

# 6697 Highway 35, Geographic Township of Bexley (Coboconk Train Station)

## Heritage Designation Evaluation

Geographic Township of Bexley

57R-7569 Part 1; 57R-7334 Parts 1 & 2; 57R16 Part 10; Part of Lots 15 to 18,  
Range GR

PIN: 63117-0388

April 2022



## Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

The subject property has been researched and evaluated in order to determine its cultural heritage significance under Ontario Regulation 9/06 of the Ontario Heritage Act R.S.O. 1990. A property is eligible for designation if it has physical, historical, associative or contextual value and meets any one of the nine criteria set out under Regulation 9/06 of the Act. A heritage evaluation of the property has determined that 6697 Highway 35, Geographic Township of Bexley has cultural heritage value or interest and merits designation under the Ontario Heritage Act.

### 1. The property has design value or physical value because it:

#### i. is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material, or construction method:

The subject property is a representative example of a rural railway station constructed in the early twentieth century. More specifically, it is an important preserved example of a standard plan Grand Trunk Railway station from this period. The shape and form of the station can be found in a variety of rural stations in the regional area and it is an important surviving example. Of the over sixty stations which once served communities in Kawartha Lakes, it is only one of ten surviving structures.

#### ii. displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit:

The property displays a typical degree of craftsmanship and artistic merit for a building of its type and age.

#### iii. demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement:

There are no specific technical or scientific achievements associated with this property.

### 2. The property has historical or associative value because it:

#### i. has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization, or institution that is significant to the community:

The subject property has direct associations with the railway in Coboconk and the growth of the community in the late nineteenth century. Although the current station was constructed between 1908 and 1910 and is a replacement for the original station from the 1870s, the property remains directly related to this important mode of transport which allowed Coboconk to grow and flourish as a regional centre in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. More specifically, the property has direct associations with two key aspects of the late nineteenth century economy in the community: the lumber industry and tourism.

ii. yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture:

The property yields information on the growth of Coboconk in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a result of the arrival of the railway in the community. It provides information on transport, industry and communication in and out of the rural community around the turn of the century. It also yields information on the growth of summer tourism in the community beginning in the late nineteenth century.

iii. demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to the community:

The station is built to a standard Grand Truck Railway plan and does not reflect the work or ideas of an architect or designer who is significant to the community.

### 3. The property has contextual value because it:

i. is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area:

The subject property helps support the character of Coboconk as a whole as a small historic community. The building is an important aspect of the community's history and visually reinforces its historical and local identity.

ii. is physically, functionally, visually, or historically linked to its surroundings:

The subject property has been moved from its original location and has lost some of its contextual value as it is no longer located within its original surroundings. However, the property remains historically linked to the historic core of Coboconk, despite its removal to a different portion of the community. At the same time, the property has links to the wider historic railway landscape in Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton through its visual links to the other two nearly identical extant Grand Trunk stations locally, as well as to other surviving railway infrastructure in the area.

iii. is a landmark.

The subject property is a well-known local landmark. It has been an important building in the community since its construction in 1908 and has served many important purposes since its construction. It is recognized throughout the local area and its status as a local landmark is enhanced by its prominent location.

## Design and Physical Value

6697 Highway 35, also known as the Coboconk Train Station, has design and physical value as a representative example of an early twentieth century railway station constructed in a rural community. More specifically, it is an important surviving example of a standard station design constructed by the Grand Trunk Railway (GTR) in its small town and rural stops around the turn of the twentieth century. Built between 1908 and 1910, the station displays the key characteristics of the GTR stations from that time, including the use of Queen Anne stylistic features in its overall design. The station is one of the few remaining railway stations in Kawartha Lakes from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; of the over sixty stations that were once present in the municipality, it is one of only ten surviving structures.

The current railway station was constructed between 1908 and 1910 by the Grand Trunk Railway and was not the first station in the community. The first station was constructed in 1872 with the arrival of the Toronto and Nipissing (T&N) Railway for which Coboconk was the terminus. At the time, the railway was intended to be constructed from Toronto all the way to the Nipissing District, but Coboconk remained its terminus until the line's closure in the 1960s. The line was absorbed into the Midland Railway in 1882 and became part of the GTR system with the merger of the Midland Railway with the GTR in 1893. It is possible that the 1872 station was replaced or enlarged around 1894, but that is not entirely clear; it is believed that the original station may have been enlarged with a second storey to accommodate the station master and his family on the upper level. The current station was constructed between 1908 and 1910 after the previous station burned to the ground due to a lightning strike and was constructed to the GTR's corporate standard plan.

As with many regional railways operating in Ontario in the nineteenth century, both the GTR and its predecessor constructed their stations to standardized corporate plans. However, it was the GTR that was the real pioneer with regard to corporate architecture within the railway industry in Canada. From its earliest development, the GTR had approached its station architecture from the perspective of standardization across its wide geographic range. Beginning with its first lines through Ontario in the mid-1850s and under the direction of British railway architect Francis Thompson, it used standardized plans that could be varied in size according to the needs of the line and the local community and were intended to both introduce a new mode of transport – the railway – and establish corporate identity in an industry that stretched over a significant geographic area. The use of standardized station plans had been introduced in the United Kingdom in the 1840s with the rapid expansion of the railway there, but the idea of corporate planning for station design took longer to catch on in Canada. Of the early railways in Canada, the

GTR's approach to corporate design was by far the most consistent during this period of early railway growth and one that the company continued to use throughout the rest of the nineteenth century and until their absorption into the Canadian National system after the First World War.

