

The Lindsay area Rail Trails and abandoned rights-of-way

BACKGROUND

Canada's two major railways, the CPR and CN (formerly Canadian National Railways) have been abandoning no-longer-needed rail lines for decades. Whereas in bygone days, unwanted rail corridors were usually sold back to the adjacent land owners (sometimes to the descendants of original owners); over the past 30 years or so, the process of abandonment has become well regulated, and the Ontario Government, conservation authorities and citizen groups have acquired many discarded rail lines.

AROUND LINDSAY

Lindsay was once a major railway hub, with much trackage in downtown Lindsay, and with no less than seven lines radiating out of town, clockwise from the kiosk at the entrance to the Legacy Rail Trail at the north end of William St. as follows:

1. to Beaverton-Orillia-Midland (immediately out of Lindsay abandoned 1907, to Midland in 1966)
2. to Fenelon Falls-Kinmount-Haliburton (abandoned 1981)
3. to Orillia-Victoria Harbour-Port McNicholl (abandoned 1937)
4. to Bobcaygeon (abandoned 1961)
5. to Omemee-Peterborough (abandoned 1989)
6. to Bethany Junction [Dranoel] (abandoned 1987)
7. to Uxbridge (abandoned 1991) [The line to Midland diverging at Albert St. was built in 1907, abandoned 1966.]

Of these, 2., 5., 6. and 7. have become rail trails. Of those that did not, trace sections are still visible.

THUMBNAIL HISTORIES OF THE RAIL TRAILS

(Referenced from above)

2. to Fenelon Falls-Kinmount-Haliburton (abandoned 1981)

Now the Victoria/Legacy and Haliburton Rail Trails. Built out of Lindsay between 1875 and 1878 as the Victoria Ry, acquired by the Midland Ry in 1882, the Grand Trunk Ry in 1893 and the CNR in 1923. (Former branch at Howland Jct. to the Irondale, Bancroft & Ottawa Ry, built starting in the 1880s, abandoned in 1960 [not a rail trail]).

5. to Omemee-Peterborough (abandoned 1989)

Now the eastern portion of the Kawartha Trans Canada Trail. Built between Omemee and Lindsay in 1857, and between Omemee and Peterborough in 1883. (Former portion of the original line between Millbrook and Omemee via Bethany [not to be confused with the Georgian Bay & Seaboard {CPR} line] abandoned 1927.)

6. to Bethany Junction [Dranoel] (abandoned 1987)

Now the Rotary/Bethany Rail Trail. From the Lindsay East Ward along the Scugog River to a point just south of Logie St. (known as Lindsay Jct., built in 1904 as the Lindsay, Bobcaygeon & Pontypool Ry), south of Lindsay Jct. to Bethany Jct. (Dranoel), built as the Georgian Bay & Seaboard Ry in 1912. (The original right-of-way of the Lindsay, Bobcaygeon & Pontypool Ry between Lindsay Jct. and Burketon Jct. via Janetville and Nestleton was abandoned in 1932.)

7. to Uxbridge (abandoned 1991) [The line to Midland diverging at Albert St. was built in 1907, abandoned 1966.]

Now the western portion of the Kawartha Trans Canada Trail. Built between Lindsay and Manilla Jct. in 1876, between Manilla Jct. and Blackwater Jct. in 1883, and between Blackwater Jct. and Uxbridge in 1871. (The former Whitby, Port Perry & Lindsay Ry joined the trail at Manilla Jct., abandoned between Port Perry and Manilla in 1937. At Blackwater Jct. the original railway continued to Coboconk, now the Beaver River Wetland Trail as far as Woodville.)

DOWNTOWN LINDSAY

At the height of the Railway Age, Lindsay itself had 55 miles of track including sidings, and in succession five railway stations, none of which has survived. The CNR and CPR stations at the end of service were both demolished in 1962 and 1964 respectively. The major alignments were: originally in the East Ward near and along the east bank of the Scugog River starting in 1857, then in the middle of Victoria Ave. and west out of town just south of Durham St. by 1876/1877, and then east out of town just south of Durham St. in 1883. Redevelopment has claimed most of the downtown rights-of-way and the space occupied by contemporary local industries. Other than the rail trails themselves, the most visible Lindsay railway land marks today are the “iron bridge” across the Scugog River, and the bridge abutments for the former Georgian Bay & Seaboard Ry further north at the river and on the Victoria/Legacy Rail Trail. The Lindsay & District Model Railroaders are partnering with the City of Kawartha Lakes to develop a railway memorial centre at the park of the same name on Lindsay St. South which happens to be alongside the diversionary Trans Canada Rail Trail through Lindsay. The project has begun with the development of a display of historical railway equipment.

THE OTHER ABANDONMENTS AROUND LINDSAY (Referenced from AROUND LINDSAY)

1. to Beaverton-Orillia-Midland (immediately out of Lindsay abandoned 1907, to Midland in 1966)

A short stretch of the original right-of-way of the Port Hope, Lindsay & Beaverton Ry (to Beaverton built in 1861) is still visible east of Hwy 35 opposite the Lindsay Airport hangar, and just west of Monarch Rd.

3. to Orillia-Victoria Harbour-Port McNicholl (abandoned 1937)

A short stretch of the former Georgian Bay & Seaboard Ry (a subsidiary of the CPR) is still visible as a shallow cutting on Angeline St., just north of the Thunder Bridge Rd., also there are the abutments referred to above.

4. to Bobcaygeon (abandoned 1961)

Although it is not a rail trail, the right-of-way of the former Lindsay, Bobcaygeon & Pontypool Ry (also CPR) can still be walked from just south of St. Paul St. through the East Ward to County Rd. 36 near Pete's Bun Stop.

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