

23dc Haliburton station

GENERAL BACKGROUND (please see leaflet 23d for information about the Victoria Railway)

The second half of the 19th century saw the rapid development of a railway network across southern Ontario. This development was promoted by the construction of two trunk railways, the Grand Trunk (GTR) and the Great Western (GWR) Railways. Civic and developer interests combined to initiate a great number of pioneering lines to connect with these major trunk railways and with each other. Typically these pioneering railways designed their own stations and had local craftsmen construct them all along the line according to a basic template, usually only varying the length of the building according to the traffic needs of each community.

The Victoria Railway initially had an agreement to share its Lindsay station with the Midland Railway. Major stops along the line were Fenelon Falls, Burnt River, Kinmount, Gelert and Haliburton. By the end of the 19th century, the GTR had emerged as the dominant railway in southern Ontario, having absorbed the GWR in 1882, and among others, the Midland Railway (the intermediate owner of the Victoria Railway), in 1893.

GENERAL STATION BACKGROUND

Today's Haliburton station is a Grand Trunk Railway (GTR) station built in 1901 as part of a GTR Ontario-wide station replacement program between 1900 and 1914. (The 1907 GTR Buildings Inventory describes it as "rebuilt", but it is of a basic standard and once abundant GTR country station design.) The common reasons for station replacement were one or more of three of (a.) dilapidation (most early stations were built as "temporary" wooden structures, (b.) track realignment/amalgamation (prompted by the frenzy of railway mergers in the late 1800s), (c.) community growth (necessitating more station space). Incidental additional reasons were the need (d.) to provide for station agent accommodation (usually on a second floor, but sometimes by extension on the main floor, as in the case of Gelert), (e.) to add telegrapher's bays for better operating efficiency, and (f.) to replace losses by fire. In the case of Haliburton, the reasons were likely (a.), (c.) and (e.).

THE HALIBURTON STATION

It is not known whether the Victoria Railway had a "standard" station pattern, but the distinctive Gelert station that survived to the end of passenger service and a surviving picture of the first Haliburton station provide possible clues. A partial picture of the first Kinmount station has surfaced that appears confirmatory, but there is no known record of the original Burnt River station, and the present Fenelon Falls station is of Midland Railway design built in 1882 to replace the first station lost by fire, again with no known surviving record of its design.

All early country "agency" stations (as opposed to flag stops that were usually simple shelters where one flagged down an approaching train or had to ask the conductor to stop the train to set one off, also sometimes combined with a section foreman's house) typically consisted of three main areas: a waiting room (larger communities may have had a separate ladies' waiting room), the station agent's office that came to include the telegrapher's bay, and a baggage room (In the railway's heyday, passengers often travelled with many suitcases and steamer trunks). In the case of Haliburton, the waiting room was at the southerly end of the building, the agent's office in the middle, and the combination baggage and freight room to the north. Freight for the community would usually be handled by a separate freight shed, but in the case of Haliburton, it was combined into one space. The overall station is 22 ft wide by 97 ft long, over twice the length of the average intermediate agency station, typically 22 ft wide by 44 ft long.

The renowned *Haliburton Highlander* ceased in 1957, regular passenger service in 1960, regular freight service in 1972, but then "as required" until 1978. A washout just north of Kinmount in 1978 and the burnt-out trestle over McLaren's Creek in 1981 sealed the fate of CNR's Haliburton branch which was abandoned in 1982 after the usual hearings, including a proposal for a tourist line. (At the Kinmount station there is a working model in 1:87 scale of the Kinmount-Haliburton section of the line.) The preserved Haliburton station, elevated to prevent deterioration, now serves as the Rail's End Gallery, a focal point of Haliburton's renowned self-re-invention as a venue for and supporter of the arts.

Sources and further reading:

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