By the 1870s, with the major railway boom in Ontario and across Canada well in progress, the idea of standardized station plans had been readily adopted by the various railway companies in operation during this time. Standardized plans accomplished a number of objectives for these companies. On one hand, they helped establish and maintain corporate identity, particularly with the proliferation of different railway companies around this period; it was particularly important in communities, such as Lindsay, where there was more than one station serving lines owned by different companies. At the same time, standardized plans also helped reduce costs by centralizing building design and construction management by providing plans that could be designed once, with modifications, then replicated regionally, or in the case of the larger lines, provincially or nationally. By the end of the century, virtually every railway company had a standard plan or plans used for stations of different sizes across its geographic area. For many companies, including the T&N, the designs were often very basic and reflected a need to keep costs low until revenue could be generated on their new lines. Larger railways, including the GTR, were able to invest in more complex and creative designs.

Beginning around 1895, the GTR was undergoing a period of renewed growth and reorganization under the leadership of Charles Hays, who made significant changes to how the company was run. One of his major focuses was with regard to the upgrading of infrastructure, including tracks and engineering works, to increase the carrying capacity of the company's lines; included in this infrastructure upgrade project was the reconstruction of many of the company's older stations, including those that had been acquired from smaller companies during various mergers in the later decades of the nineteenth century. These stations were updated gradually as the infrastructure was upgraded, or, as in the case of the station at Coboconk, when circumstances forced the company's hand. As a result, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw a significant amount of construction on the part of the GTR, both through Hays' redevelopment schemes and through expansion.

New designs developed for stations at this time were intended to align with current architectural trends and, in particular, drew from the Romanesque Revival and Queen Anne styles. Many of those in small-town destinations, particularly in areas that were viewed as tourist or destination locations, gravitated towards the Queen Anne style and associated cottage orné movement in order to introduce a picturesque and romantic aesthetic to railway station design. These stations integrated diverse decorative elements, such as bargeboard, brackets, horizontal and vertical siding, shingles and

millwork, into asymmetrical forms that included various massing elements such as projecting bays, multiple gables, and towers, to create a complex structure consistent with the highly eclectic Queen Anne style in domestic architecture. These structures were executed in wood and constructed locally, but designed at a corporate level, resulting in a relatively consistent aesthetic across GTR stations built between the mid-1890s and the First World War that is present in communities across Ontario.

The earliest known photograph clearly showing the Coboconk station date from around 1900 and show the two-storey Toronto and Nipissing station, either the original 1872 station or a larger version of it. It is a much plainer structure than the current building and consists of a two-storey rectangular structure with a gable roof, weatherboarding, and passenger awning with curved brackets. The structure is quite utilitarian with little in the way of architectural or decorative details. Little other documentation regarding this structure survives.

A version of this earlier station exists in the municipality at Victoria Road, which was also along the Toronto and Nipissing line. This station, which is still standing and has been converted to residential use, is also two-storeys and features the same basic rectangular plan, gable roof and passenger awning on the trackside. This is believed to be the original 1870s structure but also may have been enlarged at a later date. Similar two-storey stations also existed along the T&N line at both Kirkfield and Scarborough Junction. One-storey stations, on a similar floorplan with medium-pitched gable roofs and awnings, were also constructed at a range of smaller stations along the line, including at Eldon, Argyle, and Woodville. These stations demonstrate the generic design used in rural stations by the T&N which was relatively consistent across their real estate.

When this station burned down in 1908, the GTR replaced it with the existing building – a new station to the most current corporate design. This station includes a main one-storey section as well as a two-storey wing on what is now its eastern side. Its defining decorative feature is its one-storey operator's bay, which includes a shingled gable and brackets and the iconic GTR-style Coboconk sign. The station also draws on the eclecticism of the Queen Anne style through its use of different styles of wooden cladding and asymmetrical massing. There is a marked shift in the emphasis on architectural details and aesthetic in the new design as the GTR moved away from the utilitarian design of the early railway companies in favour of a more developed architectural design that spoke to the picturesque and a romantic portrayal of small town Ontario.

The plan and architectural details used at Coboconk was a popular one for the GTR at smaller stations in rural communities and smaller centres. There are

several other GTR stations still in existence in Ontario constructed around the same time on versions of this plan, including two extant ones in close proximity to Coboconk in Kinmount and Haliburton. Stations in both Kinmount and Haliburton were originally constructed at part of the development of the Victoria Railway from Lindsay in the 1870s; like the T&N, the Victoria Railway was subsequently absorbed into the Midland then the GTR system. Both stations were rebuilt by the GTR in the early twentieth century to nearly identical plans to both each other and to the station at Coboconk, although neither included the two storey section found on the Coboconk example. Both the Kinmount and Haliburton stations use the same Queen Anne-style massing and decorative motifs found in Coboconk and, taken together, the three stations form a visibly cohesive grouping which demonstrates the standardized plans used by the GTR at this time for its rural stations, and particularly those seen as destination or tourist stations, in Ontario's developing cottage country.

