constructed using Meritas brand cloth (a composite material formed from wire netting, two layers of wadding, canvas and an outer layer of two-ply artificial leather), manufactured in nearby Wakefield, Ontario.

By the 1920s, gasoline cars were building momentum as they started more quickly and were able to move faster. The Brooks Steamer tried to find its market with women. One pamphlet read: “Women motorists, who invariably grasp the wheel as rigidly as the arm of a dentist's chair, now relax and take it easy when they drive a Brooks steamer.” But this campaign was unsuccessful. Despite expectations of employing hundreds, by 1925, the factory had a mere 90 employees.

The company attempted to expand in other directions. In 1924, an English representative was appointed, and plans were made to export the cars to Britain. One model was displayed at the October 1924, Olympia, London automobile show, but at £996 it was priced out of the market.

In late 1926, it was announced that Brooks would open a factory in Buffalo, New York, in order to build steam buses. In the summer of 1927, a prototype bus was constructed by the Buffalo Body Company. At the time, the main bus show in the United States was held at the annual convention of the trolley car association, the American Electric Railway Association. The steam powered bus was displayed at the October 1927 show in Cleveland, Ohio. It was the first time a steam-driven vehicle had been shown there but was seen more as a novelty vehicle than the future of public transportation.

Despite attempts at innovation, by 1929, the shareholders decided that the company was no longer viable, and the Stratford factory was liquidated. By 1931, the company had disbanded and is now folded into the history of The Bruce Hotel.