One of the important features of this structure was the inclusion of a two-storey wing to provide living quarters for the station master and his family. These living quarters were included on the upper and lower storeys of the two-storey wing. This was a feature that was extremely common in rural Canadian railway stations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, although those that are still extant are less common; the provision of living quarters, in fact, dates to the middle of the nineteenth century when both Canadian and American railways began to house their employees in the stations, particularly in remote and rural areas. The addition of living quarters was particularly common in stations erected by the Grand Trunk Pacific, the western railway that ran from Winnipeg under the banner of the GTR. The vast majority of its rural stations were built to a standardized plan including upper storey living quarters that were included by corporate designers and architects; this was a different, but similar, plan to the one that was used by the GTR for its stations in Ontario, including that at Coboconk. However, it was clearly recognized by both the eastern and western arms of the company that providing an apartment for its station master was an important aspect of station design.

Stations that included living quarters had specific advantages for railway companies, something that the GTR undoubtedly recognized. On one hand, the station master's job extended to all sorts of hours, managing both passenger and freight trains, as well as providing other services such as receiving and dispatching mail from the post office to the train, or providing telegraphy services, depending on the station and the needs of the community. The presence of the station master at the station at all hours also ensured that there was someone on hand in the event of a theft, or to help

deter it all together, as railway stations stored cash as well as valuable freight which made them targets for robbery.

At the same time, railway companies often found that the provision of accommodation was helpful in attracting good employees and their families to move to remote and rural locations. Particularly in small communities where rental housing for families was not always available, the provision of free accommodation helped ensure that companies were able to attract married men into their employ; married men were preferred as station masters because they were seen as more steady, reliable and less likely to move once they were established in a community. From images of the T&N station, it is likely that it also included living quarters for its employees on the second storey, as there was little other reason to include a second storey on a railway station and the curtains in the windows indicate a domestic use. The provision of accommodation continued on the new station, likely as a continuation of the previous arrangement at the station and, more broadly, as part of the GTR group of railways corporate approach to stations and the accommodation of the station master at its rural locations.

Overall, the Coboconk station is representative of the types of rural stations erected by the GTR in the early twentieth century and demonstrative of its corporate approach to station architecture. At the same time, it represents an evolution for the more simplistic and utilitarian architecture of the T&N as the more established GTR looked to develop more aesthetically pleasing station architecture for the older lines. It employs the key elements of the Queen Anne style as applied to train station architecture at this time and also incorporates more unique elements - such as the addition of the second storey living quarters - which were not always present in all of the GTR's station designs.

### Historical and Associative Value

6697 Highway 35 has historical and associative value in its role as the railway station for Coboconk dating from the early 1870s. The arrival of the railway was a key moment in the history of the community as a major driver of growth and development in the late nineteenth century and the presence of a station in the community allowed it to grow and flourish as a regional and commercial centre. Specifically, the railway allowed for the development of Coboconk's major nineteenth and early twentieth century industries: lumbering and tourism. The extant railway station yields information regarding the development of the railway system in the community as the main extant historical feature from this piece of infrastructure.

Prior to the arrival of the railway, Coboconk was a tiny and isolated settler community. It has been established in 1851 with the construction of a new saw



mill, the first in Victoria County north of Cameron Lake. It was clear even at this time that the lumber industry would be a major factor in the community's development due to its location at the outlet of the Gull River coming into Balsam Lake and its proximity to large stands of pine to the north. However, in its early years, it developed slowly. The 1865 directory of Peterborough and Victoria Counties lists the community as home to approximately 70 people and a limited number of amenities, including a general store, sawmill, tavern and Methodist church. Although the lumber trade was beginning in the area at this time, it had not yet reached its peak, in part because the area was difficult to access and products, specifically squared timber, had to be shipped out by water. Local amenities were primarily intended for the rural settler population in the surrounding areas of both Bexley and Somerville Townships and the saw mill primarily served these areas as well, with limited export throughout the 1850s and 1860s, particularly of sawn lumber which, economically, made more sense to be transported by train as opposed to by water or other means.

The 1850s marked the beginning of a massive boom in railway construction throughout Ontario with new lines intended to take freight and passengers around the province and to and from its new and growing communities. The first railways in Canada had opened in the 1830s in Quebec and the Maritimes and were short lines intended to help local industry. However, the idea of rail transport grew slowly until the passage of the Guarantee Act in 1849 which made government funding available to railways over 75 miles, or 120 kilometres. The availability of government support sparked a railway building frenzy, with early lines through Ontario including the Great Western Railway and the Grand Trunk Railway. These early lines were first constructed in close proximity to the Great Lakes where the majority of the population was concentrated, but gradually began to expand in land and serve communities further back from the lakes. The first railway into what was then Victoria County, the Port Hope, Lindsay and Beaverton Railway later the Midland Railway, arrived in Lindsay in 1857, and railway growth continued for the next several decades and expanded northward along with settlement.

The growth of many towns throughout the province was intimately tied to the arrival of the railway. Although communities, such as Coboconk, existed prior to the train, they were generally small and serving only the needs of the local population. Train allowed increased access to and from the outside world, increasing the ability of local communities to receive basics, such as mail, in a timely manner. At the same time, they allowed for the export of locally manufactured or harvested products, which in turn, spurred the growth of various businesses in the communities reached by the train and those in the surrounding area; in effect, trains connected communities economically to the outside world. In fact, very few railways constructed in Ontario in the nineteenth century did not have a freight component as this was the major

money maker for railway owners and investors who could rely on the transport of various goods throughout the province as their source of revenue.

The railway arrived in Coboconk in 1872 when it became the terminus for the newly created Toronto and Nipissing Railway (T&N). The T&N was first and foremost a commercial railway. For Coboconk, as it was for much of central and eastern Ontario, the main product that the railway helped bring to market was lumber. The railway had been the brainchild of George Laidlaw, the railway magnate and owner of the Balsam Lake estate, and William Gooderham, of the distillery Gooderham and Worts, and was primarily intended to service the Gooderham and Worts establishment in Toronto, by providing direct access to cordwood from the northern forests.

The T&N had first opened in 1871 with service between Uxbridge and Scarborough. It was intended to run from Toronto to Lake Nipissing and link with the proposed transcontinental railway which was being discussed beginning around this time. However, the financing for the line was such that the line never reached beyond Coboconk which remained the terminus until the line's closure in the mid-twentieth century. Other stations along the line in Kawartha Lakes included those at Lorneville, Argyle, Eldon, Kirkfield, Victoria Road, Raven Lake, and Corsons. For nineteenth century communities, rail lines were vital modes of transport and of communication with the outside world, as they carried passengers, mail and freight which were of significant importance, especially to small communities like Coboconk which, at the time, were remote and isolated. While these functions were important, however, it was the growth of industry that provided the impetus for the line's construction and where its greatest impact would be.

The arrival of the line corresponded with the growth and development of the lumber industry in the northern part of Kawartha Lakes as one of its key economic drivers. The industry had begun in early decades of the nineteenth century with the earliest settlement in the southern part of the municipality and gradually expanded north alongside settlement. Most of this early lumbering was piecemeal and undertaken either by settlers clearing their land and selling surplus to mills, or by a variety of small, often family-run companies. Mills were generally set up to serve only the local market for building materials and for cabinetry, furniture and other finer woodworking projects. By the second part of the century, most of the lumbering was undertaken by large operations that ran the harvest, processing and sales process as an integrated business model. The majority of the wood being harvested was pine and came from the significant virgin pineries present in this area, although hardwoods were also harvested particularly for finer woodwork. In Bexley and the surrounding townships, three primary products coming out of the industry were squared timber, sawn lumber and cordwood. These products were intended for both the Canadian and international markets. Until

the end of the century, the industry as a whole was the largest employer and economic driver in Kawartha Lakes.

Coboconk was well-placed to take advantage of this growing and important industry. The location of the community on the Gull River system had allowed its participation in the early days of the industry and ensured its continued importance as harvesting operations moved north in Haliburton County in the later decades of the nineteenth century. At this time, the Gull River was one of the two major routes, along with the Burnt River, of transporting squared timber south by water and huge numbers of logs passed through Coboconk on their way south during the heyday of the squared timber trade.

However, with the arrival of the railway, Coboconk became the only community on the Gull River system with railway access and this created significant changes in how logs were transported and how the industry functioned in the area. While the immediate goal of constructing the railway was the provision of cordwood for Gooderham and Worts, its impact with regard to the development of the lumber industry as a whole was much more profound. Suddenly, it no longer made sense to float logs to mills further south when they could be processed in Coboconk and transported to southern markets by train, a significantly cheaper and faster option, given the fact that logs often could not be transported out from Haliburton to mills in Peterborough and Lindsay in a single season. Similarly, by the early 1870s, the preferred timber product had shifted from squared timber, which required transport by water, to sawn lumber which required transport by train after processing. The ability to process logs into lumber closer to the harvest areas vastly increased the efficiency of lumbering operations and reduced their costs. With access to the Gull River and the T&N line, Coboconk was in prime position to take advantage of the shifting industry and benefit from it. By the end of the 1870s, several mills were operating in the village, increasing jobs and investment in the community. Statistics from the *Ontario Gazetteer and Business Directory*, which was published throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, show the population increasing from 80 in 1869 to 500 in 1895, alongside an increase from a single saw mill operator to four, with both shingle and saw mills operating along the river. Alongside the growth in population and industry came the growth of other businesses such as multiple general stores, flours mills, boat makers, harness makers and carriage manufacturers. While the railway did not establish the lumber industry in the community, it certainly facilitated the growth of both and provided a key factor in the economic development of the area.

Although lumber and cordwood were its primary freight loads for many years, the line was also vital in the community's other major industry: the production of lime and limestone. The natural position of the village adjacent to limestone ridges made lime quarrying and processing a second major industry in the

community beginning in the nineteenth century, although certainly not to the scale of lumbering. Limestone was extracted both as a building material and for processing into lime which was used extensively in the nineteenth century for uses as diverse as fertilizer and gypsum for wall boards. The significant presence in this industry in the community are evidenced by the historic lime kilns which are still standing at the edge of the village. Like it did for sawn lumber, the train facilitated the lime and limestone industry by providing a method to export the products from the community.

The 1890s were Coboconk's heyday with millions of feet of lumber processed in the local mills, but those days of prosperity from the lumber trade were coming to an end. By the early twentieth century, the forests that the lumber industry relied on were effectively exhausted in the Coboconk area. A 1913 publication by C.D. Howe and J.H. White developed for the Canadian Commission of Conservation's Committee on Forests entitled *Trent Watershed Survey: A Reconnaissance* provided a bleak picture of the state of the industry in the Trent watershed which included the eastern portion of Kawartha Lakes as well as Peterborough, Haliburton, and Hastings Counties. The majority of the pineries were gone and the land, in many cases, beyond regeneration due to a combination of overcutting and fire. By 1911-12, the period up to which the report covered, only 10% of what had been harvested in the 1870s was being cut, a huge decline from the height of the industry.

The impact on the local economy and demographics due to the industry's decline was profound. Throughout the region, including Coboconk, the population dropped 15% between the 1901 and 1911 census, due to an exodus of people from both the lumber industry and from agricultural properties whose owners and tenants relied on the industry to purchase their produce. This demographic decline is reflected in the census statistics for both Somerville and Bexley Townships with a peak population in the late 1890s, and a significant and rapid decline to the 1920s. There was also a significant impact on Coboconk specifically, but less so than in the surrounding area because the mill remained open; by 1911, the Gull River Lumber Company's mill at Coboconk was one of only five remaining major processing plants for timber, alongside those in Lindsay, Peterborough, Lakefield and Marmora, coming out of the Trent River watershed. All five of these locations were served by railways which allowed large scale processing to be supported at these locations even as it declined elsewhere; Coboconk, as the terminus of the line, was able to draw lumber from the large surrounding area to supply its mill and keep a key economic driver in the community, despite its general decline in the immediate area and in the region more generally. The relationship between the mill and the railway can be seen in the 1910 Fire Insurance Plan of the village which shows the railway running through the lumber yard. In fact, there were

lumbering and milling activities in the community up until the 1970s, but in a greatly diminished capacity.

However, with the decline of the lumber industry came the arrival of a new economic driver in the region: tourism. Although the primary function of the T&N was unapologetically commercial, the railway company also actively promoted its route for passengers. For many people who lived in Coboconk and the surrounding area, the train was a vital link to the outside world, as the area was, at the time, remote and difficult to access. However, one of the T&N's major passenger markets was tourists looking to escape the city. Victoria County had been actively promoted as a tourist destination as early as the 1850s for the scenery and outdoor pursuits available in "the back lakes" as the region's waterbodies were often referred to. In these early days, the lakes were primarily visited by hunters, anglers, and canoeists. The lakes further to the north, including Balsam Lake, were very difficult to access due to limited transport opportunities and most visitors were concentrated around Sturgeon and Cameron Lakes which were accessible by steamboat from both Lindsay and Peterborough. Gradually throughout the second half of the century, the northern part of Kawartha Lakes became more accessible, with the gradual expansion of the Trent Canal system and the arrival of a variety of regional railways, including the T&N line to Coboconk.

As early as 1874, the T&N was promoting its line as a tourist route. In that year, it released a pamphlet entitled *The Nipissing Guide and Holiday Companion* which extolled the virtues of the line as a route to holiday destinations in central Ontario, noting that "No portion of the country around Toronto is so favoured by nature and possesses such varied attractions to the holiday keeper or pleasure seekers as the route traversed by the Nipissing Railway." Coboconk, in particular, was portrayed as the entry point to the wilderness beyond, the lakes, river and wider natural world further to the north, and marketed as a destination for all, from avid outdoorsmen and summer campers to those more interested in a resort or hotel stay and a steamboat cruise.

The emphasis on tourism as the primary auxiliary business of the railway did not end with the merger of the T&N into the Midland and then the GTR. By the early twentieth century, the GTR was actively promoting its routes across Ontario as ways of reaching tourist destinations in the backcountry for enjoying nature and escaping the city in the summer. The focus of its summer promotions was specifically to encourage city dwellers to travel by train to experience nature through leisure and sporting pursuits in various regions throughout northern, central and eastern Ontario. This included what it identified broadly as the wider Kawartha region, in both Peterborough and Victoria counties. In its 1915 guide on what it called the Ontario Highlands, which broadly covered the majority of central Ontario, the company wrote of the region: "the air is pure, and laden with health-giving and soothing balsamic

odors from the pine and spruce clad hills – it renews physical vigour, restores the nervous system, invigorates the mental faculties and give s anew lease of life...As for the canoeist, this midland district of Ontario is one broad continuous network of lakes extending to James Bay and the voyages to be taken by the enthusiastic lover of the canoe have but one limit – the time at the disposal of the voyager.” More specifically, the guide promoted Coboconk as directly accessible by tourists from its line noting that it “furnishes good accommodation for tourists...and you can at any time lure your breakfast from the stream without a guide or boat.”

The rise of regional railways into Kawartha Lakes, and central Ontario more generally, corresponded with increasing leisure time amongst middle class urban dwellers and the rising popularity of spending that leisure time in the natural environment. Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century and reacting to Ontario’s rapid urbanization, escaping from the city to the countryside and the perceived purity of the wilderness was seen as both an enjoyable and invigorating past time as well as a tonic for physical and mental health. This meant either canoe trips in the wilderness, an activity that was heavily male-dominated throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, or spending all or part of the summer at a summer resort or cottage, which was seen as a family-oriented activity and suited for both women and children. Canoe tripping notwithstanding, summer resorts were the first destinations developed for summer recreation, eventually giving way to the private cottage in the later decades of the nineteenth century. By the turn of the century, the summer recreation on offer also included summer camps, such as Camp Kagawong on Balsam Lake which were flourishing in the early decades of the twentieth century as locations for character building and wilderness for boys and, eventually, girls from the city; these were also actively promoted in GTR literature which wrote of Kagawong that its aim was “to provide a place where boys may lead a simple, manly outdoor life, in which emphasis is placed on clean, sturdy living, upon reverence and manners, upon self-reliance and physical accomplishments.” Although the idea of summer recreation in wilderness regions had been around since the mid-nineteenth century, it was the early decades of the twentieth century that really saw the tourism industry in the region explode with the arrival of middle class urban dwellers intent on spending their summers canoeing, fishing, swimming, and relaxing by the lake.

The train remained the primary method of accessing recreational cottages in most areas of central Ontario, including Kawartha Lakes, until the 1950s. For many rail lines whose primary business was the transport for freight, providing transportation to tourists into the recreational areas of the province was a lucrative auxiliary business. For these passengers, the station was their stepping off point to their summer vacation and many city-dwellers arrived at

the Coboconk station in the first half of the twentieth century on route to the cottage, summer camp or a resort. Although the automobile was rapidly adopted by the upper and middle classes in the interwar period, the roads outside of major urban centres were simply not good enough to reliably be used for long distance travel and city dwellers continued to rely on the train to transport them to summer cottages and resorts. However, in the years around and following the Second World War, the provincial government began to make significant improvements in its road network throughout the province and suddenly, driving to the cottage became both feasible and easy. The secondary market for train services suddenly shifted in favour of private transportation.

For the GTR line to Coboconk, the major turning point in its use as a tourist route was the development of Highway 35. The road between Lindsay and Fenelon Falls was designated a provincial Highway in 1931 and that designation extended to Huntsville in 1937. Although a provincial highway, this road was still effectively a dirt track throughout the 1940s, especially in its northern sections. Reconstructions efforts began around this time, in a large part to facilitate its use as a tourist route, and the conditions quickly improved. The section between Lindsay and Norland was paved in the late 1940s, becoming significantly more accessible and providing a good automobile route to access cottages on the lakes in the region. Tellingly, the last mixed service on the Coboconk line ended in 1956, showing that, just a few years after the highway was paved, the passenger service had stopped being viable.

While the passenger service ended in 1956, the freight service continued for a number of years before being discontinued in 1965 when the tracks were lifted and the station closed. The closure of the line corresponded with the wider decline of rail as a primary mode of transport across Ontario and the closure of many smaller, regional lines. The station served a number of uses over the years, before being moved to its current location in Legion Park. Despite no longer being used as a station, the building is an important reminder of Coboconk's railway history and the impact on the development of the railway on the growth and development of the community from the nineteenth century to the present day.

### Contextual Value

6697 Highway 35 has contextual value as an important local landmark in Coboconk and the surrounding area. It also helps maintain and support the character of Coboconk as a whole as a small historic community as an important aspect of the community's history and by reinforcing its historical and local identity. Although the station has been moved from its original location and lost some of its contextual value in this way, it still remains

historically connected to the historic core of Cobconk as well as to the wider regional railway landscape of the region.

The Coboconk Train Station has long been recognized as a landmark in the local community. From the construction of the original station in 1872 to its replacement around 1910, the structure has been a key community building as the transport hub for the village. It was a structure used by most members of the community in the past as they came and went from Coboconk, to meet visitors and relatives, or as part of their business. This particular structure services as a train station for over fifty years and when the line was closed, the building remained in situ. It was moved to its current location in 1995 to continue use as a community hall; its new location in Legion Park was prominent and visible from a variety of locations in the community and from the highway due to its elevated position. Recent initiatives to redevelop the train station in to a medical centre to serve Coboconk and the surrounding area have reinforced this building's importance to the community, as both a heritage structure with important ties the history of the village and as a community space.

At the same time, the station helps to maintain the small town character of the community as an important example of a rural train station from the early twentieth century. Although Coboconk's landscape has changed significantly from the early twentieth century, particularly with the closure and removal of its sawmills and other industrial structures, many buildings from this historic period have remained extant, including houses, downtown commercial buildings, and institutional structures. Taken along with these, the train station helps demonstrate the historic evolution of Coboconk from the nineteenth century to the present day and its continuing small-town and rural character.

The removal of the station from its original location to Legion Park has removed it from its original context and relationship to its surroundings. That being said, it retains its connection to other historic structures within the village as one of a collection of historic structures in the community and is historically linked to its surroundings in the village as a whole.

However, the station also has a wider historic and visual connection to the broader railway landscape in the northern part of Kawartha Lakes and into Haliburton County. Architecturally, the station has a visual and historical connection to the two other extant early twentieth century GTR stations in Kinmount and Haliburton which share a basic design and formed part of the development of stations in the area with an eye to serve tourists who were coming in to the area for summer recreation. The station also has historic relationship to other aspects of railway infrastructure remaining in the northern part of Kawartha Lakes that tell the story of its growth and development through the arrival of mass transportation. These features include the T&N



station at Victoria Road, surviving engineering works and embankments and the various railbeds which continue to exist, including the Victoria Rail Trail which travels the route of the former Victoria Railway which, like the T&N, was absorbed into the Midland then GTR systems to form part of the wider rail network throughout central Ontario. Take together, these extant stations form a wider, regional railway landscape with important connections to the development of northern Kawartha Lakes beginning in the late nineteenth century.

## Summary of Reasons for Designation

The short statement of reasons for designation and the description of the heritage attributes of the property, along with all other components of the Heritage Designation Brief, constitute the Reasons for Designation required under the Ontario Heritage Act.

### Short Statement of Reasons for Designation

#### Design and Physical Value

6697 Highway 35 has design and physical value as a representative example of a rural railway station in turn of the century Ontario constructed by the Grand Trunk Railway to their standardized corporate plan. Using elements borrowed from the Queen Anne style, such as decorative shingles, brackets, and asymmetrical massing, the style is demonstrative of the romantic and picturesque styles preferred by the Grand Trunk Railway for their rural and small town stations in the early years of the twentieth century. The property is also a rare surviving example of a railway station in Kawartha Lakes where the majority of both urban and rural railway stations have been demolished.

#### Historical and Associative Value

6697 Highway 35 has historical and associative value as the former train station for Coboconk which had a major impact on the town's economic and demographic growth beginning the 1870s when the line arrived in the community. The property yields information regarding the railway in Coboconk and its role in the development of the community where it helped facilitated the lumber boom of the late nineteenth century as well as the shift in the economy in the early twentieth century with the development of the cottage country tourist industry which continues to be an important economic driver in the community today. Both the lumber and tourism industries were vital to the evolution of the community and the station, as the primary extant feature from the railway period, provides information on the role of the railway in their establishment and growth.

#### Contextual Value

6697 Highway 35 has contextual value as a local landmark in Coboconk and the surrounding area, as well as part of the surviving historic landscape of the village. The property is an important community landmark from its original construction as the train station in the village to its evolution to community centre and planned redevelopment. The property is historically related to the wider historic landscape of Coboconk dating from the mid-nineteenth century and supports the historic small town character of the community. It has wider significance as part of the broader railway landscape in the northern part of Kawartha Lakes where it has historic connections to other extant stations, infrastructure and engineering works.

## Summary of Heritage Attributes to be Designated

The Reasons for Designation include the following heritage attributes and apply to all elevations, unless otherwise specified, and the roof including: all façades, entrances, windows, chimneys, and trim, together with construction materials of wood, brick, stone, stucco, concrete, plaster parging, metal, glazing, their related building techniques and landscape features.

### Design and Physical Attributes

The following attributes support the value of the station as a representative example of a rural standard plan Grand Trunk Railway station from the early twentieth century.

- One-storey construction with two-storey wing
- Frame construction
- Asymmetrical massing
- Hipped and gable roofs
- Varied wooden cladding including:
  - Board and batten
  - Beadboard
  -
- Operator's bay including:
- Fenestration including:
- Entrances including:
- Freight and baggage doors
- "Coboconk" signage

### Historical and Associative Attributes

The following attributes support the value of the property as a railway station and its importance to the growth of the local community.

- Former use as a railway station
- Relationship to surviving industrial and historic structures in the community
- Relationship to the history of the railway, the lumber industry and tourism

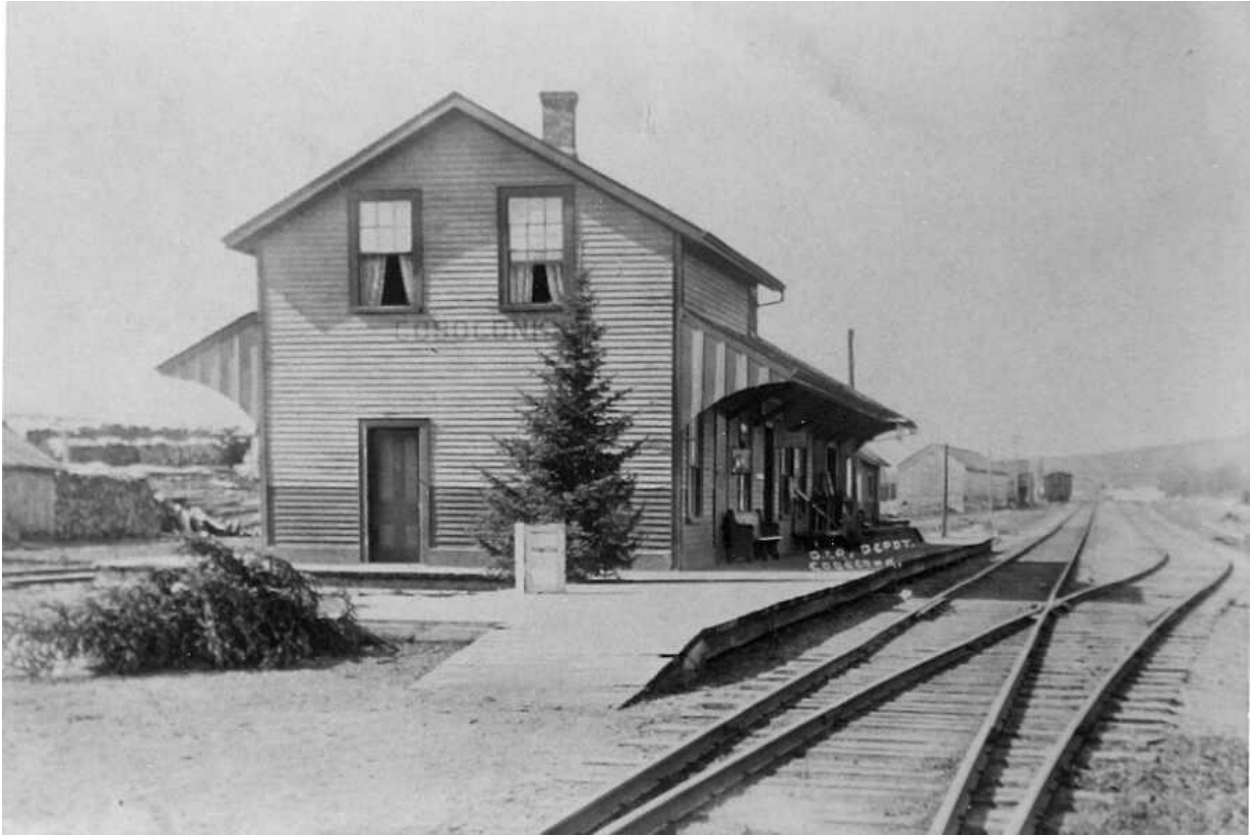
### Contextual Attributes

The following attributes support the value of the property as a local landmark, contributing feature to the small town character of Coboconk and as part of the wider railway landscape regionally.

- Prominent location in Legion Park
- Views of the community and surrounding area from the train station
- Views of the train station from Portage Road and Highway 35

- Relationship to other railway infrastructure in the surrounding area

Photos



Toronto and Nipissing Station c.1900



Early Postcard Grand Trunk Station



Arrival of the train n.d.



Grand Trunk station n.d.



South elevation, March 2022



West elevation, March 2022



North elevation, March 2022



East elevation, March 2022





Operator's Bay and Gable, March 2022



Freight and Baggage Doors, March 2022

## Bibliography

- Angus, James T. *A Respectable Ditch: A History of the Trent Severn Waterway, 1833-1920*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988.
- Baskerville, Peter. "Americans in Britain's Backyard: The Railway Era in Upper Canada, 1850-1880." *The Business History Review* 55, no. 3 (1981): 314-336.
- Brown, Ron. *Ghost Railways of Ontario*. Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1994.
- Cooper, Charles. *Narrow Gauge for Us: The Story of the Toronto and Nipissing Railway*. Erin: Boston Mills Press, 1982.
- Currie, A.W. *The Grand Trunk Railway of Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957.
- Daniels, Rudolph. *Trains Across the Continent*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000.
- De Fort-Menares, Anne M. "Durability and Parsimony: Railway Architecture in Ontario, 1853-1914." *Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada Bulletin* 21, no. 1 (1996): 25-31.
- Directory of the United Counties of Peterborough and Victoria for 1858*. Peterborough: T&R White, 1858.
- Fuller's Counties of Peterborough and Victoria Directory for 1865 and 1866*. Toronto: Blackburn's City Steam Press, 1866.
- Grant, H. Roger. *Living in the Depot: The Two-Storey Railroad Structure*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993.
- Howe, C.D. and J.H. White. *Trent Watershed Survey: A Reconnaissance*. Toronto: The Bryant Press, 1913.
- Kalman, Harold. *A History of Canadian Architecture*. 2 vols. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Kirkconnell, Watson. *County of Victoria: Centennial History*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Lindsay: County of Victoria Council, 1967.
- Lavalée, Omer. *Narrow Gauge Railways of Canada*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Markham: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 2005.
- Lower, A.R.M. *The North American Assault on the Canadian Forest: A History of the Lumber Trade Between Canada and the United States*. Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1938.

Meeks, Carroll L.V. *The Railroad Station: An Architectural History*. New York: Dover Publications, 1956.

McInnis, Marvin. "The Economy of Canada in the Nineteenth Century." In *The Cambridge Economic History of the United States*, vol. 2, 57-108. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

*The Nipissing Guide and Holiday Companion, Giving a Brief sketch of the County North-East of Toronto*. Toronto: G.C. Patterson, 1874.

*Playgrounds of Canada: A Short Treatise on Tourist, Fishing and Hunting Resorts Reached by the Grand Trunk System*. N.P.: Grant Trunk Railway General Passenger Department, 1915.

*Province of Ontario Gazetteer and Directory*. 1869. Toronto: Robertson and Cook, 1869.

*Province of Ontario Gazetteer and Directory*. 1895. Toronto: Might Directory Company of Canada, 1895.

Stevens, Peter A. "Cars and Cottages: The Automotive Transformation of Ontario's Summer Home Tradition." *Ontario History* 100, no. 1 (2008): 26-56.

Walker, Glenn. "The Changing Face of the Kawarthas: Land Use and Environment in Nineteenth Century Ontario." PhD thesis, McGill University, 2012.

Wolfe, Roy I. "The Summer Resorts of Ontario in the Nineteenth Century." *Ontario History* 54 (1962): 149-61.

Tatley, Richard. *Steamboating on the Trent Severn*. Belleville: Mika Publishing, 1978.